Linguistic and Religious Pluralism: Between Difference and Inequality

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Abstract

Through what political, economic, cultural, and social processes is difference transformed into inequality? Specifically, how are linguistic and religious pluralism implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality? I consider the political rules that privilege some languages and religions and disprivilege others; the processes that confer differential economic value on particular languages and religions; the discursive and symbolic processes that confer prestige, honor, and stigma on particular languages and religions; and the differential informal treatment of persons who speak different languages or practice different religions, as well as the ways in which linguistically or religiously differentiated social networks entail differential access to the resources that flow through such networks. I argue that political and economic forces generate deeper and more consequential forms of inequality between languages than between religions in contemporary liberal societies, while discursive and symbolic processes generate more profound forms of inequality between religions. The major sources of religious inequality derive from religion’s thicker cultural, normative, and political content, while the major sources of linguistic inequality come from the pervasiveness of language, and from the increasingly and inescapably "languaged" nature of political, economic, and cultural life in the modern world.

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Through what political, economic, cultural, and social processes is difference transformed into inequality? Specifically, how are linguistic and religious differences implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality?\(^2\)

I will be concerned with the forms of inequality that arise in connection with linguistic and religious pluralism, not with those that arise within a single language or religion. The latter are obviously important. Within-language inequalities have been explored extensively by sociolinguists and other social theorists (notably Bourdieu 1977, 1991) in the last several decades (Gal 1989). This work has shown that linguistic exchanges are permeated with power and inequality. Linguistic differences – in accent, variety, diction, stance, range of repertoires, and so on – both express extra-linguistic inequalities and contribute to reproducing them. Similarly, the sociology of religion has explored the significance of inequality within religious traditions. This line of analysis goes back to Max Weber, who wrote that the fact of differential religious qualification “stands at the beginning of the history of religion,” and that “all intensive religiosiy has a tendency toward a sort of status stratification, in accordance with differences in charismatic qualifications” (Weber 1946: 287).

The dividing line between such within-language and within-religion inequalities and the between-language and between-religion inequalities that concern me here is admittedly not a sharp one. What counts as a within-language or a between-language inequality depends on what counts as a language, as distinguished from a variety or dialect. The same holds for religion. What counts as a distinct language, or a distinct religion, is not a theoretical question; it is a

\(^2\) For a broader discussion of the ways in which categories of difference – and specifically citizenship, gender, and race and ethnicity -- are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality, see Brubaker 2015: chapter 1.
practical question, a stake of political struggles. Such struggles over the recognition of particular forms of linguistic or religious practice as distinct languages or religions are an important object of analysis in their own right. So too are struggles over whether particular forms of linguistic or religious practice should be recognized as legitimate varieties of a particular language or religion, or excluded and condemned as illegitimate or heretical. But I want to bracket these sorts of struggles here, in order to bring into analytical focus the kinds of inequality that arise in connection with relatively unambiguous cases of linguistic and religious pluralism, characterized by the durable presence within a polity of two or more of what are generally recognized as distinct languages or religions.  

I will consider the relation between linguistic and religious pluralism and inequality in four domains. The first is the political and institutional domain, specifically the domain of law, policy, and formal regulation. This is the domain of rules, policies, and procedures that govern language use and establish the parameters for religious practice, privileging some languages and religions and disfravilizing others, both on the level of the polity as a whole, and on the level of specific formal organizations like schools, universities, administrative agencies, courts, prisons, media organizations, workplaces, and churches.

The second is the economic domain. This is the domain of economic processes that – in interaction with political and institutional rules – confer differential economic value on different languages, and (sometimes) on different religions, and thereby create differential incentives to learn different languages and, in some cases, to adopt different religions. It is the domain of processes through which forms of linguistic or religious competence become forms of linguistic or religious capital, convertible into other forms of value outside the linguistic or religious field.

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3 I use "pluralism" throughout the paper to refer to this actual or perceived plurality of languages or religions. Pluralism in this sense is a condition, not a normative or political stance.
The third is the domain of cultural and symbolic inequality. This is the domain of discursive and symbolic processes that confer prestige, honor, stigma, and – more generally – symbolic value on particular languages and religions.

The last is the domain of informal social relations. This is the domain of differential informal treatment (in labor and housing markets, bureaucratic encounters, or private relationships) of persons who speak different languages or practice different religions. It is also the domain of self-organized patterns of social relations that can lead to linguistically or religiously differentiated social networks, friendship circles, and marriage opportunities, and to unequal access to the resources that flow through such networks.

These domains are interrelated, and it's not possible to draw hard and fast lines between them. Formal rules and policies may confer economic advantages and disadvantages; and informal social discrimination may be shaped by the cultural devaluation or stigmatization of particular languages or religions. Still, the domains are analytically distinct, and it's useful to consider them separately. Inequality is a complex phenomenon, and the inequalities associated with linguistic and religious pluralism are not reducible to a single kind of inequality. Political disprivileging, economic marginalization, cultural stigmatization, and informal discrimination or exclusion have distinct dynamics.

The ways in which inequality is structured by categories of linguistic and religious difference vary widely over time and context. I limit my attention to the modern era, especially the last century or two, and I focus primarily on Western liberal polities and societies. The first of these scope conditions applies equally to language and religion. But the second scope condition – the restriction to Western liberal polities and societies – applies specifically to religion. This reflects the fact that religion is implicated in the production and reproduction of
inequality in very different ways in different world regions, while language is implicated in the
production and reproduction of inequality in rather similar ways across a wide range of contexts
in the modern world, notwithstanding important variations in stances and policies toward
linguistic pluralism.

By the "modern era," I mean a set of developments that have fundamentally altered the
political, economic, cultural, and social significance of language and religion, and of linguistic
and religious pluralism in particular. One is the development and global diffusion of the modern
state, characterized by direct rule, intensive interaction with citizens, universal public education,
a public sector that provides large numbers of jobs, and an ascending formula of legitimacy, with
authority understood as arising from "the people," not as descending from God. A second,
closely intertwined with the first, is the development and global diffusion of nationhood and
nationalism as the prevailing way of imagining political community and legitimating
independent statehood. A third is the emergence of an increasingly urban, mobile, literate social
order and a correspondingly fluid division of labor. Together, these developments make
language a crucial form of cultural capital, a central focus of personal and collective identity, and
a key terrain of political struggle.

A fourth development, on a more abstract level, is the emergence and increasing
differentiation of a series of more or less autonomous and self-referential spheres of life, each
with its own immanent constitutive values, frames of reference, and causal dynamics. As
political, economic, scientific, artistic, and legal spheres become more differentiated and
autonomous, especially but not exclusively in the West, religion becomes an autonomous,
differentiated, and to a considerable extent privatized sphere of its own. Religion never becomes
fully privatized, even in the West, and the claims of public religion challenge the normative
insulation and putative autonomy of the political, economic, and legal spheres (Casanova 1994). Still, the historical reversal over the course of several centuries in the West is striking: while language has become much more central to public life and more politically contentious, religion has become less central to public life and less politically contentious, notwithstanding the resurgence of public religion in recent decades, and despite the fact that understandings of nationhood remain deeply permeated by particular religious traditions and their secular legacies.

A further aspect of the constellation of modernity concerns the expansionary political, economic, and cultural dynamics that have generated linguistically and religiously heterogeneous polities. Conquest, colonization, and other forms of state-building have brought heterogeneous populations within the ambit of a single polity (though premodern empires obviously did so as well) (Burbank and Cooper 2010). And in a world characterized by vast between-country economic and demographic gaps, migration is continually generating new forms of linguistic and religious heterogeneity.

By regrouping and drawing new boundaries around heterogeneous populations, and by internalizing heterogeneity within political units, at a moment in world time in which states were beginning to problematize heterogeneity and move towards tighter forms of political and cultural integration, these large-scale political, economic, and cultural processes have transformed latent into manifest heterogeneity. And they have made possible new forms of inequality. When languages and religions exist in relative isolation – though not of course in complete isolation -- from one another, they are not unequal. The problematic of difference and inequality – of inequality linked to forms of cultural difference – comes into being only when different languages and different religions are brought into regular and intensive relations with one
another under the same political roof (Gal 1989: 356), and when the tightly integrated nation-state emerges as the dominant model of political organization (Wimmer 2002, chapter 3).

