British Journal of Political Science (2022), **52**, 908–920
doi:10.1017/S0007123420000629

British Journal of Political Science

ARTICLE

Mitigating Servility: Policies of Egalitarian Self-Relations

Anne-Sofie Greisen Hojlund

Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark
E-mail: agh@ps.au.dk

(Received 24 February 2020; revised 26 August 2020; accepted 9 September 2020; first published online 25 January 2021)

Abstract

How should inequalities generated in part by people's self-devaluing attitudes be understood, and what can be done politically to counteract them? Building on central elements of relational egalitarianism, this article scrutinizes the case of servility as an instance of failure to relate to oneself as an equal, attitudinally and behaviorally speaking. From this perspective, servility as well as the adverse distributive consequences it gives rise to should be considered objectionable and in need of mitigation. Considering the case of political voice, the article points to certain paternalistic policies as a means of altering servility by inducing people to make their claims heard. Indeed, such policies may serve as particularly apt instruments since they directly target attitudinal barriers to relational equality in the political sphere. The novel claim is that paternalism, by altering servile attitudes as well as behavioral patterns, may effectively help make people relate to themselves in a more egalitarian manner.

Keywords: relational equality; servility; paternalistic policies; attitudinal change; behavioral change; political voice

It is empirically well documented that self-devaluing attitudes play a significant role in explaining inequalities in political participation, college attendance and completion, and career prospects. The prevalence of such attitudes partly accounts for why women are considerably more reluctant than men to run for office (Fox and Lawless 2011; Fox and Lawless 2014, 504–505; Pate and Fox 2018; Pfanzelt and Spies 2019, 44) or pursue career and salary advancements (Ponthieux and Meurs 2015, 1054). It likewise provides an explanation for why students with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to be enrolled in and complete college than their more advantaged peers (James and Amato 2013). Building on central elements of relational egalitarianism, this article offers an account of why we should be concerned about this particular type of inequality as well as what can be done politically to mitigate it.

According to the relational egalitarian tradition of thought, theorizing about justice should begin by considering the unequal relations experienced in a society and investigating how to overcome them. This focus is reflected in what Iris Marion Young has characterized as the five faces of oppression in her attempt to capture the essence of what egalitarianism should aim to combat: marginalization, status hierarchy, domination, exploitation and cultural imperialism (Anderson 1999, 312; Young 1990). While they are paradigmatic cases of relational injustice, these phenomena predominantly refer to instances in which a person or group of people fails to relate to others as equals. However, the ideal of relating as equals arguably extends to how one relates to oneself. While I suppose few relational egalitarians would resist this claim, it remains an undertheorized aspect of the literature. I attempt to fill this gap by considering the case of servility as a paradigmatic instance of a failure to relate to oneself as an equal. This is an important endeavor as it advances our understanding of what relational equality entails while highlighting a real-world challenge associated with realizing egalitarian societies.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A central aspect of the argument is that servility is objectionable (that is, that we have a *pro tanto* reason to avoid servility). While this may be the case for various reasons, I focus narrowly on how the personal badness of servility makes people's lives worse instrumentally as well as non-instrumentally. On this basis, I suggest a way in which servility may be addressed politically. To this end, I put forward a more controversial claim – that certain paternalistic policies may serve as a means of furthering relational equality to the extent that they prompt people to relate to themselves in a more egalitarian manner. I suggest that paternalism may effectively mitigate servile behavior on the part of those who are reluctant to pursue valuable opportunities and, at the same time, contribute to attitudinal change by increasing the salience of egalitarian reasons. I bring these theoretical considerations to bear on a concrete case by scrutinizing policies designed to promote a more equal distribution of speaking time (such as speaking rotation schemes). Relational egalitarians are particularly averse to paternalistic measures due to their allegedly disrespectful nature. Policies of this kind, however, may help combat barriers to equality by targeting servile attitudes as well as behavioral patterns and can therefore be attractive to relational egalitarians and others.[1] I seek to provide a systematic account of what servility means in the context of fostering egalitarian relations. In addition to contributing to normative and conceptual discussions of relational equality, such an account is useful both for evaluative purposes, as it provides reasons to prefer certain policy tools over others, and for generating hypotheses to empirically study the mechanisms driving behavioral and attitudinal change.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I establish the relevance of relations to self to an account of relational equality. Secondly, I introduce the concept of servility as a core case of relational inequality, arguing that servility in this context is best understood as the failure to acknowledge oneself as a person who is on par with others, in that one assumes an inferior moral standing. I argue that servility, in itself and by causing distributive disadvantages, is objectionable due to its personal badness. Thirdly, I introduce certain paternalistic measures as a way to mitigate servility, behaviorally and attitudinally speaking. I respond to three objections that critics may pose to my argument before considering how implementing rotation schemes in political speaking situations may help counter servility in the case of political voice.

