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Note from the Chief Editors

Otis Bakker and Benjamin Woolfe

Thank you for reading Juncture: The University of Manchester Undergraduate Politics Journal. Volume 9, Issue 1 has been the first publication that we have overseen since becoming Chief Editors, having been on the editorial board for Volume 8. Putting together this edition of Juncture has not only presented a challenge to uphold the high editorial standards of previous editions, but also presented an opportunity for us to push Juncture forward as a politics journal. Thankfully the quality of work submitted to the journal has been phenomenal, and it has been a pleasure to work with the editorial board to filter through all the submissions sent to us. Since 2017, Juncture's purpose has been to showcase undergraduate research by providing a platform for politics students to submit their work. The selected works for Volume 9, Issue 1 represent some of the highest standards of undergraduate research in political science.

Constructing a new team for the journal was the initial task for the 2025/26 academic year. Alongside our fantastic general secretary Meera Vinesh, we finalised six new editorial board members who all individually showcased their skills as well as their interest during the recruitment process. The publication of this edition would not be possible without the hard work of the new editorial board, which includes Rakay Akhtar, Elin Hywel, Lola Lesnick, Imogen Lightning, Charlie Sanigar, and Laurence Young.

We would like to thank Mitchell Bowcock and Antonia Giles who worked closely with us at the end of the 2024/25 academic year to ensure we were prepared to oversee the journal. Their commitment to the success of Juncture is unwavering. Equally we would like to thank the University of Manchester School of Social Sciences for their funding and support. Specifically, Dr. Louise Thompson and Kate Maythorne for their assistance this academic year.

Existing in a political era steeped with misinformation, polarisation, and mobilisation, the role of the politics student becomes clear: to make sense of the contentious and volatile political environment. The objective for Volume 9, Issue 1 has been to select works that have either provided meaningful insights into contentious political issues, or challenged existing political structures. All the selected works tackle different facets of political science, ranging from an empirical study into youth participation in the UK, to a philosophical inquiry analysing the importance of truth for political leaders. While they make contributions to different areas of political science, what links them all together is an undeniable intention to critically assess fundamental political questions and challenge conventional political norms. This intention is at the heart of undergraduate political research at the University of Manchester.

We hope that you enjoy Juncture Volume 9, Issue 1.

Otis Bakker and Benjamin Woolfe
Chief Editors

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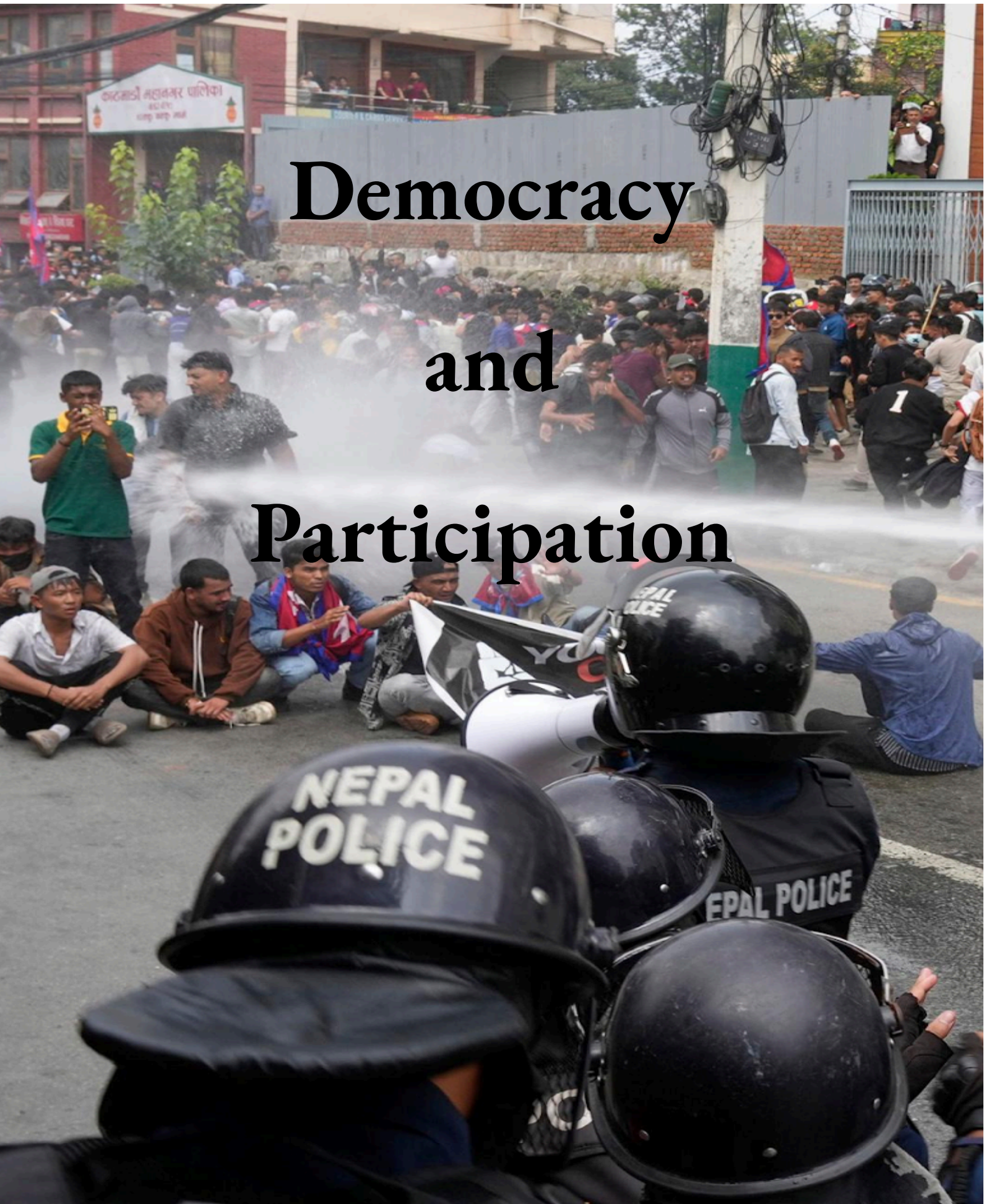

Democracy and Participation

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Disengaged or Differently Engaged? Unequal Patterns of Youth Political Participation in the UK

Emily Bennett, 3rd Year Essay
BA (Hons) Politics, Philosophy and Economics

Abstract

This paper critically examines the changing landscape of youth political participation in the UK, moving beyond the conventional focus on electoral disengagement to consider whether alternative forms of participation offer a more inclusive model of democratic engagement. Drawing on data from the 2023 European Social Survey (UK sample, ages 18–34), the analysis explores whether falling turnout may be offset by alternative methods of participation, or whether it should be treated as a significant democratic concern. This paper finds that although alternative forms of participation are more common among young people, non-electoral participation actually reinforces turnout, with voting positively associated with alternative methods of participation and internal efficacy. Thus, many young people are disengaged, and with such low turnout, the views of young people are less likely to be represented and the legitimacy of the democratic system is weakened. The findings challenge optimistic accounts of participatory pluralism, suggesting that shifts in the form of engagement have not led to greater equality of access.

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Introduction

Turnout is the traditional method of engagement, but is something that has been declining in young people (Skinner et al., 2024). Yet it seems that young people still care about social and political issues, turning instead to other forms of engagement including online activism, protest, and issue-based campaigning (Uberoi & Johnston, 2022). These new forms of engagement evidence a generational shift rather than an outright withdrawal from political participation, but whether we should be concerned about declining political engagement among young people depends on how they are engaging, and whether their methods of participation promote accountability and responsiveness of formal politics. If these methods exert comparable influence over political outcomes, then declining turnout may not threaten democratic legitimacy, but if they do not, or if these actions are concentrated among those already politically active, then youth disengagement from voting remains a serious concern.

This paper finds that although many young people do participate in non-traditional ways, this engagement does not compensate for low electoral participation. It uses data from the European Social Survey to compare behaviour of younger and older voters using chi-square analysis, and to explore the drivers of youth turnout through linear regression. It finds that while young people are more likely to engage in alternative forms of participation than older people, voting remains their most frequent form — reinforcing concerns about non-traditional engagement as substitutes for voting. Therefore, declining youth turnout should be treated as a significant democratic concern as it undermines political equality and representativeness.

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Theoretical Framework

Engagement in politics is traditionally defined as turnout; and low turnout is usually considered to be concerning. Powell (1982) treats turnout as the first standard to assess democratic performance, as he argues that voting is the primary example of citizen involvement which is a requisite of a thriving democracy. Voting ensures accountability, responsiveness, and legitimacy, and so low turnout is worrying. This reasoning reflects unequal participation if some groups are consistently underrepresented at the ballot box. Blais et al. (2020) expands on this argument by showing that when a group abstains in large numbers, they forfeit influence over policy priorities in favour of more electorally active voter groups. In the British case, young people (aged 18-24 and aged 25- 34) are less likely to vote. In 1983, 66% of 18-34 year olds reported voting (Fair Pay, 2013), but in 2024 this was only 39% (Skinner et al., 2024). This generational imbalance results in governments who have stronger incentives to prioritise the interests of older voters, creating intergenerational inequalities. This consequence has been documented in the UK, with allowances for older people such as the State Pension being protected in real terms during the era of austerity, while significant cuts were made to child benefits and social security entitlements for working-age people (Crisp & Pearce, 2021). Thus if turnout among young people is low, we should be worried as we risk losing accountability, responsiveness, and the legitimacy of the government.

There are many different theoretical explanations of individual-level turnout, and it is still unclear as to which is the most powerful (Smets & Ham, 2013). The resources model posits that people vote because they can — they have the education, time, and the opportunity to. This model expects turnout to be higher among citizens with higher

levels of skills and knowledge, and higher economic statuses. The psychological and rational choice models argue that people engage with politics because they want to, with the psychological models stressing the role of attitudes towards politics, partisanship, and political efficacy; and the rational choice model putting voting as a result of a cost-benefit calculation where a sense of civic duty drives people to vote. Lastly, the mobilisation model views voting as something that people do because they are "asked", either through their peers voting, or by campaigns. In attempting to explain low youth turnout, there is likely a combination of these factors at play. For example, while the resource model correctly predicts that more educated young people vote more than their less-educated peers, they still have lower turnout levels than less-educated older adults (Berry & McDonnell, 2014). Further, as Putnam (2000) argued, younger people tend to be less embedded in social networks that drive mobilisation and so less are likely to benefit from the sense of civic duty they provide. Psychological factors are likely also important in predicting youth turnout, as Henn and Foard (2011) found that many young people in the UK believe that politicians are not responsive, which may discourage voting, even when they possess the skills as knowledge to participate.

However, turnout is not the only form of participation. We may not have cause for concern about the decline in young people engaging in formal politics if they have simply shifted their energy to other forms of participation. Indeed, several studies have found that young people often care about social and political issues, and participate through methods such as protest activity and digital activism at higher rates than older people (Uberoi & Johnston, 2022; Sloam, 2007; Sloam & Henn, 2019). Given this shift, it is pertinent to question whether these alternative forms of participation might compensate for low youth turnout. If young people are alienated from traditional forms of politics

rather than apathetic, then they may actually be more engaged than older people as it often requires more political interest to engage in other ways than voting. This is particularly visible on social media where people can engage with political content and participate in campaigns often centred around single issues rather than party politics (Loader et al., 2014). However, there are two problems with the argument that the decline in youth voting is not worrying due to alternative participation. The first is that these alternative forms of engagement may not meaningfully influence political outcomes, rendering them politically ineffectual (Cantijoch et al., 2018). This is worrying because if young people are having an unequal impact on formal politics, we still risk losing accountability, responsiveness, and the legitimacy of the government. Thus, if new forms of engagement adequately replace electoral participation then perhaps declining youth turnout is not alarming, but if they do not, a section of society is being excluded from decision-making. The second implication is that young people who engage in other forms of participation may also be more likely to vote. According to theoretical explanations of individual-level turnout, we would expect people with higher levels of knowledge, and who are more embedded in social networks to have higher levels of turnout. Thus, we would expect alternative participation to encourage formal participation.

