The confinement of animal slaughter to a concealed space hidden from public view illustrates a central feature of the European civilizing process – the gradual expulsion of violence and morally repugnant practices from everyday life.

In this paper, I examine how debates about the reappearance of animal slaughter in England have brought deep seated, largely unconscious memories about our uncivilized past back into public view to generate widespread social and political controversy.
Across the secular West, the slaughter of animals for food has become an almost clandestine activity.

Very occasionally however, when slaughter comes into view, social and political controversy emerges.

Here I examine two such episodes in England and the controversies subsequently engendered around the food practices of outsiders:

1. the controversy over kosher meat and the Jewish method of slaughter (shechita) in 19th century Manchester, and:

2. the contemporary controversy (originating in Bradford) over halal meat and the Muslim method of slaughter (dhabiha).

Given the prior sacrificial significance of animal slaughter in near eastern culture (Fischler, 2011), it has been widely accepted since Moses that to be fit for human consumption meat must come from slaughtered animals.

While stunning animals before slaughter is now widely accepted across the Western world, on animal welfare grounds, it is opposed by Jews and contested by many Muslims (Lever and Miele, 2012).

It’s the ensuing debates about stunning animals before slaughter that has led to controversy about the food practices of outsiders!
It was not until Manchester became the centre of the global cotton industry in the late 18th century that a settled Jewish community emerged to open Manchester’s first synagogue and kosher eating house (Williams, 1976).

The commercial success of early settlers in the city encouraged more Jewish traders to settle, and many of the original members of the community became prosperous shop owners and cotton merchants.

As the economic and professional standing of this emerging Jewish middle class began to improve, they began to move out of the disease ridden and increasingly polluted city centre identified by Engels (1845) in the *Conditions of the Working Class in England*. 

Throughout medieval Europe, Jews were banished for both economic and religious reasons. They were expelled from England in 1290 and it was not until 1647 that Cromwell reopened the country to Jewish settlement.

Over the next three centuries Jews returned gradually, and by the 18th century embryonic Jewish communities could be found from the south coast as far north as Edinburgh in Scotland.
Over time, the growing dominance of this emerging Jewish middle class became unacceptable to growing numbers of poor Jewish migrants who had started to arrive from eastern Europe in increasing numbers during the 1840s!

This was the start of period of established-outsider relations within the Jewish community, with established Jewish merchants positioning themselves vis-à-vis the working poor!

Divisions subsequently emerged between those who wanted to retain traditional Jewish customs and those who wanted to modernise!

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As the influx of migrants continued, a ‘voluntary ghetto’ made up of cheap, overcrowded accommodation began to emerge (Williams, 2006).

And it was here that the orthodox, working poor could find the religious services they could not afford in a synagogue for only a few pennies a week, including slaughter facilities and the provision of kosher meat.

Seen as a threat to established Jewish community interests in Manchester, the ‘backward’ customs and foreign dress of the new migrants were thought likely to undermine the status and success many middle-class Jews had already achieved in the city!

As migrants became more visible, Christian hostility also increased!
The late 19th century was a time of rising anti-Semitism across Europe, with racial representations of Jews evident in literature and across society!

Campaigning against Jewish (shechita) slaughter and kosher meat intensified during this period, with the ‘inhumane’ element of shechita (slaughter without-stunning) increasingly linked with other forms of ‘Jewish brutality’ to reinforce the spiral of anti-Semitism!

To regulate the flow of Russian and Polish Jews, the UK Government passed the first piece of legislation aimed solely at restricting immigration.

While Jewish refugees kept arriving until the outbreak of war in 1914, the 1905 Aliens Act was an important development that set a precedent for future legislation limiting entry into the UK.
In his work on *Jewish identity and civilising processes*, Steven Russell (1996) argues that the presence of Jews reminded Germans of their mutual uncivilized past, which came into conflict with German feelings of superiority!

A similar situation was evident in Manchester, where the increasing visibility of the Manchester ghetto and Jewish food practices served not only to reinforce the Christian majority’s perception of migrants as inferior…

…it also reminded the established Jewish majority in the community of the threat posed to them by negative stereotyping that portrayed all Jews as outsiders.

Over time, tensions with the Jewish community were arguably reinforced by legislation!

The 1933 *Slaughter of Animals Act* allowed the chief rabbi to license religious slaughterers to kill red meat animals without stunning, yet political tension within the Jewish community meant that it was not until 1965 that the chief rabbi licensed orthodox immigrant groups to conduct shechita!

This legislation arguably unleashed a process of divide and rule that served not only to increase tension within Jewish community, it also kept the wider issue of animal slaughter concealed within the community throughout much of the 20th century!