Relational Equality and Relations to Self

For several decades, political theorists have been concerned with fundamental distributive issues, including questions pertaining to the currency of justice[2] (Cohen 1989; Sen 1980) and questions pertaining to the pattern of justice[3] (Crisp 2003; Parfit 2002). Yet relational egalitarians have argued that theorizing about justice would benefit from shifting the focus from these rather abstract matters to real-life instances of social oppression (Anderson 1999; Young 1990). According to them, equality should be conceived in terms of relations among people and not primarily in terms of distributions of goods (Anderson 1999). Hence, they deny that it is of intrinsic importance that goods are distributed among people in a certain way.[4] For relational egalitarians, distributions of goods matter only insofar as they are intertwined with the ways in which people relate to each other (Anderson 1999; Anderson 2010b; Scheffler 2015; Schemmel 2011a; Schemmel 2011b). That is, distributions matter only when they embody, cause or are caused by unequal relations among people (Anderson 2010b, 18). Against this backdrop, my principal

[1]As servility is not merely a concern to relational egalitarians, the article speaks to a broader audience including, but not limited to, friends of republicanism, feminism and luck egalitarianism (in those cases of servility in which the servile person bears no responsibility for holding this attitude).

[2]That is, whether it is resources, welfare or capabilities that should be distributed among people.

[3]That is, whether we should aim for an equal distribution, one that gives priority to the worst off or one that secures a certain level of sufficiency.

[4]Influential accounts of distributive equality include Arneson (1989a); Arneson (1989b), Cohen (1989), Dworkin (1981); Dworkin (2002), Rakowski (1991), Roemer (1996) and Segall (2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000629 Published online by Cambridge University Press

aim is to show that relational egalitarianism implies that we have reason to mitigate servility and its adverse effects. While I acknowledge that distributive egalitarianism may also have something to say about this, I maintain that relational egalitarianism is better able to capture our fundamental concerns about servility and, in turn, provide guidance on how to respond politically to its real-life manifestations. This view resonates with forceful objections to distributive egalitarianism for generally missing the point of equality (see, for instance, Anderson 1999; Scheffler 2003).[5]

By relating as equals, I refer here to relating as moral equals. That is, *X* and *Y* relate as moral equals only if they believe their rights and interests are, at a fundamental level, equally morally important, and act in accordance with such beliefs (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, 81). Many relational egalitarians hold that relational equality requires (at least) both a behavioral and an attitudinal component, that is, for relational equality to be upheld, people must treat *and* regard one another as equals (Anderson 1999; Fourie 2011; Lippert-Rasmussen 2018; Miller 1997; Scheffler 2003; Voigt 2018). While it may often be the case that the way people regard one another is manifested in how they treat one another, these two components can diverge (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, 71). For instance, it could be the case that racist employees, in order to keep their jobs at a racially diverse workplace, treat everyone equally even though they do not regard everyone as moral equals. Conversely, imagine a workplace with strong racist norms. Anti-racist employees may here feel the need to comply with the prevailing norm set and treat members of different racial groups unequally, even though they in fact believe that all people, regardless of race, are moral equals. Accordingly, in order to relate as equals, it is not sufficient to *treat* others as equals if one does not also *regard* them as such, and vice versa.

While these examples focus on how we should relate to others, the ideal of relating as equals arguably similarly applies to how we should relate to ourselves. This is because our underlying reasons for relating interpersonally in a certain way are also pertinent in the context of intrapersonal relations. Hence, for *X* and *Y* to believe (and act in accordance with their belief) that their rights and interests are, at a fundamental level, equally morally important requires that they each consider their own rights and interests to be just as important as those of the other. Importantly, relating to oneself as an equal also implies that one relates to others as equals, since how one relates to oneself is mediated by how one relates to others.[6] Consider Robinson Crusoe-like cases of isolated individuals who do not relate to anyone else in any way. In such cases, it would make little (if any) sense to speak of phenomena such as servility or superiority, as these are inherently relational.[7]

I take servility to be a core case of not relating to oneself as an equal.[8] Hence, I understand the relationship as a conceptual one in the sense that the presence of servility is sufficient for relational inequality to apply. I suggest that servile persons often fail to both regard and treat themselves as equals – although failing in either dimension constitutes not relating to oneself as an equal. Not considering one's rights and interests to be just as important as those of others implies a failure to regard oneself as an equal. In turn, acting in accordance with such considerations implies that one does not fully treat oneself as an equal in the sense that one, in actions and dispositions, fails to give appropriate weight to one's rights and interests. That is, we fail to treat ourselves as equals if we cast ourselves in a subordinate position in relation to others by, for instance,

[5]My argument is compatible with hybrid accounts of egalitarian justice, according to which distributions matter both intrinsically and insofar as they manifest unequal relations among people (see, for instance, Moles and Parr 2018).

