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# The Problematics of Gender for Aviation Emergency Communication during an Inflight Emergency: A Case Study

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**Abstract:** Due to the rarity of female pilots, aviation communication is typically conducted in a single-gender environment. The role of gender in interactions during inflight emergencies has not yet been adequately explored. This single case analysis uses a qualitative approach based on conversation analytic transcripts to investigate how gender may be relevant either explicitly or implicitly in radio transmissions between flight crew and Air Traffic Control (ATC) personnel, as well as internal ATC phone interactions as participants work to handle an inflight emergency. This incident involved a female pilot and a male copilot, thus providing a naturally occurring rare event to explore the potential relevance of gender. The analysis shows that explicit references to gender are limited to occasional asymmetrical use of gendered address terms and gendered pronouns. Participants also used interactional formulations that—while not explicitly gendered—have been associated in previous research with gender differences in interaction, for example, the use of indirect forms of requests or complaints, actions that imply inferences about the emotional state of participants, or possible confusion over the identity of the pilot given the transitions between male and female sounding voices speaking on behalf of the plane. The findings are discussed in terms of implications for how gender differences can impact aviation communication during emergency incidents.

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Previous research has shown that inflight communication problems can be a factor in accidents, and effective communication can facilitate the successful resolution of incidents in flight (e.g., Cushing 1994; 1995; Jones 2003; Federal Aviation Administration 2006; Howard 2008). Due to the rarity of female commercial pilots, who constitute only about 5% of pilots (Gorlin and Bridges 2021), aviation communication is typically conducted in a single-gender environment, and there are correspondingly very few women pilots in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) database of accidents and incidents. The role of gender in inflight interactions has not yet been adequately explored.

The theoretical perspective relied on for this analysis is the ethnomethodological conversation analytic approach. The ethnomethodological perspective directs our attention to the procedures people use to accomplish social action and social organization (Garfinkel 1967). This single case analysis uses a qualitative approach based on conversation analytic transcripts and sequential analysis to investigate how gender may be relevant either explicitly or implicitly in radio transmissions between flight crew and Air Traffic Control (ATC) personnel as they work to handle an inflight emergency. In addition, internal ATC telephone interactions regarding the flight are analyzed. Southwest Airlines Flight 1380 experienced an emergency in which the plane safely landed after experiencing loss of one engine, injury to the aircraft, and fatal injuries to one passenger (Stack and Stevens 2018; Shults 2019). This incident was unusual because the captain of the flight was a female pilot; the co-pilot was male. This incident thus provides a naturally occurring rare event to explore the potential relevance of gender.

## Literature Review

### Gender/ing, Language, and Communication

Earlier studies of gender in social interaction show how gender is socially constructed and study numerous ways an interactional style is often tied to gender (e.g., see Speer and Stokoe 2011). People do gender via their actions and choices about how to present themselves (West and Zimmerman 1987). Schegloff (1997) further argues that instead of assuming that gender is relevant for every interaction, analysts must show how it is procedurally relevant in a given exchange (see also Weatherall 2002). Previous conversation analytic studies have shown how participants can display an orientation to the relevance of gender through the use of gender-related terms or concepts or by topicalizing it (Hopper and LeBaron 1998; West and Fenstermaker 2002). There are also ways that gender can be implicitly relevant but not highlighted or focused on (e.g., Ochs 1992; Hopper and LeBaron 1998). These interactional asymmetries may be related to gender or other social roles or status differences that are relevant in the context. For example, in Tuccio and Garcia's (2020:54) analysis of how flight instructors interact with student pilots during inflight instruction, they note the connection between interactional choices and power differences between participants:

Directives (especially imperatives—Vine, 2009) can be a way of exerting dominance or control over another (Goodwin, 2002). Directives are often mitigated (Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013). In Goodwin's (2002) analysis of directives in children's interactions, she found that unmitigated directives assert power differentials between participants. Vine (2009) found that how directives were formulated varied with the

context in which they occurred and were related to social role and social status in the organizational setting she investigated, as well as to the purpose of the exchange.

Another conversation analytic study explored gender and interruptions in doctor/patient interaction and found that males made more intrusive interruptions than females and that male doctors interrupted female patients intrusively more than they interrupted male patients intrusively (Mohajer and Endut 2020).

Recent studies from a variety of methodological perspectives continue to find a wide range of differences in communication styles between genders. In a study of speech emotion recognition by artificial intelligence, Costantini and colleagues (2022) found that it was more challenging for the systems to categorize speech produced by different genders than it was to categorize people speaking different languages. “[T]he differences between male and female in expressing emotions are assessed as crucially relevant, possibly even more than cultural and phonetic differences between languages belonging to a similar cultural background” (Costantini et al. 2022:11). Andy, Sherman, and Guntuku’s (2022) study of how males and females constructed Twitter posts about loneliness showed that the females’ posts tended to focus on emotions, while the males’ posts tended to focus on trust and relationship problems. Hollander (2001) argues that perceptions of vulnerability are tied to our conceptions of being female. Gleason (2020) conducted an automated analysis of Supreme Court arguments and found that the success of the speaker was related to linguistic choices consistent with gendered norms. He found that male attorneys were rewarded for using less emotional language, and female

attorneys were rewarded for using more emotional language. Gleason’s (2020) work suggests that women working in male-dominated fields may be at a disadvantage if they break expectations about how women are supposed to communicate.

Gender and language become relevant for work, employment, and professions in several ways. Goldhammer, Malina, and Keuroghlian (2018) discuss the challenges nonbinary people have in obtaining medical care. They argue that medical personnel should not use conventional titles such as Mister, Miss, or Ms when greeting patients and should ask patients what pronouns they prefer. These recommendations are not only relevant to people who define themselves as nonbinary but reflect more general cultural shifts about how people think about and express their gender identities (see also Klein 2011). Hedegaard (2019) studied medical personnel interacting with patients and found that when patients did not follow stereotypically gendered norms, the staff interacted differently with them (more informally, less “professionally”). Hildenbrand, Perrault, and Rnoh (2022) found that female patients were more likely to feel they were treated dismissively by healthcare providers than male patients. Mavisakalyan’s (2015) meta-analysis of previous research on gender differentiation in languages around the world (such as gendered nouns or pronouns) showed a relationship with women’s labor force participation. Newberry-Koroluk (2018) argues that while the profession of social work is dominated by women in terms of the percentage of workers, it is not a workplace where women or women’s culture predominate. The relatively few males in the profession tend to be in positions of authority. This suggests that mere numbers alone are not sufficient to shape the culture of a profession.



Alvinus, Deverell, and Hede (2020) investigated how gender impacts communication in crisis management teams. They argue that “studies have also found that crisis communication is characterized by masculinization and militarization of civilian work processes where social change and new security threats challenge the civil crisis management system with demands for introducing military structures—work processes that assign high value to masculine norms” (Alvinus et al. 2020:274). Alvinus and colleagues (2020) note that while most crisis managers (e.g., police) are male, most crisis communicators are female. The “military” approach of the (typically male) crisis managers to solving the crisis was sometimes in conflict with the approach of the (typically female) crisis communicators to handling communication about the emergency. Those crisis communicators who were male and shared backgrounds with the crisis managers often had an easier time integrating into the work of the team. In general, male norms tended to dominate the culture of the crisis teams.

If these patterns hold in other professional contexts, such as aircraft/ATC interactions, there is a potential for problems when women are the minority in a profession. Pilots tend to be mostly male, supervised by males, and often influenced by military culture, so this field may also have a male culture (Ferla and Graham 2019; Yanıkoğlu, Kılıç, and Küçükönel 2020; Gorlin and Bridges 2021).

### **Inflight Crew and ATC Communication**

Previous research on air traffic communication has shown how official communication procedures can be functional for flight safety (Cardosi, Falzarano, and Han 1998). Routine plane/ATC communication protocols emphasize the use of scripted speech and

interactional routines that incorporate “call and response” models to assure that procedures and checklists have been followed (Nevile 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2006; Jones 2003; Howard 2008; Falzon 2009; Arminen, Auvinen, and Palukka 2010). These techniques are functional for radio communications that are audible to all planes within reach of the signal and avoid confusion as to who is being addressed, as well as an unnecessary distraction for others (Nevile 2001; Sanne 2003).

Nevile (2001) shows how inflight crew and ATC staff establish clarity as to who is performing which functions in the plane (e.g., captain vs. first officer, “pilot-flying” vs. “pilot-not-flying”). He notes that “[p]ersonal pronouns indicate which role participants are playing in a context where more than one role may be available” (Nevile 2001:59). Pronouns can work to display a connection of a turn to prior talk. For example, Nevile (2001) shows how pilots can convey whether they are acting as the individual performing a specific role or acting as part of a crew through singular or plural pronouns.

Garcia (2016) used conversation analysis to analyze interaction during an inflight emergency. She found that while scripted interactions worked well for routine situations, once the emergency began call signs were often omitted, and sentential grammar was more often used instead of truncated, “positional” grammar, and a dyadic conversational exchange could occur between the ATC and the plane. Once the emergency was announced, other planes in the sector who could hear the communications about the emergency would know that these utterances were between the ATC and the flight having the emergency rather than to them (Garcia 2016). In almost all of the emergency incidents posted on the FAA website, all of the participants were males.

Given previous research in a variety of contexts on gender differences in communication, the question as to whether or how gender may impact aviation communication should be addressed, in particular, whether gender becomes more relevant, visible, or consequential in the portions of the interactions that use hybrid/conversational mode as opposed to scripted routine talk.

### **Previous Research on Gender and Aviation Communication**

Much of the previous research on gender in aviation communication was published during the 1990s and early 2000s and focused on issues such as how gender impacts the treatment of flight attendants (Hochschild 1983; see also Murphy 1998), the effect of the gender of automatic voice warnings on cockpit crews' perceptions and responses to those warnings (Arrabito 2009), or how changing expectations about the authority of the pilot can challenge the masculine identity that is tied to that organizational role (e.g., Ashcraft 2005). A recent paper by Zirulnika and Orbe (2019) studied how Black female pilots manage their identity and role in a job that may put them in a challenging position regarding norms and expectations created for an almost exclusively White male profession. Studies that explored aspects of communication compared factors such as the length and composition of instructions given by male and female pilots, but did not analyze talk in an interactional context in real-world situations (e.g., Fischer and Orasanu 1999; Vermeulen 2009).

There is a need for research on gender in aviation communication that examines naturally occurring interactions between the flight crew and ATC personnel as they do the work of flying the

plane and assisting from the ground. As a work setting that typically involves all-male personnel, aviation needs research that explores how women in traditionally male-dominated fields do their work and interact with the largely male personnel in the profession. The current paper works to fill that gap by analyzing ATC/plane interactions during an inflight emergency in which the plane had a female pilot and a male copilot. This analysis also includes telephone conversations between ATC personnel about the ongoing incident as they shared information and coordinated interactions with the plane.

In the next section of this paper, I will describe my data and methods and then present the analysis of transcripts of the audio recordings of the incident from the ATC personnel and the crew of Southwest Airlines Flight 1380. The paper concludes with a discussion of how gender can be implicitly or explicitly relevant in interaction in this workplace setting.

### **Data and Methods**

Conversation analysis is a qualitative approach to studying talk in its interactional context (Liddicoat 2007; Schegloff 2007; ten Have 2007; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008; Heritage and Clayman 2010; Garcia 2023). Conversation analysis provides direct access to the techniques and procedures participants use to shape their actions and interpret the actions of others (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks 1984; Heritage 1987). Participants display their interpretation of each others' actions in their responses to them, which enables analysts to make inferences about how participants enact their roles and do the work of the setting (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Heritage and Atkinson 1984).

Conversation analysis has a long history of research on how work is done through talk. Early studies of workplace interactions and talk in institutional settings explored how the procedures used to organize talk can be selectively implemented to accomplish the goals of that setting (e.g., Atkinson and Drew 1979; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992). Current conversation analytic research on talk in a wide range of workplaces includes Asmuß (2008), Barnes (2007), Kevoe-Feldman (2018), and Vöge (2010) in business settings; Garcia (2019) and Gibson and Fox (2021) in legal settings; and Peräkylä (2019), Stivers and Timmermans (2020), and Wang (2020) in medical settings. The conversation analytic approach to the study of interaction is well-suited to the study of talk in workplace settings, including aviation (e.g., Frankel 2000; Neville 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2006; Arminen et al. 2010; Arminen, Koskela, and Palukka 2014; Tuccio and Neville 2017; Tuccio and Garcia 2020).

Stokoe and Smithson (2001) argue for the necessity of using a conversation analytic approach to sequential analysis and the analysis of utterances in context for the understanding of gender (see also Garcia 1998). Previous conversation analytic research by Whitehead (2009; 2018; 2020) and others on how race is made relevant in a wide range of interactions can also inform the consideration of how gender may be relevant in this analysis of air traffic communications. This body of research uses conversation analytic findings and concepts such as membership categorization analysis, formulations and reformulations, and repair of errors or misunderstandings to investigate how race is made implicitly or explicitly relevant in a given interaction (e.g., Sacks 1992; West and Fenstermaker 2002; Whitehead 2009; 2018; 2020; Whitehead and Lern-

er 2009; Stokoe 2015; Shrikant 2019; Garcia 2022a). Whitehead's (2020) study showed that implicit references to race were often quite subtle and had to be inferred from how the speaker constructed their talk and referred to social roles, regions, occupations, and other aspects of the cultural position they occupied.

The purpose of a single-case analysis is to understand a particular event (Schegloff 1987; Whalen, Zimmerman, and Whalen 1988). This approach enables us to compare the single case with published findings about routine air traffic communication and routine interactions in other settings to gain insights and new understandings of potential causes of communication failure or success during air traffic emergencies. This line of research should lead to practical implications for understanding how gender may become relevant or how gender differences in interactional style might impact air traffic communication during emergency situations.

The data used in this paper are the radio transmissions with the pilot and copilot of Southwest Airlines Flight 1380 and several ATC personnel that assisted the plane in its approach and safe emergency landing in Philadelphia. Stack and Stevens (2018) report that Flight 1380 had taken off from New York's LaGuardia airport for Dallas, Texas when an engine fire occurred. Damage to the engine caused a hole in the plane, resulting in fatal injuries to a passenger and leading the flight crew to request an emergency landing. The pilot ("captain") on this flight was female, and the copilot was male. Most of the ATC/Flight 1380 interactions were conducted by the female pilot. The gender of the pilot is indicated in each excerpt to clarify which pilot was speaking. Telephone

communications between ATC personnel were also analyzed; the participants in these exchanges were all male.

The Federal Aviation Administration posts audio data and transcripts on their website that are available to the public: ([https://www.faa.gov/data\\_research/accident\\_incident/2018-04-17](https://www.faa.gov/data_research/accident_incident/2018-04-17)).

While the official FAA transcripts accurately record the words spoken by the parties involved, they lack the detail required for a conversation analytic study. I extensively revised the transcripts of the audio data using a conversation analytic approach (see Jefferson 2004). The transcribing conventions are in the Appendix. I then conducted a sequential analysis of each transcript. I examined the radio interactions between the female pilot of Flight 1380 and the various ATC staffers she communicated with during the flight and compared them with interactions between the male copilot and ATC staffers. While the emergency was in progress, these ATC staffers also engaged in telephone conversations with each other as they worked to coordinate the hand-over of the plane from one sector to the next and to coordinate the landing of Flight 1380 with that of other planes approaching Philadelphia airport. I made note of all actions that were explicitly or implicitly relevant to gender in these exchanges. The ATC staffers in these internal phone calls were all male, and I examined whether and how they used gendered pronouns to refer to Flight 1380.

The analysis below will show that explicit references to gender are rare, except for the occasional asymmetrical use of the gendered address terms “sir” and “ma’am” in the ATC/plane radio transmissions, and the use of gendered pronouns in

the ATC/ATC phone conversations that do not accurately represent the gender of the inflight crew. There are several ways in which gender may be implicitly relevant in these interactions. Participants may use interactional formulations that—while not explicitly gendered themselves—have been associated in previous research with gender differences and/or power differences in interactions, such as the use of indirect forms of requests, demands or complaints, inferences about the emotional state of participants, and a possible instance where ground personnel did not recognize the speaker as the pilot because of her female sounding voice. The results of this analysis will be discussed in terms of potential implications for how gender can impact ATC/plane communication.

## Analysis

In the analysis that follows, I use examples from the data to illustrate each of the ways in which gender may be relevant. I first analyze the asymmetrical use of gendered address terms (“sir” and “ma’am”) and then analyze the use of gendered pronouns to refer to Flight 1380. This will be followed by the analysis of excerpts that display an implicit orientation to gender during the interactions.

### Gendered Address Terms

As shown in Garcia (2016), once an emergency begins, the plane’s call sign may be omitted in radio transmissions without causing confusion as to which plane is being addressed because other planes in the sector can hear the dyadic exchange about the incident as directed to the plane involved in the incident. In the radio transmissions studied for this project, there were a few instances of “sir” or “ma’am” being used as address terms.

The use of these gendered address terms displays an orientation to the presumed gender of the person being addressed. In the radio transmissions, the female pilot addressed the male ATC as “sir” several times, and on one occasion, a male ATC addressed the female pilot as “ma’am.” All of these gendered address terms were used asymmetrically.

For example, as Excerpt 1 begins, the female pilot for Southwest Airlines Flight 1380 (“SWA1380”) answers the question asked by the ATC staffer “10R” without using the plane’s call sign (lines 20-21). She first answers 10R’s question and then uses a gendered address term before adding more information about the emergency: “yes sir we’re single engine descending have uh fire in number (0.1) one.” (lines 20-21).

### Excerpt 1

14	1504:54	SWA1380	southwest thirteen eighty has an engine fire descending.
15			((female voice))
16			(0.3)
17	1504:59	10R	southwest thirteen eighty:: uh are <u>you</u> ? you’re descending?
18			right now?
19			(0.2)
20	1505:03	SWA1380	yes sir we’re single engine descending have uh fire in
21			number (0.1) one. ((female voice))
22			(0.1)
23	1505:07	10R	alright southwest thirteen ei:ghty u::h <u>okay!</u> <u>where</u> would you
24			like to go to <u>which</u> airport
25			(0.2)
26	1505:12	SWA1380	give us (thee) vector for your <u>clo:sest</u> ((female voice))
27			(0.5)
28	1505:16	10R	u:hm <u>okay!</u> how about u:h <u>middletown</u> airport just fly heading
29			two five zero.
30			(0.4)
31	1505:21	SWA1380	okay heading two five zero: <u>we’re</u> looking a:t u:h <u>philly</u>
32			(it’s uh) ((female voice))
33			(0.2)
34	1505:28	10R	southwest thirteen eighty roger a:nd uh just stand=by-

The gendered address term “sir” is the first explicit reference to gender in the exchange. The pilot’s use of “sir” in this excerpt is not reciprocated—it is thus an asymmetrical use of a gendered address term. This type of use of “sir” may be a sign of politeness or respect or may even indicate deference to authority or a higher-ranking person being addressed.

As the plane moves closer to the target airport, Flight 1380 is transferred from 10R to ATC staffer “25R.” Excerpt 2 shows 25R using the gendered address term “ma’am” in an exchange with the female pilot (SWA1380, line 24). This is also an asymmetric use of an address term.



Excerpt 2

1	1508:13	SWA1380	center southwe:st?, thirteen eighdy declaring an emergency
2			going through seventeen thou!sand need your loca:l altimeter.
3			(0.2)
4	1508:19	25R	<u>uh</u> southwest thirteen eighty u:h new york thee u:h (0.1) eh
5			baltimore altimeter is uh two niner eight zero and you said
6			you're going to one one thousand?
7			(0.2)
8	1508:26	SWA1380	going down to <u>one!</u> one thousand, two [nine eight] zero?
9		?	[( )]
10			(0.8)
11	1508:31	25R	southwest thirteen eighty <u>thank</u> you
12			(0.2)
13	1508:34	SWA1380	<u>a:ll!</u> right and southwest thirteen eighty ah hundred and forty
14			nine souls on board.
15			(0.2)
16	1508:38	25R	i'm sorry <u>how</u> many souls on board and hours of fuel?
17			(0.2)
18	1508:41	SWA1380	<u>four niner</u>
19			(0.5)
20	1508:43	25R	forty nine?
21			(0.3)
22	1508:45	SWA1380	one <u>hundred forty nine.</u> ((annoyance in voice))
23			( )
24	1508:46	25R	okay thank you ma'am and how many s- how many hours of
25			(fuel/fool) you have?
26			(4.0)
27	1508:52	SWA1380	three- (0.1) plus

25R's "okay thank you ma'am" (line 24) occurs after a slightly problematic exchange with the female pilot about the number of people ("souls") on the flight and how much fuel is left (lines 13-22). The pilot had to repeat the information about the number of souls three times before 25R understood her. There is some annoyance evident in her tone of voice the third time she provides this information (line 22). Perhaps 25R's use of "ma'am" in his response in line 24 is a courtesy to efficiently and quickly amend his inability to hear her.

**The Use of Gendered Pronouns in Internal ATC Telephone Calls**

ATC staffers used gendered pronouns to refer to Flight 1380 in their internal phone calls about the incident as they worked to assist the flight. Immediately after the interaction shown in Excerpt 1 above, in which 10R talked via radio to the female pilot of Flight 1380, 10R makes a phone call to 25R (Excerpt 3). Both 10R and 25R refer to Flight 1380 as "he" or "him," even though 10R has just completed the radio exchange with the female pilot in Excerpt 1 and is, therefore, aware that at least one of the inflight crew is female.



**Excerpt 3**

1		[Begin Phone call]	
2			((beep))
3		?	you're right on.
4			(0.2)
5	1505:40	10R	seven one <u>pa:pa</u> (0.8) is u::h an emergency?, (0.4) descending?,
6			(0.2) single engine (0.3) gonna turn direct philly. (0.5) .hh do you
7			want to work him? hhh=
8	1505:48	25R	=u::h <u>yeah!</u> if he's going direct
9			(. .)
10		10R	okay.
11			[End Phone call]

In Excerpt 3, 10R first announces the emergency (lines 5-6) and then asks, “do you want to work him? hhh” (lines 6-7). In his response, 25R also uses the male pronoun to refer to Flight 1380 (“=u::h yeah! if he’s going direct”). With one exception (discussed below), the ATC personnel in these data use the male pronoun when referring to Flight 1380 in internal phone calls. Because of the use of the male pronoun 25R does not know that when he subse-

quently speaks to Flight 1380 via radio, he may be speaking to a female rather than a male pilot.

After the call from 10R to 25R to ask if he will take charge of the plane’s flight, 25R calls Philadelphia Departures (“Dep14”) to convey information about the emergency and plan for Flight 1380’s landing (Excerpt 4, lines 15, 19-21). In this call, both 25R and Dep14 refer to Flight 1380 with male pronouns (lines 20, 24, and 26).

**Excerpt 4**

12			(17)
13		[Begin Phone call]	
14		(3.59audio)	((beep))
15		25R	he:y departure fourteen?
16			(3.5)
17		Dep14	yes <u>sir!</u>
18			(0.2)
19		25R	I got aye uh (0.1) <u>single</u> engine southwest thirteen eighty going
20			direct in to philly he’s an emer!gency. (0.4) you want to just
21			stop (your) departures after thuh u p s?
22			(0.4)
23		Dep14	stop all departures going u:h me[(dina )]
24		25R	[( ) oh] I don’t know he’s
25			going right in over modina so: uh I don’t know what eh-
26			altitude you want him at?
27			(2.5)
28		Dep14	a:::hm, (2.0) like eight? would be goo:d [somewhere] around
29		25R	[( )]
30		Dep14	there yeah

Given the rarity of female pilots in commercial aviation, it would not be surprising that participants in these internal calls typically referred to the plane as “he” in their discussions about how to handle the ongoing emergency. It is also possibly a choice primed by 10R’s use of the male pronoun. The use of the male pronoun means that when/if a female voice does appear in the subsequent interactions, it could be potentially disorienting. However, if 10R, who had spoken directly with the female pilot, had referred to the flight as “she” in the call with 25R when the norm was to use “he,” this could have led to unnecessarily lengthening the call by introducing a non-essential topic of talk. Unnecessarily topicalizing the gender of the inflight crew would be an unnecessary distraction. While there is no evidence that this potential problem occurred in this incident while the plane was in the air, as we will see in the discussion of Excerpt 8 below, once the plane was on the ground, it is possible that the expectation that the pilot would be male (have a male voice) may have caused a momentary delay in responding to radio communication from the female pilot.

### Gender and the Inflight Crew

Neville (2001) explained how the flight crew communicates the allocation of the roles of the radio operator, navigator, or “flying pilot” during a flight. The higher-ranking person (captain) may be the one flying the plane (flying pilot), or they may do other work while the lower-ranking person flies the plane. These roles may also be switched during a flight. The ATC personnel on the ground are, therefore, accustomed to different people making radio transmissions on behalf of a flight.

While most of the radio transmissions between ATC and Flight 1380 are between the female pilot and the male ATC personnel, there are a few radio transmissions made by the male copilot. There is no evidence in the data that these unannounced transitions from the female pilot to the male copilot caused confusion during the inflight emergency.

Excerpt 5 shows radio transmissions between Philadelphia ATC “North Departures” (ND) and

#### Excerpt 5

20	1511:37	ND	southwest thirteen eighty? fly heading zero niner zero please
21			(0.2)
22	1511:40	SWA1380	heading zero nine zero southwest thirteen eighty ((male voice))
23			(8.0)
24	1511:53	ND	southwest thirteen eighty can i get thuh fuel in <u>POU:nds</u> and thee exact
25			nature of thee emergency please!
26			(0.2)
27	1511:59	SWA1380	engine a::h engine severe damage: e. h (0.2) engine failure a:nd exact
28			pounds of fuel?, (0.5) six seventee::n <u>twenty one</u> (0.2) thousand
			((female voice))
29			(0.8)
30	1512		
31	1512:13	ND	<u>thank you.</u>

Flight 1380. While in Excerpts 1 and 2 above, the female pilot spoke on behalf of the plane, when ND next addresses Flight 1380, he receives a response from the male copilot instead of the female pilot he had been speaking with about 15 seconds prior (Excerpt 5, line 22).

The male copilot responds to ND's transmission in line 22, using routine scripted talk to confirm receipt of the instructions ND has given him in line 20. When ND next addresses Flight 1380 in line 24 ("can i get thuh fuel in POU:nds and thee exact

nature of the emergency please!" [lines 24-25]), the female pilot responds (lines 27-28).

After a brief phone call between ND and ATC staffer "North Arrivals" (NA), in which ND refers to Flight 1380 with the male pronoun (not shown), Excerpt 6 shows ND again addressing flight 1380 (lines 45-46). The male copilot responds (lines 48-49). ND then asks, "you gonna go ri:ght in or do you need an extended final" (lines 51-52). The female pilot responds to this question ("extended final." [line 54]). There is no indication in this exchange that the switch in speakers was problematic.

#### Excerpt 6

45	1513:19	ND	southwest ( ) thirteen eighty fly heading zero niner zero
46			descend and maintain <u>four thousand</u>
47			(0.8)
48	1513:26	SWA1380	four thousand (.) heading zero nine zero southwest. (0.2) >thirteen
49			eighty< ((male voice))
50			(5.0)
51	1513:44	ND	and southwest thirteen eighty you gonna go <u>ri:ght</u> in or do you need an
52			extended final
53			(0.5)
54	1513:48	SWA1380	extended final. ((female voice))
55			(0.3)
56	1513:50	ND	<u>thank you</u>

The internal ATC phone call from ND to NA in Excerpt 7 occurred right after Excerpt 6. Excerpt 7 shows

the first instance in which any of the ATC personnel use the female pronoun to refer to Flight 1380.

#### Excerpt 7

			[Begin phone call]
57	1513:51	NA	yo
58	1513:52	ND	she said she needs an <u>extended final</u> thirteen eighty
59	1513:54	NA	okay
60	1513:54	ND	southwest thirteen eighty here she comes.

In this phone call, ND refers to Flight 1380 as "she" instead of the male pronoun "he" he used in his previous phone call with NA ("she said she needs an extended final thirteen eighty" [line 58]). NA re-

sponds with "okay" (line 59). The switch in gender is not remarked on or topicalized, even though in their previous phone call just about 30 seconds prior, ND had referred to the plane as "he."

In sum, the issue with gendered pronouns is not that they are used but whether there is any consistency as to whether they refer to the plane or the crew and whether consistently sticking to one gender to refer to a flight would have less potential to cause confusion than using a gendered pronoun that did not match the apparent gender of the crew (based on their voices). It is possible that foreshadowing an unexpected gender of a crew member (e.g., a rare female pilot) through the use of gendered pronouns could be functional by preventing possible confusion. Of course, voices are not always accurate indicators of gender, and pilots could potentially have a wide range of gender identities beyond the binary male or female categories. Perhaps a convention of referring to flights as “they” instead of “he” might be a better option to avoid priming per-

sonnel for a male voice, even though the likelihood of it being a female pilot is very small due to the rarity of women in this occupation.

### Emotion, Vulnerability, and Care Work—Implicit Gendering?

Excerpt 8 shows radio transmissions between NA and Flight 1380 during the landing approach to the Philadelphia airport. This excerpt began shortly after Excerpt 7 ended. While there are no explicit references to gender in Excerpt 8, there may be some ways gender is implicitly relevant. For example, at times, NA (“North Approach”) is overly solicitous, almost treating the pilot as if she were upset or emotionally distraught (which she has given no evidence of being).

#### Excerpt 8

1	1514:10	SWA1380	(0.1) one two? (0.2) I need u:h single channel no more <u>channel</u> switching. ((female voice))
2			(0.5)
3	1514:14	NA	southwest thirteen eighty <u>you</u> ’re on approach frequency one two eight
4			point four. you’re where you <u>should!</u> be, maintain four thousand, and
5			ah do you need any further assistance from me what- type of final do
6			you want i heard short- (0.1) or long
7			(0.1)
8	1514:23	SWA1380	(yeah) we’re gonna need uh <u>long</u> final.
9			(0.2)
10	1514:25	NA	okay. i’m gonna let you drive until <u>you:</u> tell me you wanna turn base
11			okay? so u:h that’ll be at <u>least</u> uh twenty five mile final <u>lo:nger</u> than that
12			i’ll have to do some coordination?, but that will be fine we’ll get that
13	1514:25		done for you. <u>you</u> let me know when you want to come in.
14			(0.2)
15	1514:37	SWA1380	>okay.< <u>two:nty</u> is good (0.2) a:nd a:h (0.1) we may need <u>shorter</u> here in
16			uh moment tell me thuh runway we are setting up for
17	1514:43	NA	you’re gonna set up for two-
18			(0.4)
19	1514:47	SWA1380	say again.
20			(2.0)
21	1514:49	NA	southwest thirteen eighty you’ll be landing <u>two seven le:ft</u>
22			two seven left today .hh and ah <u>you</u> just let me know when you need to
23			turn base ah i ah right now i only have <u>one</u> person in front of you which
24			is uh southwest
25	1514:49	NA	and i’m sure he’ll pull off if you need to go right in.
26			(4.0)

As Excerpt 8 begins, the female pilot requests a single radio channel (line 1). She formulates this request directly and without mitigation as an “I need” statement. NA responds with the scripted call sign for her plane, followed by information about the radio channel (“frequency” [lines 3-4]). He then asks a question that he repairs in progress: “~and ah do you need any further assistance from me what- type of final do you want i heard short- (0.1) or long” (lines 4-6). The question about further assistance seems unnecessary. Presumably, if the pilot wanted anything, she would ask. To his credit, NA repaired this turn and replaced it with a specific question about the final approach. The female pilot responds with “(yeah) we’re gonna need uh long final.” (line 8). Her response is conversational rather than scripted and is direct and concise. NA’s response in lines 10-13 is also in a conversational form, but it is very lengthy for radio transmission and seems to include some unnecessary material. Since it is a radio transmission, the pilot cannot respond until he is done with the transmission because only one person can broadcast at a time. Nevertheless, NA includes a request for confirmation within his turn (“okay?” [line 11]), displaying an orientation to her right to confirm or reject his suggestions or plans. In a face-to-face or telephone conversation, the pilot could respond to a confirmation request, but in a radio exchange, she cannot respond until he has stopped transmitting. The use of “okay?” here may be an affiliation move to show support or concern and to emphasize that he will do whatever he can to facilitate her approach to the airport. The rest of NA’s turn seems designed to provide reassurance and to reaffirm that the pilot can request what she wants. This seems odd given that she has shown no sign of needing reassurance, and routine procedures would surely prioritize the needs of a plane experiencing a serious emergency, as is the case with Flight 1380.

