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Shades of Cultural Marginalization: Cultural Survival and Autonomy Processes

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Abstract:	The recent rise in extremism, authoritarianism, displacement, and isolationism signals troubled times for the most marginalized groups in societies. In this article, our primary emphasis is on a specific aspect of marginalization within organizational theory—referred to as cultural marginalization. We argue that the existing literature lacks an adequate theoretical understanding to address this phenomenon. To theorize cultural marginalization and uncover how marginalized groups may cope with such circumstances, we build on and problematize the culture as a toolkit (CaT) perspective. We integrate this perspective with other cultural theories that consider power structures more prominently. Drawing on this theoretical base, we develop a typology of four dynamics of cultural marginalization and conceptualize the specific cultural survival and cultural autonomy processes marginalized groups may undertake to safeguard their culture. In doing so, we contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding the toolkit perspective by providing novel insights into how marginalized groups utilize their socio-culturally constrained cultural resources in distinct ways, compared with more resourceful actors and groups. Our theoretical contributions pave the way for new avenues of research to deepen our understanding of the general process of cultural marginalization and to direct further inquiry into the survival strategies of marginalized groups and how they might (re)gain autonomy.	

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have been marked by a noticeable rise in extremism (Lösel, King, Bender, & Jugl, 2018), authoritarianism (Moghaddam, 2019), displacement (O'Neill & Spybey, 2003), and isolationism (Stephens, 2014), which materialize in a context of high global uncertainty. These times are typically most troubling for the most fragile actors in society, be they individuals, organizations, or communities, i.e., those who might be termed as marginalized because they do not have the power, status, or resources to defend their interests against more powerful actors in society (Baba, Sasaki, & Vaara, 2021). Throughout modern history, marginalized actors and groups¹ have endured oppression and cultural genocide from a more dominant force through colonization, wars, forced emigration, or social identity-based oppression.

As a result, marginalized groups have historically lost material and symbolic cultural resources due to various forms of domination, be they physical or symbolic (Miller, Rowlands, & Tilley, 1995). Such loss is usually followed by coping mechanisms such as mourning, resistance, escaping, or accepting and adapting to survive (e.g., Alkhaled & Sasaki, 2022; Martí & Fernández, 2013). Examples of cultural marginalization include the language and cultural maintenance of the French Canadians in Quebec (Létourneau, 2002), the historic ethnic identity cleansing of the First Nations in Canada (Baba et al., 2021), and the symbolic cultural survival of Syrian women refugees (Alkhaled & Sasaki, 2022). Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge that cultural marginalization extends beyond individuals and communities. Entities such as firms can also experience marginalization and oppression linked to their values. For instance, in former socialist countries,

¹ In our paper, we choose to mostly employ the term "groups" rather than "actors" to address the cultural and structured aspects of cultural autonomy and survival. However, this does not negate the reality that individuals, as separate actors, are equally influenced by the issues related to cultural marginalization. In such cases, the concept of marginalized actors encompasses a more comprehensive understanding of actorhood and individual agency.

where private enterprise is often relegated to a secondary role, firms face unique challenges (Hafsi, 2012).

Motivated by an increasing concern about societal issues and phenomena, organizational theorists have dedicated much attention to marginalization and marginalized groups over the past two decades or so. This body of research has investigated marginalization from the standpoint of different actors (individuals, organizations, and communities) and delved into various forms of marginalization, spanning economic (Mair, Martí, & Ventresca, 2012), political (Papillon, 2011), and institutional dimensions (Martí & Fernández, 2013). Interestingly, marginalization based on values, beliefs and norms is frequently observed in this literature, although this form is seldom explicitly acknowledged or theorized as such (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010; Hein & Ansari, 2022; Leung, Zietsma, & Peredo, 2014). We depict this kind of marginalization as cultural marginalization, which we define as the exclusion of individuals, organizations, or communities based on their unique shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices, which diverge from the prevailing norms of the dominant culture in a society. This exclusion is grounded in the contrast between what the marginalized represent and stand for, and the societal expectations and norms established by the dominant cultural framework.

Despite the significance of this form of marginalization, the current literature in organization and management theory (OMT) lacks substantial theoretical development, particularly in understanding the diverse forms of cultural marginalization and the array of strategies that actors might employ to cope with and navigate through their circumstances. Addressing such questions has significant currency for at least three reasons. First, cultural marginalization is not only prevalent but also extends across the globe, affecting both the so-called developed and developing nations (Chowdhury, 2023; Grabska, 2006). Second, cultural

marginalization has long-lasting effects on individuals, organizations, and communities, which are still being uncovered (Djilali, 2017; Soman & Koci, 2023; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Yet a common objective in these settings is the (often overlooked) struggle of marginalized groups to culturally survive and uphold their unique values, beliefs, norms, and way of life, while being influenced by more dominant cultural frameworks (Fortin-Lefebvre & Baba, 2021). Third, cultural marginalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that occurs within and around organizations, which often contribute to its occurrence and make it subject to further institutional forces, be they formal structures such as governments or broader tacit social structures encompassing norms, values and rules. In this conceptual paper, we show how cultural marginalization is essentially an organizational phenomenon. In fact, throughout history, organizations have played a substantial role in fostering cultural marginalization, impacting both individuals and entire communities (Abdelnour, 2023; Monchalin, 2016; Pauly, 2004). In particular, various societal domains such as law enforcement (police), news dissemination (media), legal systems (justice), education systems, and economic entities (firms) have been pivotal in shaping and sustaining this form of marginalization.

In this article, we theoretically synthesize the literature on cultural marginalization in order to construct a formative categorization of prior work in order to theoretically deepen our understanding (see Cornelissen, Höllerer, & Seidl, 2021). In our approach, we are guided by the culture-as-toolkit (CaT) perspective (Swidler, 1986) to theorize cultural marginalization and uncover how marginalized groups may cope with it. The CaT perspective considers culture as consisting of "stories, frames, categories, rituals, and practices" (Giorgi, Christi, & Glynn, 2015, p. 13) that actors and groups can use in combination to advance the goals of their cultural group. While the CaT perspective has informed sociology and organization studies by providing novel

explanations for how culture impacts organizational and field behavior and change (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019), the current application of the CaT perspective in organizational theory does not sufficiently account for the different social positions of marginalized groups who, as we will argue, face considerably more structural constraints than do dominant groups in a given society. Therefore, to conceptualize the distinct social positions that marginalized groups hold, we blend the CaT perspective with other cultural theories that consider power aspects more prominently (Bourdieu, 1977; Ortner, 2006; Swartz, 1997).

In terms of theory, we aim to offer two main contributions to the literature. First, we conceptually develop and reimagine the concept of cultural marginalization, which, until now, has not been explained in a systematic or integrative way. Further, we conceptualize the phenomenon as a process rather than a fixed state. Within the framework we propose, we present four distinct dynamics of marginalization with various implications for the marginalized groups, which are largely dependent on the extent to which the marginalized groups can exercise agency in relation to the structural imposition they inevitably encounter (Emirbayer, 1997). These four dynamics are contingent upon the level of structural constraints and the agency exhibited by marginalized groups as they navigate the constraints imposed upon them by the social structures in which they are embedded. The overall framework which is built around these four patterned trajectories of marginalization facilitates a more nuanced understanding of marginalization and, as a result, provides deeper insight into the overall phenomenon compared with what is currently depicted in the literature.

Second, by relying on a more structurally qualified version of the cultural toolkit argument to theorize the possible alternative ways in which marginalized groups may protect their own culture, we conceptualize two main alternative processes: cultural survival processes and

cultural autonomy processes. Our theorization puts forward the types of cultural registers—conceptualized as a set of cultural elements at the collective level of the field or society (Weber, 2005)—to which the marginalized groups are exposed, and explains how such groups might use cultural resources in different ways to (re)gain autonomy and survive, even in the most oppressive circumstances. We theorize that such cultural survival and autonomy processes represent a *developmental process* insofar as the marginalized groups might change while maintaining their core communal self and identity. We thus provide a vital addition to the conventional CaT perspective (Swidler, 1986) by offering novel insight into how marginalized groups use the cultural resources at hand, but how they do so differently from more culturally resourceful actors and groups.