These theoretical debates raise important questions about how young people are engaging with politics, and whether their engagement poses a risk to democratic legitimacy. To explore whether youth disengagement from politics should be considered concerning, I test the following hypotheses:

H1: Young people (aged 18-34) are less likely to vote than older adults, but more likely to

participate in alternative forms of political engagement.

H2: Alternative forms of participation do not substitute for electoral engagement as young people who participate in non-electoral activities are also more likely to vote.

Methodology and Results

To test H1, I use 5432 observations from Round 11 of the European Social Survey, collected in 2023. I conduct a series of chi-square tests comparing political behaviours between 18-34 year olds, and 35+ year olds. It is important to note that turnout in the European Social Survey is self-reported and so there is disparity between reported and actual turnout. This could be for two reasons — firstly, participants could be embarrassed to admit that they did not vote, as voting is regarded as a civic duty, or secondly, the survey could have been fielded to people who are more likely to engage in politics, for example by completing surveys on the topic. As a result, the absolute levels of turnout reported in the ESS should be interpreted with caution, although the relative differences between age groups remain analytically useful. Ages 18-34 were included as both the 18-24 and 25-34 categories have exhibited similarly low turnout in recent elections (Skinner et al., 2024), and to ensure a large enough sample size for meaningful analysis.

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Table 1: Cross-tabulations of Methods of Political Participation by Age

Participation Method	18–34	35+	Chi-square	p
Voted (n = 5012)	58.7%	76.4%	176.119[a]	<0.001**
Contacted politician (n = 5249)	14.7%	22.4%	40.640[a]	<0.001**
Donated to party/pressure group (n = 5431)	4.8%	6.8%	7.201[a]	0.007**
Worn/displayed badge or sticker (n = 5432)	7.1%	5.3%	6.109[a]	0.013*
Signed a petition (n = 5397)	45.8%	39.8%	15.999[a]	<0.001**
Public demonstration (n = 5429)	11.0%	4.3%	83.523[a]	<0.001**
Boycotted products (n = 5414)	25.6%	25.6%	0.001[a]	0.973
Posted/shared political content online (n = 5416)	30.4%	19.2%	80.297	<0.001**
Volunteered for charity (n = 5435)	25.8%	26.7%	0.496[a]	0.481

Data: European Social Survey, Round 11, UK sample, 2023. Weighted data. All "don't know" responses have been excluded. Participants not eligible to vote in the 2019 General Election have been excluded from turnout statistics. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

The results reveal a clear generational divide in both electoral and non-electoral forms of political participation. As expected, young people are significantly less likely to vote than older adults. Among respondents aged 18-34, only 58.7% reported voting in the 2019 election, compared to 76.4% of those aged 35 and over (X^2=176.119, p¡0.001). This finding supports the evidence from the literature that young people are underrepresented in electoral politics, and that this disparity could threaten democratic equality and responsiveness (Blais et al., 2020; Powell, 1982).

The data also shows that younger people are more likely to engage in several alternative forms of political participation including attending public demonstrations (X^2=83.525, $p < 0.001$), posting or sharing political content online (X^2=80.297, $p < 0.001$), and signing petitions (X^2=15.999, $p < 0.001$). These findings align with studies suggesting that young people are not apathetic, but are engaging in alternative ways (Sloam & Henn, 2019;

Loader et al., 2014). However, some forms of participation such as boycotting or volunteering showed no significant difference across age groups, suggesting that not all forms of participation are generationally skewed. These results support H1: young people are less likely to vote, but more likely to engage in some alternative forms of participation.

Interestingly, voting remains the most common form of political participation among young people as while only 58.7% reported voting, this figure still exceeds participation in any other political act, with the next most common acts being signing a petition at 45.8% and sharing political content online at 30.4%, showing that voting still constitutes the primary form of political participation. Further, signing petitions and sharing content online are actions which require minimal time commitment or skill, and if young people were truly more engaged and alternative engagement was compensating for declining youth turnout we would expect to see very high levels of alternative activity, perhaps to the turnout levels of the 35+ group. Therefore, it is possible that those who take part in alternative forms of engagement may also be more likely to vote. This raises doubts around the argument that alternative participation compensates for low turnout.

To address this concern and test H2, I ran a linear regression model, filtering respondents so that only those aged 18-34 were included. The dependent variable was voting in the 2019 General Election and independent variables included education level, internal political efficacy (measured on a 0-8 scale), political interest, and an index of non-electoral political participation (measured on a 0-8 scale).

Table 2: A Linear Regression Analysis of Youth Turnout

	Coef.	Std. Error	Beta
Constant	0.397**	0.033	–
Education (ref: Mid Education)			
Low Education (up to GCSE)	-0.196**	0.035	-0.167
High Education (Degree)	0.043	0.030	0.044
Index of Internal Political Efficacy (0–8)	0.066**	0.008	0.259
Index of Participation (0–8)	0.072**	0.008	0.267
		$R^2 = 0.288, \quad N = 1087$	

Data: European Social Survey, Round 11, UK sample, 2023. Weighted data. Dependent variable: self-reported turnout in the 2019 General Election, filtered by age 18–34. All "don't know" responses have been excluded. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

The results show that non-electoral participation is a strong positive predictor of voting (B=0.072, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2 that alternative engagement is not substituting electoral participation but reinforcing it. Specifically, each increase in non-electoral activities is associated with a 0.072 point increase in the likelihood of voting on a 0-1 scale. This aligns with the argument made by Cantijoch et al. (2018), that political activities often cluster, meaning that individuals who are more active in one area are more likely to be active in others. Further, internal political efficacy also emerged as a significant positive predictor (B=0.066, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that young people who feel confident

in their ability to understand and participate in politics are more likely to vote. This aligns with psychological models of turnout that emphasise political competence (Smets & Ham, 2013).

Finally, education level was also significant, and having lower qualifications (up to GCSE) was associated with a 0.196 decrease in the likelihood of voting, supporting the resource model. However, holding a university degree was not a significant positive predictor (B=0.043, p=0.159). This could be due to the fact that many respondents in the 18-34 group are likely to be current students or may be in the future, skewing educational categorisation. In this model, a degree educated, 18-34 year old voter whose internal and external political efficacy are 4 out of 8, but who has participated in no non-electoral activities has a 60% probability of voting, but this increases to 74.4% if they have participated in two. This suggests that alternative political engagement has a role in meaningfully reinforcing participation and that encouraging young people to participate in these ways could play a role in reducing the turnout gap. Participating in a couple of non-traditional forms could bring a young person's turnout probability up to levels similar to those over 35. However, it is important to note that the inverse could also be true and voting could encourage participation in alternative forms of participation, particularly if they are dissatisfied with the political system. This highlights the reciprocal nature of participation, and that if young people are absent from both voting and alternative forms of participation then their political voice risks being under-represented.

The model explains approximately 28.8% of the variance in self-reported youth voting (R2=0.288), indicating moderate explanatory power. While included predictors were

important in explaining turnout, a substantial portion of the variation remains unexplained, which is unsurprising given that voting is influenced by a wide range of factors. To develop the model further, a logistic model could be used to improve robustness. Further, it would be interesting to break down participation methods to see whether specific actions contribute more to turnout as the theory suggests that community-based actions may be more likely to do this. Nevertheless, the model offers meaningful insights into which factors matter for understanding youth political engagement, and increases understanding of whether alternative participation substitutes or reinforces voting. The results of this model suggest that alternative political participation is not replacing formal engagement but reinforcing it, supporting the argument that youth disengagement from politics is concerning.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to examine whether we should be concerned about young people not engaging in politics. While some argue that falling turnout may be offset by alternative methods of participation, the evidence suggests that this is too limited. Chi-square analysis showed that young people are less likely to vote, but more likely to participate in some non-electoral activities including signing petitions, protesting, and posting online. However, none of these activities surpassed voting in frequency, with overall levels of alternative engagement remaining moderate. Further, regression analysis demonstrated that non-electoral participation actually reinforces turnout, with voting positively associated with alternative methods of participation and internal efficacy, supporting the argument that many young people are disengaged. With such low turnout, the views of young people are less likely to be represented and the legitimacy of the democratic system is weakened. Therefore, we should be concerned about youth disengagement from

politics, and about whether the political system is meaningfully representing their interests.

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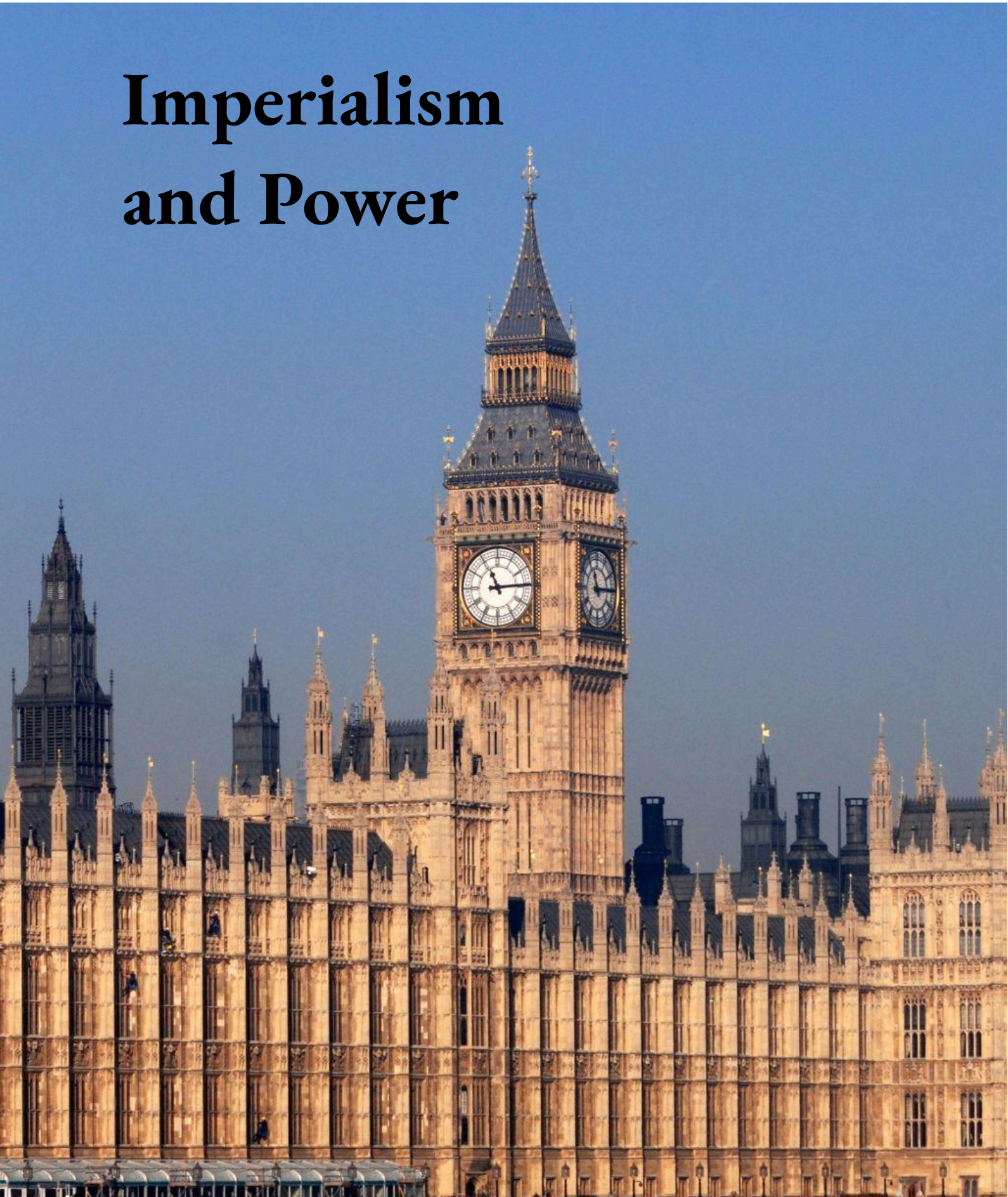
Imperialism and Power



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Imperial Legacies, Hidden Power, and the Racialisation of UK Education Policy

Zauditu Derby-McCabe, 2nd Year Essay

BA (Hons) Politics and Sociology

Abstract

This article analyses how various forms of power shape education policymaking in the UK, focusing on the legacy of imperialism in legitimising racial hierarchies. Using the Power Cube framework, it explores the dynamic interplay of visible, hidden, and invisible forms of power across different policy spaces and levels. The article examines three key areas: the imperial roots of compulsory education, the 1988 Education Reform Act's national curriculum and agenda-setting, and contemporary education policies alongside ongoing decolonisation efforts. It argues that hidden forms of power, operating through agenda-setting and the hidden curriculum, have been most influential in perpetuating systemic racism within the

education system. Grassroots activism in claimed spaces challenges these structures, advocating for a more inclusive and anti-racist curriculum. To conclude, I emphasise the need for racial literacy policies and collective efforts to dismantle imperial ideologies embedded in education policymaking, fostering equity and social justice in UK education.