A final specifically modern development – though again one with earlier antecedents and precedents – is the transformation of linguistic and religious heterogeneity into linguistic and religious pluralism. In the domain of language, this involved the transformation of dialect continua into standardized, codified, individuated, bounded languages (Haugen 1966). Claims for recognition of these as distinct and fully fledged languages were linked to – and grounds for – claims for recognition of distinct nations.

The codification and individuation of languages have at least loose parallels in the crystallization of often fluid and variable recognized "religions." The awareness of religious difference is of course much older, and in some contexts difference has been understood in terms of reified entities and sharp boundaries, as between Christendom and Islam (Armstrong 1982). But the idea of a global set of “formally equal, self-contained, and systematic units that are in important ways mutually exclusive” (Beyer 2001: 127) is distinctively modern. And the processes of objectification, standardization, and reification are still ongoing, generating a heightened self-conscious awareness of religions as distinct and bounded entities.

In the case of both language and religion, then, one can identify a transition from a more fluid to a more pluralistic mode of heterogeneity. Both language and religion come to be understood as fields of categorically distinct rather than continuously varying cultural practice. They come to be understood as partitioned into discrete, sharply bounded, mutually exclusive languages and religions.

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4 On Hinduism, see Van der Veer 1994; on objectification, with specific reference to Islam, see Eickelman and Piscator 1996: 38ff.
5 On the emergence of the discourse of "world religions," see also Masuzawa (2005).
The political and institutional domain

States necessarily operate in and through language. This is all the more true as their activities become more communication-intensive. As the range and communicative intensity of state activities increases, states cannot help but advantage people with certain language repertoires and disadvantage others, in their capacities as students, clients, conscripts, citizens, or prospective public employees. Language repertories become an important determinant of life chances, and the rules and practices that govern the language of public life become chronically and pervasively politicized (Zolberg and Long 1999:21).

This points to a crucial difference between language and religion. While language is a necessary medium of public life, and indeed a universal and inescapable medium of all forms of social life, religion is not – at least not in the same way. Public life – including public discourse, administration, law, courts, education, media, and public signage – operates not just in and through language in general, but in and through a particular language or small set of languages. Even if religion -- in the broad Durkheimian sense of distinctions between sacred and profane – is seen as a universal part of public life, it's not the case that public life must operate in and through the medium of some particular religion. The distinctively modern phenomenon of “religions” – as recognized, individuated entities -- is quite distinct from the Durkheimian phenomenon of “religion.”

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6 I focus here on the state, but other organizations too have linguistic or religious policies. Examples include English-only rules in workplaces; policies adopted by employers to provide for the "reasonable accommodation" of employees’ religious beliefs and practices (Ringelheim, Bribosia, and Rorive 2010); and policies and practices of prisons to provide religious services to inmates (Beckford and Gilliat 2005).

8 This and the next paragraph draw on Brubaker 2013.
The state must privilege a particular language or set of languages, but it need not privilege a particular religion, at least not in the same way, and not to the same degree. It’s true that complete neutrality in matters of religion is widely recognized as a myth, not least because the state cannot help but take a position on the vexed and contested question of what counts as “religion.” And one can easily identify pervasive traces of Christianity in the public life of western liberal democracies (Alba 2005): the reckoning of dates according to the Christian calendar, the organization of holidays, or the privileging of Sunday as a day of rest. Yet contemporary liberal polities -- even those that still have some kind of established church -- have made substantial, though contested, moves in the direction of a more neutral stance towards differing religions. Such moves have no counterpart in the domain of language. The state can approach neutrality with respect to religion, even if such neutrality can never be fully realized in practice; but it cannot even approach neutrality with respect to language (Zolberg and Long 1999: 21; Bauböck 2002: 175-6). The conditions of possibility for neutrality differ sharply for language and religion.

I want to consider here three kinds of inequality that are generated by policies and practices that privilege particular languages and religions and disprivilege others. The first is unequal opportunities for specifically linguistic or specifically religious expression or activity; the second is unequal access to extralinguistic or extrareligious goods and opportunities for

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9 Bader 2007: 82ff; Danchin 2012. For a different critique of the ideal of neutrality, see Mahmood (2006). As I shall note below, the power to define what counts as "religious" can enable states to circumvent well-institutionalized legal norms protecting the free exercise of religion and requiring the equal treatment of religions. On the broader debate in political theory about the ideal of state neutrality vis-à-vis competing understandings of the good, see Koppelman 2004. Koppelman acknowledges the incoherence of the idea of complete neutrality, yet he affirms the continued relevance and value of neutrality as an ideal.

10 This is the domain of what Torpey (2010) calls “latent religiosity.”
people with different linguistic repertoires or religious affiliations; and the third is unequal opportunities for the *intergenerational transmission* of linguistic or religious identities.

The first kind of inequality arises from restrictions on specific forms of linguistic and religious behavior. In liberal states, private linguistic and religious conduct enjoys strong legal protection, and much public conduct is strongly protected as well. But “public” can mean different things. One may have the right to speak a minority language in public places with other speakers of that language, yet one may *not* have the right to communicate with public officials, receive schooling or other public services, or even display commercial signage in that language.

This points to another key difference between language and religion. Since language is a universal medium of social interaction, speakers of minority languages are compelled either to use the prevailing language (to the extent that they can) or to rely on translators or interpreters whenever they need services that are not available in minority languages.\(^{11}\) How often this is the case depends on the extent of “institutional completeness” (Breton 1964) or “structural pluralism” (van den Berghe 1967: 34) – the extent and range of parallel, minority-language institutions such as hospitals, media, schools, stores, service providers, churches, clubs, even economic niches. Religion is different. Except for people with very serious religious commitments, religion is more sectoral and compartmentalized; it is not a universal medium of interaction.\(^{12}\) This makes religious life more self-sufficient than linguistic life. One can lead

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\(^{11}\) This generates inequality within minority-language communities between monolinguals and bilinguals. Bilinguals who occupy key nodes in networks may profit from a monopolistic mediating position (see De Swaan 1988: Chapter 3 for a sophisticated treatment of this in connection with the historical development of national languages and state education systems in Europe). Inequalities between monolinguals and bilinguals also transform authority structures and socio-emotional patterns within families, notably when bilingual children must mediate for monolingual parents (Zhou and Bankston 1998: 170).

\(^{12}\) For seriously religious persons, to be sure, religion *is* – at least ideally -- a universal medium of interaction. One’s religious identity and commitments color every interaction, and impose
one’s entire religious life among co-religionists; but immigrants, for example, can’t lead their entire linguistic lives among co-linguists. The fact that linguistic life is not self-sufficient, and that one must therefore go outside the sphere of co-linguists, generates specifically linguistic inequalities.

Yet while religious life is more sectoral and therefore self-sufficient than linguistic life, in another sense religion is more vulnerable than language to restrictions on public expression. This is the case insofar as public activity -- not just collective worship, ritual, or prayer, but also the regulation of certain aspects of public as well as private life -- is understood as central to religious practice. Language is intrinsically social; but some forms of religion are understood not only as intrinsically social, but as intrinsically public. They are therefore resistant to, and disadvantaged by, prevailing liberal understandings of religion as a fundamentally private matter.

A further key difference between language and religion in liberal states is that religion enjoys much stronger legal protection, thanks to the institutionalization -- in both national and international legal arenas -- of the principles of the free exercise of religion and of equality and non-discrimination between religions (Koenig 2007). But how should “religion” be defined? The expansive protections and rights that accrue to religious practices and organizations have generated high-stakes definitional struggles and boundary-work over what practices, symbols, and organizations are to count as “religious.”

At stake in such struggles are not only core rights of religious belief and expression, but also privileges like exemption from taxation or exemption from military service on grounds of obligations -- or at least make relevant religious ideals -- at every moment. One is never outside the sphere of religion; indeed it makes no sense to think of religion as a separate sphere of life alongside other spheres. This may impose special burdens and specifically religious or religio-moral hazards for such persons when they are obliged to go outside the sphere of (serious) co-religionists. When this “outside” world is deemed religiously dangerous -- notably for women, since such marking of the “outside” world as morally and spiritually dangerous is often gendered -- opportunities may be severely restricted.

