

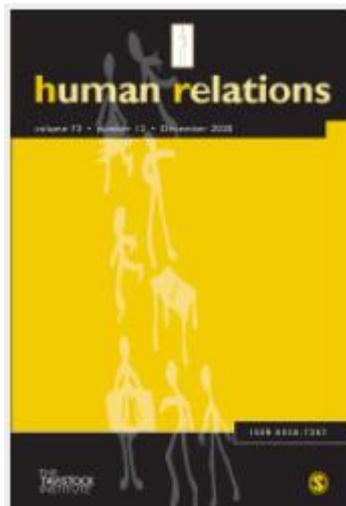
# **The politics of (in)visibility displays: Ultra-orthodox women manoeuvring within and between visibility regimes**

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## **Abstract**

How does the multiplicity of surveilling gazes affect the experience of employees subjected to a matrix of domination in organisations? Building on a case study of ultra-religious Jewish women in Israeli high-tech organisations, the article demonstrates how the intersectionality of gender and religiosity exposed them to a matrix of contradicting visibility regimes—managerial, peers, and religious community. By displaying their compliance with each visibility regime, they were constructed as hyper-subjugated employees, but simultaneously were able to use (in)visibility as a resource. Specifically, by manoeuvring between the various gazes and playing one visibility regime against the other, they challenged some of the organisational and religious norms that served to marginalize them, yet upheld their status as worthy members of both institutions. Juxtaposing theoretical insights from organisational surveillance and gender studies, the paper reveals the role of multiple surveilling gazes in both the reproduction of minorities' marginalization, and their ability to mobilize it to maintain their collective identities.

Keywords: religion and organization, marginalization, power and control, visibility regime, gender in organizations, matrix of domination, intersectionality, identity displays, surveillance and minority groups

## **Introduction**

The changing demography of the developed world in recent decades has led to the entrance of ultra-religious employees into the modern workplace (Chan-Serafin et al., 2013). Unlike Protestant Christianity, religions such as Islam and Judaism, in their ultra-conservative versions, pose demands on their members' behaviour in the public sphere that are at odds with typical modern organisational environments (Banton, 2011; Macey and Carling, 2010; Tracey, 2012). Members of these faiths often prioritize religious authorities and values over

managerial or modern values such as democracy and equal opportunity (Mirza, 2012). In an organisational context, that parallel authority structure challenges the common authoritative organisational control systems. The integration of women from these groups into organisations is even more complicated, since their communities subject them to surveillance mechanisms designed to ensure obedience to strict chastity rules and avoid working in mixed-gender environments (Erogul et al., 2016). Yet, in the workplace they are subjected to other surveillance mechanisms aimed at ensuring their compliance with the modern ideal of the devoted employee who is socially integrated with her peers and embodies the organisation's values (Acker, 1990; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Although the literature on control and disciplining in organisations has begun to explore women's subjection to multiple organisational mechanisms of surveillance (Lewis and Simpson, 2010, 2012), the theoretical analyses of the matrix of domination and how it shapes the experience and agency of employees from marginalized minorities is still in its infancy (Essers and Benschop, 2009). In this paper, we draw upon the literature on surveillance and resistance (e.g. Ball, 2010; Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Iedema et al. 2006; Sewell, 1998) and on gender and organisations (for a review, see Calás et al., 2014) to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding multiple surveilling gazes as a matrix of visibility regimes enforced on women from marginalized groups. Specifically, we explore how organisational gazes intersect with gender and religious gazes to shape the work experiences of ultra-orthodox Jewish (Haredi) women in the Israeli high-tech industry, and demonstrate how women manoeuvre within and between these visibility regimes.

Our contributions are fourfold: (1) we coin the term *matrix of visibility regimes* to account for the co-existence in a single organisation of multiple gazes and surveillance mechanisms that do not necessarily reinforce each other to enhance productivity and compliance with

an ideal-type employee, but which are contradictory and competing; (2) we advance the understanding of the dialectics between surveillance and agency by moving beyond the claim that a multiplicity of gazes will generate ‘hyper-subjugated’ subjects, and show how, by manoeuvring between the visibility regimes and playing one against the other, women can *use surveillance as a resource* and reclaim their right to be seen and noticed as worthy members of their organisation as well as the religious community; (3) following calls by scholars (e.g. Ball, 2010; Sewell and Barker, 2006) to expose the cultural embeddedness of surveillance and the various interpretations it is given by those gazed at, our study reveals ultra-Orthodox women’s interpretations of the surveillance mechanisms and demonstrates the cultural embeddedness of the gazing mechanisms; (4) we add to the growing literature on gender-intersectionality by indicating the importance of intersecting surveillance systems as a reflection of the extra-organisational matrix of domination that infiltrates the organisational lives of social minorities, and subjects them to more extensive surveilling systems (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Fotaki and Harding, 2018). In so doing, we also contribute to recent interest in gender-religiosity intersectionality within organisational studies (Tariq and Syed, 2018).

Notably, studying women from non-liberal groups poses unique challenges to Western feminist theory (Mahmood, 2001). Transnational feminism has called for acknowledging the multiplicity of perceptions, aspirations, and experiences of women from various cultures, classes and ethnicities, and has sought to give a voice to the interpretations of what they consider repression or agency (Fotaki and Harding, 2018; Mohanty, 1991). We present the experiences of ultra-religious women both as a form of internalization of control mechanisms and as a manifestation of their view on what they see as possibilities of action and agency.

## **The matrix of visibility regimes: Towards an understanding of the intersection of surveilling gazes**

Three theoretical traditions offer us a preliminary entry into an understanding of the matrix of domination—organisational, religious, and gendered—which Haredi women must navigate while working in the secular, masculine, high-tech industry: theories of organisational surveillance and agency; gender and organisation studies on in/visibility as gendered processes; and fledgling studies of gender–religiosity intersectionality.

