TILL HILMAR

Fragile Bonds of Recognition: Exploring the Social Underpinnings of Sentiments of Exclusion in Post-1989 East Germany

Abstract

Recently, as a corollary of intensified efforts to understand the rise of right-wing populism, the topic of social recognition has gained renewed attention in sociological research. It seems that a sense of misrecognition and exclusion is shaped as much by cultural as by economic factors. Just how these elements are interlinked, however, remains a black box. In this article, I offer an empirical contribution to this problem: I demonstrate that social recognition is nourished in everyday interpersonal relations and that people negotiate ideas of economic deservingness in their social surroundings—so much so, in fact, that they make social ties dependent on them. The article studies the case of the post-1989 societal shifts in formerly communist-ruled East Germany, a context marked by a pervasive sense of social exclusion today. In interviews with 41 individuals who lived through this rupturing process, I identify a crucial dynamic of social misrecognition in how respondents evaluate other peoples' strategies of coping with the economic fallout of this time and how they draw—often deeply personal—boundaries between themselves and others on these grounds.

Keywords: Social Recognition; Deservingness; Symbolic Boundaries; Post-communist Germany.

Introduction

IN RECENT YEARS, the nativist, far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has been remarkably successful in eastern Germany, the formerly communist-ruled part of the country. In the federal elections of 2017, its vote share in the former East was double that which it received in the former West (more than 20% in the East compared to around 10% in the West), and after the state-level elections of 2019, it

Till HILMAR, SOCIUM - Research Center for Inequality and Social Policy, University of Bremen, Germany [till.hilmar@uni-bremen.de].

European Journal of Sociology, 63, 2 (2022), pp. 247–278—0003-9756/22/0000-900$07.50per art + $0.10 per page
© *European Journal of Sociology* 2022. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. [doi: 10.1017/S0003975622000236].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

entered all five eastern regional parliaments with between a fifth and a quarter of the vote. The presence of an openly racist, anti-Semitic party at the heart of German politics is of critical concern for the future of democracy in the European Union.

In seeking to explain the rise of the AfD—a party which was only founded in 2013—researchers have, for the most part, followed the global conversation on authoritarian populism [Autor *et al.* 2020; Morgan, S. 2018; Mutz 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019] and asked whether popular support is best explained by economic or cultural grievances [Lengfeld 2018; Lux 2018]. In the formerly communist-ruled part of Germany, both of these problems are aggravated: more than 30 years after German unification, wages and pensions continue to lag behind Western levels, and more people hold anti-immigrant views in this part of the country than in the West [Arzheimer and Berning 2019; Mau 2019].

It is increasingly becoming clear that pitting one explanation against another—framing the problem in terms of economics *or* culture—has limits. Because the two dimensions are interlinked, more and more scholars concur that it is necessary that we adopt an integrative perspective [Gidron and Hall 2020; Lamont 2018; Morgan, M. 2020]. Noam Gidron and Peter Hall [2020] assert that grievances mobilized by right-wing parties are fuelled by a sense of social exclusion—or, in other words, by an unmet desire for social recognition [Honneth 2012] in everyday encounters with political institutions, as well as with other people in society. A growing number of studies corroborate this finding [Engler and Weisstanner 2021; Kurer 2020; Sachweh 2020].

However, we presently lack a deeper understanding of precisely how the intersection of cultural and economic experiences might generate a sense of misrecognition and exclusion. In this article, I contribute such a perspective by demonstrating that social recognition is nourished in everyday interpersonal relations. I ask how people make sense of experiences of misrecognition vis-à-vis concrete others, and specifically, how they do so on the basis of lived experience and salient memories of relational exclusion.

The article's key finding is that this takes place through a process of making judgements about the economic worth of others, based on ideas of economic deservingness. I show that people negotiate ideas of economic deservingness in their social surroundings—so much so, in fact, that they make their social ties dependent on thir own need for recognition.

I develop these insights on the basis of an interview study carried out with 41 respondents who grew up in communist-ruled East Germany,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the majority of whom experienced the 1989 revolution as young adults. Using a symbolic boundary approach [Jarness and Flemmen 2019; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002], I focus on stories that people tell about other peoples' experiences of the changes that accompanied the transformation into a market society after 1989. I identify a crucial dynamic of social misrecognition—a blow to the social texture—in how respondents evaluate other peoples' strategies of coping with the economic fallout of this time. Individuals draw moral boundaries between themselves and others on the grounds of whether these others adopt what they define as a socially esteemed way of coping with economic challenges. Respondents claim economic worth and respectability by referencing their strong work ethic coupled with the notion that they managed to *stay true to themselves* after 1989. This comes at the price of devaluating others: frequently, I find, symbolic boundaries target formerly close, trusted relations, such as friendship ties.

Hence, ideas of deservingness are closely intertwined with problems of social inclusion. Recognizing this, this article concludes by calling on scholars interested in political distrust and voter alienation who seek to study social recognition to engage with research on culture and inequality that highlights the social and moral sources of ideas of economic deservingness [Alexander 2011; Jarness and Flemmen 2019; Lamont 2000; Luft 2020].

Dissecting Social Recognition: An Integrative Approach

In recent times, as a corollary of the debate about the rise of right-wing authoritarian parties, sociologists have devoted renewed attention to the topic of social recognition. In an effort to pinpoint the cause of surging support for these parties among diverse electorates around the world, some scholars argue that it is rooted in cultural factors (usually defined as anti-immigrant sentiments and racism and/or opposition to multiculturalist values and LGBTQ rights) while others point to economic forces (usually defined as economic deprivation and/or status anxiety) [Morgan, S. 2018; Mutz 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019]. The German debate on popular support for the relatively novel authoritarian populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has unfolded along similar lines [Lengfeld 2018; Lux 2018]. While this controversy has generated variegated empirical insights, it has also resulted in a theoretical stalemate. In everyday life, cultural and economic forces are not neatly separated but

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

interact in manifold and complex ways. Thus, it is necessary for integrative perspectives that transcend this dichotomy and trace the dynamic interrelation of these two elements to be elaborated.[1]

A growing number of researchers committed to this task have drawn attention to one particular phenomenon: they argue that a crisis of social integration is fuelling the popular resentment that far-right populists exploit and weaponize to achieve their aims [Gidron and Hall 2020; Schneickert, Delhey, and Steckermeier 2019].[2] Noam Gidron and Peter Hall, offering a multidimensional conceptualization of social integration, define it as "the degree to which individuals see themselves as part of a *shared normative order*, (b) their levels of *social interaction* with others, and (c) the extent to which they feel *recognized* or respected by others in society" [2020: 1031]. Those who feel socially excluded, the argument goes, are likely to display low levels of social and political trust, which in turn makes them more prone to vote for anti-systemic parties. Engler and Weisstanner [2021] as well as Kurer [2020] confirm these results in cross-national analyses. Sachweh [2020] corroborates them for Germany. These studies find that the issue is particularly salient for middle-class individuals, whose "subjective sense of 'decoupling' between them and mainstream society" has particularly consequential political effects [Sachweh 2020: 389].

Economic Inclusion

These analyses suggest that, from the subjective perspective of individuals, the cultural and the economic domain are interlinked, and the ways in which they are woven together can potentially generate a sense of misrecognition. However, the question of the precise ways in which this happens in individual experience remains a black box. It must be unpacked more systematically. To do so, I define culture as the frames, scripts, and narratives that people use to imbue the world with meaning [Mohr *et al.* 2020]. An important point of departure in this regard is the observation that popular perceptions of the economy, and specifically, of the ways people construct meaning around work, are socially

[1] This also concerns the tools of measurement: contextual and sociocentric dimensions are still sparsely elaborated in the existing approaches, which overwhelmingly foreground individual-level and egocentric variables.

[2] This resonates with arguments from political philosophy that struggles for redistribution are necessarily tied to struggles for recognition [Fraser and Honneth 2003; Sayer 2005: 52–69].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

consequential [Bandelj 2015; Beckert 2002; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Bourdieu 1984; Zelizer 1998]. The economy is the primary sphere in which social worth is distributed in capitalist societies. In Europe as much as in the USA, individuals in low-status positions [Charlesworth 2000; Lamont 2000], in the middle classes [Groh-Samberg, Mau and Schimank 2014; Kefalas 2003; Svallfors 2006], and in elite positions [Jarness and Flemmen 2019; Sherman 2017] differ in the manner in which they derive a sense of recognition and respect from their work and from the notion that their contribution to society is valued by others.