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are in most instances the final arbiters of such struggles, though in some important instances international courts have weighed in, notably the European Court of Human Rights (Koenig, forthcoming).

This power to define what counts as “religious” gives states some leeway to circumvent well-institutionalized norms of free exercise and non-discrimination. France was able to ban the wearing of the face-covering niqab by defining it as a cultural practice, not a religious obligation, and therefore not covered by the right of free exercise of religion (Joppke and Torpey 2013: 25). And after a storm of protest greeted a preliminary European Court of Human Rights ruling barring the display of the crucifix in Italian classrooms, the Court reversed itself, defining the crucifix in this context as a symbol of political culture, tradition, and national identity, not primarily a religious symbol, and therefore as something that could legitimately be displayed without involving the illegitimate state promotion of a particular religion (Joppke 2013: 116). Moves toward a more neutral and even-handed stance toward religion have been real and substantial; but as the niqab and crucifix cases show, equal treatment has its limits.

The second kind of political and institutional inequality does not involve restrictions on linguistic or religious expression or activity; it involves unequal access to extra-linguistic or extra-religious goods and opportunities. This is the terrain of social closure: linguistic competence or religious affiliation is used as a test or qualification for scarce and desirable positions (public offices, public sector jobs, university slots, or even citizenship itself).

Here again, there’s a striking difference between religion and language. Formal exclusion and discrimination on religious grounds have been massively de-legitimized in the West, along religious belief. Scientology, for example, was involved in a decades-long – and ultimately successful – battle with the Internal Revenue Service to be recognized as a religious organization (Urban 2011). On the politics of defining "religion," see Beckford (2003) and Sullivan (2005).
with exclusion and discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and ethnicity. Even states such as the UK that still have (weakly) established religions bar discrimination on the grounds of religion in employment. Prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of language are much more limited. Religious tests for public office, employment, or citizenship are today virtually unthinkable in liberal states, yet linguistic tests are routine. Two factors account for this difference. First, linguistic competence, unlike religious affiliation, can be understood as a functionally and substantively relevant qualification for various positions, including citizenship. Second, linguistic tests can be seen as pertaining to acquired competencies, open to anyone, while religious tests are seen as pertaining to an ascribed status. Of course one’s initial language competence is developed through no choice of one’s own, while religious affiliations and practices may be voluntarily changed, indeed sometimes more easily, quickly, and radically than one’s linguistic repertoire. But while it is seen as legitimate, in liberal contexts, to expect people to change their linguistic repertoires, and notably to expect immigrants – and, a fortiori, their children -- to learn the prevailing language, it is not seen as legitimate to expect people to change their religious beliefs or identities.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\) This point would have to be qualified in a fuller discussion. While religious beliefs are very strongly protected in liberal settings, the protection afforded religious practices is more qualified. Conduct that would otherwise be illegal, or that can be construed as harming others, is not automatically protected by virtue of being characterized as “religious.” For American constitutional jurisprudence on the “free exercise” of religion, see Greenawalt 2006. Moreover, there are signs that the neo-assimilationist turn in liberal polities (Brubaker 2001) extends increasingly to certain religious practices – or, more precisely, since the category “religious” is chronically contested, to practices that can be construed as religious by those engaging in them. In France, for example, citizenship can be withheld from applicants whose conduct or putative attitudes are judged incompatible with “values essential to French society,” and notably with equality between the sexes. Justifications for such refusals of citizenship have been carefully framed to avoid the appearance of discrimination on religious grounds, but the underlying concern with certain forms of religious practice seems clear (Bowen 2011; Hajjat 2011a, 2011b).
The third kind of political and institutional inequality concerns unequal opportunities for the intergenerational transmission of linguistic or religious identities. This arises from the fact that states seek not only to promote or restrict certain forms of linguistic and religious behavior, but also to shape linguistic and religious repertoires and identities. It can be difficult, of course, to reshape the repertoires and identities of adult persons. But thanks to the dynamics of cohort succession, it's possible for the repertoires and identities of a population to change without any change in the repertoires and identities of individual persons. This can happen if a new generation is socialized into a linguistic or religious repertoire or identity different from that of the parental generation. For this reason, control over the instruments of linguistic and religious socialization is a recurring stake of linguistic and religious struggles.

In this respect too, there is a striking difference between language and religion. This can best be seen through a stylized – and admittedly crude – comparison of the dynamics of linguistic and religious reproduction in premodern and contemporary liberal societies.\(^1\)

In premodern societies, linguistic pluralism was more or less self-reproducing. Linguistic socialization occurred in families and local communities, without any specialized apparatus. Political authorities made no effort to impose linguistic homogeneity (though they often did impose religious homogeneity).

In contemporary liberal societies, the situation is reversed. It is now religious pluralism that is more or less self-reproducing. Religious socialization occurs in families and local religious communities; and political authorities make no effort to impose religious homogeneity. But linguistic reproduction now requires what Ernest Gellner (1983: chapter 3) called exo-socialization. It requires prolonged and expensive schooling on a scale that only the state is

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\(^{15}\) The following paragraphs draw on Brubaker 2013.
ordinarily in a position to provide. So the state is much more central to linguistic than to religious reproduction.

Of course, children often acquire basic competence in a minority language from their parents and extended families, and this can be reinforced by minority-language media. But without comprehensive minority-language schooling – provided in certain historically multilingual states, but nowhere available to minority languages generated by recent immigration – it is difficult for the minority language to be fully and durably reproduced.

The religious pluralism generated by immigration is more easily reproduced. Of course it’s not automatically reproduced, given the fluidity of the religious landscape of contemporary liberal societies. But the intergenerational transmission of minority religions requires no state apparatus like a minority language school system. And it requires no particular legal regime beyond the commitment to religious freedom that is a constitutive element of liberal polities. The transmission of religion, moreover, is not particularly costly. The transmission of a language – beyond what is simply picked up in the home – requires a major effort and carries a substantial opportunity cost. But the transmission of a religious affiliation or identification does not.

The liberal state therefore controls crucial instruments of linguistic socialization, but it has much less leverage over religious socialization. The upshot is that while opportunities for reproduction of religious identities are relatively equal in liberal contexts, opportunities for the reproduction of linguistic repertoires are not.

I want to conclude this section by noting two qualifications to the argument I have sketched. First, I’ve been tacitly assuming that the state-identified language of religion is in a position of strength. But sometimes the state-identified language or religion is understood as
weak or vulnerable. Indeed it's precisely in such cases that policies and practices that privilege a particular language or religion are particularly important – and particularly contested. Policies and practices that privilege a weak or threatened language or religion are found in three characteristic configurations. The first involves state efforts to revive, sustain, or promote a weak or declining language, such as Irish or Welsh. The second involves efforts to protect or support a still-dominant but declining or threatened language or religion. Examples would include efforts to protect a quasi-monopolistic state or national religion from "foreign" competition, or efforts to protect a national language from the encroachment of English. The third configuration arises in the aftermath of empire when new or newly reconfigured states, understood as the states of and for particular ethnoculturally defined nations, use state power in a remedial or compensatory way to promote the national language, which had been weakened by the imperial predecessor regime (Brubaker 1996, 2011).

Second, I've been discussing state policies and practices that promote inequality. But some state policies and practices promote the equal treatment of languages and religions. Regimes of full parity between two (or in some cases more) languages are found in some countries including Canada, Switzerland, and Belgium (though in each of these cases single languages are privileged within almost all territorial subunits, and the regime of strict parity holds, with a few exceptions, only at the federal level). Fully paritative regimes, however, are rare; and they are never extended to include immigrant languages: established regimes of equal linguistic treatment are not “joinable” by new, immigration-generated languages, while

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16 Restrictions on proselytism are problematic in liberal contexts, where the free exercise of religion may be understood as entailing the freedom to proselytize. And efforts to protect prevailing but threatened religions are generally more problematic, in liberal polities, than efforts to protect prevailing but threatened languages – yet another indicator of what Zolberg and Long (1999) characterized as the asymmetrical stance of liberal states towards religious and linguistic pluralism.
established regimes of religious parity are joinable – albeit not easily or automatically so -- by immigrant religions (Brubaker 2013:11-12). Short of regimes of full parity, states may adopt a variety of other measures to accommodate or even, in limited ways, to promote and preserve linguistic diversity. They may provide signage, information, voting materials, or bureaucratic forms in minority languages; translators in medical, legal, or administrative settings; or various transitional forms of bilingual education. But these pragmatic accommodations are categorically distinct from the comprehensive parallel school systems or regimes of territorial autonomy that are needed to secure the long-term reproduction and preservation of multiple languages within a single state. And they do not alter the fact that all modern states must massively privilege a particular language or small set of languages, while they need not massively privilege a particular religion.