CULTURAL MARGINALIZATION

Organizational research has demonstrated a growing interest in understanding the realities and experiences of marginalized groups in society (e.g., Creed et al., 2010; Hein & Ansari, 2022; Mair et al., 2012; Martí & Fernández, 2013). The term "marginalized groups" has been defined in various ways but generally lacks a coherent conceptualization. Nevertheless, four important characteristics have emerged from this literature. First, concerning its scope, the literature on marginalization includes investigations of individuals (Creed et al., 2010), organizations (Baba, Hafsi, & Hemissi, 2022), and communities (Bruijn & Whiteman, 2010) that all involve marginalized groups.

Second, while scholars have sometimes regarded marginality as a static social condition, they have also recognized marginalization as a historical process involving the relegation of actors to secondary positions in society (Morrar & Baba, 2022). For instance, Fortin-Lefebvre and Baba (2021) studied how indigenous entrepreneurs from Wendake, Quebec, navigate the entrepreneurial

process despite feeling marginalized by the dominant society at the economic, legal, and institutional levels. Their research showed how these entrepreneurs struggle to find a balance between fitting into the dominant culture to gain credibility and being shunned by their own community for compromising and potentially endangering their culture. Strategizing, in turn, has become crucial for these entrepreneurs. In terms of the historical dimension, numerous studies have delved into the processes through which groups experience marginalization over time. An exemplary demonstration of this can be observed in the historical dynamics of marginalization endured by indigenous populations in Canada and Australia (Feit, 1995; Niezen, 2009).

Third, many studies have explored how actors and groups gradually transcend their marginalized status, centering on the strategies through which marginalized groups reclaim their rights, dignity, and position in the society from which they have been excluded (Baba et al., 2021; Olabisi, Kwesiga, Juma, & Tang, 2017). In general, these studies underscored the significance of legitimizing the rights of marginalized groups through gradual successes, utilizing media and legal achievements to build momentum, and creating discursive resonance with broader societal concerns (Diamond, 1985; Niezen, 2009). In an exemplary study, Olabisi et al. (2017) looked at how an indigenous community from East Africa successfully transformed from a non-stakeholder position to a critical stakeholder group for a multinational company operating locally. This transformation was achieved by strengthening their entrepreneurial capabilities and strategically integrating their communal economic activities into the multinational's value chain.

Lastly, it is important to note that marginalization is not a monolithic concept but rather a multi-dimensional phenomenon encompassing varying degrees of marginalization, ranging from groups occupying a peripheral field position (Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004) to being

completely shunned and dehumanized (Martí & Fernández, 2013). Table 1 below highlights several of the definitions used to describe marginalized groups.

Authors	Definition		
Maguire et al. (2004, p. 657)	"Poorly resourced communities"		
Maguire et al. (2004, p. 658)	"Actors not occupying dominant positions in a field"		
Hart and Sharma (2004, p. 10)	Those "typically disconnected from or invisible to the firm because they are remote, weak, poor, disinterested, isolated, non-legitimate, or non-human"		
Mair and Marti (2009, p. 420)	The ultra-poor who are "excluded from participation in markets and social life"		
Creed et al. (2010, p. 1340)	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender "marginalized by the common assertion that homosexuality and ordained ministry are morally incompatible"		
Martí and Fernández (2013, p. 1206)	"Those who are broken psychically and physically"		
Leung et al. (2014, p. 423)	"Low-power, role-constrained actors"		
Alkhaled and Sasaki (2022, p. 1584)	"Actors in perpetual liminality [who] tend to have less control over the ambiguous social structure, leaving them to engage in identity work that remains unresolved."		
Chowdhury (2023, p. 553)	"Powerless communities, stigmatized population and labor forces with low income are defined as marginalized because they are dominated by powerful actors."		
Muzanenhamo and Chowdhury (2023, p. 16)	"Marginalized stakeholders are individuals who lack self- representation, and they are ignored, neglected, mistreated, misrepresented through bias, and discriminated against."		
Chowdhury, Sarasvathy, and Freeman (2023, p. 1)	"Those who predominantly come from vulnerable social identities or belong to lower social classes"		

Upon closer examination of these definitions, three perspectives on marginalization in the literature become apparent. First, the field-level perspective perceives marginalization as predominantly determined by actors' peripheral positions in a particular field (Creed et al., 2010; Maguire et al., 2004). Second, the resource-based perspective sees marginalization as arising from insufficient access to resources, low social standing, and/or a general exclusion from markets, with extreme poverty serving as an illustrative example (Leana, Mittal, & Stiehl, 2012; Leung et al., 2014; Mair, Marti Lanuza, & Ventresca, 2011; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The third, predominantly

institutional, perspective suggests that marginalization is closely linked to oppression and dehumanization resulting from institutionalized systems of oppression at the societal level (Martí & Fernández, 2013; Morrar & Baba, 2022).

Thus, it is apparent that social, political, and economic exclusion commonly underlies the marginalization of groups. However, marginalization based on culture and values has also been described in many articles (Banerjee, 2003; Toubiana & Ruebottom, 2022). Moreover, despite the lack of integration of this notion of cultural marginalization in organizational studies, there is a degree of familiarity with it. The analysis of the Holocaust by Martí and Fernández (2013) offers one possible lead. The authors explored how the oppressive Nazi regime strategically employed institutional mechanisms to dehumanize and exterminate individuals based on their faith. In this case, marginalization was undeniably rooted in religious faith and thus inherently linked to values and cultural practices. The study shows how actors were "robbed of their capacity to act, of their humanity" (Martí & Fernández, 2013, p. 12), which appears to be the most extreme case of marginalization. Another noteworthy case can be observed in the historical research conducted by Baba et al. (2021), which examined the government's historical marginalization of the Cree First Nation in Canada. Their research shed light on the divisive practices employed by the government, which bear a stark resemblance to tactics of cultural genocide. Similarly, the study by Creed et al. (2010) on LGBT ministers in two mainline Protestant denominations in the United States demonstrated how actors, despised but included nonetheless, engaged in processes of changing the institution from within. In this case, the ministers experienced marginalization due to their cultural identity and sexual orientation.

THE CONTINUUM OF CULTURAL MARGINALIZATION

We argue that a nuanced understanding of such processes of cultural marginalization requires conceptual differentiation, with a specific focus on examining the level of structural constraints and the agency exhibited by marginalized groups as they navigate the constraints imposed upon them by the social structures in which they are embedded (Emirbayer, 1997). The crux of this endeavor lies in defining two classic fundamental concepts: structure and agency. However, this undertaking is fraught with challenges given the multitude of definitions, diverse perspectives, enduring debates, and epistemic divergences regarding both concepts at an epistemological level.

As mentioned, we base our theorizing on a (re)qualified version of the culture-as-toolkit (CaT) perspective, and blend structural and power dynamics into its basic formulation. To develop a more structurally qualified version of the CaT perspective (Swidler, 1986) and consequently theorize cultural marginalization, we first cite Sewell's influential work to articulate structures as "mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action" (Sewell, 1992, p. 19). This perspective regards structures as persistent but dynamic entities, constantly (re)negotiated in everyday life. Further, we define agency as "engagement by actors of different structural environments [which] both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 294).

Both definitions align coherently with the classic theoretical frameworks proposed by Bourdieu and Giddens (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984). For example, Bourdieu suggests that the structure/society and agency/individual problem be viewed as "dialectical"; conceptually, he does not regard society and individuals as separate or oppositional, but rather sees them as two sides of the same social reality. In this regard, habitus—a deeply buried cultural schema that shapes people's behaviors in such a way that they unconsciously accept the dominant social system (adapted from

Bourdieu, 1977 and Ortner, 2006)-becomes an automatic, self-fulfilling prophesy where individuals unconsciously comply with the dominant cultural schema(s). In addition, Sewell's perspective on structures is coherent with Giddens' conceptualization of structures as dual, effectively acting as "both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems" (Giddens, 1981, p. 27). In this view, human agency and structures are not inherently antagonistic; instead, they coexist and co-evolve, much like the left and right foot work in tandem. In addition, Gidden's theory of structuration and (Sewell, 1992, p. 2) helpfully suggest that humans are "capable of putting their structurally formed capacities to work in creative or innovative ways [which] may have the consequence of transforming the very structures that gave them the capacity to act."

Returning to our focal phenomenon, that of cultural marginalization, it is analytically helpful to discern at least two distinct scenarios. For example, within certain contexts, marginalized groups may experience extreme hostility, resulting in significant constraints on their capacity to act and exercise autonomy. Such environments are often characterized by coercive force, thereby imposing severe structural constraints that curtail individual agency and limit the marginalized groups' capacity to practice and promote their own culture. Conversely, other groups may possess the ability to exercise agency and intentionally distance themselves from dominant cultures for various reasons. Consequently, cultural marginalization in such cases does not result from imposition alone but rather emerges from the deliberate actions of the groups involved and their efforts to assert their own cultural identity. Their agency, resulting in their own cultural expressions, may be more pronounced in institutional contexts that are not oriented toward violence and coercion, allowing for greater autonomy in shaping their own cultural future.

