

FACULTY OF ARTS STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION

THE UNDERGRAD SCHOLAR

Winter 2025 Publication, first edition
FASA. & University of Calgary Arts.



Welcome to the inaugural edition of our Research Journal, curated by the Academic and Advocacy Team (2024/25).

This journal represents the dedication, innovation, and scholarly excellence of our student researchers. Each paper showcases a commitment to critical inquiry, a passion for learning, and a desire to contribute meaningfully to contemporary academic conversations.

We are proud to provide a platform where emerging scholars can share their work, challenge ideas, and inspire future research. We hope this journal not only highlights the incredible talent within our community but also encourages dialogue, collaboration, and continued academic exploration.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of discovery.

With enthusiasm,
The Academic and Advocacy Team (2024/25)

Student Research Index

Department	Paper Title	Author
Communications	<u>Solar-Powered Knowledge: The SolarSPELL Initiative in Low-income Countries</u>	Jemma Fryer
Communications	<u>Baiting the Hook: An Analysis on Artificial Intelligence's Role in Sustainable Fisheries Management in Indonesia</u>	Paul Vasquez
Political Science	<u>The Rainbow at the End of the Storm: Applying Liberal Institutionalism to LGBTQ+ Human Rights</u>	Thomas Tri
History	<u>The Anglo-Irish Country Houses and the Transition of Power and Space 1903-1923</u>	Jacqueline Ho
History	<u>I've Always Lived Here": The Métis Association of Alberta's Land Claims Research Project, 1978-1980</u>	William Devine
History	<u>Mexico's La Santa Muerte, Beloved and Feared: Through the Lens of Ideological Communitas</u>	Yessenia Montoya Castro
Political Science	<u>Rhetoric vs. Reality: An Examination of Canadian Refugee Policy in Response to Contemporary Humanitarian Crises</u>	Asha NenshiNathoo
Political Science	<u>Canada vs the United States Level of Democracies: A Comparative Analysis</u>	Raewyn Muller
Political Science	<u>How Have Afghan Women's International Human Rights Changed in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime?</u>	Wazhma Rahmani
Political Science	<u>Armed Conflict Influence the Perceived Significance and Standing of these Laws within the International System?</u>	Wazhma Rahmani
Psychology	<u>Examining the Relationship Between Mild Circadian Disruption and Spatial Navigation Using the Morris Water Maze</u>	Allison K. Yang and Michael C. Antle
Sociology	<u>Radicalism via the Online Sphere: Female Youth as Targets and Actors for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)</u>	Uraib Amar
Interdisciplinary (Arts and Science Honours)	<u>Intersectional Approaches in Interdisciplinary Research: A Pathway to Addressing Systemic Discrimination Against Ethnic and Racial Minorities</u>	Shafaq Batool

Solar-Powered Knowledge: The SolarSPELL Initiative in Low-income Countries

Jemma Fryer

COMS 401: Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies (Global Communication)

Department of Communications, Media and Film, University of Calgary

Dr. Ali Karimi

Abstract:

Quality education is essential for global development, reducing inequalities, and facilitating sustainable and healthy living. However, in low-income countries and regions, such as the Global South, challenges such as limited resources, teacher shortages, and lack of access to communication technology impact access to quality education. This research explores the role of SolarSPELL (Solar Powered Educational Learning Library) in offering quality education in low-income countries through solar-powered digital libraries. By providing offline access to educational materials, SolarSPELL empowers communities in Global South regions like East Africa and South Asia, enhancing information literacy and supporting teachers. This research reveals SolarSPELL's potential to bridge educational gaps and contribute to social and economic development in low-income countries.

Introduction:

Quality education is crucial in all areas of the world. Education helps development in countries help to reduce inequalities to reach gender equality and empower people everywhere to live more healthy and sustainable lives. Quality education is seen as important for achieving many Sustainable Development Goals, however, in low-income countries, limited resources, poor infrastructure, teacher shortages, and outdated learning materials pose significant challenges to quality education (United Nations, 2023). The lack of communication technology worsens this issue by impacting access to educational resources and interactive learning experiences. There is a great need for communication technology to improve education outcomes, but many regions in the Global South, such as East Africa and South Asia, lack reliable internet connectivity and digital devices (United Nations, 2023). The United Nations emphasizes the urgent need for increased investment in education infrastructure and communication technology to address disparities and ensure universal access to quality education (2023).

The importance of E-learning systems for quality education has become evident in the Global South, revealing problems in developing countries' ability to educate due to infrastructure limitations. This is significant because, in today's fast-paced, technologically driven environment, e-learning platforms are increasingly vital for social and economic development in low-income countries of the Global South (Mawaka 2024). E-learning platforms can decrease the education gap, providing more individuals access to high-quality education (Mawaka, 2024). Over the past few years, many communication technologies have been used to address the developmental issue of quality education in the Global South, notably SolarSPELL.