An important way in which people make sense of economic constellations such as unequal outcomes of income or wealth is the justice-based ideology of merit [Lane 1986; McCall 2013; Miller 1999]. The meritocratic ideology, widespread today not just in the USA but across the Western world [Duru-Bellat and Tenret 2012; Mijs 2019], deems material success to be a sign of superiority (based on individual effort, talent, and/or wit) and regards individual failure as a similarly legitimate outcome, as it is ultimately rooted in a lack of effort. Merit entails a promise of social recognition and economic inclusion because it allows individuals to claim respect not for who they are but for their choices and activities in the past—in the words of Daniel Miller, merit "looks backwards to what people have already done" [1999: 50]. Hence, merit rests on the idea of individual *contributions* for which people can legitimately expect to be rewarded and esteemed.

Misrecognized Economic Contributions and Temporal Horizons

Conversely, the feeling that one's contributions are undervalued and misrecognized, and that others get more than they truly deserve (on the basis of their imagined contributions), is a source of deeply felt anger and, potentially, of feelings of social exclusion. Meritocracy produces sentiments of demoralization among the "losers", leaving them with a feeling of having failed personally [Sandel 2020; Sennett and Cobb 1972; the conviction that certain groups in society that are deemed lazy, unproductive, or otherwise unworthy are rewarded by social policies generates resentment in welfare societies [Van Oorschot 2000; Meulemann, Roosma, and Abts 2021]. People respond to perceived instances of misrecognition in both active and passive ways—precisely how they do so varies across cultural contexts [Lamont 2018].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

There is evidence that the sense of social exclusion is furthermore shaped by how individuals make sense of economic change; by how they imbue meaning into processes such as digitization, deindustrialization, and the changing value of skills in labour-market regimes. Who will profit from change, and who will be disadvantaged? The sense that an existing order is shifting may generate anxieties about social status and trigger sentiments of social exclusion, as demonstrated by research that finds these sentiments to be particularly salient among the middle class [Engler and Weisstanner 2021; Groh-Samberg, Mau, and Schimank 2014; Kurer 2020; Sachweh 2020]. A great number of sociological contributions to this topic draw on relative deprivation theory, which asserts that feelings of being disadvantaged are typically generated when individuals (or groups) compare themselves to others who are relatively similar to them and find that they themselves are less well off [Smith *et al.* 2012]. Yet, people's subjective temporal reasoning also matters for the cultural apprehension of economic ruptures. As a small but growing strand of research points out, such social comparisons are, in fact, frequently rooted in perceptions of change, or in "temporal comparisons" [Albert 1977; de la Sablonnière and Tougas 2008]. However, exactly how perceptions of change and temporal comparisons are translated into issues of social recognition is a process that has so far been relatively poorly understood. We must ask: how do peoples' evaluations of disruptive change enter into their judgements of economic worth, and possibly a sense of social exclusion?[3]

Social Ties and Symbolic Boundaries to The Fore

Sociologists study social recognition predominantly through attitudinal surveys. Yet we need to foreground peoples' relational experience of this phenomenon: social recognition, to a significant degree, is nourished in existing networks of interpersonal connections, where people construe meaning through their attachment to others. It is a social force that inhabits the very associations by which people navigate their lives

[3] Temporal comparison is known to shape ideas about fairness in the economy more generally. As Leslie McCall [2013] has shown for the postwar USA, people are more likely to judge prevailing societal conditions as unfair if they interpret them as the result of a process of change in the course of which opportunities decreased for everyone. The judgements in question, in other words, are formed as a part of their historical consciousness, against the background of a tangible horizon of change. Peoples' apprehension of social change, then, is an important element of the relationship between culture and economics.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and through which they develop and foster a sense of autonomous, moral personhood. As Axel Honneth notes with reference to Hegel, "we achieve our autonomy alongside intersubjective paths by learning to understand ourselves, via others' recognition, as beings whose needs, beliefs and abilities are worth being realized" [2012: 41]. Examining its embeddedness in social relations allows us to examine how people *actively attribute meaning* to sources of recognition.

George Herbert Mead's [1924] classic formulation is that a sense of self is generated in relation to those who surround it; it is also nourished, and constantly reshaped, by those relations. Relational sociologists have espoused this idea [Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; White 2008]. As one contemporary strand of network theory emphasizes, people attach cognitive and affective meaning to interpersonal relations and also act on these meanings [Luft 2020; Mische 2011; Mohr *et al.* 2020: 94–127]. The meaning dimension is not reducible to factors such as the size of one's network or the formal properties of ties (such as physical distance or frequency of interaction). It depends on the perceived quality of those ties.

As relational sociologists highlight further, moral sentiments are attached to social ties in a variety of ways. Gabriel Abend [2014: 38] suggests that some relations are linked to "thick" moral concepts, like dignity, cruelty, clemency, or friendship. Unlike "thin" moral concepts, these are not abstract prescriptions for how to act but are rather "constrained in their application by what the world is like" [*Ibid.*: 39]. Webs of social obligations necessitate the application of thick moral concepts; at the same time, relations also depend on them. Moral sentiments, in other words, can be socially consequential: in relations guided by thick moral concepts, obligations can also be misrecognized and relational expectations can be disappointed. We are particularly likely to encounter thick moral concepts in relations that are treated as an end in themselves (i.e., not primarily instrumentally), such as in trusted, proximate social environments.

Bringing these lines of thought together in a single framework, I propose to study judgements of economic worth as they are articulated vis-à-vis other people in one's changing social environment. A practical way to do this is to interrogate the symbolic boundaries that people draw between themselves and others draw to others [Jarness and Flemmen 2019; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002]. In this approach, the assumption is that, by giving an account of others, people position *themselves* in a social space, revealing relevant criteria of affection or social proximity (who they want to associate with) and distance (who they want

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to avoid or disassociate themselves from). Tracing these acts of positioning allows researchers to map the moral logic behind notions of "us" and "them" and can thus reveal subjective parameters of group membership. Existing approaches to social boundaries, however, primarily treat them as acts of social positioning vis-à-vis distant others in society.

In line with the considerations presented here, I propose to expand this approach and probe boundaries with regard to more proximate social relations, in which thick moral concepts likely apply [Abend 2014]. An investigation into how people express judgements of economic deservingness by giving an account of trusted social ties, I suggest, would offer insights into the dynamics of social recognition and misrecognition. Before delving into the analysis, in the following section, I introduce the historical framework of this research.

The Case: East Germany Post-1989

The case of post-communist East Germany (as a political entity, the *German Democratic Republic* (GDR) ceased to exist after the unification of Germany in 1990, but "East German" continues to exist as a collective identity) provides a useful framework for interrogating this set of problems. Today, political distrust and a sense of social disintegration are pervasive among East Germans. Generalized trust and levels of social reciprocity are lower in East Germany than in the West, even decades after the system change of 1989 [Freitag and Traunmüller 2008]. Many East Germans perceive themselves to be treated as "second-class citizens" [Köpping 2018; PEW Research Center 2019]. In this part of Germany, the authoritarian far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has achieved a number of significant electoral successes in past years, far exceeding its growth in the West.[4] The sense of discontent that may have contributed to making this possible can hardly be explained by single factors in the domain of "culture" or "economics"—instead, it is nourished by a complex interaction of historical processes [Mau 2019;

[4] Founded only in 2013, the party initially formed around opposition to EU monetary policy but it soon began to embrace a nativist, reactionary conservative agenda (notably, some members of the party's inner circles maintain close personal connections to neo-Nazi milieus). In the course of the 2015 European migrant crisis, when around 1 million refugees settled in Germany, the AfD were able to capitalize on racist sentiments and demographic fears among the German public [Arzheimer and Berning 2019]. Their outsized electoral success in the post-communist East reached an all-time high in the most recent 2019 regional elections.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Weisskircher 2020]. Recently, evidence has been mounting that a sense of social misrecognition, and, specifically, the ways in which it has been sustained by the experience of living through the rupturing transformation from communist rule to market democracy after 1989, may be particularly decisive in this regard [e.g., Schneickert, Delhey, and Steckermeier 2019].

Approaching the relevant processes from a historical perspective, it is useful to distinguish between the political, economic, and social dimensions of the post-1989-transformation shock. As far as the political dimension is concerned, there are persisting legacies from communist times. Before 1989, East Germans lived in a highly centralized and bureaucratic regime infamous for its near-total suppression of efforts at political and economic reform. Secret-police surveillance was particularly tight in this model socialist, ethnically homogenous society at the Western frontier [Offe 1996]. What is more, German unification (enacted on 3rd October 1990, a few months after monetary union was established), though widely regarded as a political success story, also created profound discontent. After the fall of the Wall, East Germans were granted full legal and political equality with their fellow citizens from the West. Yet, the fact that West Germans took control—occupying elite positions in political, economic, and cultural life, with Easterners continuing to be dramatically under-represented in all of these domains today, has generated disappointment, anger, and nostalgia among not just the older generation but also many of those born after 1989. Adding insult to injury, Easterners have been regularly mocked as *backward* in terms of their readiness and ability to engage in democratic, civic life in public discourse [Glaeser 2000].