These general considerations provide the basis for a theoretical framework that enables us to conceptualize four distinguishable dynamics of cultural marginalization: (1) *cultural extermination*, (2) *cultural isolation*, (3) *cultural exiting*, and (4) *cultural distancing*. We argue that the dynamics of cultural marginalization mentioned earlier are not fixed or monolithic but instead take shape depending on the context examined and the conditions and groups involved. Accordingly, we present these dynamics as a continuum that illustrates the multifaceted nature of cultural marginalization and encompasses varying degrees and manifestations of marginalization. Table 1 below describes these four patterns, which are to be regarded as ideal-type representations to which actual instances of cultural marginalization can be compared.

--- Insert Figure 1 and Table 1 here ---

	Cultural extermination	Cultural isolation	Cultural exiting	Cultural distancing
The interplay of structural constraints and agency	High structural imposition and low agency	High- moderate structural imposition and moderate agency	High-moderate level of agency and moderate structural constraints	High-moderate level of agency and moderate-low structural constraints
Structural constraint modus operandi	Regulatory, symbolic, physical, and territorial	Symbolic, regulatory, economic	Mostly symbolic, partly regulatory	Mostly symbolic, partly regulatory
Dominant group's intent	Asserting one's cultural superiority	Maintaining the social order (power hierarchy)	Maintaining the cultural order	Unconsciously reproducing the cultural norms
Possible reactions by the marginalized	Extremism	Hostility	Stigmatization	Value misalignment
Potential level of cultural loss	Radical (Marginalized groups may completely lose their culture due to cultural genocide)	Partial (Marginalized groups may partially lose their culture in the social sphere)	Radical (Marginalized groups may completely lose their culture due to a radical shift	Partial (Marginalized groups may partially lose their culture as they gradually reassess their

	in their own	cultural
	cultural identity)	framework)

Cultural Extermination. Cultural extermination occurs when marginalized groups are subjected to aggressive assimilation, cultural genocide, and segregation. This form of marginalization takes shape in situations where "the use of force" (Martí & Fernández, 2013) is relied upon and when the dehumanization of groups is done routinely and even normalized. This dynamic of cultural loss is radical in that the culture of marginalized groups is perceived as insignificant and illegitimate by the more powerful actors. In this scenario, communities and ethnic groups often confront governmental entities directly. Cultural extermination leaves little room for the agency of marginalized groups because of the severity of the repression and the material, human, and institutional means deployed by the more powerful groups to silence the groups' voices and inhibit the expression of their culture. In this sense, cultural extermination is akin to the idea of cultural genocide, understood as the "destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves" (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79), or "the attempt to systemically and wilfully destroy a group – alongside physical genocide and biological genocide... [and] the destruction of both tangible (such as places of worship) as well as intangible (such as language) cultural structures" (Bilsky & Klagsbrun, 2018, p. 374).

Cultural extermination is more likely to take place in repressive and autocratic regimes. It involves a widespread form of domination that permeates various societal domains, including education, culture, politics, and the economy. It is often characterized by institutionalized and conspicuous forms of violence. The dominance exerted in cultural extermination is rooted in the exclusion of marginalized groups from all spheres of society, resulting in a significant reduction of their economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977). The targeted nature of cultural

extermination means that it effectively aims to annihilate any embodied cultural capital of marginalized groups, which encompasses their habits, knowledge, and languages. This deliberate act of repression and extinction may be particularly impactful, given that the perpetuation of a culture from one generation to the next relies on transmitting and sharing such cultural capital.

Canada's approach to indigenous peoples for most of the 20th century is a revelatory example. The Canadian government had established the Indian residential school, a network of boarding schools for indigenous peoples.² The mission of these schools was "killing the Indian in the child" (Fournier & Crey, 2006; Young, 2015). Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities and sent to schools far removed from their communities. They were then forced to abandon their language, cultural practices, and traditions. A former Canadian politician argued in 1879: "...[I]f anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions." Other examples include the Holocaust (Martí & Fernández, 2013), the forcible displacement of Syrian refugees around the world (Alkhaled & Sasaki, 2022), and the French colonization of Algeria between 1830 and 1962 (Harbi & Stora, 2004).

Considering a potential cultural loss, marginalized groups face extreme challenges in these circumstances as they strive to preserve their culture and ensure survival. They might employ various forms of resistance to do so, including symbolic and armed opposition, as well as engaging in political processes and utilizing diplomacy at national and international levels. Their determination, driven by the perception of losing almost everything, showcases remarkable courage in many recorded cases (Harbi & Stora, 2004). However, resignation may also arise when

² Approximately 150,000 indigenous children attended residential schools and about 6,000 died because of forced cultural assimilation, which sometimes took the form of physical and psychological abuse. The residential school system operated for more than 160 years, and the last one closed in 1996.

³ Nicholas Flood Davin, Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds, 1879.

the prospects of successfully protecting their culture seem minimal due to the structural constraints and the repression imposed by more dominant forces. Consequently, groups within these communities often experience and internalize fear and anxiety as part of their daily lives.

Cultural Isolation. Cultural isolation refers to situations where specific groups are rejected from mainstream society and culture (Amin, 1990, 1996). They thus become less visible, or even invisible, in public life. As Kondo (2018) asserted, individuals, organizations, and communities must be reflected in the public sphere, i.e. media, television, education, and political discourse, to exist in their own right. This is particularly the case because cultural identities are formed through these social representations, which exhibit "visions of possibility." Cultural isolation, or the lack of visible representation in society, may therefore have profound effects on the well-being of a marginalized group, such as experiencing "depressive symptoms" (Kim, Gonzales, Stroh, & Wang, 2006, p. 167), drug use problems (Muñoz-Laboy, Martínez, Guilamo-Ramos, Draine, Garg, Levine, & Ripkin, 2017), and a general loss of dignity (Lazali, 2018).

This second dynamic of cultural marginalization and loss, along with the previous one, exhibits significant structural imposition. However, rather than seeking to eradicate the culture of marginalized groups, here dominant groups appear to predominantly aim to relegate the culture to a marginalized position within the social sphere. Consequently, specific individuals, ideas, and values are favored while others are intentionally backgrounded and marginalized (Tucker, 1990, p. 7). Hence, the level of cultural marginalization and loss may be partial rather than radical.

Strictly speaking, cultural isolation refers to a marginal position in a social field, where agency is often exercised from a hidden place (Ferguson, 1990). The cultural capital of marginalized groups is rendered invisible, intentionally disregarded or concealed within society. The relationship between the dominant and the marginalized culture is in turn a permanent struggle

to define the characteristics of the legitimate culture, a struggle that might lead to "two antagonistic world views, two worlds, two representations of human excellence" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199). Contrary to the previous dynamic, cultural isolation may occur in more democratic, free and supposedly inclusive contexts through common and normalized forms of everyday symbolic violence (Fox & Sandler, 2003) and through regulatory and economic constraints affecting the marginalized group. In contexts of cultural isolation, the level of agency among groups is higher than in cultural extermination, as the group is not subject to an institutionalized system of oppression characterized by pervasive violence and repression. However, agency within this context may still be somewhat constrained due to conscious undermining by dominant groups. This hostility manifests itself through acts of economic or other forms of sabotage, instilling fear of the marginalized culture in individuals, and limiting their willingness to overtly challenge their oppression.

An illustration of cultural isolation is the example of the Berbers' demands for greater recognition of their identity and culture. The cultural struggle of the Berbers is not limited to Algeria. It is unfolding throughout North Africa, including Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. Berber culture involves language along with customs, traditions, and ancestral heritage. Berbers are essential to Algeria's social fabric, representing about 25% of its population., They have engaged in a cultural struggle since 1962, when the first president of independent Algeria claimed that "We are Arabs, we are Arabs, we are Arabs" and that "Arabization is necessary, because there is no socialism without Arabization [...], there is no future for this country without Arabization." (Bouamama, 2000, p. 114). In this case, the historic desire to self-identify as an Arab Nation led to the cultural isolation of the Berbers. History shows that some staunch defenders of Berber

culture have been intimidated by the political and legal administration in an attempt to isolate and dissuade them (Le Monde, 2020; Redjala, 1994).