The scope for egalitarian policies and practices is much greater in the field of religion, thanks to the differentiation of the state from religion, which contrasts sharply with the inextricable entanglement of the state with particular languages. As noted, liberal states have made substantial moves toward a more neutral and even-handed stance towards religious pluralism, including immigration-generated forms of religious pluralism, in sharp contrast to their stance toward immigration-generated linguistic pluralism. But there are three limits to this generally more egalitarian and supportive political and legal treatment of religious than of linguistic pluralism, two of which have been noted above. The first is that the differentiation of state and religion is never complete; full neutrality is therefore impossible. The second is that the power to define what counts as “religious” gives states considerable room for maneuver in implementing norms of non-discrimination and free exercise. The final limit is more fundamental and categorical: the generally egalitarian and supportive stance of liberal polities
towards religious pluralism does not extend to state-rivaling, state-challenging forms of religion, i.e. to forms of religion that challenge the state’s monopoly of legal order (Hirschl and Shachar 2009). Robust forms of religiously based legal pluralism – characteristic of some empires and post-colonial polities, where differing systems of personal law govern members of different religious communities -- are “incompatible with the structural character of modern nation-states” (Zolberg and Long 1999: 14). More modest forms of legal or quasi-legal pluralism, however, are currently being negotiated on the terrain of personal and family law (Bowen 2010; Büchler 2011).

The economic domain

I turn now to the economic domain. I consider here two kinds of inequality: unequal economic opportunities for people with different linguistic or religious repertoires or affiliations; and unequal opportunities for growth or survival for different languages and religions within a particular linguistic or religious ecology. I then discuss how these two kinds of inequality are dynamically interconnected.

Different linguistic competencies or repertoires and different religious affiliations or dispositions can operate as forms of linguistic or religious “capital” that, under certain circumstances, are “convertible” into economic resources or benefits. It’s straightforward to see how language can work in this way (Wolfson and Manes 1985; van Parijs 2011). In many contexts, prospects for social mobility (or for the inter-generational transmission of a privileged social position) depend on mastery of a global or regional language in addition to the prevailing local language(s). In India, for example, this means mastering Hindi and English in addition to
the official language of one's state of residence, if this is not Hindi (Laitin 1989). Given the
hegemony of English as global lingua franca, mastery of English (or of a regional lingua franca
like Chinese, Russian, Spanish, or Hindi) is a key form of cultural capital in a wide range of
contexts. And language knowledge is obviously closely linked to economic opportunity in most
immigration contexts.

The economic value of language is powerfully shaped by directly political processes. The
global economic demand for English, for example, obviously reflects the history of overseas
expansion and Anglo-American hegemony. But once robustly entrenched in business,
scientific, technical, and professional networks, English no longer requires directly political
support, and its hegemony in many contexts is refractory to political attempts to promote other
languages. The economic value of other languages of wide circulation – Chinese, Russian, and
Spanish, for example – is also deeply embedded in economic networks and refractory to political
intervention. Yet while the economic value of languages of wide transnational circulation no
longer requires direct political support, the economic value of other languages is often politically
co-determined in a more direct and immediate way by rules that privilege some languages over
others.

Religion, too, can function as an economically redeemable form of cultural or social
capital and as a determinant of mobility opportunities. This works in part through formal social
closure or informal discrimination, which excludes members of a disprivileged religious category
from certain economic opportunities, and thereby constitutes that religion, in effect, as a form of
negative cultural capital. But religion can also shape economic opportunities in ways that are

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19 Laitin (1995) has analyzed an interesting flipside of this. If religious or ethnic minorities are
excluded, formally or informally, from a range of socially esteemed occupations, yet at the same
independent of political exclusion and social discrimination. It can do so through what Weber called the “economic ethos” that may be associated with certain forms of religious socialization; through the religious legitimation or delegitimation of specific forms of economic activity; and through the social capital that may be generated by some forms of religious participation (Connor and Koenig 2013; Weber 1946: 303-308).

The analytical point I want to underscore here is that linguistic and religious repertoires and affiliations are dynamic, not static. People change their repertoires and affiliations for many reasons. Among other things, they are sensitive to the advantages and disadvantages of particular linguistic and religious competencies and identities, and this can lead them to learn one foreign language rather than another, to put more or less effort into learning a particular language, or to or to convert from a disprivileged to a privileged religion. This holds not only for the choices people make for themselves, but also for the choices they make for their children. Parents’ concern for their children’s economic opportunities may lead them to bring up their children with different repertoires or affiliations than their own. They may send their children to school, for example, in a language of wider circulation than the one in which they were time monopolize, formally or informally, certain stigmatized yet lucrative occupations or economic niches, the economic benefits of social marginality can solidify boundaries and inhibit processes of assimilation.

20 Obviously, people's linguistic and religious choices are not driven exclusively – or even primarily – by economic considerations. But choices are sensitive to the perceived advantages and disadvantages of different linguistic and religious repertoires, whether these are seen as deriving from political privileging or disprivileging, from economic valorization or devalorization, from cultural prestige or stigma, or from informal social networks or discrimination. On the micro-sociology of language choice, see De Swaan 2001: chapter 2, focusing not on economic value directly, but on the sensitivity of language choice to differences in the “communication value” of different languages.
themselves schooled; or they may give their children a religious upbringing different from the one they themselves received.\(^{21}\)

Individuals, then, may respond to the perceived differential opportunities associated with particular language repertoires or forms of religious practice by altering their own linguistic repertoires or religious affiliations or strategically shaping the linguistic or religious socialization of their children. Cumulatively, such choices can transform linguistic and religious demography. Here it's useful to shift from an *individual* perspective – considering the prospective costs and benefits of different language repertoires or religious affiliations for oneself and one's children – to an *ecological* perspective. From this perspective, languages and religions can be understood as competing with one another for adherents within some ecological setting. Depending on one’s analytical interest, the setting may be a locality, an institution, the nation-state, or the entire world.

Competition among languages differs in important ways from competition among religions. Competition among religions – in so far as we are talking about organized religion – involves competition among organizations. It involves competition *for itself*, not just

\(^{21}\) In liberal settings, where religious difference is generally less politically and economically disadvantaged than linguistic difference, especially in post-migration contexts, this logic of differential opportunity or advantage leads more routinely to changes in language repertoires than to changes in religious repertoires. Changes in religious repertoires are of course common in contemporary liberal settings, but they are generally driven by less pragmatic concerns. Where social inclusion has lagged behind legal emancipation, however, a pragmatic orientation to perceived advantages and disadvantages may lead to shifts in religious repertoires as well. In the last decades of Imperial Germany and the Habsburg Empire, for example, it was not uncommon for Jewish parents to have their children baptized as a strategy for overcoming limits on opportunities (Richarz 1998: 15).
competition *in itself*. Religious organizations are not just objectively but subjectively competing for members; they monitor and respond to the behavior of their competitors.\footnote{The religious economies literature (critically reviewed in Chaves and Gorski 2001) has developed this ecological perspective, treating religious organizations as analogous to firms competing for customers.}

Languages are not organizations; they compete for adherents in a different sense.\footnote{For an ecological perspective on language competition, see Mufwene (2002).} Organizations figure centrally, to be sure, in nationalist struggles over language. Language-identified nationalist organizations, like religious organizations, may compete directly and self-consciously for adherents. They may seek to get people to identify themselves in particular ways in censuses, to adopt particular forms of linguistic behavior, or to send their children to particular schools.\footnote{On such struggles between Czech-identified and German-identified organizations in East Central Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, see Zahra 2008.} But in these cases it is not languages themselves that are competing; it is nationalist organizations speaking on behalf of particular languages. And these organizational struggles are not my primary focus of interest here. I am interested in the ways in which languages “compete” objectively – in an agentless, figurative sense -- for speakers, quite independently of struggles between language-identified nationalist organizations, indeed quite independently of any forms of overt language politics.