The mode of economic transformation was consequential: East Germans experienced rapid deindustrialization and the radical dissolution of social milieus after the fall of the Wall [Diewald, Goedicke, and Mayer 2006; Mau 2019].[5] Before 1989, GDR society was based on the principle of "social integration through work" [Kohli 1994]—now, all of a sudden, work was in short supply. Privatization resulted in skyrocketing

[5] Unlike in neighbouring post-communist societies, the German privatization model administered by the federal agency Treuhand did not foresee the transfer of ownership from the state to its former citizens; instead, East German firms—overwhelmingly large, formerly state-owned enterprises—were sold off fast in an auction-style process in the hope of attracting competitive prices. This strategy did not produce the expected results, as Treuhand found itself in a weak bargaining position with investors and many firms were ultimately sold off for prices dramatically below their value. The result was the near-total demise of East German industry: in its four years of existence, Treuhand managed over 13,000 economic units, of which only a fraction survived [Goedicke 2006].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

joblessness, with official unemployment rates reaching around 20% in some regions shortly after the system change. While the West German welfare state could cushion the most dramatic social ramifications, in the long run, East Germans' paths to social upward mobility were blocked. The labour-market crisis affected different groups in society differently: those with convertible skills and a higher-education background (notably, skills attained before 1989) generally fared better than manual workers [Diewald, Goedicke, and Mayer 2006]. Still, unemployment and labour-market shocks reached deep into the emerging East German middle class: the promise of merit as the basis for personal economic success after 1989—a promise that many were ready to embrace given the tenacity and ubiquity of political cronyism before the fall of the Wall—remained hollow for many. The long-term ramifications of these processes have only become fully evident to the public recently, about three decades after the system change occurred.

Crucially, the period after 1989 was also a social shock. In the years immediately following the fall of the Wall and again after around the turn of the century, hundreds of thousands of East Germans migrated to the western part of the country, primarily to escape unemployment and dire economic prospects. Younger, well-educated women (the GDR prided itself on having one of the highest rates of female participation in the labour force in the world) were most likely to leave, which created additional problems for the communities they left behind. Elderly, male individuals were most likely to stay behind after 1989 (consequently, they had a harder time finding marriage partners). However, evidence from longitudinal studies of East German social networks after 1989 suggests that the dynamics of social change post-1989 are more complex than a social-atomization hypothesis would predict. Interpersonal networks did not break down after the fall of the Wall [Diewald and Lüdicke 2006; Posner 2002; Schaub 2002]; trusted relations were affected in a subtler way. According to Martin Diewald and Jörg Lüdicke [2006], two processes intersected: on the one hand, individuals could strengthen their social connections with some others, especially family and kinship ties; on the other hand, non-kinship ties, such as relations to former colleagues and friends, were weakened. For friendship ties, for instance, the "losses clearly outweigh[ed] the gains" [*Ibid.*: 201–202]. As the authors argue further, this was driven by the many challenges of coping with economic hardship after 1989. As unemployment surged, competition for jobs intensified and network ties were crucial for attaining information about jobs and emotional support. While there is evidence that East Germans' social capital

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

increased during the 1990s (people were forging and sustaining increasingly more business ties) [Schmelzer 2005], we do not know much about the meaning of these shifts as seen from the perspective of those who lived through them, as research on the question of how people apprehended and evaluated social network change is sparse.[6]

Anti-immigrant attitudes (as well as violence against migrants) were widespread in the communist-ruled GDR; violent right-wing networks and neo-Nazi groups had already achieved considerable organizational strength before the fall of the Wall. Sadly, the 1990s saw a dramatic spike in right-wing violence and the German authorities were unable to counter the strengthening of these networks in the East. This is one important reason why the AfD, which openly flaunts racist and anti-Semitic ideas of German ethnic nationalism ("Volksgemeinschaft") fared well in this part of Germany in the 2017 federal and 2019 regional elections—anti-immigrant attitudes are also particularly widespread among "centrist" voters in this part of Germany [Arzheimer and Berning 2019]. Relatively recently, the party has also embraced a discourse that paints East Germans as victims of the post-1989 period. Pursuing this strategy, it seeks to exploit a sense of political exclusion (through the idea that East German political sovereignty was violated by the unification process) [Göpffahrt 2020], as well as a sense of economic exclusion (through the notion that people were betrayed in economic terms by West German elites during that time).[7]

Given these multiple layers and the significance of memories of the post-1989 period in them, in the following analysis, I adopt a comprehensive approach and analyse biographically anchored stories about social change post-1989. I ask: how do people give an account of other

[6] There are two problems in this regard: first, the bulk of the literature focuses not on relations among East Germans, but on East–West relations. Second, the issue of meaning in East German interpersonal relationships was, for a very long time, predominantly defined as nostalgia for communism—a form of irrational longing for a rosy, egalitarian past—which does not do justice to the many complexities of the social experience of the transformation period.

[7] The Eastern branches of the AfD are increasingly engaging in the politics of memory around 1989 and its aftermath. The party promises to "finish the revolution" ("Vollende die Wende"), a slogan that is ambiguous but speaks to a trope popular among some East Germans, according to which the pre-1989 fight against the communist regime is equivalent to the fight against decadent, corrupt West German elites today (who are regarded to have "stolen" East German sovereignty after 1989). The AfD has also launched a campaign to investigate the Treuhand privatization and its economic consequences. By doing so, it effectively paints East Germans as economic victims of the transformation, while, at the same time promoting a narrative that aims to restore peoples' sense of economic worth as competent, productive, and more authentic Germans—all of which resonates with East Germans' difficult memories of the post-1989 era.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

peoples' experiences of the transformation period, and specifically, how do they form judgements of economic worth vis-à-vis others in this way?[8]

Data and Method

The data for this article come from an interview study in combination with a survey administered in 2016 and 2017 to 41 respondents who had grown up in East Germany. The majority of individuals contacted experienced the year 1989 as young adults: at the time of the conversations, they were between 45 and 75 years of age (more than four fifths were aged between 50 and 65, and the average age was 57, see Table 1). Conversations usually lasted from one to two-and-a-half hours and were conducted in workplaces, cafes, or respondents' homes.

I devised the sample based on a principal finding from the *East German Life History Study* [Diewald, Goedicke, and Mayer 2006]: skills and educational credentials attained before 1989 were a crucial determinant of labour-market success after 1989. I selected individuals from two professional groups that differed in respect to how their skills were valued after the system change: engineers (with higher-education as well as GDR-specific technical degrees), whose skills could generate high incomes after 1989 [Giessmann 2000]; and care workers (nurses and elderly care), whose wages and social prestige remained low after 1989 [Heisig 2004]. The sample is stratified by gender: engineering is a predominantly male profession, while care work is a predominantly female one. While state-socialist social policies encouraged women to enter technical fields, they were predominantly employed in its less-valued segments (such as light industries). Care work was a near-totally female profession both before and after the revolution. In terms of job security after 1989, engineers were more directly exposed to ruptures (as they were generally employed at rapidly shrinking firms) than care workers, as the public sector was a "safe haven" during the economic turmoil of the 1990s [Diewald, Goedicke, and Mayer 2006]. Age at the time of the system change critically determined an individual's sense of labour-market agency in the emerging market order: individuals over 50 were unlikely to feel a sense of control over their fortunes; younger

[8] In pursuing this question, I examine how the meaning of social ties, and specifically, the sense of (mis)recognition inhabiting the quality of social relations, informs these episodes.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Table 1
Overview of the sample

Occupation	Gender	Number of records	Age (average)	Number of times work-place changed after 1989 (average)	Number of relocations to a different city, part of the country, or abroad after 1989 (average)
Care worker	female	17	54	2	1
	male	1	52	3	3
Engineer	female	8	59	3	0
	male	15	64	3	0
	total	41	57	3	0

cohorts were relatively privileged and thus more inclined to be optimistic about the possibility of individual success in market society [Diewald 2006: 228]. The present study largely reflects the experience of younger cohorts.

The main topic of the interviews was the post-1989 period. For the interviews, I relied on a methodical combination of biographical and focused elements [Rubin and Rubin 2012]. In the first part of the conversation, I asked respondents to freely narrate their work biography, beginning with the time at which they finished their education, which in all cases had taken place before the fall of the Wall. In the second part, I introduced focused questions: I prompted respondents to share accounts of the experiences and decisions of other people in their social network after 1989, thereby generating accounts of the types of classification and moral evaluation they used to position themselves vis-à-vis others [Presser 2004: 96]. I asked respondents, first, to assess how (and if) people had changed in general after 1989. Here, they could introduce stories from their wider network of acquaintances. I then prompted them to share accounts of change in their trusted environment, such as their circle of friends.[9] The final part of the conversation featured some focused questions on respondents' justice orientations. The subject of

[9] The questionnaire only targeted non-romantic relationships. The research was specifically interested in friendship ties since these ties are marked by a homophily assumption (shared values and orientations) as well as a choice assumption (if the relationship is entered into voluntarily, it can also be ended on the same grounds) [Blatterer 2015]. Recognition of self in a friendship is thus deeply rooted in the idea of equality [Margalit 2017].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

social comparisons and stories about other people could also surface in this segment.[10]

Using this method makes it possible to reconstruct symbolic boundaries in the analysis [Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002]. Symbolic boundaries are stories about other people through which respondents signal who they feel close to and who they feel distant from, thus revealing subjective criteria of group membership and a sense of "us" and "them". In stories about changes in trusted relations, respondents may articulate "thick" moral concepts [Abend 2014] through episodic accounts of social (mis)recognition. In accordance with the combination of biographical and focused elements [Rubin and Rubin 2012], I applied a strategy of inductive coding for the biographical part, and introduced some pre-existing categories for analysing the focused elements. These codes were generated in close combination with the questionnaire, but also from recurring patterns found in episodic accounts.