NA’s turn in lines 10-13 is not only conversational rather than scripted or hybrid mode—it is an extended and elaborated turn. It is wordy, time-consuming, and potentially distracting, given the situation. NA’s tone is solicitous and somewhat anxious. It sounds like he is trying to reassure the pilot or provide emotional support via his reassurances. The question arises as to whether he would be taking this tone if the pilot were a male. There is nothing obvious in the pilot’s tone of voice or turn formulations that betrays emotional upset that would warrant these types of emotional support moves (Whalen and Zimmerman 1998; Garcia 2022b).

The exchange proceeds in a conversational style. The female pilot acknowledges NA’s turn with a quick “>okay.<” (line 15), which sounds like an agreement with his suggestion (“that’ll be at least uh twenty five mile final” [line 11]), but she follows this with “twenty is good” (line 15), which seems to be an indirect way of disagreeing with his suggestion of twenty five miles. The pilot then hesitates and suggests it may be less than twenty: “(0.2) a:nd a:h (0.1) we may need shorter here in uh moment” (lines 15-16). Taken together, these parts of the pilot’s turn may be an indirect way of rejecting his suggestion of 25 miles. However, she does not leave space for NA’s reply and—within the same transmission—flows through to a question about the runway (line 16). NA’s reply was apparently cut off because the pilot is able to transmit in line 19 as she initiates an other-repair (“say again.”). In his reply, which begins in line 21, NA starts with the plane’s call sign, but then uses sentential form (“you’ll be landing”) instead of a scripted response. The remainder of this turn reverts to conversational style: “and ah you just let me know when you need to turn base ah i ah right now i only have one person in front of you which is uh southwest and i’m sure he’ll pull off if you need to



go right in.” (lines 22-25). The work done in this extension of his turn could be described as reassurance work rather than informing. This part of his turn contains information she does not need to know (e.g., the name of the airline of the plane in front of her and that there’s only one plane ahead of her in line for landing). All she needs to know is that since she has an emergency, they will do what is needed to get her on the ground. The question this raises in terms of the implicit relevance of gender is why this reassurance was perceived to be necessary. The pilot was speaking in a calm and coherent way and did not display being upset in words or tone of voice.

### Transitions from the Female to the Male Voice

Once the plane is on the ground, the most critical part of the emergency is over. However, the plane’s crew is still dealing with injured passengers, and the ground crew is still ruling out the potential for fire. Thus, the emergency is not actually over yet. Excerpt 9 is from radio transmissions between the plane and ground personnel. “Local Control West” (LCW) is an ATC staffer, and “Foxtrot 21” (F21) is out on the runway working with crews that are assisting with the plane. In Excerpt 9, Flight 1380 is first represented by the female pilot and then by the male pilot. The personnel, thus, hear first a female voice and then a male voice speaking on behalf of the flight. In this section, I discuss how the apparently unexpected female voice may be confusing F21 and how the subsequent switch from the female pilot’s voice to the male copilot’s voice may also be causing confusion.

As Excerpt 9 begins, F21 (working with safety crews on the ground) asks to talk to the pilot (line 5). LCW responds that “he’s coming over to my frequency now” (lines 7-8), thus letting F21 know that he can

talk to the pilot on the same radio frequency they are currently conversing on. Note that he used the male pronoun “he” in this transmission. The pilot then announces her presence in the conversation “(alright) this is captain ( ) at seven two:” (line 10). There is then a 2-second pause (line 11). LCW displays an orientation to this pause as indicating a problem with turn transition (the absence of a response from F21) and repairs F21’s absent response with “foxtrot twenty one that’s thuh captain there go ahead.” (line 12). While there is no information in the exchange that explains F21’s delay in responding, the absence of a response could be due to confusion as to whether the female voice was the captain, especially since LCW had just used the male pronoun to refer to her. Once the LCW initiates repair of the absent response, the female pilot then speaks again: “yes sir (thuh lead/I believe) captain’s side is where we had thuh damage. (0.1) and that’s thee engine that went out.” (lines 13-14). F21 then hesitates briefly and responds (lines 16-18), first addressing the threat of fire issue, then asking about injuries “u:h is there any injuries? inside thee aircraft itself” (lines 16-17). The last part of F21’s transmission also addresses the fire issue: “and (what-) also we have no signs of any smo:ke .h or fi:re from thee outside right now” (lines 17-18). The pilot’s response in lines 20-21 is also in conversational mode.

About a minute later, F21 makes another request to talk to the pilot (“can we talk to thuh pilot again=” [line 27]). After a 4-second pause, the male copilot of Flight 1380 speaks: “go ahead for southwest u:h thirteen eighty” (line 30). After another 4-second pause, the male copilot speaks again, apparently working to repair the absent response from F21: “southwest thirteen eighty is up: o:n (0.2) thirty five one” (line 32). Another pause follows (line 33), and LCW again intervenes to repair F21’s absent response (“foxtrot



twenty one that's thuh pilot there go ahead." [line 34]). As with LCW's earlier intervention, it is possible that confusion about who is speaking arose from the shift from the female to the male pilot, although the delay could be due to an unrelated issue. The

way LCW phrases his intervention ("that's thuh pilot there go ahead") is consistent with the interpretation that he believes that F21 does not realize that a male is now speaking on behalf of Flight 1380 rather than the female pilot he was talking to earlier.

### Excerpt 9

1 1522:15 F21 ( ) foxtrot twenty one  
 2 (0.2)  
 3 1522:17 LCW foxtrot twenty one tower  
 4 (0.5)  
 5 1522:17 F21 U::hm (0.1) i need to: talk to thuh pilot?  
 6 (0.4)  
 7 1522:24 LCW foxtrot twenty one go to tower one one ah correction he's coming over  
 8 to my frequency now  
 9 (0.1)  
 10 1522:28 SWA1380 (alright) this is captain ( ) at seven two: ((female voice))  
 11 (2.0)  
 12 1522:33 LCW foxtrot twenty one that's thuh captain there go ahead.  
 13 1522:35 SWA1380 yes sir (thuh lead/I believe) captain's side is where we had thuh  
 14 damage. (0.1) and that's thee engine that went out. ((female voice))  
 15 (0.6)  
 16 1522:42 F21 U:h yeah we're (we're going down) to check for heat source. u:h is there  
 17 any injuries? inside thee aircraft itself and (what-) also we have no  
 18 signs of any smo:ke .h or fi:re from thee outside right now  
 19 (0.2)  
 20 1522:55 SWA1380 okay we do have injured inside so as soon as: ah we can get those taken  
 21 care of that'd be great. ((female voice))  
 22 (16)  
 ((12 lines omitted))  
 23 1524:30 F21 Philly tower, foxtrot twenty one.  
 24 (0.1)  
 25 1524:31 LCW foxtrot twenty one tower?  
 26 (0.7)  
 27 1524:34 F21 can we talk to thuh pilot again=  
 28 ? =[[ ( ) ]]  
 29 (4.0)  
 30 1524:40 SWA1380 go ahead for southwest u:h thirteen eighty ((male voice))  
 31 (4.0)  
 32 1524:45 SWA1380 southwest thirteen eighty is up: o:n (0.2) thirty five one ((male voice))  
 33 (2.5)  
 34 1524:51 LCW foxtrot twenty one that's thuh pilot there go ahead.  
 35 (1.5)  
 36 1524:55 F21 (ah/alright?) how many injuries do you have on thee aircraft?  
 37 (0.2)  
 38 1524:58 SWA1380 we tried to u:h we're trying to figure (it) out right now (stand by)

### Indirect/Mitigated Talk

A second issue to consider in Excerpt 9 is how the interactional style of participants changes once the plane is on the ground. In this section, I will compare how the female pilot’s communications on the ground differ from her communications in flight. For example, once on the ground, the female pilot produces some indirectly formulated or mitigated requests that have the characteristic of implicit complaints. Maynard (2013:201) notes that complaints can be formulated simply by displaying “notice of a negative event” (see also Schegloff 1988). For example, consider lines 20-21 in Excerpt 9 (“okay we do have injured inside so as soon as: ah we can get those taken care of that’d be great.” However, note that her interactional style differs here compared to how she communicated earlier. Instead of directly stating what is needed

or what she wants (e.g., “a single channel” as in Excerpt 8), here, she produces a mitigated and indirect request for medical attention for the injured. This turn is followed by 16 seconds of silence rather than a direct response from F21.

In Excerpt 10, which also occurred after the plane had landed, the female pilot makes a request to get the emergency services (“EMS”) on board to attend to the injured passengers (lines 1-2). The first part of her turn (after the self-identification) is a direct statement of need (“we need e m s on board” [line 1]). This is followed by a question that can be heard as an indirect complaint (“is there uh way to get them UP here?” [lines 1-2]). The implication is that they have waited a long time to get the EMS on board to help the injured passengers.

### Excerpt 10

1	SWA1380		and <u>this</u> is: uh thirteen eighty <u>we</u> need <u>e m s</u> on board is there uh way to
2			<u>get them UP</u> here? ((female voice))
3	1528		(5.0)
4	1528:11	LCW	foxtrot twenty one did you copy <u>that</u> ?
5			(12)
6	1528:24	F21	foxtrot twenty one.
7			(0.2)
8	1528:25	LCW	yeah they wanna know if they can get <u>e m s on</u> board thee aircraft (there)
9			(0.2)
10	1528:39	F21	we are in thuh process of bringing <u>e m s</u> on
11			(0.1)
12	1529	LCW	(yeah) thank you.

Another instance of indirect/mitigated talk on the behalf of the female pilot occurred earlier, when the plane was still in the air (Excerpt 11).

Note that 10R’s question in lines 1-2, other than beginning the transmission with the plane’s call

sign, is completely conversational in structure. The pilot’s response is in hybrid mode. She starts with “oka:y,” repeats her plane’s call sign, and says, “we’re single engine, that’s it.” (line 4). She repeats the information 10R had given in his turn—that they are single engine—but follows it with “that’s

it.”—thus declining an opportunity to “tell a story,” give details, or elaborate. Earlier, she had said there was a hole in the plane, but in this context, she presents the single engine as the only relevant issue. As the transcript notes, she sounds annoyed by this question. 10R’s response follows her lead by keeping it short and simple (“okay. single engine.” [line 7]), repeating the information she has given to display his understanding of it. He then uses conversational structure to transition to the next part of his turn (“just” [line 7]) and follows it

with a scripted format instruction (“maintain one one eleven thousand”). 10R immediately follows this with a question (“do you need anything standing by on thuh ground?” [lines 7-8]). The pilot’s answer is both mitigated and indirect: “yes, if you would,” (polite formulation). The rest of her turn implies that she needs the trucks on the ground rather than makes a direct request for trucks (she tells him which side of the plane they should be on: “tell all thuh trucks that it’s on the engine number o:ne captain’s side.” [lines 10-11]).

### Excerpt 11

1	1507:36	10R	southwest thirteen eighty (eh-) just so i can understand (0.2) you said that you are still single engine, and uh <u>what</u> else?
2			(2.5)
3			
4	1507:45	SWA1380	okay, southwest <u>thirteen</u> (eighty) eighty we’re <u>single engine</u> , that’s it.
5			((sounds a little annoyed))
6			(0.3)
7	1507:51	10R	okay. <u>single engine</u> . just maintain one one eleven thousand do you need anything standing by on thuh ground?
8			(0.5)
9			
10	1507:55	SWA1380	yes, if you would, <u>tell</u> all thuh trucks that it’s on the engine number
11			<u>o:ne</u> captain’s side.
12	1508		(.)
13	1508:01	10R	okay. thank you. southwest thirteen eighty contact new york center one
14			tree five point four five
15			(0.2)
16	1508:06	SWA1380	three five four five. good day! ((sing song intonation))

As previous research has shown, there are advantages to switching to an ordinary conversational mode rather than using routine scripted talk when an emergency is in progress (e.g., Garcia 2016). However, the use of a conversational mode makes any gender differences in interactional style or expectations about such things as how requests or complaints should be formulated or whether or how emotions should be displayed potentially problematic if there is a possi-

bility of complicating the interaction about the emergency situation.

### Discussion and Conclusions

In sum, I found several ways that gender may be explicitly or implicitly relevant for the exchanges between the participants in this workplace interaction during the incident affecting Flight 1380. First,

I showed that while gendered address terms (sir, ma'am) are rarely used, when they are used, they are used asymmetrically. Of course, as shown in Garcia (1998), the significance of asymmetrical actions must be examined in terms of their use in the specific interactional context they are used within (see also Stokoe and Smithson 2001). In this case, the gendered formal address terms "sir" and "ma'am" are used in a way that may reflect differences in power and status. As Stevanovic (2018) notes, how speakers formulate their utterances may convey their power or status in the situation. As a pilot who is also a captain, the female pilot is of higher status than the ATC staffer in terms of her institutional role. The question arises whether the fact that she addresses him with "sir" (and does not receive a reciprocal "ma'am") may be an implicit reflection of the intersection of gender with social role or status. All except one of the instances of gendered address terms in the radio transmissions were by the female pilot. The question arises as to whether the asymmetric use of these terms is a display of orientation to lower status or extra politeness.

Gendered pronouns were used in internal ATC phone calls to refer to Flight 1380. Male pronouns (he, him) were almost always used, even when the ATC staffer had just communicated with the female pilot. There was one instance where an ATC staffer used female pronouns to refer to the flight. While the use of these gendered pronouns did not cause any problems or hesitation in the calls made during the inflight emergency, it is possible their use could lead to confusion. It might be preferable to retain scripted talk (the plane's call sign) or implement a change to the use of the plural pronoun "they." Scripted talk is designed to increase safety, including by providing clarity over which flight is being referred to (Cushing 1994; Jones 2003; Nevile 2004a;

Howard 2008; Falzon 2009; Garcia 2016). This is one reason why flight call signs are used as identifiers in radio transmissions between ATC and planes rather than names of individual crew members. In these dyadic telephone calls between ATC staffers, the flight identification issue may seem less of an issue, but note that these phone calls are interspersed with direct radio transmission exchanges between ATC officers and the flight experiencing the emergency. Thus, how references to the flight are handled in the telephone calls could possibly impact those radio communications.

There were several ways in which gender may be implicitly relevant in these data. The female pilot used mostly direct and unmitigated formulations inflight during the emergency, with a couple of exceptions. Once the plane was on the ground and passenger injuries and the potential for the fire were assessed and managed, the female pilot used more indirect and mitigated formulations. Potentially gender-related differences in style of communication seemed to be more pronounced once the plane was on the ground.

Another potential communication style difference that may have been related to gender was that one ATC staffer communicated in a way that suggested the female pilot may have been feeling vulnerable, emotional, or needing support even though her transmissions during the flight had not displayed a need for reassurance. Stevanovic and Peräkylä (2014) describe the complex intersections between power, status, and emotion as they are constructed and reflected in how participants formulate their utterances and sequences of actions. For example, in Excerpt 8 between the ATC "North Arrival" (NA) staffer and the female pilot, there was incongruence between how the participants either did or did not

display an orientation to the emotional context of the emergency with which they were currently dealing.

While the interactions that occurred during the emergency with Flight 1380 appear to be conducted professionally and competently, the analysis has shown some potential ways that gender could have played a role in how the interactions unfolded. The switch from scripted to hybrid/conversational formats when emergencies happen can be functional for handling emergencies (as shown in Garcia 2016) but may also open the door for problems when aviation interactions involve female pilots because conventions, stereotypes, or patterns of interactions typical of male/female interactions (e.g., assumptions about emotionality, status/position on the hierarchy, formulations to convey politeness) may emerge. How gender is made explicitly or implicitly relevant could conceivably lead to problems or less than optimal communication in other instances and could become even more complex as nonbinary gender categories are included (Klein 2011). This analysis may lead us to imagine what ATC/plane communication could/should be like if its gendered nature is noticed and redesigned to create the most effective form of communication rather than relying on norms created by and shaped by a traditional concept of male/male communication, military conventions, and organizational concerns for standardization. Given previous research in a variety of contexts on gender differences in communication, the

question as to whether or how gender may impact aviation communication should be explored further, in particular, whether gender becomes more relevant, visible, or consequential in the portions of the interactions that use hybrid/conversational mode as opposed to scripted routine talk. Some specific research questions that could fruitfully be addressed include direct comparisons of pilot/ATC interactions with different configurations of participants in terms of gender (e.g., male or female pilots interacting with male or female ATC staffers). Since female commercial pilots are relatively rare, using routine flight/ATC interactions instead of the rarer accident/incident flights as a data source would provide access to more interactions involving female pilots. This would facilitate the exploration of a wider range of participants and enable further explorations of the type and extent of gender relevancies in aviation talk. For example, how gender may become relevant in routine scripted ATC/flight exchanges could be compared with those non-routine incidents where hybrid or conversational formats of interacting are used (Garcia 2016).

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## Appendix: Simplified version of Gail Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions

Symbol	Definition
.hh hh	Inhalations and exhalations, respectively
ta:l k	Colons indicate a syllable is drawn out
that-	Dash indicates a word was cut off abruptly
<u>lot</u>	Underlining indicates stress or emphasis
YOU	Capital letters indicate increased volume
(1.4)	Numbers in parentheses indicate the length of pauses (in seconds)
(talk)	Words in parentheses are tentative transcriptions
( )	Empty parentheses indicate non-transcribable talk
.,?!	Punctuation generally indicates intonation, not grammatical structure
ãnd ah	~ indicates quaver in voice
<more slowly>	Carets indicate the enclosed talk was spoken more slowly
>more quickly<	or more quickly than the surrounding talk
A: [a copy of it]	
B: [I have ]	Brackets indicate simultaneous speech
A: yeah=	
B: =in order	Equal signs indicate one word is placed immediately after another without pause or overlap
A: are yuh gonna?	Words spelled as pronounced

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# Southern Rural Feminism: U.S. Women Farmers in Production Agriculture

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**Abstract:** Although U.S. women's contributions to farming are vital, scholarship on U.S. female farmers is limited, especially in the U.S. South. Twelve women farmers in the Southern United States were interviewed about their experiences and opportunities in production agriculture. This study offers further nuance of the sociological and theoretical complexity and interpretive power of difference feminism and intersectionality, focusing on region and place, to a concept we call Southern Rural Feminism. Participants promote women's equality yet acknowledge gender differences between the binary gender categories of men and women, where the uniqueness of a woman's touch offers value to the agriculture industry. Nearly all participants' everyday life in southern agriculture was grounded in the participants' Christian faith, and some women used Christianity to explain gender dynamics. Within the context of the traditional rural southern culture, all women experienced differential gendered treatment in the industry, from welcomed gentlemanly behavior and gendered slights to more severe discrimination and harassment. Despite widespread gender problems, findings suggest most women do not view systematic gender oppression in the industry, do not adhere to feminist labels, and are cautiously optimistic about the future of female farmers. Incorporating theoretical discussions of Southern Rural Feminism is vital given U.S. Southern Farm Women's restricted material access to land, and full participation in production agriculture, a field with tremendous gender inequities.

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**The** number of U.S. female farmers is growing dramatically. The 2017 Census of Agriculture found 1.2 million women producers in American agriculture, making up 36% of all producers, up 27% since 2012 (United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service [USDA, NASS] 2017). As of 2019, 51% of all U.S. farming operations included at least one woman (Whitt and Todd 2021). In 2009, undergraduate women are now enrolled in agricultural programs at Land Grant Universities in higher numbers than men (USDA 2012).

Despite the rising numbers of women in agriculture, glaring inequities persist. Further developing a rich sociological and theoretical understanding of gender inequity in agriculture clarifies how social structures and institutions shape women's farming experiences and opportunities. Horst and Marion (2019:3) studied historical structural discrimination in U.S. farming. They found that "Women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds experienced structural barriers to land ownership and farming" and confirmed that these inequities endure. Women continue to be underrepresented in agriculture compared to men, in particular those in positions of power and especially among Black women (Pilgeram, Dentzman, and Lewin 2022). While statistics about Black female farmers are not readily available, Lockhart (2021) estimates that Black female farmers make up less than 1% of farmers in the United States. Similarly, Fremstad and Paul (2020:124) call attention to the widespread gender pay gap in the U.S., where women earn about 40% less than men in agriculture; they suggest that "farming is among the most unequal professions."

Given the increase in female farmers and the micro and macro barriers they face, scholars point out the

need for additional research that provides a deeper understanding of the agriculture industry from female farmers' perspective (Ball 2014). Currently, most of the scholarship on women and farming is focused on developing countries (Schmidt, Goetz, and Tian 2021). The limited research done in the United States has yet to focus on the South. Beach (2013) states that interviewing farm women specifically about "roles in farming households" and "gender relations" in the agriculture industry would be beneficial and informative because it would allow for the perspective of women in agriculture to be seen and heard. Fremstad and Paul (2020:139) argue that more research needs to be done to investigate how the dynamic of women in agriculture has evolved, the barriers that entry female farmers may face, and what else can be done to "open the farm gate to women." Schmidt, Goetz, and Tian (2021) argue for further investigation into the types of support women need.

Even with inequities for women in agriculture, research suggests that because of negative stereotypes connected to the term "feminism," female farmers internationally are hesitant to identify themselves as feminists (Brandth 2002). This is particularly common among rural women (Neustaeter 2015). Identifying as a feminist for rural women may lead to exclusion and relational difficulties. Yet, Neustaeter's (2015:113) study of Canadian rural women found that even when women reject feminist identity, they display feminist characteristics. "Feminist language and action are often transposed into softer, subtler tones and actions rephrased as equality and fairness, which are quieter, held longer, and repeated, often over decades." Missing from this discussion are the unique experiences of female farmers living in the U.S. South.

This qualitative study fills a gap in the literature by examining how women farmers in the South-



ern United States, a geographically understudied area, describe their gendered participation and opportunities in the production agriculture industry. Production agriculture is a “series of activities that result in a product being sold,” including but not limited to livestock production, plant production, timber production, and other agricultural bi-product production (Minnesota Department of Revenue 2022). Pilgeram, Dentzman, and Lewin (2022:1352) suggest that distinctive U.S. regions need unique interventions for women in agriculture, “Different support strategies will be necessary for these different contexts.”

Our study identifies a concept we call Southern Rural Feminism, an extension of difference feminism and intersectionality, where participants do not identify themselves as feminists and adhere to a binary gender construct. They emphasize the inherent differences between women and men, arguing that women and men should not be seen as the same because of these distinctions, whether due to biology, religion, or Southern traditions. Yet, participants unobtrusively take on aspects of the feminist perspective, repackaging it and making it more palatable for their rural southern context. This qualitative research addresses how difference feminism and intersectionality combined, at the micro- and macro-levels, impact women farmers in the U.S. South. Incorporating theoretical discussions of Southern Rural Feminism is vital given U.S. Southern farm women’s restricted material access to land, and full participation in production agriculture, a field with tremendous gender inequities.

## Literature Review

Traditionally, women in the agriculture industry have had a significant yet silenced role. Farm wom-

en have engaged in growing a summer garden, caring for livestock, selling produce, and taking part in intensive labor on the farm (Meares 1997:28-30). Historically, “women are the unpaid and invisible labor force” in the agriculture industry (Contzen and Forney 2017:27). Meares (1997:27) asserts that “while studies in the middle of the century tended to emphasize farm women’s roles as mothers and homemakers...research constitutes that this is mostly a narrow-sighted and partial view of the social reality” in the agriculture industry.

One aspect of invisibility is the struggle for women to have the title “farmer” instead of “farm wife” or other similar secondary terms. Keller (2014:76) points out how masculinity and femininity have been shaped over time by gendered symbolic categories of farmer and farm wife. She argues that women often face an “uphill battle in asserting themselves as farmers.” Beach (2013:212) explains that “traditionally, women on farms have been defined in terms of their marital relationship as farm-wives instead of in terms of their connections to the land, the farms, or their children as farmers, farm women, or farm mothers.” Hall and Mogyorody (2007:293) found that men in the agriculture industry tended to “underestimate their spouse’s contribution” to work done on the farm. This was similar to Beach’s (2013:212) findings that women in the agriculture industry were portrayed as “the supporter of the male farmer, the homemaker, or the one who raises the children and cares for the elders.” While men in the agriculture industry agree that women do have a place in the industry, they disagree over the value of contributions of women. The only way to help women identify as farmers is to “open the farm gate to women by shredding historically entrenched patriarchal roles and norms” (Fremstad and Paul 2020:125).



In addition to being overlooked and undervalued, female farmers face legal constraints. Fremstad and Paul (2020) discussed legal barriers that women faced, such as access to farmland. Married women in the United States were not able to own land under American Common Law until 1850. While women can own farmland today, it is still a scarce and expensive commodity, and there are new challenges that make acquiring farmland difficult for women, with many of these challenges remaining gender specific. Some of these barriers include financing markets, agricultural training, and education, suitable working conditions, and equal treatment by those in the industry, both individual and organizational (Kennedy-Duckett 2022).

Several lawsuits have been filed under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) against the USDA. Some of these most famous lawsuits include *Love vs. Vislack*, *Pigford vs. Glickman*, and *Keepseagle vs. Vislack*. These lawsuits were filed because the USDA was accused of “discriminating against African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and female farmers in various programs” that were offered to people working in the agriculture industry (USDA, Outreach and Advocacy Division [OAD] 2011). There is a “long history of structural discrimination in U.S. agriculture...[and] this history continues to impact farmers today” (Horst and Marion 2019:13). Specifically, the *Love vs. Vislack* case was a woman farmer class action settlement suit. It was filed in October of 2000 by several farmers who claimed they were discriminated against because of their gender when applying to farm loan programs (USDA, OAD 2011). The case was ruled in favor of the women farmers. Funds of \$1.23 to \$1.33 billion were set aside for women farmers who were successful in their discrimination claims (USDA, OAD 2011). Today, there are still disparities in the agri-

culture industry across race, ethnicity, income, and gender (Ball 2014; Contzen and Forney 2017).

The USDA (2021) claims that “women have been a critical part of farm and ranch operations across the country and across the globe for centuries.” Yet, the USDA has only been collecting data on female farmers since 1978, less than 50 years, but has been collecting data on men since 1840, for nearly three times as long (Fremstad and Paul 2020:127). Fremstad and Paul (2020) note that, despite the agriculture industry depending on women’s work all along, women continue to be missing from academic research.

A fair selection of rural sociological research discusses men and masculinities in the agriculture industry (Saugeres 2002; Nusbaumer 2011; Keller 2014; Anderson 2020). However, there is an absence of scholarship on women and femininities among U.S. women, even though U.S. women’s “contributions were essential to the viability of family farms” (Keller 2014:77). This is also true in the U.S. South.

## Theoretical Framework

Our analysis begins with feminist theory, which recognizes the impact that gender dynamics play at the micro, mezzo, and institutional levels. Specifically, we draw from difference feminism and intersectionality—merging these two feminist perspectives helps highlight the intricate manner in which gender, class, race, and other social statuses intermingle to shape female farmers’ unique lives in the U.S. South. Difference feminism is a branch of feminism first articulated by Gilligan (1982), which emphasizes the moral, emotional, and cognitive differences between women and men and challenges the notion that women are morally, eth-

ically, and rationally inferior. Gilligan was silent on whether biology played a role in gender differences. However, some scholars have taken a biological difference perspective. Difference feminism posits that gender socialization leads women to be more relational and adopt traditional feminine qualities such as caregiving, emotionality, empathy, and nurturing in decision-making, arguing that because of these differences, men and women are equal but should not be seen as the same. Although traditional feminine characteristics are devalued, prioritizing traits perceived as masculine, such as individual rights and autonomy, especially in the workplace, these care ethic qualities are celebrated and made visible by difference feminists (Brandth and Haugen 1997).

Difference feminists argue for,

caregiving to be valued and for workplace structures to be redesigned for the female experience to be embraced. Rather than continue to push women to comply with male-defined expectations, pathways to leadership need to be restructured and cultural expectations need to be rewired in order to accept and reward women's differences. [Katz 2020:248]

Many women who adhere to difference feminism principles do not identify themselves as feminists. This is not entirely surprising, as nearly 40% of U.S. women do not identify as feminists (Barroso 2020). Research suggests that farm women, in general, are also less likely to embrace the label of feminism (Brandth 2002). Difference feminism has been critiqued for strengthening gender stereotypes by idealizing them and for being essentialists. Feminine ways of thinking and negotiating in the world are not a monolith and are impacted by individuals' different social statuses.

An intersectional lens also highlights differences (Crenshaw 1989) and contests race and gender exclusion among groups of people who are subordinated. Collins (2000:18) defines intersectionality as "forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation." Hill Collins' work critiques the black-white binary and "either/or" dichotomies. Instead, she describes the matrix of domination as an interlocking system of inequality and argues that individuals can occupy multiple contradictory locations as oppressors and oppressed.

Intersectional research is beginning to examine the diversity of individuals from dominant social locations, including conservative activist women's experiences (Avanza 2019; Yuval-Davis 2006), but is less common in female farmers in the United States, and especially the U.S. South. Intersectional analysis of farm women at the international levels has explored how gender, race/ethnicity, and marital status "create power relationships that influence farmers' positioning" (Tavener and Crane 2019:316; An-Vo, Shahbaz, and Cockfield 2022). Rushing (2017:293) points out that intersectionality research fails to examine place and region. She suggests "that paying attention to region and place offers an additional level of complexity and explanatory power for understanding social phenomena...as well as southern feminism."

The U.S. South has long been cast as problematic with its history of white supremacy and sexism (Rushing 2017). Contemporary surveys indicate that sexist attitudes toward women in the U.S. Southeast are higher than in other parts of the country (Charles, Guryan, and Pan 2022). The South continues to be seen as an exception to the rest of the more progressive country, with "no

place for a feminist,” and these conceptions continue to impact the direction of research in this region (Rushing 2017:306). Additionally, the Southern United States is often referred to as the Bible Belt and as the most religious area of the country, with most people in this region adhering to Christianity (Norman 2018).

Failing to examine the U.S. South maintains stereotypes and misses the “complexities of feminism, intersectionality, and place” (Rushing 2017:293). Incorporating an inclusive, feminist lens to women farmers’ experiences in the U.S. South is important as this analysis expands the theorizing on gender, feminism, and place by exploring lived experiences of 12 women farmers living in the U.S. South.

## Methods

### Setting

The U.S. South tends to have fewer female farmers compared to the western and northeastern United States. Yet, Southern states are heavily involved with the production of the agriculture industry and produce top commodities such as poultry, cotton, tobacco, blueberries, and dairy products (American Farm 2022). The Southern United States has nearly 118,000 farms run by women, including nearly 5 billion in sales with almost 13 billion in national sales (Hoppe and Korb 2013). For example, in Georgia, where most of the participants resided, 34% of farmers are women. Institutional gender inequity in agriculture has sociological consequences for women’s lived experiences and opportunities; examining the factors that draw women to agriculture and avoiding overlooking their stories is crucial.

### Participants

Twelve women farmers participated in this study. Participants were required to meet the following qualifications to participate in the study: be at least 18 years of age, identify as a woman, live and work in the Southern United States, read, speak, and understand English, and have been involved in the production agriculture industry for at least three years before the interview. We wanted participants to have at least several years of agriculture experience so they were able to provide deeper insights and knowledge on the norms and practices that newer farmers may not have had.

The average participant was White, educated, married, lived and worked in the state of Georgia, and was raised on a family farm. Our recruitment strategy likely prioritized White participants. The authors identify as White women, and the first author was raised on a family farm with connections to the agriculture industry. We were unable to provide language interpretive services for non-English speakers, which likely excluded Latinx farmers. We may have missed important differences that would be apparent in a more racially diverse sample. At the same time, research (Wheeler et al. 2021) indicates that farmers may be reluctant to talk about personal issues with outsiders, and participants in our study stated that the first author’s lived experience put them at ease. The average age of the participants was 44 years old, ranging from their 20s to 60s. The size of farms varied in size and type and included plant production, livestock production, a honeybee farm, and a university research farm. A more detailed listing of the demographics of participants can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Education	Marital Status	State	# Years Farming	Raised on Farm
Elenor	25	White	Bachelors	Engaged	FL	10	Yes
Kelly	39	White	Masters	Married	AL	9.5	Yes
Louise	41	White	Bachelors	Married	GA	41	Yes
Kimberly	28	White	Masters	Single	GA	28	Yes
Patsy	51	White	Masters	Married	GA	51	Yes
Christy	66	White	Masters	Married	NC	18	No
Madison	51	White	Bachelors	Single	GA	30	Yes
JoJo	51	White	Specialist*	Married	GA	3	No
Annie	37	White	< HS**	Married	GA	35	Yes
Carmen	33	White	Masters	Married	GA	33	Yes
Charlie	63	Black	Associates	Single	TN	5	No
Jessie	44	White	Bachelors	Married	GA	44	Yes

\* A Specialist degree is an academic degree conferred by a College or University that is after a Bachelor’s degree and before a Doctorate degree.