Languages can be understood as competing for limited numbers of speakers.\footnote{I refer to "speakers" as shorthand for persons who use language in various ways, involving not only speaking (with varying degrees of competence, and in varying domains) but also writing.} Speakers are not locked into their existing repertoires (though changing one’s repertoire can be costly); still less are children locked into the repertoires of their parents. Actual and prospective speakers are aware of the plurality of languages and have rough ideas of their differential value. This awareness informs their choices to alter their own repertoires and to invest in particular repertoires for their children. The cumulative result of these individual choices can dramatically
alter the linguistic landscape. Some languages may get weaker and die, while others go from strength to strength.\textsuperscript{26}

Competition among languages is colored by the fact that language is a "hyper-collective" good, the value of which increases with the number of those who speak it (De Swaan 2001; for a complementary view, see van Parijs 2011). This can accelerate processes of linguistic change and generate self-reinforcing "stampedes" into or out of a particular language. Of course there are also powerful forces that promote relatively stable – or at least more slowly-changing – distributions of languages in a given setting. These include the costliness of acquiring new languages as an adult, the symbolic and emotional meanings of language, and above all the "political roofs" that shield numerically and otherwise weak languages from direct competition in a number of domains (Laponce 1987; van Parijs 2011). Still, an ecological perspective on competition among languages can help explain ongoing spirals of language death on the one hand (Crystal 2000) and the rapid and seemingly inexorable spread of English as a global second language on the other.\textsuperscript{27}

Religion is of course a collective enterprise, but is not a hyper-collective good, and religious communities are therefore much less sensitive to such dynamics of economic demography. Small religious communities can stably reproduce themselves, and can sometimes grow dramatically, even when they enjoy no special state support or privileges (as in the case of ultra-orthodox forms of Judaism in the US in recent decades). Religious movements may exhibit

\textsuperscript{26} On the emerging field of language dynamics, in which language competition is formally modeled, see Wichmann 2008.
\textsuperscript{27} A final step in the dynamic interplay between individual choices and aggregate patterns in the distribution of languages is that the increasing prevalence of a language – an aggregate result of many individual choices sensitive to the value of that language – can end up decreasing its value in certain contexts. English may be indispensable for many forms of mobility, but it has lost the scarcity that made it especially valuable in certain contexts, as for example in early post-communist Eastern Europe. This is similar to the logic of credential inflation and devaluation.
self-reinforcing demographic dynamics -- precipitous growth or decline, waves of enthusiasm or defection – and religions can fail to reproduce themselves and disappear. But the demographic dynamics of religion are less acutely sensitive than the demographic dynamics of language to economic costs and benefits.  

The cultural and symbolic domain

I turn now to the domain of cultural and symbolic inequality. This is the domain of discursive and symbolic processes that confer prestige, honor, recognition, respect, and, more generally, symbolic value – as distinct from economic or instrumental value – on particular languages and religions, while denying such value to others, either by default, or through active processes of stigmatization or symbolic devaluation. I limit myself here to two points.

The first concerns the symbolic power of the state (and of authoritative religious institutions): the power to officialize, recognize, legitimize, and naturalize; to authoritatively identify, define, classify, and categorize; and to articulate and diffuse authoritative representations. Thanks to this symbolic power, the cultural and symbolic domain is closely

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28 A sustained consideration of the factors accounting for the growth and decline of religions and languages is beyond the scope of the paper, but one observation may be made in passing. In liberal polities, the reproduction and growth of religious communities are less constrained and conditioned by demographic strength, economic value, or state support than are the reproduction and growth of language communities. The growth of a religious community depends on its cultural content or "message" in a way that the growth of a language community does not, notwithstanding the powerful symbolic associations that attach to particular languages. But in many other settings, political support and military power have been crucial to the growth of particular religions, just as they have been to the growth of particular languages.

29 A fuller treatment would address the issue of ideology, specifically the broad body of work on language ideology (reviewed in Woolard and Schieffelin 1994), and the debates about religion and ideology.
intertwined with the political and institutional domain of law and policy. But the domains are analytically distinct, working through the medium of discourse and representations within and outside the state in the one case, and through that of law, policy, and procedure, in states and other formal organizations, including churches, in the other.\textsuperscript{30}

State-building is among other things a massive cultural project; and a large literature has addressed the cultural dimension of state formation (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Bourdieu 1996; Steinmetz 1999; Gorski 2003; Loveman 2005). The development of unified national languages and educational systems in Europe, starting from conditions of great linguistic heterogeneity, was one key terrain on which this played out (De Swaan 1988). The process had a formal legal and policy dimension, involving a legal commitment to universal and compulsory education, and formal policies governing linguistic standards and languages of instruction. And it had an economic dimension, conferring value on particular varieties and languages and devaluing others. But it also had a specifically symbolic dimension, involving the massive stigmatization of non-standard varieties and non-prevailing languages, and a kind of symbolic violence through which the stigmatized come to internalize the stigma and thereby to participate in the authoritative devaluing of their own linguistic repertoires (Weber 1976, Bourdieu 1991).\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} Of course a broad definition of the political and institutional domain might incorporate discourse and representations. But then one would still want to distinguish between processes that work through formal regulation (law, policy, or procedure) in the state or formal organizations, and processes that work through discourse and representation, in the state, but also outside the state.

\textsuperscript{31} Devaluation, stigmatization, and symbolic violence might seem to work rather similarly in the construction of religious authority, inducing the dominated to be complicit in their own domination by acknowledging the superior value and prestige of orthodox forms of belief and behavior and devaluing their own forms of competence. Yet on closer inspection, symbolic devaluation and de-legitimation can be much more drastically consequential within religious than within linguistic traditions. Religious traditions are structures of authority, and religious authorities may control the means of physical as well as symbolic violence. Symbolic violence
The law itself has a powerful symbolic dimension; it can legitimize, recognize, or stigmatize. Struggles over the legal recognition of gay marriage, for example, concern intangible symbols – the imprimatur of legitimacy and recognition – as much as tangible benefits. And the stakes of state-level campaigns in the United States to declare English the official language are almost exclusively symbolic. A similar point can be made about debates over the disestablishment of state religions in Scandinavia and the UK. In the prevailing context of massive religious pluralization and substantial moves toward a more inclusive and even-handed stance toward other religions, the legal privileges associated with established churches are increasingly vestigial and symbolic. Tellingly, many Muslim organizations are opposed to the disestablishment of the Church of England, preferring a regime of weak establishment – with its pluralistic and relatively egalitarian openness to other religions – to disestablishment and secularization.

The second point I want to make is that religious outsiderhood can be culturally and symbolically much deeper and more categorical than linguistic outsiderhood. Languages (or linguistic varieties) may be devalued and stigmatized because of their associations with devalued social categories, and specifically with class, ethnic, regional, or gender categories. This is an aspect of what sociolinguists call indexicality. Religions, or forms of religious practice within

can thus prepare and legitimate physical violence. Heresy and apostasy, which may be punishable by death, have no counterpart in the domain of language.

One might think that issues of heresy and apostasy pertain to inequality within religious traditions, while I have been concerned here with inequality between languages and between religions. But this again shows that the distinction between “within-religion” and “between-religion” (or within-language and between-language) forms of inequality is not just an academic distinction, but a stake of practical struggles. What legitimately belongs to a religious tradition, and what can be condemned as heretical, or as grounds for apostasy, can be a matter of life and death. The boundaries of a religion, and the distinction between inside and outside, are eminently practical questions.
broader religious traditions, may be devalued and stigmatized for analogous reasons. Yet beyond this kind of *devaluation by association* with devalued social categories, religion can be criticized, devalued, or stigmatized on its own terms, by virtue of its ideational, normative, and political content. Moreover, religion is not only a rich target of criticism and stigmatization; it is also an active agent of criticism and stigmatization. The resources for authoritatively devaluing or stigmatizing other forms of religious practice are internal to religion. Religion is a structure of authority in a deeper and different sense than language is.