[6]The reverse seems equally true – that how one relates to others is mediated by how one relates to oneself.

[7]Note that Robinson Crusoe-like persons could think of themselves as having no moral worth, in which case they would consider themselves to be inferior in an absolute sense. For the current purposes, however, I focus on servility in a comparative sense, that is, how one regards oneself in relation to others.

[8]I use servility as a placeholder for a range of closely related self-devaluing attitudes, which also include deference, submissiveness and obsequiousness (Benson 1991; Christman 2004; Friedman 1985; Hampton 1993; Hill 1973; Hill 1991; Mason 2000).

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treating our own interests as inherently less weighty than those of others.[9] In what follows, I provide a more detailed account of servility before assessing why it should be considered objectionable.

What Servility is and Why it is Objectionable

To clarify what I mean by servility, consider the following case, which I take to capture the term in a paradigmatic sense.

> Reluctant speakers tend to avoid putting forward suggestions and making their opinions heard because they do not believe they have earned the right to engage in discussions on an equal footing. They hesitate to interrupt when others make decisions over their heads with which they disagree, and when asked for their thoughts, they tend to shrink away. Their reluctance results in their not taking the floor even when they have good reason to do so.

Starting from this case, I suggest that servility is best understood according to the following definition of the term: *To be servile is to fail to acknowledge oneself as a person who is on par with others in that one assumes an inferior moral standing.*[10]

Accordingly, servility is a failure to recognize oneself as an equal moral agent with an equal standing to have one's views and claims taken seriously (Anderson 1999, 312; Mackenzie 2008, 525). This attitude is manifested in the absence of recognition respect for oneself, that is, the kind of respect to which every person is entitled (Darwall 1977, 39). Recognition respect should be distinguished from appraisal respect. Having appraisal respect for oneself involves a positive appraisal of one's excellence as a person or as engaged in a specific pursuit (Darwall 1977, 38). Importantly, the problem of servility is not one of non-normative belief, because one's talents or achievements could be modest compared to those of (some) others. Entertaining such beliefs does not make one servile, or imply a failure of recognition (as opposed to appraisal) self-respect. Rather, the problem is holding a particular attitude concerning one's moral standing and rightful place in society, which is unrelated to actual talents or achievements (Hill 1973, 90). Given that the capacities of different persons vary, what servile persons fail to acknowledge is something by virtue of which they are equal with every other person, namely their moral standing (Hill 1973, 93).

Having defined servility, we may pause to question how prevalent this attitude actually is since, all else equal, the argument has greater practical relevance if it addresses a phenomenon of a certain magnitude. While open source psychometrics data (n = 47,974) suggest that up to 24 per cent[11] of people hold servile attitudes, estimates from population surveys carried out in the United States (n = 503) and Norway (n = 51,217) lie within 9 and 12 per cent (HUNT 1997; Sinclair et al. 2010). There is thus no firm agreement on how prevalent servility is. However, even if the lowest estimate holds true, it is not a marginal phenomenon.[12]

[9]This rationale is implied by Scheffler's (2015) deliberative constraint, although the focus here is on how we ought to treat the interests of others.

[10]This definition excludes cases such as the following: Consider parents who are deeply devoted to their children and tend to put their children's (even trivial) interests above their own. This is not a case of servility if the parents consider their interests to be just as important as those of their children but willingly set their interests aside out of love for their children. It may even plausibly be the case that parents who actually believe the interests of their children are more important than their own are not servile in the relevant sense as this kind of unequal relationship seems unproblematic (Bou-Habib 2006, 245; Scheffler 2005, 17f). Moreover, consider the case of employees who, during a busy time at their workplace, agree to work overtime without additional pay. If they do so for strategic or opportunistic reasons (e.g., they expect to be promoted or receive a pay raise sometime soon), this is not a case of servility, because they choose not to insist upon their rights but still know that they are not less entitled than others.

[11]This estimate is based on data from https://openpsychometrics.org/_rawdata/.

[12]All estimates are based on responses to the statement 'I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others' on a scale including 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. This measure is part of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which is widely used in social science research.