SolarSPELL, which stands for Solar Powered Educational Learning Library, is an educational innovation, focused on increasing quality education, particularly in resource-constrained regions in the Global South such as East Africa and South Asia (Hosman, et al., 2020). SolarSPELL is a digital library, of solar-powered technology, that teaches people how to build information literacy and internet-ready skills in offline environments (SolarSPELL, n.d.). The SolarSPELL library is an educational tool that spreads knowledge through an offline WiFi hotspot and is easily accessible to any WiFi-enabled device, offering a large range of educational content, that is selected and tailored to the local region (Hosman, et al., 2020).

The beginning of SolarSPELL goes back to the early 2000s when co-founder Laura Hosman began researching educational communication technologies in underprivileged areas, specifically looking at the One Laptop per Child project (Hosman, et al., 2020). Her research found that in various countries, including the Pacific Islands and West Africa, there were significant issues with the One Laptop Per Child initiative, particularly in teacher training, equipment durability, and logistical challenges (Hosman, et al., 2020). This led her to want to address these issues and actively engage with local communities to increase quality education in areas like the Global South. Unlike the One Laptop Per Child initiative, SolarSPELL stresses collaborations with teachers, schools, ministries of education, and practitioners to ensure that the communication technology is relevant and effective (Hosman, et al., 2020).

As an innovative and accessible communication technology, SolarSPELL is constantly expanding its library resources to suit developing themes and languages, assuring broad accessibility and relevance (SolarSPELL, n.d.). This research paper examines SolarSPELL as a communication technology, and how it aims to increase social and economic development in

areas like the Global South, by addressing educational obstacles, empowering communities, and promoting sustainable access to educational materials.

Literature Review:

This literature review aims to highlight the challenges surrounding quality education and the use of communication technology, specifically looking at how SolarSPELL, addresses quality education in the Global South.

Access to quality education is fundamental to fostering social and economic development, particularly in the Global South where educational inequalities persist. Quality education in the Global South is crucial for social and economic development, as emphasized by Tikly and Barrett (2011). In their study on education quality in the Global South, Tikly and Barrett discuss the importance of quality education in fostering positive societal outcomes, particularly in low-income countries of the Global South where disparities persist due to challenges in resource distribution (2011). Tikly and Barrett's findings argue the necessity for comprehensive support and professional development for educators to translate policy intentions into tangible educational improvements (2011).

Over the past few decades, Global South countries have taken significant steps to enhance education accessibility and quality (Gruijters & Behrman, 2020). Despite notable progress such as increased enrollment rates and the elimination of fees for basic education, the Global South continues to encounter challenges related to quality education outcomes (Gruijters & Behrman, 2020). For example, many children, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, are enrolled in primary schools but struggle to attain even fundamental literacy and numeracy skills (Gruijters &

Behrman, 2020). This highlights the importance of not only expanding access to education but also prioritizing quality.

Kamat and Nasnodkar argue that “the primary goal of using technology in education is to facilitate effective pedagogical practices, improve student engagement, and optimize educational outcomes” (Kamat & Nasnodkar, 2019, p. 2). Within this context, educational technology, particularly solar-powered devices such as SolarSPELL, is seen as a promising solution to improve education quality in resource-constrained settings such as rural schools in developing countries (Kamat & Nasnodkar, 2019). SolarSPELL is a low-cost technology, which is essential for bringing educational technology to places with limited resources. Solar-powered solutions are particularly useful in areas with unreliable electricity, ensuring that digital devices can be used consistently for learning (Kamat & Nasnodkar, 2019).

As access to quality education becomes increasingly more of a crisis in the Global South, communication technology devices are gaining popularity, with SolarSPELL standing out as a prime example. The SolarSPELL digital library aims to close the gap for underprivileged communities that do not have access to power or internet connectivity, while also promoting digital capabilities and information literacy (Hosman, et al., 2020). Researchers such as Hosman, Walsh, Comisso and Sidman have highlighted and praised SolarSPELL for empowering users to become digital ambassadors of their local culture, language, and perspectives (2020). It highlights the potential for a future increase in quality education in the Global South, encouraging active participation in the digital world.

The impact of SolarSPELL on education, particularly in underserved regions, is becoming a subject of increasing interest among researchers. In their study, Hosman, Gómez

Zermeño, and de la Garza discuss the effects of the SolarSPELL initiative on teaching and learning about climate change in rural schools, with a focus on Fiji (2020). The findings of the study show that SolarSPELL is found to be a valuable resource for teachers, offering accessible educational materials despite challenges like limited access to traditional resources and internet connectivity (Hosman, et al., 2020). The authors emphasize the need for inclusive, accessible education, for sustainable development, and advocate for the use of digital technology to overcome educational access hurdles in underprivileged areas (Hosman, et al., 2020).