Languages are routinely represented as primitive, undeveloped, crude, uncultivated, uncouth, impoverished, and unsuitable for use in particular domains. But it’s hard to imagine languages being represented as evil, violence-prone, or threatening to a whole civilization or way of life. There are of course contexts in which languages are represented as threatening. But it is not the language per se that is threatening; it is the putative unassimilability, potential disloyalty, or extra-linguistic characteristics of its speakers. These are not properties of the language per se; they are properties of the sociolinguistic situation.

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32 The term indexicality has not been used to designate this sort of devaluation by association in the domain of religion. Indexicality – and Peiercean semiotics more broadly – have been adopted in the sociology of religion in other contexts, notably by Rappaport 1999.

33 It is important to recognize, to be sure, that religious traditions contain not only the cultural and symbolic resources for the authoritative stigmatization and devaluation of outsiders, but also the cultural and symbolic resources for the de-stigmatization and valorization of outsiders (Stamatov 2014). So while religion lends itself to deeper and more totalizing forms of othering than does language, it is also a potent source of criticism of and opposition to all forms of social exclusion.

34 Of course language too – in traditions of analysis that reject the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole* -- is shot through with power, authority, and inequality. But religion is or can be a structure of authority – of authoritative rules for the conduct of life, and authoritative judgments about doctrine and practice -- in a way that language is not.

35 The putative unassimilability, for example, may be understood to derive from the number of speakers, their concentration, their isolation in separate regions or institutions, their alleged cross-border nationalist sympathies or commitments, or the availability of a dense network of mother-tongue institutions sustaining the language. The only feature of the language itself that
The stigmatization and devaluation of religion – as well as the criticism of religion, which has after all been central to critical social theory since the Enlightenment -- can cut much more deeply. Languages have no intrinsic ideational content; they make no claims about the proper organization of social life. In Herderian or Humboldtian perspective, to be sure, languages may be seen as constitutive of culture and as carriers of distinctive world views (Spencer 2012; Vergés Gifra 2014:211-2). But even if one were to accept this view, with its problematic organicist and groupist ontology, the substantive ideational and normative content of language would be relatively thin. 37

Religions, on the other hand, have highly elaborated ideational and normative content; they are carriers of substantively different ways of life; and they may make claims to regulate public as well as private life. Discursive struggles to represent, characterize, and define religions are therefore intense and high-stakes affairs. 38 This can be seen by considering the ways in which Islam is represented in public discourse in North America and Europe. There is an

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36 One might make an analogous argument about religion. One could argue, for example – quite correctly, of course -- that violence is not intrinsic to Islam, any more than it is to Christianity, and that the putative dangers of Islam are not properties of the religion per se, but properties associated – correctly or incorrectly – with Islam in a particular social and political context. This is certainly true, as far as it goes; but it neglects the fact that wherever we draw the line between religion per se and all the things that are said or done in the name of a particular religion, or associated with a particular religion in a particular context, religion per se – at least in the case of scriptural religions or those with differentiated structures of religious authority -- has a rich ideational, normative, cultural, and political content that has no counterpart in the domain of language.

37 To underscore the relative normative and cultural “thinness” of language vis-à-vis religion is not to deny that language may carry “thicker” cultural meanings and commitments in some contexts than in others. See Carens (2000: 128-9) and Bauböck (2002:177-8) on “thin” and “thick” theories of language in relation to cultural commitments.

38 Of course, these often involve gross misrepresentations, highly selective and one-sided interpretations, or essentializing readings that neglect the chronic struggles within highly differentiated religious traditions.
(intensely contested) field of struggles – struggles in which both Muslims and non-Muslims participate – to define and represent Islam; there is no analogous field of struggles to define and represent Spanish, Arabic, or Turkish. And Islam is criticized, devalued, and stigmatized in these representational struggles in ways that have no counterpart in the domain of language.

**Informal social relations**

Unequal access to goods and opportunities between persons who speak different languages or practice different religions is mediated by informal social relations in two ways: through *differential treatment by others* (in the context of labor and housing markets, bureaucratic encounters, or private relationships); and through *self-organized processes of social separation*, which can lead to linguistically or religiously differentiated social networks, friendship circles, and marriage opportunities.

One form of differential treatment involves discrimination: differential treatment on the basis of a functionally irrelevant yet subjectively meaningful categorical attribute. Such informal discrimination may work in tandem with formal social closure, but it is analytically independent of such formal closure, and it may even be formally prohibited. In most contemporary liberal settings, for example, discrimination on religious grounds – though not, generally, on linguistic grounds – is illegal in a variety of contexts, including, crucially, employment.

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39 This shows clearly, *pace* Zolberg and Long (1999), how Islam is *not* like Spanish.
40 Members of stigmatized and subordinate categories, to be sure, need not simply internalize the stigma; they may instead challenge and contest dominant schemas of evaluation and appraisal through strategies of transvaluation (Wimmer 2013: 57-58) or de-stigmatization (Lamont and Mizrachi 2012).
41 In the US, language is not designated an impermissible grounds of employment discrimination, but national origin is. Since accent may indicate national origin, it can be illegal to discriminate on the basis of accent. However, employers may successfully defend themselves
discrimination is analytically independent of, even as it may be nourished by, the cultural and symbolic devaluation of forms of difference: discrimination is an individual-level process, linked to individual-level prejudices and associations. And informal discrimination is analytically independent of the economic processes that confer value on particular linguistic or religious repertoires and affiliations.\textsuperscript{42} The specificity and analytical independence of informal discrimination come into sharp focus precisely when such discrimination is legally prohibited, culturally de-legitimated, and economically irrational.\textsuperscript{43}

Discrimination on the basis of language is likely to reflect associations between speakers of a language in a particular context and extra-linguistic categories (class, gender, race, or ethnic, national, or regional origin), rather than prejudice or animus against the language per se. Discrimination on the basis of religion, too, may reflect associations between adherents of a religion in a particular context and other social categories.\textsuperscript{44} But it may also reflect beliefs about

\textsuperscript{42} This independence – the fact that discrimination is prima facie economically irrational – is what gave rise to the literature on the economics of discrimination (Becker 1971).\textsuperscript{43} Discrimination has been studied empirically mainly with respect to race (Pager and Shepherd 2008), and chiefly, in recent years, through field studies (reviewed in Riach and Rich 2002) that seek to identify discrimination in gatekeeping encounters by systematically varying race while holding constant candidates’ functionally relevant characteristics. Although field studies present methodological difficulties of their own, their quasi-experimental method seems clearly preferable to the statistical procedure of attributing residual differences in outcomes to discrimination, after controlling for other explanatory factors. A few field studies have addressed discrimination on the basis of religion, suggesting notably that Muslims face employment discrimination in France. One experiment (Adida et al 2010) found that among matched job candidates with obviously Senegalese surnames, those with an obviously Catholic first name were 2.5 times more likely to be called back than those with an obviously Muslim first name. The experiment is ingenious, but it is not necessarily generalizable, since religion and country of origin cannot be neatly distinguished for the vast majority of Muslim migrants and their children in Europe.\textsuperscript{44} The ways in which “indexical” associations between language and social categories are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality have been widely studied by
the religion itself, as distinguished from beliefs about the social attributes of its practitioners. Beliefs about and representations of Islam, for example, are analytically distinct from beliefs about and representations of Muslims in particular settings. Such beliefs about religions, nourished by the discursive construction of religions in the public sphere, are generally much more elaborate, and much more highly charged, then beliefs about particular languages.

Other forms of differential treatment, however, cannot be assimilated to the discrimination paradigm. This is true even in some relatively public contexts, notably for some forms of language-based differential treatment in employment, since language can obviously be functionally relevant in a way that race or religion is not. But the difficulty of assimilating differential treatment to discrimination is especially relevant in more private contexts, involving access to friendship circles or sexual or marriage opportunities, for example. This is partly because language and religion may be pervasively relevant to the meaning and content of relationships – and thus not “functionally irrelevant” -- in the private domain.