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Turning to the matter of why servility is objectionable, it seems, to begin with, obvious that it is disvaluable.[13] As servility constitutes a paradigmatic deviation from relational equality, we may say that it is bad in and of itself. In Samuel Scheffler's words, '[equality] matters to us because we believe that there is something valuable about human relationships that are, in certain crucial respects at least, unstructured by differences of rank, power or status' (Scheffler 2005, 18). In a similar vein, Martin O'Neill holds that 'the badness of [servility] can best be understood by virtue of the contrasting value of certain kinds of fraternal, egalitarian social relations' (O'Neill 2008, 130). The value alluded to here does not necessarily depend on whether relationships absent of servility make people's lives better. Yet it is not obvious that we should endorse the view that egalitarian relationships are morally important in a world in which they are generally bad for people (Tomlin 2014, 17, see also footnote 54). This suggests that at least part of the reason why we should be concerned about servility is because it makes people's lives worse instrumentally as well as non-instrumentally.[14]

The claim that servility is personally bad in a non-instrumental sense can be understood as either being dependent on experiential harm suffered by those who are servile or as being independent of such harms. First, it may be bad for people to feel inferior in an experiential sense as it entails damage to their sense of self-worth (cp. Scanlon 2003, 212). Such feelings are intimately related to the lack of self-respect that I have associated with an appropriate understanding of servility. Importantly, the moral significance of this damage does not depend on whether one is treated as an inferior or made to feel inferior by others, or whether such feelings are purely intrapersonal; both may compromise the bases of self-respect alluded to here. Secondly, we may think it is bad for people to be servile even if being servile does not frustrate their experienced well-being (Parfit 2002, 86). According to this line of reasoning, the fact that some people are servile leaves them worse off in a relevant sense regardless of whether this is manifested experientially.[15]

The claim that servility is personally bad in an instrumental sense is conditional on empirical facts. While servility does not necessarily affect distributive outcomes, I assume that this is often the case. Recall that relational egalitarians are not occupied with distributions in their own right.[16] However, distributions that are relevantly caused by inegalitarian relations among people may, for that reason, be assessed as objectionable (Anderson 2010a, 2; Anderson 2010b, 18). By 'relevantly caused by', I refer to a causal relationship in which servility causes someone to have less than they are entitled to. In the context of this article, I focus on cases in which servility leaves those holding the attitude worse off than others by inhibiting them from pursuing valuable opportunities that they are equally entitled to.[17] In the case presented above, servility leaves reluctant speakers worse off than others in distributive terms because it causes them to abstain from pursuing valuable opportunities to put forward political demands due to a belief that this is 'not for them'. Since this mode of participation is key to obtaining many goods, inequality in this sphere spills over

[13]Some may argue that servility is objectionable because we have a duty to relate to ourselves as equals. I am in principle open to the possibility that such a duty may exist, but I do not explore it further here. I focus here on the personal badness of servility and try to account for this in some detail.

[14]The literature on relational equality includes different versions of this view, i.e., a personal value-based view (Anderson 2008, 145f; O'Neill 2008, 130; Scanlon 2003, 212ff; Scheffler 2005, 19).

[15]Compare to how we commonly think that a healthy life is better than an unhealthy life even if experienced well-being is held constant.

[16]An exception is those who endorse a hybrid account of egalitarian justice according to which both relations and distributions matter intrinsically.

[17]Other objectionable outcomes of servility include (1) cases in which servility leaves those holding the attitude with the same as others but less than they are entitled to and (2) cases in which servility leaves those holding the attitude better off than others, and others worse off than they are entitled to. Imagine a case in which *X* and *Y* start off equal in all respects. While *X* choses to save more, *Y* choses to consume more, which leaves *X* better off than *Y*. For some reason, *X*, being servile, gives up more than *Y*, which leaves them equally well off. By contrast, imagine a case in which *X* and *Y* are both sexually harassed by their employer. As a result of (only) *X* being servile and putting up with the harassment, *X* is rewarded at the expense of *Y*.

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into other spheres. For example, inequality in participation may lead to inequality in opportunities to protect one's interests and secure full membership in the polity as well as to obtain engagement that is meaningful, self-realizing and socially esteemed. Importantly, the role that servility plays in generating distributive outcomes in which those holding the attitude are disadvantaged is not merely relevant within a political context but equally so when scrutinizing choices about higher education, health-related behavior, career paths, etc.

The upshot is that relational egalitarians should be concerned about the personal badness of servility – both instrumental and non-instrumental. Hence, their assessments of distributions should take into account disadvantage caused by attitudinal barriers to obtaining valuable goods. This means that relational egalitarians should consider disadvantages that individuals face as a result of a fear of feeling unwelcome or having nothing to contribute – even when they could in a relevant sense be construed as being mediated by voluntary choice – objectionable (Voigt 2017, 120). Accepting this view implies including in the scope of what warrants correction or compensation attitudes that reflect a distorted view of one's moral standing and rightful place in society as well as the distributive disadvantage they may cause. Establishing that servility warrants mitigation, however, leaves us with the question of how to further this course politically. I explore this question in the next section.

The Equality-Enhancing Potential of Paternalistic Policies

Having considered the concept of servility and why it should give relational egalitarians reasons for concern, I now turn to the question of how, if at all, we can address servility and its adverse consequences. This matters because many of the circumstances that shape individuals' attitudes and subsequent actions are factors that can be influenced politically. Although attitudes themselves might not be susceptible to direct control, policy decisions may affect what kinds of attitudes people come to have (Voigt 2017, 124) and the possibility of acting in accordance with them. While an extensive literature on affirmative action focuses on policy measures that target barriers to equality, it generally relies on the assumption that individuals seek out valuable opportunities themselves.[18] However, this assumption is, as we have seen, not always warranted.