Introduction

The legacy of British imperialism continues to structure contemporary secondary education policy, shaping both overt decisions and hidden agendas that reinforce racial hierarchies. The use of hidden forms of power has the greatest influence, operating through subtle mechanisms of agenda-setting. Using the power cube theory to deepen my analysis, I will explore three key areas, examining the interplay of forms, spaces, and levels of power. Firstly, the influence of imperial power in Britain, which shaped the foundations of compulsory education. Secondly, The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), specifically the national curriculum, and its use of hidden power through agenda-setting and the "hidden curriculum". Thirdly, current education policies and ongoing decolonising efforts in education, particularly in claimed spaces, and their overall impact. Finally, I will consider the future of education policy, exploring the most effective forms, spaces and levels of power that encourage anti-racism.

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Theoretical Framework: Power Cube

The Power Cube identifies three forms, spaces, and levels of power (respectively): visible, hidden, invisible; local, national, global; and, closed, invited, claimed. This essay's focus will be on the forms of power which interact dynamically within educational contexts, shaping policy outcomes in complex ways. Visible power, as argued by Dahl (1957), constitutes decision-making within a formal political arena, and in an educational context this would be the formation of education policy. According to Bachrach and Baratz (1963), hidden forms of power, unlike visible forms of power, involve agenda-setting or non-decision-making. Agenda-setting is crucial for education policy as it determines the contents of the national curriculum. Invisible power, on the other hand, shapes societal norms and values (Lukes 1986). In education, this can manifest as unconscious bias pertaining to certain groups of students, which has the potential to influence policy decisions without explicit discussion.

The interplay between these forms of power is critical. Hidden power can reinforce visible power structures and vice versa. Analysing these interactions reveals how power dynamics in education policy are more nuanced than they appear; this is essential for developing effective strategies that address educational inequalities. It highlights the need to look beyond traditional policy-making processes while considering the more implicit forms of power (Cox 2011). Furthermore, it demands a critical assessment of the values that underpin policy decisions,

acknowledging that seemingly neutral policies can have differential impacts on marginalised communities.

Imperial Roots of UK Education Policy

During Britain's imperial era (1815-1914), hidden forms of power profoundly shaped the UK education policymaking process, legitimising racism within the system's foundations (Cole 2004), notably exhibited within the 1870 Education Act. While aimed at improving literacy and providing education to all children, it served as a vehicle for perpetuating imperial ideologies and racial hierarchies (Bushby 1988). As the basis for the proliferation of UK mass education, this Act laid the groundwork for the use of education in creating an "imperial race" and raising "national efficiency" (Cole 2004). W.E. Forster, the Vice-President of the Education department under Gladstone, argued that education was imperative in maintaining Britain's global position and power (Maclure 1979).

This rhetoric reveals how hidden power in the form of imperial ideology and racism was embedded in the education system from its inception. The focus on "imperial race" and "national efficiency" not only legitimised but also naturalised racial hierarchies. Its underlying motivations were subtly influenced by imperial ideologies which legitimised racial hierarchy and racism within education (Cole 2004). This illustrates how hidden power in policymaking

can shape institutions to maintain power structures without obvious enforcement. Critically, Cole's (2004) analysis, while insightful, is written from a radical perspective; a more nuanced perspective might acknowledge the genuine concerns around national competitiveness that also motivated the Act, despite perpetuating harmful ideologies.

The 1988 Education Reform Act and Agenda-Setting in the Curriculum

Since the 1870 Education Act, there had been several notable reforms within education policy, namely the 1944 Butler Act, the 1976 Education Act, and the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). The 1988 ERA fundamentally reshaped the distribution of power within the education system, transferring power from local to national levels enabling the government full control over the content of the education curriculum (Maclure 1989). This centralisation of power facilitated the legitimation of racism within the curriculum (Gillborn 2008), which was more about what was absent from the curriculum, rather than what was included – agenda setting. Gillborn (2008, p.74) argues that the national curriculum had "no meaningful acknowledgment of race/ethnic diversity" and promoted a very ethnocentric curriculum (this is another example of agenda-setting).

This observation presents a prominent example of hidden power according to Bachrach and Baratz's (1963) definition. By actively excluding people of colour (POC) from the curriculum,

Thatcher took a colour-blind approach to education policy, refusing to acknowledge the important histories and experiences of POC in education. This "systematically down-plays the legacies and current manifestations of institutional racism" (Weis, Cipollone, and Jenkins 2014, p. 148), pushing a certain agenda onto school students. However, as with the 1870 Education Act, the 1988 ERA aimed to improve overall education quality, with standardised curricula and tests intended to improve educational outcomes (Maclure 1989), not necessarily to disadvantage POC students. Despite this, its implementation revealed hidden forms of power shaping the policymaking process. Without acknowledging racial and ethnic diversity, as noted by Gillborn (2008), it implicitly reinforced existing racial hierarchies and power structures within the education system. The insidious perpetuation of institutional racism demonstrates how hidden forms of power can operate within seemingly harmless policy reforms, shaping educational outcomes in ways that are not immediately apparent but can have long-lasting impacts on marginalised communities. Furthermore, the focus on standardised testing may disproportionately disadvantage students from marginalised backgrounds who face systemic barriers to academic success (Gilborn 2008).

The Marxist perspective on the hidden curriculum offers a critical framework for understanding how education policy can perpetuate racial hierarchies. The hidden curriculum, as defined by Bowles and Gintis (1975), acts as a tool of social reproduction, legitimising

dominant ideologies and social structures. In the context of education policy, the hidden curriculum can subtly instil students with imperial ideologies, whilst teaching them to be subservient to authority. Within the hidden curriculum, certain narratives are explicitly taught, while others are actively omitted – this creates a selective history which can perpetuate a colourblind approach to education. This form of hidden power within education policymaking could reinforce invisible power, covertly manifesting unconscious biases among students. As Pennant (2022) notes, the consequences of this have been profound, with black female students facing racist stereotypes within the classroom, as well as facing low teacher expectations.

British Values and the Continuation of Hidden Power

There is an underlying assumption in policymaking that the status quo must be maintained (Gillborn 2009). The 1988 ERA has been the dominant education policy for the last 40 years and has continued to uphold traditional values, especially in the national curriculum. David Cameron's Coalition Government maintained traditional, imperial values through his education policies. For example, "British Values", following on from the "Prevent" strategy in 2011, aimed to emphasise democratic principles within the education system (Department for Education 2014). The selection of which values are deemed "British" acts as a form of hidden power, subtly imposing a specific cultural framework, while marginalising others. This

agenda-setting normalises certain values and worldviews at the expense of others, thus reinforcing dominant, imperial ideology. However, as argued by the Department for Education and Lord Nash (2014), the initial aim of the policy was to "ensure children become valuable and fully rounded members of society who treat others with respect and tolerance, regardless of backgrounds" – suggesting that British values were framed as a mean to foster inclusivity, democratic principles, and societal cohesion. It is imperative to note, however, that framing the promotion of these values under the guise of protecting schools from extremism served to further alienate minority communities. Ironically, "British Values" were introduced without proper public discourse or a pragmatic democratic process, emerging as a byproduct of counter-terrorism policy (Farrell 2023). Moreover, Farrell (2023) argues that The Coalition Government "weaponised Anglican Christianity as a symbol of British values and national identity" by equating British Values with Christian values (p. 44). While they attempted to promote 'tolerance' of other religions and beliefs they were implicitly pushing their own traditional, Christian values onto the curriculum – a form of hidden power (agenda-setting). Furthermore, Vincent (2019) posits that the British Values policy excludes and marginalizes those who do not conform to these constructed norms – this can reinforce racism and racial hierarchies within education. Ergo, using British values as a form of hidden power legitimises racism within education policymaking. This policy, therefore, epitomises how seemingly inoffensive policies can subtly create unequal power dynamics.

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Claimed Spaces, Grassroots Resistance and Dismantling Hidden Power

Despite the ubiquity of hidden power in shaping policymaking, spaces for resistance and change have emerged, particularly through "claimed" spaces of power within education. These spaces represent grassroots efforts to challenge dominant ideologies and promote more inclusive curricula (Cox 2011), like The Black Curriculum. Founded in 2019, the Black Curriculum actively challenges Eurocentric education policy (such as the national curriculum) in a claimed space (The Black Curriculum, n.d.). This direct action is crucial in education policy as it gives an opportunity for marginalised voices to be heard. However, the national curriculum does include opportunities to teach about empire and colonialism in history[1]. Therefore, there has been an effort to include diverse histories and address historical injustices. Yet, these topics are listed as "non-statutory", this means that schools have the choice on how much emphasis they place on these topics – or whether to teach them at all. Here, the visible power of curriculum design is undermined by the hidden power of selective implementation, affording schools the option to avoid uncomfortable histories. This demonstrates how hidden power operates within education policymaking by allowing dominant narratives to persist (Cox 2011). Furthermore, this selective inclusion of history reflects how invisible power shapes

[1] This would be under the "ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901" section of the history curriculum, where the Transatlantic Slave Trade is given as an example of what to study (Department for Education 2014)

societal norms and values by determining what is considered important knowledge. As argued by Gillborn (2008), this omission perpetuates a Eurocentric worldview that marginalises Black contributions to British History – reinforcing imperial ideologies. Hidden and invisible power thus work dialectically to legitimise dominant ideologies.

Given the pervasive influence of hidden power in shaping education policy and perpetuating racial hierarchies, future reforms must actively work to dismantle these structures. For example, a policy that teaches and encourages racial literacy among staff and students. Racial literacy refers to the skill of understanding "the ways in which race and racisms work in society", while also having the capacity and means to challenge racism within yourself and others (Joseph-Salisbury 2020, p. 7). This policy could challenge hidden forms of power that have historically shaped the curriculum by explicitly acknowledging the complexities and nuances of the often-unspoken racial dynamics in education, decentring Eurocentric perspectives and allowing for a wider range of voices to be heard. Furthermore, understanding the colonial roots of racism will aid educators in understanding the importance of more diverse and inclusive education policy, specifically the national curriculum (Joseph-Salisbury 2020, p. 7).