There is a further reason for distinguishing differential treatment or patterns of differential association from discrimination in the private domain. Differential treatment in such private contexts can of course arise through the exclusion of specific categories of others. This is particularly clear in the rejection of specific forms of religious exogamy. But patterns of sociolinguists, but the analogous phenomenon has received much less attention in the sociology of religion.

There is an interesting ambiguity here. The obligation to marry (or preference for marrying) a co-religionist is analytically distinct from the prohibition on marrying (or preference against marrying) a specific category of religious outsider. In the first case, outsiderhood is defined residually and as it were indiscriminately: all who are not co-religionists are outsiders. In the second case, outsiderhood is defined directly and in a discriminating fashion: it is specific categories of outsiders that are excluded. In both cases, discrimination is categorical: it works through categorically identified insiders in the first case, and through categorically identified outsiders in the second. But we would probably hesitate to speak of "discrimination" in the first case, especially where minorities are concerned, for example in the case of Jews (outside Israel).
differential association can also arise from the ubiquitous phenomenon of homophily. Discrimination presupposes an orientation, conscious or unconscious, to specific categories of insiders or outsiders; homophily does not. Homophily may become statistically visible as differential frequency of association with specific categories of others; but it may be generated in practice by a vague and tacit sense of comfort, style, pleasure, or compatibility, without any identification of or orientation to specific categories of self or other. Linguistic repertories and styles and modes of religiosity may be an important part of what generates this tacit sense of compatibility. When patterns of differential association arise in this way, rather than through an orientation to linguistic or religious categorical identities, they do not fit the discrimination or social closure paradigm. Discrimination and social closure are categorical social processes; they work through specific, subjectively meaningful, and practically operative categories of insiders and outsiders.

Inequality between persons with different language repertoires and religious affiliations can arise not only through differential treatment by others, but also through self-organized separation in social space. Some forms of linguistically mediated inequality, already discussed in this and the preceding sections, are externally driven, involving formal or informal differential treatment, exclusion, and stigmatization. Other forms, however, are self-enforcing; they do not require any active exclusion, discrimination, or stigmatization. Opportunities – not just for education and employment, but also for the formation of broad and strong social ties and for full participation in a broad spectrum of activities – are systematically limited for those who lack who feel obliged to marry other Jews, or Muslims in Muslim-minority settings who feel obliged to marry other Muslims. This brings into focus the tension between the implicit moral universalism that gives “discrimination” a strongly pejorative meaning and the culturalist particularism that legitimizes and valorizes the projects of cultural reproduction that may depend on certain forms of “discrimination.”

46 The remainder of this section draws on Brubaker (2015), Chapter 1.
proficiency in the locally or sectorally prevailing language. Different language repertoires are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality not only (as discussed above) by virtue of their differential value as languages of economic opportunity and mobility, but also by virtue of their differential value as languages of participation and social connectedness. This systematic constriction of opportunities – which works largely through self-exclusion from the pursuit of opportunities that require forms and degrees of linguistic competence beyond those possessed – holds even for those who experience no discrimination, stigmatization, or active exclusion. It is a kind of agentless exclusion, an exclusion without excluders, but it is no less efficacious for that.47

Religiously mediated inequality, like linguistically mediated inequality, is often externally driven through the systematic privileging or disprivileging – both formal and informal – of certain religious categories. As noted above, formal discrimination on religious grounds has been drastically curtailed if not entirely eliminated in liberal polities. Yet substantive inequalities remain. These are driven in part by informal discrimination and discursive stigmatization, most conspicuously vis-à-vis Muslims throughout northern and western Europe and in other countries of immigration. But religious beliefs and practices can also generate inequality from within. The traditional gender norms promoted by various forms of conservative religion, for example, may generate massive gender inequalities in educational attainment, labor force participation, and earnings, while also disadvantaging the larger ethnoreligious categories in which such traditional gender norms are prevalent. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish families may be

47 The distinction between externally driven and self-enforcing modes of linguistically mediated inequality, to be sure, applies only to inequality-generating processes within particular socio-linguistic environments, not to the larger-scale processes that have shaped those environments. The large-scale transformations involved in colonialism, nation-state building, and the spread of global capitalism, for example, have created vast inequalities among languages, raising the economic, political, and social value of some, and devaluing others (Gal 1989: 356-7).
similarly disadvantaged by the religious premium placed on full-time Torah study by ultra-Orthodox men, as well as the premium placed on large families. On the other hand, distinctive forms of religious belief and practice may confer advantages rather than disadvantages. These may be mediated by the social form of participation in religious institutions, or by the cultural content of religious beliefs and practices. Participation in religious institutions can generate social capital and network-linked benefits, as well as a wide range of physical and mental health benefits. Distinctive religious beliefs and practices may confer economic advantages indirectly (for example by curbing drinking, drug abuse, and other risky behavior, and by channeling informal social relations in particular directions) or more directly (for example by sanctioning the pursuit of worldly success, as in "prosperity theology").

Inequality along (ethno-)religious or (ethno-)linguistic lines can be generated by social separation as well as cultural difference. By social separation I mean concentration in residential, occupational, institutional, social-relational, marital, consumption, media, and recreational space. Social separation regularly arises in post-migration contexts as an incidental byproduct of scarce resources, limited information, language constraints, religious affiliations, and, above all, the network-mediated dynamics of migration and settlement, which can lead to the formation of ethnolinguistically and ethnoreligiously organized business niches, churches, and other institutions. But social separation can also be pursued as a deliberate strategy of insulation from surroundings that are perceived as physically dangerous, economically disadvantaging, morally compromising, or culturally threatening. Whether arising as an incidental byproduct or pursued

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48 The inequalities arising from network-mediated goods and opportunities are always double-sided: they not only advantage those included in the networks, but disadvantage those excluded from them. Recent work in the sociology of religion has become more attentive to the ambivalent workings of religious social capital and strong religious boundaries (Edgell 2012). On the ways in which network effects can amplify inequality, see DiMaggio and Garip 2012.
as a deliberate strategy, such self-organized (though resource-constrained) separation differs sharply from externally imposed segregation. While imposed ethnoracial or ethnoreligious segregation is massively and cumulatively, albeit unevenly, disadvantaging, uniting cultural stigmatization and material deprivation, self-organized social separation is ambivalent in its implications for inequality.

The flip side of the incidental social separation characteristic of almost all immigrant communities is the social-relational and institutional density of the ethnolinguistic or ethnoreligious enclave, and this can provide resources and opportunities for those without the contacts, resources, or language skills to flourish in the wider society. Yet many second generation immigrants experience enclosure within ethnically organized institutions as constraining rather than enabling, and as limiting the range of opportunities and the reach of networks.

A similar ambivalence characterizes strategies of deliberate insulation. Some ethnoreligious communities – or more specifically, some husbands and fathers in such communities – may seek to isolate and thereby insulate their wives and daughters from what they regard as an (ethno-)religiously unsuitable, morally dangerous, and potentially dishonoring public realm. Such enclosure can generate and reproduce not only gender inequality but broader forms of ethnoreligious inequality.\(^{49}\) On the other hand, poor immigrants, constrained to live in

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\(^{49}\) Some ostensibly religious norms with powerful implications for informal social relations – notably norms about appropriate behavior for women -- may alternatively be understood as ethnocultural norms that are only contingently associated with religion in particular contexts. The distinction between cultural and religious norms is not an academic nicety; it is the stake of practical struggles. Distinguishing between the universality of religion and the particularity of ethnic culture, tradition, and custom, for example, can give second generation immigrants leverage and legitimacy in criticizing – from the standpoint of a religion “purified” of merely “cultural” and “ethnic” encrustations and deformations -- the practices and customs favored by their parents. We think of fundamentalism as inherently conservative, but as Jacobson (1997)
neighborhoods they see as undesirable, often enlist a strategy of insulation in the service of social mobility (as well as cultural reproduction). As the literature on segmented assimilation has shown, such strategies of insulation can be employed in an attempt to prevent the behavioral or attitudinal assimilation of their children to peers in the immediate environment, and thereby to enhance their longer-term educational and occupational chances. Dissimilation and social encapsulation in the short term (and in relation to a disfavored immediate urban milieu) may facilitate long-term assimilation and integration (in relation to a wider middle class national environment).