The first (and most established) scholarship focuses on *managerial surveillance* and on how organisations exert control by shaping employees’ desires, relationships, and identities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). Adopting a Foucauldian perspective, studies in this tradition employ the notion of the ‘panoptic gaze’, detailing the various mechanisms through which organisations subjugate employees to vertical and horizontal observations, examinations, and normalizations, thus constructing observable and docile subjects (Burrell, 1988; Covalleski et al., 1998; Grey, 1994; Humphreys and Brown, 2002). Since contemporary forms of control and surveillance tend to be subtle and ambiguous, often exerted by peers rather than superiors (Sewell, 1998), employees tend to internalize the surveilling gaze and comply with its expectations through active consent and self-discipline. They may even interpret surveillance as ethical and desirable rather than oppressive and dominating (Sewell and Barker, 2006). However, despite the increasing number of surveilling mechanisms in organisations, the dynamics of multiple and contradictory mechanisms is still under-studied. Our study allows us to explore how this multiplicity simultaneously generates hyper-subjugated employees and allows for some agency.

One aspect of these dynamics relates to the penetration of extra-organisational gazers into the workplace. Most studies in this field still prioritize the analysis of organisational

surveilling mechanisms highlighting their role in gaining and sustaining employees' commitment, involvement, and loyalty to organisational goals as viewed by management (but see Holmqvist and Maravelia, 2010). In contrast, our study emphasizes the role of external gazes as they intertwine with (and contradict) organisational ones, thus allowing us to examine the contextual processes wherein surveillance takes place (Ball, 2010).

An additional aspect of the dynamic of multiple gazes refers to the control-agency dialectic. Indeed, along with the emphasis of critical management studies on surveillance as a domination mechanism, there is a vigorous debate about the extent to which employees may have agency and capacity to resist control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Knights and McCabe, 2000; Sarpong and Maclean, 2017; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2011). Critical scholars agree not only that surveillance is imperfect—thus allowing space for evading and resisting—but also that compliance and agency should be examined as a dialectic process rather than a binary opposition (Fleming and Spicer, 2007). Among the several means for coping with surveillance, evading control and surveillance is seen as a particular type of resistance—one that does not reiterate power but rather modifies, challenges, reconfigures, or subverts it. In this context, it is still unknown whether multiple gazes generate hyper-subjugated and docile employees or enable resistance, and how employees' social positions affect their agency.

A second strand of theories studying *gender and organisations* (e.g., Calás et al., 2014; Fotaki and Harding, 2018) has added a gendered layer to our understanding of organisational discipline and surveillance practices, arguing that surveillance is never gender-neutral (Lewis and Simpson, 2010, 2012). We build on this work to conceptualize the matrix of the visibility regime by exposing the multiple and contradictory standards and norms, as well as the multiplicity of gazers, including the 'male gaze' that imposes bodily and sexuality regulations, presenting women as observable subjects and objects of

men's pleasure (Foucault, 1978; Koskela, 2012; Trethewey, 1999). While in most organisational theories the 'ideal worker' is presented as gender neutral, the standards of 'normality' against which individuals in organisations are compared and judged are often masculine (Acker, 1990). Normative professional behaviours, especially in top positions, are stereotypically masculine, exposing women who cannot meet the required standard to exclusion, improvement, or correction, so that any deviation from the ideal model forces women into micro-tactics of visibility and invisibility (Lewis and Simpson, 2012:146). Women can either conceal their femininity, adhere to the masculine standard, and try to 'match' the masculine norms of the organisation's highest echelons—thereby perpetuating those norms' legitimacy—or they can compromise their professional goals and stay in the organisation's 'feminine spheres', where their femininity is unobtrusive. In Lewis and Simpson's (2012) view, women's display of femininity or sexuality in masculine environments should be understood as a mechanism of resistance that exposes them to discipline, but simultaneously makes visible masculine standards.

By indicating ways in which employees display their 'other' identity—in itself an act of resistance (see also Gagnon and Collinson, 2017)—Lewis and Simpson laid the foundation for understanding the micro-tactics that allow women to manoeuvre within and between the matrix of visibility regimes '(in)visibility display.' However, despite their emphasis on women's visibility as a complex and ambivalent construct in organisations, they do not directly refer to visibility regimes and the unique dynamics enabled through the multiplicity of gazes, nor do they address the additional gazes directed at women from minority and/or religious groups.

Scholars of gender and organisations have recently argued for the *gender-intersectionality* perspective, to include the experiences of members of minority groups into organisational studies (Acker, 2006; Collins and Bilge, 2016; Fotaki and Harding, 2018). Recognizing the

different experiences of individuals affiliated with various identity groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, and religiosity) and the unique matrix of domination to which they are subjected (Hill-Collins, 1990), scholars of intersectionality examined how gender and other social categories co-construct each other, and reinforce women's repression and marginalization through such intersecting mechanisms of control (Choo and Ferree, 2010). While religiosity is often listed as a relevant identity category for studying gender intersectionality (e.g., Tariq and Syed, 2018), organisational studies have yet to explore in depth this important intersection and its consequences. However, assumptions of disenchantment and rationalization undergird organisations, making the secular, rational man—whose devotion to the organisation is not compromised by religious demands of time and compliance with another authority—the ideal worker.

The visibility of women's religiosity—especially Muslim women in Europe—has attracted the attention of scholars from other disciplines (MacLeod, 1992; Mirza, 2012). These scholars argued that the decision to wear visibly religious accoutrements, such as the hijab, in non-Muslim public spaces, is a micro-tactic of visibility often intended to display Muslim presence in public spaces as unquestioned (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Garbin, 2013). However, visible religious symbols such as the hijab, skullcap, turban, bisht, thobe, and even beards, are often considered inappropriate professional attire that present their bearers as organisational 'others' (Tracey, 2012). As women are often considered the bearers of religious piety, and since most radical religious groups consider women's modesty and controlled sexuality a significant part of religious life, when women of radical religious groups join modern organisations, they encounter a third type of gaze that monitors not only their productivity and sexuality, but also their religious devotion (Raz and Tzruya, 2018). Further, in an age of diversity management and antidiscrimination policies, the radical religious discourse that justifies gender differences renders women of radical

religious groups the ultimate organisational Other. When they enter the modern Western labour market, they not only encounter the managerial and peer gazes—which are never gender-neutral—but are also subjected to their own religious community’s gazes that stand at odds with professional norms.