Evaluative accounts about other people and the quality of a social relationship are often retrospective. For this reason, the categories of evaluation documented in interviews cannot be regarded as causal for changes in social relationships; instead, they illuminate aspects of the salience of the relationship history in the present. From social psychological research, we know that events that are defined as "important" [Glick *et al.* 1990 302] and negative events [Kensinger 2007] (such as unpleasant changes in a friendship) tend to be remembered in more detail. So-called "flash-bulb" memories, i.e., episodic memories of significant events, shape autobiographical identity [Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 2000]. In this study, I contacted individuals from an age group likely to have formed such "flash-bulb" memories at the time of the revolution—individuals who had then been aged between late adolescence and around 30 years old, a phase in which "long-term goals and plans are formulated, [and] the individual becomes integrated with society and with an immediate social group" [*Ibid.*: 280].

An interview situation is an open, contingent interaction, potentially shaped by misunderstandings and other forms of unexpected bias. To ensure better comparability and as a measure of controlling for the terminology used around social relationships, respondents were asked to fill out a short, standardized digital survey focused on social ties around two weeks after the conversation (39 of 41 individuals completed the

[10] This is a methodological trade-off. The disadvantage of combining biographical and focused elements is that the overarching narrative is less comprehensive (leaving less room, in particular, to reconstruct family history and milieu references) than in exclusively biographical approaches.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

survey). The results of the survey are not discussed separately here, but are used to support the interpretation of the interview material.

Findings

Respondents shared vivid accounts of other peoples' experience of the 1990s. For many, this was a time of great hope, but also of great anxiety and uncertainty. In what follows, I discuss two types of symbolic boundaries that respondents draw between themselves and others who also lived through the system change.[11] I find, first, boundaries that set the self apart from individuals who are regarded as *opportunistic*. Second, I find boundaries between the self and others whose social position is either above or below that of the respondent, defined in terms of *economic success* after 1989. The latter type, in particular, affects formerly close, trusted ties, revealing injuries to bonds of recognition. Taken together, these social demarcations underscore that respondents value an ethic of *staying true to oneself* after 1989.

Rejecting the Political "Opportunist"

Numerous respondents tell stories that set them apart from individuals whose success after 1989 they regard as rooted in opportunistic behaviour and thus as morally problematic. Often, they distance themselves from the so-called former "politicals", individuals who were actively involved in state and Party affairs during communist rule, and who are understood to have continued to profit from *old guard* networks after the regime change. This is expressed, for instance, in the story of a 62-year old respondent who was originally trained as a construction engineer and in electronics and had difficulties adjusting after the system change. Becoming sick from mounting stress at work in the second half of the 1990s and having been laid off in 2002, he was forced to leave his profession. The respondent recounts the story of his former bosses, who

[11] I focus on boundaries respondents draw between themselves and other East Germans; thus, I exclude those articulated between respondents and West Germans (of which there are many in this material) from the analysis. The latter often express East Germans' wish to demonstrate that their professional skills (as well as their work ethic) are superior to, or at least of equal value with, those of West Germans [see Glaeser 2000: 148–171].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

founded an engineering company after the fall of the Wall as a spin-off of a former GDR state holding company. Under their management, the business faltered, which ultimately led to his being laid off. Humiliated by this experience, he notes that he was always deeply sceptical about whether they were truly qualified to manage the firm:

> They were not planners, they had never done any planning back in the GDR. One of them was from Berlin, which was advantaged in GDR times. […] Therefore, shortly before 1989, they were put into these high-level positions and given the opportunity to take over the business—on the basis of their political position alone. […] They were both Party members, leading comrades, and as soon as the *Wende* [revolution of 1989] came, they were out! They turned their backs on the Party, and they went: "Capitalism is beautiful".

He regards them as opportunists. This charge, in fact, has two aspects: first, it is grounded in the notion that their economic success was exclusively based on political privileges accrued before and after 1989, not on economic criteria such as skills, competences, or a hard-working attitude. Second, it problematizes the fact that they were willing to abandon their former values and political beliefs in 1989, thus violating their own principles. They are, to use a phrase that still evokes vivid emotions among respondents today, paradigmatic examples of "turncoats". Defining the turncoat also has a biographical function. Distancing oneself from an individual defined in this way allows one to portray one's views and beliefs as unaffected by external influences; it grants a sense of integrity and continuity of the self. It may also be used to portray one's personal experience of the transformation period as politically neutral, and as independent of any kind of ideological sway. A key rationale of drawing boundaries between oneself and opportunistic individuals is to contrast their economic choices with one's own professional trajectory after 1989, and to be able to narrate the latter as morally intact.

In accounts like this, respondents often problematize modes of wealth accumulation after 1989: turncoats are frequently understood to have been involved in some form of corruption. Since the reproduction of political capital (and with it, the pervasiveness of fraud) was much greater in post-Soviet societies [e.g., Wanner 2005] than in Germany after the fall of the Wall, the salience of this topic is surprising in the present context. Still, there is a palpable, everyday quality to demarcations from the turncoat that is arguably less about the actual extent of economic fraud and more about making sense of the enigmatic mechanisms by which wealth was redistributed after 1989. For many East Germans, a sense of injustice about how jobs and access to social status were distributed *both before and after 1989* allows them to link the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

image of turncoats (in the sense of former Communist Party members) to West Germans, whose takeover of leading positions in political and economic life after 1989 is similarly regarded as undeserved. In this way, the actions and the mindset of the turncoat are linked to a broader understanding of the post-1989 order as a system that privileges undeserving individuals.

Economic Boundaries: Rejecting Others Above and Below the Self

I also find numerous boundaries that respondents articulate primarily in terms of socio-economic status with regard to another person's economic outcomes after 1989. Many of these accounts do not reference distant individuals in society but are concerned with how a formerly strong, trusted tie has evolved negatively in the course of the transformation. These are frequently episodes of friction in a person's social network after 1989.

To be sure, respondents also offer contextual, general evaluations of social change: many assert that the rise of the principle of competition after 1989 has affected economic and social relations. As collective guarantees of GDR life such as the constitutionally enshrined *right to work* (together with, in practice, a near-impossibility of being laid off) disappeared after the fall of the Wall, everyone now had to "take care of themselves", as respondents call it. Many of those who, in the respondents' view, refused to assume responsibility, are judged negatively.

Beyond such broad assessments, the majority of interviewees share specific episodes of relational change that resulted in the end of a formerly trusted relationship. Not all of them are necessarily charged with negative moral affect: respondents frequently recount stories of how a relationship ended as a result of lack of time or because someone moved away.[12]

Still, the fact that numerous accounts of relationship endings involve moral blame deserves close scrutiny. More than half of respondents tell a story of a break in a formerly strong, trusted relationship that fits this

[12] Here, respondents share accounts of what network scientists refer to as natural causes for tie dissolution: social relationships dissipate over time, as people lose sight of each other due to external circumstances [Bidart and Lavenu 2005: 363; Burt 2000]. The majority of respondents have episodes like this to share, which is not surprising given that hundreds of thousands of East Germans resettled after the fall of the Wall.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

pattern. In the following, I scrutinize examples of such accounts and ask how meaning is assigned to relational change in them.

Boundaries Regarding Those Below the Self

According to some respondents, some people did not manage to get "back on their feet" in the course of the turbulent 1990s, and they ultimately only had themselves to blame for this outcome. This failure, they assert, is also what caused the relationship to break down. A 49-year-old head of an elderly care facility, who has never experienced unemployment herself and was able to advance professionally after 1989, explains:

> I had a very good friend from school, we went through thick and thin together, then came the *Wende*, and then it started. She went, "you got new sneakers again!" But it was […] really based on hard work and not just like that […]. She couldn't afford anything, she had to make every penny count at home because her parents weren't working. […] This friendship was broken by envy. I couldn't bear her always complaining anymore at some point. In the beginning I said, "well then take my sneakers," I gave her my old sneakers so we could keep it up for another two years or so, but then I said, at some point, I don't have to do this to myself, she finally has to go and do some hard work herself, and so I quit. I never saw her again, never!