Against this background, I propose that certain paternalistic policies might sometimes serve as apt instruments to influence people's servile attitudes and behavioral patterns. This is because paternalism seeks to directly alter individual dispositions; if successful, it may induce those exposed to an intervention to pursue opportunities they would otherwise have forfeited. By paternalism, I refer to a reason-based understanding of the term, according to which the good of people is accepted as a relevant (but not necessarily decisive) reason to bypass their agency in self-regarding matters[19] (Dworkin 2019; Feinberg 1989, 4).

Depending on how they are designed, paternalistic policies may affect those who are subjected to them in two fundamentally different ways (Grill 2017). We may distinguish between policies that work through *agency-mediated effects* vs. *non-agency-mediated effects*. Typical agency-mediated effects result from cost changes that induce an individual to reconsider a purchase or mode of action. By contrast, typical non-agency-mediated effects arise from physical coercion as well as subtle changes in the context of choice, which promote outcomes that are unmediated by any conscious effort on behalf of those who are 'nudged'. On this basis, we may distinguish between policies that (1) increase or decrease the costs of options in the choice set, (2) remove options from the choice set or (3) change the salience of options in the choice set (Grill 2017). As cost increases and decreases work through rational choosing aimed at furthering self-

[18]An exception to this is the literature on outreach affirmative action. However, this literature mainly considers the provision of information and other similarly unrestrictive measures (Sterba 2009, 36f).

[19]I use this rather inclusive definition in order to make the argument compatible with various conceptual specifications of paternalism.

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interest, these are unlikely to provide an efficient way to alter servility. Recall that servility in essence implies a failure to acknowledge the equal moral importance of one's interests and act accordingly. For this reason, policies of Types (2) and (3), whose effects are unmediated by rational choosing, are more likely to effectively alter servility. On this basis, I argue that a paternalistic strategy is attractive in at least one sense to the extent that it effectively prompts people to relate to themselves in a more egalitarian manner, behaviorally and attitudinally speaking. I acknowledge that this claim may strike some as quite controversial. I therefore briefly address three potential objections to my argument.

First, some might object that I am asking the wrong question by focusing on attitudinal barriers to equality, that is, barriers that could be said to be mediated by voluntary choice in some sense. It seems likely that a reluctance to pursue valuable opportunities, at least to some extent, is due to structural conditions. For example, the fact that some choose to stay in abusive relationships even though they are, in principle, free to leave probably reflects their embeddedness in a culture of dominance. For that reason, some have argued that we should stop asking why some stay and instead ask why others abuse. This is because focusing on the former type of question, as I do in this article, could be seen as blaming the victim for having internalized what is in fact external oppression (Schneider 1992, 558). In response to this first point, I do not mean to suggest that we should stop looking for potential structural causes of servility, and this is fully consistent with the research agenda set out in this article. Conceptualizing servility as an attitudinal barrier to equality does not imply that servile persons are morally responsible for their situation. However, eliminating external causes is not always sufficient. As Marilyn Friedman asserts, we could imagine that the law had the resources, capacity and will to provide full protection and justice to every abused person who leaves their abuser or co-operates to bring them to justice. This, however, does not provide any guidance about how to respond to those who *do not* leave their abusers and who *do not* co-operate to bring them to justice (Friedman 2003, 140).

Secondly, some may object to the paternalistic part of my argument on the grounds that paternalism is sometimes considered to compromise rather than further self-respect. To elaborate, paternalistic reasons are often rejected as unwarranted for interfering in self-regarding matters because they rely on the assumption (whether empirically sound or not) on the part of paternalist agents that their judgment is, in some respect, superior when it comes to advancing the good of those exposed to an intervention (Anderson 1999; Begon 2016; Flanigan 2017; Husak 1981; Quong 2011; Shiffrin 2000; Tsai 2014). Following this line of reasoning, it may appear paradoxical to claim that we can make people relate to themselves in a more egalitarian manner by treating them in a way that allegedly communicates to them that they are in some respect inferior. In reply to this second point, I grant that paternalism does involve expressing a negative judgment that may in one sense compromise an important basis of self-respect. This does not, however, imply that paternalism cannot, at the same time, help enhance the self-respect of those who otherwise fail to acknowledge their equal moral standing.[20] Moreover, to the extent that servility inhibits people from pursuing what they want, the paternalistic policies in question may be perceived as concerning 'means' as opposed to 'ends', and for that reason seem easier to justify (see, for instance, Le Grand and New 2015, 27ff). Arguably, inducing others to do something that goes against their conception of the good life is more questionable than inducing them to do something they have difficulty summoning the willpower to do on their own initiative. The condescending aspect of paternalism is thus a *pro tanto* objectionable feature of it – but not necessarily one that cannot be outweighed on balance.[21]

[20]This line of argument has a parallel within the literature on paternalism and autonomy. For instance, Marneffe (2006) and Arneson (1980) have pointed out that a paternalistic interference may sometimes be conducive to autonomy even though in one sense it compromises autonomy.