Our study explores ultra-religious women’s experiences of three intersecting gazes that impose conflicting expectations upon them: the religious community gaze, managerial gaze, and peers’ gaze, and theorizes the role of multiple gazes and matrix of visibility regimes in subjugating and disciplining minority groups’ conduct within organisations.

## **Methodology**

To examine how ultra-religious women manoeuvre between various gazes directed at them and how they enact their (in)visibility at work, we used an inductive, qualitative case-study methodology that is well-suited for examining the point of view of individuals acting within a frame of meaning (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). Based on the interpretations and experiences of 40 ultra-orthodox women employed in Israel’s high-tech industry, we were able to explore their various (in)visibility displays and manoeuvres.

### *The case*

The Haredi community comprises 10% of Israel’s population and is an enclaved society engaged in constant attempts to demarcate its boundaries vis-à-vis other Jewish groups. Unlike Christianity, which is commonly seen as a private value system, the boundaries of Haredi affiliation are institutionalized and reinforced by a set of community rules and practices marking a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. Supported by the state, most Haredi men do not participate in the labour market, devoting themselves instead to full-time religious studies, while women are the main breadwinners for their large families. The combination of low-income, large households, and the dwindling number of available

jobs within the community has placed Haredi families at risk of poverty and forced women aspiring to provide for their families to seek jobs outside the community, in the secular sphere, where salaries are much higher (especially in the high-tech industry; see Raz and Tzruya, 2018). Given the gender segregation and hierarchical structure of the Haredi community—where women are subjected to a highly traditional patriarchal authority, strict rules of chastity aimed at regulating their sexuality, and constant surveillance of their behaviour and bodily appearance—the modern work environment poses many challenges for them, especially regarding their interactions with men (for similar restrictions concerning Muslim women, see Erogul et al., 2016). Nonetheless, in recent years more women have entered the secular job market, developing career aspirations that contradict the Haredi work ethos, according to which work is of secondary concern. This is especially true in the Israeli high-tech industry, which is amply populated with young people who work together many hours a day in an open, lively work environment.

Rabbis and others in the community accordingly frown on women’s integration into the tech industry. They consider it a risky solution for supporting families, and fear it could lead to assimilation, secularization, and modernization. To ensure women’s chastity and regulate their sexuality in a secular, mixed-gender environment, rabbis published a list of prohibitions. See table 1.

**Table 1: A partial list of prohibitions enforced on Haredi women**

Male and female employees shall not converse with each other about subjects that do not directly touch on their function (news, politics, etc.). Caution must be taken against conversations on non-work matters even during random encounters.
Men and women shall not address one another by first names or nicknames.
Personal greetings such as “hi there” and “see you later” are forbidden.
When a manager wishes to praise a female employee for her dedication, he can praise work that was properly executed, but must not praise her personally.

Whenever possible, it is appropriate to avoid passing objects from hand to hand, and rather to place them on a table.
Men and women should not perform any kind of service for one another (such as buying food from the grocery for a man, or offering food she has brought from home).
Separate rooms should be allocated to male and female employees. If this is impossible, they should sit at separate desks with a considerable distance between them.
Male and female employees must not eat together.
No parties, events, or trips may be held for employees, and attending them is forbidden.
A male employee may not transport a female employee/s in his car.
Women are prohibited from coming to work in extravagant dress... they must wear minimal jewellery and perfume and anything that attracts attention.
Phone-calls between male and female employees outside work-hours should be avoided, even those regarding work matters.

As new employees, most Haredi women work in open cubicles and in gender-segregated areas where they are often supervised by an inspector who is hired by their community to ensure that employers provide a religion-friendly environment and that women obey religious rules. Due to their designated dress code, which includes head covering, long skirts, and fully covered arms and legs, their otherness is always visible in a secular organisation. While many women move to mixed-gender areas after a few years, where they work with secular peers and are eligible for promotion and higher salaries, some still forego these career opportunities to stay in the highly monitored areas (Raz and Tzruya, 2018).

#### *Data collection*

This article is based on 40 interviews with Haredi women employed in five leading companies in the Israeli high-tech industry. The interviews were held in their workplaces, in a private conference room; each lasted between one and two hours and was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Despite the relative homogeneity of the group of

women, we tried to reduce similarity biases by snowball-sampling women from a variety of hierarchical positions (10 new arrivals, 18 junior employees, and 12 senior employees in managerial positions), ages (20 women under age 25, 13 women aged 25–35, and 7 over 35), and hometowns (15 from religious cities and 25 from mixed cities); 25 of them worked in secluded software laboratories and 15 in gender-mixed areas.

The interviews were semi-structured, but interviewees were encouraged to add information by telling stories, on the assumption that these could enrich the data. The interviewees' preoccupation with visibility was something they raised of their own accord.

In line with feminist methodology (Reinharz and Davidson, 1992), we acknowledge the unavoidable power structure within which our study took place. As secular women in a position that our interviewees could have seen as a powerful, our observations may have comprised a third authoritative gaze in the matrix of visibility regimes. We attempted to resolve these issues by ensuring that participation in our study was grounded on informed consent and fulfilled each interviewee's request as to the interview's place and time, and the questions she felt comfortable answering. To protect confidentiality, all interviewees were assigned pseudonyms. Further, to reduce the social desirability bias associated with social inequality between interviewers and interviewees, we also employed three younger research assistants (sociology students) from religious backgrounds to conduct 20% of the interviews, predominantly with younger interviewees who were otherwise more likely to experience the power gaps between us as interviewers and themselves. We trained them and ensured they followed the interview schedule and avoided biases deriving from different interviewing styles. Comparing the recorded interviews they conducted elicited no systematic or significant differences between the way interviewees shared their experiences with us and with them.