Overall, cultural isolation results in marginalized groups feeling excluded from society due to the undermining of their cultural practices. As the level of structural imposition is moderate to high and not as severe as in the previous scenario, marginalized groups may have varied perceptions of their experiences. Some groups might navigate the isolation of their culture with a sense of tranquility, depending on their level of attachment to their own culture and on any personal experiences they have endured. In contrast, other groups who actively engage with their culture may experience heightened frustration and strive to promote, embrace, and protect their culture from further repression by the dominant culture in society. However, these efforts often take a significant toll, as these groups might face further restrictions imposed on their own freedoms and agency. Additionally, the structural constraints in cultural isolation are lower, resulting in instances where the group's efforts to protect its culture are penalized through social control mechanisms such as shaming, stigmatization, and acts of intimidation, whether legally or administratively. Consequently, the prevalence of fear is not as pronounced as in the previous case, as the lives of groups may not be at immediate risk; but fear nonetheless continues to be a pervasive and daily experience for groups in this scenario.

Cultural Exiting. The third dynamic of cultural loss sheds light on situations where groups who perceive themselves as marginalized within a society deliberately detach themselves from the dominant culture, thereby undergoing a radical shift in their own cultural identity and, by doing so, exhibit a higher degree of agency. Unlike cultural extermination, which is enforced by more powerful and dominant groups and often occurs within hostile institutional contexts, cultural exiting can arise from milder forms of violence that are inflicted on a group within stable and

democratic contexts. The motivations of the cultural majority may vary according to their political, religious, and personal values. Some groups may genuinely embrace and support cultural diversity, while others may seek to uphold or restore the existing cultural order. However, when any particular powerful group in society aims to maintain the cultural status quo, different forms and degrees of symbolic violence against minority groups (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) may ensue.

When marginalized groups who are on the receiving end of such violence experience disappointment, feelings of being hurt, or a sense of being overlooked by society, they may in turn choose to exercise their agency and attempt to transform the prevailing values and behaviors (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). Nevertheless, if, based on their circumstances, they feel they lack the power to effect significant societal change, they may instead opt to purposefully distance themselves from the dominant cultural sphere. This cultural disengagement arises from their inability to identify with the dominant culture, which they perceive as a threat to their own subculture, which, as a result of the dominant culture's influence, is often perceived as being in a precarious state. Factors such as feelings of stigmatization, precariousness, and sociopsychological disorientation contribute to this experienced reality (Benslama & Khosrokhavar, 2017).

In this scenario, when marginalized groups perceive stigmatization based on additional factors such as race, gender, religion, or other cultural reference points, they may choose to join or establish various humanitarian and social movement organizations that advocate for cultural autonomy. In the worst cases, marginalized groups may even opt to join extremist groups, as observed in the case of French religious extremists who left their country to fight against the West and its culture in the Middle East. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in France, where, in recent years, approximately a thousand French citizens, including a significant number of women,

have left the country to engage in the conflict in Syria (Benslama & Khosrokhavar, 2017). Among these individuals, 90% were born in France, and 94% hold French citizenship (Karoui & Hodayé, 2021). Notably, around a quarter of them are converts (Politi, 2014) who have not only left their country of birth but also their former religion, representing a profound break from the cultural reference points with which they once identified. This rejection of their birth country, the society in which they were raised, and their former religion often reflects a deep-seated sense of exclusion and associated feelings of being left behind and forgotten.

However, not all people experiencing these circumstances might engage in cultural exiting. It is plausible that the majority accepts their situation and discreetly endeavors to preserve their own culture while attempting, albeit with difficulty, to bring about change in the dominant culture to promote a greater acceptance of their own culture.

Cultural Distancing. Lastly, cultural distancing pertains to situations where cultural marginalization and loss arise from the active response of marginalized groups who feel alienated from the dominant culture. At the core of this dynamic lies the perception of value misalignment, whereby the group experiences a disconnect or lack of resonance with the prevailing societal values. This dissonance is not necessarily the result of overt hostility from the dominant cultural group but rather often stems from the unintentional reproduction of local cultural norms and values. In contrast to cultural exiting, cultural distancing represents a partial cultural loss, as the perceived value misalignment prompts actors to reassess their own cultural frame of reference without radical rejection of the dominant culture, as seen in the previous dynamic.

An illustrative example of this dynamic is that of the Japanese *shufu* (housewives), a case that has been largely documented as a manifestation of marginalization that impeded the emancipation of women (Bardsley, 1999; Imamura, 1992; Leung et al., 2014). Despite some recent

regulatory updates to enhance gender equality in Japan, male-centered norms still shape much of Japanese society (Roberson & Suzuki, 2003), where "men are expected to play the masculine role, while women are expected to be exclusively feminine" (Sato, Suzuki, & Kawamura, 1987, p. 87). The "Housewife Debate" was popular in the second half of the 20th century in Japan (Bardsley, 1999), with a significant number of writings on the "appropriate" role of women in Japanese society, who were often "portrayed as submissive, subordinate, oppressed and passive" (Hsia & Scanzoni, 1996, p. 309). Yet, the structural imposition is not always overtly or intentionally malicious. Frequently, it is an unintended consequence of instances of symbolic violence where men have been regarded as conforming to idealized stereotypes when exercising power outside of the household, and women managing the household and, through that, exercising their power (Ueno, 1987).

Perceived value misalignment arises as a consequence of such a systemic reproduction of cultural structures, wherein marginalized groups gradually recognize the oppressive nature of their reality and consequently distance themselves from the values, behaviors, and identities that have been imposed upon them. These imposed aspects, which they may have initially accepted as natural or beneficial for maintaining societal order, gradually reveal themselves as incongruent with their lived experiences. Marginalized groups who are deeply entrenched in a given social system can in turn transform their thinking and behaviour to become agents of institutional change (Creed et al., 2010; Hein & Ansari, 2022). A notable example of this dynamic was observed in Japanese society, where some women have redefined their identities and expanded their roles within a traditionally male-dominated context through collective learning, sensemaking, and action (Leung et al., 2014). In addition, some women choose to deviate from societal expectations by opting out of marriage and prioritizing their careers instead (Rich, 2019).

In 2020, the marriage rates in Japan reached their lowest point since the end of World War II (Murasaki, 2022). While the causes of this trend are multifaceted, the cultural questioning by women plays a significant role, as some have re-evaluated their perceptions of family and the societal roles of women, often influenced by Western images and ideas (Sonoda, 2013, p. 33). This process of cultural distancing and re-socialization takes time, often spanning years or even decades. It involves a complex interplay of unconscious reproduction of existing social norms and tentative transformative actions as part of the existing, yet shifting structures of society (Emirbayer, 1997). As a result, groups make choices that are influenced by past experiences and shaped by situational circumstances, as they seek to divest themselves of certain cultural elements within the dominant culture that contributed to their marginalization. Rather than challenging the entire cultural framework, the focus here is to partially deconstruct it in ways that help construct a renewed sense of cultural autonomy for the marginalized groups involved.

To summarize, the decision of groups to engage in cultural distancing is primarily driven by their realization that the dominant cultural framework, to which they are naturally or institutionally connected, no longer resonates with them or hinders their life choices and cultural being. Unlike cultural exiting, cultural distancing is a process that tends to unfold gradually rather than rapidly. From the perspective of the groups involved, the typically entrenched dominant culture loses its legitimacy and appeal, leading the marginalized groups to willingly disengage from cultural practices associated with the dominant culture, with which they no longer identify.

CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND CULTURAL AUTONOMY PROCESSES

Marginalized groups are not mere victims under the control of the dominant culture(s). Although not comparable to the dominant groups, they have, as we have argued, a degree of agency in pursuing the survival and even autonomy of their culture. Inspired by Ortner (2006), we argue that

while all humans have the capacity to exercise agency, it is always culturally and historically constrained depending on the actions of the dominant culture (Sewell, 1992). For example, even people undergoing cultural extermination are not merely passive actors; they may decide to go underground (Martí & Fernández, 2013) or flee (Alkhaled & Sasaki, 2022) to ensure their cultural survival. Social domination and reproduction are "never total, always imperfect, and vulnerable to the pressures and instabilities inherent in any situation of unequal power" (Ortner, 2006, p. 7). Therefore, in this section, we explore the possibilities for cultural survival and autonomy processes among marginalized groups. To this end, the culture as toolkit (CaT) perspective (Swidler, 1986) provides a useful theoretical basis because, unlike other works of culture (Geertz, 1973; Peterson, 1979), it conceptualizes culture as consisting of multiple cultural elements such as stories, categories, rituals, and practices (Giorgi et al., 2015) that groups can use in everyday situations to advance their own goals.

