

# LEVERHULME TRUST

## Research Fellowship

Applicant: Professor Georgina Waylen	ID/Ref: [REDACTED]
Project Title: Democratic Backsliding and Rightwing Populism: the UK in comparative perspective	
Submission Date: 05 November 2021	Total Requested: [REDACTED]

### Applicant Details

<b>Title</b>	Professor	<b>Address</b>	School of Social Sciences, Arthur Lewis Building, University of Manchester,  Manchester  United Kingdom M13 9PL
<b>Forename(s)</b>	Georgina		
<b>Surname</b>	Waylen		
<b>Honours</b>			
<b>Institution</b>	University of Manchester		
<b>Department</b>	Politics		
<b>Telephone No.</b>	[REDACTED]	<b>Email Address</b>	[REDACTED]

### Career

<b>Current Position</b>	Professor of Politics
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### Employment History

From	To	Position	Organisation
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

### Education

#### Degrees

From	To	Degree	Subject	Class	Institution
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

#### Doctoral Degrees

From	To	Degree	Subject	Institution	Supervisor
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

<b>Title of research proposal</b>	Democratic Backsliding and Rightwing Populism: the UK in comparative perspective
<b>Main/sub field of study</b>	Politics

**Abstract**

In contrast to the optimism that characterised democratisation's third wave, democratic backsliding is now seen as a threat to some long-standing democracies. Right-wing populism plays an important part in this trend. This research asks: is Boris Johnson's Conservative party presiding over a form of back-sliding more usually associated with right-wing populist governments? To place the UK within debates about backsliding and right-wing populism, it uses an intersectional lens, highlighting dynamics of race, class, gender and sexuality, to analyse four areas: Brexit; Covid-19; 'levelling up'; and 'culture wars', examining three elements: leadership styles, ideas and rhetoric; policies; and policy outcomes.

**Places where you will carry out the proposed research**

The majority of the data collection (particularly the interviews with politicians, think-tank staff and journalists) for this research will take place in London. I envisage 15 trips of 1 week duration taking place primarily over a seven month period (from November 2022 -May 2023). The data analysis and writing of the conference papers, journal articles and working on the journal special issue will take place primarily in Manchester. I will present research findings at conferences and seminars in UK, Europe and the USA.

**Relevant experience/skills/training**

I have studied democratic transitions, democratic consolidation and crisis, and how these processes are gendered, for nearly thirty years (e.g. Waylen 1994, 2000, 2007, 2015). Like other democratization scholars (eg Haggard, Kaufman and Levitsky) who focused primarily on the developing world, the threat of backsliding in some consolidated democracies has prompted me to redirect my research to the analysis of de-democratization/backsliding, focusing on the UK. This experience, combined with insights from my recent analysis (Waylen 2021) of hypermasculine leadership, right-wing populism, and Covid-19 (using Boris Johnson as a case study), gives me the building blocks necessary for this research.

**Detailed statement of proposed research****Aims and Objectives of the Research**

In contrast to the optimism about the future of democracy that characterized its third wave in the 1980s and 1990s, de-democratization and democratic backsliding are now seen as a growing threat to many democracies, including long-standing seemingly consolidated ones like the USA. (Bermeo 2016; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Haggard and Kaufman 2021a). Happening incrementally, and amid polarization, Haggard and Kaufman (2021a) argue backsliding is evidenced by a collapse in the separation of powers; the erosion of political rights and civil liberties; and undermining the integrity of electoral processes. Right-wing populism has been identified as important in this trend. We have seen, not just radical right challenger parties on the fringes of politics (Mudde 2007), but also the election of right-wing populist governments in the USA; Hungary; Poland; India; and Brazil (Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Grzymala-Busse, 2019). While unlikely to overthrow democracy, Muller (2021) argues right-wing populist governments can exploit and erode democracies. For Muller (2021),

despite many differences, their common strategy, dubbed 'the shared populist authoritarian art of governance', is based on nationalism, hijacking the state for partisan loyalists, weaponizing the economy to secure political power, and uses a combination of culture wars, patronage and clientelism to undermine the media and state institutions like the judiciary.