This helped to reinforce the position of Jews as outsiders in the Jewish-Christian figuration, whilst entrenching Jewish established-outsider relations within the Jewish figuration!
Muslim outsiders?

• The presence of Muslims in the UK can be traced back at least three centuries to the activities of the East India Company, who recruited young men from the Indian subcontinent to work in the merchant navy.

• Muslim sailors known as lascars first started settling in greater numbers in port towns and cities such as London, Cardiff, Liverpool and Manchester during the mid-19th century.

• During the Second World War, as labour shortages intensified, increasing numbers of Muslim seamen were directed to Leeds and Bradford to work in essential wartime industries (Ansari, 2009).

Post war period in UK...

After the Holocaust, debate about religious slaughter began to focus more on animal rights/animal welfare than anti-Semitism, although for some the two issues remains closely linked.

In the post war period, attention also began to focus on the UK’s growing Muslim population and their traditional method of halal slaughter (dhabiha).
As the Government started to look for ways to restrict commonwealth immigration during the early 1960s, media driven, anti-immigration rhetoric began to surface more regularly.

Much as the right-wing press had targeted poor Jewish immigrants in late 19th century Manchester, in coming decades Pakistanis in Bradford were targeted by the right wing, Leeds based Yorkshire Post (McLoughlin et al., 2014).

Much as it did in the previous century, this stereotyping served to enhance negative perceptions of Muslims, and they were increasingly viewed - much like Jews in the 19th century - as outsiders by the established majority.

Contemporary controversy over halal meat and religious slaughter can be traced back to Bradford in 1984, when the headmaster of a local school, Ray Honeyford, wrote an article on education and race for The Salisbury Review.

The 1980s were a significant decade of demographic change within England’s Muslim population, who were starting to move out of the inner city into other areas...

In the article, Honeyford criticized British multiculturalism, anti-racist policies and the wider impact of immigration on education and society.

- These developments reignited opposition to “ritual/religious slaughter” at the national level, and throughout the 1980s the National Front aligned themselves directly with animal rights campaigns.
When the *global halal market* began to expand in the early 21st century, *EU legislation* reinforced the *UK’s 1933 Slaughter Act*, granting minorities the right not to *pre-stun animals before slaughter*!

In this emerging context, *dual markets* for *stunned* and *non-stunned* halal meat emerged in some European countries, *including the UK* (Lever and Miele 2012).

*This was controversial* and campaigning against *halal meat* increased considerably in this period, with *repeated calls for a ban on slaughter without stunning* in the UK!
Expansion of the global halal market in the 21st century…

- As the availability of halal meat increased during this period, two observable trends in the meat industry directly influenced public understanding to enhance social controversy!

1. On the one hand, as the HMC certification body started to provide fresh halal meat from non-stunned animals in major supermarket chains, the visibility of halal meat from non-stunned animals increased significantly.

2. On the other hand, as the availability and provision of halal meat increased more generally, stunned halal meat certified by the HFA became increasingly invisible and harder to identify (Lever and Fischer, 2018).

- What was subsequently termed ‘halal hysteria’ came to a head in May 2014. During a heightened period of UK media reporting, restaurant chains such as Pizza Express and Subway were accused of sourcing halal ‘only’ chicken without informing their customers.

- At the same time, supermarkets such as Waitrose, Marks & Spencer, Tesco and Morrisons were accused of selling halal meat imported from New Zealand without labelling it halal, even though all such meat was from stunned animals!

- Arguably, this directly influenced the emergence and consolidation of established-outsider relations in the Muslim community!
Established-outsider relations

- While the volume of non-stunned halal meat produced in the UK has never been more than 20% of the overall total produced, a lack of transparency in the meat industry has – combined with negative media reporting – arguably been instrumental in the generation of widespread public controversy!

- While Muslims are increasingly positioned as outsiders vis-à-vis the established non-Muslim majority, the media and meat industry has combined to create more complex established-outsider relations involving Muslims and non-Muslims!

- Rather than concealing debate about religious slaughter within the Muslim community, as occurred in the 19th century with shechita, these developments have arguably enhanced social controversy about halal meat at the national level significantly!

Breaching the boundaries of the permissible?

- While the presence of Jews in the 1930s reminded Germans of their mutual uncivilized past, I have argued in this paper that something similar occurs when the food practices of outsiders challenge long held civilized views about the slaughter of animals for food!

- In this context, the slaughter practice of outsiders is often seen as cruel, barbaric and inhumane, as very often are outsiders themselves.