In addition to the interviews, twenty observations with an average duration of three hours were documented. They were conducted during the organisation's daily routine and in areas where Haredi women work, documenting informal talks and surveillance practices targeting Haredi women, both by the organisation and the Haredi inspector.

### *Data analysis*

We based our analysis on an interpretative approach and a hermeneutic reading that involves searching for patterns in order to decipher meanings (Age, 2011). Collecting data from both interviews and observations allowed us to frame the surveillance practices and build a grounded theory that emerged from the field (Charmaz, 2014). Our methodology involved sifting, charting, and sorting material by key themes, and enabled new issues and theoretical framings to emerge from the data. This open-ended yet systematic approach allowed us to reach beyond induction and an iterative process of data collection to reconsider our theoretical framework, and to consider visibility as our main framework for analysis.

Our in-depth analysis of the quotes related to surveillance and visibility revealed that the interviewees' interpretation of surveillance and visibility was very different from our own (as two secular women) and far more complex. After realizing that women's visibility displays are oriented towards specific audiences, we classified all quotes into three main categories according to the 'audience' whom the women target (see also Van Laer and Janssens, 2014). Those categories proved significant for understanding how the women negotiated the conflicting demands and expectations of them.

During the process, we tried to surface the interviewees' point of view by corroborating and comparing our insights with our research assistants. Since we saw our interviewees as informed and knowledgeable interpreters of their own world, we also shared our insights

with a few interviewees who were interested in them, ensuring that our interpretations mirrored theirs.

### **Findings: Displaying (in)visibility**

Our data suggest that Haredi women in secular environments were subjected to a matrix of two contradictory visibility regimes, organisational and religious, both gendered in nature. Each regime presented demands imposed by three main disciplining agents/gazers: the religious community and its authority system; employers; and peers. Below we depict the disciplinary norms of each of the three gazers and the (in)visibility displays Haredi women employed as micro-tactics to cope with, evade, and challenge those gazes.

#### **(In)visibility displays of piety: The gaze of the religious community**

The religious visibility regime consisted of the surveilling gazes of the rabbinical authority, Haredi women's families, and their friends. In that regime, displaying piety at work was aimed at allaying the community's concerns that the encounter with secular society would compromise their faith, chastity, and loyalty to the community. This was evident in Abigail's (21, married) justification of the religious gaze. She described how young Haredi women working in high-tech risked harm to their matchmaking prospects:

You're exposed to a very different environment from what we're used to.... there are a lot of problems with potential matches...thus it's good that external means [are employed] to ensure that young women won't be tempted to stray from our path.

And Haya (22, married) reinforced the need for supervision:

Because my family is newly religious, they want to be accepted in the Haredi community, to prove they're Haredi, so why does their daughter work in secular high-tech?...So I must prove that things are under control.

Like all our interviewees, Abigail and Haya were aware of their gendered role as religious women throughout the interview. They stated that the religious supervision is an efficient means of protecting them from the stigma associated with the secular environment. Many of them measured their piety against the list of prohibitions (see the Methodology section), and the most desirable way of avoiding temptations and displaying religious piety at work took the form of working in gender-segregated areas. They said those areas were a safe environment for them, despite the lower wages paid there. Shirley (22, single) stated:

Working in a Haredi environment is better for us: maternity leave, eight-hour working days; never mind what happens [at work], you go home after eight hours... The salary in the mixed areas is tempting, but...it was important for my father that I work in a segregated space, especially while I'm still single. If I were married, it's different. I myself didn't want to work in a non-religious place till I get married...

Rachel (25, married), described by her friends as a role-model for devoted piety, added:

My husband and I asked a rabbi whether I can work here, and only after he said that it is only for the money, I agreed. He explained that social connections are forbidden... I often thought I should leave because of all the uncomfortable situations I encounter. I refuse to sit with men, so I requested a private space, but I always ask the rabbi for the most rigorous rules.

These quotes show the significance attributed to the rabbinical gaze, and suggest that for our interviewees, the strict rules are a way to overcome the contradictions of being both a Haredi woman and an employee in the secular high-tech sector. Sheina (40, married, a manager) compared herself to Rachel, her role-model for strong religious devotion, to evaluate her own piety:

As a manager, men often approach me, share stories which I don't want to hear... I can't say I'm doing OK in this sense [adhering to religious restrictions]. This is the reason I

was so impressed with Rachel... Look at her, she doesn't socialize with [secular] people... so she's able to maintain her protected state.

Although she herself was unable to adhere to the standard, Sheina's words suggest that she willingly embraced the Haredi rules. Instead of reinforcing the organisational norms to which she should have adhered as a manager, she invoked the ascetic employee as the desired role-model, turning the external religious gaze into an organisational one.

Despite the rigidity of Haredi rules, most interviewees did not say that these rules were constraints imposed on them; rather, they said that their visible compliance with the rules was an advantage that offered them an effective means of demonstrating their piety. Lilian (20, single) referred to cubicles as an effective means of displaying piety (rather than as a surveillance tool):

Cubicles are great for Haredi women. It's a benefit. It doesn't bother me that someone can look at me. On the contrary, since we are not allowed to surf the internet, we use it only for work. This way you know that at any moment someone could enter, and you cannot surf websites that you'd be ashamed of.

The visibility of Haredi women in cubicles allowed them to display their compliance with the strict religious rules and reclaim their community's membership, despite their career choice. By embracing the community's gaze directed at them, they made their compliance visible to all and were able to be recognized as 'normative' members of their community, or, in Lewis and Simpson's (2010) words, 'to occupy the norm' (p. 5).

Along with their visible compliance with the religious gaze, however, our interviewees also recounted unique moments of resistance in which they invisibly challenged Haredi norms. One such example is reflected in the words of Rada (25, married), who moved from the supervised segregated spaces to the gender-mixed area:

I moved here although they did frighten us in the beginning, and many girls didn't even try to work in secular organisations... but there's no way they can check it. My husband said "Do it. You already did what they wanted. Who knows what you do?"