This research asks if Boris Johnson's UK Conservative party is presiding over a form of democratic backsliding more usually associated with right-wing populist governments. Ostensibly it seems unlikely that the Conservatives are a right-wing populist party. They were long seen as an archetypally pragmatic party, concerned primarily with achieving and keeping power, and, as such, a usually relatively non-ideological, albeit centre-right, party with an affinity for a small state and business, that has recently modernized, becoming more socially liberal (e.g. introducing equal marriage) (Bale 2012, 2016). Moreover, the longevity and stability of the UK political system are seen to make democratic backsliding unlikely.

However, the Conservatives have displayed some countervailing tendencies over the last decade and particularly since the Brexit referendum of 2016. For example, they shifted to the right on Europe and immigration to undermine a radical right party like UKIP. These trends, that intensified after Johnson's election as leader in July 2019, have led more moderate conservatives like David Gauke to warn of the dangers of right-wing populism within the Conservative party (speech to ONWARD May 2019). The Common Sense group for example - a newly formed organization of MPs and peers claiming to speak for the patriotic 'silent majority' against the 'elitist bourgeois liberals' wanting to rewrite and denigrate the nation's history - now pressures the leadership (*Daily Mail* 21 Nov 2020). With the exception of Whitehead (2020), Haggard and Kaufman (2021b) and Bale (2021), whose preliminary analyses consider backsliding, right-wing populism and threats to the quality of democracy (such as the prorogation of parliament and the electoral integrity bill), scholars have not yet systematically analysed any incipient democratic backsliding in the UK.

### **Approach, Methods and Data Collection**

There are two distinctive elements to this research. First, it will combine key elements from recent scholarship described above on backsliding (i.e. Haggard and Kaufman's 2021a) with recent work on right-wing populism (eg Muller 2021), to assess how far the contemporary conservative party is a right-wing populist party presiding over backsliding. The research will place the conservative party and recent developments in UK politics within a wider comparative politics framework of de-democratization, backsliding and right-wing populism, rather than, as is more usual, the literatures on political parties and party systems.

Second, it uses not just a gendered, but an intersectional lens, to explore both the party's contextual specificities and its commonalities with other right-wing populist parties. Foregrounding the intersecting dynamics of gender, race, class, sexuality and disability is central to understanding right-wing populism. Hyper-masculine leadership is an important element in right-wing populism and Johnson's leadership (Waylen 2021). The legacies of Empire, colonialism and slavery shape the contestation around migration, race, and English nationalism/xenophobia. How these dynamics intersect with class is also key. Equalities Minister Liz Truss has claimed for example that the white working class is the most disadvantaged section of the UK population.

The research will examine the period from the 2016 Brexit referendum, focusing on four areas central to the Conservative government and party:

1. Brexit: including the Vote Leave campaign and subsequent negotiations/policies (eg prorogation of parliament) and departure from EU, that dominated the polity after 2016.
2. Covid-19: the government response to the pandemic, a huge external shock and policy challenge, garnered criticism for corruption and cronyism as well as excessive risk-taking.
3. 'Levelling up': how important is this policy agenda in cementing support, eg from new voters in the Northern 'red wall', through the provision of economic opportunities?
4. 'Culture wars': i.e. the crusade against 'wokery' - eg BLM, trans rights and cancel culture (rather than typical right-wing populist anti-gay and anti-reproductive rights sentiment) - is this a significant element of government policy?

In each area, I will examine three elements: the leadership styles, rhetoric and ideas used by Johnson's conservative government; the policies adopted; and policy outcomes.