[21]I am aware that this response may not satisfy those who believe the condescendence conveyed by paternalistic interventions constitutes a decisive reason to reject them. I take this view to be endorsed by Flanigan (2017) and perhaps Elizabeth Anderson, although her support for so-called trivial paternalism such as seat belt laws moderates her stance (Anderson, 1999, 302).

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Thirdly, justifying an action or policy paternalistically presupposes that it is assumed to be beneficial to those exposed to the intervention. Hence, for this mode of justification to apply, servility must be personally bad for those holding the attitude and not merely impersonally bad or wrong. Above, I defended the view that servility is objectionable because it is personally bad. However, there may be cases in which maintaining a servile attitude and acting in accordance with it seems to be in the interest of the servile person because it leads to higher levels of experienced well-being. Imagine someone who has become so used to being servile that they do not know how to behave otherwise. In this case, the critic might argue that mitigating undesirable attitudes and behavioral patterns that individuals nevertheless identify with and consider central to their conception of the good would leave them worse off than before. In reply to this third point, I acknowledge that being servile in some cases does not detract from experienced well-being. However, this does not imply that servility cannot also be bad for those who hold this attitude. Recall that badness may be non-experiential (Parfit 2002, 86). For this reason, there seems to be a case for paternalistic intervention for the purpose of mitigating servility, although the paternalism in question would then refer to an objective list understanding of well-being, which is admittedly more controversial than paternalism seeking to increase experienced well-being.

Having set these three concerns aside, in the next section I explore in more detail the possibility that paternalism may induce people to relate to themselves in a more egalitarian manner by scrutinizing the case of political voice.

Mitigating Servile Attitudes and Behaviors: The Case of Political Voice

In this section, I elaborate on how paternalistic policy interventions may effectively mitigate servility. To that end, I use the case of implementing rotation schemes in speaking situations to counter inequality of political voice, understood as inequalities pertaining to activities undertaken with the intent or effect of influencing government action through expressions of preferences (Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2018, 24). By speaking situations, I refer to caucuses, citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, and similar local deliberative panels and forums. For the current purposes, I am interested in the distribution of what have been termed assertive speech acts, understood as language that advances one's personal agency in a situation, as this is the type of speech act that is relevant to political voice[22] (Leaper and Ayres 2007, 329f). This is because expressing political voice is a way to inform public officials of one's needs and preferences, and to pressure them to respond to these, which is important for protecting one's interests (Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012, 96; Schlozman et al. 2018, 2).

It is empirically well documented that political voice is highly unequal. Schlozman et al. (2012, 2) note that 'citizens are not equally likely to undertake actions to let public officials know what they want or need, political activists are not representative of the citizenry at large, and a particularly acute form of participatory distortion results from the fact that those who are disadvantaged by low levels of income and education are less likely to participate in politics'. While inequality of political voice is surely not merely a matter of servility, empirical research suggests that it is a common cause. Quantitative studies have found that servility mediates the relationship between low socioeconomic status and low levels of political participation (Cohen, Vigoda and Samorly, 2001, 751; Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 1995).[23] This relationship is further supported by in-depth qualitative studies. For instance, Harrits (2011) shows that assumed inferiority is central to understanding why members of relatively disadvantaged groups are typically reluctant to make

[22]Assertive speech acts are contrasted with affiliative speech acts. The latter function to affirm or positively engage one's speaking partner(s).

[23]Cohen et al. study the effect of self-esteem, conceptualized as 'one's positive and supportive attitude toward oneself and one's perception of personal worth' (Cohen et al., 2001, 738). I take low scores on this variable to be an approximate measure of servility, assuming that one's rating of oneself is relative to one's rating of others.