The mobilization of the CaT perspective in organizational theory has, as mentioned above, generally advanced our understanding of how actors and groups are embedded in a social field where they might capitalize on the existing cultural register or create new sets of cultural repertoires by recombining symbolic elements from other cultural registers (Rao & Giorgi, 2006; Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011; Zilber, 2006). For example, Rindova et al. (2011) studied the evolution of the cultural repertoire of Alessi (an Italian producer of household goods). They found that enriching the cultural repertoire through recombining cultural elements from other industries enabled the firm to adopt unconventional strategies and change its organizational identity. This line of thinking in cultural sociology and its use in organization studies have informed the emergence of new theoretical angles in institutional theory, organizational culture, and identity studies (Navis & Glynn, 2011; Wry, Lounsbury, & Glynn, 2011).

However, the current application of the CaT perspective in organizational theory does not fully consider the different social positions of actors. One example pertinent to our investigation would be the position of marginalized groups who face considerably more structural constraints than do the dominant groups, which possess readily available cultural resources to draw on and express themselves. For example, existing studies highlight how groups who are "skilled cultural operatives" (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001, p. 559) mobilize symbolic resources to legitimize new ventures (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019, p. 12), and enable technological innovation (Leonardi, 2011) and organizational change (Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2011). Nevertheless, this stream of studies, perhaps because of its general focus on WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) settings, tends to over-emphasize the resourcefulness and skillfulness of groups in other contexts and circumstances—in other words, their agency. In turn, this application and extension of the CaT perspective affirms many of its underlying agentic presuppositions.

At the communal level, research that draws on CaT has shown how groups tend to choose cultural elements that are readily available, convenient, and aligned with their personal or social identity (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). At the same time, scholars acknowledged that groups in a given institutional field do not have equal access to such cultural elements and that social meaning systems "privilege the importance and symbolic weight of some distinctions over others" (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000, p. 9). Therefore, the level of access, mobility, and influence that groups can have in mobilizing cultural elements can differ considerably. Some groups with more opportunities and fewer constraints can use a broader range of cultural resources more skillfully and flexibly than others, although they may also face seeming contradictions of having to employ various cultural elements (Small, Harding, & Lamont, 2010). Hannerz's (1969) study of the black ghetto

culture in Washington, D.C., for example, illustrated how the ghetto developed a unique culture that mixed the ghetto and mainstream American culture.

Building on these insights, we contend that marginalized groups often cannot use cultural elements in the same way as the mainstream dominant groups in a field due to their social position. To conceptualize the distinct social positions that marginalized groups hold, as discussed in the previous section, we start from the premise that marginalization is a *spectrum* rather than a static state. In recognition of this point, we blend the CaT perspective with other cultural theories that consider power and positions of structural domination more prominently. For example, Bourdieu's conceptualization of culture is less agentic than that of Swidler. According to the Bourdieusian approach, culture is not just a set of values, beliefs, and codes of conduct but also inherently an expression and source of domination as it symbolically shapes and maintains social hierarchies and affirms social distinctions (Mahé, 2020). Bourdieu's conceptualization complements Swidler's approach in theorizing the case of marginalized groups as he puts more emphasis on the group embeddedness and power aspect of individual action, while considering how a dominant culture influences individuals (Swartz, 1997). Similarly, sociologists and organizational scholars have demonstrated that groups in different social positions are able to access various cultural repertoires. For example, cultural anthropologist Ortner (2006) considers cultural projects as 'serious games' where the social play of cultural objectives is ordered depending on local power relations. To illustrate such a power play, Van Hook and Bean (2009) showed how poor Mexican immigrants in the U.S. had a cultural repertoire characterized by the strong involvement of work and family when deciding to immigrate from their country of origin, which affected their behavior in terms of exiting far more quickly from social welfare systems in comparison to other immigrant groups. Within organization theory, Kellogg's (2011) study of elite teaching hospitals highlighted

how less powerful organization members tended to conform to existing and taken-for-granted organizational practices rather than being able to use various cultural elements to question and change organizational practices. She explained how political power first had to be gained before actors could strategically mobilize elements of a culture.

Below, we apply such a structurally qualified version of the toolkit argument to theorize the alternative ways in which marginalized groups may act to protect their own culture. We conceptualize these actions as cultural survival processes and cultural autonomy processes. We define *cultural survival* as the process through which individuals, organizations, or communities who lack power, status, or resources strive to safeguard essential elements of their cultural values and practices in the face of external pressures imposed on them by dominant groups and institutions in society. Following the perspective that cultural marginalization exists along a spectrum, we suggest that cultural survival processes are particularly salient when the level of structural constraint is higher (e.g., for groups facing cultural extermination). Along these lines, we elucidate that when the structurally constrained agency is more actively exercised by the marginalized (for instance, in cases involving cultural distancing), the potential for marginalized groups to pursue cultural autonomy expands. This cultural autonomy is characterized by the independent shaping or modification of their own cultural values and practices by individuals, organizations, or communities without significant power, status, or resources. It also involves asserting the right to protect their own culture from the incursion of dominant groups. We discuss in turn how the marginalized may be initially integrated into a specific institutional environment or transition from a highly hostile institutional setting to a less hostile one. We posit that the characteristics of cultural elements (which we classify as embedded, discursive, and material) and their utilization vary in the processes of cultural survival and autonomy presented. Lastly, we

elaborate on the view that marginalized groups, having achieved cultural autonomy, may regress to a state of cultural survival should the institutional environment itself undergo a transformation and lead to greater forms of oppression.

Cultural survival processes

In contrast with the conventional application of the CaT perspective, the cultural survival process represents a predominately *defensive* use by a marginalized group of their existing symbolic resources to protect their own culture. Due to their inherently constrained social positions, marginalized groups have limited symbolic resources to use in this scenario. The resources they use might be largely restorative in nature; with the marginalized group, for example, using their past memories to attempt to reclaim the symbolic resources that previously belonged to them (e.g., territories before colonization or united communities before diaspora). Second, the cultural resources they use might be situational, insofar as marginalized groups may be able to access some symbolic resources, albeit in a situated, constrained manner (e.g., as a part of underground or hidden practices). For example, the marginalized groups may keep certain material artefacts with them or uphold certain ritual practices within the home even if they have lost their sovereign land or are rejected from mainstream society and culture. From our theoretical perspective, and as we will argue in more detail below, the primarily defensive mobilization of cultural resources may simultaneously promote cultural autonomy. Thus, when a group uses defensive strategies, the culmination of such uses may lead to opportunities for (re)claiming one's culture and its place in a society.

Following a Bourdieusian approach that, as mentioned, considers culture from a stronger structuration stance, we propose that the greater the structural imposition, the more imperative it becomes for marginalized individuals to first and foremost strive for *cultural survival* through the

use of restorative and situational cultural resources. Below, we provide examples of various cultural elements, categorized as embedded, discursive, and material, that may be employed in the pursuit of such cultural survival. We then discuss instances where the use of such resources may further cultural autonomy processes.

Cultural survival toolkit: Embedded cultural elements. In the most extreme form, cultural marginalization can take the form of territorial dispossession insofar as scattering the members of these cultural communities is regularly seen by hostile forces as a good way to weaken their cultural connection and attachment to the land as their original cultural territory (Fortin-Lefebvre & Baba, 2021). Territory, where groups are embedded, is envisioned as a "bounded social space that inscribes a certain sort of meaning onto defined segments of the material world" (Delaney, 2005, p. 14).

Because the very lives of marginalized groups are challenged in such cases, in addition to being dominated at the economic, regulatory and social levels, refocusing on the territory might be a way for these marginalized groups to protect themselves and establish their culture and its historical anchorage. When the structural constraints are extreme, other discursive and material cultural elements, however, may survive underground or be practiced by the individuals who have fled the territory. Yet for many such groups, their collective social survival may be difficult unless the territorial foundation is restored.