After displaying her piety, Rada, encouraged by her husband, was able to move to the gender-mixed areas where she earned a higher salary and was removed from the inspector's gaze (and, in this respect, became less visible to the religious gaze). However, such a move was possible only after displaying her loyalty to the community and consequently being labelled as a legitimate member of the community. Notably, moving to the gender-mixed areas should be seen an act of resistance both because women would no longer be watched by the inspector and because of the rabbis' fear of women's growing financial independence, which might result in altering the community's gendered power relations. This example reflects what Kandiyoti (1988) termed 'patriarchal bargains', a tactic enabling women to comply with patriarchal dictates in order to gain power and freedom in other areas. Interestingly, such 'bargains' not only corroborate the fact that compliance and resistance are tightly entangled but, in this case, they simultaneously involve visibility and invisibility, since women were required to clearly display their submissiveness, but in return were able to conceal invisible actions that challenge traditional power relations.

Other examples of deviations from the religious norm were mentioned during the interviews. First, although they presented a passive position regarding their husbands, some women became more influential in family decisions due to their growing self-confidence ("My children see how I enjoy work, and my daughter asks me 'what should I do when I grow up?', so now I'm saying to her 'you can do whatever you want'... I didn't used to say such things"). Second, while women justified the traditional division of labour at home and said they would never neglect their maternal duties, in fact their husbands became more involved in household and childcare responsibilities due to their long workday ("Our

husbands have changed since we work here. We learn software and they learn how to change nappies”, and “My husband helps with the children. He takes them to school. He isn’t happy about it, but there’s nothing else to do. I work long hours. He’s a full partner at home and this isn’t something that’s common in our society’). Third, while many consulted rabbis about their decision, they also tended to consult those rabbis likely to support their choices (‘Is it allowed to do what I’m doing here? Well, it depends which rabbi you ask. Each of us makes her own decisions after a while’). Finally, though all of them publicly praised modesty and austerity as desirable ideals, and were secretive about their high salaries (“Only my husband knows how much I earn”), some of them often sidestepped the rigid religious rules (“I’m a friendly person. I can’t pretend to be tough and not answer men who talk to me or make jokes, so I cooperate with it more than I think I should”). These quotes reflect the intrusion of the religious gaze into the organisation, and the ways it simultaneously forces compliance and allows agency.

**(In)visibility displays of effectiveness and loyalty: The employers’ gaze**

The second visibility regime imposed upon Haredi women was that of their employers. These employers enjoyed the advantages of Haredi women’s compliance with the religious visibility regime because it provided them with relatively inexpensive and docile employees (Raz and and Tzruya, 2018). However, employers also had to cope with shorter working hours and other restrictions on work processes (such as refusing to work on weekends or to travel abroad). Moreover, the rabbinical demand to locate Haredi women in gender-segregated spaces added financial and managerial burdens for employers, forcing them to invest in building designated spaces and to compromise on their workforce’s social integration. Haredi interviewees reported that as they did not conform to the ideal male model of a high-tech employee who devotes himself exclusively to work (Acker, 1990;

Kunda, 1992), their loyalty to the organisation was questioned constantly. They also said that they often felt like the ultimate organisational ‘other,’ or aliens, in their terms, embodying the intersection of two marginalized groups in the high-tech industry: women and Haredi.

Seeing themselves as responsible not only for their own careers, but for the future careers of other community members, many of our interviewees deemed it important to engage in what Van den Brink and Stobbe (2009) label ‘doing visibility’, that is, showing their employers that they were industrious employees deserving of appreciation. To display their unique form of loyalty and availability, they did not resist surveillance by subversive acts of ‘working under the radar’ (as is common in most organisations; see, e.g., Sarpong and Maclean, 2017). Instead, they made sure that their employers noticed that they did not spend time chatting, taking breaks, going out to lunch or drinking coffee, or calling home. To cite an extreme example: when we interviewed them at work (with their employers’ approval), they reported back to their employers that they had spent time in the interview. However, Haredi women could not hide their religious identity and make their otherness invisible, as is often the case with female managers (Kanter, 1977), since the religious visibility regime forbade them from trying to assimilate. Thus, the matrix of visibility regimes, religious and organisational, pushed them to make conscious efforts to challenge the organisational norm that contrasts religious piety with professionalism. Such conspicuous displays of assiduousness, while emphasizing religious otherness, constituted, in Lewis and Simpson’s (2012) terms, a form of resistance, as it challenged the strong affinity between secularism and the ideal worker model. Shirley explained the Haredi’s advantage over secular employees:

We don't take 'cigarette breaks' [as secular people do]... We stay with our food by the computer, keep working... I often speak with a client on Skype and see that he's on ynet [a news site]. We don't do that.

The common use of the word 'we' in interviews may imply that Shirley, like other interviewees, felt obligated to speak on behalf of all Haredi employees and to present them as devoted employees despite the restrictions imposed on them by their religiosity, and despite their deviance from the high-tech norms. In a similar vein, Norma (31, married) wanted to convince her boss of her professional devotion:

We bring our own food and eat at the computer, to do as much work as possible...We never close the door to our room. We have to work. That's good because we show that we are constantly available, so we can't close the door whenever we want.

Emily (22, married) elaborated:

As far as I'm concerned, cubicles are the best thing. I come here to work. I'm in a workplace, not at home...It's important for my manager and I agree with him.

These quotes reinforce the role of visible displays of diligence in claiming the right to be seen without trying to evade the managerial gaze and even rationalizing it as 'the best thing for them'. Although compliance with and internalization of the managerial gaze are common in other organisational contexts, in this case they also replicated their status as observable subjects within a patriarchal community in the new secular environment by transferring the gazing authority usually assigned to male figures in their lives (e.g., fathers, husbands, rabbis) to other men in the secular organisation, specifically, male managers. As long as this gaze was not a sexualized male gaze, it was considered legitimate. To neutralize the sexualized male gaze, they asserted that they were not allowed to be seen as individual women, but rather as a group. As a group of women who did not adhere to the ideal-type

employee, their otherness became very visible, but at the same time they were able to reject the male gaze directed at their sexuality and corporeality. Simone (30, married) explained:

We came here as a group. It protected us... from interacting with men. Nobody approached us and we helped each other with the religious issues.