Another effective education policy could be to diversify the national curriculum. Joseph-Salisbury (2020, p. 12) suggests creating an anti-racist curriculum that involves "showing how the history of modernity is shaped by racism, coloniality and white supremacy". This can challenge the hidden curriculum and agenda-setting enacted within education policymaking by providing staff and students with the tools to critically analyse colonial power within UK institutions whilst receiving efficient and accurate race education. However, implementing such curricula changes could face further protest due to the entrenched nature of hidden forms of power within education. Additionally, it is important to consider how these policies are implemented across various levels of power, especially if teachers are under-prepared to teach it or if a policy altering the national curriculum is not implemented in tandem with a racial literacy policy (Joseph-Salisbury 2020). But, while national policy changes are crucial, the influence of local initiatives and school-level organisation cannot be overlooked. Cox (2011) argues that political action within claimed spaces of power gives voices to minoritised and marginalised communities. Ultimately, it is a contingent, dynamic process and activists and researchers should have a level of flexibility when addressing forms of power in social issues and social change (Cox 2011).

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Conclusion

To conclude, the interplay between visible policy decisions, hidden agenda-setting, and invisible ideological influences creates a complex and nuanced web of power relations that reinforce imperial and racial hierarchies through the education system; hidden forms of power have been the most influential overall. Starting from the 1870 Education Act, hidden power in the form of imperial ideology has impacted the education policymaking process, legitimising racism, and racial hierarchy within the education system. This was further reified through proceeding education policies such as the 1988 ERA and "British Values".

Despite the institutionalisation of racism within education policy, there have been effective grassroots organisations aiming to decolonise the curriculum and education policy. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. The most effective way of creating this social change within education policy is through activism within claimed spaces of power, giving marginalised communities a platform and the capacity to effectively change education policy. These efforts to decolonise the curriculum would be enhanced by implementing a racial literacy policy for staff and students at schools so that they understand Britain's colonial history and the pervasiveness of racism within British institutions and are more confident in challenging institutional racism, racism within themselves and within others. Only then can we disrupt the

reproduction of inequality and foster a truly equitable education system in which anti-racist policies are at the forefront.

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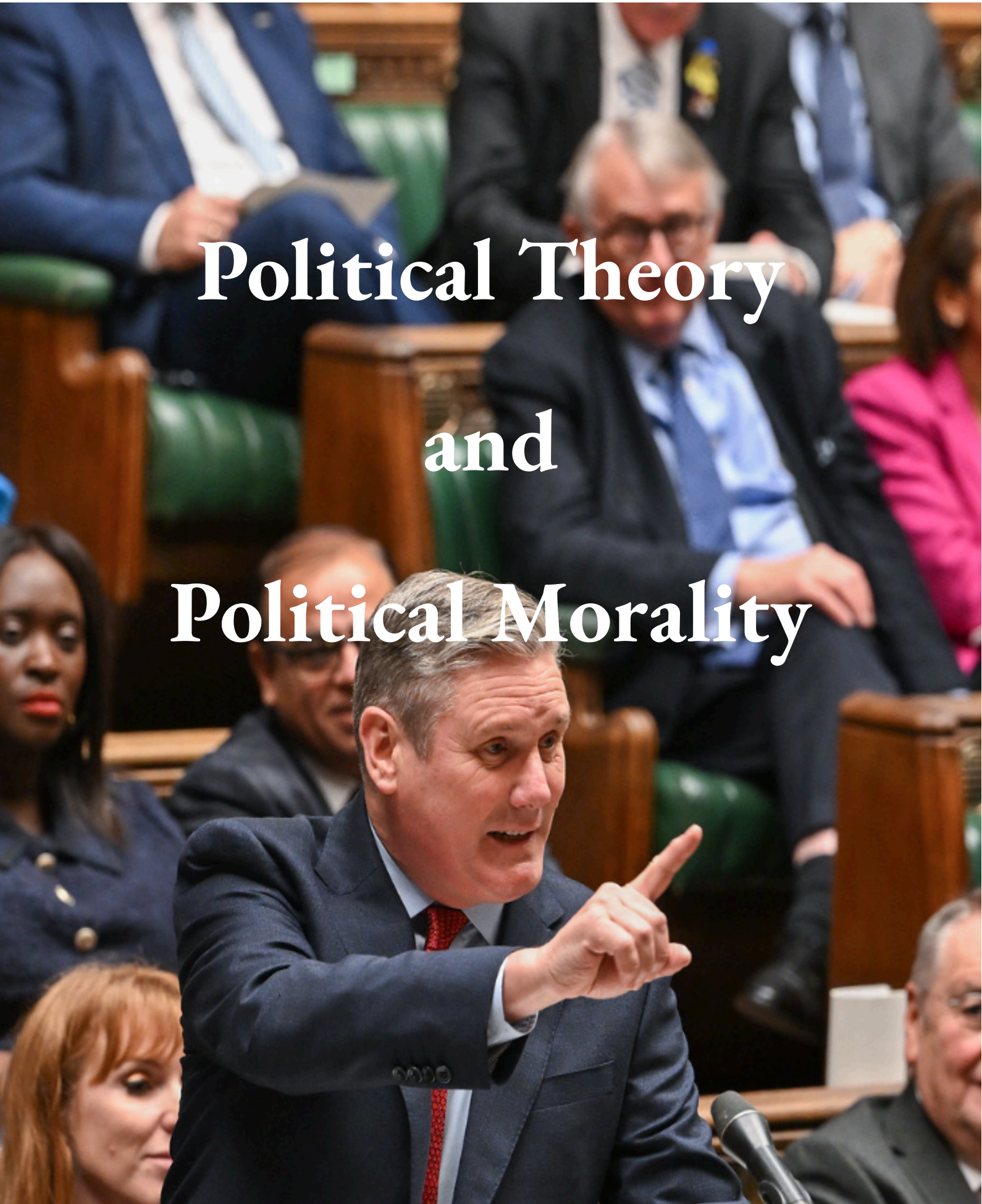

Political Theory and Political Morality

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The Role of Authority in Foucault's Concept of Parrhesia

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Abstract

This essay critically discusses Foucault's concept of Parrhesia – the Greek concept of fearless speech. In the book Fearless Speech (2001), Foucault argues that figures of authority cannot be parrhesiastes, since they are the ones who create the truth, and therefore cannot challenge it. This essay argues that this view is incorrect, and that truths expressed by authority should be viewed as equally as important as those truths presented by other members of society. This discussion of Foucault's concept of parrhesia is relevant to political theory debates, specifically discussions around political morality, as it raises questions of what truth is in the modern political climate; who creates the truth and whose speech truly matters?

Introduction

In his book Fearless Speech (2001), Foucault outlines the concept of parrhesia as being a form of frank and fearless expression of truth, often involving risk to oneself. This expression of truth centres around a commitment/moral duty to speak the truth openly, as this facilitates both accountability and transparency, which are fundamental democratic ideals in modern society. Foucault excludes the figure of the King from having the ability to use parrhesia due to the centrality of risk in his formulation of the parrhesiastes, as he believes that the King cannot risk anything. In this essay, I will examine the role of risk and imbalance of power in the

character of Foucault's parrhesiastes, arguing that they serve as modes of verification. I will use Socrates' view of parrhesia to propose that authenticity and alignment between logos and bios can also verify parrhesia and argue that, by invalidating the necessity of risk in parrhesia, there is no significant barrier to the King's ability to use parrhesia. I will demonstrate the importance of the King's ability to use parrhesia, and conclude that Foucault is wrong to argue that the King cannot use parrhesia on the basis of risk.

The Importance of Risk

In Foucault's formulation of parrhesia, the King cannot be a parrhesiastes due to the characteristic of risk. Foucault argues that the courage displayed in telling the truth creates a sense of sincerity that verifies the parrhesiastes; the fact that the parrhesiastes tells the truth despite the risk being posed to them demonstrates their commitment to and belief in that truth (Foucault, 2001, p. 15). Thus, to demonstrate the sincerity and courage that verifies the truth, Foucault views parrhesia as fundamentally linked to risk. Foucault interprets this risk as being manifested in imbalanced power dynamics between the parrhesiastes and the interlocutor. When critical truths expressed through parrhesia are posed to powerful figures, the parrhesiastes risk the wrath of the interlocutor should they decide not to participate in the parrhesiastic game. It is due to this assumed necessity of risk, and the view that risk can only be manifested through an imbalance of power, that Foucault (2001, p. 16) concludes "It is because the parrhesiastes must take a risk in speaking the truth that the king or tyrant generally cannot use parrhesia; for he risks nothing". Foucault's view that risk is essential to parrhesia is plausible - it is logical that an act of parrhesia involving risk would be more sincere than one that risks nothing. Moreover, it is self-evident why it is necessary to verify the parrhesiastes' credibility. However, risk itself is only necessary as an avenue to this verification. It is possible that other methods of verifying parrhesia could exist alongside the characteristic of risk. Yet, Foucault does

not include other modes of verification in his formulation of the parrhesiastes, and so unnecessarily excludes the King from being able to use parrhesia.

The Importance of Frankness and Authenticity

An alternative method of verification could take form in the alignment between logos and bios, as seen in Socratic parrhesia. Alignment between logos and bios means a consistency between someone's beliefs (logos), and the principles by which they live their life (bios). Socrates proposes that the truth of someone's words is demonstrated by their mode of living, which ought to align clearly with what they preach. By committing to the truth through their bios, the parrhesiastes "can use parrhesia and speak freely because what he says accords exactly with what he thinks, and what he thinks accords exactly with what he does" (Foucault, 2001, p. 101). Thus, alignment between bios and logos can be seen as another mode of verification. This method of verification does seem plausible; it logically follows that a parrhesiastes would implement what they preach into their bios if it did truly align with their beliefs, and so it is possible to verify whether they speak truthfully by observing their life. Furthermore, it is supported by Socrates' criticism of rhetoric. Rhetoric involves persuasion and influence as opposed to parrhesia which highlights frankness. Schlosser (2014) analyses the use of rhetoric in Plato's Gorgias, and Socrates' explicit criticism of rhetoric, to argue that rhetoric conflicts with parrhesia by being disingenuous. Embellishment of speech in the form of rhetoric breaks the alignment between logos and bios by fracturing the sense of frankness and authenticity in the logos. Thus, the prohibition of the use of rhetoric can be seen as an extension of verification through alignment between logos and bios. Given that frankness is already a key characteristic of Foucault's parrhesiastes, the concept of verification through frankness and authenticity is clearly compatible with the ideas of Foucault. Therefore, it does seem possible for a person to verify their truth not through risk taking, but in living in consistency with the truth they preach.

This method of verification is arguably more convincing than that of risk taking. When the parrhesiastes risks themselves, they express a temporary commitment to the truth, with potentially dreadful consequences. However, the commitment is singular. Moreover, the parrhesiastes has the potential to be protected by either public pressure, or the participation of the interlocutor in the parrhesiastic game. Contrastingly, in living their bios in alignment with the truth in order to verify their speech, the parrhesiastes dedicate their mode of existence to the truth, and so completely commits to it. Schlosser argues that this commitment to truth in the form of life entails an element of risk itself, "since these were now open to competitive scrutiny and legal accountability" (Schlosser, 2014, p. 96). Verification of truth through alignment between logos and bios can thus be seen as more convincing, as it entails complete commitment to the truth, and forces one to expose their life to public scrutiny in the name of the truth. Therefore, the characteristic of risk is not essential to the figure of the parrhesiastes as they can instead verify their commitment to the truth by aligning their logos and bios. Consequently, the King does not have to be excluded from use of parrhesia on the basis that he cannot take risk in telling the truth, when the role of risk can be fulfilled by alternative modes of verification.