\*\* Less than High School.

Source: *Self-elaboration.*

**Data Collection**

An IRB proposal was approved for this study by Georgia Southern University. In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted virtually by the first author through Zoom or on the telephone due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews took place from February 2022 to May 2022 and averaged about 40 minutes, were audio-recorded and transcribed. The anonymity of the participants was kept by excluding any personal identifying information in the transcripts, such as places of employment or names of spouses. All participants were given a pseudonym to further protect their privacy.

Participants were recruited through word of mouth as the first author grew up in a farming family and shared recruitment information with farming networks, snow-ball sampling, and agricultural organizations and conferences, such as the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Georgia. Informed consent was collected from all participants before the interview took place. All interviews included a brief demographic survey at the beginning. Examples of the types of interview questions asked include “What is it like being a woman farmer in the agriculture industry?”, “Do you think gender affects your opportunities in the agriculture industry?”, and “Do men and women have different roles in the agriculture industry?”

Other questions explored how the intersections of race, gender, and religion affected women farmers' opportunities.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, "a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set," was used for this study (Braun and Clarke 2012:57). We use a contextualist method of thematic analysis, "sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism" (Braun and Clarke 2006:86). Contextualist methods focus on the historical, social, and cultural backdrop of people's experiences and see meaning as created through socialization and impacted by history, norms, and power. Thus, we primarily used inductive coding, which allowed themes to emerge from the raw data.

The data analysis for this study started immediately after the first interview. We used NVivo software to help code and identify themes appearing through the experiences of the participants. For example, by looking for common, underlying themes between all the interviews in the data. The data analysis happened concurrently with the data collection to fully understand the data, as well as consider if other questions should be added to the interview schedule. After about four interviews, more questions were added, including, "What does feminism mean or not mean to you as a woman in agriculture?" and "Are religion and agriculture connected?" The above questions were added because, without prompting, the women farmers would talk about religion or not being a feminist. We did not re-interview the four participants as they had each already discussed issues related to religion and feminism.

The authors practiced reflexivity by positioning our backgrounds, social statuses, and biases to be open to different views. Both authors are White, cisgender, middle-class women. As mentioned, the first author grew up on a family farm and identified as Christian. In contrast, the second author does not have a connection to agriculture and does not practice Christianity. We used self-contained triangulation in which participants' statements supported or weakened their positions. We used peer review by having two sociology colleagues who study gender review the findings. Our rich, in-depth findings will allow sociologists and policymakers to better understand the experiences of southern women in the agriculture industry.

### Findings: Southern Rural Feminism

Feminist theory, specifically, difference feminism (Gilligan 1982) and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 2000), combine and expand to help explain a geographical type of feminism (Rushing 2017) we call *Southern Rural Feminism*, a kind of feminism seen among women farmers in our study. Southern Rural Feminism follows a binary gender construct and posits that women and men have the same abilities. Yet, differences focused on gendered strengths and weaknesses exist, where a woman's touch offers some advantages for women farmers.

#### A Woman's Touch

Southern Rural Feminism posits that women can do anything men can, especially in agriculture. Kelly is a 39-year-old White woman who has been farming for nearly a decade. Like other participants, Kelly is self-assured that she can do anything a man can do. Kelly talks about her experience interviewing with a group of all men for her current position; she is the



first woman in this position on a university research farm. She describes the interview:

And since they can't approach the topic of my gender, I did. And I said, "Look, if you have concerns about me being a female, then don't hire me. I'm perfectly happy where I'm at. Can I do this job? Yes. Can I do it well? Yes."

Similarly, Carmen, a 33-year-old White woman who farms with her husband, says, "I can do just about anything that he can do. And sometimes I might even say even better, right?" This can-do attitude that indicates difference, almost a benefit among women, was present amongst many participants.

Although women reported having the same skills as men, the majority highlighted gendered strengths and weaknesses that often lead to unique responsibilities on the farm. Kimberly, a 28-year-old White woman, who was driving to her office after feeding cattle, echoes Carmen that women may possess some advantages compared to men.

I don't believe that men or women should be excluded from any opportunity within ag...There's a lot of male production farmers, but just because they're doing it, that doesn't mean that females can't plow a field or milk a cow as well...But, I definitely think there are some strong suits that women bring to the table that, you know, men may not always carry.

Participants expressed that being a woman in a work environment dominated by men is what made their contribution to their farm and the agriculture industry so exceptional. These unique gendered, maternal distinctions can be summed by Elenor, a 25-year-old White woman and the youngest of the participants in the study. She mentioned

"a woman's touch" throughout her interview. She explains that female farmers are strong-willed and passionate:

I think that the maternal female touch on stuff is what makes women in ag their influence so much more powerful...We don't even have to be mothers, but just like the woman's touch on everything. I think there's something to be said on that approach to a lot of business things.

Elenor was not the only woman who thought about nurturing or maternal instincts when discussing what it means to be a woman farmer. Christy, a 66-year-old White woman and the oldest of the female farmers, also discussed how women have a nurturing character that makes their contributions to the agriculture industry valuable. She states that "when men farm, a family will eat good. When women farm, the community eats good." She goes on to explain that women farmers care for others and the land.

Loving and nurturing the land came up with many women farmers, including Charlie, a 63-year-old Black poultry farmer. When Charlie was asked what characteristics or qualities a woman farmer has, she responded, "[women farmers] love the land, they maybe, there's a nurturing inside of you." She describes women farmers as "people that have a beauty within the feminine side."

### **Christianity**

Gender differences and day-to-day life in agriculture in the South are often grounded in the participant's Christian faith. Participants mentioned Christianity in some contexts. Women discussed they rely upon God in many circumstances because

of the uncontrollable elements, such as weather and insects, in the agriculture industry.

Elenor, a 25-year-old White woman, believes the differences between men and women in the agriculture industry are positive. She insinuates that some of these differences are due to Christian values, which support Southern Rural Feminism. Elenor explicates:

I mean, we were designed, biologically designed, differently. To think differently. To act differently. I think there's a lot of judgment because of how things have always been, so to speak, on how women approach things versus how men do it.

Kelly, a 39-year-old White woman, states while talking about the farm she grew up on, "Pray for rain, then you prayed it would stop raining long enough to get the crops out the field." Kelly continues talking about her faith as she comments that she believes the "Lord'll provide no matter what."

Kimberly, a 28-year-old White woman, supports Kelly's perspective that agriculture and Christianity are traditionally tied together and explains:

Personally, I don't know any farmers that aren't Christians. Because, in my opinion, it's very hard to be a farmer and not be a Christian and see life and death and the peaks and valleys and the miracles on the farm. I know that sounds a little cliché, but it's taught me to be able to live with a lot of those things.

Madison is a 51-year-old White woman and fourth-generation farmer who owns and operates a cotton gin. She thanks God every day that she wakes up, has a beautiful day, and that the crops

are growing. She says, "I do think it [religion] plays a part...[for] the majority of the people who do farm. I think it's a big part of it."

### U.S. Rural Southern Traditions

The U.S. rural Southern traditional context was connected to a particular type of gender traditionalism. All women experienced treatment ranging from being discounted, being discriminated against, to being put on a pedestal by men. All participants in this study referenced the traditionality of the agriculture industry in the South and how traditionalism impacts women farmers; some aspects of this traditionalism were viewed as positive. A 51-year-old White woman, Patsy, appreciates being treated like a Southern lady. She explains how difficult it is to open a gap gate on the farm, which is a gate that holds a lot of tension and is built of wire and a wooden post. It takes a fair amount of strength to open a gap. Patsy expresses that while she is capable of opening a gap, she is "kind of thrilled that I'm still married to a man who's, you know, he still believes in southern chivalry, and he'll jump off and get that for me."

On the other hand, rural southern traditions can sometimes be problematic. Jessie is a 44-year-old White woman and is often assumed not to be a farmer when she's with her husband, who also farms. "They automatically think that if you are a woman in South [state], you are a teacher or a nurse. So, I do think women get put in that box that that's the only thing they can do."

A 66-year-old White woman, Christy, has had a similar experience to Jessie. "People, like, if they want to know who's in charge, they always assume it's my husband, and he's not. I mean, I run the

business. He definitely helps.” Christy describes the South as a “very White, religious, red area.” She later explains that she would like to see more diverse people in farming and that she enjoys having access to a larger variety of products. Christy acknowledges how challenging it is for younger farmers to get access to land, but takes a gender and color blindness approach (Collins 2017) and suggests, “I don’t care whether you’re man, woman, what color you are.” When asked about opportunities in the industry, Kimberly, a 28-year-old White woman, states, “it can be discriminated upon very quickly, especially for us being in the Bible Belt.”

Charlie, a 63-year-old Black woman, started her farm herself and had no ties to agriculture except for some ancestors she had never met. Charlie says, “I don’t think there should be [different roles], but there seems to be.” She is one of three women in this study with no prior connection to the agriculture industry and the only Black participant. She explains how some women can feel threatened by other women in the industry. Although she sees the benefit of more women farmers, she mentions some bad experiences she had with women. She says, “I think we’re just trying to load up numbers, but I have worked with women that have destroyed other women. Just destroyed them. You understand?” Charlie describes what she often observes:

It seems to be he’s out there working the farm. She’s doing the books. That’s typical. She may go out and help him with a few things...But, by and large, when I’ve helped or volunteered or whatever, she’s coming out ‘cause she’s like, “Oh, there’s a woman out there.” Yes, honey. I’m not trying to take your husband, okay? I’m out here trying to learn about this shit that I don’t know because I didn’t have time to be on a farm.

While some participants write off their environment as “traditional roles within their family business” or people just being “stuck in the old ways,” it is easy to see the adverse effects. For starters, women farmers feel they are not always treated fairly or given the same level of respect as men farmers, despite being equally or more educated than men farmers. All but one participant held higher education. However, this does not seem to make much difference in how women are treated or respected in the agriculture industry. Kimberly, mentioned above, discusses that women in agriculture are not always taken seriously and that women are not given the same credit as men.

I’ve had some very rough conversations...I do think the level of respect is often different, especially being in agriculture in the South, you kind of get some of that traditional roles. It’s not always popular to have a woman in the workplace. I mean, obviously, things evolved some in 2022, but when you’re with those farmers, sometimes that’s not always as easy because they grew up very traditional and still maintain a lot of those old-school traditions.

Kimberly discusses the “traditional roles” in the agriculture industry, which include women not driving the tractor or operating farm machinery, women not being the primary farm owner and operator, or women not attending agricultural meetings such as Cattlemen’s Association Meetings or Farm Bureau meetings. The “traditional roles” for women may look like more secretarial roles on the farm, marketing and selling the farm product, and assisting the primary farm operator with a clear distinction of who the primary farm operator is. Like Kimberly, Elenor, a 25-year-old White woman, discusses how her gender affects her opportunities in the agriculture industry through “imposed ceilings” or

expectations placed on her because she is a woman farmer. Elenor is in beef production, which she calls a “man’s world,” and mentions that men are often threatened by women in charge. She recalls a conversation:

Somebody told me one time, “Well, since you’re a woman, you’re not always going to be able to be on the back of a horse, like, you’re gonna have to find an office job somewhere,” and I was like, “I just don’t think so.” I don’t think that’s how it works. I think you set your mind to something, and you do what you want. So, I would say there are, like, superimposed ceilings that the industry puts on you...You’re treated differently because they [men] don’t think you’re capable.

Being treated differently was a common experience for women farmers. This often looked like other farmers not thinking you were qualified, being called inappropriate names, or not being listened to. For Kelly, a 39-year-old White woman and the head of a university research farm, and co-principal farm operator with her husband, being treated differently meant that men farmers and farm workers offered her help more often, even with simple farm tasks such as backing up a trailer. Kelly provides an example of working with men in the industry:

We have a really long trailer at work that’s actually a hay hauler, and the first time I ever drive it, one of my farm crew was trying to help guide me when I was backing it to unhook it. And I was like, “Okay, stop. I appreciate what you’re doing, but this will go much faster if you go back to the shop and let me do this myself.”

Likewise, Carmen, a 33-year-old White woman, who has worked in multiple agriculture sectors

and is at least a third-generation farmer, tells of an experience she had at an agricultural meeting. Carmen walked into the room for the meeting, and “they came up to me and said, ‘Would you like to join [the women’s version of the agricultural organization]?’ And I said, ‘Well, what does that mean?’” Women farmers embrace their femininity, but do not want to be looked at differently in the workplace. Multiple women farmers discussed the reality of working with men at these agricultural meetings. For instance, Jessie, a 44-year-old White woman, talks about how she walked into a room full of older White men for a meeting. After walking in, she received the remark, “Well, don’t you add color to the room?” She says they were acting as if “[I] don’t really need to be there, like, you know, ‘What are you doing here? Well, you add color to the room..’ And [I] was kind of like, ‘Yeah, that’s why I’m here.’” Charlie, a 63-year-old Black woman relates that when she tells people she’s a woman poultry farmer, they tend to underestimate her:

They think I have, you know, like ten chickens in the back, and I’m picking up eggs. I’m like [laughs], no. More like 300 to 500 layers. Okay? Meat birds. Yes, eggs are being laid, but I’m selling chicks. I’m selling pre-layers. They’re [men farmers] like, “What? You’re 24 commercial?” Yes, is that a problem? [laughs] They’re not expecting that.

Charlie was the only Black woman farmer who participated in this research. She shares the discrimination she has faced in the agriculture industry, though she is unsure if it is because of her race, gender, or a combination of both. Multiple identities leave Charlie with a different experience than the White women farmers in this study. She discusses an instance where she went into a feed store where she experienced some “pushback” because “they

couldn't embrace me." Charlie explains her surprise at learning that discrimination is embedded within agriculture:

[Discrimination] is infused into the vein...it's more than the fiber of this country. It's too much. [Sigh] I didn't think about ag because I'm thinking you have to eat, and there's food, and whoever the hell is doing it, right?... But, I never expected ag, for some reason. How silly was I to think it couldn't be there, too? And it's, it's a fair amount, unfortunately.

What Charlie is describing here is institutional and systematic racism. While the White women farmers in this study may make light of some of the mistreatment and discrimination, it is present in the production agriculture industry and appears highlighted when gender and race (Blackness) combine.

Differential treatment also included gender-based discrimination in hiring. Annie, a 37-year-old White immigrant woman and farmer who has been driving a tractor since the age of three years old, talks about how a man farmer would not employ her because "he didn't want women on his farm. He always claimed he didn't want to make accommodations...it was just his rule, like, he would just not hire women."

Two participants also labeled their experiences as sexual and verbal harassment. Louise, a 41-year-old White woman, works in plant production and often attends agricultural expos, fairs, and meetings. She explains, "I was hesitant entering agriculture and opening a business...you know, it's a rural county, and sometimes, sometimes the older generation is slow to adapt." She recalls going on a three-day agriculture show to showcase her products, but ended up being spoken to inappropriately—something

that would have been far less likely to happen to a man in this industry. She remarks:

On the second day, this d-, I have no nice words for this human. This human from [state] looked me up and down like a piece of meat. And just, I mean, called me sugar britches. And I was like, "You are disgusting." And I held my own. I fired right back at him.

Louise continues her story by saying how another exhibitor, who was a man, stepped in on her behalf. The man who called her "sugar britches" ended up getting kicked out of the agriculture show. She concludes her story, "I definitely felt it was a good and bad feeling. One, I knew that he had my back, but at the same time, did he jump to my defense because he thought I couldn't hold my own?" Similar to Louise, Elenor, a 25-year-old White woman, describes her experiences with working with men in the agriculture industry. She says:

Oh man [deep exhale]. Whether they [men] know it or not, I mean this [pause]. There's a lot of sexual harassment that goes on both knowingly and unknowingly. There's a lot of like, "Oh, are you sure you should be doing this?" And, and this and that... I just think there's a lot of deep-seated opinions, emotions, and kind of boundaries that you stay in, in the ag industry.

Although the women all had gendered mistreatment in the agriculture industry, most participants were quick to point out that mistreatment was the exception and not the rule. Louise suggests, "There's a few bad eggs everywhere, you know... but that's not the majority of the folks we run into... So, I mean, you have stuff like that, but we got so many good people in our industry."



Roughly half of the participants talked about the good men in the industry. These were often relatives such as husbands, brothers, uncles, fathers, and grandfathers. It was clear that having a paternal familial tie was an important part of these women's lives on the farm. Not only because it made farming more accessible but also because of the support they received. It is also important to note here that while having a paternal tie offers more support and potentially a broader network, women still typically rely on other men for entry into the production agriculture industry. For example, Kelly says that when she thinks of a farmer, she often thinks of "my dad and granddad in a hayfield." Like Kelly, Elenor talks about a negative experience with men in the agriculture industry, but she follows up with an example of a good experience. She observes:

There's also some [men] that are so proud of you for, like, paving the way because, like, especially if they have daughters. If they have daughters, then they see it as like if she can do it, my kid can do it kind of deal. But, I've definitely had both ends of the spectrum of, like, being taken advantage of because you're a woman and being very respected.

Louise, a third-generation farmer, talks about her relationship with her grandfather who was "a dirt farmer, and a peach farmer, and a cattleman." She describes him and other men farmers she interacted with in childhood as generous and loving. She was just four years old when her grandfather encouraged her interest in agriculture. Louise points out, "My grandfather always, I was always told I could do anything. Anything. Like, and he always, he, he totally reinforced that." She recounts a story of how he gave her the freedom to experiment:

There was a strawberry patch in my grandparent's front yard...They would harvest those strawberries

and sell them...It got time to dig up those strawberries. They weren't producing as well as they should... Granddaddy said, "Well, what are we going to do here, baby?" and I said, "We're gonna plant seeds in a circle"...And he said, "Okay," and that's what we did, right in the middle of the front yard. [Laughs]

Having a significant family member, specifically a man in agriculture, helped to build a foundation for many of the women farmers in this study. Whether it was a husband, father, or another close relative, the women expressed how extraordinary those bonds were to their success in agriculture.

### Rejection of Feminism

Despite consistent stories of harm, most women reject the notion of systematic gender oppression and are quick to defend the agriculture industry as a mostly friendly place for women. Participants advocate for gender equality but see no need to take on the feminist label. This would only alienate men who have created important career pathways for them. Maintaining harmonious relationships in agriculture with both women and men is the ideal, perhaps reminiscent of a woman's touch living in the traditional rural South.

Women farmers described their rejection of feminist identity. Elenor, a 25-year-old White woman, asserts, "I am in no way, shape, or form a feminist." When probed about what being a feminist means, Elenor mentions faith as a backdrop to her views, explains that gender diversity is helpful in agriculture, and that she would not rebuff a man's assistance, as a so-called feminist might do. She says, "But being, not being a feminist to me just means that I'm not, I'm not shutting men out from being able to help me just because I think I can do it myself."

Charlie, a 63-year-old Black woman farmer, is also cautious about shutting out men. She thinks of Gloria Steinem, a White women's rights activist, when she thinks of feminism, and she understands why the feminist movement was needed "back in the day," and admits some problems with gender equality continue, but also sees the downside.

I also feel like the feminine, the feminist movement can be negative if you don't have some opening to what it means for the mass human side because, to me, you can be feminist or feminine and not feel like you have to push them [men] out... But, I also think that you have to have, there's got to be a, a way of opening the door so that we both [women and men] can exist.

JoJo, a 51-year-old White woman and honeybee farmer, was asked to describe what feminism meant to her. She became hesitant, and her body language became uncomfortable. JoJo says, "I'm not a feminist, first of all. I think that when, anytime that there's a conversation about that, this topic, people get intimidated." She continues explaining how feminism, especially in their Southern context, often threatens men and women:

I think in the South, there are more, probably women have been suppressed and they're just in progress by choice often. I don't think they, and I'm thinking about women that I know. My friends of mine, my family's, whatever. I don't think they necessarily want to move into leadership roles that men are traditionally in.

Patsy, a 51-year-old White woman, and many other women farmers concur that feminism has a negative connotation for them. Many women farmers see feminism in radical lighting that is harsh and abrasive, not the type of relationship they want with other men farmers in the industry.

Madison, a 51-year-old White woman, says, "Yes, I'm proud to be a woman. I'm proud to be a woman in the agriculture industry that is predominantly dominated by men, and I'm not gonna back down...but I'm not gonna go to the extreme." Carmen, a 33-year-old White woman, who was happily weighing 1,300-pound steers three days before giving birth to her child, describes feminism as needing a balance. She remarks:

I ultimately think that women have the same rights as men. But, just as much as a man needs to learn to listen to a woman, in a, we'll say professional setting, a woman needs to learn to keep her mouth shut, too. So, I mean, it's a give and take.

Feminism, for many participants, was equated with discarding men. Women farmers, even those who verbalized support for gender equality, did not want to be cast in the stereotypical role of a man-hating feminist. This is not surprising when you consider that men are often the gatekeepers or the perceived gatekeepers to farming opportunities.

### **Cautious Optimism for Women in Agriculture**

Ultimately, most women farmers are optimistic about the future, and many desire to see more women in agriculture and leadership. A few women even mentioned how there rarely is a woman U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and how they felt a woman could be capable of that position. The United States had one woman Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, in 2001 (USDA 2022). Women farmers want to see women involved with the USDA, the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and other major agricultural organizations. Louise says, "The future for women overall is very bright in ag...I'd also love to see a new generation of women step up and take hold, you know, and start these farms."

Although women are growing in number, gender roles are still persistent. Madison, a 51-year-old White woman, explains that we will continue seeing men on the manual labor side of the industry, but women farmers will be doing the marketing, selling, and other office work. The reasoning she gives for this is the physical differences between men and women. The physical and biological differences between men and women are a concept that comes up throughout the interviews.

Kelly, a 39-year-old White woman, discusses the importance of mentorship and leadership of other women within the agriculture community. Kelly and six other women hosted a “southern women in ag hands-on workshop” in different parts of her state, where they taught other women various farming tasks, such as backing up a trailer, operating farm equipment, and driving cattle. She explains:

I want to say we did four different workshops that were always full...The demographics were all over the board, and those were the most fun when you just had the young and the old. I believe one lady said she was in her eighties, and she wanted to come and just drive a tractor...So, it was very good, even networking experience.

Kimberly, a 28-year-old White woman, also talks about how it helps to have connections with other women in agriculture. She talks about how her county has a local agriculture extension agent, who is a woman and a close friend. She explains how women in leadership positions could help the future of women in agriculture when she says:

Women are not always taken seriously at their first, say, at things. And so, if there’s a woman in a leadership role, she might be willing to lend an ear to

a younger woman who’s got something to say that can make an impactful difference in a business. So, I would really love to see more women in ag leadership roles.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study broadens and nuances the sociological and feminist theoretical context of meaning-making for Southern women farmers by combining difference feminism (Gilligan 1982) and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 2000) to a focus on region and place (Rushing 2017) to a concept we call Southern Rural Feminism. Participants verbalize women’s equality yet acknowledge perceived gender differences, often framed as strengths and weaknesses between the binary gender categories of men and women, where the uniqueness of a woman’s touch is understood as maternal and offers value to the agriculture industry. “A woman’s touch is expected to be caring, servile, and responsive, whereas a man’s touch is supposed to be predatory, controlling, and expert” (Hancock, Sullivan, and Tyler 2015 as cited in Cheded and Skandalis 2021:341).

Interesting tensions and ambiguities present themselves in this seemingly contradictory space where women engage with a form of feminism, but also reject the view of what they construct feminism to be. Nearly all participants’ everyday life in southern agriculture was grounded in the participants’ Christian faith, and some women used Christianity to explain differing gender dynamics. To be clear, Christianity is not exclusive to women farmers or even female farmers in the U.S. South and continues to be the most reported U.S. religion (64%), but is declining (Pew Research Center 2022). At the same time, research indicates that the U.S. South tends to be more religious and specifically Christian and has

a greater level of sexist attitudes than other parts of the U.S. (Norman, 2018; Rushing 2017; Charles, Gu-ryan, and Pan 2022).

Within the context of the traditional rural southern culture, all women experienced differential gendered treatment in the industry, from welcomed gentlemanly behavior and gendered slights to more severe discrimination and harassment. The majority of mistreatment was from men, with only a couple of instances of ill-treatment from other women, including the only Black woman in this study. Despite widespread gender problems, findings suggest most women do not view systematic gender oppression in the industry (Sachs 1983), do not adhere to feminist labels (Alan and Sachs 2007), and are cautiously optimistic about the future of women in agriculture, especially when women support and mentor each other.

Women farmers in this study were raised on a farm, and many were intergenerational farmers with ties to men who helped pave the way for their entry. For example, Louise, a White, third-generation farmer, recounts the support she received from her grandfather when learning to farm, “I was always told I could do anything. Anything. Like, and he always, he, he totally reinforced that.” Louise is the same woman who recounted harassment at an agriculture expo, referred to by a man as “sugar britches.” She quickly pointed out that abuse was not the norm and said, “There’s a few bad eggs everywhere, you know.” Participants generally expressed gratitude toward paternal family members as they seemed to experience overwhelming support, which may have led them to minimize the multitude of negative experiences from other men in the field. Participants viewed feminism as rejecting men and wanted no part in this. At the same time, they inconspicuously

adopt many features of feminism, but seem to minimize it and make it more acceptable for their rural southern context. Their feminism does not include excluding or hating men. Perhaps this is a survival strategy—without relational networks of men farmers and at least some reliance on the traditional farming norms, women may have an even harder time accessing full integration into production agriculture, including land, equitable pay, and occupational environments free from discrimination. Christianity adds a layer of complexity—inherent in this belief system is often a patriarchal framework (Whitehead and Perry 2019) that further explains gender differences as natural or ordained by God.

Specific to our study, all the participants except one identified as White women, which reflects U.S. agriculture demographics (Lockhart 2021). All White women, except for one immigrant woman, have at least a bachelor’s degree and more than half of the educated White women hold graduate education. White women in this study were much more likely to have grown up on a farm. Gender and whiteness paired with a farming background, which generally includes networks with men, higher education, and marriage to a man (Tavener and Crane 2019; An-Vo, Shahbaz, and Cockfield 2022), which might be the recipe for more opportunities in southern agriculture. Similar to Beach (2013), we found that women struggled to be identified as farmers and were often seen as farm wives or farm helpers. Many of the women farmers discussed how instead of being addressed themselves, often another accompanying man (such as a husband, father, or uncle) would be addressed instead—even if that man knew little about the farm.

Finally, this study identified discrimination also found in previous scholarship (Horst and Marion

2019; Fremstad and Paul 2020). Some women discussed how they felt they were treated differently in USDA or FSA offices because of their gender, and that this may have led to a lack of funding or quality services. Two participants labeled their experiences as gender harassment, and several other women described this. In line with Sachs, Jensen, Castellanos, and Sexsmith's (2021) recommendation, future research must examine pervasive harassment in the agriculture industry.

More research needs to focus on Black female farmers living and working in the South. Charlie was the only Black woman farmer interviewed. While she shared many views with the White participants, she was the only person who voiced the impact of the intersection of gender and race on her experiences in agriculture. The White women in this study tended to take a colorblind approach, believing that hard work and perseverance is the key to success in farming.

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In conclusion, our research adds a new layered perspective to the literature on women in agriculture by contextualizing Southern rural feminism and how it impacts U.S. Southern female farmers' experiences. Although the number of women in U.S. agriculture is growing and steps have been made to increase equity in the industry, our participants describe continued gender inequality, but do not identify the inequities as systematic. Gender barriers in agriculture are seen as individual-level problems that can be overcome with a feminine touch, passion, confidence, and hard work, and with what we call Southern Rural Feminism.

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# Entering Iranian Homes: Privacy Borders and Hospitality in Iranian Movies

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## Keywords:

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**Abstract:** The architecture of homes in Iran has changed significantly over the past four decades since the 1979 Iranian revolution. We ask how these architectural changes shift neighborhood relationships and how they transform the Iranians' hospitality rituals and practices. We conducted a qualitative content analysis of eighteen Iranian movies filmed after the 1979 revolution. They allowed us to make comparisons among various dwelling patterns and neighborhood relationships. We argue that the representations of neighborhood relationships reflect these changes, demonstrating the impact of architecture on interactions. Our focus in this article is on borders of privacy, power dynamics in the neighborhoods and among families, and communication forms to better understand the impact of changing architecture on hospitality through the lens of cinema. Additionally, we engage with Goffman's (1956) concepts of frontstage and backstage, demonstrating that these are not dichotomous, although they are opposites, and there can be a thinning of frontstage along with a thickening of backstage. Entrances to homes are often gradual, and visitors may gradually penetrate through layers of the frontstage as they become closer (emotionally and in space) to the heart of the home's (and its occupants') backstage.

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Following the 1979 revolution in Iran, which coincided with increased architectural modernization, apartments started to gradually replace previously yard-centric and yard-sided traditional Iranian homes. Structural changes to family living have accompanied this shift in housing. Our study delineates these changes in architecture and hospitality by comparing the portrayal of relationships in cinema, which depicts life in both traditional Iranian houses and new apartments. We focus on interpreting borders of privacy, power dynamics in the neighborhoods and among families, communication forms, and their differences in two kinds of dwelling patterns in the field of Iranian cinema. This study demonstrates the disruptions resulting from changing dwelling patterns. We also discuss the residents' agentic practices in various situations, that is, the actions they take to accomplish agency in a given context—a concept Maxwell and Aggleton (2011) coined to indicate how young women in unequal power relationships “take action” or “take power back”—to cope with some of these fundamental changes and adjust to new architectural forms.

Hospitality is a central part of the house and home in Iran. The word *khaaneh* (خانه) in Farsi or Persian is in relationship with the land (Barati 2003) and translates to both home and house in English. It relates to the concept of *sokoonat* (سکونت)—a dwelling that refers to habitation, as well as being established and living in comfort (Diargahe Shahr Co 2015). The relationships between the terms house and home, however, vary across cultural and historical contexts, including the North American context, which is influenced by Anglo-Saxon origins. *Khaaneh* captures both the physical aspects of the place of habitation (house) and its ideals, feelings, and practices—the related (home) aspects (Mallett 2004). We

use “home” and “house” based on the mentioned differences, but we also use the term “house” in opposition to “apartment,” which is a building comprised of different units that may become home for their residents.

Iranian hospitality and its rituals, central to Iranian culture, rely on gradual entrances and exits as guests are accompanied through progressive and layered spaces into the home. We argue that this creates a gradual process of moving through spaces where the frontstage thins as the backstage thickens. Traditional Iranian architecture accommodates these gradual processes through more than twenty-six defined private, semi-private, or public parts of the home, including the yard, five-to-seven-door rooms, the *eivan* (an Iranian-style porch), the *orsi* room, the *korsi* room, the water fountain house, among others (Diargahe Shahr Co 2015). From an essentialist perspective, Iranian architecture has unique principles that Pirnia (2008) identifies as human scale; inward-looking; self-sufficiency; avoiding non-essentials; structural rigidity; and proportion. However, these terms are no longer suitable for contemporary Iranian architecture, which has moved away from yard-centric houses toward apartments (Qayyoomi Bidhendi and Abdollahzadeh 2014).

Privacy borders, particularly in traditional houses, which are designed to accommodate these practices, are complex and yet clearly understood by all. In apartment buildings, there is a lingering complexity to privacy borders. However, the architecture does not permit accompaniment through spaces. Privacy borders become muddled, and conflict ensues. Because of the visibility of the kitchen in apartments—traditionally the heart of the Iranian backstage when hosting—hosting becomes even more of a challenge as the architecture allows the backstage to be visible

and penetrated. While apartments disrupt the coherence and continuity of performing Iranian hospitality, they also make women's household labor more visible by introducing the open-concept kitchen, a trend previously noticed among other cultures as the kitchen and back regions become more architecturally visible (Halle 1996; Munro and Madigan 1999). We argue that the agentic work towards interpreting and maintaining privacy borders is a generic social process that looks different in various settings, such as apartment kitchens in Iran.