She recounts how she lost patience with her former friend: in the beginning she had supported her, but soon she realized that a fundamental value gap had emerged between them. Despite knowing better, the former friend refused to assume responsibility (or "go and do some hard work") and became "envious". The respondent regards these behaviours as indicative of a change in her friend's personality. She uses this observation to justify the break, as she understands these ways of acting as violating the very grounds on which their relationship had rested.

The notion that the other person failed to assume responsibility for their own plight and therefore ultimately deserved a disadvantaged economic outcome is a recurring motif in boundaries marking off those perceived to be positioned "below" the respondent. To be sure, many also paint a nuanced picture, taking difficult conditions into account—only to conclude that the other person, ultimately, only has him- or herself to blame. As evident from this example, rejecting the other person on these grounds ("I never saw her again, never") allows the respondent to draw her own positive lesson from the episode: she claims the principle

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of an active, optimistic economic agency for herself. At the same time, to her, this episode serves as an illustration that some people in society can get away with making very little effort.[13]

The account provided by a 57-year-old heating engineer, who personally experienced the 1990s as a time of "great opportunities" but also of tough economic struggles, reveals a similar pattern. He recounts how a relationship with a former school friend went sour:

> [He] is simply too stubborn I'd say. He's a trained electrician, he would not have had any problems to find work as an electrician. He starting working at some business that did carpeting or something, so he abandoned his proper life as an electrician, and when, at some point, the shop was closed down, well he couldn't find anything! […] It's his fault, he's too stubborn. He's not flexible enough. […] At some point you don't want to listen to him complaining. So the relationship weakens because you are not interested in it anymore. […] 15 or 20 years after 1989, you can't blame it on the system if you don't find a job!

Again, economic failure after 1989 is narrated as a problem of character, which also serves as a justification for why the friendship ended. The former friend's problematic disposition ("stubborn", "complaining") only grew more noticeable as the years went on. He made a major mistake ("abandoned his proper life as an electrician"); however, as the respondent suggests, he could have reversed this fateful decision later. He failed to do so, thus confirming that the problem was not merely an issue of difference in opinions; it ran much deeper than that, and concerned his intrinsic dispositions and character. And while the respondent emphasizes that this is a case of individual and not societal failure, he also paints this as a pathological condition of market society—as a system that *permits* individuals to make bad choices.

Drawing moral boundaries allows respondents to signal and affirm their status in society [Lamont 2000]. Moreover, it is a way to express and confirm normative horizons based on biographical apprehensions of the post-1989 period, and specifically, the manifold economic challenges of that time. On these grounds, respondents claim continuity and authenticity, an ethic of *staying true to oneself* for themselves.

The example of a 52-year-old technical designer who experienced a brief period of unemployment after the system change, illustrates this further. The respondent reports a break with a former confidant who

[13] These modes of reasoning can draw on a neoliberal script of personal responsibility for societal outcomes, but they can also draw on a cultural legacy from communist times, a moral grammar that defined "productive work" as a social value in opposition to so-called "asocial" behaviours such as presumed "laziness" and an "unwillingness to work" [Wierling 1996: 47].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

went through a number of difficult experiences after 1989 such as divorce and unemployment, and who is still struggling economically today. She describes his pessimistic attitude, arguing that he could never get himself to accept the authority of others: it is his "mindset" to "challenge, to contradict" everyone. By doing so, he violates a norm she holds dear—a readiness to embrace change, to "take matters into your own hands"—a principle that she roots in her own biographical experience of economic hardship (the experience of joblessness after 1989). To her, this episode is a genuine source of this conviction:

> You've got to pick yourself up! In September 1989, I went back to work. In November, that story with the breakdown of the system started, and in this situation, the military cartographic service could not exist any longer! [...] And so I took matters into my own hands! [...] You're reorienting yourself, you're ready to do something new, this was true for a lot of people in our circle of friends as well. They did it in a similar way, taking the initiative. There's this nice little saying, "the engineer can do anything!" That was our motto. We'll do it. Even if you had to learn something new. That was where we said, we can identify with those [who are ready to do so].

In her account, this positive attitude (though rooted in an experience of economic uncertainty) has become a shared principle of her closest circle of friends. Conversely, to abandon that principle would mean abandoning other people who have committed themselves to the same goals. Thus, her biographical choices and her social relations are firmly and consistently rooted in moral values, and she managed to *stay true to herself* in this way.

As a general pattern, boundaries demarcating oneself from those lower on the social scale tend to be drawn by engineers more frequently than by care workers. This arguably reflects the better status outcomes of this group after the fall of the Wall. In the examples given, respondents construe a positive, authentic story of economic worth as part of the trajectory of the self. In order to do so, they must reject others who threaten to undermine their story and who challenge the economic narrative they have created for themselves. In the meanings that people assign to relationship endings, we can thus find examples of the withdrawal of social recognition.[14]

[14] At the same time, as evident from this example, these are often stories of *reorienting* the sources of recognition towards those who in fact share one's narrative of economic worth after 1989.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Boundaries Regarding Those Above the Self

Stories of cutting ties with individuals who enjoyed some form of morally questionable economic success after 1989 can also be found frequently. One respondent, who is in her late 60s today and was trained as an engineer before the fall of the Wall, endured a great deal of economic hardship after the system change. She experienced a number of episodes of unemployment and ended up working in various jobs. She recounts how her relationship with her former best friend went sour after 1989:

> This female friend of mine, we used to be close, we used to be true girlfriends back then. I sewed her wedding dress so this was a deep friendship. We also went on a young tourist trip together around the Soviet Union. [...] At one point [after 1989] she came to my birthday, as a surprise, but only to acquire customers for her business! She occupied my guests, my friends, in this way! So we separated, we haven't been in contact for years. [...] Once we had a school reunion. [...] I remember how she bragged, "I don't need to work anymore, no additional jobs, I'm making that much", she was high up in the hierarchy. I don't know if she still does that, and I don't care. So that was a case when we said, "no, I don't want you around anymore".

What mattered in particular was how the former friend coped with her newly attained social role as an entrepreneur (and the gain in status that came with it): this did not go well, as she made the respondent feel replaceable. She provoked a conflict of what Boltanski and Thévenot [2006: 65] call "orders of worth," showing up at a birthday party (the sphere of intimacy) to distribute her goods or to demonstrate her business acumen (activities which belong to the sphere of the market—which, in this context, is also the post-1989 order). In that moment, she manoeuvred herself out of the circle of confidants: the respondent recalls that she was "occupying my guests, my friends, in this way". Her behaviour undermined the value of their relationship, and likely also the value of the respondents' professional choices after 1989: she cannot feel respected by a person who values her own talent as a salesperson more than she does her close, trusted social connections. In this way, the status difference is negotiated as a problem of growing apart, an estrangement in personal dispositions. This motif—linked, in effect, not to the status difference as such but to the former friend's humiliating ways of communicating it—can be found in many accounts of boundaries regarding those above the self.

One 63-year-old respondent, who was close to retirement when the interview was carried out, was originally educated as a technician. She was struggling greatly after the fall of the Wall: having been laid off by a large firm right after the system change, she was not able to find work in her area

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of expertise. She underwent continuous periods of unemployment, precarious employment, and retraining for more than 25 years. Her economic predicament has also affected her relationship with a friend of hers:

> A friend of mine engaged in flights of fancy a bit after the *Wende*. Her husband earned some money and she received a little something through her grandma, only a bit, but you do realize how this person forgets what it was like not to have it, and how she used to be […]. These really are new types of behaviour, at the restaurant she suddenly calls over the the waiter three times, just because something isn't right and she's complaining, and goes like, "I deserve good things for my good money!" So that is exaggerated, because she really used to be—, she comes from a poor background. […] So I stopped meeting up with her because it was unpleasant. But today, it's better because she only has a few friends left and now she is coming to her senses. […] You know, I am not like that … I don't begrudge others if they have work. Some get angry about it, like "oh, these people have work and make money!" But I am not like that.

She rejects her friend's arrogant behaviour—"she calls over the waiter three times"—by drawing a moral boundary. Her judgement concerns the quality of the relationship in the past and in the present. Her friend's ways of comporting herself are artificial, since, as she must know herself, she did not value these superficial details in the past. By stating that "she comes from a poor background," the respondent in fact makes a normative statement, as she claims that there is a more genuine social position shared by both of them. The differences in the present make themselves felt all the more because of a shared past—a past of equality that is also rooted in mutual agreement about what really counts in life. At the same time, her episode entails a broader lesson about the post-1989 order: money, she seems to say, corrupts character, and the promises of this order impel people to abandon their true selves.