The Imposing of the Truth

Foucault furthers his argument that the King cannot be a parrhesiastes by referring to the fact that, due to his position of power, the King imposes the truth on others. The imposing of truth upon others conflicts with Foucault's view of parrhesia as it means the parrhesiastes cannot criticise the established order (since they impose it), and so they do not risk themselves. The fact that the imposing of power is contradictory to the role of the parrhesiastes is redundant, since risk is not necessary to the role of the parrhesiastes, as demonstrated above. However, the argument that the King cannot be a parrhesiastes because he imposes the truth can further be

invalidated by arguing that Foucault's formulation of the parrhesiastes requires them to impose the truth. This becomes evident when examining the similarities between Foucault's and Plato's parrhesiastes. In Plato's formulation, the parrhesiastes' role as a moral guide is a foil to the role of the powerful who create legal rules; "Plato says that even in the city ruled by good laws there is still a need for someone who will use parrhesia to tell the citizens what moral conduct they must observe" (Foucault, 2001, p. 104). Though Plato's parrhesiastes does challenge imposed laws, they also impose a truth upon the demos in the form of moral guidance. Similarly, though Foucault's parrhesiastes does criticize the truth imposed by the powerful, they also attempt to shape the truth into something more akin to their conception of the truth through political activism. Thus, they impose the truth on the public through parrhesia, as their criticism aims to shape and change the demos. Therefore, it is unreasonable for Foucault to reject the King as a parrhesiastes on the basis that he imposes the truth, as it is evident that his formulation of the parrhesiastes requires the imposing of truth in order to be an effective catalyst for change.

Defenders of Foucault's view that imposing truth prevents one from becoming a parrhesiastes could appeal to the Cynic view of parrhesia by arguing that the Cynic's emphasis on self-authentication removes them from the community and prevents them from imposing the truth upon others. However, Cynic parrhesiastes do impose their truth upon others through visibility. The Cynic aversion to societal norms extends beyond their own independence, to a duty to compel others to reject the norms they perceive as perverse. Foucault (2001, p. 119) identifies the three modes of Cynic parrhesiastic practice as critical parrhesia, scandalous behaviour, and provocative dialogue. These practices all directly grapple with the demos and provoke them, rather than focusing on personal truth. Hull (2018, p. 259) argues that this provocative behaviour inherently serves to challenge, and shape, the demos - "the Cynic authenticates himself - and implicitly criticizes others for not authenticating themselves in this

way - not just by denying any need for privacy, but also by living entirely in public view". The centrality of the Cynic scandal, as emphasized by the three forms of practice Foucault identifies, inherently links Cynic parrhesia to the community. Imposing their criticism of societal norms on the community by "presenting them with the image of what they accept and value in thought, and at the same time reject and despise in their life" is essential to Cynic parrhesia (Hull, 2018, p. 258). So, it seems that even Cynic parrhesia fundamentally imposes the truth on others. Therefore, it is evident that these variations of parrhesia all necessarily include some element of imposing the truth. So, it is illogical to exclude the King from using parrhesia on the basis that he also imposes the truth.

Why It Matters that the King Can Use Parrhesia

The King's ability to use parrhesia is important as to ignore a truth told by the King in favour of falsehoods proposed by those in lower positions of power could expose society to anarchy. In Foucault's formulation of parrhesia, one can be in possession of the truth without being a parrhesiastes (Foucault, 2001, pg. 15). This distinction between possession of the truth and the ability to successfully communicate the truth makes it possible that the King could possess the truth and govern justly, yet would still be ignored in favour of ignorant or dangerous truths proposed by those in lower positions of power. Indeed, the Cynic view of parrhesia argues that "the masses understand that this man's ignorance, vulgarity, and sympathy are more useful to them than all the morals, wisdom, and antipathy of the distinguished man. With such a social order, it is true, a state will not be able to develop into perfection itself, but democracy will be best maintained in this manner" (Foucault, 2001, p. 80). As this quote illustrates, to fail to listen to the truths of the King because of his position prevents society from reaching a perfect state, yet is somehow considered favourable due to the threat to democracy. Though totalitarianism is dangerous, to disregard just truths in favour of useless or unjust truths based on position of power could be equally dangerous by resulting in anarchy or the failure of

society. Furthermore, the King's ability to use parrhesia does not necessarily result in totalitarianism, as the King can simply be one of many parrhesiastes within a society. Thus, it seems illogical that, should the King be correct or truthful, it necessarily follows that we should not listen to him because of his position in society. Therefore, the King's ability to use parrhesia is important for guiding society towards the truth.

Conclusion

I have argued against Foucault's view that a King can never be a parrhesiastes. I have demonstrated why the qualifications that have traditionally formed a barrier preventing the King from using parrhesia are not essential to the character of the parrhesiastes by identifying their function, and provided alternative methods that equally fulfil this function. I have also demonstrated why it is important to accept the King as being able to use parrhesia, as this prevents society from ignoring valid or useful truths due to their source. Thus, I believe the King should be accepted into the role of the parrhesiastes should his truth be beneficial and just, and should he live in accordance with this truth.

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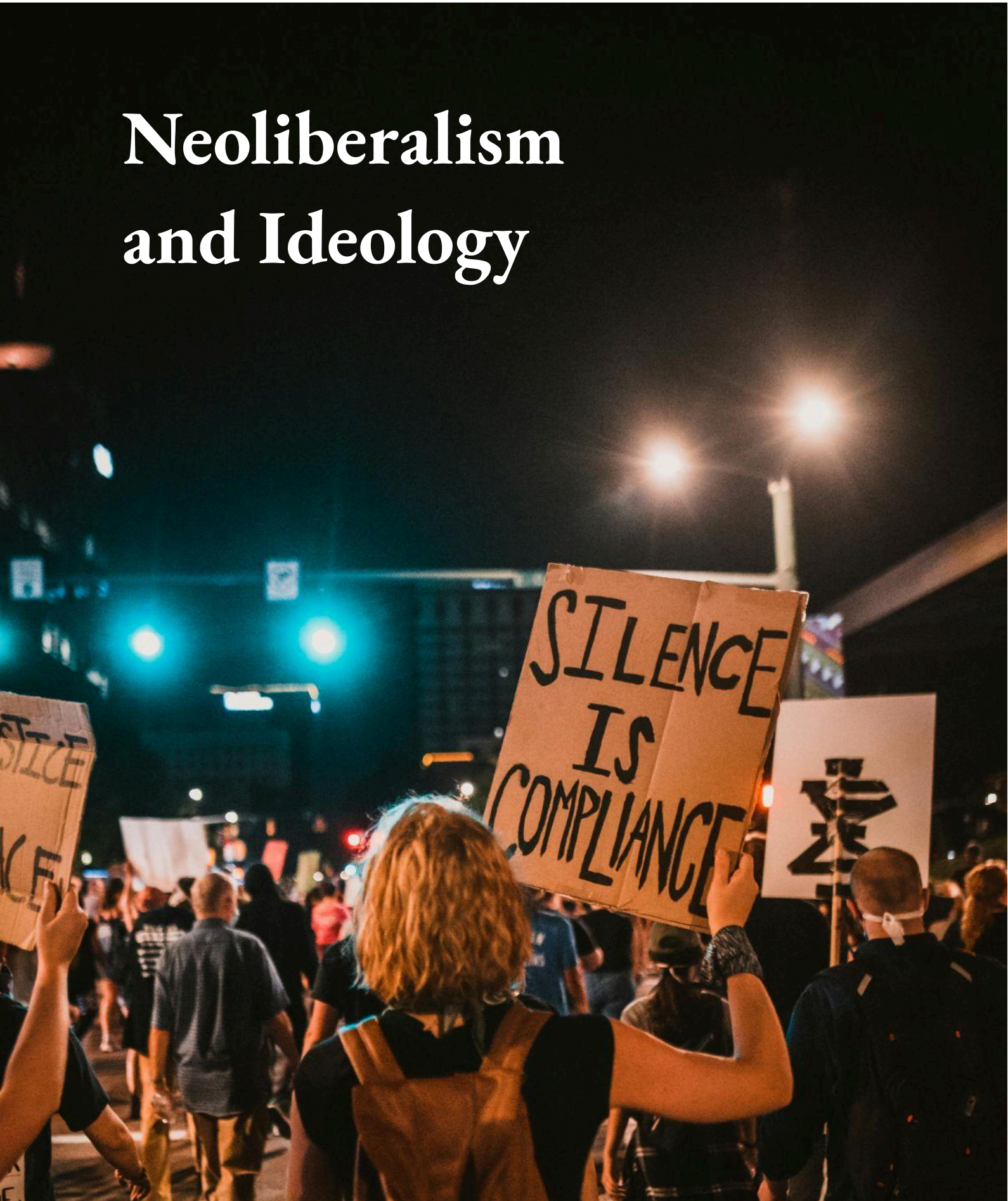
Neoliberalism and Ideology



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Neoliberalism in Dystopia: An Analysis of Neoliberalism and How The Hunger Games Illustrates Mechanisms of Ideology

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how neoliberal ideology maintains its dominance through internalised ideological mechanisms. Using the constant comparative method and a case study of *The Hunger Games*, it explores the roles of individualism, self-reliance, and the media in legitimising neoliberal ideology. It highlights the effects of neoliberal values, including weakening collective responsibility and depoliticising the public. Drawing on theorists such as David Harvey, Gramsci, and Althusser, it argues that neoliberal values are embedded in everyday structures. It concludes that individualism, self-reliance, and the media legitimise neoliberal ideology, as reflected in *The Hunger Games*. Ultimately, this work calls for greater media literacy and political engagement in contemporary democracies.

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has become a dominant ideological framework, shaping social norms and institutions in contemporary democracies (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). There is much debate over whether neoliberalism is better understood as a set of economic principles or as an ideology. This dissertation will examine what constitutes an ideology in order to determine whether neoliberalism fulfils the criteria. Drawing on the work of Harvey (2007), Brown (2015; 2017), and Piketty (2014), it argues that neoliberalism is in fact an ideology, before subsequently proceeding to analyse how neoliberalism is legitimised. I shall analyse the identified legitimising mechanisms - individualism, self-reliance, and media - which render neoliberalism the dominant ideology in contemporary democracies, illustrating these three dimensions through *The Hunger Games (THG)* as a case study. This dissertation will further show how dystopian fiction provides valuable insight into issues in contemporary democracies.

What is an Ideology?

Ideology can be broadly understood as a system of beliefs; however, Antonio Gramsci offers a foundational framework for understanding it as an active force that shapes the lives of individuals and their perception of the world, producing a worldview and 'common sense' that align with the core values of the ruling ideology (Bates, 1975, p. 251). Gramsci's central theory of ideology is the idea of hegemony (Bates, 1975, p. 352), whereby the ruling class secure the consent of the rest of the population, embedding its values as 'common sense,' making the ideological values appear natural (Bates, 1975, p. 352). Bates (1975, p. 352) articulates this: "Political leadership [is] based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularisation of the world view of the ruling class". This diffusion of the ruling class's worldview produces what Gramsci calls 'common sense', a term which refers to the

normalisation of these ideas, transforming this ideology's core values into a "natural view of the world" (Woolcock, 1985, p. 205).

In Gramsci's view, ideology is spread through civil society through institutions such as the media, government, and education (Woolcock, 1985, p. 206). These institutions disseminate and reinforce the ruling class' worldview, sustaining its authority and entrenching the ideology (Woolcock, 1985, p. 205). A core aspect of Gramsci's conception of ideology is that it acts as a force that normalises and justifies societal issues like inequality, framing them as accepted results of a "certain way of life" within the worldview (Woolcock, 1985, p. 204). Gwyn Williams (1960, p. 587) describes the idea of hegemony as "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional manifestation". Thus, through internalisation and normalisation, ideology is the active force that embeds and legitimises itself. Gramsci's framework helps to analyse how ideologies are legitimised.