The territory is thus both shaped and occupied by a specific cultural group. It can also act as a spatial and geographical symbol or metaphor in which cultural, material, and discursive realities are enacted (Desbiens, 2014). Beyond a simplistic vision of territories as spaces where social life takes shape, the territories themselves are dynamic cultural resources since they are constantly negotiated and contested at the very moment when they shape the social life of the

community (Paasi, 2003, p. 110). Because territories reflect a socio-cultural reality, they obviously exemplify an appropriation of space (economic, ideological, political and social) by groups that produce a particular representation of themselves, their history, their values and their uniqueness (Desbiens, 2014). The territory is essential for cultural survival because it shelters historical realities and becomes for many marginalized groups "a bounded space to which there is a compulsion to defend and secure—to claim a particular kind of sovereignty" (Cowen & Gilbert, 2008, p. 16). Put otherwise, culture and territory are intimately related as "cultures are ways of territorializing, the ways one makes oneself at home" (Wise, 2000, p. 300).

Baba and Fortin-Lefebvre (2021, p. 6), for instance, argued that many indigenous peoples define themselves through their ancestral land, which acts as the reservoir and vector of their ancestral cultures: "the territory is the bearer of the age-old history of indigenous peoples. Its significance is heightened by its prominent presence in impactful socio-political struggles to preserve the indigenous identity from the colonialist ambitions of successive governments." Because they have lived on the same territory for millennia, indigenous peoples tend to view territory and culture as interdependent facets of their existence (Figueroa, 2011).

Cultural survival toolkit: Discursive cultural elements. To protect their culture, marginalized groups can also simultaneously employ discursive elements, such as 'nostalgic storytelling' to remember the past and keep it alive for the new generations, and thus maintain and restore various aspects of their culture. For example, in the case of communities coping with cultural extermination, the territory becomes an important reference in the stories that are being told and shared, featuring as part of the collective's memory and historical socio-cultural struggles, and thus allowing marginalized groups to anchor their existence in and through their stories (Blaser, Costa, McGregor, & Coleman, 2010).

Language is thus an important means of community building, and it is often a powerful vehicle for the induction of new members into a culture. Language and culture are known to be intertwined (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015); although a community does not necessarily need to speak the same language, it is recognized that a common language strengthens community membership. Létourneau (2002, p. 79) suggests that rather than conceptualizing language as "a purely utilitarian, communicative tool," it should be situated "at the very pit of its broader entanglements as a transmitter of memory and culture." Language is particularly important, so much so that it is advised that the preservation of the culture of a people be considered through the enhancement of "the linguistic rights of speakers of the so-called minority languages" (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015, p. 89).

For instance, research by Komsuoğlu and Örs (2009) on the Armenian minority group in Turkey explained how women who are confined to the private sphere engage in ideological and cultural reproduction by transmitting their cultural values to the next generation. By speaking and sharing the language, these women managed to keep their children connected with the community, facilitating the maintenance of the minority culture. Wirth's (1943) classic study also underlined the critical role of education within the Jewish community that allowed their survival as a separate group despite being scattered worldwide. Moreover, the already mentioned Berbers of North Africa case is interesting in this respect, in that the Berbers vigorously defend their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness by referencing and mobilizing their history in and through their language. North African Berber communities are also recognized as being particularly organized worldwide. For example, during the creation of the first Berber TV channel in Algeria, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (whose theories are largely based on the functioning of Berber societies) highlighted its importance for the cultural survival of the community: "the existence of a television channel is a

mode of existence for a group like the Berbers. And I think that those in charge of this channel have a great intellectual, political and cultural responsibility. They have an extraordinary instrument which can be very useful."4

Cultural survival toolkit: Material cultural elements. Finally, material cultural elements are crucial to protect marginalized cultures. Artefacts, symbols, and rituals are important for asserting cultural differences from the dominant culture that wishes to impose itself. Keeping material cultural elements alive and vibrant becomes an act of resistance through which groups form and occupy an independent social space for themselves. Concomitantly, they engage in cultural affirmation by reiterating that they have not disappeared, nor do they intend to. Artifacts and other material symbols representing the marginalized culture are also often sacred means through which the marginalized may protect their culture. Their visual characteristic is a powerful vector of cultural and identity affirmation, and these artefacts can be seen as "mnemonic devices" that fosters collective memory (Eisenman & Frenkel, 2021).

For example, the research conducted by Alkhaled and Sasaki (2022) on Syrian refugees in three different host country contexts showed how creating craft objects allowed them to culturally survive during an indeterminate situation. Similarly, throughout the French colonization of Algeria, Algerians actively sustained their cultural heritage, specifically emphasizing musical artifacts, through informal channels. They also defied cultural extermination by protecting religious artifacts, targeted by the colonizers as part of their strategy to eradicate Algerian culture. Amid a dark chapter in their history, the Indigenous peoples of Canada faced forced assimilation into the supposedly more modern Western culture by public authorities. Nevertheless, they diligently

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu's interview on Berber TV, April 28, 2001.

strived to uphold their culture and identity by construing material artifacts, particularly those associated with hunting, fishing, and art, as a means of intergenerational cultural transmission.

It is also important to note that the use of these embedded, discursive, and material cultural resources is interrelated. For example, territory contains, embodies and makes possible a large part of the material elements of a culture. Sanctuaries, rivers or ancestral and historical places, are material elements linked to the territory that is key to cultural survival. Similarly, storytelling is facilitated through an embedded and material cultural infrastructure that is common to a cultural group.

From cultural survival to cultural autonomy processes

Under certain conditions, the institutional environment surrounding marginalized groups may shift from being highly hostile to offering moderate or weak structural constraints. For example, the case of the indigenous people of Canada shows that, over time, they may pass the stage of culturally surviving to achieve cultural autonomy as they progressively regain their power, status, and resources (Baba et al., 2021). From such a process perspective, the marginalized may exercise more agency when the level of structural constraints decreases either because of their advocacy efforts or because of exogenous institutional changes (Blaser et al., 2010; Figueroa, 2011). The absence of territorial, physical, or economic constraints can free up marginalized groups to react differently as they, for example, shift their focus to primarily dealing with constraints at symbolic levels. Alternatively, as our typology of cultural marginalization exemplified above suggests, some marginalized groups may already be in an institutional environment characterized by moderate or low structural constraints from the outset, and may continue to be so over time.

In such cases of a processual shift, we argue that the response of the marginalized groups creates a hybrid situation where they are *simultaneously defensive and offensive*, in which, building on the cultural survival processes mentioned above, they continue to protect their own culture but are also able to build and replace the cultural elements that do not fit with their worldviews. They may also bring forward their own oppositional culture, for example, by creating counter-narratives and altering material cultural elements. In such instances, symbolic cultural resources are, on the one hand, mobilized *restoratively* insofar as the marginalized groups continue to use the traditionally inherited cultural register to protect their core cultural elements and identity. On the other hand, facing less structural constraints, the marginalized may additionally be able to use these resources *creatively* as they seek to alter and transform the group's cultural elements, generating multiple possibilities for new cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1990; Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). Below, we provide some illustrative examples of these cultural autonomy processes.

Cultural autonomy toolkit: Discursive cultural elements. From a process standpoint, as the marginalized groups move from a situation of primarily cultural survival toward cultural autonomy, their discursive cultural practices may change from being simply restorative in seeking to protect the past values and practices to simultaneously being more assertive and vocal in attempting to distinguish themselves from the broader dominant cultural sphere. The example of the Cree First Nation exemplifies this pattern. In the early 1970s, the requests by the Cree for cultural protection were largely disregarded in Canada, due to an institutional context that was highly hostile to First Nations. Their ancestral culture and rights were not recognized at the time. Faced with an existential threat to their cultural identity, the Cree had to resort to legal means to protect their culture and the natural habitat that enabled it. Subsequently, the institutional constraints gradually began to diminish, notably due to the momentum of a nation-wide social

movement advocating for indigenous rights (to which the Cree contributed actively), granting the Cree the opportunity to emphasize the distinctiveness of their culture and underscore the significance of institutionalizing its protection (Niezen, 2009).

In other cases, when the marginalized are embedded in an institutional environment characterized by moderate or low structural constraints from the start, these groups may use discursive cultural elements as cultural tools to gradually learn to make sense of values and practices that had undermined their sense of themselves while learning new values and practices from elsewhere in order to compensate for what is being lost. When the marginalization is only partial, there is no need to completely detach oneself from the entire cultural domain, nor is it necessary to completely embody the imposed new values and behaviors. In such instances, marginalized groups find themselves somewhere in between (Turner, 1969), and through comparing and contrasting, gradually evolve to retain some elements of the dominant cultural discourse while partly renarrating new values and norms for themselves.