Again, the problem of economic worth is at the root of this impaired relationship. The respondent criticizes the asymmetry in the relationship that has emerged only in the course of the transformation period. Yet, she wants to make sure that her criticism is not understood as envy or frustration, carefully signalling that it is not based on such *low motives*: "I don't begrudge others if they have work". Otherwise, her reasoning could easily be discounted as illegitimate. Given her own precarious position, the moral burden rests with her.

We can see how boundaries drawn between the self and individuals who have a higher status allow respondents to align themselves with the principles of authenticity and consistency and to promote the ethics of *staying true to yourself* after 1989. Here, too, a perceived mismatch in relations of recognition affects one's ability to claim economic worth for the self.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Discussion: Fragile Bonds of Recognition

The goal of this article was to contribute to our understanding of how people negotiate judgements of worth by attributing meaning to change in social relations, and to explore the sense of misrecognition articulated in them. Drawing on an interview study with 41 East Germans (the majority of whom experienced the revolutions of 1989 as young adults), I approached this problem by examining how respondents narrate the profound economic and social shock that accompanied East Germany's transition from communist rule to market society post-1989 through stories of how others around them fared during that time. The analysis revealed that, first, people actively apprehend these changes by narrating accounts that revolve around changes to other peoples' character: they tell deeply personal and profoundly moral stories about this period. Second, it highlighted that many respondents adhere to an ethics of *staying true to oneself*, promoting values such as persistence and authenticity as key lessons gained from this period. By emphasizing consistency of the self, people make sense of a dual shock (and the many experiences of loss that accompanied it): that of transitioning from one social order to another, and that of coping with the fallout of the massive labour-market crisis of the 1990s. Seen in this light, the prevalent concern with being able to count oneself among those who are *deserving* after 1989 draws on a meritocratic logic, but it is also a way of claiming respectability in market society [Hochschild 2016; Jarness and Flemmen 2019; Lamont 2000; Sayer 2005]. Crucially, ideas of merit are articulated in a context of widespread disappointment with the German model of transitioning to market society after 1989—respondents claim that they adhered to meritocratic principles when broad swaths of society did not. In fact, many invoke these principles to criticize what they regard as a *corrupted* form of market society.

Judgements of Economic Worth: Moral Lessons from Economic Change

People articulate judgements of worth [Boltanski and Thévenot 2006] in the ways they draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and others [Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002]. I found that respondents articulated ideas of economic worth—gained from stories about

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

economic change after 1989—by referencing their social environment, thus linking those judgements to the problem of social recognition. Two patterns surfaced here: first, the wish to set oneself apart from the "turncoat," a person who is perceived to have profited from the system change on the basis of opportunistic behaviour. The image of the turncoat also entails a broader systemic critique, a repudiation of an order that allows certain individuals to profit despite their inferior professional qualifications, one that consequently betrays the principle of market justice [Lane 1986], which holds that individual effort and talent must be appropriately rewarded. The legitimacy of the post-1989 political arrangement—an order that encourages individuals to succeed by violating their own principles—is called into question in these accounts.[15]

Second, respondents drew symbolic boundaries along socio-economic lines between the self and those *above* and those *below* that self. These boundaries do not merely concern distant individuals in society, but formerly trusted, strong ties which have decayed since 1989. They reveal a profound sense of *estrangement from one another* associated with this period. These are retrospective accounts, yet they are rooted in episodic experience: network studies have shown that the labour-market crisis of the 1990s has negatively affected certain bonds of recognition such as friendship ties [Diewald and Lüdicke 2006; Posner 2002; Schaub 2002].

The sample used in this research is not representative in a statistical sense. However, it is noteworthy that stories of breaks in social ties could be found among both of the observed groups (engineers and care workers, male and female), as this suggests that the problem affects broader swaths of society. Engineers, who were in a better position than care workers to capitalize on their skills in the unified German labour market, tend to draw status boundaries between themselves and individuals below them more often than care workers do. Accounts of ruptures to social bonds offer only a window into the variegated experiences of loss and gain of the turbulent 1990s. They must be seen in the context of the range of social forces that typically affected East German biographies at the time, such as the widespread downsizing of firms, short-term work,

[15] I do not discuss the boundaries respondents draw between themselves and West Germans in this article, but there is an interesting parallel between these demarcations and boundaries between the self and the turncoat: in both cases, respondents base their critique on a perceived lack of professional qualifications, skills, and competences on the part of the subject in question.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

joblessness, retraining, and labour migration [Diewald, Goedicke and Mayer 2006; Mau 2019].

Social Recognition at Stake

The concept of recognition, as Andrew Sayer notes, must be regarded as part of a structure of meaning: "Recognition is always *of* something, in virtue of something, and what it's for is what is most important" [2005: 67]. The present analysis suggests that bonds of recognition are actively made conditional on deeply held beliefs about a person's worth in society—people are ready to disassociate from others if they feel those beliefs have been violated. Recognition, then, has a relational and a meaning dimension to it: people experience judgements of worth reciprocally, in webs of associations that are also webs of meaning. As we saw, episodes of friendship endings that are charged with blame are concerned with acts of *withdrawing recognition* from others. If a bond of recognition breaks and cannot be repaired, it must be abandoned in order to protect the sense of self of the individuals involved. Philosopher Avishai Margalit argues that "betrayals" of former equals (such as friends) are the most profound breaches of recognition, as they amount to an epistemic revelation: "Betrayal colors the past in a way that drifting away does not", as "it creates a shock to one's basic beliefs" [2017: 103, 132].

Some instances of misrecognition, then, leave people with a sense that their moral personhood has been violated. Sociologists need to scrutinize these formative experiences further, as they provide a window into how societal grammars of worth leave an imprint on webs of social association. A key point of departure for such inquiries is what Gabriel Abend [2014] calls "thick" moral concepts, the normative beliefs that are attached to relations of obligation—and conversely, the types of social relations that are fragile because they depend on normative commitments.[16]

[16] We may ask, further, how proximate relations can be a source of societal conflict. As René Girard [(1977) 2013] argued, because we are so attuned to locating the source of conflict in the categories of *social difference* and *fear of a distant other*, we tend to underestimate the power of *social similarity* as a source of symbolic violence and resentment.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Deserving and Undeserving Others

As we have seen, people generate their ideas of economic worth from evaluating how others coped with the economic fallout from the post-1989 transformation period—in fact, they structure these notions around an image of others as either deserving or undeserving of their economic outcomes.

In one respect, this type of reasoning is based on the notion of merit as contribution, the idea that economic success must be individually deserved and the assumption that there is a natural, balanced relationship between a person's economic activities, commitments, and projects and what he or she can expect to receive back from society. The meritocratic ideology [Markovits 2019; Miller 1999; Sandel 2020] permits those who are already on top to justify their advantage materially and morally; conversely, those who are losing out or struggling only have themselves to blame.[17] On the societal level, the promise that individual effort will be rewarded remained unfulfilled—not just in formerly communist-ruled East Germany, but more broadly in Europe as well as in the USA, where social-mobility chances for the bottom half of the population and for broad parts of the middle class have been decreasing or stagnating over the past 40 years. This has produced stark and tangible contradictions. Socially, it has unleashed feelings of humiliation and demoralization [Sandel 2020]: the promotion of merit encourages an elitist haughtiness and elitist behaviour that looks down on large parts of the population, shattering peoples' trust in the political institutions inhabited by those elites. But most importantly, perhaps—and this, as we saw, colours the memories of economic and relational change in East Germany—it also encourages people to devalue each other's struggles by subjecting themselves, and others around them, to the harmful logic that economic failure is also a sign of moral failure. Yet, as the present analysis also suggests, the anger and disappointment bred by a system that fails to guarantee opportunities for everyone does not necessarily lead people to abandon the idea of individually deserved market outcomes—here, to use Robert Lane's formulation [1986], "market justice" triumphs over "political justice," in the sense that the charge of unfairness is often directed at the

[17] Meritocracy's seemingly neutral emphasis on skills and education is, in fact, based on a narrative about the economy, since, as Daniel Markovits succinctly notes, "even if superordinate workers deserve their hard-won skills, they cannot possibly deserve the unequal contrivance that makes these skills so peculiarly economically valuable" [2019: 265].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

political order (which is understood to *skew* the fair distribution of resources) and not at the market order (which is perceived as *naturally* generating legitimate outcomes). The fight against the negative ramifications of meritocracy, in other words, may well be waged in the name of merit.[18]

In another respect, however, it seems that merit does not necessarily have to be associated with individual performance: it might also be grounded in an idea of another person's *character*. The present analysis has revealed that individuals construe accounts of change to other peoples' character as part of larger cultural narratives [Alexander 2011]. Judgements of worth, I found, are articulated against a perceived temporal horizon, a tangible sense of social change that is rooted in a particular historical and cultural framework. In popular understanding —not just in social science narratives—the post-1989 period represents the dawn of a new social order. This social order, is, by many, understood to have brought to the fore certain personality traits, and by some, it is understood to have corrupted peoples' character. The idea that there are people in society who are *undeserving* of the material achievements and social esteem they enjoy is a comment on the nature of the political arrangement that permits those individuals to thrive.