Apartments also force people to move through vertical spaces outside their unit, such as staircases. People must develop vertical relationships with each other—if they ever happen. In traditional homes, where groups live in the wings of the home, there is an expectation that residents and visitors will be calling to each other through windows, across alleys, and generally interacting in horizontal spaces, creating more horizontal relationships. The dominance of the vertical form of relationships further complicates privacy borders and hospitality and can lead to conflict. Ultimately, thresholds that bring unity and order in traditional homes, leading to continuity and coherence, gain a disruptive characteristic in the apartments and suspend traditional Iranian hospitality work.

Thomas Gieryn (2002) comprehensively defines the difference between space and place from a sociological perspective. A space requires three things to become a "place;" a geographic location, material form, and social meaning. We use the term "place" to refer to specific places in the movies we analyze, but the term "space" when speaking more broadly of a category of space rather than a specific place. For example, people move through space to penetrate deeper into a home. However, in a mov-

ie, we would note the movement of specific people from one specific place (someone's specific foyer in the film, say) to another specific place (the unique threshold depicted). We refer to the collective sense of a "threshold," however, as a space because it is not anchored in one geographic location. Of course, time is intimately connected with space, and as people move through spaces (or move from one place to another), they are also moving through time. We recognize this and make some reference to the temporal aspects of movement, but ultimately, we focus on space and place in this article.

We will first discuss dwelling pattern shifts in Iran and the new proliferation of apartment buildings. From there, we discuss privacy and the home, connecting these literatures to mobilize our analysis and to argue that front and backstages, while opposites, operate along a continuum.

## Dwelling Pattern Shifts in Iran

Norberg-Shultz (1985), as a phenomenologist, based his definition of "dwelling" on the relationship of humans with the environment and with each other. According to him, dwelling somewhere means being at peace, having relationships with others, and being protected from the outside. Architectural patterns in the preindustrial era ensued from local and embedded socio-historical contexts, resulting from the interactions between people and places. Architectural patterns were most often the outcomes of cooperation between builders and people. Given that "buildings stabilize social life" (Gieryn 2002:35), traditional relationships acted as a guarantor of coordination between culture and architecture.

The process of modernization, along with a move towards Westernization, however, discredited these



relationships and building practices. Modernization brought the gendered ideals of progress, rationality, and authenticity to Iranian society, embodying new forms of male subjectivity (Felski 1995; Baydar and Heynen 2005). Moreover, according to philosophers Adorno and Heidegger—although coming from different perspectives—modernity and dwelling are incompatible concepts and cannot be reconciled (Baydar and Heynen 2005).

The disruption of dwelling patterns couples with the modernization process and transforms houses into predominantly market-oriented economic capital. These rapid changes began during the industrial revolution, which spurred the mass production and industrialization of housing (Diargahe Shahr Co 2015). Accordingly, form and function replaced traditional knowledge as a driving power behind architecture in the designing process. Thus, the driving forces of experiential knowledge, tradition, and culture lost influence over architectural designs (Rapoport 1969). Ultimately, buildings reflect power dynamics (Gieryn 2002), and in this era of hyper-globalization, decision-making powers lie less and less at the grassroots level.

In Iran, modern architecture brought the same lack of connection with previous cultural practices to the Iranian architectural context. In the 1960s, the Shah embarked on a modernization program, bringing the industrial revolution to Iran, along with changes to economic and material expectations (Hetherington 1982). Housing forms and everyday life practices also changed. Living patterns shifted away from the extended family living to nuclear families, and life in the historic districts and neighborhoods expanded beyond these areas with the arrival of automobiles. In the newer parts of the cities, it became more common to construct housing along a grid and

to include resident complexes and apartment towers. These rapid changes and their inconsistency with the traditional Iranian ways of life, this “unfriendly architecture” (Dawson 2008), disrupted Iranians’ everyday lives. The 1979 revolution marked an end to any feelings of affinity to Westernization. However, modernization clung fast, and apartment living has become a norm. This raises the question of how Iranians agentically navigate the gap between more engrained, traditional cultural practices around the home and their newer living arrangements in apartments. We should note that the rise in apartment living is unequally distributed across classes, which we will discuss more below.

These rapid changes potently impacted women in the realm of home and society. With the increase in the level of education and occupation of women in paid jobs outside of the home (Fazeli 2020) and the inevitable modernization process, the architectural changes led to creating spaces where women had more opportunities to come out of the backstage of the house and play a more visible role in the public arenas. This does not mean architecture had a deterministic role in bringing these changes to Iranian society, but we acknowledge its role as an accelerator of such processes and how people have to agentically engage with new forms of dwellings as they relate to cultural hospitality practices and privacy borders.

Additionally, today, people outside and inside Iran often move several times during their lifetime in a highly globalized world (Diargahe Shahr Co 2015) rather than remain established in one place during their life span. We argue that neighborhood relationships also changed in line with these processes, resulting in more limited neighborhood relationships and more conflicts among residents, especial-

ly in apartment buildings and residential towers. We take the neighborhood relationship changes as a significant sign of disruptions to the Iranian way of living. Our study examines the dwelling pattern shifts in Iran through the lens of cinema by focusing on neighborhood relationships and everyday life entering and exiting practices of residents at home. Since these practices are home-based and oriented around both hospitality and privacy, we will now turn to a discussion of privacy and the home.

## Privacy at Home

Privacy is a critical concept in Iranian culture. With a long history of habitation and urbanization, Iran has incorporated its history of dwelling, religion, and continuity into Iranian cultural values. Therefore, like other cultural elements, privacy has a complicated nature and comprises different layers in accordance with architectural elements. We begin with a discussion of the definition and meanings of privacy and link this to *home*, as a concept, as a practice, and as a process. We emphasize the contextual nature of privacy and highlight its implications for social order, power, and control. We then explore how people accomplish privacy through their everyday life practices, focusing on the Iranian context. The everyday, on-the-ground practices of privacy take place in the home, so the varying types of homes are perfect places to observe privacy practices and the maintenance of boundaries and the borders of the home.

Erving Goffman (1956) set the tone for the literature on the boundaries between public and private. He postulated a frontstage, where people present their ideal and desired selves, and a backstage, where people can relax their concentrated performance of self. Of course, people are still performing to themselves,

even when alone, but when the curtains are closed and the public act, the public-facing self, relaxes. This framework serves as the basis for many scholars across a variety of disciplines in their analysis of the performance of self and roles (e.g., Goretzki and Messner 2019; Moncada-Comas 2020). Although there have been studies that examine what happens when the frontstage and backstage collide or fail in some way (Miller 2004; Turner, Wang, and Reinsch 2020) or where frontstage norms are subverted and challenged (Coates 1999), we take the opportunity to study frontstage and backstage as a continuum rather than a dichotomy—a continuum that varies in specifics according to the cultural context and which is instantiated through interaction. As such, the process of maintaining the front-backstage continuum is a generic social process (Prus 1987). The interactions we examine, the entering and exiting of Iranian homes, are spatially arranged. As guests are escorted through connected spaces and penetrate the home more deeply, the roles required of both hosts and guests adjust along the continuum of front to backstage, where acts are contextualized by being in (or out) of place (Cresswell 1996). What results is a team performance (Goffman 1956) reifying rituals of the public-to-private transition.

The concepts of backstage and frontstage correspond with the Persian architectural concepts of *andarooni* (backstage; private inner quarter available only to the family) and *birooni* (frontstage; public, social area for hosting) spaces in traditional Iranian houses. Iranian home architecture involves a variety of forms, functions, and meanings that vary across different regions, climates, cultures, and throughout history. *Andarooni* and *birooni* are context-specific and are in the *darongara* style, that is, an introverted architectural pattern (Pirnia 2008). However, they are the macro-spatial form of *darongara* pattern, which is

very common in traditional Iranian architecture (Diargahe Shahr Co 2015). While they define and separate the more private realm of the home from the semi-public areas, they also manifest patriarchal relationships in the form of architecture (Fazeli 2008). Jafar Shahri (1988:407) investigates the position of Iranian women in the house domain during the Qajar dynasty era (1789-1925). He indicates that women used to be present mainly in the *andarooni* realm of the house, which included the more private places of the home. However, their presence in the *birooni* place was limited as they were mostly absent in public spaces outside the house.

*Andarooni* and *birooni* provided different functions for the members of the family. While *andarooni* created a private area at home for the family, the function of *birooni* as a semi-public space allowed men to continue their work at home without interrupting the family's private life. In other words, the *birooni* mediated between the public and private realms of the house. Moreover, according to religious interpretations, *andarooni* used to provide private spaces for women to unveil their hijab and "be protected" from the eyes of *naa-mahram* (any male who is not a brother, a father, a grandfather, an uncle, or a spouse—who is not supposed to see women without a hijab according to Islamic rules). The arrival of new dwelling patterns dramatically challenged *andarooni* and *birooni* spaces and their functions for family members, especially for women. While our study focuses on the interruption of hospitality, a core feature of Iranian culture, more work certainly needs to be done that focuses more directly on women and gender.

## Home and Privacy

We combine the literature on privacy and front-back-stage with the literature on the concept of home,

where privacy and boundaries are enacted daily. Saunders and Williams (1988) focus on the meaning of home as a refuge, and they refer to privacy at home as freedom from surveillance and external role expectations. Somerville (1992) identifies six signifiers of home: hearth, shelter, privacy, roots, abode, and paradise. In defining home as it relates to privacy, he argues that home is a space where people can establish and control their personal boundaries. Therefore, the privacy and the boundaries people make at home are noteworthy in terms of how they impact one another. These conceptualizations of the home have been challenged as representative of Western, middle-class perceptions (Jackson 1994). However, the middle-class ideals impacted by modernization in Iran have become entrenched in how people idealize the meaning of home, and thus how people strive to create a home, particularly given the architectural breakdown of *andarooni* and *birooni* spaces (Habibi and De Meulder 2015). People work towards accomplishing "home" with respect to these ideals, even if those ideals are not realized in practice (Tucker 1994; Kusenbach and Paulsen 2013). These ideals may be cultural ideals, such as hospitality in the Iranian context.

As people define the meaning of home differently across class, gender, and different geographical locations, the meaning of privacy at home varies. We argue that the meaning of privacy and how people accomplish it depends on their cultural context and their role within that cultural context. For example, people in the same home may have varying experiences and expectations around privacy that are rooted in gender. Religion, history, and tradition in Iran impact how people accomplish privacy, as we have seen above. Islam, for instance, provides a framework to attribute individuals with various levels of intimacy with their surrounding people,

including different family members. The way Iranians practice privacy also varies across local cultural contexts. For instance, privacy for families in the historical district of Yazd (a city in the center of Iran) involves more rigid and strict boundaries than in Boushehr (a city in the south of Iran near the Persian Gulf). It is important to people in Yazd for women, especially those in more traditional and historic neighborhoods, to protect themselves from *naa-mahram* or “stranger’s eyes” and to wear scarves.

The architectural structures are in line with these practices. There are very few windows on the external walls facing the alleys in Yazd. The climate has also impacted the limited number of external windows. Access to a home and surrounding space is controlled with a surrounding wall and a closed door. In contrast, privacy in Boushehr is more flexible in historic neighborhoods. In Boushehr, the house structure is similar to Yazd. However, the doors in the walls, which surround yard-centric homes, are usually partially open in the historic district. Therefore, the residents always expect people, especially neighbors and relatives, to come in and chat.

The form of family living in traditional houses also differed among the social class. Either a single family or multiple families together occupied the yard-centric houses, mostly in central Iran. Multi-family houses were found among the working class in the lower-income neighborhoods that suffered from poverty and had no choice but to live in communal houses. On the other hand, there were numerous elaborate traditional houses named after their wealthy owners across the country. In this spectrum, many other variations exist that mostly include extended family living in one big house. However, the children of extended families sometimes moved to their houses a few years after marriage.

Women often cover their hair with a scarf in all areas of a traditional house because they know that neighbors or relatives may enter the house during the day. A male neighbor usually says *Ya Allah* loudly when he enters his neighbor’s house to notify them of his presence. Boushehris and Yazdis consider the yard a public space, compared to the private space inside, but they accomplish privacy in the yard differently. Boushehris imagine people outside the house as potentially present in their yards and daily lives. They expect people from outside anytime during the day. Such expectation, however, does not necessarily extend to strangers for people in Yazd. These examples show how privacy is a subjective, fluid concept and differs across geographical and cultural Iranian contexts.

## Privacy and Access

People accomplish privacy in homes based on their cultural understandings and “cultural toolkits” (Swidler 1986). Some spaces at home are architecturally more suitable for private life, and some are more convenient for public rituals. Ozaki (2003:105) states that “the front region of the house is a place where performance is given, whereas the back region is where informal behavior and domestic activities take place.” This is in line with Goffman’s (1956) conceptualization of front and backstage. Ozaki (2003) argues that the architectural form of houses is the product of underlying social relations within the household and reflects the interactive use of the back region.

In Ozaki’s definition, the functions of the front and back regions correlate with proportionate access. This is of particular interest to us. The front and back region, and the agency with which these are managed, help us understand how people accomplish privacy in the Iranian context, what series of actions are related to the public or private realm, and what

they mean. As we demonstrate, for instance, the story of *Mum's Guest* revolves around Effat's efforts and struggles to offer her guests hospitality in an honorable way. She is highly concerned about how to represent her family and keep everything in order on the frontstage of her home. Therefore, we see many tensions in various scenes about keeping her private and public realms separate from each other and intact. We observed the similar efforts and struggles in keeping private and public realms separate and distinct from each other in *Leila*, *The Lodgers*, *Mother*, and *Felicity Land*. The main characters are concerned about how they keep the private realm out of reach of the public to control their narrative and their presentation of selves.

Privacy often maps onto spaces through access. Moving into more private spaces equates to more access to the private lives of individuals. On the other hand, accomplishing privacy varies depending on how people decide what information to share and what to keep private. In their sociological review of privacy, Anthony, Campos-Castillo, and Horne (2017:251) define privacy as "the access of one actor (individual, group, or organization) to another." According to this definition, privacy refers to "what people conceal or reveal and what others acquire and ignore" (Anthony et al. 2017:251). Many factors, including the law, social practices (such as levels of supervision or interaction patterns), technology (from architectural elements to smart technologies), and privacy norms, affect access. Christena Nippert-Eng (1996;2010) conducted two seminal studies on how people police access and maintain boundaries in their everyday lives as they negotiate the physical elements of movement in and out of homes and work. She finds that people put in a significant amount of work, which she calls "cognitive engineering," to mark boundaries through daily practices and interactions (Nippert-Eng 1996). In ad-

dition, she argues that we all face a "privacy problem" that is subjective and contextual (Nippert-Eng 2010). In short, privacy is a process—one that involves interactions around entrances, exits, access, expectations, and idealized notions of the home. While we cannot access the cognitive work at play in this study, we can analyze how movies represent this work; how privacy is represented and normalized; how characters perform front and backstage transitions. We hone in on the process of entering a home to tease out the issues of privacy and access that arise at the moment of entrance—which turns out not to be a moment, but a gradual progression towards the inside, as we will discuss.

Privacy and privacy norms have implications for social order, too. Social control, for instance, is highly dependent on visibility. We are certainly familiar with discussions about what should be allowed "in the privacy of one's home" and what should be policed. Recent policy changes around marijuana, sexual norms, and abortion in the United States are an example of this conversation. Privacy has implications for social cohesion as well. It is relevant to the intimacy of relationships (Lawler, Thye, and Yoon, 2011) and implies a level of trust, solidarity, and unity. Therefore, "achieving social order requires managing privacy in a way that allows for an optimal balance between revealing and concealing" (Simmel 1950:361). We can thus indicate that privacy is an inseparable constituent and essential component of social order (Anthony et al. 2017). Accordingly, it significantly impacts any micro-level interactions, particularly those involving visitors and residents of a home.

Privacy also intersects with inequality. Having access to places and their attached information as a resource is unequally distributed in society. Therefore, priva-



cy can be “a scarce social commodity” that reflects status, prestige, and power differences (Schwartz 1968:744 as cited in Anthony et al. 2017). In short, visibility and accessibility are unequally distributed within hierarchies (Anthony et al. 2017), and they are “as important structural elements in a bureaucracy as the distribution and delimitation of authority” (Cosser 1961:29). Finally, the allocation of privacy indicates the individual’s or groups’ status and power within a given social context (Nippert-Eng 2010). We, therefore, attend to social class and hierarchies as they intersect with privacy in our analysis. Think, for example, of marginalized groups and how much more easily a warrant might be issued to search their home. Their living spaces are considered less worthy of protection and privacy.

Adding a layer of nuance by acknowledging that access, disclosure of private information, privacy, and front/backstage regions exist on a continuum allows us to more accurately understand interactions as people enter homes. In other words, privacy affects interpersonal relationships, groups, and communities and has implications for group boundaries, cohesion, and collective action. While most of the studies referenced above are focused on Western contexts, we now turn to the accomplishment of privacy in a non-western context—Iran. This allows us to make the strange familiar and to establish interactions around entrances as generic social processes rather than only Western constructs. We ask how people interact with each other when it comes to managing the private-public sphere of their lives. We examine this through Iranian cinema and the portrayal of entrances and exits.

## Methodology

We conducted an ethnographic qualitative content analysis to examine neighborhood relationships, hos-

pitality, and privacy practices in 18 Iranian movies. We chose movies set in two different dwelling patterns and local cultural contexts—the traditional yard-centric home and newer apartments or condos. In addition, we focused on films set across regions in Iran. This method allowed us to pay attention to the emerging data in these movies and to code for themes inductively while attending to differing neighborhood relationships in these two types of dwelling patterns. We should stress that one limitation of this kind of study is that we are watching a representation of practices rather than the enactment of practices on the ground. These representations resonate as strong depictions from the perspective and experiences of the Iranian first author, but more importantly, we know that studying representations can be key in understanding what we think, as a society, about our norms.

We approached through the lens of ethnographic content analysis (ECA) (Altheide 1987; Altheide and Schneider 2013), which emphasizes reflexivity as visiting and re-visiting the data allows for sensitizing concepts to emerge (Blumer 1954; van den Hoonaard 1997) rather than applying a codebook as in some forms of content analysis. Not only did we record data from watching the movies, but we memoed throughout the process, including details around our affective engagement (Kavka 2008). We watched and re-watched the movies, allowing themes to emerge inductively “from reflexive fieldwork through constant discovery and comparison” (van den Scott, Forstie, and Balasubramanian 2015:422).

After watching movies and categorizing the sub-themes into major groups, three broad themes emerged: 1. Borders of Privacy, 2. Power Dynamics in the Neighborhoods and among Families, and 3. Communication Forms. Since the data were rich and nuanced, we present each major theme with its relevant subcategories (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Main themes**

Borders of Privacy	Power Dynamics in the Neighborhoods and among Families	Communication Forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrance and Exit Processes: Thresholds</li> <li>• Inside and Outside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict Resolution</li> <li>• Women’s Struggles and Action Strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horizontal and Vertical Relationships</li> </ul>

Source: Self-elaboration.

We chose movies produced after the 1979 revolution in Iran in drama/narrative, drama/social, and comedy genres. This aligns with increased living in apartments and unequal access to traditional, yard-centric homes across age, geographical location, and class. Iranian cinema after the revolution is still predominantly independent, and the Iranian directors who worked independently were able to create movies with less censorship and fewer external, political, and market forces. Therefore, the cinematic image of Iranian homes varies, emphasizing different aspects of the home across various forms of architecture. We chose the movies with specific attention to multiple characteristics, including the Iranian critics’ and popular opinion ranking lists, geographical places, the main place of the story, and years of production. We selected movies, particularly from different regions in Iran, in different decades to ensure the representation of movies over a forty-year period, which included at least a part of the story at home or in relation to home.

We focus much of our discussion around changing neighborhood relationships on *Mum’s Guest* and *Dayereh Zangi*. These two movies are in two different types of homes—a traditional Iranian yard-cen-

tered house and an apartment. They portray neighborhood relationships in two different contexts, and they can be representative of the ideal types of each kind of dwelling in our analysis. We will primarily use examples from these movies so that the reader can have a sense of continuity and follow the stories of the movies, deepening the reader’s connection with the context of a potentially foreign culture. The examples we draw on are representative of our findings across movies.

*Dayereh Zangi* is a 2008 movie about a girl (Shirin) who claims she had an accident and needs to collect money to repair her father’s car. Her boyfriend (Mohammad) helps her by installing satellites for residents of an apartment to collect his wage and give it to Shirin to repair the car. The story of this apartment begins when Shirin and Mohammad enter an apartment to install a satellite for one of Mohammad’s clients. Coming from various cultural backgrounds, the apartment residents have different levels of religious adherence. The apartment building is in the “uptown” part of Tehran, and the most common point between neighbors is their wealth. All the neighbors live in the same apartment, and the movie focuses on the conflicts they experience due to living near each other.

The other movie is *Mum's Guest*, which Dariush Mehrjui produced in 2004. The movie takes place in one of the older neighborhoods in a poor district of downtown Tehran, in a big yard-centered Iranian house on two levels. The house is a multi-family dwelling divided among at least six families. Effat is the main character. She is also a mother and wife who lives in one part of the house with her husband and two children. In the movie, her nephew and his newlywed spouse arrive as unexpected guests, but Effat and her family are not prepared to host the guests, especially by their cultural standards. They are poor and do not have enough money at the moment to buy groceries and prepare food for their guests. The neighbors notice their situation and help them hold a suitably fancy dinner. One of the neighbors is from outside the building (Mrs. Akhavan), and the rest live in the same building as Effat, in the multi-family dwelling. The story highlights the level of collaboration and a sense of community among neighbors despite the conflicts and amid financial and emotional struggles.

The 16 other movies (18 in total) we chose, cover a spectrum—from highly elaborate yard-centered houses to small apartments. One end of the spectrum is traditional Iranian houses—which are diverse across varied cultural contexts and geographical regions of Iran (*Mum's Guest* [2004], *A Cube of Sugar* [2011], *Gold and Copper* [2010], *Bashu, the Little Stranger* [1989], *Pop* [2014], *When the Moon Was Full* [2019], *Mother* [1991], *Where Is the Friend's House?* [1987], *Just 6.5* [2019], *Children of Heaven* [1997])—and yet always yard-centric. The other end of the spectrum consists of apartments of different styles, primarily reflecting the residents' class more than any other characteristics (*Dayereh Zangi* [2008], *The Lodgers* [2000], *A Separation* [2011], *Felicity Land* [2011], *Just 6.5* [2019, included both patterns]). There is another

type of dwelling roughly in the middle of the spectrum—the yard-sided houses surrounded by walls around the yard, resulting from the transitioning time from tradition to modernity in Iran (*Shokaran* [2000], *A House Built on Water* [2003], *Unruled Paper* [2002], *Leila* [1996]).

In these 18 movies, we found several ways of portraying home—home as a place of retreat and refuge (*Where Is the Friend's House?*; *Leila*; *Children of Heaven*); home as a communal space (*Mum's Guest*); home with its associated feelings connected to the presence of mother (*Mother*; *Mum's Guest*); home as a unifying space for the extended family and/or neighbors (*Pop*; *A Cube of Sugar*); home as a place of uncertainty and betrayal (*Felicity Land*); and home as a place of loneliness and terror (*A House Built on Water*; *Just 6.5*).

The familial and neighborhood relationships and friendships these movies portray also vary. Each movie focuses on some specific aspects of these relationships, that is, neighbors as members of the family or even closer than family (*Mum's Guest*); neighbors as hostile unwanted intruders of privacy (*Dayereh Zangi*; *Bashu, the Little Stranger*); or neighbors with both hostile and friendly characteristics (*The Lodgers*). These movies demonstrate how neighborhood relationships, like a mirror, reflect the transition of the way of living and associated cultural practices from yard-centered houses to apartments. We indicate how movies depict privacy borders as having changed in this transition and how people adapt to the new, structured, architectural borders of privacy and their affiliated constraints by negotiating them through their agentic actions and interactions. We will go through each of our main themes to examine how privacy is enacted at home, paying particular attention to agency, neighborhood relationships, and hospitality practices.

## Borders of Privacy

### Entrance and Exit Processes: Thresholds

As we watched representations of entering and leaving, privacy emerged as one of the main themes. The entering and exiting processes have certain rituals and formalities. How do people perform the rituals of moving from one place to another? How do these processes take shape in each type of dwelling we introduced in this article?

Thresholds are inseparable spaces in traditional Iranian houses. They regulate and order private and public spaces by controlling the entering and exiting processes. They manage access from the most private space to the public and vice versa. While Bourdieu (1970) recognizes thresholds and doors as “worlds reversed,” his conceptualization does not entirely account for cultures whose thresholds extend through multiple doorways or spaces. These spaces function as consequential mediating zones that make the entrance and exit a gradual experience. Thresholds prepare people to enter a more private or public space in harmony with the continuum of privacy. These thresholds have semi-private or semi-public natures, which people negotiate and navigate as they move between public and private spaces. Ikebuchi (2016:88) defines the threshold as an

environment that defines what must be maintained and/or set aside in an effort to ensure the purity and clear delineation of each realm...it is not simply an empty space between two spaces: it is a space where practices and ideologies from both sides are negotiated, played out, embraced, and sometimes discarded.

The difference between the nature of the thresholds in these movies and Bourdieu’s definition is that rather than connecting two completely different worlds, they manage and unify the attached spaces. They are liminal transition spaces that keep the Goffmanian frontstage and the backstage in their places and create a continuum between them. Thresholds in traditional Iranian houses not only prepare the people to pass through different spaces but also bring them together and present them as a whole. We argue that thresholds unify two main arenas in traditional Iranian houses, *andarooni* and *birooni*, which differ dramatically in terms of privacy and access. The representation of entrance and exit processes in the movies demonstrates that there are two or more separate thresholds for each arena to control and manage access to the other.

The first arena is the yard which has more public characteristics. Family members can gather together in the yard with each other or with their guests (i.e., in *Leila*, *Mother*, *A Cube of Sugar*, *Mum’s Guest*, and *Pop*). The door, the corridor (*daalan*), and the *hashti* (an octagonal vestibule connecting the corridor to the yard) are the thresholds mediating between the public world outside the yard’s surrounding walls and the semi-private realm inside the yard. For instance, after entering through the door of the yard, guests pass through the corridor in *Mum’s Guest*, *Mother*, and *A Cube of Sugar*, along with residents who welcome and greet their guests while they accompany them inside. Passing through sequential spaces of the corridor, *hashti*, yard, and the Iranian-style porch, or *eivan*, from more public spaces outside towards the more private area of the home, prepares guests to enter the house and the occupants to host them. While thresholds can disrupt the existing order with



their messiness and contradictory nature (Ikebuchi 2016), the sequential stages of traditional Iranian houses create order. In other words, people move gradually through spaces from public to increasingly private ones as they pass the *hashti*, yard, and porch and then withdraw similarly when they exit.

**Screenshot 1. *Eivan* (porch) is a threshold that mediates between the yard and the inside of the house**



Source: *A Cube of Sugar*.

We observed these gradual and sequential processes in *Mum's Guest* with careful attention. Four spaces with different levels of privacy mediate between the inside and outside of the house. When a neighbor, a friend, or a stranger rings the door's bell from the alley, at least one person from inside the house goes to the yard and opens the yard door. Accompanying the guest from the yard's door to the inside, and vice versa, is necessary and a part of the entrance and exit ritual. This makes the entering or exiting process a gradual one. For example, when the visitors entered her house, Efat's husband accompanied his colleagues from the yard's door, through the different spaces, to the inside of the room (1:03:20).

**Screenshot 2. The gradual process of entrance and welcoming guests**



Source: *Mum's Guest*.

A similar process happens in *A Cube of Sugar*, *Gold and Copper*, *Bashu*, *the Little Stranger*, *When the Moon Was Full*, *Mother*, and *Where Is the Friend's House?* Interestingly, this process is less formal in *Pop* and *Bashu*, *the Little Stranger* (the movies from the south and north of Iran, near the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea). The yard door is usually open in *Pop*. There is no wall to surround the yard in *Bashu*, *the Little Stranger*, as the architectural design complies with the climate and the work on the rice fields. Accordingly, the entrance and exit processes involve less formality, and the residents only accompany the special guests or strangers once they enter the yard. In other words, the level of intimacy and the borders between private and public are defined differently, at least in the north and south of Iran, compared to the center of Iran. Privacy norms, borders, and privacy management are thus portrayed differently, but in both cases, they are instantiated through interaction. Entrance and exit processes in these movies show how people accomplish privacy differently by passing through spaces in various re-



gions of Iran, with different climates, geographical characteristics, and cultures.

The second arena is closer to “inside” the house—the *eivan*, a threshold that mediates between the yard and inside the house, acts as a more private space than the yard. The *eivan* is also accessible to guests and relatives. A regular, Western porch is a place to pass through rather than to stay. The *eivan*, however, draws a fine but invisible line between the private “inside” (of the actual building of the house) and the semi-private “outside” (which is the yard and the rest of the open space of the house). The *eivan* exists as a liminal space, but one where you can linger, unlike the porch. This shows the degree of fine detail in the transition from public to private, with many stops and liminal spaces in between. In *Mum’s Guest*, we observe that Effat serves dinner for the guests on the *eivan* (see screenshots 3a and 3b). Note that Effat faces the private inside of the house, with her back to the yard, while her guests face the yard. They both occupy this liminal space, but their orientation speaks to their membership in the space and whose front and backstage are being managed.

### Screenshot 3a. Serving food in the *eivan*



Source: *Mum’s Guest*.

### Screenshot 3b. Serving food in the *eivan*



Source: *Mum’s Guest*.

While drawing a line between the public and the private is controversial and full of ambivalence and contradiction (Ikebuchi 2016), the corridor, *hashti*, and *eivan* create continuity and coherence. They are transitional spaces with a character of their own and become a place that offers stability and standing. Therefore, in addition to Ikebuchi’s (2016) argument that thresholds can both order and disrupt, we add that they have unifying and ordering characteristics in traditional houses, establishing norms and degrees of frontstage and backstage. The worlds may be reversed on either side (Bourdieu 1970), but there are anchoring norms and a place where these worlds intersect and mingle.

The movies portraying the apartments, such as *Day-ereh Zangi* or *The Lodgers*, show there is no guard (or host) to control the entrance or exit process. Additionally, there is no yard to create a gradual process for entering the home. Instead, each unit has a bell near the apartment’s door so that people from the outside can ring-push a button to ring the bell and get a family member’s permission to access the lobby, elevator, or staircase. This process can even start from the parking lot instead of the lobby for residents or visitors with cars. The entering and exiting

experiences are not as sequential as in traditional houses and differ in pace, design, and function. Thus, the apartment threshold's meaning contrasts with that of traditional Iranian houses. Contrary to traditional houses, thresholds of apartments, where visitors have their first interactions with residents, are not spaces to linger. Their function is restricted to connecting two spaces (inside and outside the apartment) and allowing people to pass through them to reach another space. While there is still gradual movement from a parking lot to a lobby to an elevator or stairs to the doorway, the architecture prevents a genuine sequential process of *accompaniment* through gradual thinning frontstages and thickening backstages.

While the gradual entrance and exit process in traditional homes resonates with and regulates the Iranian *hospitality work*, we can also see the disruption in apartment buildings of the gradual process of entering and exiting through the lens of hospitality. For instance, when guests exit from the unit in the *Felicity Land*, Yasi closes the door behind them. Also, nobody will accompany them when they enter the apartment building until they get to the unit's door. We argue that the apartment suspends hospitality work for Iranians, especially in relation to entrance and exit processes. No family member accompanies the guest to facilitate the guest's entering and exiting. Therefore, there are fewer opportunities to linger and to have a conversation on the way in or out. This directly counters cultural hospitality norms.

Entering, the guest passes through the lobby, the elevator, and the hall, which are shared spaces for the residents. There is no space for waiting, being, and negotiating between the public and private realms without any disruption and awk-

wardness of encountering unwanted strangers or other neighbors. These examples show how the meaning of threshold decreases and collapses into a single point rather than a series of spaces, in this new dwelling pattern, without necessarily providing the possibility of experiencing various stages of liminality and transition. The corridor and the elevator are the only spaces connecting the lobby to the homes. Narrow hallways do not encourage accompaniment. Their function is restricted to moving people through various areas on the way to a destination.