As this case-study research uses thick description, the methods are predominantly qualitative – process-tracing - with some basic statistical analysis. Data will be collected from: newspaper articles, tweets and speeches by conservative politicians; policy briefs, government publications, think tanks (both right-wing/partisan such as Bright Blue and others e.g. Institute for Government) and media outlets, particularly right-wing media with close contacts in government e.g. *The Spectator*, *The Telegraph* and *The Mail*. This will be triangulated with semi-structured interview data gathered from key actors in politics, think tanks and the media, accessed through existing contacts and snow-balling techniques.

### Outcomes and Outputs

This research will contribute new dimensions to several literatures. First, placing the UK Conservatives within wider de-democratization/backsliding frameworks, challenges the exceptionalism of some British politics literature. Second, building on existing analyses (eg Childs and Webb 2011; Campbell and Childs 2015), this research will provide new insights into how the contemporary party is gendered, raced and classed. Third, it will add a missing gendered/intersectional dimension to the largely gender-blind literatures on backsliding and right-wing populism and a new case-study to the burgeoning gender and populism literature.

The research will result in two articles: one on the UK and another placing the UK in a comparative framework for journals like *Political Studies* and *Comparative Politics*. As well as giving papers, I will organize comparative panels at APSA, ECPG and PSA on the intersectional politics of right wing populist governments and backsliding eg in Brazil, USA, Poland, Hungary, resulting in a journal special issue (eg in *Politics, Groups and Identities*).

### References

- Bale, T, 2012, *The Conservatives since 1945*, Oxford University Press.  
Bale, T, 2016, *The Conservative party from Thatcher to Cameron*, Polity.  
Bale, T, 2021 'Post Truth, and post Conservative?' *Constitution Unit Blog*, July 20.  
Bermeo, N, 2016, 'On Democratic Backsliding', *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1): 5-19  
Campbell R, and Childs S, 2015, 'Conservatism, feminisation and the representation of women in UK politics', *British Politics*, 10(2):148-68.  
Childs S, and Webb P, 2011, *Sex, Gender and the Conservative Party*, Palgrave.  
Grzymala– Busse, A, 2019, 'How populists rule: consequences for governance' *Polity*, 51(4).  
Haggard and Kaufman 2021a, *Backsliding*, Cambridge University Press.  
2021b, Democratic backsliding: could it happen here?', *Constitution Unit Blog*, June 10.  
Levitsky S and Ziblatt, D, (2018) *How democracies Die*, Viking Press.  
Mudde, C, 2007, *Popular Radical Right Parties*, Cambridge University Press.  
Muller, J-W, 2021, *Democracy Rules*, Allen Lane.  
Norris P, and Inglehart R, 2019, *Cultural Backlash*; Cambridge University Press.  
Waylen, G, 2021, 'Gendering Political Leadership', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(8).  
Whitehead, L, 2020, 'The hard truths of Brexit', *Journal of Democracy*, 31(2):81-95.

### Major publications

#### Books

\*2007 *Engendering Transitions: Women's mobilization, Institutions and Gender Outcomes*, Oxford University Press (winner APSA Victoria Schuck prize 2008).

1996 *Gender in Third World Politics*, Lynn Rienner/Open University Press.

#### Selected Edited Books

2017 *Gender and Informal Institutions*, Rowman and Littlefield International.

2016 *Gender, Institutions and Change in Bachelet's Chile*, Palgrave.

2013 *New Frontiers in Feminist Political Economy* (with Shirin Rai), Routledge.

2013 *Oxford Handbook on Gender and Politics*, lead editor (together with Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola and Laurel Weldon). Oxford University Press.  
 2008 *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives* (with Shirin Rai), Palgrave.  
 1998 *Gender, Politics and the State*, (with Vicky Randall) Routledge.