Several of our interviewees corroborated this quote, telling us that being part of a group protected them from 'being seen as individuals', something that they saw as deviating from the religious dictates expected of them as women who were 'vulnerable' in a masculine work environment. Their invisibility as individual women was what legitimized their employment outside the community's direct gaze, and thus they could signal that they are both good employees and 'standard' Haredi woman.

The power of the 'matrix of visibility regimes' was further reinforced by the fact that the (secular) organisational management collaborated with the rabbinical authority in order to legitimize their employment. For instance, husbands were allowed to visit the workplace unannounced, and clear-glass windows were installed to facilitate the inspectors' gaze, allowing them to ensure that the women adhered to religious dictates. While the secular management of the high-tech organisation usually forbids entrance to any visitors, in this case, it cooperated with religious leaders by allowing free access to men who extended their control over these women beyond the boundaries of their community, thus perpetuating gender power relations within and outside the organisation.

Yet, Haredi women made tremendous efforts to present an *alternative* ideal model of a diligent employee without compromising their religiosity. The next intriguing quote by Anabel (married, 21) exemplifies their struggle to maintain the ideal employee image despite religious restrictions:

One of the clients asked my friend to stay late to finish something, so she consulted her husband and the rabbi and then said: "I'm not happy to stay, but I also have a [religious]

problem with staying. If I stay and finish the work for you, you will continue working on Saturday [a day on which religious Jews are not allowed to work or generate work for other Jews], and I can't have that happen, because then I'll be responsible for your working on Saturday, and you are Jewish too". It was brave of her, because he is a client who must be kept satisfied.

Instead of hiding her religiosity and using an alternative, more common excuse for her refusal to work overtime, Anabel's friend made her Haredi identity highly visible and still managed to maintain the ideal worker image. By simultaneously embodying the diligent worker and the pious Haredi woman, our interviewees challenged the somewhat invisible organisational (and Haredi) norm that presents ultra-religiosity and significant professional achievements as inherently contradictory.

### **(In)visibility displays of distinctiveness: The peers' gaze**

A third visibility regime was that of the secular peers, to whom they displayed their distinctiveness while evading their scrutiny. The most common example was avoiding private celebrations held in the workplace. Melina (25, married) explained:

There are social events they invite us to, trips and things like that. I don't go. That was one of the conditions when I got here; that they won't oblige me or try to convince me... If I'd gone on such a trip, I wouldn't be able to converse with people and they would have approached me and wanted to talk. To be [silent]—that looks terrible and being an 'ice cube' isn't appropriate either. So, I don't go at all.

Critical scholars have already revealed the significant role of peer groups' scrutiny in reinforcing and legitimizing workplace standards and intensifying organisational control. They have suggested that employees of minority groups may be even more exposed to their peer group's 'petty-tyranny' reinforcing marginalization processes in organisations

(Sewell, 1998; 2012). As Sewell (1998) suggested, ‘those who stand out from the crowd, either as “good” workers or “bad” workers, will receive the scrutiny of their peers and then be subjected to sanction or reward and any other forces of normalization determined by the team’ (p. 411). It is in this context that we understand Haredi women’s reluctance to integrate into social groups that would force them to change their ways. Judith (26, married) acknowledged her secular peers’ good intentions, but mentioned the ‘risks’ those intentions might generate for Haredi women:

Many secular people are certain we’re foreign creatures, a creature with a horn or a tail... we too were told that all secular people are drunk and drugged... so they come to ask questions... It happened to me once that a secular man tried to develop small talk with me because he didn’t know anything about our community, so I had to set a boundary ... It’s like with children... If someone trespasses this ‘distance,’ then I stop it, but I don’t do it bluntly and I don’t tell anyone off, saying that what he did is wrong. I say something that cannot be further developed... just letting him feel it... This way they understand that we are different.

While organisational literature sees peers’ gaze as a relatively invisible form of control—because it is considered a bottom-up initiative by individuals rather than top-down imposed control (Sewell, 1998)—Judith’s words suggest that even the allegedly well-meaning effort was interpreted as threatening the Haredi lifestyle. As the inclusion of minority groups is often conditioned on their accepting standard social interactions that are culture-specific, deviation from that standard further reinforces the otherness of minority group members or, in our case, Haredi women. The oddity of the seemingly normative practice of workplace socials in the eyes of the Haredi women became clearer from Rada’s words:

We participate in team meetings and professional lectures, but we sit together. If it’s some kind of a birthday party we don’t participate... I remember that when we received

the first email invitation, we didn't understand it was a birthday party. We didn't get the idea. We got there and we saw some of them [peers] sitting on the desks, some sitting on chairs, laughing, eating, gossiping. Immediately, all of us turned around and left.

While evading social interactions and peers' social control, Rada also reinforced the difference between social engagement and work-related meetings. In so doing, she, like most other interviewees, displayed her devotion to her community role, but challenged the 'invisible' organisational norm that links social engagement with professional performance (Gabriel, 1999). To be sure, with three notable exceptions of veteran and relatively senior women, all our interviewees claimed to voluntarily avoid social engagement. In describing the training process conducted by the religious inspector, Tracey (20, single) described the role of the religious gaze in securing this result:

During our training we had a woman who once worked in a mixed environment. She told us that her boss knew that she wouldn't attend social events, only professional, and he respected that. But then a new group of girls arrived... they decided together that they will not attend social events, but one of them decided to go. She said that everything was strictly kosher [Haredi dietary rules], but as soon as she transgressed, they [secular people] realized that we could attend, if we want... So, the rabbi said, and he's right, you don't protect only yourselves, you protect our entire community.

Tracey's story emphasized how the matrix of visibility regimes legitimizes invisibility displays. In this case, the presence of the religious gaze allowed Haredi women to evade their peers' disciplining gaze and accept the consequences of social awkwardness as a positive status symbol in the context of their community.