Louis Althusser's structural conception of ideology is also useful to these ends. In the essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," he distinguishes between repressive state apparatuses, which function through coercion (such as the police and military,) and ideological state apparatuses, which operate through ideology (Althusser, 1971, p. 80). Given that my focus is on neoliberalism, the concept of the ideological state apparatus is particularly relevant. He explains that institutions like education and religious systems disseminate and reproduce the dominant ideology, thus embedding the ruling class' worldview into everyday practices (Althusser, 1971, p. 80). This is unique in democracies, where such dominance of ideology is not done by overt force but through naturalisation of thought. As Althusser (1971, p. 82) states, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices".

This view connects to Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Both thinkers argue that ideology is deeply embedded and reinforced within society and its institutions. Moreover, for both philosophers, the sustained dominance and legitimacy of the ruling class depends on the extent to which its ideology is perceived as common sense. Althusser and Gramsci thus provide a rich framework for understanding ideology to be an active and structural force which creates hegemonic discourse through institutions and society, rather than a mere set of ideas. Their theories show how ideology flows through society and is simultaneously internalised, legitimising the ruling class's ideology and maintaining its dominance. This foundation is essential for analysing neoliberal ideology in contemporary democracies.

Ideology vs Economic System, or Both?

Neoliberalism has been described as both an economic policy created in response to the financial crises of the 1970s, and as an ideology that reshapes society and its individuals (Harvey, 2007). These perspectives are not mutually exclusive; instead, neoliberalism relies on both. Economic policies that emphasise deregulation and privatisation become more acceptable when an ideological framework presents them as natural and rational. This section explores how neoliberalism is a comprehensive framework, where its ideological aims coexist with economic logic, drawing on Harvey (2007), Brown (2015; 2017), and Piketty (2014). .

David Harvey (2007, p. 2) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices". However, he argues that neoliberalism operates as a hegemonic discourse that shapes how individuals understand and interpret the world. He states, "It has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey, 2007, p. 3). Importantly, he shows how neoliberal ideology functions as a "system of justification and legitimation" to achieve class restoration (Harvey, 2007, p. 19). Thus, neoliberalism results not

solely as an economic logic but as a political project. In my view, Harvey's argument strongly aligns with Gramsci's theory of hegemony, demonstrating how ideology becomes embedded in creating 'common sense' (Martin, 2023). This shows the ideological nature of neoliberalism, highlighting the intersection between neoliberal economic policies and ideology.

Wendy Brown (2015) builds on this analysis. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, she argues that neoliberalism is neither solely a set of economic policies nor an ideology; neoliberalism operates on a deeper level, shaping perceptions as a "distinctive mode of reason" (Brown, 2017, p. 21). Aligning with Gramsci and Althusser, Brown highlights how neoliberalism is legitimised through state apparatus and by altering and normalising a worldview that becomes internalised as 'common sense' of individuals in contemporary democracies. Through this, neoliberal values like individualism and self-reliance become integrated into one's rationale, thus bridging the gap between economic policies and ideology.

Piketty (2014) further contributes to this analysis of the intersection of ideology and policy, contending that the belief in meritocracy justifies growing inequalities within contemporary democracies (Piketty, 2014, p. 65). He emphasises how certain narratives suggest inequalities result from individual effort and labour, deflecting structural causes, thus maintaining the system of ideology. He employs the example of high pay gaps, which are framed as 'earned' whilst often based on arbitrary factors like bargaining power (Piketty, 2014, p. 236). Whilst Piketty's work focuses on empirical data, he critically examines how neoliberal outcomes are justified through ideological narratives. This is integral for my discussion of how ideology and policy are interlinked and how neoliberalism must be acknowledged as an ideological endeavour.

Harvey, Brown, and Piketty thus show that neoliberalism must be understood as an intersection between economic policies and ideology. Policies such as deregulation, privatisation, and austerity are legitimised by the neoliberal ideological framework that presents these policies as natural and rational (Harvey, 2007). This interplay mirrors Gramsci and Althusser's theory of hegemony and ideological apparatus, demonstrating how neoliberalism becomes internalised as 'common sense.' Therefore, it is clear that neoliberalism is more than a set of economic principles and policies; it is a distinctive political theory (Machan et al., 2021). Its market logic coexists with normative aims, like reducing the welfare state and promoting self-reliance, confirming that it is inadequate to call neoliberalism an economic doctrine or ethos; it is a comprehensive framework (Harvey, 2007, p. 23).

How can we define neoliberalism as an ideology?

From this discussion, it is clear that neoliberalism as an ideology espouses core beliefs and values; this is how it creates a worldview and 'common sense'. I will now discuss the core values of neoliberalism, which will serve as a definition for this dissertation. Neoliberalism is grounded in the belief that liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills can best advance human well-being (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). This emphasises individualism, where individuals are viewed as singular political units (Harvey, 2007, p. 176). Individualism fosters self-reliance, which is a core tenet of neoliberalism: indeed, responsibility for oneself, rewarding individual initiative and endeavour, is central to the competitive environment created by neoliberal ideology (Brown, 2017, p. 37). Margaret Thatcher said, "Who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women (...) people look to themselves first" (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 1987). This encapsulates neoliberalism's belief in individualism and self-reliance, framing poor outcomes as personal failings rather than structural issues. This neoliberal rationality makes society individualistic through neoliberal norms and environments

(Brown, 2017, p. 36). Moreover, neoliberalism champions competition as central to growth and development. Brown (2017, p. 36) shows this value of neoliberalism through job applications and university scholars, framing humans as "entrepreneurial and investment capital". Here, market values enter all aspects of life. The state's role is to maintain competition, individualism, and self-reliance, aided by the media in disseminating these values. Thus, neoliberalism is an ideology that promotes individualism, self-reliance, and competition by framing individuals as singular atoms in society.

How is neoliberalism legitimised?

Despite growing evidence of neoliberalism's harmful consequences, it remains dominant in contemporary democracies. Research shows that with the rise of neoliberalism, both as an economic model and ideology, economic inequality has increased, and social and cultural rights have eroded (Macnaughton & Ahmed, 2023, p. 105). In Australia, a study on the impacts of neoliberalism found that income inequality has risen definitively since the 1970s, a period defined by its shift to neoliberal policies, such as reduced welfare (Western et al., 2016, 413). It also found that neoliberalism fosters an "atomised society" and a "breakdown of interpersonal trust" (Western et al., 2016, p. 402, p. 409). Their findings are supported by a Global Health Report from 2022, which states that "the bottom 50% of adults in the global wealth distribution together accounted for less than 1% of total global wealth at the end of 2021...while the top 10% owns 82% of global wealth" (Macnaughton & Ahmed, 2023, p. 105; Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2022). From this, we see how neoliberalism erodes community and societal values. In an environment shaped by neoliberal ideology, competition displaces solidarity, and collective responsibility is overshadowed by individualism. Nevertheless, neoliberalism maintains its legitimacy, is implemented through policy, and is internalised by individuals. The contradiction between adverse outcomes and the sustained

dominance of neoliberalism highlights how the ideology succeeds as a legitimised discourse. This raises the question: how has neoliberalism maintained its legitimacy despite its damaging effects? Understanding these mechanisms reveals how it endures. This section examines how neoliberal values are legitimised through individualism, self-reliance, and media, which disseminate, naturalise, and sustain neoliberalism.

Individualism within neoliberalism is multifaceted. It champions individual freedom, prioritising individual action over collective responsibility (Harvey, 2007). Gramsci's theory of ideology connects to how this idea becomes accepted as 'common sense' and how prioritising the individual becomes natural. Internalised by the public, individualism undermines collective responsibility, and shifts blame for social issues onto individuals. This view seems intuitive but is deeply ideological and aligns with neoliberal market logic, given that self-reliance is a crucial element in framing individuals as solely responsible for their well-being and success. People are viewed as 'human capital', expected to continuously improve and refine themselves (Adams et al., 2019, p. 195; Brown, 2017, p. 10). This ideological element seeps into welfare and healthcare, presenting systemic issues as personal shortcomings (Harvey, 2007, p. 65). Neoliberalism thus promotes the need for self-reliance, creating an illusion of self-sufficiency (Harvey, 2007, p. 76). Critically, this narrative prioritises responsibility for one's actions and reduces empathy and support for welfare policies (Adams et al., 2019, p. 196). As such, Neoliberalism is legitimised through the internalisation of individualism and self-reliance, which aligns with market logic, making neoliberal principles appear natural and legitimate. Individualism and self-reliance legitimise neoliberal ideology by concealing structural flaws. Individuals blamed for health or financial issues demonstrate the damaging influence of the extreme focus on self-reliance and individualism. Consequently, space for critical reflection is limited, with individualism and self-reliance legitimising neoliberalism as the only viable framework.

The media further entrenches neoliberal ideology by shaping public perception and constructing and disseminating narratives. Drawing again on Gramsci, the media constructs 'common sense' narratives. John Downing (2011, p. 150) notes that it manufactures "the consensus". Noam Chomsky (1988) contends that the media serve the interests of privileged groups, which in Gramscian terms are the ruling class. The purpose of the media is to "inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate (...) society" (Chomsky, 1988). The choice of topics and framing of issues align with and reinforce the ruling class's interests, legitimising neoliberalism. Promoting neoliberal ideals like self-reliance and depoliticising issues like poverty disguises systemic flaws and frames issues like inequality as inevitable. This selective reframing actively creates hegemonic discourse, as it is manufactured through the media.

Through this, the media operates as an ideological institution, legitimising and shielding neoliberal ideas from scrutiny. As of 2022, just six companies controlled 90% of US media (Nalbandian, 2022). As media ownership is concentrated and privatised, output aligns closely with business interests. AJ Liebling (1960) famously quoted, "Freedom of the press is limited to those who own one," highlighting the connection between ownership and content produced. Crucially, this concentration translates into an institutional bias, "self-censorship", which presents a specific worldview and reinforces the dominant ideology (Chomsky, 1988). Robert McChesney (2004, p. 18) notes that corporate media increasingly focus on "fluff" and celebrity news, distracting from substantive political discussion, with Downing (2011, p. 150) similarly observing that news often needs to be entertaining to "survive in the market". Promoting individualism and self-reliance aligns with neoliberal values, presenting them as natural and inevitable. By leaving little room for critique and amplifying ideology-aligned narratives, the media fortifies neoliberalism's hegemony.

In summary, neoliberalism promotes individualism and self-reliance and overall champions personal responsibility. These values frame dependence on state resources as a personal failure, justifying neoliberal policies and obscuring systemic root causes of widespread issues. The media constructs and broadcasts narratives reinforcing these ideals, entrenching neoliberal ideology. Individualism, self-reliance, and the media are mechanisms that reinforce and legitimise neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse. Their interconnectedness sustains neoliberalism's dominance by making its goals and principles appear natural and inevitable. I will now move on to the case study section, examining how these dimensions manifest in *The Hunger Games*.

Case study of *The Hunger Games*

I will examine *The Hunger Games* (*THG*) as a political case study illustrating key mechanisms of neoliberal ideology, focussing on individualism, self-reliance, and media influence. Fictional works offer valuable lenses for illustrating and analysing political and ideological systems. In this instance, I will be employing *THG* as my study. Others have utilised dystopian literature for political analysis, such as *1984* by George Orwell, which is used to analyse authoritarian governments (Tyner, 2007). Tyner (2007, p. 130) argues that dystopian literature offers a unique lens for examining themes like ideology, power, and resistance, whilst Khaghaninejad (2015, p. 92) contends that literary analysis is inherently political and can provide a way of understanding real-world political realities. In addition, Frame (2019) postulates that the media is a product of its political and cultural context.