### Selected Chapters and Articles

\*2021. 'Gendering Political Leadership: hypermasculine leadership and Covid-19', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28, 8.  
 2021 'Gender and Global Economic Governance after the Global Financial Crisis' *Review of International Political Economy*, Early View, March.  
 2021 'When are women as corrupt as men: gender, corruption and accountability in the UK Parliamentary Expenses Scandal', *Social Politics*, 28:119-142.  
 2020 'Institutional Change in Constrained Circumstances: Gender, Resistance, and Critical Actors in the Chilean Executive' (with Silke Staab), *Latin American Politics and Society*, 62, 4.  
 2018 'Nudging for Gender Equality', *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, July, 1, 2.  
 \*2015 'Engendering the 'Crisis of Democracy': Institutions, Representation and Participation', *Government and Opposition*, 50, 3.  
 2014 'A Seat at the Table – is it enough? Gender, Multi-party negotiations and Institutional Design in South Africa and Northern Ireland', *Politics & Gender*, 10, 4.  
 2014 'Informal Institutions, Institutional Change and Gender Equality', *Political Research Quarterly*, 67, 1.  
 2013 'Gender and the Hidden Life of Institutions', (with Louise Chappell), *Public Administration*, 91.3.  
 2011 'Gendering Institutional Analysis: Understanding Democratic Transitions' in M L Krook and F Mackay (eds), *Gender, Politics and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*, Palgrave.  
 2010 'A Comparative Politics of Gender: Limits and Possibilities', *Perspectives on Politics*, 8,1.  
 2008 'Governance' in G Goertz and A Mazur (eds) *Politics, Gender and Concepts: Theory and Methodology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.114-135.  
 2007 'Women's Mobilization and Gender Outcomes in Transitions to Democracy: the South African Case', *Comparative Political Studies*, 40, 5.  
 2006 'You Still Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements Continue between feminists and IPE' , *Review of International Studies*, 32, 1.  
 2004 'Putting Governance into the Gendered Political Economy of Globalization', in Special Issue on 'Gender, Governance and Globalization', co-ed with Shirin Rai, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6, 4: 557-78.  
 2003 'Gender and Transitions: What do we know?' *Democratization*, 10, 3.  
 \*2000 'Gender and Democratic Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Democratic Consolidation in Argentina and Chile', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 32, 3.  
 \*1994 'Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics', *World Politics*, 46, 3.

### Any other matters you wish to bring to the attention of the Committee

### Duration and Timing

#### Duration of whole project

As well as forming a discrete piece of research in its own right, this work will be developed in the following ways. I will continue to integrate my research findings into the British politics subfield through conference presentations and contributions to specialist British politics journals. I also envisage this work as the jumping off point for a larger research programme. If I secure funding (e.g. from Manchester's Hallsworth and Simon conference fund or the British Academy), I will bring together country specialists and thematic scholars, eg working on LGBTQI issues, to develop intersectional perspectives on backlash and right-wing populist governments.

<b>Duration of Fellowship (3-24 months)</b>	15
<b>Proposed start date</b>	October 2022
<b>Percentage of time to be spent on the project during the fellowship</b>	75

**Details of other research projects and commitments during the Fellowship**

In the remaining 25% of my time, I would continue as Research Director for Politics and continue to supervise my PhD students (3 currently). I would also continue playing an active role on the advisory boards of the two international research programmes I am involved in (SuPWR and EUGenDem).

**Referees**

<b>Referee 1</b>	Professor Tim Bale
<b>Department : Institution</b>	Politics : Queen Mary, University of London
<b>Position</b>	Professor of Politics
<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<b>[REDACTED]</b>

<b>Referee 2</b>	Professor Sarah Childs
<b>Department : Institution</b>	Politics : Royal Holloway, University of London
<b>Position</b>	Professor of Politics
<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<b>[REDACTED]</b>

<b>Referee 3</b>	Professor Pippa Norris
<b>Department : Institution</b>	John F Kennedy School of Government : Harvard University
<b>Position</b>	Professor of Politics
<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<b>[REDACTED]</b>

**Previous and Current Applications****Previous Leverhulme awards or pending applications to the Trust**

None

**Other awards received in the last 3 years related to this research**

None

**Applications you have made or intend to make to other bodies related to this research proposal**

I intend to apply for a British Academy/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship.