This second dimension suggests that merit, as a judgement of economic deservingness, may not be all that individualistic—instead it may provide a structure of meaning, a cultural grammar of economic and social inclusion. Merit, beneath the level of expressing individual qualities, may function as a social norm, a cultural script used to signal group membership. Future research must explore the proposition that judgements of deservingness rest on cultural images of individual agency that can be deployed for further social ends.

Misrecognition and Political Distrust

Finally, we can take judgements of economic deservingness as a point of departure to gain further insights into the relationship between personal misrecognition and political distrust. While it remains to be

[18] This dynamic is also detailed by Arlie Hochschild in her ethnography of Louisiana Tea Party sympathizers, whose informants are deeply convinced that it is politics, not the market, that is broken: the market provides opportunities for moving ahead, but since it has been corrupted by politics, it does so only for the *wrong kind of people*, those who are "cutting in line ahead of" oneself [Hochschild 2016: 137].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

explored in detail how the dynamics of misrecognition *among* East Germans identified here are linked to the broader issue of disrespect for Easterners *on the part of* West Germans [Köpping 2018; Mau 2019; Schneickert, Delhey and Steckermeier 2019], it may well be that the sense of being excluded from the social promise of merit—the promise of recognition via economic integration—in part fuels East German resentment today. This theme is certainly central to the AfD's success in the East: the party suggests to its supporters that they are part of a collectivity of *truly deserving individuals*, a message that resonates with East German memories of the difficult post-1989 period. The AfD derives the necessary legitimacy for its struggle against a corrupt system from its stated aim to restore a structure of economic worth—imagined as a social texture of recognition and belonging—which has allegedly been violated. This issue, to be sure, is not limited to the German case: everywhere, when trust is impaired, the socially divisive messages promoted by far-right movements are more likely to resonate with large swaths of society.

We must, therefore, ponder the possibility that social and political misrecognition interact and that political sentiments of exclusion are rooted in social experiences and expectations. Future research needs to be attentive to accounts of relational and symbolic exclusion [Alexander 2011; Jarness and Flemmen 2019; Lamont 2000] when interrogating problems of recognition. Peoples' memories and lived experiences of misrecognition can ultimately serve as a cornerstone for sociological theory-building around the problem of social inclusion in contemporary democracies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abend Gabriel, 2014. *The Moral Background. An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics. An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

Albert Stuart, 1977. "Temporal comparison theory," *Psychological Review*, 84: 485–503.

Alexander Jeffrey C., 2011. "Market as Narrative and Character," *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 4: 477–488.

Arzheimer Kai and Carl C. Berning, 2019. "How the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and their voters veered to the radical right, 2013-2017," *Electoral Studies*, 60, Article 102040.

Autor David, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson and Kaveh Majlesi, 2020. "Importing political polarization? The electoral consequences of rising trade exposure," *American Economic Review*, 110: 3139–3183.

Bandelj Nina, 2015. "Thinking about Social Relations in Economy as Relational Work," *in* Patrick Aspers and Nigel Dodd, eds, *Re-Imagining Economic Sociology* (New York, Oxford University Press: 227–251).

Beckert Jens, 2002. *Beyond the market. The social foundations of economic efficiency* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

Bidart Claire and Daniel Lavenu, 2005. "Evolutions of personal networks and life events," *Social Networks*, 27: 359–376.

Blatterer Harry, 2015. *Everyday friendships. Intimacy as freedom in a complex world* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Boltanski Luc and Laurent Thévenot, 2006. *On Justification. Economies of Worth* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

Bourdieu Pierre, 1984. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press).

Burt Ronald S., 2000. "Decay functions," *Social Networks*, 22: 1–28.

Charlesworth Simon J., 2000. *A phenomenology of working-class experience* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Conway Martin A. and Christopher W. Pleydell-Pearce, 2000. "The construction of autobiographical memories in the self-memory system," *Psychological Review*, 107: 261–288.

De la Sablonnière Roxane and Francine Tougas, 2008. "Relative Deprivation and Social Identity in Times of Dramatic Social Change: The Case of Nurses," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38: 2293–2314.

Diewald Martin, 2006. "Spirals of success and failure? The interplay of control beliefs and working lives in the transition from planned to market economy," *in* Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke and Karl U. Mayer, eds, *After the fall of the wall. Life courses in the transformation of East Germany* (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 214–236).

Diewald Martin, Anne Goedicke and Karl U. Mayer, eds, 2006. *After the fall of the wall. Life courses in the transformation of East Germany* (Stanford, Stanford University Press).

Diewald Martin and Jörg Lüdicke, 2006. "Community lost or freedom gained? Changes of social networks after 1989," *in* Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke and Karl U. Mayer, eds, *After the fall of the wall. Life courses in the transformation of East Germany* (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 191–212).

Duru-Bellat Marie and Elise Tenret, 2012. "Who's for meritocracy? Individual and contextual variations in the faith," *Comparative Education Review*, 56: 223–247.

Emirbayer Mustafa and Jeff Goodwin, 1994. "Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency," *American Journal of Sociology*, 99: 1411–1454.

Engler Sarah and David Weisstanner, 2021. "The threat of social decline: Income inequality and radical right support," *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28: 153–173.

Fraser Nancy and Axel Honneth, 2003. *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange* (London, Verso).

Freitag Markus and Richard Traunmüller, 2008. "Spheres of trust: An empirical analysis of the foundations of particularised and generalised trust," *European Journal of Political Research*, 48: 782–803.

Gidron Noam and Peter A. Hall, 2020. "Populism as a problem of social integration," *Comparative Political Studies*, 53: 1027–1059.

Giessmann Barbara, 2000. "Berufliche Handlungsmuster ostdeutscher Fachschulingenieure an der Nahtstelle von Wissenschaft und Produktion—Potential im Transformationsprozess?," *in* Helmuth Lange, ed., *"Man konnte und man musste sich verändern". Natur- und ingenieurwissenschaftliche Fachkräfte aus der DDR in der Marktwirtschaft der BRD* (Münster, Lit Verlag).

Girard René, [1977] 2013. *Violence and the Sacred* (London, Bloomsbury).

Glaeser Andreas, 2000. *Divided in unity. Identity, Germany, and the Berlin police* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).

Glick William, George P. Huber, C. Chet Miller, Harold D. Doty and Kathleen M. Suttcliffe, 1990. "Studying Changes in Organizational Design and Effectiveness: Retrospective Event Histories and Periodic Assessments," *Organization Science*, 1: 293–312.

Goedicke Anne, 2006. "A 'Ready-Made State': The Mode of Institutional Transition in East Germany after 1989," *in* Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke and Karl U. Mayer, eds, *After the fall of the wall. Life courses in the transformation of East Germany* (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 44–64).

Göpffarth Julian, 2020. "Activating the socialist past for a nativist future: far-right intellectuals and the prefigurative power of multidirectional nostalgia in Dresden," *Social Movement Studies*, OnlineFirst.

Groh-Samberg Olaf, Steffen Mau and Uwe Schimank, 2014. "Investieren in den Status: Der voraussetzungsvolle Lebensführungsmodus der Mittelschichten," *Leviathan*, 42: 219–248.

Heisig Barbara, 2004. "Pflege im Transformationsprozess zwischen beruflicher Modernisierung und Professionalisierung," *in* Melanie Fabel and Sandra Tiefel, eds, *Biographische Risiken und neue professionelle Herausforderungen* (Wiesbaden, Springer: 193–206).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hochschild Arlie R., 2016. *Strangers in their own land. Anger and mourning on the American right* (New York, The Free Press).

Honneth Axel, 2012. *The I in We. Studies in the theory of recognition* (Cambridge, Polity).

Jarness Vagaard and Malte P. Flemmen, 2019. "A struggle on two fronts: boundary drawing in the lower region of the social space and the symbolic market for 'down-to-earthness'," *British Journal of Sociology*, 70: 166–189.

Kefalas Maria, 2003. *Working-class heroes: Protecting home, community, and nation in a Chicago neighborhood* (Berkeley, University of California Press).

Kensinger Elizabeth A., 2007. "Negative emotion enhances memory accuracy: Behavioral and neuroimaging evidence," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16: 213–218.

Kohli Martin, 1994. "Die DDR als Arbeitsgesellschaft? Arbeit, Lebenslauf und soziale Differenzierung," *in* Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Helmut Zwahr, eds, *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta: 31–61).

Köpping Petra, 2018. *Integriert doch erst mal uns! Eine Streitschrift für den Osten* (Berlin, Ch. Links).

Kurer Thomas, 2020. "The Declining Middle: Occupational Change, Social Status, and the Populist Right," *Comparative Political Studies*, 53: 1798–1835.