In addition, staying with the same scenario, the marginalized who experience stigmatization and yet have enough agency to break away from it may fundamentally make sense of their circumstances by problematizing the prevailing values, attitudes, and behaviors prescribed for them. Such additional questioning may create counter-narratives to the dominant culture as a way of challenging their cultural supremacy and legitimacy (Barros, 2014). In the context of the cultural survival processes mentioned above, the marginalized may have the capacity to generate counter-narratives; however, advocating for them openly and publicly may pose a challenge. By comparison, in the case of a cultural autonomy process, the counter-narratives can, we surmise, be used more overtly. From a processual point of view, this suggests that counter-narratives may be

dormant for a given period of time but may then surface and become publicly visible in times of crises and discontinuities.

However, somewhat counter-intuitively, enacting counter-narratives in this open way may have the opposite effect of accelerating the phenomenon from which the marginalized groups seek to extricate themselves, as the counter-narratives exist only based on the existence and influence of the dominant cultural force. Paradoxically, marginalized groups who radically and deliberately alter their cultural register may ultimately uphold some elements of the original cultural elements in their subconscious as part of their renewed cultural activities (Bélanger, Nisa, Schumpe, Gurmu, Williams, & Putra, 2020). This juxtaposition also implies the perpetual narrative divide between the dominant and marginalized groups. Groups may seek to separate themselves from dominant institutions and rebuild a dramatically different cultural register, either because they want to promote justice, or to resolve their traumatic experiences; yet when they do so, their narratives remain tethered to the dominant culture.

Cultural autonomy toolkit: Material cultural elements. As the marginalized come to make sense of the oppressed reality and can exercise agency to detach themselves from it, some parts of their original material rituals may begin to fade naturally over time while others may continue to be maintained. Some rituals may have been practiced consciously, others unconsciously. For example, certain gendered behaviors are easy to detect and alter, especially if one despises them, triggering some women to detach from the dominant culture. Yet, other cultural beliefs and behaviors can be deeply rooted in cultural traditions, unconsciously structured, patterned, and practiced; and thus take time even to realize, let alone alter (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011).

Simultaneously, certain artifacts and material symbols may lose their cultural significance over time. For example, the recent example of the #KuToo movement shows how some women in Japan have refused to be forced to wear high heels in the workplace. The same movement questioned other gendered dress codes that modern Japanese corporations enforce for Japanese workers, such as wearing glasses and makeup. Following the nation-wide campaigning and actions of the social movement, some companies have accepted the changes in the dress code, while others decided to retain the conservative practices. Therefore, the marginalized groups may locally experience varying degrees of replacement of artefacts and material symbols, often not reaching the fully acceptable level of change that they envision (Rich, 2019).

In contrast, the material cultural elements that are used as part of cultural autonomy processes may become more radically altered as the marginalized groups may, on the one hand, seek to distance themselves entirely from the conventional rituals and develop new artefacts and material symbols. Examples may include new mottos, logos, and codes of conduct that encapsulate the novel counter-narrative and are used to re-create a novel group identity. Several examples show how cultural artefacts such as arts and crafts are instrumental for women in voicing their political concerns in societies such as Mexico and Afghanistan (Henderson, 2021). An illustrative instance can be observed among ultraorthodox women in Israel, who encounter societal pressures imposed by the patriarchal structure to conform to notions of modesty and plainness, aiming to deter what is viewed as unwanted attention and desire (Linzer, 2012; Taragin-Zeller, 2014). However, some women resist by using fashion and style as tools to regain control over their bodies, enabling them to independently identify and express values that are consistent with their faith, but in ways that contrast with the dominant patriarchal cultural norms (Adler, 2002; Baikovich, Wasserman, &

Pfefferman, 2022; Soloski, 2021). Therefore, material artefacts (such as dress) can be used to either overtly or covertly reinterpret and recast the beliefs and values of the dominant culture.

Cultural autonomy toolkit: Embedded cultural elements. Finally, when the marginalized are able to exercise a moderate to high level of agency, the importance of a local community (and/or territory) may gradually decrease over time as the embedded cultural elements themselves gain force and become taken for granted. Instead, the marginalized may occasionally face emerging internal division within their own community because of a loosening sense of community. This may be particularly true in marginalized groups characterized by a mixture of hybrid identities. For example, Djilali (2017) observed the hybrid nature of Algerian society, where traditional and modern values co-exist. The author examined how the progressive shift toward modernity created ideological conflicts between the two social spheres, giving rise to social and political blockages. In a similar vein, Ballinger (2004, p. 31) analyzed identity struggles in a "quintessentially 'hybrid'" site, the western borderlands of the former Yugoslavia.

In such contexts, some marginalized groups may seek to detach themselves from the localized community activities with which they were associated (e.g., companies with patriarchal cultures or female-only local community associations). They may do so because these community activities perpetuate traditional values and practices to which they can no longer relate (Komsuoğlu & Örs, 2009). They may also decide to join another cultural environment characterized by values and practices that more closely align with their ideals such as choosing to work for companies that prioritize egalitarian values or relocating to another country. For example, Kang, Park and Park (2019) showed how many Korean women choose a teaching profession because of the national cultural context in which education is valued and because of the persistent gender role ideologies that limit women's participation in other labor markets. This trend, in turn, has resulted in the brain

drain of highly educated women from male-dominated industries and from Korea as they relocate to other countries. As such, embedded cultural elements such as territory and community can inadvertently facilitate the creation of new cultural practices. However, this does not mean that the marginalized become completely detached from their original values and beliefs. They can transcend territorial and spatial boundaries, yet such boundaries may continue to unconsciously guide individuals' attitudes and behaviors. In other words, in many cases, as hybrid cultural values are formed, the blend that arises is often strongly conditioned by the prior culture and its embeddedness.

Further, in more extreme situations, the marginalized may also physically distance themselves from the dominant group by moving to a distant territory or community or by creating their own sanctuary or holy places. This pattern is exemplified by marginalized religious communities, with the case of Islam in France serving as a noteworthy example. Amid a rising wave of Islamophobia, numerous Muslims have experienced feelings of stigmatization and persecution, to the extent that an increasing number of these French Muslims opt to leave the Western world to be closer to holy sites that afford them the freedom and dignity to practice their religion, for example, by choosing to be buried in their geographically distant home countries (Onishi & Alami, 2022; Schofield, 2013). In doing so, these individuals deny the material practices and traditions of the dominant culture and radically replace them with new ones that allow them to assert their new culture in contradistinction.

From cultural autonomy back to cultural survival processes

As a final part of our theorizing, we draw attention to instances where the marginalized who have achieved cultural autonomy may fall back into a state of cultural survival when the institutional context changes and the fine balance of the traditional and renewed coexistence of the cultural elements crumbles. For example, this reversion to cultural survival could arise because of a national regime change. The situation of women in Afghanistan is a good illustration of this process. The aftermath of the U.S. government's announcement of troop removal in Afghanistan facilitated the Taliban's complete resurgence to power. This resurgence included the reinstatement of the previous patriarchal and regressive system, resulting in a severe curtailment of women's rights and autonomy. Consequently, women have experienced a loss of their albeit limited freedoms and independence, particularly concerning fundamental aspects of life such as education, clothing choices, employment opportunities, and the ability to travel.

More specifically, changes in the political parties in power may shift the general sentiment in the population to be harsher toward indigenous people, immigrants, or women, among other minorities. As one example, the recent elections in South Korea and the debate about scrapping the gender equality ministry greatly threatened the already problematic gender equality in the country. Another example is that of indigenous peoples in Brazil. The election of Jair Bolsonaro as the President of Brazil in 2019 raised significant concerns for the culture and survival of indigenous peoples residing in the Amazon rainforest. Bolsonaro's policies and positions pertaining to indigenous rights and environmental preservation drew substantial global criticism from activists, environmentalists, and indigenous communities. His initiatives not only directly threatened the Amazon rainforest but also resulted in escalated deforestation, weakened environmental safeguards, and encroached upon the territorial rights of indigenous groups on their ancestral lands. Furthermore, Bolsonaro pursued a policy of assimilating indigenous peoples, thereby placing their cultural heritage and traditional way of life in jeopardy. This situation

underscores the ongoing vulnerability of marginalized groups when the political context in a society changes.