THG was written in 2008, thus coinciding with the 2008 global financial crisis, which highlighted several flaws in neoliberal policies, raising issues with wealth concentration among

the elite and widespread precarity (Jaques, 2016). Frame (2019, P. 2) suggests that *THG* embodies this context, reflecting the logic of neoliberalism and its legitimising mechanisms. He further proposes that dystopian fantasies should be treated as historical fiction, given that they offer narratives of present-day ideology and reality (Frame, 2019, p. 17). As such, *THG* provides a valuable medium through which cultural attitudes and dominant values are reflected, offering an opportunity for ethical reflection. Although fictional works do not offer empirical representations of real-world dynamics, they do offer powerful illustrative case studies of ideology in its most extreme form. *THG* is, therefore, an advantageous subject for studying how neoliberal mechanisms operate. As a cultural product, I believe literature can reach broader audiences differently than academic work, providing powerful opportunities for practical political theory. For example, the *THG* series has sold over 100 million copies, showing how fictional books can reach broad audiences and thus are an important point of study (Pereira, 2018).

To execute this case study, I will first provide an overview of *THG*, then define and conceptualise the mechanisms of neoliberalism, operationalise these concepts, and compare the three mechanisms - individualism, self-reliance, and media - in *THG* and neoliberal democracies. This study employs the constant comparative method to analyse how *THG* illustrates these legitimising mechanisms. This method allows me to identify and compare themes within the novel to understand the legitimising mechanisms of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is legitimised by individualism and self-reliance, with the media playing a pivotal role. By approaching *THG* as a case study, I can examine these ideological mechanisms of neoliberalism in an exaggerated yet recognisable form, comparing their portrayal in the novel and neoliberal democracies. *THG* is a thought experiment revealing specific ideological trends pushed to the dystopian extremes. I do not claim that *THG* directly represents a neoliberal society, but it exposes neoliberalism's core assumptions and contradictions.

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THG follows 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen, living in a dystopian nation of Panem, where the authoritarian Capitol controls 12 districts. Every year, two tributes from each district must compete in the televised Hunger Games, a fight to the death designed to entertain the Capitol and assert dominance over the districts. Tributes quickly become 'fan-favourites' and are treated as celebrities, more so if they emerge victors. Victors are promised wealth and glory. From the impoverished District 12, Katniss volunteers for the Games to protect her younger sister. Skilled in hunting and survival, Katniss has to navigate both the physical dangers of the arena and the media spectacle that manipulates the life-and-death outcomes. The novel explores themes of control, inequality, and spectacle (Collins, 2011).

Individualism in *THG*

The story's main event, The Games, is a televised gladiator-style fight to the death with the promise of wealth and success to the winning tribute (Collins, 2011). The Games normalise competitive individualism, promoting personal survival over all else, framing one's continued existence as a personal success or failure. Evidently, this reinforces the neoliberal logic of prioritising the self. Alliances form but are fragile and often betrayed, underscoring the narrative of placing the self before the collective. Katniss' victory is celebrated as 'earned', and she becomes a celebrity, masking the rigged nature of The Games, where the Gamemakers intervene and manufacture obstacles to enhance the spectacle. Katniss's success highlights skills she developed under hardship, such as her hunting skills due to food scarcity in her home district (Collins, 2011, p. 8). This supports the myth of self-made success despite significant systemic oppression and obstacles. Hence, promoting individualism shifts scrutiny away from the Capitol and sustains its ideological dominance. Both Panem and neoliberal democracies promote individualism to maintain the dominance of a neoliberal ideology. Portraying success

or failure as personal responsibility shifts blame from institutions to individuals and obscure structural obstacles while celebrating individual success (Harris, 2021). The competition between districts mirrors real-world precarity, where effort is the determinant of success, overlooking the role of systemic privilege or obstacles.

Self-reliance in *THG*

In the arena, Katniss's survival entirely depends on her abilities, exemplifying self-reliance. Neoliberal ideology similarly emphasises self-reliance over dependence on the state, illustrated by the rollback of welfarism in the UK since the 1970s (Harvey, 2007). The Games institutionalise self-reliance in a competitive environment where it is every person is for themselves. Alliances are temporary and eroded by fear of relying on others. This makes Katniss' journey unique in the story, as she begins alone but comes to value the ability to work with others to survive, whilst others begin in alliances, which they eventually break to survive alone. The system of Panem and the objective of The Games is to fracture solidarity and fragment society, mirroring neoliberalism's subsequent erosion of collective solidarity and trust (Harvey, 2007, p. 23). As Brown (2017, p. 37) states, neoliberalism tasks individuals with "being responsible for themselves in a competitive world of other human capital". Therefore, the narrative of self-reliance reinforces the Capitol's values and power.

Media in *THG*

In Panem, the Games are the ultimate spectacle, where the Capitol controls the 'airwaves.' Capitol media censors dissent, manipulates public perception, and echoes the elite's message (Collins, 2011). Media coverage of the Games focuses on personal storylines, such as Katniss' relationship with Peeta (the boy tribute from District 12), distracting from the brutal reality of the Games. Consequently, the media is crucial for sustaining the Capitol's dominance.

Entertainment and celebrity culture distract from the unjust nature of the Games and Panem's broader struggles. Moreover, the media portrayal of the Games encourages the audience to focus on individual tributes rather than acknowledging the oppressive system (Collins, 2011).

The role of media in Panem mirrors that of media in contemporary democracies, where it is not neutral but shapes political discourse and reinforces dominant ideologies (Couldry, 2008, p. 28). The focus on the individual in the Games mirrors how real-world media focuses on celebrity culture, detracting from critical socio-economic discussions and analysis of institutions. For example, the Johnny Depp v. Amber Heard trial was noted by Michallon (2022) to have received more online attention than Roe v. Wade, demonstrating the media's preference for celebrity culture over substantive political discussions. The media, therefore, functions as a tool for maintaining dominance over discourse, reinforcing neoliberal ideological values in the process.

Case Study Conclusion

This case study aimed to explore how *The Hunger Games* (*THG*) illustrates the ideological mechanisms underpinning neoliberal ideology in contemporary democracies. Using the constant comparison method, I revealed that *THG* portrays a dystopian world and amplifies current neoliberal trends to dystopian extremes. *The Hunger Games* presents a world where individual competition, self-reliance, and media manipulation sustain an unequal system, mirroring real-world neoliberal structures. The annual Games entrench extreme competition; individuals are rewarded for survival whilst eroding collective resistance. This reflects how neoliberal ideology frames personal success as the result of individual merit. Systemic and institutional issues are obscured in Panem, in keeping with the neoliberal emphasis on individual problems rather than structural ones. Self-reliance is necessary for survival in Panem,

becoming an internalised logic, not a choice. Neoliberalism, both in *THG* and reality, relies on the media to manufacture consent and depoliticise the public, weakening solidarity by encouraging individualism and promoting self-reliance, reinforcing dominant ideology. Whilst *The Hunger Games* is constrained as a fictional work and cannot capture all real-world dynamics, it is a powerful and illustrative case study, acting as a mirror to real-world neoliberal democracies, exposing the ideological mechanisms of neoliberalism and urging greater media literacy and systemic critique.

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored how neoliberal ideology sustains dominance through economic practices and deeply internalised social and ideological mechanisms. Drawing on the work of numerous scholars, I showed how neoliberal values are embedded in everyday structures, legitimising inequality and reinforcing neoliberalism's hegemony. Focussing on individualism, self-reliance, and the media, I demonstrated how these mechanisms legitimise neoliberal ideology, framing social issues as personal failings, weakening collective responsibility and depoliticising the public. I illustrated how these mechanisms operate in a dystopian setting through a case study of *The Hunger Games*, where the glorification of individual competition, plus the need for self-reliance media spectacle, are prominent. As such, *The Hunger Games* can be said to mirror real-world neoliberal logic. Using the constant comparison method, I revealed how dystopian fiction exposes ideological mechanisms that resonate today. According to Gramsci's framework, neoliberalism is shown to be an ideology legitimised through such social mechanisms, visible in its most extreme form in dystopian literature. This dissertation contributes to the field by applying a political analysis of neoliberal ideology to fiction, offering new insight into its dominance. Scholars should further analyse fictional work in the future, with literature offering a unique and revealing tool for political study. This work suggests

critical media literacy, solidarity, and political engagement are crucial in contemporary democracies.

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Comparative Politics And The Far-Right

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An analysis and comparison of the influence of the far-right in France and Sweden between 2002 and 2017.

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Abstract

Reflecting the resurgence of far-right politics across Europe, the National Front (FN) and Sweden Democrats (SD) have entrenched themselves in the French and Swedish political landscapes. This paper analyses and compares how and why FN and SD became major political actors between 2002 and 2017, arguing both grew through the banalisation and diffusion of their ideas by the political establishment, normalising them within mainstream politics. Drawing from Pederson's thresholds of institutionalisation, Kallis' theory of 'diffusion', and Berezin's concept of 'banalisation', the analysis demonstrates how these mechanisms enabled FN and SD to cross thresholds of relevance, embedding them within national political discourses. It further compares institutional arrangements and cultural resonance, arguing majoritarianism and receptivity in France allowed FN greater success than SD. This paper concludes that far-right influence derives less from ideological moderation (dédiabolisation) by far-right parties than establishment legitimation, producing a cyclical dynamic of normalisation and institutional consolidation.

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Introduction

In 2002, National Front (FN) and Sweden Democrats (SD) were in quite different positions. The FN finished ahead of the establishment socialists in the first-round of the Presidential election, with reaction to this success ranging from perceptions of FN as simply an electoral nuisance (Auberger and Dubois, 2005) to a strong challenger (Bonnetain, 2004). In comparison, SD was further behind in representation; with some representation in local municipalities, but still distant from the halls of power, and still widely perceived as illegitimate and unacceptable by the political establishment (Oja and Mral, 2013). By 2017, FN and SD were established features and influential power-brokers of French and Swedish politics, emerging as the second-largest parties (FN by the presidential election, and SD based on election polling [Surel, 2019; Sennero, 2017; Sharman, 2017]). How then, did these parties rise in influence over these fifteen years?

In this paper, I shall analyse the growth in influence between the French National Front and the Sweden Democrats through Pederson's (1982) thresholds of institutionalisation, and the banalisation and diffusion of far-right ideology within France and Sweden (Berezin, 2006; Kallis, 2013), emerging as significant power-brokers and influences on the political discourses of both countries by 2017, as well as *dédiabolisation* ('de-demonisation' {Surel, 2019}). I shall argue the FN emerged as somewhat more influential than SD due to their countries' differences in constitutional arrangements and cultural norms. I have chosen to compare the influence of the far-right in France and Sweden due to these differences, to understand how far-right politics has entrenched itself. The 2002-2017 time-frame covers the most significant years of SD and FN's rises to prominence, beginning with significant elections for both parties, and ending with significant landmarks of influence for both parties.

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Ideologies of FN and SD

FN and SD's ideologies are quite similar, and are underpinned by similar values and ideas, which I shall describe briefly here where relevant for this paper. They rely upon nativist and exclusive-populist ideas–the French and Swedish 'natives' must come first in policymaking, and immigrants (and multiculturalism) pose a significant threat to the nation and its natives (Vahter and Jakobson, 2023). Furthermore, they position themselves as anti-establishment, and therefore I shall frequently demarcate between 'political establishment' and FN and SD throughout this paper (*ibid*). Significantly, SD are squarely neoliberal in their (sparse) economic policies, whereas FN has shifted from neoliberal to more interventionist under the premiership of Marine Le Pen (2012-present), with opposition to TNCs, financialisation and support for state-directed reindustrialisation (Mudde, 1999; Surel, 2019).