Hospitality is all about the journey for Iranians, but the end space, "inside," becomes the goal within the architecture of the apartments. We can see the thresholds' *disruption of order* in various movies such as *Dayereh Zangi* and *The Lodgers*. In *The Lodgers*, there is a moment where the tenants make peace and start negotiating over who should host the construction workers and other neighbors. However, a process of serious negotiating for who gets to offer hospitality, which could take a long time in a traditional house, becomes shortened and simplified. The architectural structure does not allow residents to perform their hospitality work. When everyone enters the building, they immediately face the narrow space of the staircase. While all residents insist on hosting everyone, Abbas Agha wins the negotiation because his home is located on the ground floor, right near the staircase. He has already opened both slides of his unit's doors and leads everyone to enter his home. In a similar vein, the door closing behind the guests in *Felicity Land* demonstrates the sharp suddenness of the departure, the lack of liminal space, and the failure of the characters to mitigate the messiness of the unfriendly architecture and the awkwardness and suspension of the Iranian hospitality rituals.

#### Screenshot 4. Inviting guests inside the apartment



Source: *The Lodgers*.

#### Inside and Outside

With two different arenas in the house, two main borders exist in the realm of a yard-centered house, as shown in the movies. From the inside out, the first border separates the inside of the house from the yard. The *eivan*, discussed above, is not a specific line. It is an extended border, mediating between the inside and yard of the house. It is a semi-private or semi-public space. It is a space to linger. The second set of spaces that work together as a border separates the yard from the alley. These are the *daalan* or corridor, the *hashti*, and the doorway with a portal (*sar dar*, which is an elaborated decorative crescent on top of the main entrance door). Ultimately, the outside wall surrounds the yard and the house, uniting them conceptually as the home. Although the yard is in the center of the home, as in *Mum's Guest*, *Mother*, *When the Moon Was Full*, and *A Cube of Sugar*, it works as a shared space for neighbors in a multi-family house or in a single-family who reside inside the house, and everyone has equal rights to use it. The yard is an inevitable part to pass through in the process of entrance and exit and

works as a mediator between the inside of the home and the outside of it.

In *Mum's Guest*, borders of privacy among neighbors, as opposed to visitors and visiting relatives, are more flexible. In other words, neighbors are closer to each other than relatives. This becomes more apparent when Effat feels stressed out about having her nephew visit them. Effat's family fridge is almost empty, and she has no money to buy groceries. She has no issue with a lack of food when she is hosting neighbors. However, when her nephew and new wife are coming, she brings it up as a concern with her neighbors and asks for their help. She is determined to keep her dignity in her nephew's eyes.

Effat's embarrassment in encountering her nephew and his wife (as guests) in the kitchen as backstage reveals the importance of keeping *aaberoo* (honor and reputation) on the frontstage of her life among the guests. This includes having the ability to offer hospitality along cultural norms. Effat works to conceal her difficult economic situation in front of her nephew. She also instructs her husband to act appropriately, that is, narrate fewer jokes for their guests, to maintain her social status.

The kitchen is one of the most interesting places when having guests in Iran. It is key to how people offer and perform hospitality. In *The Lodgers*, the kitchen is still a defined place with walls (contrary to open-concept kitchens that became more prevalent later in the apartments), where the hosts negotiate how to serve the guests in the best way. It is a clear backstage area. No guest enters the kitchen, and the hosts lead the guests to the best part of the living room to be served. On the other hand, the kitchen gets a more public characterization in the more contemporary apartments, such as in *Felicity*

*Land*. In line with the changes in the structure of the homes in offering less sequence and continuity, the level of formality decreases. This also affects the hospitality work and the nature of interactions between hosts and guests, particularly where a formal reception of guests is the backbone of Iranian hospitality. As we observed in *Felicity Land*, friends rush into the kitchen and contribute to preparing the dinner. They succeeded in dealing with the hosts' levels of *ta'arof*—a widespread Iranian ritual of verbal and non-verbal communication and performing mutual deference (Maghbouleh 2013), which Majd (2009:65) described as “the great national trait [of] exaggerated politesse, modesty, and self-deprecation that Iranians seem to be born with.” Eventually, they pushed the boundaries of hospitality towards a much less formal tone. In apartments, kitchens are easier to access, view, and breach than in yard-centric houses. Also, the bedrooms are not completely out of sight. More importantly, bathrooms—as the most unpleasant spaces, usually in the far corner of a traditional house—are in the same space as other parts of the apartment.

Since the appearance of the apartments, the meanings of inside and outside, and shared and semi-private spaces have changed. Controversy over defining the boundaries of different spaces caused conflicts between neighbors in *The Lodgers* and *Dayereh Zangi* and severe legal and moral dilemmas in *A Separation*. There is relatively little clarity in the definition of shared spaces in apartment buildings. Some residents use rooftops to install their satellites and consider it a public place, such as in *Dayereh Zangi*. However, other residents consider it illegal or against religious values (because of its uncensored content). Khosrow, a religious, traditional wealthy man, complains about people installing satellites on the rooftop. Similarly, while some residents use

the roof as a place to hang their family's clothes after washing and drying them in the sun, Khosrow disapproves. He considers the rooftop a semi-private place and insists that men should not go on the rooftop because the clothes of wives and children are hung there and should not be seen. The more open-minded residents disagree with Khosrow's definition of shared spaces. Each resident tries to impose their definition of shared spaces and manage the apartment building based on their system of values.

Another example of tension over a lack of consensus regarding defining borders occurs in *The Lodgers*. The rooftop is a public space for some residents and a private space for others. A tenant whose unit is the closest to the rooftop considers it his space and uses it as he wants. He creates a garden and limits the other residents' access to it. It leads to a crisis over who has the right to occupy space and who has not.

Similar to *The Lodgers*, the staircase and the lobby are public spaces in *A Separation*. The neighbors have a bit of interaction on the staircase. However, as long as it is not necessary, the neighbors avoid interacting with each other in the shared spaces. In *A Separation*, Nader kicks Razieh (the grandfather's caregiver) out of the apartment because she left the grandfather alone and is accused of theft. Despite Razieh's insistence on her innocence, she is expelled from the apartment and then she falls down the stairs. A moral question and crisis appear concerning the definition of the inside and outside of the home. The law also becomes confused about how to judge Nader's behavior towards Razieh. The rest of the story revolves around the boundary of where the “inside” of the home ends and the “outside” of the home begins. Why is there no consensus on defining the inside and outside? What does



such a crisis tell us about living in an apartment? Would Nader do the same thing if he knew Razieh was pregnant? In fact, the existence, meaning, and usage of the public space and the border that separates the two realms from each other are obscured in the apartment. While the borders of the units in the apartment are more rigid among neighbors, the border of public space is blurred and disrupted in comparison with the yard-centered houses, that is, in the *Mum's Guest* or *A Cube of Sugar*.

## Power Dynamics in the Neighborhoods and among Families

### Women's Struggles and Action Strategies

In *Mum's Guest*, the story takes place in a traditional Iranian house in the south of Tehran, the capital of Iran. History, tradition, and religion are critical elements in the movie. People are from a low economic class in this neighborhood. The main character, Effat, is a woman who is also a wife and a mother. She runs the household, and the rest of the family obeys her rules. While Effat is a housewife and does not work outside the home, she has the most control within the house. This also puts the responsibility on her shoulders. If there is any disorder in the home realm, it is first directly attributed to Effat and brings into question her management skills. Effat's high sense of responsibility and her efforts to represent her family among their guests in the best way possible demonstrate the amount of pressure she feels when encountering, and especially in hosting, others. However, in such a traditional context, she is also equipped with the community's support and overcomes the situation with their help.

While a traditional context provides some opportunities for women to exercise power, it also limits their

abilities to act outside of the expected framework. As discussed in the above sections, the way people negotiate and accomplish social cohesion and privacy challenge or maintain the social order (Anthony et al. 2017). In *Bashu, the Little Stranger*, Naei, the main character, is a woman working at home and on the land for harvesting. Her husband is working far away, out of town. She is from the working class and manages economic errands at home with hardship. Even though she is poor, she shelters Bashu, a child war refugee whose appearance and language are different from the people in the village. The people in the village never accepted Bashu—a child who escaped alone on a truck from the Iran-Iraq war from the southwest of Iran—as an insider. When Naei saw Bashu struggle for his life, she decided to adopt him no matter what. Without her husband's and relatives' approval, she faced bitter controversies and complaints on their behalf. However, Naei exercised action strategies in this difficult situation to defend her decision about Bashu by pushing her relatives and neighbors out of her collective life. In this way, Naei, a woman in a highly traditional context who was expected to obey the norms and expectations, became a rebel and put her life in jeopardy to protect Bashu, "a little stranger."

Maxwell and Aggleton (2011) used the concept of agentic practices to explain how young women, motivated by their provoked emotional reaction, "take their power" back in an unequal power situation with their partners. We extend the realm in which women "take action" and concur that taking power back is an agentic practice Naei exercises in the relationship with her extended family and neighbors living in a patriarchal-dominant village. While social orders require stability and norms, Naei interrupted stability in the village by exerting her agency to oppose expectations. She capitalized on the norm



of her home as her private realm of decision-making to gradually establish firmer boundaries between inside and outside. This correspondingly increased her ability to make decisions unhampered by the influence of others, although she could not decrease the judgment of others. Naei was able to become more independent and not leave the final decision to her husband or the extended family in her husband's absence. Once she thought out of the box to defend her stance and used her agency to do what she believed was true, contrary to the village norms, she refused to step back and let others impact her in making the decision.

Contrary to *Mum's Guest* and *Bashu, the Little Stranger*, *Dayereh Zangi* takes place in a new apartment in one of the northern neighborhoods of Tehran. In this apartment, people are from the upper-middle class and are mostly wealthy. The apartment manager, Mahnaz, is an educated woman and a school principal. Mahnaz is also a mother and a wife, and she is engaged in household work, as well as other jobs outside of the home. *Dayereh Zangi* is an example of a shifting era in Iran during which Iranian women increasingly experience engaging in paid employment outside the home.

While modern ideals have encroached on the lives of the upper-middle class residents of the apartment in this movie, and the architecture also brings opportunities for women to make their work more visible, we still observe the new forms of gendered relationships. Women's employment increases, but they are still expected to get the majority of household work done. While men also experience these changes and may become more involved in household work, as the husband does in this movie, men's engagement at home is not quite expected. *Dayereh Zangi* portrays the husband's participation in run-

ning the home as a goodwill gesture to "help" his wife. Thus, we see another way in which an ambiguous definition of inside and outside of apartments implicates relationships. In addition, the architecture of the apartment in *Dayereh Zangi* makes the kitchen more visible, and less of a backstage space. A reason behind an unequal transformation and the continuance of the male gaze dominance in the home's realm is traceable in the ideals of modernity. As Baydar and Heynen (2005) mention, modernity was not concerned with equality and fairness, but with dominance, reason, and courage in opposition to the capacities of care.

### Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution appeared as another significant theme connected to entering, exiting, and time spent around privacy boundaries in these Iranian movies. In *Dayereh Zangi*, the story occurs in a new and modern apartment, while *Mum's Guest* occurs in a traditional home. Familial relationships, neighborhood relationships, and the people's different ways of interacting with each other let us compare the power dynamics in these two dwelling types. Here, we turn to the context and interactions around conflicts, a consistent theme across the movies.

In *Mum's Guest*, when Yousef (the husband) attacks Sedigheh (the wife) because of some contention over his addiction, all the neighbors appear in the yard and try to calm them down. Effat and her husband had a significant role in solving the situation as a more established, middle-aged couple. During and after this conflict, the neighbors bond, and then, hearing about her woes, they get involved in preparing Effat's dinner. Sedigheh and Yousef's relationship also becomes peaceful again for the time being. The reliance of the neighbors on each other

in conflict resolution shows how the relationship between communal life and traditional architecture is reciprocal and dependent on each other.

The neighborhood relationships have a completely different dynamic in *Dayereh Zangi*. The boundaries are more rigid, and characters champion individualism over friendship and care. Therefore, residents are highly cautious and suspicious of each other. The architectural structure exacerbates segregation and disorder in the relationships. The most serious conflict in *Dayereh Zangi* occurs between neighbors because one of them installs a satellite on the rooftop. The neighbors fell to insulting each other and chasing each other to fight. Mahnaz, the apartment manager, was impartial in the conflict, but she could not find common ground for the residents' controversy over how to use the rooftop. Khosrow threatened to call the police on his neighbors, but his wife did not let him. Abbas, another neighbor who had some conflicts with Khosrow, tried to make peace between Khosrow and other furious residents.

In the meantime, Mahnaz was not at home, and Shirin, a young woman, asked Mahnaz's husband if she could use their bathroom. Mahnaz arrived and saw Shirin coming out of the bathroom. She became suspicious that her husband had a relationship with Shirin in secret. As a result, Mahnaz called the police and told them about Shirin, Mohammad, and the satellite installation. Owning or installing satellites in Iran is illegal, and, finally, police arrested Mohammad, Shirin's boyfriend. The movie portrays the fragile relationship between neighbors, the amount of distrust, and a lack of empathy among them, particularly when privacy boundaries are disputed. The family relationship also follows the same pattern, being unstable and full of doubt, as we see Mahnaz's outrage after seeing Shirin in her home.

This kind of conflict, with poor resolutions and a lack of cohesiveness among neighbors, is representative of the relationships across movies that take place in apartments. Of course, we do not argue that there is an innate way that apartments always structure relationships but rather that, in this case, they have disrupted hospitality norms and impacted interactional expectations. This relates to the changed patterns around entering, exiting, and interacting within liminal spaces—who has the responsibility for maintaining a peaceful and hospitable environment. Families in apartment buildings are not living together in the building in the same way they would share, and understand the spaces of, a traditional yard-centric home.

### Communication Forms: Vertical and Horizontal Relationships

We observed that relationships, influenced by the changing architecture of homes in these movies, were either horizontal or vertical relationships. Horizontal relationships occur among different units on certain levels of a building or group of buildings. On the contrary, vertical relationships refer to relationships that occur between different levels of a building. For instance, there is a vertical relationship between the first, second, and third floors of a building. We argue that the yard is the heart of traditional homes and has a unifying character. Yard (*hayat*) means "life." It is a place that usually includes gardens with many flowers and trees and a water fountain (*howz*) in the center. It facilitates the transformation from outside to inside and vice versa. The yard brings the two contrary inside and outside spaces into harmony through sequentializing access. However, for apartment residents, the yard is often absent or exists with questions over the right to access and privacy. We argue that the hori-

zontal relationship is fading in the apartments with units on different levels, and the vertical relationship has become dominant because of the absence of the yard.

In *Mum's Guest*, *Mother*, *When the Moon Was Full*, and *A Cube of Sugar*, neighbors and family members enact a horizontal relationship shaped around the yard. A traditional home, even when occupied by multiple families or extended family, would not be broken up into units on one floor. Rather, the wings of the house would be populated by different families or different adult children. The neighbors and family members have lively interactions, calling across the yard, through windows into nearby homes, and generally expecting to engage with others routinely. The yard is their most significant gathering place. Most of the sequences of *Mum's Guest*, *Mother*, and *A Cube of Sugar* occur in the yard. They discuss matters with each other in the yard, confabulate, cry, play, help, laugh, or even throw a traditional wedding and a funeral in the yard. We argue that horizontal relationships result in centralism, solidarity, and a shared sense of space for defined insiders. A yard is a public place for gathering, which unifies and connects all the residents. A yard is where the neighbors and family members help each other solve their problems, like the members of a unified family. Thus, the yard is the heart of the house in traditional Iranian houses and provides the most important space for different forms of communication and interaction.

However, in *Dayereh Zangi* and other similar movies set in apartments, such as *A Separation* or *Felicity Land*, there is no gathering space for apartment residents. There is no unifying space in the apartments shown in these movies, and we can see the reflections on the neighbor's segregation and conflicts.

Neighbors think of each other in terms of which apartment or unit they occupy. Interactions mostly occur on stairs, on the rooftop, or in the parking lot. Residents move through vertical spaces in ways that do not contribute to a sense of shared destiny, responsibility, or hospitality. In other words, apartments dramatically decreased the amount of interaction and level of mutual understanding over contradictions. This, along with issues around borders of privacy, caused numerous conflicts and discussions among family members and neighbors, as we discussed above.

## Conclusion

Our findings demonstrate that neighborhood relationships have changed along with the shift in dwelling patterns in Iran, particularly along the lines of privacy and hospitality. Goffman's frontstage and backstage coexist in layered ways in traditional Iranian houses. As one gradually moves into a yard-centric home, the frontstage thins as the backstage thickens. According to Western literature, thresholds that may disrupt order, here, create order and unity in the traditional Iranian houses through their elaboration and sequential stages. Interactions around thresholds contributed to mutual understanding and care. The yard, for instance, used to be a unifying element at home, bringing nature to the house and providing a proper context to perform elaborate Iranian hospitality. This closeness, however, is transforming in Iranian culture because of architectural changes and cultural influences. The arrival of modernity in Iran, without adaptation to the cultural context, intensified these changes (Hetherington 1982). Our findings highlight the impact of apartment dwellings on Iranian neighborhood relationships and hospitality. While we can only comment on how the presentation of these practices

has changed rather than the practices themselves, further work can reveal how these changes disrupt privacy borders, power relationships, and communication forms, among other things. Also, further research can demonstrate Iranians' agentic and collective practices in localizing the apartments according to Iranian ideals and ways of life. However, given the data extracted from movies, we do see nostalgia for yard-centric homes and the relationships around them due to the deterioration of traditional ways of living. We also see the agentic practices with which people work to practice hospitality despite architectural constraints. Movies portray apartment living as disconnecting cultural values from the Iranian socio-cultural context.

The dwelling pattern shifts to apartments have brought Iranians a new way of life, full of contradictions, tensions, and uncertainties that align with the nature of modernity. The architecture of apartments makes it difficult to maintain dynamics that originated from thousands of years of experiences of living in traditional houses in Iran, for example, their hospitality work. Nonetheless, returning to the past is neither ideal nor feasible. Iran has entered a new era. The role of modernity is significant in igniting

the flame of desire for change. Women, for instance, negotiate patriarchal-dominated power relationships in the apartments, which gives new meaning to the concept of privacy and how to accomplish it. However, we also saw how Naei used agentic practices to take her power back in a traditional home in a small rural town before the prevalence of the apartments.

This study is limited in its ability to observe how people are agentially navigating the constraints of apartment buildings. In addition, we are limited by our choice of movies, and the range of what movies depict. This study merely provides a starting point for approaching how Iranians enact front and backstage practices on the ground, as well as how modernity and globalization impact cultural practices of arriving and leaving. A future direction of study would be to conduct an ethnographic study of how and when people bring traditional hospitality practices into apartment buildings, and how they perform and enact privacy through interactions in those spaces.

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# The Australian Mainstream Media's Portrayal of Youth Climate Activism and Dissent

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**Abstract:** The March 2019 School Strikes 4 Climate, predominantly organized by young students, garnered widespread and polarizing media coverage. We aimed to identify how Australian mainstream print news media portrays youth involvement and dissent within climate action movements. A qualitative media framing analysis was conducted to determine how youth climate activists and dissent were presented during the first large-scale youth climate protests in Australia. Australian newspaper articles and opinion pieces (N = 101) were identified via ProQuest and screened. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted in NVivo12. Findings were assessed through a typology of dissent to determine how different forms of dissent were represented in the Australian print news media. The framing of dissent in Australian media coverage was varied, with news articles being more likely to prioritize the voices of young people, while opinion pieces resorted to fear-mongering rhetoric that critiqued and invalidated their agency. Protestors used combinations of dutiful and disruptive dissent to advocate for climate action, with the latter being more effective for challenging systemic drivers of climate change.

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On the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019, protests for climate action occurred worldwide. Over 1.4 million climate activists collectively organized in over 1,700 cities to advocate for substantial climate policies and to criticize the complacency of government and fossil fuel industries contributing toward climate degradation (Narksompong and Limjirakan 2015; Thomas, Cretney, and Hayward 2019). These climate protests are noteworthy as they were primarily organized and initiated by young people who demanded that governments and industrial sectors listen to the voices of people who would have to inherit the consequences of climate inaction (Pickard 2019; Boulianne, Lalancette, and Ilkiw 2020). These climate protests were prevalent in Australia, where its highly concentrated media landscape has the potential to influence public and political discourse (Anderson 2009; Beeson and McDonald 2013). The Australian media's framing of both climate action and the young protestors warrants exploration, as media narratives contribute to the shaping of public discourse on climate change and can determine public opinion through favorable or unfavorable coverage.

### Australia's Response to Climate Change

Before the 2022 Federal election, Australia's conservative Coalition government has been repeatedly criticized by environmental activists and groups for their inaction on climate change policy (Ali et al. 2020). Australia has ranked in the lowest 10 countries in the world for their performance on climate protection policy and is the highest emitter of greenhouse gasses per capita among developed nations (Climate Change Performance Index 2021). Investments in renewable energy, coupled with the falling cost of using renewable energy among

households, show that renewables are more sustainable and are well within Australia's capacity to achieve. However, the transition to renewable energy has been significantly delayed by federal government policy (Ali et al. 2020). The Australian government's inaction on substantive climate policy has led to a spike in public awareness and engagement regarding how to adapt to and mitigate climate change, specifically among children, adolescents, and young adults (Thackeray et al. 2020). According to the latest Climate of the Nation report from the Australia Institute (2020), people aged between 18-35 reported the highest levels of concern about climate change and were the most supportive of reaching national net-zero emissions targets, phasing out coal mining in favor of other renewable industries, and introducing a levy on Australia's exports in fossil fuels to aid in paying for the consequences of climate change. Young people's disillusionment and dissatisfaction with traditional political and institutional structures can motivate them to engage in initiatives that contribute towards climate action (Pickard 2019).

### Youth Action on Climate Change

In March 2019, protestors worldwide, many of them school and university students, walked out of their classrooms and engaged in non-violent protests for climate action that advocated for intergenerational climate justice (Pickard 2019; Boulianne et al. 2020; von Zabern and Tulloch 2020). These grassroots movements were spurred on by the rise of the young climate activist Greta Thunberg, who showed what a young person using her voice to break the *status quo* could achieve in the climate change discourse (Pickard 2019). The protestors established a global platform to voice their stance on goals for climate action agendas, with movements such as School Strike 4 Climate (n.d.).

Within Australia, young people issued specific demands to the Australian Government—calling for a cessation of new projects in coal, oil, and gas; 100% renewable energy generation and exports by 2030; and funding for the transition of fossil fuel workers and communities into jobs in renewable energy. Engaging in youth action, which is characterized by the ability to be expressive about substantive issues and advocating for decisive action and accountability towards influential stakeholders, has demonstrated numerous positive outcomes (Narksompong and Limjirakan 2015). Youth action can empower young people to engage in active citizenship, which helps foster positive coping behaviors and demonstrates their agency in articulating goals and agendas for the world in which they want to live (Gibbs et al. 2013; Gislason, Kennedy, and Witham 2021). It can also increase their engagement in socio-political issues and develop their capacity as leaders and community builders, which was associated with enhanced organizational capacity and continued engagement in collective action (Checkoway and Aldana 2013; Narksompong and Limjirakan 2015).

## Dissent and Climate Change

A study by O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward (2018) identified that youth climate activists express dissent with the prevailing *status quo* on climate policy using a typology of three different forms of dissent: dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous. Using these forms of dissent, either individually or in combination, can help contribute to the reclaiming, reframing, and transforming of issues in the public discourse (O'Brien et al. 2018). Dutiful dissent prioritizes the use of existing institutions and systems to voice concerns regarding the *status quo*, which can help ensure the legitimacy and authority of the concerns (O'Brien et al. 2018). This type of dissent is considered useful when indi-

viduals are directly involved with those in influential structures to advocate for change, such as through open forums with politicians and policymakers, but difficulties can arise as deeper issues with the political structures are not challenged, risking the depoliticization of climate action (O'Brien et al. 2018). Disruptive dissent prioritizes oppositional action where activism is used to raise awareness of systemic and institutional problems and challenge hegemonic powers through mobilization, nonconformity, and debate (O'Brien et al. 2018). Disruptive dissent is effective in advocating for justice and equity in climate change and highlighting its anthropogenic causes, but the critiques presented can lead to a polarization of the climate change debate, leading to a rise of antagonism against climate activists that can constrain their agency (O'Brien et al., 2018; Bergmann and Ossewaarde 2020). Dangerous dissent also prioritizes activism, but focuses on creating alternatives that threaten institutions and create long-term transformations in society (O'Brien et al. 2018). These transformations can undermine current systems by advocating alternatives that challenge the *status quo*, such as how degrowth movements advocate for reducing production and consumption, which is against a central tenet of capitalism (O'Brien et al. 2018). Dissent has been cited in the existing literature to identify its various methods and how it reinforced the agency of youth activists (Thomas et al. 2019; Bergmann and Ossewaarde 2020). This dissent model has not been empirically assessed in the context of climate change and could be insightful to assess how different forms of dissent have been framed in the mainstream media.

## Australian Media Coverage of Climate Change

The rise of climate change movements in March 2019 led to a surge in media coverage, specifically focusing

on the youth movements and how influential bodies like the government, scientists, and organizations responded to the protests (Thackeray et al. 2020). News media is considered influential in its ability to not only influence the public's stance on issues but also the actions of politicians (Speck 2010; von Zabern and Tulloch 2020). In the context of climate change, news media is influential in how climate science is described and what information is highlighted or withheld (Anderson 2009; Adekola and Lamond 2017). The media landscape in Australia is dominated largely by Nine Entertainment and the conservative-leaning media company News Corp (Anderson, Chubb, and Djerf-Pierre. 2018). News Corp owns 7 of 11 national and capital city daily newspapers, including the only daily, nationally distributed paper, *The Australian*, and their newspaper readership comprises an average of 6.9 million Australians each week (Anderson et al. 2018; News Corp 2020). Content analyses of articles from News Corp papers, including *The Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Herald Sun*, highlighted News Corp's tendency to reject the anthropogenic causes of climate change, perpetuate climate skepticism, and downplay the need for substantive climate action (Manne 2011; Bacon 2013). Manne (2011) also found that the opinion articles in *The Australian* were overwhelmingly written by people who were affiliated with or employed by lobbying groups for business and fossil fuel industries, who lack the scientific evidence and expertise on climate science.

## Youth Climate Movements and Frames in Media Coverage

With youth activist movements such as School Strike 4 Climate challenging the *status quo* of government and mining and fossil fuel industries on climate action, the Australian media plays a crucial role in presenting their demands to the public dis-

course (von Zabern and Tulloch 2020). As youth climate movements threaten hegemonic power structures and relationships, mainstream news media can set the agenda and frame these movements in a way that can marginalize and de-politicize them (Holmes and Star 2017; von Zabern and Tulloch 2020). Mainstream news media has been shown to frame youth climate activists as politically illegitimate by focusing on their ages and lack of authority, indicating their inability to participate in political systems and processes (Feldman 2020; von Zabern and Tulloch 2020). In addition, mainstream news media has also been shown to frame and describe the protests as episodic rather than thematic, thereby reducing protests down to an event rather than engaging thoughtfully with what the protests are advocating for and undermining the legitimate grievances of these climate movements (Iyengar 1991; von Zabern and Tulloch 2020).

## Research Aims

Understanding how Australian media coverage frames youth climate activism could provide insight into the shaping of public discourse on climate change and youth agency (Beeson and McDonald 2013; Anderson et al. 2018). This research aimed to identify how Australian print media coverage portrayed young climate activists who participated in the March 2019 climate strikes and their use of dissent to challenge and critique the *status quo* of climate inaction in Australia.

## Methods

### Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed, where published news media were examined through



a media framing analysis. A thematic analysis was utilized to identify themes related to media framing of youth dissent in climate action. A constructionist epistemological position was adopted for this study, which argues that reality is socially constructed, unique, and can be shaped via cultural, historical, social, and political factors and norms (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Darlaston-Jones 2007). Positionality was considered throughout the research process, as the qualitative nature of this research, particularly the thematic analysis, required an awareness of the perspectives that we brought to the research and how we influenced the analysis. The population that is the focus of this research, that of youth engaged in climate movements, are young people whom we hold admiration for as they are courageous in their concerns and should not be underestimated for their abilities to organize, mobilize, and inspire action.

### Data Sources

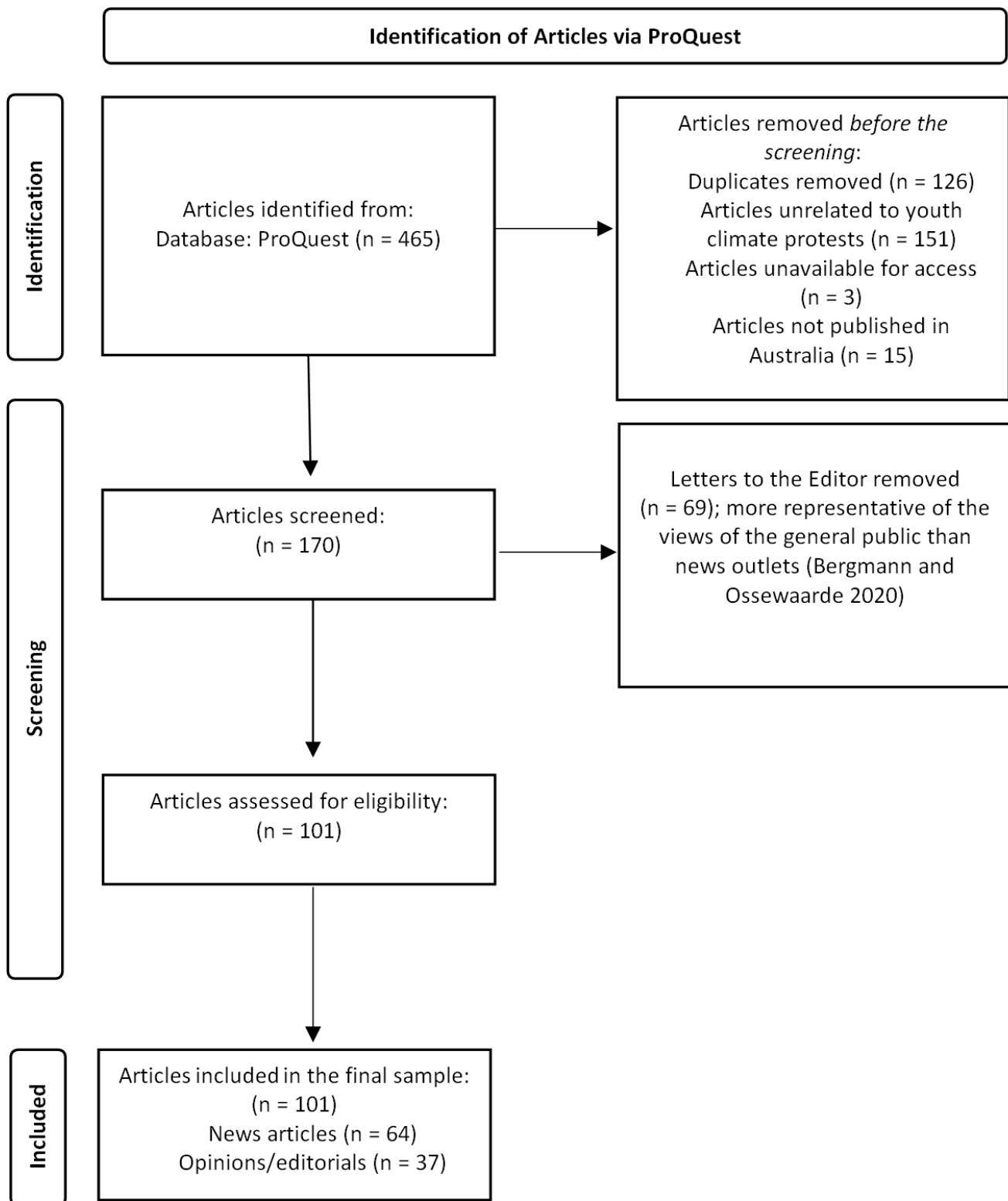
Print media articles related to the climate change protests and movements that occurred in March 2019 were collected, including newspaper articles, editorials, and opinion pieces. Letters to the Editor(s) were excluded from the dataset, as these articles constituted views that were more representative of the general population rather than the specific media outlet. This exclusion is consistent with the methodology described by Bergmann and Ossewaarde (2020) in their research on the framing of youth climate movements in German print media. The dataset comprised 101 print news media articles: 64 standard news articles and 37 opinion pieces and editorials. News articles were gathered from 52 Australian news outlets (see Appendix). Of these 101 articles, 51 articles were published through News Corp, 42 articles were published through Australian Community Media, and 8 articles were published through Nine Entertainment.