<b>Where did you hear about this Leverhulme scheme?</b>	University
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**Finance****Replacement costs or loss of earnings**

**Type**

Replacement costs (salary)

**Number of months (3-24)**

15

**Percentage (%)**

75

**Justification if applying for a temporary replacement**

Teaching Replacement costs are requested for the duration of the proposal to match Pi time allocated to the Project.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Scale Point	■	■	
Basic Salary	■	■	■
London allowance	■	■	■
National Insurance	■	■	■
Superannuation	■	■	■
<b>Total</b>	■	■	■

**Research Expenses**

	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Total (£)
UK travel Research Trips London Year 1:Costs requested for 13 trips of 5 days each - Train Travel of £94.50 per trip so £1228.50  Conferences-Year 1- PSA -Travel costs of £90  Research Trips London Year 2:Costs requested for 2 trips of 5 days each - Train Travel of £94.50 per trip so £189	£1,319	£189	£1,508
Overseas travel Conference Costs:  Travel to ECPG July 23 Flights EU TBC £350; APSA Sept 23 Flights Los Angeles £950;	£1,300	£0	£1,300
Overseas subsistence Conferences -Travel to ECPG July 23 - Subsistence 4* £150; APSA Sept 23 - Subsistence 6 * £150	£1,500	£0	£1,500
Conferences Conference Registration Fees for Year 1  PSA April 23 £235  ECPG July 23 £200  APSA Sept 23 £280	£715	£0	£715
UK subsistence Research Trips London Year 1:Costs requested for 13 trips of 5 days each -	£3,550	£500	£4,050

	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Total (£)
subsistence at £50 per day as no accommodation required. Each trip costing £250 so £3250			
Conferences-Year 1- PSA -Subsistence of 2 *£150			
Research Trips London Year 2:Costs requested for 2 trips of 5 days each - subsistence at £50 per day as no accommodation required. Each trip costing £250 so £500			
	<b>£8,384</b>	<b>£689</b>	<b>£9,073</b>

### Budget Summary

	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Total (£)
Replacement costs/Loss of earnings			
Research Expenses			
<b>Total</b>			

### Study Leave Details

#### Your institution's policy for paid or unpaid study leave

The University of Manchester's usual study leave policy is that academic staff can apply for one semester's leave at the end of every six semesters (it is not an entitlement). However, all study leave was suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has now been reinstated, but I am not sure when I will next have study leave as there is now a large backlog.

#### Amount of paid study leave in the last 4 years

One semester from September to December 2018.

#### Amount of unpaid study leave in the last 4 years

None

#### Study leave eligibility in the next 3 years

I should be eligible at some point in the next three years (as under normal circumstances I would have been entitled to apply for study leave for the second semester of academic year 2021/22) but I am not sure exactly when I will be able to next have study leave.

#### Details of teaching and/or administrative activities to be replaced

All my teaching responsibilities, including:

One level Two undergraduate course, Gender and Comparative Politics (65 students)

One MA course, 'Gender and Politics in Comparative Perspective (80 students)

supervising 10 undergraduate dissertations

supervising 10 MA dissertations

Personal Tutor to undergraduate and MA students

Some administrative activities e.g.:



Chair of the School Board; departmental promotions committee.

**Institutional Approver**

I confirm on behalf of the applicant's head of department/school and this institution:

- That this institution will grant the application the period and proportion of time requested for the Fellowship
- That if replacement costs are requested the applicant will be in receipt of his/her normal salary during tenure of the award, and that the institution will accept the sum requested to provide such cover as requested in the Budget section;
- That if research expenses are requested, this request has the support of the head of department/school and institution.

<b>Name</b>	Neil Chetham
<b>Position</b>	RSO-SoSS
	