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their claims heard in political contexts.[24] Hence, when it comes to understanding inequality in political participation generally and political voice specifically, the prevalence of servility should be considered an important explanatory factor.[25] One way to address the issue and enhance equal political voice is to implement rotation schemes in political speaking situations which ensure that speaking time is distributed equally.[26] This kind of scheme has, for example, been implemented by the Danish political party Alternativet, with a view to securing an equal distribution of speaking time among persons of different genders during party group meetings.[27] A policy intervention of this sort could be relevant in various contexts outside politics, including academia and higher education, and it may provide a means of addressing inequalities between a range of socially salient groups. To support this claim, I consider how implementing a rotation scheme in a given inegalitarian speaking situation may help mitigate servile attitudes and behaviors on the part of those who are reluctant to take the floor.[28]

Considering the behavioral dimension, implementing a rotation scheme at a caucus, for instance, would induce reluctant speakers to engage as equals in the speaking situation and hence increase relational equality in at least one sense. In its simplest form, a rotation scheme would require everyone to take turns delivering a speech act or have representatives of different groups do so. In that case, the policy would remove the option to not speak, which would fulfill the goal of an egalitarian speaking distribution. Alternatively, a rotation scheme may be designed in such a way that the option to not speak would not be removed but only made less obvious. One way to do this is to make speaking the default option while allowing potential speakers to opt out of speaking. This would be a less restrictive alternative which amounts to changing the salience of options in the choice set. The attitudinal dimension is more complex. This is because interference cannot block attitudes in the same way it can block behavior, as attitudes and behavior are not subject to the same principles of control.[29] Hence, the behavioral effects of removing the option of not speaking cannot be directly transferred to attitudinal change in a meaningful sense. Nevertheless, prior theoretical (Cohen 2009; Knight and Johnson 1998; Parvin 2018, 41f; Rawls 1971; Rawls 1993; Rawls 2001; Warren 2001) and empirical (Finkel 1987; Stenner-Day and Fischle 1992; Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk, 2009) studies suggest that changes in political behavior may cause changes in political attitudes. In particular, it is commonly

[24]When asked about politics, an interviewee [Lise] said, '[b]ut I'm not a person who can talk to those fancy people. I opt out a little bit' (Harrits, 2011, 249). As Harrits emphasizes, the interviewee refers to her assumed inferiority to explain why she does not participate in politics.

[25]Alternative explanations of reluctance may include political disinterest, lack of motivation, and perceived or real lack of efficacy. I acknowledge that the policies I propose may be harder to justify to those whose reluctance is unrelated to servility.

[26]Note that there may be *pro tanto* objectionable features of implementing rotation schemes of this sort; that is, one could argue that they override people's disinclination, suggesting they cannot speak for themselves or decide when to speak or not, that they interfere with a natural conversation flow or that they inhibit creativity and spontaneity. While I do not reject objections of this sort, for the sake of argument I am primarily interested in scrutinizing whether paternalistic rotation schemes may further relational egalitarian goals to the extent that they successfully combat servility.

[27]For more information, see Alternativet's website: https://alternativet.dk/arkiv/politiske-udspil/ligestilling-og-mangfoldighed.

[28]Suggesting a paternalistic justification for implementing rotation schemes in political speaking situations does not imply that such policies could not be supported by other reasons. It could be, for instance, that we wanted to secure a certain distribution of speaking time for its own sake and, hence, regardless of the interests of those exposed to the intervention. That is, we could appeal to the potential intrinsic value of people having equal speaking shares as a reason to promote this state of affairs. Moreover, it could be that abstaining from making one's voice heard causes harm to others because, say, it leads to sub-optimal decisions. We could thus appeal to the harm principle as a reason to implement rotation schemes. Using a paternalistic justification does not rule out the possibility that relevant non-paternalistic reasons may support the very same policy (Pedersen 2019, 36). Yet I believe the disadvantage suffered by those who do not make their claims heard is a weighty concern that a plausible justification of remedying measures ought to track. This is in line with Viki Pedersen's claim that the reasons provided in favor of a policy should adequately reflect the concerns at stake (Pedersen 2019).

[29]For example, worried parents can prevent their children from going out on weekdays by controlling their ability to leave home. They cannot, however, prevent their children from wanting to go out on weekdays.

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assumed that political participation positively affects self-regarding attitudes.[30] Following this tradition of thought, I suggest that implementing rotation schemes in political speaking situations may support the transformation of servile attitudes on the part of reluctant speakers in at least two ways. Exploring how such a policy plays out in concrete political contexts is a subject for future empirical research.

First, over time, rotation schemes would affect attitudes, that is, the way people regard one another and, of particular relevance to the present purposes, the way servile people regard themselves. This is because transforming the context of interaction affects how we understand ourselves and each other in that context. As Cohen (1997, 26) explains, '[e]xpectations determine behavior, behavior determines expectations, which determine behavior, and so on'. Hence, prompting reluctant speakers to speak more often not only makes them perform another role. It also makes them *conceive of themselves* as performing another role, which transforms their attitudes toward themselves in a more egalitarian direction.