DISCUSSION

Our theorization of marginalized groups' cultural survival and expressions of cultural autonomy provides several important organizational implications. Organizational theory has explored how marginalized groups pursue their interests when interacting and negotiating with more powerful groups. While organizational and institutional theorists have been increasingly dealing with the phenomenon of marginalized groups (e.g., Creed et al., 2010; Mair et al., 2012; Martí & Fernández, 2013), this concept has, as we have suggested, been defined in very different ways (for example, by focusing on exclusions regarding religion, cultural traditions, and sexual orientation). To date, however, theoretical integration in this area is scant.

Our theorizing aims to redress this state of affairs by advancing an integrative, dynamic and more detailed cultural understanding of processes of marginalization. As part of our integrative framework (Table 1), we conceptualized a continuum of structural constraints that marginalized groups may encounter; defining a set of scenarios based on the levels of structural imposition and agency that they can exercise: *cultural extermination*, *cultural isolation*, *cultural exiting*, and finally, *cultural distancing*. In this way, we can map the different forms and processes of cultural marginalization. As defined by the framework, there is a radical form of cultural extermination, implying a far-reaching cultural loss, and even the vanishing of the original cultural register of a marginalized group due to violence and territorial dispossession. On the other side of the spectrum, there is a more partial form of cultural loss arising from sustained symbolic violence and deep stigma, although this too can result in a far-reaching cultural demise over an extended period of

time. For each of these dynamics of cultural loss, the dominant groups have, as we suggested, distinct intentions; their modus operandi vary and the marginalized groups thus perceive their situations differently.

We suggest that the specific typology that we provide is useful in deepening our theoretical understanding of marginalization dynamics in two ways. First, it makes a distinct form of marginalization in the field of organizational theory, namely 'cultural marginalization,' a salient concept. To date, cultural marginalization has been only loosely recognized in OMT but has not yet been systematically defined or explained. However, considering culture as a cornerstone of the meaning that individuals, organizations, and communities give to their daily lives, thereby broadening our theoretical understanding of the dynamics of how cultural marginalization takes place, can provide insight into how the marginalized perceive their oppression and what they can do to protect and promote their own culture.

Second, our typology shows that cultural marginalization should not be conceptualized from a static perspective. It is, first and foremost, a process, a form of negotiated order (Strauss, 1993) that is constantly evolving and may, as such, be subject to change. Marginalized groups can use cultural resources differently as they shift their strategies from cultural survival to autonomy. Cultural marginalization is not a binary condition; in other words, groups are not simply marginalized or not. Rather, they can experience varying degrees of marginalization. This dynamic understanding should enable us to better understand the processual dynamics of marginalization in their different forms and how marginalized groups may deal with their predicament.

In addition to the theoretical currency of our typological framework, we also extended the CaT perspective as the analytical angle to theorize the cultural survival and autonomy processes through which marginalized groups can maintain and rebuild their unique traditions, cultures, and

way of life while being influenced by more dominant cultural values and systems. In using the CaT perspective in this way, we have tried to convey throughout the paper how it is crucial to conceptualize the marginalized as not pure victims but as social groups that possess variable degrees of socio-historically constrained agency. In line with this view, we requalified the CaT perspective, building on previous studies that emphasize the structural inequalities that prevail in the use of cultural elements by groups in different social positions and on cultural theories that consider the power aspect of culture more prominently (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Ortner, 2006; Swartz, 1997).

On these theoretical grounds, we in turn theorized how the marginalized can use culture while being structurally constrained according to two different processes—cultural survival and cultural autonomy—, which take shape depending on the degree of structural constraints and agency available. Our theorization of these cultural survival and autonomy processes integrates three types of cultural registers: restorative, situational, and creative, along with the cultural resources within them that may be drawn on by marginalized groups. The restorative aspect includes collective resentments, traumatic memories, as well as benign memories that marginalized groups can mobilize as part of their internalized cultural schemas and understanding. Such cultural registers based on past experience powerfully influence how the marginalized might react to any present structural hostility by a dominant cultural group, creating a base condition for how they are likely to engage in a cultural survival process with their cultural register at hand. Because marginalized groups lack power, status, and resources in the present day due to their positional inferiority, they thus tend to mobilize what they previously had. Therefore, the cultural survival process is simultaneously restorative (concerning what the groups have lost due to

domination) and *situational* (concerning the currently and narrowly available symbolic resources at hand).

From the dual structure/agency perspective underlying our theorizing, when the marginalized defend themselves, they might simultaneously create autonomy; in parallel, when such groups create autonomy, they might also protect themselves to promote their survival. However, the nuances in how these processes are coupled differ depending on the degree of structural imposition and agency in any particular situation. Specifically, cultural autonomy processes often manifest in the continued *restorative* mobilization of elements of a culture combined with *creative* use of culture where marginalized groups use the dominant culture as a lever to gradually transform their cultural reality by actively producing counter-positional cultural elements. In doing so, marginalized groups are able to deviate their actions from the dominant culture (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 19) and engage in field-transformative change initiatives that might lead to major cultural upheaval and change (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).

Conceived in this way, cultural survival and autonomy processes represent a *developmental process* insofar as the marginalized might change and develop *while* maintaining their core cultural identity. Such a developmental process is perhaps inevitable to protect one's core while simultaneously transforming, under pressure from a dominant culture. Such dualistic and somewhat contradictory processes, where traditional and renewed cultural values co-exist and co-evolve, drive the marginalized group from cultural survival to autonomy processes (and in some cases, as we have suggested, a return to a cultural survival process). The structured processual view that this paper offers is, we argue, an important addition to the conventional CaT perspective as it provides novel insight into how marginalized groups might use their cultural resources at hand differently from more culturally resourceful groups. The balancing in terms of cultural registers

(Shore, 1996). Contrary to the core idea in the literature that resourceful groups use culture to establish cultural resonance and alignment with the dominant culture in order to legitimize their identity and seek positions of economic power (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019), we explain how marginalized groups, over time, seek instead to protect themselves from the dominant culture and gain independence, not necessarily because they intentionally and strategically aim to use the culture, but because they ought to do something to stand up for themselves in response to the different forms of cultural loss. This perspective also moves beyond the prevailing emphasis found in many CaT studies, which often focus on the (conscious) rearticulation of cultural resources. Instead, it twins such processes to a deeper understanding of structural constraints.

Beyond these theoretical contributions, one can rightfully question the organizational implications of our theorization of cultural marginalization. As discussed at the outset, we believe we have illustrated throughout this paper that cultural marginalization is intimately tied to organizing processes driven by dominant cultural groups at the societal level. Similarly, formal organizations are not disconnected from the cultural marginalization observed in society. They contribute to it either directly or indirectly, through their silence and the voices they amplify, which detrimentally overshadow others. In other instances, they might play a much more active role by assuming prominent positions in the marginalization of specific groups (Koburtay, Syed, & Haloub, 2020). Marginalization therefore also takes place within organizational settings where prevailing cultural frameworks are perpetuated, leading to the marginalization of what is then regarded as "sub-marginal" cultures in organizations (Bloor & Dawson, 1994).

Directions for Further Research

We suggest that scholars build on our theoretical framework to empirically investigate how marginalized groups can culturally survive and gain cultural autonomy in different settings. Acknowledging that marginalization is not a static state but rather a continuously evolving process. our theorized spectrum of marginalization invites scholars to become more sensitive to the nature and degree of cultural marginalization. This enhanced understanding can be used as a conceptual frame or reference point to shed light on when, why and how marginalized groups behave in specific ways within particular contexts. In particular, much more research is needed to better understand how cultural marginalization and, more specifically, cultural margins "are created, defined and enforced" (Ferguson, 1990, p. 14). We also need insight into how marginalized groups can assert their interests, in this case culturally, against more powerful groups. In other words, through what means of resistance is cultural autonomy possible? For example, do these resistance processes differ depending on whether or not a culture is linked to spiritual and religious dimensions? Also, what are the internal implications of such resistance within marginalized groups themselves? Future research may also study how the different types of cultural marginalization evolve over time (e.g., cultural isolation can escalate to cultural extermination, and cultural distancing can develop into cultural exiting), and how the marginalized respond to such changes. Furthermore, in the context of rising authoritarianism worldwide, it would be useful to look at the darker aspects of organizations and institutions and how they are related to cultural autonomy, i.e., their role in eradicating cultures or promoting certain cultures at the expense of others.

In closing, even though it has been said that today's world has never been safer (Pinker, 2018), "threats to the world's cultural heritage have become increasingly brazen" in recent years (Luck, 2018, p. 5), highlighting the urgent need for organizational theorists to pay more attention to these cultural marginalization dynamics.

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