Some interviewees mentioned other practices that were aimed at evading secular peers' gaze and social interactions, and displaying distinctiveness. These included avoiding any decoration of their work station, which is common in many secular workplaces where

employees use domestication of space to signal their distinctiveness and colonize their surroundings (Wasserman and Frenkel, 2015). For instance, they ensured that no personal items were exhibited in their cubicles and that clear boundaries were established between work (secular) and home (religious). By keeping their cubicles un-personalized, they marked themselves as ‘other’ and signalled their wish to remain isolated. Rosa (25, married) exemplified this:

I don’t have any personal items in my cubicle... because I don’t want people to see and talk to me about it... This is a place of work... I’d feel very uncomfortable if someone were to give me a compliment that’s not work-related... This is unusual here.

Norma added:

[If I could choose a colour for my cubicle] I wouldn’t choose a particular colour, perhaps a colour that blends with the surroundings and doesn’t stand out too much. If all the cubicles around me were white, then I’d want my cubicle to be white, too.

As these quotes clearly show, many of our interviewees attempted to make their personal lives invisible to other organisation members. Their visibility in the open-space cubicles facilitated the display of their religious identity, and all passers-by could easily note the ascetic design that is atypical of high-tech environments. By choosing anaemic colours for their work-stations, they were able to extend their religious selves into the secular workspace and mark their surroundings as a Haredi space. Further, due to their unique dress code, it was impossible to ignore them even if they were located in peripheral areas within the organisation. Thus, they were not only able to display their ‘otherness’, but also to appropriate their surroundings and mark them as their own. In Lewis’s (2008) terms, they created a ‘differential separate space’ that was better suited to them not only emotionally, but also culturally. Here again, Haredi women said they aspired to blend into their surroundings, to be invisible as individuals, but to be noticed and perceived as a group.

Thus, the differential space was also a space of mutual empowerment for Haredi women, since they could feel safer as a group. In line with Sewell's (1998) argument of minority members' over-exposure to peers' disciplining gaze, Haredi women stated that their secular peers' gaze was an intrusive gaze directed at them as visibly different minority members. However, while Sewell's argument that the combination of vertical and horizontal control systems increases employees' subjugation, our data suggest that the parallel existence of two different vertical control systems—the organisational one and the religious one—offers ways for employees to evade their peers' control, at least to some extent.

### **Discussion: Intersecting visibility regimes: overlaps, tensions, and contradictions**

This article has examined the intersection of three visibility regimes enforced on a group of marginalized ultra-religious Jewish (Haredi) women employed in the Israeli high-tech industry and how they manoeuvre within this matrix of visibility regimes. We demonstrated how they reconcile the conflicting demands of their identity groups (as employees and members of a secluded, anti-modern community), and at the same time employ a wide variety of visibility and invisibility strategies to improve their position in both the professional and religious communities.

These findings offer three overarching insights into the politics of visibility in three different ways: an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of multiple, *contradictory* visibility regimes and surveillance mechanisms within a single organisation and the ways in which this multiplicity is used as a resource in securing subjects' agency; the socio-cultural and political embeddedness of organisational surveillance mechanisms; and the significance of various visibility regimes in the construction of intersectional identities and in gendered power relations. These points are further elaborated below.

### *The matrix of visibility regimes and surveillance as a resource*

Drawing on critical theory on surveillance and visibility, our findings highlight the complex implications of multiple surveillance mechanisms enforced upon marginalized groups. While previous Foucault-inspired studies on surveillance in organisations have examined the power of multiple gazes—vertical, horizontal, or external (Ball, 2010; Sewell, 1998; Holmqvist and Maravelia, 2010)—that jointly operate to generate docile subjects, our study emphasized the potential contradictions between them, allowing some space for agency and subsequent manoeuvres between the various gazes. We thus argue that the contradictions encapsulated in the multiplicity of visibility regimes have two contrasting consequences: on the one hand, they generate hyper-subjugated employees who are exposed not only to the managerial gaze, but also to other gazes directed at them. This multiplicity expands organisational surveillance, subjecting additional aspects of employees' lives and identities—that are not necessarily part of the organisational demands to increase productivity and loyalty—to the organisational control system. On the other hand, the legitimacy bestowed upon these 'other' gazes by the organisation allows workers to play one visibility regime against the other. As a result, they are able to block and resist some of the demands and expectations from all regimes.

In our case, by displaying their submission to the religious visibility regime, Haredi women were able to moderate some of the organisation's demands while maintaining their image as devoted employees, although they did not fully comply with the ordinary organisational working schedule and the requirement for social integration. At the same time, by partly complying with the managerial visibility regime, they could justify their divergence from the strict religious community's gendered standards. The infiltration of an external surveillance mechanism that contradicted the organisational norms and expectations enabled Haredi women to use surveillance not only to reclaim their right to be seen and

noticed as worthy members of several groups, but also to choose how, when, and to what extent to submit themselves to each visibility regime. In that respect, our research has broadened previous studies arguing that resistance is also enabled through consent (Ashcraft, 2005), but in our case resistance was enabled due to the compliance with multiple, contradictory surveillance mechanisms. We thus challenge the view of surveillance and visibility as a mere tool of discipline and argue that surveillance may be used as a resource that allows employees, who are subjected to multiple and contradictory visibility regimes, to gain some agency even in highly supervised circumstances.

### *Surveillance in a culturally embedded context*

In line with Sewell and Barker (2006), we have demonstrated that the meanings employees assign to surveillance mechanisms are always embedded in a specific organisational context. Broadening this insight, our study has shown that these organisational contexts often reflect wider socio-cultural and political power relations that infiltrate everyday organisational life. Our findings have indicated how the unique relations between various social groups outside the organisation and the socio-political contexts that shape labour relations and employment patterns define the meanings that are assigned to surveillance as well as the scope of agency enabled therein.