Lamont Michèle, 2000. *The dignity of working men. Morality and the boundaries of race, class, and immigration* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press).

—, 2018. "Addressing Recognition Gaps: Destigmatization and the Reduction of Inequality," *American Sociological Review*, 83: 419–444.

Lamont Michèle and Virag Molnár, 2002. "The study of boundaries in the social sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28: 167–195.

Lane Robert E., 1986. "Market justice, political justice," *American Political Science Review*, 80: 383–402.

Lengfeld Holger, 2018. "Der 'Kleine Mann' und die AfD: Was steckt dahinter?," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 70: 295–310.

Luft Aliza, 2020. "Theorizing Moral Cognition: Culture in Action, Situations, and Relationships," *Socius*, 6, OnlineFirst.

Lux Thomas, 2018. "Die AfD und die unteren Statuslagen. Eine Forschungsnotiz zu Holger Lengfelds Studie Die 'Alternative für Deutschland': Eine Partei für Modernisierungsverlierer?," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 70: 255–273.

Margalit Avishai, 2017. *On Betrayal* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press).

Markovits Daniel, 2019. *The meritocracy trap. How America's foundational myth feeds inequality, dismantles the middle class, and devours the elite* (London, Penguin Books).

Mau Steffen, 2019. *Lütten Klein. Leben in der ostdeutschen Transformationsgesellschaft* (Berlin, Suhrkamp Verlag).

McCall Leslie, 2013. *The undeserving rich: American beliefs about inequality, opportunity, and redistribution* (New York, Cambridge University Press).

Mead George H., 1924. *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago, The Free Press).

Meulemann Bert, Femke Roosma and Koen Abts, 2021. "Welfare deservingness opinions from heuristic to measurable concept: The CARIN deservingness principles scale," *Social Science Research*, 85: 1–15.

Mijs Jonathan J., 2019. "The paradox of inequality: income inequality and belief in meritocracy go hand in hand," *Socio-Economic Review*, OnlineFirst.

Miller Daniel, 1999. *Principles of Social Justice* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press).

Mische Ann, 2011. "Relational sociology, culture, and agency," *in* John Scott, and Peter Carrington, eds, *The Sage Handbook of Social Network Analysis* (Los Angeles, Sage: 80–97).

Mohr John W., Christopher A. Bail, C. A., Margaret Frye, Jennifer C. Lena, Omar C. Lizardo, Terrence E. McDonnell and Frederick F. Wherry, 2020. *Measuring Culture* (New York, Columbia University Press).

Morgan Stephen L., 2018. "Status threat, material interests, and the 2016 presidential vote," *Socius*, 4: 1–17.

Morgan Marcus, 2020. "A Cultural Sociology of Populism", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, OnlineFirst.

Mutz Diana C., 2018. "Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115: E4330–E4339.

Norris Pippa, and Roman Inglehart, 2019. *Cultural Backlash. Trump, Brexit, and*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Authoritarian Populism (New York, Cambridge University Press).
OFFE Claus. 1996. *Varieties of Transition. The East European and the German experience*. (Cambridge, Mass, Polity Press).
Pew Research Center, 2019. *European Public Opinion Three Decades After the Fall of Communism* [https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/10/15/european-public-opinion-three-decades-after-the-fall-of-communism/, September 10, 2020].
Posner Christine, 2002. *Die Bedeutung sozialer Einbindung für die Entwicklung von Individualisierungsprozessen. Eine theoretische Annäherung an das Phänomen der Individualisierung sowie eine empirische Analyse der sozialen Bindungen unter den Bedingungen des sozialen Umbruchs in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang).
Presser Louis, 2004. "Violent offenders, moral selves: Constructing identities and accounts in the research interview," *Social Problems*, 51: 82–101.
Rubin Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin, 2012. *Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data* (Los Angeles, Sage).
Sachweh Patrick. 2020. "Social integration and Right-Wing Populist Voting in Germany. How Subjective Social Marginalization Affects Support for the AfD," *Analyse & Kritik*, 42: 369–397.
Sandel Michael J., 2020. *The tyranny of merit. What's become of the common good?* (New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux).
Sayer R. Andrew, 2005. *The moral significance of class* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
Schaub Johannes, 2002. "Freundschaftsnetzwerke in den neuen Bundesländern," *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie*, 33: 295–310.
Schmelzer Paul, 2005. "Netzwerkveränderung als Folge der Transformation?," *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 15: 73–86.
Schneickert Christian, Jan Delhey and Leonie C. Steckermeier, 2019. "Eine Krise der sozialen Anerkennung? Ergebnisse einer Bevölkerungsbefragung zu Alltagserfahrungen der Wert-und Geringschätzung in Deutschland," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 71: 593–622.
Sennett Richard and Jonathan Cobb, 1972. *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
Sherman Rachel, 2017. *Uneasy Street. The Anxieties of Affluence* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).
Smith Heather J., Thomas F. Pettigrew, Gina M. Pippin and Silvana Bialosiewicz, 2012. "Relative deprivation: A theoretical and meta-analytic review," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16: 203–232.
Svallfors Stefan, 2006. *The moral economy of class. Class and attitudes in comparative perspective* (Stanford, Stanford University Press).
Van Oorschot Wim, 2000. "Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public," *Policy & Politics*, 28: 33–48.
Wanner Catherine, 2005. "Money, morality and new forms of exchange in postsocialist Ukraine," *Ethnos*, 70: 515–537.
Weisskircher Manes, 2020. "The Strength of Far-Right AfD in Eastern Germany: The East-West Divide and the Multiple Causes behind 'Populism'," *The Political Quarterly*, OnlineFirst.
White Harrison C., 2008. *Identity and control. How social formations emerge* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).
Wierling Dorothee, 1996. "Work, workers, and politics in the German Democratic Republic," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 50: 44–63.
Zelizer Viviana A. R., 1998. *The social meaning of money* (New York, BasicBooks).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Résumé

Récemment, comme un corollaire de l'intensification des efforts pour comprendre la montée du populisme de droite, le thème de la reconnaissance sociale a connu un regain d'attention dans la recherche sociologique. Il semble que le sentiment d'absence de reconnaissance et d'exclusion soit influencé par des facteurs culturels autant qu'économiques. La manière dont ces éléments sont liés reste toutefois une « boîte noire ». Dans cet article, je propose une contribution empirique à ce problème : je démontre que la reconnaissance sociale se nourrit des relations interpersonnelles quotidiennes et que les gens négocient des idées de mérite économique dans leur environnement social – à tel point, en fait, qu'ils en font dépendre les liens sociaux. L'article étudie le cas des changements sociétaux survenus après 1989 dans l'ancienne Allemagne de l'Est sous domination communiste, un contexte marqué par un sentiment omniprésent d'exclusion sociale aujourd'hui. Au cours d'entretiens avec 41 personnes qui ont vécu ce processus de rupture, j'identifie une dynamique cruciale d'absence de reconnaissance sociale dans la façon dont les répondants évaluent les stratégies d'autrui pour faire face aux retombées économiques de cette époque et tracent des frontières – souvent profondément personnelles – sur ces bases.

Mots-clés : Reconnaissance sociale ; Mérite ; Frontières symboliques ; Allemagne post-communiste.

Zusammenfassung

Im Zuge der verstärkten Bemühungen den Aufstieg des Rechtspopulismus zu verstehen, hat das Thema der sozialen Anerkennung in der soziologischen Forschung wieder an Aufmerksamkeit gewonnen. Es scheint, dass das Gefühl der Nichtanerkennung und Ausgrenzung von kulturellen sowie wirtschaftlichen Faktoren geprägt ist. Wie genau diese Elemente miteinander verknüpft sind, bleibt jedoch eine Blackbox. In diesem Artikel leiste ich einen empirischen Beitrag zu diesem Problem: Ich zeige, dass soziale Anerkennung in alltäglichen zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen genährt wird und dass Menschen in ihrem sozialen Umfeld Vorstellungen des wirtschaftlichen Verdienstes aushandeln – und zwar so sehr, dass sie soziale Bindungen davon abhängig machen. Der Artikel untersucht den Fall der gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen nach 1989 im ehemals kommunistisch regierten Ostdeutschland, einem Kontext, der heute von einem weit verbreiteten Gefühl der sozialen Ausgrenzung geprägt ist. In Interviews mit 41 Personen, die diesen Umbruch miterlebt haben, identifiziere ich eine entscheidende Dynamik sozialer Fehleinschätzung in der Art und Weise, wie die Befragten die Strategien anderer Menschen zur Bewältigung der wirtschaftlichen Folgen dieser Zeit bewerten und auf dieser Grundlage – oft sehr persönliche – Grenzen ziehen.

Schlüsselwörter: Soziale Anerkennung; Vorzug; Symbolische Grenzen; Postkommunistisches Deutschland.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975622000236 Published online by Cambridge University Press