### Procedure

A search was conducted in ProQuest, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2021, using pre-specified keyword strings to obtain articles related to the youth climate protests that occurred in March 2019. ProQuest was utilized as a search database as it allowed for an exhaustive and thorough search strategy through multiple keyword strings to screen articles. Three sub-strings were created: the first sub-string captured the general topic of climate change and other related terms, the second sub-string captured the key demographics of young people that participated in the protests, and the third sub-string captured terms related to protests, varying in general terms and specific movements like School Strike 4 Climate. The keyword strings used were: (climat\* OR climate chang\* OR global warming OR climate cris\* OR climate emergenc\*) AND (youth\* OR child\* OR teen\* OR adolescen\* OR young OR student\*) AND (protest\* OR activis\* OR demonstrat\* OR movement\* OR organiz\* OR dissent OR school strike\* OR fridaysforfuture).

Using this keyword string generated articles that contained at least one of each term from the combined sub-strings. The resulting articles were screened to determine their eligibility using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Figure 1). To be included in the dataset, articles were required to be: 1) focused on discussion of Australian climate change protests in newspaper articles, editorials, and opinion pieces; 2) make mention of youth climate movements, either generally or through specific movements like School Strike 4 Climate; 3) published between March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. This timespan was chosen to capture the immediate emerging discourse that occurred during the first School Strike 4 Climate protests in Australia.

Figure 1. Procedure for Screening and Inclusion of News Articles.



Source: Self-elaboration.

## Data Analysis

A media framing analysis was conducted based on Giles and Shaw's (2009) framework. This approach enabled us to flexibly analyze the textual elements of Australian print news media, which could then inform how youth climate activists were framed in this coverage (Giles and Shaw 2009). Media framing analysis aims to explain how issues are presented and defined, who or what is responsible for an issue, and how the framing of an issue is related to its evolution in the public and political discourse (Pan and Kosicki 1993; Adekola and Lamond 2017). Media framing analysis begins with exploring the actors and stories of the protests, such as the young protestors, politicians, teachers, and other influential figures (Giles and Shaw 2009). Reader identification was noted by determining whom the audience was expected to identify with in the protests (Giles and Shaw 2009). The structure of the narrative in the articles was also noted to identify the narrative conventions that were adhered to in the articles' description of the protests (Giles and Shaw 2009). Once these factors are understood, the language of the articles can be analyzed. For the research question, an inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) was conducted to identify how Australian mainstream media portrayed youth involvement in climate strike movements. Data were coded in Nvivo12, with initial coding gathering more descriptive and semantic codes and secondary coding moving to more abstract and interpretive ideas (Braun and Clarke 2006). Codes were then collated into potential themes, which were reviewed, named, and defined to capture the scope and content of what was discussed (Braun and Clarke 2006).

## Quality Assurance

A random sample of 10% of the articles and editorials was selected and cross-coded by a second inde-

pendent researcher. Cohen's kappa, which indicates the level of consistent agreement between coders, ranged between 0.5 to 1.0 across the selected articles (McHugh 2012). Of the selected articles, 94% had a Cohen's kappa greater than .8, which indicates substantial levels of consistent agreement (McHugh 2012). An audit trail and memo-writing were used to demonstrate clear decision-making processes and ensure transparency during analysis and write-up. As this study did not require human participants, ethics approval was not required.

## Findings

The thematic analysis identified four core themes that illustrated the portrayal of young climate activists: act before it's too late, knowledge seekers, inauthentic truants, and innocent pawns. Young people were often portrayed as active and knowledgeable citizens in news article coverage of the protests, while opinion pieces were more likely to criticize the movement and portray young people as inauthentic or manipulated pawns. These findings will identify and analyze the media framing of youth climate activists, which will then be assessed through the typology of dissent separately in the discussion.

### Act Before It's Too Late

Young protestors were portrayed as recognizing the desperate need for climate action, with a sense of urgency that was not matched by those in power, and this urgency motivated them to be persistent in driving change. Often, articles would include interviews with protestors and utilize emotionally-laden direct quotes as a means of conveying protestors' fears regarding climate inaction. For example, a student protestor was reported saying on wildlife protection: "I don't want to have Australia's coat of arms

with one of the animals on it being extinct" ("Students Join City Rally for Climate Change" [*Northside Chronicle*] 2019:3). Another protestor cited her fears of an unstable future, saying: "I'm terrified of my future, of my children's future, and of my grandchildren's future and I know we need to do something before it's too late" (Messenger 2019:4). These examples highlighted the two most commonly cited climate-related fears of the protestors; namely, the decline of Australia's unique biodiversity and inter-generational instability.

With this sense of urgency being underpinned by a lack of time to meaningfully address these issues, the protestors directly addressed their criticism of the Australian Government. One protestor stated,

We are the closest we have been to extinction since the Cold War and yet despite climate change being worthy of extreme concern what action have we seen from our government? Nothing but frivolous measures. [Telford 2019: paragraph 3]

This sentiment reflected the movement's disappointment and frustration with the Australian Government, as, despite the danger that climate change presents as an existential threat, the protestors believed that their urgency towards this issue was not being matched by politicians.

Students were depicted as active citizens when they initiated direct discussions and engaged in open forums with influential politicians such as then Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg. These discussions demonstrated instances of dutiful dissent towards these politicians as one student described their dissatisfaction with a response from Bill Shorten to protestor demands, "We got a reply from him two weeks later,

and it was not that great. It just told us what Labor was already doing so we'll continue to strike at his office to show his reply was not good enough" (Cosoletto 2019: paragraph 21). Here, the news media has noted the expectations of the protestors towards political figures and structures, which framed the protestors as persistent activists who sought to hold their politicians to higher standards on climate action and policy.

### Knowledge Seekers

Australian news media framed young protestors as informed on the causes they advocated for and used activism as an opportunity to learn and develop their active citizenship. Young people that are passionate about climate change were described as "hungry for the knowledge" ("Liam's Climate Change Mission" [*The Sunshine Coast Daily*] 2019:13), as they wanted to understand the implications of their actions, identify what they can do to help, and drew on reputable sources. One student stated, "we go out and research for ourselves...we find out the facts for ourselves" (Holmes 2019: paragraphs 13-14), which reflected that young protestors are self-determined to seek out the latest research so they may have informed perspectives on issues they are passionate about.

When advocating for the students' right to protest, some articles and opinion pieces noted that "education and school are not synonymous" (Boyer 2019:14) and that activism is a learning experience. Some articles pointed out that education systems indicated they had "shifted the goals from teaching knowledge to learning skills about how to use knowledge in real-life situations" ("Let Kids Strike as a Lesson to All on Planet" [*The Camden Advertiser*] 2019: paragraph 6), with some of the key skills including

“critical thinking, conscientiousness, collaboration, creativity, and problem solving” (“Let Kids Strike as a Lesson to All on Planet” [*The Camden Advertiser*] 2019: paragraph 7). An opinion piece from the *Sydney Morning Herald* echoed these points when they said, “While it is a shame that they will miss classes for one day, the learning that will come from taking responsibility for their futures and standing up for the principles in which they believe are far more important” (Challen 2019:27). The news articles that acknowledged this learning experience framed the protestors as empowered activists who channeled their knowledge into active citizenship and developing key competencies.

The protestors’ ability to present scientifically informed arguments for climate action extended to their frustrations at the Australian Government’s inaction. One high-school student expressed her frustration, stating, “These are not religious beliefs, this is science. This is fact and the government knows it’s fact” (Preston 2019:3). Her frustration pointed to the government’s inability to acknowledge the scientific consensus and a resulting sense of complacency. The news media highlighted the protestor’s use of scientific knowledge to effectively dissent against the government, which framed them as capable active citizens who demonstrated their agency through pursuing informed perspectives and research.

### **Inauthentic Truants**

Australian news media criticized young people for protesting during school hours and questioned whether the protestors were genuine in their demands or if they were using the protests as an opportunity “to enjoy [a] three-day weekend” (“Labor’s Leader Led by Children” [*The Daily Telegraph*] 2019:20). Framing protestors as truants was per-

petuated largely by politicians quoted in the news media, such as Prime Minister Scott Morrison, then New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian, and former Defence Minister Christopher Pyne, with the latter politician who stated that protesting “will damage their education” and that “if they wanted to engage in political activism, it should be on their own time” (McCauley 2019:5).

Some political figures, such as the NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes, believed that participation in these protests would constitute illegal activity, as he said, “students would be breaking the law if they took part” (Dabrera 2019:12). This position was also presented in an opinion piece from *The Sunday Telegraph*, where they criticized some politicians who defended students’ right to protest as, “endorsing law-breaking (as it’s actually illegal for school-age children not to be at school without a reasonable excuse)” (Credlin 2019:101). This assertion of illegality framed the protest as an unreasonable excuse to skip school and the protestors as truants who should be punished for choosing to advocate for climate action during school hours.

The authenticity of the activists was challenged, with some opinion pieces pointing to students using the protests as an excuse for truancy, with one columnist from *The Australian* stating,

There’s little doubt that the prospect of spending a day out and about with friends shouting about Adani, fossil fuels and the Morrison government is infinitely more thrilling than enduring a morning of double maths followed by an afternoon of double science. [Dabrera 2019:12]

This excerpt called the protestors’ passion for their advocacy into question, which sought to shift the fo-



cus away from the demands of the movement and instead framed students as deceptively using protests as a way to skip class.

The protestors' authenticity was also challenged by highlighting the inconsistency of what they advocate for at protests and what they do at home. A candidate for The Nationals party, Patrick Conaghan, said in a statement,

How many of the students charged their iPhone or iPad all night when it only needed an hour, how many have used an air conditioner rather than opening a couple of windows, and who has used a laundry dryer recently for convenience sake? [Telford 2019: paragraph 22]

By framing protestors in ways that challenge their authenticity as climate activists by focusing on their hypocritical actions, it sought to focus on the character of the protestors and their individual choices, which invalidated the legitimate grievances they have over the climate inaction of the Australian Government.

### Innocent Pawns

Several Australian news media outlets framed the protestors as being susceptible to manipulation by adults and education systems, who wished to use them for their political agendas, suggesting politically motivated adults had pushed young people into engaging in climate activism for their political means. An adult bystander who disagreed with the protests believed that it was "such a shame that the rest were conned into doing the bidding of climate change activists who are making a lucrative living out of an industry built around scaremongering" ("You Said It on Facebook: Principal Drives 40 Stu-

dents to Climate Protest" [*The Fraser Coast Chronicle*] 2019:12). This insinuation of young protestors being tricked into climate activism framed them as being naive and easily impressionable.

Educational institutions were accused of allowing teachers to force their political agendas onto students. A writer from *The Daily Telegraph* stated that,

Pupils were being used as pawns by climate-alarmists because teachers had made them afraid of coal. "I remember being in class (and told) 'mining is bad,' 'mining is going to be the end of us,' and 'mining is going to destroy you.'" [Harris and Armstrong 2019:7]

Such examples framed the protestors as easily susceptible to unnecessary climate alarmism in the classroom.

The school curriculum was also criticized by some outlets as being left-leaning. Reactionary rhetoric was used in opinion pieces from News Corp-owned papers such as *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, saying, "what parents have to realize is that Friday's strike is just the most recent example of how the cultural left is using the curriculum to indoctrinate students with its neo-Marxist and postmodern ideology" (Donnelly 2019:12). Framing curriculum as radicalizing students also stripped the young protestors of any agency, as they are framed as innocent victims who had been "fed a deep green, extremist view of climate change" (Donnelly 2019:12). The framing of the protestors as victims of political indoctrination also invalidated their demands, positioning young people's knowledge of climate science as a product of the manipulation of the cultural left.

## Discussion

### Summary of Findings

Understanding the Australian print media's portrayal of youth climate movements and the framing of protestors' dissent provides insight into the media's role in shaping public discourse on climate change. The media coverage was varied, with frames differing depending on article type and media outlet. News articles prioritized the voices of young people by highlighting direct quotes to illustrate their active citizenship in both dutiful and disruptive expressions. This then framed them as persistent agents of change who engaged with political structures and figures using informed knowledge and research. The climate movements were shown to use the latest scientific research, consensus, and the perspective of climate experts to not only demonstrate the urgent need for climate action but also aim their dissent at the complacency of hegemonic powers who have failed to address the existential threat of climate change. Comparatively, opinion pieces from more conservative outlets such as News Corp's *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, who published nine opinion and editorials pieces out of ten articles in this sample, instead prioritized the voices of political figures and bystanders, and used fear-mongering rhetoric to invalidate the protestors' grievances regarding climate inaction. Opinion pieces explicitly targeted the 'dangers' of disruptive dissent and singled out the character of the activists rather than their demands. These types of articles were the primary source for framing young protestors as either truants who were using protests as an excuse to escape the tedium of school or vulnerable pupils who were victims of leftist extremism.

The editorial line of news outlets was notable in this sample, especially in the more conservative-leaning News Corp. An analysis of News Corp articles, opinion, and editorial pieces from Bacon and Jegan (2020) on their reporting of climate change and its related stories have demonstrated that of 8,612 articles between April 2019 and March 2020, 59% of these articles consisted of commentary articles such as editorials and opinion pieces compared to 41% of information-based articles. Of these commentary articles, 65% of these contained climate skepticism viewpoints, which were inferred through a lack of scientific visibility in sources and perspectives, preferences towards quoting politicians over scientists, and negative biases towards climate protests and movements (Bacon and Jegan 2020). Our sample consisted of half News Corp published articles and opinion pieces, with two of the most popular newspapers in readership (Hughes 2022), *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, and its weekend edition, *The Sunday Telegraph*, predominantly publishing negatively slanted opinion pieces highlighting the presumed illegality of the protests and the vulnerability of children to climate alarmism and fear-mongering. Our findings, thus, align with Bacon and Jegan's (2020) analysis, indicating that the conservative editorial line of News Corp predominantly utilized commentary articles to portray negative depictions of youth climate activists and their dissent.

### Consideration of Findings amongst Existing Literature

This research used O'Brien and colleagues' (2018) typology of dissent to identify and analyze how young protestors' use of dissent was represented and framed by the media. Protestors' motivations to protest were based on their belief in the urgent need for climate action and fears related to the conse-

quences of climate change if a limited intervention was taken. These beliefs and fears were presented in the media by highlighting quotes and excerpts from participants and organizers of these protests, indicating that the majority of news articles represented the voices and motivations of the protestors. By prioritizing protestors through substantial visibility in coverage, readers would be more likely to identify their frustrations, motivations, and reasoning for their political action, lending a dimensionality to their portrayal in media reporting. Protestors were portrayed as using a combination of dissent types, specifically dutiful and disruptive, to not only challenge hegemonic powers and their lack of substantive action but also to demonstrate their agency and influence on the discourse around climate action. Dangerous dissent was not portrayed in the media coverage, as the protests were more indicative of the overt dutiful, and disruptive expression of dissent. Dangerous dissent tends toward more long-term, covert, and subversive challenges to the political *status quo* (O'Brien et al. 2018).

### *Dutiful Dissent*

The protestor's utilization of dutiful dissent was portrayed as a means to voice their concerns in established political spaces and gain opportunities to discuss climate action with politicians such as former Opposition Leader Bill Shorten (O'Brien et al. 2018). While this type of dissent was beneficial for protestors to allow them access to existing political structures, it ultimately left young people little to no recourse from these structures and those who held power. Protestors were instead reported to have received unsubstantial replies, ignorance, or were told they could only speak with politicians outside of school hours. This lack of recourse could explain the protestors' preferred utilization of disruptive

dissent to maximize media exposure and be able to freely express their dissent outside of existing institutions. Despite the futility of dutiful dissent, news coverage was favorable towards protestors who attempted to meet and discuss these issues with influential decision-makers. News articles would highlight quotes from protestors, demonstrating their persistence in challenging the *status quo*, despite the opposition they faced from those upholding it. The framing of young protestors as persistent active citizens was also present in the framing of the Fridays for Future movement in Finnish print media, highlighting their urgency in demanding action from influential decision-makers in political and economic institutions (Huttunen and Albrecht 2021). Empowering young people to continue to persist in exercising their roles as active citizens will not only help to challenge the stereotypical view of young people as passive and apathetic but can also help to foster the agency of the protestors and ensure that their voices are included and prioritized in climate action discourse (Gibbs et al. 2013; Narksompong and Limjirakan 2015; Gislason et al. 2021).

### *Disruptive Dissent*

Disruptive dissent appeared to be more effective in raising awareness of systemic drivers of climate change, which included challenging hegemonic institutions and stakeholders. The use of disruptive dissent was portrayed by media as an opportunity for young people to boycott schools and universities, instead choosing to mobilize at protests through organizations such as School Strike 4 Climate to challenge and critique political inaction on climate change. This form of dissent was met with a polarizing response from the Australian print media. Favorable media coverage of the protestors highlighted how their disruptive dissent served as

an opportunity for the youth to begin to learn about the importance of political participation and use the protests as a learning experience. These findings were reflected in Huttunen and Albrecht's (2021) research on media framing of the Fridays for Future movement in Finland, as articles noted that critical skills could be developed through these protests and empower young people to be more competent and proficient in their active citizenship.

While favorable coverage of disruptive dissent was present in the Australian print media, this form of dissent can result in the antagonization of protestors (O'Brien et al. 2018), which was presented in numerous frames presented by the media. This antagonization of protestors typically came from politicians who argued against truancy and highlighted the damage caused by missing out on education, and opinion pieces, who sought to highlight the age and innocence of protestors to invalidate their character and demands. Framing of Fridays for Future protests in German (von Zabern and Tulloch 2020) and Finnish (Huttunen and Albrecht 2021) news outlets would similarly reframe the protests to focus on the voices of politicians and official sources and discussions of truancy to detract from the young protestors and their demands. A study by Bergmann and Ossewaarde (2020) also focusing on Fridays for Future in German print media highlighted how articles would frequently refer to compulsory education law, which would allude to criminalizing the protestors for skipping school to protest. Australian print media extended this argument by advocating that student protestors be punished by their schools. This focus on reporting bystander and official sources in media coverage simultaneously upholds traditional hegemonic structures while minimizing the agency of youth activists, making it more difficult for readers to identify with their cause.

As these protests were organized by young people, their age became a significant factor used by some articles and opinion pieces to invoke their political illegitimacy and invalidate their character and demands. Research from Mayes and Hartup (2021) on the portrayal of School Strike 4 Climate in Australian news media found that the majority of articles would describe protestors as 'kids' and 'children' who were easy targets for fear-mongering and climate hysteria. This characterization was identified in our research, through opinion pieces that would trivialize protestors' genuine concerns about climate change, undermine their agency as political actors, and imply they were impressionable and vulnerable to manipulation by adults and the education system (von Zabern and Tulloch 2020; Mayes and Hartup 2021). The targeting of the Australian education system would extend this susceptibility to manipulation by framing protestors as radicalized and brainwashed political pawns, while also invalidating their knowledge base as a product of these exploitative systems. Framing these protestors in ways that antagonize and invalidate their use of disruptive dissent not only constrains the agency and autonomy of these protestors but also inhibits the viable change that needs to occur to effectively deal with the existential threat of climate change (O'Brien et al. 2018).

### **Practical Implications**

The climate protests are an indication that young people can be competent active citizens who are highly capable of community organization and are well-informed on scientific research, consensus, and expert opinions (Narksompong and Limjirakan 2015; Kosciulek 2020). The qualities of these young protestors, as demonstrated through their positive portrayals in the media, may indicate that

they could be prioritized as relevant stakeholders in collaborative policy-building for climate action (Kosciulek 2020; Agarwal and Sung 2021). Youth are already underrepresented in the policy process for climate action, yet they will be the most vulnerable population to the consequences of climate change, indicating that their inclusion in climate policy development should be considered (Kosciulek 2020; Agarwal and Sung 2021). Empowering youth climate activists through their inclusion in the political process could offer diverse perspectives toward substantive climate action and can assist in fostering competencies in understanding political processes and developing leadership skills (Kosciulek 2020; Agarwal and Sung 2021).

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the timespan of media coverage was chosen to determine the emergent nature of the discourse towards the first global youth climate strike held in Australia, the timespan may be too narrow to see whether this discourse persisted over time. Future research using this methodology could assess different peaks of media coverage where climate change or protests were presented in the news cycle, such as the United Nations Climate Change Summit in September 2019, which coincided with protests that had an estimated attendance of 300,000 protestors ("Global Climate Strike Sees 'Hundreds of Thousands' of Australians Rally across the Country" [ABC News] 2019). Alternatively, it could be insightful to determine how the discourse on these movements has time by conducting a longitudinal study, comparing media framing from the inception of these movements to the present. We have commented on the notable editorial biases present in this sample through News Corp's utilization of commentary articles in their publications to negatively

portray the character and dissent of youth climate activists. There may be scope to consider the editorial leanings of Nine Entertainment and its influence on the framing of youth climate dissent, given that they, along with News Corp, represent the two major mass media firms in Australia. Although this research intended to determine how the Australian print media portrayed youth climate activism, it is worth considering that these young protestors were likely affected by the public discourse that revolved around their use of dissent towards political structures that perpetuated climate inaction. It would be beneficial in future research to include these youth climate activists in the research process by allowing them to discuss their experiences of climate activism and how they, both as individuals and representatives of an overall movement, were affected by the discourse and frames perpetuated in the Australian news media.

### Conclusion

This research offered insight into the early coverage and discourse of these movements in a highly concentrated media landscape, where the media played a significant role in framing the demands of these movements to the public. By a media framing analysis, we were able to identify four frames that were ascribed to the movement, discuss how dutiful and disruptive dissent can be portrayed in favorable and unfavorable ways, and how these portrayals can contribute to perceptions of youth climate activists in the public discourse. Regardless of the polarizing narratives and frames presented in Australian media, these young activists are posing a righteous challenge to the political *status quo* and are not slowing down in the face of media admiration, apathy, or adversity. The protestors' authentic passion for climate action and their willingness to dissent could



help to reshape the public's awareness and knowledge of these issues, but only if the Australian public chooses to empower and prioritize their voices as active citizens, future leaders, and policymakers. In light of the effectiveness of these climate protests, we believe that more effort should be placed on empowering youth voices by highlighting their unique perspectives in future media coverage and giving them the platform to offer insights and solutions to the evolving climate crisis.

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## Appendix: Newspaper Outlets Used (N = 101)

Publication	Owner	National/State/Regional	Frequency of publishing	Total articles used
The Advertiser	News Corp	State – SA	Daily	4
The Advocate	Australian Community Media (ACM)	Regional – Devonport, TAS	Daily	1
The Age	Nine	State – VIC	Daily	2
Armidale Express	ACM	Regional – Armidale, NSW	Bi-weekly	3
Atherton Tablelander	News Corp	Regional – Atherton, QLD	Weekly	2
The Australian	News Corp	National	Daily	4
Bay Post	ACM	Regional – Batemans Bay, NSW	Weekly	1
Bellingen Shire Courier	ACM	Regional – Bellingen, NSW	Weekly	1
Bendigo Advertiser	ACM	Regional – Bendigo, VIC	Daily	3
Blue Mountains Gazette	ACM	Regional – Blue Mountains, NSW	Weekly	2
The Border Chronicle	ACM	Regional – Bordertown, SA	Weekly	1
Border Mail	ACM	Regional – Albury-Wodonga, NSW	Daily	1
The Braidwood Times	Nine	Regional – Braidwood, NSW	Weekly	1
Bunbury Mail	ACM	Regional – Bunbury, WA	Weekly	1
The Cairns Post	News Corp	Regional – Cairns, QLD	Daily	1
Camden Advertiser	Nine	Regional – Camden, NSW	Weekly	1
Canberra Times	ACM	Regional – Canberra, ACT	Daily	3
Centralian Advocate	News Corp	Regional – Alice Springs, NT	Bi-weekly	1
Central Western Daily	ACM	Regional – Orange, NSW	Daily	2
The Courier	ACM	Regional – Ballarat, VIC	Daily	2
The Courier-Mail	News Corp	State – QLD	Daily	2
The Daily Mercury	News Corp	Regional – Mackay, QLD	Daily	1
The Daily Telegraph	News Corp	State – NSW	Daily	6
The Examiner	ACM	Regional – Launceston, TAS	Daily	3
Fraser Coast Chronicle	News Corp	Regional – Fraser Coast, QLD	Daily	2
Glen Innes Examiner	ACM	Regional – Glen Innes, NSW	Bi-weekly	2
Gold Coast Bulletin	New Corp	Regional – Gold Coast, QLD	Daily	1
Goulburn Post	ACM	Regional – Goulburn, NSW	3 days a week	2
Gympie Times	News Corp	Regional – Gympie, QLD	Daily	3
The Herald Sun	News Corp	State – VIC	Daily	2
Heidelberg Leader	News Corp	Regional – Blackburn, VIC	Weekly	1
Illawarra Mercury	ACM	Regional – Wollongong, NSW	Daily	1
Innisfail Advocate	News Corp	Regional – Innisfail, QLD	Bi-weekly	1
Inverell Times	ACM	Regional – Inverell, NSW	Bi-weekly	1
The Islander	ACM	Regional – Kingscote, SA	Weekly	1
Manning River Times	ACM	Regional – Taree, NSW	Bi-weekly	1
The Mercury	News Corp	State – TAS	Daily	3
Milton Ulladulla Times	ACM	Regional – Ulladulla, NSW	Weekly	1
The Morning Bulletin	News Corp	Regional – Rockhampton, QLD	Daily	6
Mudgee Guardian	ACM	Regional – Mudgee, NSW	Bi-weekly	1
The Newcastle Herald	ACM	Regional – Newcastle, NSW	Daily	5
Bundaberg NewsMail	News Corp	Regional – Bundaberg, QLD	Daily	1
The Northern Star	News Corp	Regional – Lismore, NSW	Daily	2
Northside Chronicle	News Corp	Regional – Brisbane, QLD	Daily	1
Port Douglass & Mossman Gazette	News Corp	Regional – Port Douglass, QLD	Weekly	1
Port Macquarie News	ACM	Regional – Port Macquarie, NSW	Weekly	1
Redland City Bulletin	ACM	Regional – Redland, QLD	Weekly	1
Southern Highland News	ACM	Regional – Bowral, NSW	3 days a week	1
The Sunday Telegraph	News Corp	State – NSW	Daily	1
Sunshine Coast Daily	News Corp	Regional – Sunshine Coast, QLD	Daily	1
Sydney Morning Herald	Nine	State – NSW	Daily	4
Townsville Bulletin	News Corp	Regional – Townsville, QLD	Daily	4

# “What Would You Do If You Were to Win the Lottery?” A Qualitative Tool for Overcoming Agency-Structure Issues in Migration Research

Gergely Horzsa 

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## Keywords:

Acquiescent  
Immobility; Semi-  
Structured Interviews;  
Hypothetical  
Questions; Fieldwork;  
Life Aspirations;  
Migration Aspirations;  
Internal Migration;  
Rural Sociology

**Abstract:** This paper proposes a quasi-standardized hypothetical interview-guide question and demonstrates its applicability in addressing participants’ general life aspirations, and, in particular, the embedded migration aspirations. The proposed interview question is related to the hypothesized behavior of participants in the off chance of having won the national lottery. Based on fieldwork results, conducted in rural Hungary between 2014-2019, the paper demonstrates how this question, introduced as a closing question during interviews, may be useful in addressing cultural values and attitudes in an agency-oriented way and with a reduction of perceived structural constraints affecting them. The question was eligible in differentiating between forms of geographical mobility, reflecting some migration-related phenomena that were formerly claimed challenging to be specifically addressed, revealing that pro-migration structural constraints might mask general attitudes to stay among those seemingly opting for emigration, and conversely, structural, restraining-constraints that, in some cases, mask pro-migration attitudes among those seemingly aspiring to stay.

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This paper utilizes the results of an extensive series of qualitative fieldwork to demonstrate the convenience of an employed empirical tool in understanding development-migration interactions within personal narratives. Fieldwork research took place in peripheral rural settlements of Hungary between the period of 2014-2019 and was specifically focused on the investigation of connections between rural development and rural outward mobility prospects, including perceived rural-urban differences. Based on the transcribed 163 semi-structured interviews and responses provided for a quasi-standardized interview question enquiring about the prospective activities of participants if winning the national lottery, this paper aims to explore the “acquiescent immobile” form of mobility, as defined by Schewel (2015; 2019) while describing development-migration interaction.

Following the claims of Halfacree and Boyle (1993), this paper understands migration (geographical mobility) as being embedded in the general life stories (biographies) of participants. According to this viewpoint, migration is not (only) a distinct action within time-space; rather, it is intertwined with a personal understanding of life and personal life goals, as well as the personal understanding of the general societal environment, including social change. Thus, personal considerations about whether to move are, in essence, regarded as statements about the self and are influenced by these individual concepts of the social environment. As a consequence, concrete actions of movement might be considered only a small part of the phenomena of mobility. As in his 2014 paper de Haas—following the approach of Sen (2001) on development as freedom—puts it, migration should be viewed and defined as “the

freedom to choose where to live” (de Haas 2014:26). According to the author, two distinguishable forces define this freedom of migration—namely, general life aspirations and opportunity structures, which strongly influence one another. If differentiated based on the absence/presence of these two factors, the forms of migration might be grouped into five major categories (voluntary immobility, voluntary mobility, involuntary immobility, involuntary mobility, and finally, acquiescent immobility).

A major challenge of this paper is to address the measurement of the—empirically most challenging—latter form of mobility. The term “acquiescent immobility” was introduced by Schewel (2015), who grasps with this term a group of people neither having the capacity nor articulating desires to move. Understanding the formulation of acquiescent immobility might be challenging, despite it covering a substantial fraction of migration. This paper provides a potential empirical tool for revealing internal attributes of acquiescent immobility and the behavior of participants labeled acquiescent immobile. Furthermore, with the use of narratives gathered from an extensive series of qualitative fieldwork, the paper demonstrates how, in practice, narratives of opportunity changes and personal aspirations are intertwined. This paper will argue that, by the analysis of general migration responses concerning the ‘lottery question,’ the methodological problem of separating opportunity structures and opportunity-influenced migration aspirations might—at least partially—be solved.

The paper is structured as follows: A summary of qualitative (non)migration research standpoints will be introduced in the next section, along with a short introduction of theoretical concepts of opportunity-aspiration interactions within

migration research. This section will be followed by describing the lottery question along with the general methodological setting of the fieldwork series and a brief summarizing description of the location, as well as participants. The following chapter will introduce the analytical steps leading to circumscribing acquiescent immobile participants, as well as unique responses provided for the lottery question. The discussion chapter will deal with the general assessment of the fitness of this approach for the analysis of development-migration interactions.

## Background

### Migration in Qualitative Research

Qualitative migration research is engaged with the understanding of geographical mobility behaviors of individuals, or even groups of people, on the micro-level and is embedded in complex socio-cultural settings. While macro-approach research is focusing mostly on where people move, micro-level investigations might answer questions related to the reasons for mobility, as well as immobility (Etzo 2008). As Halfacree and Boyle (1993) understand migration as a cultural construct, they propose it to be approached as a part of potential (instead of actual) migrants' biographies, including their past, present, and future, rather than as a discrete event within time-space. This understanding of mobility exceeds the rational cost-benefit approach by stating that immobility is as crucial as mobility, and considerations regarding mobility are embedded in the everyday lives of people instead of being a linear course of clean-cut calculation of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Instead, mobility is a cultural construct, as well as a statement of the self's worldview (Halfacree and Boyle 1993). This approach contributed to several qualitative investigations of migration that

resulted in an ever deeper understanding of human mobility considerations (Findlay and Li 1997; Ní Laoire 2000; Schäfer 2010; Corbett 2013; Nugin 2014; Stockdale 2014).

Perceiving migration on the micro-level set path to analyses of the matter of immobility, which does not only concern the selection effect of migration, usually explained by personal characteristics (Etzo 2008). Instead, by understanding migration as a cultural construct, immobility and mobility became the two mutually non-exclusive sides of the same phenomenon, and research on immobility multiplies. In his work, Carling (2002) argues that reasons for immobility are rarely assessed, and even when they are, reasons lying in the scarcity of opportunities are mixed with reasons of a lack of personal will. Nevertheless, a large share of people is immobile not because push-pull effects are at a low level but despite it being high. The author refers to them as the involuntarily immobile and suggests that migration abilities and aspirations be assessed parallelly.