Secondly, implementing a rotation scheme may change servile people's attitudes toward themselves by helping them to better appreciate relevant reasons. According to Jason Hanna (2015, 627), 'a particular means of influence [may encourage its targets] to appreciate and act on the basis of good reasons'. For the purposes of our argument, we should consider here the part of the claim that relates to appreciation. Appreciating a reason is not reducible to knowing a fact: 'An agent fully appreciates a reason only when she assigns it the appropriate weight in her deliberations' (Hanna 2015, 627f). Considering the case of rotation schemes in political speaking situations, I suggest that implementing such initiatives increases the salience of relevant reasons to actively engage in deliberation. In that sense, the policy does not merely induce reluctant speakers to speak more; it also encourages them to reflect upon the reasons underlying this policy goal. Hence, changing the default to a more equal distribution of speaking time makes the reasons in favor of this option more salient; at the same time, it encourages reflection as departures from this option require identifying good reasons to do so. From this reflective process, I believe most would reach the conclusion that there are no good reasons for not pursuing equal political voice. Engaging the rational capacities of those targeted by this policy thus prompts them to reconsider their reasons for holding back, thereby laying the groundwork for attitudinal change.[31] Returning to Grill's distinction between the three different policy types, I suggest that implementing a rotation scheme in a political speaking situation changes the salience of the options of speaking and not speaking, respectively. In turn, this encourages reluctant speakers to appreciate the relevant reasons to speak. Importantly, whether the policy will effectively foster attitudinal change as expected arguably depends on details pertaining to the implementation and context, including whether reluctant speakers are taken seriously and whether their views are subjected to scathing criticism when presented. In order to avoid countereffects, rotation schemes may be supplemented by further initiatives that secure a safe speaking environment.

Since behavioral change is arguably considerably easier to achieve than attitudinal change, I suggest that the effects of implementing rotation schemes in political speaking situations are likely to occur diachronically, meaning that behavioral change will precede attitudinal change. Since relational equality involves people treating *and* regarding themselves as equals, it is important to design policy interventions that effectively target both dimensions. Based on the above discussion, I suggest that this requires changing the salience of options in the choice set (perhaps in addition to removing some options). Nevertheless, policies that promote one or the other component of relational equality may still be justifiable.

[30]Importantly, there are some limitations in terms of extending the findings of previous studies to this context. While I am interested in the effect of political participation on *recognition* self-respect, others have studied its effect on internal political efficacy, which may be seen as an indicator of *appraisal* self-respect.

[31]It could be argued that the kinds of relevant reasons I appeal to become less apparent as an egalitarian condition is approached. However, this is consistent with suggesting that paternalistic policies can affect people's attitudes.

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Returning to the problem presented initially, recall that one reason why relational egalitarians should be concerned about servility is that it is personally bad in and of itself, and because it causes distributive disadvantage to those holding the attitude. As I have argued in this section, implementing rotation schemes in political speaking situations may help mitigate servility on the part of reluctant speakers, behaviorally and attitudinally speaking. More generally, I suggest that certain paternalistic policies may help combat servility in various contexts. As relational egalitarians are adamant that we should avoid paternalism due to its allegedly disrespectful nature, these are significant claims that support a possible reconciliation between relational equality and certain paternalistic measures. Such a reconciliation, in turn, has considerable practical implications in terms of making attractive a wider range of policies to politicians who are sympathetic to the spirit of relational equality, including attempts to equalize political participation and voice.

Conclusion

In this article, I have scrutinized servility from the perspective of relational egalitarianism, arguing that it constitutes an important (and thus far undertheorized) deviation from this ideal. I have suggested that servility, as well as distributive inequalities which are caused by servility, should be deemed objectionable due to their personal badness. On this basis, I have suggested that certain paternalistic measures may help mitigate servile attitudes and behavioral patterns. Considering the case of inequality of political voice, I have illustrated how implementing paternalistic rotation schemes in speaking situations may effectively alter servile behavior and, over time, foster attitudinal change by increasing the salience of egalitarian reasons. Hence, if my argument is correct, paternalism may induce persons suffering from servility to both treat and regard themselves in a more egalitarian manner than they would in the absence of such an intervention. This is an important finding that challenges the widespread aversion many relational theorists feel towards paternalism and which, in turn, suggests a rethinking of this commitment. It also has considerable practical implications in terms of identifying – and potentially remedying – inequalities that pose a fundamental challenge to realizing egalitarian societies.

Acknowledgements. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Danish Philosophical Association and at a Political Theory workshop at the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University. I thank the participants at these events as well as Andreas Bengtson, Lauritz Aastrup Munch, Rune Slothuus and Hanna Mortensdatter Vandeskog for invaluable discussions and feedback. I am especially grateful to Editor Paul Bou-Habib, two anonymous reviewers for the *British Journal of Political Science*, Søren Flinch Midtgaard and Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen for detailed written comments that have greatly improved the article.

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Cite this article: Hojlund AG (2022). Mitigating Servility: Policies of Egalitarian Self-Relations. *British Journal of Political Science* **52**, 908–920. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000629

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000629 Published online by Cambridge University Press