Conclusion

The literatures on politicized ethnicity, ethnic boundary making, and multiculturalism have paid relatively little attention to the distinctive dynamics of linguistic and religious pluralism, preferring to subsume both under the broader conceptual rubrics of ethnic or cultural difference or diversity. While this strategy of subsumption is undeniably fruitful, it is also

has argued with respect to second generation British immigrants of Pakistani background, the idea of a pure, de-ethnicized Islam can be used in family contexts in a liberalizing direction, for example to criticize arranged marriages and restrictions on women’s activities. Once again, we are confronted with the deep ambiguity of “religion,” a problematic category of analysis precisely because it is a deeply contested category of practice.

50 See for example Portes and Zhou (1993: 86, 90). Such strategies of insulation seek to keep children out of certain undesired networks and to embed them in alternative, preferred, and more surveyable networks formed by ethnic churches, language schools, camps, and so on. The promotion of more or less arranged marriages with home-country spouses also belongs to such strategies of insulation.

51 For the strategy of subsumption in the study of politicized ethnicity, see Rothschild 1981:9; Horowitz 1985:41; Posner 2005; Chandra 2012; and Wimmer 2013. Important theoretical antecedents for this strategy include Weber’s (1978: 43ff., 341ff.) discussion of social closure and Barth’s (1969: 15) injunction to focus on the nature and dynamics of ethnic boundaries rather than on what he somewhat dismissively – and to his later regret (1994:17) – referred to as the “cultural stuff” enclosed by those boundaries. Thoughtful correctives to the one-sided focus
flattening: it neglects the sharply differing ways in which linguistic and religious pluralism are phenomenologically experienced, interactionally negotiated, culturally elaborated, socially organized, legally regulated, and politically contested. I have argued that these differences are consequential for the production and reproduction of inequality.

Religious pluralism enjoys much stronger legal and institutional support than linguistic pluralism in liberal polities. Minority religious beliefs and practices – including practices designed to assure the intergenerational reproduction of religious communities – enjoy legal protections and guarantees of equal treatment that are not generally available to minority languages, and certainly not to the languages of immigrant minorities. Religious tests for access to goods and opportunities are nearly unthinkable in liberal states, while linguistic tests and qualifications are seen as routine and legitimate. Public life is massively and inescapably “languaged,” operating not just in and through “language” in general, but in and through a particular language or small set of languages. As a result, any kind of general impartiality or neutrality towards language would be impossible (notwithstanding some regimes of equal treatment of a small number of long-established languages). States must massively privilege a particular language or small set of languages; they need not massively privilege any particular religion, even if complete religious neutrality is impossible. I did, however, note three limits to this generally more egalitarian stance toward religious than towards linguistic pluralism: complete neutrality towards religion is impossible; states define the scope of equal treatment by deciding what counts as “religious”; and states’ support of religious pluralism is limited to attenuated forms of pluralism that do not challenge the state’s monopoly of legal order.

on boundaries at the expense of “cultural stuff” include Cornell 1996 and Jenkins 1997: chapter 8. Zolberg and Long 1999 is one of the few works to give sustained attention to the distinctive dynamics of linguistic and religious pluralism.
Economic structures and processes, too, generate much greater inequalities between languages in modern settings than between religions. As work becomes more semantic and less physical in a mobile and fluid division of labor (Gellner 1997:85), it becomes increasingly embedded not just in “language” per se, but (especially for more desirable positions) in particular standardized, literate languages of relatively wide circulation. These languages are valorized, while others are devalorized. At the same time, the long-term differentiation of spheres makes work less embedded in religion. There are no analogous forces arising from the nature of work that massively valorize some religions while devalorizing others.

By favoring intergenerational linguistic assimilation in post-immigration contexts, economic incentives also generate massively unequal opportunities for the durable intergenerational transmission of linguistic repertoires. The economic incentives for learning the prevailing language are overwhelming; and the opportunity costs of maintaining, in addition, full fluency and literacy in the ancestral language(s) increase with each generation. By contrast, the economic incentives favoring intergenerational religious shift are much weaker in contemporary liberal settings. Contemporary liberal nation-states are much more hospitable to the intergenerational transmission of immigration-generated religious than immigration-generated linguistic difference, not just at the level of law and policy, but also at the level of economic incentives and social processes.

On a global scale, the economic inequalities between languages are even more stark. Language is a hyper-collective good. Its communication value – and its economic value as well – increases with each additional user. This helps explain the inexorable spread of English as a global lingua franca, as well as the inroads English has made at the expense even of state-protected languages on their home turf, notably in higher education and certain forms of
business. At the other end of the spectrum, the communication value and economic value of small languages decrease as the number of speakers decreases. This feeds a spiral of decline that dooms most small languages – at least those unprotected by a state apparatus -- to extinction. Religion is not a hyper-collective good, and religious communities are therefore much less sensitive to such dynamics of economic demography.

Both political-legal and economic forces, then, are deeply inegalitarian when it comes to language. They massively favor state-identified, economically powerful, and demographically robust languages. But in liberal settings, they don’t massively favor state-identified, economically powerful, and demographically robust religions in the same way. And if one looks beyond liberal polities, the fastest-growing forms of religious engagement worldwide – Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity – are not identified with powerful states, or with a powerful position in the global economy, though they are in many instances linked to hopes for economic betterment among poor and marginalized populations.

If political-legal and economic forces generate deeper and more consequential forms of inequality between languages than between religions in contemporary liberal polities, discursive and symbolic processes generate more profound forms of inequality between religions. This is because religious difference is vulnerable to deeper and more totalizing forms of devaluation and stigmatization than is linguistic difference. Both languages and religions may be devalued and stigmatized because of their association with devalued or stigmatized social categories. But beyond such devaluation-by-association, religions can be much more deeply problematized, devalued, or stigmatized on their own terms, by virtue of their intrinsic ideational, normative, political, and cultural content, in a way that has no counterpart in the domain of language. And religions are not only stigmatized; they are also stigmatizing. As a structure of authority,
religion contains within itself the resources for authoritatively devaluing or stigmatizing other forms of religious practice.

While political-legal and economic structures and processes generate deeper and more consequential forms of inequality between languages, and discursive and symbolic processes generate deeper and more consequential forms of inequality between religions, the differential contributions of informal social relations to linguistic and religious inequality are more complex and resist easy summary.

Differential informal treatment of persons with different language repertoires often reflects the "functional" significance of language to social relationships in public and private contexts. Differential treatment of persons with different religious affiliations is more likely to reflect discrimination, except in contexts in which religious affiliation or religiosity is central to the meaning of social relationships, as it may be, for example, in intimate relationships.

Language differences generate self-organized separation in social space in a quasi-automatic manner, as persons without adequate command of the locally or sectorally prevailing language exclude themselves from the pursuit of economic, political, and social opportunities that require competence in that language and develop linguistically differentiated networks, institutions, and economic niches. Religious differences generate self-organized social separation in a somewhat different way. Separation can be pursued as a self-conscious, religiously prescribed project, rather than emerging (as in the case of language) as a self-enforcing process. The norms that can generate patterns of differential association are internal to religion; they are external to language (though they may be internal to the ethnic milieux locally associated with particular languages, in which shared norms are supported by similar migration trajectories and country-of-origin, regional, and class background as well as by linguistic and religious
commonalities). Even where religious norms do not directly prescribe who can associate with whom, they may indirectly yet powerfully shape patterns of association by prescribing or proscribing particular forms of behavior, as in the case of rules about diet, alcohol, prayer, and fasting. The resulting patterns of social separation can confer either advantages or disadvantages, depending on the resources that flow through these linguistically and religiously differentiated networks.

Religion, in sum, is culturally and politically thicker and more authoritative but (generally) more compartmentalized or sectoral in the modern world; language is thinner, but much more pervasive. To conclude in a single (though of course massively oversimplified) sentence: the major sources of religious inequality derive from religion’s thicker cultural, normative, and political content, while the major sources of linguistic inequality come from the pervasiveness of language, and from the increasingly and inescapably "languaged” nature of political, economic, and cultural life in the modern world.

Works Cited