Recognizing the under-theorized nature of migration research, de Haas (2014) develops a possible general theory that might be useful in addressing several forms of migration phenomena under several circumstances. To be more precise, what the author proposes is not a new general theory for migration but rather the application and arrangement of former theories in migration research. He offers (de Haas 2014) a contextual theory for migration, or a "conceptual eclecticism," which connects particular research results to more general phenomena. Migration, according to the author, should be regarded as an intrinsic part of social change (rather than a phenomenon affecting or being affected by it). The proposal builds on the

development idea of Sen (2001) and the concept of involuntary mobility of Carling (2002). As much as Sen equates development with freedom, de Haas, as mentioned, regards migration as freedom (and thus, social change and development).

Migration is regarded as a function of capabilities and aspirations that are intertwined. Here, capabilities stand for negative and positive liberties, as understood by Berlin (1969), whereas aspirations are constituted by general life aspirations and perceived spatial opportunity structures (migration aspirations in a narrower sense). Distinguishing

between negative and positive liberties concerning migration provides an opportunity to categorize migration under various circumstances. Therefore, connections could be set between particular research fields and results. On the other hand, the aspiration-capabilities framework is useful to categorize the different forms of migration (and non-migration). This brings together research dimensions and may create a common ground for analyses of different forms of geographical mobility, with the inclusion of those findings that deal with intrinsic forms of migration, as well as both involuntary and “acquiescent” (Schewel 2015) forms of immobility.

**Figure 1. The theoretical concept of migration typology in the aspirations-capabilities continuum**

		Migration capabilities	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Migration aspirations (intrinsic and/or instrumental)	<i>High</i>	<b>Involuntary immobility</b> (Carling 2002) (feeling ‘trapped’)	<b>Voluntary mobility</b> (most forms of migration)
	<i>Low</i>	<b>Acquiescent immobility</b> (Schewel 2015)	<b>Voluntary immobility</b> <i>and</i> <b>Involuntary mobility</b> (eg refugees, ‘soft deportation’) <sup>13</sup>

Source: de Haas 2014:32.

### Qualitative Migration Research: Aspirations and Place Attachment

Geographical mobility aspirations are a widely discussed topic in both international and intra-national settings, employing various statistical (Garasky 2002), survey (Hodge 1985; Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006; Thissen et al. 2010; Coulter and

Scott 2015; Van Mol 2016), and qualitative tools. Intra-national investigations address the factors of the urbanization and counter-urbanization processes, often reflecting—besides wage and career differences—the cultural construction of urban and rural areas appearing in the narratives of both urban and rural dwellers. Results from such qualitative research on migration aspirations witness a large

influence of education on the outmigration attitudes of the youth. This, however, concerns not only the level of education but, as both Corbett (2005; 2013) and Dabasi-Halász, Lipták, and Horváth (2017) point out, also the institutions themselves. Rural outwards mobility can be regarded as a source and also answer to Beck's understanding of risk, which is demonstrated in an East-West German context by Schäfer (2010). Furthermore, as it unfolds from the narratives presented by Corbett (2013), in traditional rural communities, the cultural norm of progress and education, and locality, family, and other traditional norms are present in parallel, often causing conflicts for young people in migration decision-making. If understood as a statement of the self on its identity, as Fielding (1992) proposes, migration decision-making unfolds in rural dwellers' narratives as strongly connected with not only vertical mobility but also the general cultural value of progress in life. Thus, in rural mobility narratives, 'leaving' is a strong synonym for 'moving forward' rather than 'moving away,' and the opportunity of physical returning never ceases to be an option (Findlay and Li 1997; Ní Laoire 2000; Nugin 2014). This invokes, once again, the difference between attachment and actual geographical location, where the attachment can be reinforced by the idea of the rural idyll, even though, in several cases, migration seems to be influenced by ad hoc life events (Stockdale 2002; 2014).

Place attachment is an often recurring concept in constructivist qualitative research on migration. Although describing complex cultural attitudes, the various approaches include the ones employing quantitative tools. For instance, Heleniak (2009) analyzes an industrial region of post-socialist Russia by employing statistical data analysis and survey methodology to find a relatively great level of attachment to the region contrary to the economic

decline. Survey methodology was employed by Barcus and Brunn (2009) and (Raymond, Brown, and Weber 2010) for a US (Kentucky) and Australian social environment, respectively. The surveys consisted of both questions regarding general attitudes about given areas and very direct questions and statements about place attachment ("I am very attached to..."). Qualitative research might grasp this question in more detail, for instance, by revealing interactions between attachment to the place and the local community (Lokocz, Ryan, and Sadler 2011; Baldwin, Smith, and Jacobson 2017). Wiborg (2004) conducts interview-based research with secondary school students with rural origins and finds a great variety of environmental, social, and cultural elements used by them when discussing their relationship with their respective rural localities. Similarly, Morse and Mudgett (2017) analyze the phenomenon of "homesickness" in those Vermonters living in other parts of the US. Other scholars emphasize the role of social connections and social capital in attachment to place (Milbourne and Kitchen 2014).

### **Acquiescent Immobility**

The concept of acquiescent immobility is introduced by Schewel (2015) in a working paper on Senegalese youths' international (im)mobility aspirations. The author refers to the term as one challenging the common standpoint of classical migration theories expecting everybody with potential gains from migration to, at least, aspire to emigrate. In contrast to these beliefs, the author finds persons neither having the capacity nor articulating desires to move. This is defined as "the state of preferring to stay in one's homeland even though one does not have the capability to migrate. *Acquiescent non-migrants* lack the choice to stay in the same way that a voluntary

non-migrant, with the resources to migrate, does and yet they, nevertheless, prefer to stay” (Schewel 2015:28). The author finds that around a quarter of those lacking actual means for moving do not desire to move either, and reported reasons echo those ones heard from voluntary immobile participants (such as family ties, religious connections, and patriotic considerations). It is argued to be a concept to challenge classical migration theories by stating that the lack of (financial) capabilities, in many cases, does not result in the desire to balance out this lack by territorial mobility (or only to an extent similar to higher-status people).

Second, however, there is yet another subgroup within the acquiescent immobile category, defined by the interaction between capabilities and aspirations. This is referred to as “adaptive preferences” by Carling and Schewel (2018) and “post hoc rationalization” by Schewel (2015). The idea is that capabilities might affect aspirations through psychological courses and, “in the face of limited migration ability, individuals could react by subconsciously subduing their migration aspirations” (Carling and Schewel 2018:958.). This idea is in alignment with what Sen (2001) argues, namely, that differences in personal freedom or capabilities are crucial to be identified when addressing otherwise similar sociological outcomes. Also, this echoes the arguments of de Haas (2014), too, on the strong interrelations between capabilities and aspirations. These might stress that aspirations among the acquiescent immobile group cannot validly be understood without the parallel assessment of capability structure differences. After all, by analyzing interactions between development and migration aspirations, essentially, the effects on capability structure changes are meant to be measured (capability structures including cultural

and social forms of capital, too). The problem is with the analysis of (this, ‘pure’ form of) acquiescent immobility, as it is easy to be mistaken for voluntary immobility. As Carling and Schewel (2018:958) put this: “Migration aspirations then become even more elusive, for both methodological and theoretical considerations. Within the capability approach, adaptive preferences are widely seen to undermine the value of subjective self-assessments. By extension, one could argue that asking people about migration aspirations is meaningless if they have internalized obstacles to mobility.” The exact methodological problem to be solved originates from this argument: how can aspirations to stay be measured if the aspirations themselves are only the product of external circumstances (i.e., lack of opportunities)? This paper argues that enquiring about what participants think they would do in the fictional setting of having won the national lottery might provide one solution to this problem.

## Exploring Acquiescent Immobility

### The Case of Hungary

To help contextualize the concrete research, a brief description of the Hungarian case might be necessary. The current economic situation of the Hungarian countryside can be understood considering three major tendencies: first, the historical belatedness of industrialization, which resulted in a relatively high ratio of non-urban dwellers and a lower level of urbanization (Enyedi 2011). Second, the automatization in agriculture is in parallel with the regress of the manufacturing industry. And third, the changes in financial redistribution sources.

Authors describe the post-socialist period as an era with a further shrinking of agriculture, for which



reason was that even though several co-operatives have survived the system change, privatization of the lands was happening more rapidly than privatization in any other economic sector (Csite and Kovách 2002). Juhász (2006) describes the political action of land privatization and compensation as an act of taking lands from those making their livings by agrarian production and giving them to those unable to engage in farming. The author's diagnosis on agricultural privatization is echoed by Kovách (2016), who states that as soon as by 1996, 94 percent of all lands were sold and, consequently, around 15 percent of the population became land owners, resulting in land structure stipulated by small holdings. On the other hand, it is stated, too, that two-thirds of all lands were not used by owners and were rented out instead.

In their recent work, Csatári, Farkas, and Lennert (2019) provide a systematic summary of the agriculture-related changes in the economy of the Hungarian countryside. The authors agree with Kovách (2016) when describing the last few decades as the history of continuous concentration and the automatization of Hungarian farm holdings, which is, on the other hand, regarded as the only profitable form of agricultural production. The East European (and Hungarian) countryside became very differentiated in previous decades and in several aspects, and should not be regarded as one (Csite and Kovách 2002; Virág 2010; Kovách 2012; 2016; Csurgó 2013; Váradi 2013; Valuch 2015.). Understanding these differences and variability, several authors have tried to provide category systems for Hungarian villages. The socio-economic differentiation between villages might be explained based on the growing importance of urban-rural connections. Those rural areas being strongly connected (mostly in an infrastructural

and economic sense) to larger urban centers are described as being developed, whereas those are mostly smaller villages on the peripheries in which social problems heighten. According to Eurostat, in general, the share of rural dwellers in Hungary, who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, is twice as high as those living in urban areas. In this sense, Hungary is very similar to other Eastern-European countries, whereas, in the West, the contrary is seen as more prosperous.

On the macro level, after the transition, peripheral micro villages of Hungary are characterized by a decreasing level of the population supporting capacity in the terms of labor opportunities, but depending on their positions in the settlement structure. This general attribute, as Kovács (2008) unfolds, leads to various results and a variation among even the smallest of settlements. According to the author, villages might be marked on a scale leading from those having immobile, segregated but growing populations towards those realigning, integrated villages suffering great population loss during the first decades of the post-socialist period.

On the micro level, these disadvantages might be unfolded through narratives of personal life strategies. Based on a series of interview-based field research, Váradi (2015) examines strategies of the most up-staged population (partially belonging to the Roma ethnic minority). The author considers poverty as a multi-element status including factors of not only the economic and labor market status but also (and mostly originating from economic status) elements of social ties and physical, as well as psychological, well-being.

The Hungarian countryside is characterized by a great and growing variability, even among rural

areas marked by a similar spatial-geographic pattern, such as agglomeration (Kovách, Kristóf, and Megyesi 2006) or peripheral (Kovács 2008) regions. As the rural countryside is populated by up to 70 percent of the Hungarian population, depending on the definition of rural (or non-urban) (Kovách 2012), the social context of rural research is incredibly diverse in the Hungarian case.

### Methodology, Field, and Participants

From 2014 to 2019, fieldwork in altogether eight Hungarian, non-agglomeration villages was conducted<sup>1</sup> with the definite aim to address questions of socioeconomic change in rural areas, as well as questions of rural-urban linkages and mobility. Altogether, 163 semi-structured interviews (78 minutes average length) were voice-recorded. This provides around a 211-hour length audio source that was the subject of verbatim transcription. Field variety concerns the villages' migration and labor market tendencies, as well as development (EU-subsidizing) patterns. Four villages belong to those third of all Hungarian agglomeration villages receiving the highest per-capita amount of rural development funds, whereas there are three of all eight villages that receive below-average funds, thus belonging to the least assisted third. Furthermore, the fieldwork was conducted in both villages located nearby Budapest (1-1.5-hour travel time), and those being further.

<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork was led by the author; interviewees were recruited among university students (mostly sociologists) and, in particular, among the members of the youth organization *Angelusz Róbert College for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences*. Excluding the author, 34 young scholars participated in the research throughout the years, for whose engagement the author is extremely grateful, especially considering the fact they participated mostly at their expense, out of sheer scientific commitment.

Even though random sampling was not employed in either of the research, during the fieldwork, the research teams aimed to ask people with different demographic statuses and socioeconomic backgrounds for a response. We also wanted to include people with different roles in the localities, thus, to call employed and unemployed, active and inactive people, employees and entrepreneurs, farmers and service sector employees, NGO members and members of the local administration, priests, students, and retirees proportionately. As a result, interviewees show a variety considering gender and age.

Around half of the interviewees<sup>2</sup> were born locally, whereas the others moved in only later (on average, in their 20s). Among immigrants (people coming locally from other Hungarian settlements), gender ratios are 4:5, with females being overrepresented. The median age of moving into the settlement is 22.5 years among males and 26.0 years among females, suggesting that women are more likely to move in after marriage. As for their marital status, we have no information about 21 respondents. Altogether, around half of all interviewees were married, 10 percent (17 persons) were single, and 16 percent (26 persons) were widowed. As they were not directly asked, and the reconstruction-categorization based on the interviews is often very challenging, exact data on the highest level of education has low validity. However, in general, it can be determined that a third of the participants are vocational-school skilled laborers, around 15 percent of interviewees have attended and passed higher education, whereas

<sup>2</sup> An ID number is rendered to all participants, computed as follows. The first digit grasps the number of fieldwork, the second digit refers to the field number within the fieldwork period, whereas the final two digits are a simple chronological, fieldwork-specific, ordinal number of the participant.

some 20 percent have only elementary qualifications. The rest has other middle-level qualifications.

In general, the variety of both the fields and interviewees allows a multi-perspective approach when answering the research questions. The narratives provided by participants on perceived social change and migration considerations are fit to describe a phenomenon in its entire complexity and from different perspectives. Furthermore, a somewhat standardized, 'final' question was raised in 90 interviews during the fieldwork. In this question, interviewers enquired about what participants would do in the hypothetical scenario of having won the national lottery. The idea for the question was facilitated both by previous fieldwork experiences, during which several respondents spontaneously addressed this, and the usefulness of the generated discussions in relieving stress and tension as the interviews come to a climax, as well as a means of transitioning the interview into an off-record, more informal talk. The exact question sounds as follows: *What would you do if you were to win the lottery?* [trans. GH]

The analysis of the transcribed 163 interviews was done with Atlas.ti software, which consisted of the following steps:

1. Identifying and labeling (coding) the parts (from a few sentences to longer paragraphs or pages) of narratives separately, in which the following topics were discussed by participants:
  - changes (or the lack of changes) in the local setting (607 quotes)
  - development in the local context (319 quotes)
  - migration (367 quotes)
  - rural-urban connections (256 quotes)
  - the lottery question (105 quotes)

2. Inductively collecting typical narratives. Types of "change," "migration," as well as typical "lottery" responses were identified based on narratives coded into the respective three categories.

- change narratives: typical narratives included narratives of "no local change," "local deterioration" (post-socialism, local community, demographic changes, local services, local governance, cultural-mental, aesthetic), "local development" (aesthetic, infrastructural, political, economic, cultural), "change in comparison (with other places)," "natural," "national-global"
- migration narratives: typical responses included narratives of "pro-move statements" (no social life, necessity of housework, commuting, self-actualization, incomes, lack of jobs, fear of security change or social downfall, personal ties, adventure/moving forward, cheaper city life, boredom) and "pro-stay statements" (community, family, fear of the new, escaping, moving costs, rural idyll, local career, undervalued local property)
- lottery narratives: typical narratives included "modern values" (house, vehicle, debt payback, financial deposit), "hedonistic values" (travel, party, sports car), "community values" (social, communal, local infrastructure, religion, politics, family) and "self-actualization" (career, entrepreneurship, hobby), as well as neutral standpoint ("wouldn't need"). Based on these responses, it was evaluated whether participants explicitly or implicitly suggested that they would emigrate from the locality.

## Analysis

### Lottery Responses in General

Participants in altogether 87 cases provided valid answers for out of the 128 interviews conducted

based on guides including the lottery question. By complementing them with the 3 cases in which interviewees spontaneously addressed this question in the earlier fieldwork, 90 narratives are provided. Participants gave various types of answers when asked to imagine their behavior after winning the lottery. Even though attention is paid to migration-related issues, it is necessary to provide a brief comprehensive summary of these types of responses, as migration aspirations might only be understood through these in many cases. In general, several people were arguing to have already imagined this situation, whereas others claimed they had never thought about this, at least in a mentionable account. Arguments can be grouped as follows:

- **Nothing; would not need:** Some participants claimed they would not need that much money, but the reasonings differ. Some, especially elderly people, argued they do not have anything to ask for in life anymore, whereas others reported that this amount of money would change their lives to an unnecessary extent, or expressed fears regarding the responsibilities this amount of money would bring into their lives. In general, the first reaction of many was the claim that winning the lottery would not change their lives or their worldview—the way they are thinking about different aspects of life.
- **Security and modern values:** A large share of participants have dealt with general life security. These included modernistic values such as buying a stable and convenient house for living, an ordinary car for commuting, the payback of loans, and, more commonly, putting the (rest of the) money securely in a bank

without having to take it out while it would be possible to live from the interests.

- **Family and friends:** Several people claimed they would distribute their money, or at least a share of it, among their acquaintances. Besides community-related purposes, this category included altruistic values; however, these two should be regarded separately. Distribution among family members and friends appeared in the third of all lottery-related narratives, and arguments often included specific aims of helping those acquaintances who are in the need of specific goods or who are generally in need.
- **Community and social support:** Both local communities, national, and religious communities, as well as religion in general played an important role in the lottery narratives. To develop the local communities either in an infrastructural or cultural aspect was a very often mentioned potential aim, almost as popular as helping family members and friends. This obviously can originate from a bias caused by our special interest in the localities during the interviews, however, even this bias would not explain the spread of such responses. Besides this specific aim of developing the local economy, infrastructure, and culture, answers have dealt altruistically with social issues, namely, helping out strangers in need (local dwellers or others).
- **Hedonistic values and hobbies:** Participants were not shy to share their hedonistic plans either when the lottery question was raised. Altogether a third of interviewees mentioned such plans, including those describing in-

vestment-demanding hobbies. Most often described goals were to travel, buy sports cars, and party.

- **Career and entrepreneurship:** As the latter quotes imply, too, there were some who were thinking of investing their lottery money in the realization of their enterprise ideas. Altogether 14 narratives are provided out of the 90 that reflect self-actualization goals of this kind, and such responses are provided partially by those already owning smaller enterprises (such as a pub, small restaurants and hostels, lands and agricultural enterprises, and a car repair shop).
- **Migration and keeping/leaving the job:** The dilemma of keeping or leaving one's job also appeared in the lottery narratives, however, these sometimes were regarded as natural consequences or logical prerequisites of mentioned aims of another sort (for instance, claiming one would invest in local development means one would stay locally; whereas moving to Miami would require one leaving their former job).

### General Migration Narratives: Pro-Move and Pro-Stay Arguments

To understand acquiescent immobility, narratives provided for the lottery question are analyzed in parallel with the provided general 'substantive' arguments about whether to move. These latter arguments are divided into pro-move and pro-stay arguments, with the latter being split into 'negative' and 'positive' forms. While it is not viable to introduce these narratives in detail here, a general vision of these mobility arguments is necessary

for taking further steps in the analysis. Typical narratives are categorized as 'pro-move,' 'negative pro-stay,' and 'positive pro-stay' factors as follows.

#### *Pro-Move*

- **Moving is developing:** Personal development and advancement are often a synonym for migration, especially among the youngest generations.
- **Commuting problems:** Questions and problems caused by the complicatedness of commuting are one of the most characteristic factors of outward mobility.
- **Lack of nearby jobs:** The lack of good-paying local or nearby jobs is, surprisingly, not the most often mentioned factor of migration aspirations.
- **Vivid social and cultural life in urban areas:** Communities and community life in some interviews are connected to rural areas, but for others, it is rather the cities that are reported as being open and integrative.
- **Everyday tasks:** Some participants provide reflections about maintaining a house causing much more work for them than for those living in city blockhouses.

#### *Negative Pro-Stay*

- **Family attachment:** Family, in several cases, appears as a negative (i.e., restrictive) factor for staying, as a force forestalling people from moving.
- **Getting stuck/used to it:** In several narratives, the psychological cost of moving appears as a distinctive negative, restrictive factor for staying.

#### *Positive Pro-Stay*

- **The local (rural) idyll:** Narratives about the idyllic rural are not solely the argument of urban out-migrants seeking a quiet place to stay



but also of rural dwellers, who emphasize the advantages of staying.

- Integration: A second dimension of recognizing the advantages of staying include the sense of community, involvement, and integration.
- Finding one’s account (local career): The best way to phrase the third dimension for ‘positive’ narratives on staying is that people report they were able to “find their account” in staying.

Participants were grouped considering which of the above-introduced forms of narratives they provided considering lottery narratives. By contrasting general migration narratives (what pro-stay and pro-move arguments they provided) with migration narratives under the lottery scenario, it can be evaluated whether the received general pro-stay arguments might be only due to the lack of personal opportunities to migrate, or, conversely, are, indeed, a result of strong ‘positive’ personal aspirations

to stay. Analysis of these two arguments will be introduced in the next subchapter.

### Migration in Lottery Responses

Out of the 90 interviews including the lottery question, 39 narratives included explicit migration aspiration narratives. Around two-thirds of these respondents claimed they would not emigrate if they were to win the lottery (n=27), and the third explicitly claimed they would (n=12). The group of participants providing both answers to the lottery question and ‘pro-move,’ ‘positive pro-stay’ or ‘negative pro-stay’ arguments is 13, 22, and 20, respectively, who, on the other hand, serve as an adequate sample for analyzing the questions of acquiescent immobility. The idea for approaching this question comes from emerging contrasts between the ‘current’ migration aspiration narratives and when the lottery scenario is framed. The number of respondents is shown in Table 1 by their provided answers, with respect to the three possible forms of migration arguments.

**Table 1. Respondents’ crosstabulation by migration arguments and lottery responses**

		pro-move argument		positive pro-stay argument		negative pro-stay argument		Total per category
		no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	
Would move if winning the lottery	no	20	7	11	16	15	12	27
	yes	6	6	6	6	4	8	12
	N/A	103	21	95	29	110	14	124
Total		129	34	112	51	129	34	163

Note: Highlighted cells represent ‘unexpected’ interactions/anomalies.

Source: Self-elaboration.

As can be seen in the table, ‘anomalies’ of different kinds occur when trying to match general migration arguments with those provided for the lottery scenario. The anomalies are constituted by three types of respondents: 1) those providing pro-move arguments, but claiming to consider staying as lottery winners (n=7), 2) those providing negative pro-stay arguments, but claiming as well to stay in the fortunate scenario (n=12), and finally, and most interestingly, 3) those providing positive pro-stay arguments, but regardless of this, claiming it is likely they would emigrate after winning the lottery (n=6).

People belonging to the **first category** are those who, either voluntarily mobile or involuntarily immobile, try to flee due to the lack of economic opportunities, and would stay once these limits are no longer decisive. A middle-aged, skilled laborer, communal worker and a mother of one spontaneously addressed the lottery question. After having moved out from the micro region’s center town where she has been living for a decade, she now lives in a renewed house in the village, but explicitly mentioned her desire to move out, motivated by community fragmentation and rivalry. Local economic opportunities are described as being limited, and she, as a communal worker, although having the opportunity to engage in creative work in the locality otherwise described as being developing, receives low wages. Furthermore, she describes urban life as being more convenient and comfortable. However, when the topic of winning the lottery emerges, the community-related negative aspects of rural life seem to disappear from the narrative and are replaced by local personal careers, as well as independent entrepreneurial opportunities:

I’d move away, but I have no clue where... maybe not too far. But, it’s also possible that if there’d be a chance

of winning the lottery or something, maybe I wouldn’t even move, but instead build a bigger house or go and buy some things like machines, a tractor, et cetera, with which one could work. This is an agrarian village, this way one could live better. Or renew the rooftop [of my house], change the windows, or something, you know. If there’d be a tractor, one won’t have to be hacking with a rototiller, I’d buy a small tractor, and there’d be an opportunity to work for myself, not for others. [Respondent 4122, 58-year-old female, communal worker]

One might argue that this shift can be explained by the original argument about the bad neighborhood masking a more crucial reason for aspiring to move, namely, the lack of opportunity to stay with the parallel aspiration to do so. Therefore, these participants might be categorized as the involuntary mobile group, as de Haas (2014) labels them.

Participants of the **second group**, in contrast, regardless of recognizing negative retaining factors concerning migration, would not move, also in the lottery scenario. The group consists mostly of the two major forms of involuntary immobile: those having strong social connections to the localities and those who are incapable of moving due to financial reasons. What can be seen is that a part of those with ‘too’ strong connections (negative social capital), since then becoming older, would now not move regardless of the assets, and this is a reason we find them in this category. In contrast, some of those who were unable to move due to financial reasons can be found in this group as well. The reason is that while winning the lottery would increase their opportunities to move, the very same would reduce the necessity (thus, the aspirations) of emigrating. Thus, they ‘instantly’ turn into voluntarily immobile. Such an argument is present

in the narrative of a self-employed man, who, once the lottery scenario was set, got rid of all the doubts about his desire to stay:

Well, then [if winning the lottery], it's certain [that I won't move]. One hundred percent certain, that then I'd stay. I wouldn't even think of not staying. This is certain. This is for sure. First, my heart belongs here. This is my favorite place, I grew up here, and I lived here, too, so I very much... Here's an old cemetery...my ancestors are here, everybody is here. [Respondent 6122, middle-aged male, self-employed]

The **third group**, those who are ‘seemingly’ voluntarily immobile by reporting positive reasons for their stay, but who provide strong claims about willingness to migrate once winning the lottery, are those that can be regarded as ‘true’ acquiescent immobile people. In this group, even by imagining the scenario of having the opportunity, among other activities, for migration, a shift is seen from seeing the positive aspects of staying to wishing to move away. This can signify the psychological phenomenon of “adaptive preferences,” “post hoc rationalization,” “cognitive dissonance reduction,” or, to use a more informal term, the “sour-grape effect” that both Schewel (2015) and Carling and Schewel (2018) refer to. It is important to note that respondents of this group might be characterized by a lower level of general place attachment. Furthermore, participants vary based on where they would move once having won the lottery (even smaller settlements, farms, to a town, city, or abroad), and one person claimed to think of moving precisely because of the money—so that other dwellers would not gossip about him. Nevertheless, these sudden changes of mind can be witnessed generally among the members of this group, for instance, in the narrative of the

following retired woman, already having a history of relocations:

I lived in [the county capital city] for 2 years, then came back here...just to be with the elderly ones if anything would happen with them, and then it wasn't that good, and so we moved again...to [a farm], we received a house from the enterprise...] and then [we] came back home once again anyway. So I...really have moved a few times, so that it'd be for the good of me, and yet we ended up here anyway [laughs]. We live peacefully here and won't move anywhere for certain...But, who knows, we might win the lottery and then fly away in that instant, like birds. [Respondent 1104, female retiree]

Another representation of this group's mindset change is provided by a middle-aged odd-job worker woman, who, instead of expressing her desire to move to a city, claims to be thinking about changing for an even smaller settlement as a home place once the lottery scenario is presented:

[After moving from the county capital city back home to this village] I never wanted to move to [the neighboring village], I don't know, I liked [that one], too, but I always loved [this] better. They knew me here. Knew who my grandfather was, my mother, and my father—they were respected people...It's not good when one has too much money. That's not good either. Ten million would be enough so that I can attain my husband's dream of moving to a farmstead: stock-raising, a beautiful log house, and that's it. I wouldn't even need a car; a motorbike would be enough. I don't desire such things. [Respondent 3122, 44-year-old female, odd-job worker]

Acquiescent immobility is characterized by narratives of general satisfaction with the otherwise

less-to-offer socioeconomic circumstances. Members of the group are similar to involuntarily immobile respondents in the sense that they do not usually report any positive changes in external circumstances. However, they seem to make comparisons less likely, too, or, if they do, these comparisons are rather neutral (“it’s not good here, but other places wouldn’t be either”). Such “other” places might be cities within a reachable distance. For one who is generally attracted to the countryside, moving to cities is not a real option due to this attraction; accessible alternatives seem beyond their capabilities—do not occur as real options. Also, there is a relative satisfaction with the circumstances to be found in, especially in comparison with other places that are in sight and reachable, and in comparison also with the respondents’ past living circumstances: a sense of personal development in life might lead to a reduced level of aspirations even though by migration, the circumstances could further be developed.

These would suggest that acquiescent immobility is sometimes a provincialist version of voluntary immobility: voluntary in the sense that, among the reachable options, respondents consider their place of living as the best. However, the scope of what constitutes reachable options might vary greatly, ranging from the next micro-region located seemingly far in the personal scope of space, to exotic overseas places. A local-born retired male respondent with a high level of education, who is highly integrated with the local society on many levels, argued that the village had suffered greatly after the post-socialist transition, considering its economic opportunities. He also reported a fragmentation of the local society and a great level of intranational, as well as international emigration among those who are capable to move, but he referred to himself

as someone deeply involved in the community, as well as the cultural life. Nevertheless, as the father of two teenagers, he expects his children to leave the locality. He described his goal to be ensuring his children’s education and success by using two different expressions of mobility: “to send them out on their ways” and to “mount them with wings.” Further, he claimed in the main narrative not to consider moving, nevertheless, as a response to the lottery question, his attitudes suddenly seem to reverse. He describes his desire to move, partially by a fear that news about his sudden wealth would spread within the community and create envy, but, generally, he claims he would move to more idyllic places, thus maximizing the reported positive aspects of his current local life:

**Participant:** I’m not very much attracted to moving. Maybe if I were still younger, I might emigrate to Austria. But, everything bonds me here, I lived my life here, and I don’t miss that. My partner had a flat in [the micro-regional center town], but everything bonds me here...Here, I can just sit on the stairs, sit in the garden, and sometimes make a barbecue. Go to my garden, and prune the vine in the autumn. I can entertain myself. And, as I just mentioned, I’m an animated person: I come and go a lot, and do what I must. I don’t miss the city.

**Researcher:** This is our final question: What would you do if you were to win the lottery?

**Participant:** Well, I’d remain silent and maybe move away where the sun shines [laughs], I mean, somewhere I’d feel good. These things come to light anyway...It’s very likely that I won’t stay. [Respondent 4114, 67-year-old male, retiree]

Among the acquiescent immobile group, development programs do not appear similar to those found in the voluntary immobile group

(hence, those having similarly low levels of aspirations). Instead, members of the acquiescent immobile group concern change in a similar way to the voluntary mobile: that is, with significant undervaluation of its effects and positive aspects that, on the one hand, might have developed personal welfare but also failed to provide crucial life opportunities. Not surprisingly, by the lottery question being introduced, and thus, a greater scope of opportunities proposed, the range of space opened, too, and by comparison with further places, mobility suddenly became an option to concern seriously. A middle-aged public servant, who was already introduced earlier as somebody who likes to be local, provided the following clear-cut answer:

**Researcher:** What would you do if you were to win the lottery?

**Participant:** [Chuckles] [short pause] I'd go. [pause]

**Researcher:** And where'd you go?

**Participant:** I don't know yet, well... not too far away. About 20 kilometers [to Austria], that's it. And that's how you get to know me, that I have an answer for this in a second. Because... 'cause... 'cause, after all... this is not perfect, living here. Not a perfect life. So that is what I already told you... this country is capable only of this, but yet, no one is an enemy of oneself. [Respondent 7114, middle-aged male, public servant, manager]

International and internal migration aspirations both appear in lottery narratives of this third group, though a detailed analysis of mobility directions would exceed the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is important to note that claims about potential international movements can be aligned with hedonistic values and careers, whereas those respondents rather staying on more 'secure' grounds (by expressing security-related and modern values) prefer to think about shorter

moving distances, even considering international mobility. Hence, besides international movements, inter-regional moving desires are presented among this subgroup as well. A young mother, for instance, who loves the rural idyll, according to her claims, would not think to move towards great cities once being a lottery winner. Instead, she claims she would move to a somewhat larger town in a more idyllic region of Hungary, maximizing the idyll and making a compromise between vivid city life and the peaceful rural:

Well, I'd move away, for certain. I'd move away from here. I'd move away. Somewhere to Transdanubia. Transdanubia. Bringing my family with me, buying a small flat for everyone, and then moving away... rather to a town. Rather to a small, calm, nice town... That's a nice area. And hilly. I like to travel there; this place is boring. And then, there are more opportunities there, at least that's what I think. [Respondent 8112, 32-year-old female, medical worker]

## Discussion

Analyses presented in this paper dealt with personal aspirations and opportunities for outward mobility from peripheral, rural settlements of Hungary. One might argue that the group of acquiescent immobile people is composed of two subgroups: first, those for whom perceived opportunity structures are irrelevant in their (lack of) aspiration to migrate because other factors compensate for this lack of capacities. This might very well be understood from a rational choice perspective, too—here, rational calculations are meant in their widest sense, that is, including all non-economic factors as well, such as local identity and patriotism. Considering the phenomenon in its dynamism: after changes in opportunity structures, by all other 'push' and



'pull,' as well as 'retaining' and 'repelling' factors further compensating this change, it would remain only an analytical problem that former acquiescent immobile people be labeled voluntary immobile ones. This subgroup of virtually acquiescent respondents is arguably "voluntary immobile" in essence, and their labeling as acquiescent immobile is only a methodological bias, as their lack of opportunities masks them and conceals them from the eyes of the observer. This problem will not arise concerning other forms of mobility, as those are identified through verbally expressed personal perceptions of aspirations and capabilities.