In our case, the interdependence between the religious community, which needs to provide women with stable jobs, and the employers in the high-tech industry, who require a relatively cheap and obedient labour force, shapes the specific patterns of surveillance and the meanings attributed to them. For instance, seeing religious supervision as an integral part of religious piety makes surveillance taken for granted and even desirable for these women. Further, the obligation that Haredi women feel to protect their community, on the one hand, and the community's ability to continue sending Haredi women to the high-tech

industry, on the other, grants the managerial gaze a moral value, which is desirable for the Haredi community as well. Similarly, the socio-political context also shapes the patterns of resistance available for women. For example, by mobilizing their religious affiliation they can refuse to participate in social events and avoid peer and managerial gazes despite the importance that management assigns to these events.

The interrelations between employers and the religious community led each 'gazer' to be aware of the other and consequently to the mutual acceptance and legitimization of the other's demands. In this context, it is important to note that in the Israeli case, the religious community has great political power; it can negotiate with secular employers and dictate strict religious surveillance mechanisms. Since employers get state incentives when implementing diversity policies by hiring Haredi employees, and since these employees are much cheaper than secular ones, they are willing to accept the infiltration of the religious gaze, even at the expense of the managerial one. As a result, employers find it much more difficult to resist the religious surveillance.

In highlighting the cultural embeddedness of surveillance mechanisms in the broader socio-political context, we answer Ball's (2010) call to deepen understandings of the contextual meanings assigned to surveillance, adding also the infiltration of broader political power relations into the organisation. In attempting to theorize these findings and to generalize from our case study to other cultural contexts, we argue that specific meanings assigned to visibility and surveillance are not only interpreted as good or bad in a specific cultural context, but also define what is being gazed at, and what is acceptable.

### ***Surveillance, religiosity, and gender-intersectionality***

Highlighting the role of the broader socio-political and cultural context in shaping the organisational matrix of visibility regimes contributes an enhanced understanding of

gender intersectionality in organisations in general, and of gender-religiosity intersectionality in particular. While the existing literature on gender intersectionality calls attention to the multiplicity of systems of control and intersecting exclusionary ideologies (known as the matrix of domination) that reproduce and amplify othering processes of women from marginalized groups (Hill-Collins, 1990), our findings demonstrated how this matrix of domination is being enacted within organisations through multiple surveilling gazes. Moreover, in line with existing studies of the ways in which gender identities are constructed within organisations (Calás et al., 2014), our study has revealed the role of organisational practices and surveilling mechanisms in shaping specific gender-religiosity intersecting *identities*. These intersecting identities then seep out towards the extra-organisational sphere to shape professional-religious women's identities and legitimate behaviours.

In our case, the simultaneity of managerial, religious, male, and team gazes repeatedly illuminated the boundaries of acceptable religious and professional conducts within and outside the organisation. Construing intersectional identities as dynamic and emerging from the matrix of domination, we showed that under these multiple gazes, ultra-orthodox women, individually and collectively, have assigned new meanings to religiosity and professionalism. Since the gazes were directed at them as a group, they developed collective strategies to cope with the contradictory expectations, and therefore reinforced their unique group identity and felt empowered despite the multiple restrictions imposed upon them.

In this respect, our study also highlights the significance of religion and religiosity in organisations. While the literature on intersectionality within organisations rarely addresses the role of religion in the matrix of domination and in women's marginalization (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Collins and Bilge, 2016), our study calls attention to the unique

demands and prohibitions of some religious communities regarding their female members, especially when they cross the community borders and enter the modern secular job market. The growing integration of ultra-religious women within the modern workforce provides an opportunity to theorize the intersectionality of gender and religion in organisations, while bracketing the interchangeability of religiosity, ethnicity, and immigration that characterizes other ultra-religious women across the world (see the case of Muslim women in Europe in Essers and Benschop, 2009; Van Laer and Janssens, 2014). Since the clash between ultra-religious ideologies and practices and modern organisational life has great significance in shaping the opportunities and possibilities of women from excluded cultural groups worldwide, these findings offer new insights from trans-feminism that are relevant to contemporary organisational theory.

### ***Limitations and suggestions for future research***

The cultural embeddedness of our study reveals the limitations of generalizing from our findings. Although many ultra-religious groups share similar gender power regimes, and even gender-segregating ideologies (especially in Islam and Judaism), our study was conducted in a very specific social, cultural, and political context. Our findings showed that the use of manoeuvres between visibility and invisibility depends on specific power structures within and outside the organisation, and therefore it is difficult to predict how different matrices of domination affect religious women's agency. To offer a comprehensive framework of multiple gazes, future research will need to examine other cases where such multiple gazes exist and to explore the role of the religious gaze as a supplementary control mechanism that is added to (and sometimes contradicts) the organisational and masculine one.

Further, visibility and invisibility are defined differently in various cultures. In our case, the interpretations and desirability of (in)visibility are complex and often contradictory due to specific Jewish modesty rules and gender norms within this community. While Lewis and Simpson (2010) have already examined the multiple interpretations of women's visibility and invisibility, it is important to compare our findings not only with women in Western liberal societies, but also to women with similar characteristics, especially Muslim women (Essers and Benschop, 2009; Van Laer and Janssens, 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010). Such a comparison will reveal the different interpretations of visibility and invisibility, and the different strategies adopted to negotiate between the various visibility regimes they are subjected to.

### ***Conclusions and practical implications***

The growing presence of Muslim and ultra-religious groups in Europe and the USA challenges many of our Western, taken-for-granted assumptions. These challenges should prompt efforts to fully grasp the nuanced ways in which different religious rules and practices affect organisational lives, power and gender relations, discipline, surveillance, and agency. More broadly, diversity management representatives and ideologies of multiculturalism are not always sensitive to the unique needs of women in these groups and the constraints they must cope with when entering the liberal, modern labour market. Much of the efforts that organisations invest in minorities' integration focus on preventing direct discrimination, while at the same time pushing them to assimilate and adopt Western organisational norms (such as removing their veils and socializing with their colleagues). Only a very few organisations embrace multiculturalism in everyday life. Our study encourages organisations to better understand the power relations and visibility regimes

these women are subjected to in order to integrate them in a way that ensures their freedom to act and choose their own paths.

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