Thresholds of institutionalisation

For this paper, I shall employ two modified *thresholds of institutionalisation* by Pederson (1982) to understand the rise in influence of the far-right, underpinning how SD and FN have transformed themselves from minor parties into permanent fixtures in political institutions. Firstly: *the threshold of representation,* wherein a party is able to gain representation. In 2002, SD only penetrated the municipal level, and achieved the national threshold in 2010. FN are more complicated: a single representative in parliament until 2002, and achieving representation in the second-round presidential elections. They returned to parliament in 2012 and grew in 2017, whilst achieving representation in the second-round presidential elections again in 2017. Therefore, FN were in an ambiguous position to this threshold until 2012, when they consolidated themselves. Secondly, *the threshold of relevance:* party representation in government. However, in this analysis, I shall modify this threshold to instead refer to a party's ability to lead national political discourses. This is because both FN and SD espouse anti-establishment sentiments, thus presenting a façade of disinterestedness in collaboration

with the establishment (Elgenius and Rydgren, 2019) – so, to reach this threshold, a party need not control the executive, but instead control political discourses. How they achieved this threshold is key to my argument.

Processes of legitimation

In Sweden and France, these processes of political legitimation to reach different *thresholds* as described by Pederson rest on two different concepts: 'banalization' (Berezin, 2006) and 'diffusion' (Kallis, 2013), working hand-in-hand, referring to the process where the dialogues of the far-right are given increasing legitimacy by the political establishment ('banalised'), and then are adopted by the establishment ('diffused'). The end-product of these processes was the far-right reaching the *threshold of relevance* and establishing themselves as political thought leaders within the two countries between 2002 and 2017.

Oja and Mral (2013) provide a useful historiography of the rise of SD throughout the 2000s, showing how 'banalization' allows the far-right to be legitimated by the establishment, through a case-study of advertising. In preparations for the 2002 general election in Sweden, there was an almost blanket boycott of providing advertising space to SD, particularly in newspapers. Their justifications for this decision were viewing SD as illegitimate, racist, and even antithetical to Sweden as a free and tolerant country. However, they found as SD gained traction in the municipalities, the boycott began to erode–such that by 2010, newspapers still boycotting SD advertisements were rare. By 2010, justifications for ending the boycott painted SD as a party with perhaps excessive or wrong beliefs, but nonetheless legitimate and equally entitled to exposure as establishment parties, a process of 'banalising' the party by the political establishment and paving the way for the party to break the *threshold of representation* in the 2010 elections. Whilst these decisions were made by national newspapers, part of the political establishment and close to the hallways of power, as the chief vehicles of national political

discourses, they reveal wider implications of how the far-right were perceived. Elgenius and Rydgren (2019) expand on this historiography, discussing how the legitimation of SD by 2010 opened the doors for a paradigm shift in national discourses towards an SD-oriented conception of nationalism–one resting on nativist and exclusionary conceptions–allowing SD to reach the *threshold of relevance* by the mid-2010s. Thus 'banalization' of far-right ideologies was a key process in the rise of far-right influence in Sweden through their legitimation by the political apparatus between 2002 and 2010, facilitating their rise in influence between 2002 and 2017.

Regarding France, Berezin (2006) discusses the European Constitutional referendum in 2005 – one which FN positioned itself against due to its opposition to the European Union–and the riots later in the year. The victory of the 'no' vote was discussed by some establishment parties as a repeat of the 2002 election, or a 'Boomerang of April 21' (Berezin, 2006, p. 270) – further evidence of the growing influence of FN and far-right ideas therein. This was compounded with the rioting, mainly from those of Arab and African descent, throughout the projects of France later in 2005. Berezin notes a SOFRES poll (2005) concurrent with the riots, one showing how the discourses of FN were under the process of 'banalization': It found Le Pen's ideas had captured some 38% of the French demos, but most significantly, the number of people who considered Le Pen's ideas unacceptable was decreasing, and the number who perceived them as merely excessive was increasing–the 'banalization' of far-right discourses in effect, clear evidence of how FN was reaching the *threshold of relevance* and increasing its influence.

Similarly, the legitimation of these discourses within the political establishment was already in effect via 'diffusion': Chirac came out from the riots and "proclaimed a problem of "national identity" (Berezin, 2006, p. 72) – a move ceding ideological ground to FN. Two other events

show this process of 'diffusion' (Kallis, 2013): the 2004 ban on religious symbols in schools, and the landmark 2011 ban on full-face Islamic veils in public. Both decisions are significant, because they play directly into the discourses of FN of a confrontation between the laïcité (secularism) of France and Islam (Cremer, 2023) – furthermore, the growing conspicuousness of these laws, which pit laïcité versus Islam, gives credence to the idea FN discourses were growing in their influence in France. Notably, both decisions came from the establishment right-wing UMP governments, most in competition with FN for voters. The UMP's adoption of FN rhetoric shows these processes of legitimation and 'diffusion' by the mainstream establishment, bringing FN closer to the *threshold of relevance,* with growing influence.

We must also consider the role of *dédiabolisation* ('de-demonisation'), or the process whereby SD and FN have engaged in internal reforms to gain political legitimacy–or *legitimation from the inside*. FN has engaged in two rounds of *dédiabolisation*: the first round in 1997 (Berezin, 2006), and the second under Marine Le Pen in the early 2010s (Mayer, 2013); SD underwent the process in 1999. Both involved removing blatant fascist language and a party split purging the parties of their most extreme. The importance of intraparty legitimation through *dédiabolisation* is certainly relevant to the wider banalisation and diffusion of their ideas, especially considering Bjånesøy et al (2023) found that people are far more likely to accept far-right ideas if they are not explicitly connected to Nazism.

However, if the role of this intraparty *dédiabolisation* is to reach out to further cleavages and establish a Kirchheimerian catch-all populism–which the reduction of ideological baggage in FN and SD certainly point to (Kirchheimer, 1966; Surel, 2019; Elgenius and Rydgren, 2019) – then this should be viewed as secondary in increasing their influences to banalisation and diffusion because these processes by the establishment had already entrenched their ideologies into the electorate and demonstrably allowed for their brands of exclusive populism to become

the *lingua franca* of a significant cleavages of the demos–and therefore a catch-all strategy was unnecessary. Most importantly, we can already directly correlate the parties' increasing 'banalisation' to the electorate with the legitimising actions of the establishment, whereas their *dédiabolisation* strategies occurred earlier. Removing Nazi connotations has certainly aided the demos' acceptance of their discourses, but without external banalisation and diffusion, their influences would not be anywhere as impressive. Therefore, I argue the roles of institutional factors and intraparty *dédiabolisation* are relevant, but nonetheless less important than the roles of banalisation and diffusion by the political establishment in the rise of influence of the far-right in France and Sweden between 2002 and 2017.

Beauzamy (2015, p. 182) argued the "acceptability of FN ideology increases not because it has toned down to appeal to moderate voters, but because the whole space of political discourses has shifted to include FN themes and vocabulary". It is through the legitimation, 'banalisation' and 'diffusion' of FN and SD discourses in France and Sweden that their political apparatuses themselves were forced to move to the right to accommodate them. Through Pederson's thresholds, the *thresholds of representation* and *thresholds of relevance* work in tandem with one another – when a far-right party's *threshold of representation* increases, the compensatory strategies adopted by the political establishment–of 'banalisation' and 'diffusion' whether wittingly or not–work to increase their *thresholds of relevance*–creating a cyclical process elevating the influence of far-right parties in France and Sweden between 2002 and 2017.

The process of banalisation, legitimation, and diffusion of far-right discourses in France and Sweden has the clear and instrumental role of increasing their influences through wider support of their ideologies in the demos–but it also increases their influence through positioning them as thought leaders to the demos, particularly when their ideologies begin to 'diffuse' into the political establishment. Bezerin (2006) provides a particularly transparent

example of this process from the 2005 riots: in response to the riots, when Sarkozy declared a problem of "national identity" within France, a discourse playing directly into the hands of FN, Le Pen was able to declare he had "said it", positioning himself as a political thought leader for a majority of the demos. As far-right discourses were 'banalised'–moving from labels of unacceptable and illegitimate to excessive but legitimate–both FN and SD were able to boast as the first parties to openly address the issues of immigration, or of multiculturalism, or of globalisation (Beauzamy, 2015), issues the out-of-touch establishment only now was realising. Therefore, the processes of 'banalisation' and 'diffusion' by the political establishment have the added effect of playing into the far-right as thought leaders to the demos, increasing their influence even further in France and Sweden between 2002 and 2017.

Institutional and cultural factors

I shall now discuss the role of institutional and cultural factors, and compare how they affected the rise of influence of FN and SD in France and Sweden between 2002 and 2017, and why this leads to FN having more influence than SD, although they were both major fixtures of their respective countries' political landscapes by 2017.

Perhaps the most important institutional factor is the electoral system and its effects on the paths taken by FN and SD to reach *thresholds of representation* and *thresholds of relevance*. France employs a more majoritarian two-round first-past-the-post election system for its legislative and presidential elections, which often leads to only two major parties, whilst Sweden employs a more consensual proportional-representation system–one which is characterised by more parties with lower vote-shares (Lijphart, 1984). For SD, this resulted in a continuous increase in representation after breaking the *threshold for representation* in 2010, and thereby the greater and greater legitimation of their ideas, and growing their *threshold of relevance* in the aforementioned cyclical pattern. The relationship with France's more majoritarian system is

more complicated for FN, and can be best described as hindering the party *until it didn't*: whilst they were unable to gain major and proportionate (both to their vote-share and their *relevance*) representation in parliament, they were able to break through to the second-round and gain a third of the voteshare in 2017 – twice their 2002 result – evidence FN were one of the two major parties, and thus the majoritarian French system was now working to their advantage. Their vote-share was also higher than that of SD's polling under a proportional system (Surel, 2019; cf. Sennero, 2017; Sharman, 2017). Therefore, institutional arrangements help explain why support for FN is higher than for SD.

The other significant factor in considering the rise of the far-right is the translatability of their ideologies to the general demos. FN presents a broader programme than SD, and one more economically populist than the neoliberalism of SD since Marine Le Pen's party leadership – SD are sharply focused on immigration, to the degree they come close to a single-issue party (Mudde, 1999). Given the significant connections between poor economic circumstances and support for the far-right (Dehdari [2022, p. 2] even finds a correlation of 0.17-0.45 new SD voters for every factory closure in some Swedish constituencies) – then the sparser economic commitments of SD as well as their stronger neoliberal commitments help explain their lower levels of political influence by 2017 (de Lange, 2007). Furthermore, the French demos appears predisposed to more xenophobic tendencies: van der Valk (2003) suggests racist tendencies are more common in France, and IPSOS (n.d.; as cited in Surel, 2019) finds France worst for overestimating its Muslim population of surveyed countries. Indeed, there is no correlation between votes for FN in France and the number of migrants in an electoral constituency (Beauzamy, 2015) – but this correlation *does* exist in Sweden (Dehdari, 2022) – suggesting greater xenophobia. Therefore, the greater prominence of FN versus SD between 2002 and 2017 may be due to greater disposition to xenophobia in France. As FN and SD have a leading role in stoking xenophobic discourses within national political conversation, these differences

could be an indication FN has embedded itself deeper than SD within their respective countries, suggesting higher levels of influence for the far-right in France compared to Sweden between 2002 and 2017.

Conclusion

In conclusion, between 2002 and 2017 both National Front and Sweden Democrats have experienced a massive growth in influence in France and Sweden, although SD wields less influence. I have considered this rise in influence through the perspective of Pederson's thresholds of institutionalisation to mark their growing influence, and have argued this growth in influence is primarily due to the legitimation of these far-right parties and their ideas by the political establishment through the 'banalisation' of their ideas and 'diffusion' of them across the political landscape–creating a cycle of breaking *thresholds of representation* and of *relevance*. Whilst internal 'banalisation' through *dédiabolisation* has been relevant, it is a secondary factor. Furthermore, I argue institutional arrangements (chiefly electoral system) as well as the translatability of their economic and cultural discourses to the French and Swedish demos help to explain why FN have captured more of the demos and held more influence than SD throughout the 2002-2017 period.

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