The lottery question (*What would you do if you were to win the lottery?*), despite its standardized and somewhat unnatural character, seemed useful as a final question, as a tension relief, and as a means of transitioning the interview into an off-record, more informal talk. The reasons for the adequacy of this question are based on the following:

A. Based on the responses, migration aspirations might be analyzed in a general life aspiration setting: Interviewees were not specifically asked about their migration intentions. Instead, the field is provided for these ideas to inductively unfold, just as Schewel (2019:28) proposes: "Research on migration aspirations needs to be expanded even further to include the broader life aspirations, hopes, and motivations that contribute to the particular aspiration to migrate or stay." However, though no one is forced to have an opinion about migration, by not inquiring specifically about moving, the share of unobserved potential migrants will be higher. On the other hand, the group of those who do express their will to migrate creates a good ground for a valid analysis of the various forms of mobility.

B. Hypothetical, but easily imaginable, situation and focused treatment: Though winning the lottery is a hypothetical and entirely unlikely scenario, the situation is very easy to be internalized by respondents and thus, valid answers are to be expected regarding one's current life aspirations, including the aspirations to migrate. Furthermore, winning the lottery is a narrow-scope and concrete scenario, which requires no changes in other aspects of life, let alone an all-inclusive shift in one's life. [As, for instance, other questions would suggest, such as if interviewees were interested in what respondents would do if having 'all the opportunities' or just 'being rich.' These would be much harder to internalize.] Hypothetical questions are widely used by various market and public policy research (Fitzsimons and Shiv 2001). However, several analysts are concerned about the validity of such questions (Meyerhoff 2006). For instance, Chang, Lusk, and Norwood (2009) test various survey and modeling tools in an experimental setting to find hypothetical situations worse in predicting actual shopping behavior than non-hypothetical choice cases. Formerly, a similar argument was framed by Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988) who argue that when hypothetical questions are asked, respondents might be more willing for change than in real-life situations, when a bias towards the status quo is to be seen. As Meyerhoff (2006) summarizes the related debate, general attitudes are regarded as weak and attitudes towards concrete targets as unreliable predictors of further behavior, while it is agreed that attitudes are prerequisites of certain behaviors and therefore, a good predictor of general tendencies to act in a given way. Consequently, "the intention to perform the behavior is indeed the strongest predictor of the stated behavior" (Meyerhoff 2006:223).

Nevertheless, some qualitative researchers also suggest that hypothetical questions be used to receive even more valid data on actual (rather than potential) social phenomena (Chase 2003; Moore, Lapan, and Quartaroli 2013). Based on these claims, it can be argued that hypothetical scenarios are seriously considered by respondents, raising the validity of replies on their actual attitudes, even though their potential future behavior might differ.

- C. Fitness to differentiate between opportunities and aspirations: As de Haas (2014:23) argues, migration is defined by aspirations and capabilities, where “migration aspirations are a function of people’s general life aspirations and perceived spatial opportunity structures.” Therefore, migration aspirations, by being embedded in general life aspirations, are fit to be analyzed as a part of it (instead of addressed directly with migration-related questions), and, in particular, even if this might be influenced by ‘objective’ capabilities. What the lottery question provides is the hypothetical elimination of most (if not all) economic opportunity boundaries to get a more detailed view of general attitudes, aspirations, and personal beliefs about mobility.

## Conclusion

Based on findings from a series of qualitative fieldwork conducted in peripheral Hungarian rural settlements, this paper demonstrated the lottery question as being a useful tool in exploring the general life aspirations of respondents. The hypothetical and, to an extent, standardized interview question enabled addressing general life goals under a hypothetical setting without external constraints, by the question also providing a simple

and clear-cut scenario for reaching maximum-validity responses.

The applicability of the question was demonstrated through an analysis of migration aspirations. As was shown in this narrower research topic, the question was not only useful in grasping the general life aspirations but also in making it possible to assess how migration attitudes are embedded in them. By providing a tool for the focused analysis of attitudes without disturbing the presence of structural factors such as economic opportunities, and in general, the instrumental forms of freedom, the internal coherence of the agency elements of geographical mobility could thus be evaluated. It was shown that both mobility and immobility (internal and international) might, in essence, be a self-defining life goal for many, characterized by the complex cultural meaning of migration. Furthermore, it was also shown that the question was eligible in differentiating between and addressing the different forms of mobility. The findings suggest that the voluntarism of migration provided in general in narratives is often shifted or reversed once the structural constraints are, at least hypothetically, eliminated. For instance, among those aspiring to move out from the locality, but unable to do so, the hypothetical lottery win brings up modernistic values and, as a part of them, empowered aspirations. Those looking forward to moving, provide either hedonistic or career-oriented responses, and aspirations are further facilitated. Mobility aspirations of those being happy with staying seem not to be influenced by the lottery question, and, among these people, entrepreneurial and community-oriented values play a major role. Nevertheless, attitudes towards moving were reversed, in some cases, among those with both high and low general migration aspirations.

Among these respondents, we might recognize the involuntary mobile (de Haas 2014) and acquiescent immobile (Schewel 2015) subgroups, respectively, which otherwise might be challenging to identify. It can be hypothesized that structural constraints, forcing people to move, masked general agency attitudes to stay among the former, and structural, restraining-constraints masked attitudes to move among the latter group.

Although not presented in this paper in a detailed way, besides approaching specific theoretical issues such as migration, the lottery question was

applicable in approaching the various classes of general life aspirations, ranging from living a quiet life, to being of service to others, to engaging in religious actions, to getting new experiences, living a thrilling life, and so forth. Instead of making predictions, the question was able to grasp the current cultural values of respondents, which could serve as a basis for further investigations in various fields. Furthermore, based on the fieldwork experiences, the inclusion of this question at the end of the interview guide might also serve as a good way of relieving tension and setting up a transition into an off-record, informal talk with respondents.

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## Book Review

Flick, Uwe. 2020. *Introducing Research Methodology: Thinking Your Way through Your Research Project*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing

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**T**hrough this book, Flick presents beginners in research with a concise view of research practice in academic, political, and other contexts. However, it focuses primarily on research in social science scenarios rather than natural science, history, or technology. Flick defended his Ph.D. in 1988 and is an experienced professor in qualitative and other research methodologies with a good number of books on methods to his credit. The book is quite elaborate, with 384 pages, structured into five different parts, namely, “orientation,” “planning and design,” “method selection,” “working with data,” and “reflection and writing.” The first edition of this work came out in 2011, and the second in 2014. Compared to the second edition

(Flick 2015), the present edition has a structural re-ordering. A particular focus is given to methods by grouping the two chapters on methods into a new part. The chapter on e-research is avoided, and the concept of digital research is incorporated into various chapters by recognizing it as a means for doing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research rather than as a method of its own. In the part on “working with data,” a new chapter is added on the use of existing data. This restructuring and addition and deletion of chapters have given the book a more meaningful and logical structure.

The author attempts to accompany young researchers through this book as each chapter gives a picto-

rial description of where the research has reached that moment and discusses the various challenges and practical issues to be faced there. This escorting is also seen when the author gives practical advice from his expertise in the field. For example, he states: "In most researches, you will learn a lot not only about the participants, but also about yourself" (p. 17). That gives beginners an experience of interacting with an experienced professor. Moreover, Flick has attempted to help the readers by providing a bullet-pointed view of what is discussed in each chapter at the beginning and end of the chapter. A few questions are also provided at the end of each chapter to check whether the reader has grasped the issues discussed. What makes this book even more beneficial are the examples from actual research done in the past. Around forty such examples are given in boxes, and these examples are discussed throughout the book to explain various concepts. As many of such examples are from student research as part of their academic curricula, it can be insightful for beginners.

The "orientation" part of the book distinguishes social research from other kinds of research and knowledge of everyday life. It also points out prominent epistemological ideologies, such as critical rationalism, interpretative paradigm, and constructionism, that underlie various methodologies commonly used in research. A rather important discussion in this part is about various ethical issues to be looked into while undertaking research. This discussion makes it clear that ethical boundaries make it impossible to do research on every possible interest of a researcher. At the same time, it also makes it clear that getting consent may not be possible in every instance (e.g., while observing the behavior of people walking through a street). In the second part of the book, the chapter that narrates steps

in the research process is quite helpful in gaining clarity about the practical differences between doing quantitative research and qualitative research. In the third part of the book on "method selection," the descriptions of triangulation and mixed method approach could be the most helpful while entering real-life research.

The addition of a chapter, in the fourth part, on the use of existing data is a timely update for this book because the use of existing data is on the rise, as the possibility of digitally storing collected data, the digital availability of documents, and their public accessibility are increasing in the contemporary world. While the methods of collecting data are discussed in detail, the description of various analytical approaches is brief in certain aspects. For example, topics like "central tendency" and "testing associations and differences" could have been more elaborate. In the twelfth chapter, the author makes an original contribution to the field by suggesting a way for true integration in the analysis stages of research done via the mixed method and triangulation. The last part of the book makes it clear that it is impossible to evaluate quantitative and qualitative research using the same criteria. While quantitative research is checked for its reliability, validity, and objectivity, qualitative research can be rightly assessed only with a reformulated understanding of these evaluative ideals. The worthiness of the topic, rigor with which research is conducted, ethics, coherence, the significance of contribution, et cetera, are also presented as meaningful criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research. The author's discussion of the various limits of different methods helps a beginner choose the suitable method for one's research. Finally, the author's expertise again becomes visible as he points out the need to consider aspects other than scientific interests (e.g., economic

and social interests) to have political and practical impacts of one's research findings.

Even though the book may not be attractive to experts, it neatly serves its declared aim of being helpful to beginners in research. However, it seems contradictory as the author calls the book concise since it spreads to 384 pages with some repeated narrations. One of the clear examples of such repetition is chapter eight, in which the description of decisions to be taken in the research process is an iteration of the steps presented in chapter six (even though pre-

sented in a different style). Another example is the discussion about digital research. Avoiding such 'repeated' narrations could have made the book more concise. For a modern reader in the post-covid-19 era, one thing that could be disagreeable in the book is the view that conducting an online video interview is an arduous task. It could be because video calls became very popular and easily accessible only with the Covid-19 spread in 2020. Even with these comments, one can undoubtedly affirm that this is a commendable book from Flick and recommendable for those entering their social research career.

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## Book Review

Petre, Caitlin. 2021. *All the News That's Fit to Click: How Metrics Are Transforming the Work of Journalists*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press

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The book opens with a leaked story from *Business Insider* about an internal slide deck from AOL called “The AOL Way” in 2011 (p. 1). Within one of the slide decks from the AOL Way, it asks writers and editors from *Business Insider* to consider a content generation process that contains four factors when deciding which topic to cover, and they are: traffic potential (i.e., editors’ estimate, with the help of an algorithmic prediction tool, of how many pageviews each ‘piece of content’ would generate); profit potential (the estimated amount of money a piece of content would cost to produce versus how much advertising revenue

it was likely to bring in); turnaround time; and, finally, ‘editorial integrity.’ One can immediately observe that the content generation process is basically a flowchart that tells journalists exactly what they are supposed to do to produce journalism. And in fact, if one goes deeper into the slide deck, one will see that each step within the flowchart has more steps of instructions with other slides devoted to it, and so on.

The AOL Way slide was received with abject horror by journalists, and many journalists felt that way because the vision of journalism that the AOL Way is advocating represents a new yet terrifying type of managerial interference in editorial work (p. 2). That

is to say, the AOL Way implies that to be successful or even survive as a digital media company, journalism needs to be transformed into a type of labor that is completely rationalized and standardized.

Yet behind this relentless digital metrics-driven content optimization, AOL was, in fact, taking a page out of a century-old managerial playbook, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, written by a mechanical engineer named Frederick Taylor (p. 2). In this book, Taylor argues that if managers want to make factory work more efficient, they need to pay more attention to the labor process. That is, they need to start paying more attention to how work is organized and managed down to the smallest detail.

So, Taylorism became associated with time studies in which managers would try to break down a particular work into its smallest component, then figure out how to optimize and streamline each component to make sure that each worker is carrying out these micro-tasks appropriately. Therefore, through this scientific management, the work becomes more profitable by becoming more efficient. However, journalists managed to stay relatively untouched by these micro-management techniques in the twentieth century, until now (p. 3). Professor Petre suggests that we start to see the work of journalism be broken up into essentially micro tasks according to the AOL way, much in the same way that Taylorism did to the factory work.

This change occurred for many reasons. One of the most important reasons the book focuses on is the rise of analytics tools such as Google Analytics, Chartbeat, Parsley, and Quantcast. These tools measure in a very detailed way how each online reader interacts with the news that they are reading (p. 5). For example, these tools often show in real-time

how many readers click on a particular story, how many comments on it, what their comments are, and how many are sharing it. The tools can get more detail than that. Many of them can even show how many seconds an average reader spends reading a story before they drop off, and they can show how far down the page of an article readers scroll before they click on something else. Not only do these measurements exist, some news organizations even display these traffic numbers on a giant flat-screen in the office on the wall so that it can remind writers how good their works are (p. 171).

So, analytical tools started to play an important role in many newsrooms around 2011. What Petre is trying to understand is what kind of effects these tools have on journalists and the process of doing journalism. Hence, she conducted ethnographic research and many interviews at three companies that were really at the center of these questions about the role of metrics in news production.

The analytics tool she chose to research is Chartbeat, a prominent tech start-up specializing in creating real-time web analytics tools specifically for journalists. What Petre intended to investigate is how metrics produced by Chartbeat have been interpreted and used in distinct organizational contexts. One of the new organizations she chose to study is *The New York Times*, a media famous for its prestige and journalistic professionalism. To contrast the status of *The New York Times*, Petre also did five months of interview fieldwork at *Gawker Media*, an independent network of blogs that became known for taking great pleasure in breaking the boundaries of traditional journalism. Even though *Gawker* and *The New York Times* are two very different news organizations, they both use the same analytics tool, Chartbeat.

The book's findings suggest these points: first, Petre argues that metrics tools enable management to extract increased productivity from journalists, and they do this while obfuscating the role of management in this work speedup. According to Petre, many journalists at *Gawker* are addicted to Chartbeat, and they admitted that they could not stop looking at the score from Chartbeat (p. 50). The more journalists at *Gawker* looked at Chartbeat, the harder they worked because they wanted to beat their traffic scores and their colleagues' traffic scores, and this could simply be some sort of editorial optimization or just writing more blog posts. The crucial thing was that Chartbeat makes writers at *Gawker* work harder and harder, but interestingly, they do not perceive production pressure from managerial interference. Instead, these writers feel like they are putting pressure on themselves because they are the ones that are looking at Chartbeat for the traffic level (p. 66).

So far, this might seem like a depressing story of managerial control. But, Petre went beyond a simple story of managerial domination because the meaning of newsroom metrics was highly ambiguous (p. 111-112). What does that number Chartbeat produce mean? There is rarely a definitive, objective answer to the question of whether a certain number of page views for a news article is good or bad because there are so many confounding factors that contribute to the final outcomes. For instance, the subject of the story varies, the day and time of publication vary, the news cycle that a story is competing with, the amount of promotion a story receives, and then most importantly, the opacity of the social media platform algorithms that plays a huge role in determining how much distribution and visibility and news story gets. Accordingly, there were a lot of comments like this during the interview at *Gawk-*

*er*, which implies there is enormous uncertainty about what metrics mean and what to do with them (p. 100). And what, in effect, happens is that a lot of interpretive labor is required to make sense of metrics and tell a story with them that is meaningful to the newsroom. The ability to perform this interpretive labor correctly, to decide what a particular metric means and what should be done about it, and to make others in the newsroom accept your interpretation as legitimate has become a really important and contested form of power in the digital news organizations that journalists did not have before. And these struggles played out in different ways depending on specifically the kind of organizational culture and power structure of that newsroom. That is why it is important in the book that Petre compares *Gawker Media's* working culture with *The New York Times*'.

Based on the book, *The New York Times* is a very hierarchical news organization. This meant that the editors at *The New York Times* restricted reporters' access to the metrics because editors of *The New York Times* did not want reporters using metrics to challenge their editorial authority and to question their editorial decisions (p. 140-142). Whereas at *Gawker*, where writers had ample access to metrics, writers sometimes did just that. They would leverage their traffic numbers as a way to advocate for raises or promotions, especially if they had a boss that was somewhat skeptical of whether they should get those things. In other words, Petre shows that metrics become mobilized within these organizational power struggles. Therefore, on the one hand, while metrics did extract increased productivity, on the other hand, the metrics also provide an alternative evaluative framework for writers and reporters to understand their work and understand their worth.

Toward the end of the book, Petre states that metrics serve as an ever-present reminder that journalism is work. She argues that it is important to acknowledge journalism is work because, between the 1990s and 2000, many critical media scholars lamented the pervasiveness of what they call enterprise discourse in creative and knowledge sectors like journalism. According to the enterprise discourse, workers should be happy to accept the offered payment and potentially a precarious career trajectory because they are doing what they love, and they are lucky to be there. And up until early 2015, this kind of enterprise discourse was still very common in the digital journalism industry. The book references an article published by *The Washington Post* called "Why Internet Journalists Don't Organize" (p. 190). The reporter in the article argues that one of the reasons is generational. Millennial journalists have this neoliberal, individualistic idea of work and their careers. They have built these personal brands largely based on quantitative web map metrics that they can transfer as an individual to another company at will. Consequently, they do not need to be in solidarity with other journalists. But, four months later, in 2015, something interesting happened: *Gawker Media* became the first digital media company to unionize. And then, after that, there was a massive wave of unionization. Six-

ty-plus digital newsrooms in the US have unionized since *Gawker* did it in 2015. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this wave of unionization and how much this wave of unionization debunks the conventional wisdom about young digital journalists that was very common at the time.

The book itself is fascinating because *Gawker*, which was this digital media company that was arguably most strongly associated with this oppressive metrics-driven culture, was also the first where the writers rejected this enterprise discourse and unionized. In the book's conclusion, Petre suggests that metrics, especially when displayed on a giant flat screen monitor of a newsroom on the wall above writers as they write, is a symptom of the precariousness of their careers. In other words, she argues that metrics inadvertently make it harder for journalists and knowledge workers in other fields to ignore that what they do is work, however creative or prestigious or autonomous it may seem, however passionately they often feel about it. It is work, and that heightened awareness and as far as it can lead to demands for greater dignity or stability or equity in the workplace, which is a good reason to be cautiously hopeful about the future, even when it is saturated with metrics.

## Citation

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## Book Review

Gundur, R. V. 2022. *Trying to Make It. The Enterprises, Gangs, and People of the American Drug Trade*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press

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“**A** good ethnographic piece of work!” Those were the first words that popped into my mind after reading the work by Gundur. This monograph is precious to me, so my review is also personal. I highlight issues that are both salient for me and present in my research.

This monograph is intended for anyone, regardless of the reader’s background, education, and research experience. Gundur speaks in simple words and inclusive language about complex issues related to drug trafficking, street/prison gangs, drug trafficking organizations, corruption, politics, and violence. He paints a fascinating story about the mechanisms

of drug trafficking and perfectly operates with data and literature. The author applies a micro-field-based perspective on organized crime to utter on macro processes and domestic and international policy on drugs and organized crime. Combining these two perspectives (micro and macro) is a challenging endeavor. He did it flawlessly. Based on his numerous interviews and direct field observations, Gundur gives us insights into individual decisions behind involvement in illegal drug-related activities of many people he spoke with. He also discusses the roles of national/regional regulations, politicians, journalists, NGOs, border agents, and law enforcement in shaping the institutional response to crime. As I mentioned, it is also a pivotal monograph for



me for several reasons. First, the development of qualitative research in criminology and, second, making a clear division between gangs (both street-based and prison-based) and drug trafficking organizations (informally termed “cartels”).

*Trying to Make It* advocates for ethnographic research and the use of qualitative work in delivering explanations in the field of criminology, breaking the ‘monopoly’ of the quantitative approach (Jacques 2014; Copes, Tewksbury, and Sandberg 2016), even if the most prominent criminological journals are more willing to accept quantitative and mixed papers (Copes et al. 2020). Gundur provided a clear added value beyond the reach of those choosing only a ‘hard data methodology’ and proved that qualitative methods are indispensable for accessing difficult-to-obtain information (rather than the traditional idea of their strength in accessing difficult-to-reach populations) (Chomczyński 2018; Treadwell 2020; Chomczyński, Guy, and Cortés 2022). The ethnographic approach Gundur successfully applied in his study allows for valuable, serendipitous findings that are rarely obtainable via quantitative designs. I am still curious how many interviewees partook in the research and what were their affiliations and positions. Still, I believe the author had good reasons not to reveal all information. I am also greedy enough to know how the author managed his emotions in the fieldwork and how he won the gang members’ trust and convinced them to share their life stories.

The second contribution to the literature on organized crime is an attempt to clarify the division between gangs and drug trafficking organizations. Knowing how hard that task is, I am grateful for it. Having had repeated experiences of struggling with reviewers who advocated for referring to gang lit-

erature to discuss “cartel”-related issues, I greatly appreciate it. Few researchers maintain that distinction, including Fraser and Hagedorn (2018:22), who caution that the term gang “does not easily map onto these groups.” Gundur also does it by trying to differentiate between the two types of organized crime (Chomczyński and Clark 2022). “Most drug trafficking organizations appear to have structured the ways in which gangs provide protection and assume trafficking tasks in order to constrain them. Gangs typically engage in only intermediary trafficking activities and do not have access to suppliers in the countries from which precursor products originate. This arrangement generally benefits both gangs and drug trafficking organizations: gangs generate income while using the skills they already possess, while drug trafficking organizations defray risk to themselves by accepting a modest cost for having gangs assume riskier roles” (p. 94). I also appreciate Gundur’s efforts in delimitating the term gang by providing some rules respected by its members: “Ideally, the gang wants to recruit only members who are fully committed to gang life” (p. 82) or “Moreover, to join the gang, ‘there was no blood in, blood out,’...Membership was informal” (p. 80). The last rule probably differs even among the same-named gangs according to the country from which they originate and where they operate. For example, an 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang member (Mara Barrio 18), deported from Los Angeles and imprisoned in Mexico, with whom I recently spoke, claimed that the “blood in, blood out” rule still prevails on American soil. Yet, gang members from the 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang imprisoned in Honduras told me that “the only way out is through the church” (p. 85). To my best knowledge, in the case of drug trafficking organizations in Mexico, it is always “blood out” that helps distinguish them from street gangs and clarifies the boundary between the two types of organizations. The differ-

ence also lies in relations between drug trafficking organizations and street gangs. “Cartels” sometimes “outsource” plaza protection and “use gangs to enforce protection at the street level” (p. 120).

Gundur’s research stands in the same line as Venkatesh’s (2008) groundbreaking study of the street gang and very few others. Both researchers collected first-hand data by shadowing gang members’ daily routines, decision-making processes, and organizational dynamics. From my standpoint, it is exceptionally valuable when a researcher is also an eyewitness, reducing personal risk as much as they can. What makes me particularly enjoy reviewing the chapters and following the author’s insights is the transparent methodological section, which allows the reader to become familiar with the researchers’ data-gathering methods and reveals the backstage setting as positionality (Bourke 2014). Such an in-depth methodological reflection and critical approach make the outcomes well-explained and reliable.

Going into detail, Gundur proposes a comprehensive, evidence-based reflection on the drug trafficking panorama. The chapters, like puzzle pieces, create a complex big picture of organized crime on both sides of the US-Mexican border—El Paso and Juárez. The author carefully and respectfully reveals to his readers the activities of street-gang members, including street, border, jail, violence, and family. Turning pages, I felt immersed in the gang reality and as if I were accompanying the author in his fieldwork, seeing and hearing with his eyes and ears. *Trying to Make It* also responds to stereotypes and ‘official narration’ promoted by mainstream media that have arisen around criminal organizations in the US and Mexico, reducing ambiguity in the literature. Gundur’s work is rich in examples—

the violence described is one persuasive evidence. Gundur shows the mechanisms underlying violence split among competing criminal organizations (Ríos 2013) and factors decreasing violence. Despite public opinion and media releases, drug trafficking organizations use violence also for instrumental reasons because of bloodshed: “violence may drop when competing drug trafficking organizations engage as an economic cartel and collude with one another. This practice serves two purposes. First, it minimizes the human, monetary, and security costs of violence, which after a certain point become so expensive, when taken in the aggregate, that an enterprise cannot survive and grow. Second, it allows the drug trafficking organizations to work more efficiently in terms of trafficking” (p. 98).

The monograph is highly accessible for readers who are not familiar with the field of criminology, especially organized crime. The historical background, where one can find the path of criminal organizations, is helpful. It also informs about the dynamics of criminal groups’ *modus operandi* over time. For example, Gundur highlights the changes in drug trafficking organizations that had a strong impact on the whole Mexican society we witness today: “the cautious old-school bosses favored corruption over violence to facilitate business, an arrangement that had become normalized in Mexican political society” (p. 57; see: Lupsha 1991). The division between old-school bosses (and the organization they are in charge of) and ‘modern’ military-based organizations (e.g., *Los Zetas*, *Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación*) is crucial for understanding the changes in organized crime in Mexico that took place in recent years. Magaloni and colleagues (2020; also see Maldonado 2018) also bring up the difference between “old school” and “military-based” drug trafficking organizations. It

is their relationship to the communities, where the first ones used to be cooperative while the second ones were antagonistic.

In summary, this is a fascinating work suitable for a broad audience. The monograph is rich in exam-

ples based on first-hand data the author collected. This work also contributes to organized crime criminology by clarifying certain inaccuracies related to drug trafficking, gangs/drug trafficking organizations, recruitment, and the role of local and national institutions in the fight against drugs.

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## Book Review

Joslyn, Jacqueline. 2022. *Conceptualizing and Modeling Relational Processes in Sociology: Introducing Disjointed Fluidity*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing

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**C**onceptualizing and Modeling Relational processes in Sociology: Introducing Disjointed Fluidity by Jacqueline Joslyn provides an intriguing new way to think about the analysis of relational processes and social networks that adds depth and complexity to more traditional ethnographic and social network analysis techniques. Specifically, Joslyn's book argues for a cognitive process-based data analysis that integrates the flow of memory and imagination within the study of relationship networks. She presents us with a conceptual tool she calls disjointed fluidity to frame this innovative analysis. Then moves on to explain the internal psychological and external sociological bases of this concept. Her expertise and

writing style make this text a strong contribution to ethnographic methods of data analysis, social psychological studies of relationships, and social networks. This work is best suited for scholarly audiences and specifically for those with a background in social psychology, social network theory and relational analysis, and/or symbolic interactionist theory. This text is intellectually, theoretically, and methodologically dense, though the use of illustrative case studies and examples throughout helps strengthen the reader's understanding.

In her first chapter, she introduces the concept of disjointed fluidity as a way of understanding and modeling relational processes in sociology, broad-

ly speaking. Joslyn begins the core of the book by providing a complex theoretical background for her conceptualization. Utilizing phenomenological and social psychological frameworks, she introduces us to a way of thinking about relationships that employs time and cognition. She does this by considering relationships in terms of remembered and imagined events and the thought or cognitive frameworks that she defines as “disjointed fluidity.” Conceptually she argues that relationships are understood by relations actors as a series of remembered or imagined events and cognitive understandings of the meanings of such events within relationships. This chapter is theoretically dense and, at times, gets confusing. Still, her argument about the symbolic meanings of interactions as a way of understating and perpetuating relationships is effective.

Chapter 2 seeks to provide a kind of process-oriented evaluation of disjointed fluidity by specifically identifying what she terms as “internal mechanisms of continuity.” These three mechanisms include reminiscing/reflection, relationship evolution or transformation, and extending the relationship during absence or loss. Joslyn provides interview data to illustrate these relationship-forming processes from her project on mentorship relationships among faculty and graduate students. She effectively argues that the social psychological processes, which she summarizes as “reflections transitions and extensions,” form the core of her approach to relational analysis. This chapter feels particularly persuasive from a social-psychological standpoint. It is very effective in persuading the reader of the importance of these mechanisms in creating symbolic meanings that are attached to relationships by relational participants. Her examples are well-chosen and highly illustrative.

The third section explores some of the external mechanisms that create relationship continuity from a disjointed fluidity perspective. Joslyn argues that her conceptualization also integrates an evaluation of external mechanisms, which primarily operate through structural and institutional frameworks that create relationship formation and continuity. She specifically discusses material/symbolic mechanisms, which she defines as empirical mechanisms. She also discusses institutional/structural or normative mechanisms and interactional/discursive or communication-based mechanisms. Joslyn, again, provides ethnographic data from a variety of her sources to illustrate the phenomena she is discussing. She adds case studies to this chapter to highlight the application of her disjointed fluidity concept. This chapter strays a bit from a true symbolic interactionist perspective, moving instead into a more traditional ethnographic analysis, but still, she effectively frames and demonstrates the methodological strategy that she is introducing in this text.

In the next chapter, which Joslyn titles “Pixels and Flows,” she moves away from arguing the theoretical and intellectual underpinnings of her analysis and proceeds to introduce it as a modeling tool or methodology. She begins by explaining that she has developed a specific method to allow disjointed fluidity to function as a practical means for analyzing relational social processes. She places this tool as a mid-point between the fluidity of qualitative content analysis and the rigidity of social network analysis. She uses the terms pixel and flows to represent two interrelated means of organizing data. First, the concept of “pixel” that she uses as a representation of individual RIECOs (remembered or imagined events or cognitive outputs) that make up the individual perceptions by a relationship



partner that define the nature of the relationship. Secondly, she introduces the reader to the concept of “flows” to indicate temporal elements that exist within a relationship. Once again, Joslyn utilizes illustrations from her research to highlight how this pixel and flow framework functions as a modeling tool for the theoretical analysis of relational processes. This is her strongest chapter, where she finally presents to us the framework of her analysis and demonstrates how it could be used effectively by other researchers.

The final substantive chapter focuses on fully illustrating the use of her pixel and flow model as a tool for empirical analysis. This chapter is the publication of an article addressing gender awareness training using mixed methods research and pixel/flow analysis techniques. While it is clear that Joslyn is seeking a means to fully illustrate the empirical possibilities, this chapter is by far her weakest. First, given the extensive use of case studies, examples, and research illustrations, it feels somewhat unnecessary. Secondly, and perhaps most problematically, the decision to use a journal article style, including a literature review and so forth, makes the section feel padded. Still, although this chapter feels separate from the rest of the book, in many ways, it does function as an illustration of the empirical possibility of her analysis framework.

In her conclusion, Joslyn makes her final case for the use of a disjointed fluidity as a means of understanding relationships, which is firmly embedded in social psychological and symbolic interactionist theoretical frames. She also addresses lingering questions and concerns about the strengths and weaknesses of her theoretical analysis and her methodological toolkit and does so quite persuasively.

This book is a solid introduction to a method of relationship analysis that brings together strengths from both traditional unstructured ethnographic analysis and the more computational social network analysis techniques. Further, it contributes to the ever-evolving body of literature that helps scholars to analyze empirical data. This book effectively brings a systemic and explicitly social psychological mode of relational qualitative analysis to the table and illustrates its effectiveness for both theoretical and empirical research. Joslyn’s discussion of both the theoretical and methodological implications of her work is powerful, though, at times, the complexity of her writing makes the ideas less clear. Further, while the final substantive chapter is illustrative, it seems like a missed opportunity to spend more time fleshing out the details of her pixel and flows tool, which is the strongest contribution of the book. Overall, this text is useful, if a somewhat limited, contribution to the methodological and theoretical subfields of qualitative data analysis.

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