Over the past five years, SolarSPELL has deployed over 365 libraries in remote regions of eight countries, primarily in the Pacific Islands and East Africa, targeting primary and secondary school users, and some other settings such as health education (Ross, et al., 2022). These regions often suffer from poor health outcomes due to limited access to quality health education and low literacy rates, hindering health efforts (Ross, et al., 2022). SolarSPELL aims to address this gap by providing access to tailored health education content, potentially enhancing self-efficacy and quality education about critical health in under-resourced rural communities. SolarSPELL contributes to addressing economic and social development challenges seen in the Global South through these efforts.

Collectively, these pieces of literature highlight the importance of quality education in fostering social and economic development, in the Global South where the issue of quality education persists. Despite initiatives that have been made to enhance education quality, challenges remain in improving learning outcomes. Educational technology, such as SolarSPELL, offers a promising solution to address these challenges by providing low-cost, sustainable access to educational resources in resource-constrained settings.

Discussion:

Global Affairs Canada indicates that approximately 59 million children residing in developing countries, including the Global South lack access to fundamental education, with quality being a pressing issue as well, as evidenced by 250 million children who struggle to attain basic literacy and numeracy skills even after completing four years of schooling (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). These statistics highlight the urgent need to address the education crisis, focusing on both access and quality, to ensure that every person has the opportunity to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future.

While the statistics shown reveal the challenges faced in education in the Global South, over the last few years, SolarSPELL has shown to be an effective communication technology, addressing quality education in the Global South. Since 2023, SolarSPELL has been instrumental in establishing 597 libraries across 15 countries, providing training to over 960 people, and reaching 300,000 people (SolarSPELL, n.d). The impact of SolarSPELL is evident as a teacher reported that SolarSPELL helped raise exam scores at their school dramatically, from 29% to 100%, due to SolarSPELL's ability to give students more access to knowledge (Hosman et al., 2020). Additionally, based on a survey, 100% of teachers who used SolarSPELL reported feeling more prepared to do their jobs effectively, reported feeling more equipped to fulfill their professional duties, and noted improvements in school attendance rates (SolarSPELL, 2023). Regarding education about climate change, SolarSPELL has become highly regarded by teachers for its role in incorporating multimedia materials into their teaching and bridges a critical gap by providing educators with the proper resources and training to educate students on climate change

(Hosman et al., 2020). This emphasizes how SolarSPELL is being used to empower teachers and students in the Global South, contributing to increased social development.

Data from many schools showed that teachers and students have access to a wide range of 6,441 educational materials, highlighting SolarSPELL's broad usefulness and influence (SolarSPELL, 2023). Furthermore, a survey done on SolarSPELL Health Library with the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences revealed that it positively impacted healthcare professionals and students (SolarSPELL, 2023). According to the survey, after six months, all 91 respondents who used SolarSPELL, including nurses, students, lecturers, faculty, and librarians, felt more confident or better prepared for their roles (SolarSPELL, 2023). The respondent's benefits of using SolarSPELL included cost savings, access to educational videos, and improved evidence-based practice and patient care (SolarSPELL, 2023). These findings highlight SolarSPELL's transformative influence on healthcare education and practice in areas with limited resources.

Based on this data, it's evident that SolarSPELL is effective in providing quality education in regions with limited resources, such as the Global South, through the implementation of solar-powered libraries, training, and substantial reach. The positive feedback from teachers improved student performances, and increased school attendance rates further highlight its effectiveness (Hosman et al., 2020). SolarSPELL is fulfilling a crucial need by providing access to diverse educational resources and empowering educators and students.

When looking at other initiatives to increase quality education in the Global South, such as One Laptop Per Child, it's clear that SolarSPELL is unique and is shown to be an effective communication technology. The One Laptop Per Child initiative, another communication

technology wanting to address quality education, aimed to give affordable laptops to students in developing countries. However, it faced problems because it focused too much on technology without understanding local needs, which made it less effective (Warschauer & Ames, 2010). Distributing the laptops was also hard because of bureaucratic issues, delaying their delivery (Warschauer & Ames, 2010). Unrealistic expectations and differences in success across regions showed the need to be more flexible (Warschauer & Ames, 2010). Examining initiatives like One Laptop Per Child reveals that communication technologies used to combat the lack of quality education present unique challenges, and it's crucial to adapt to these challenges effectively to address quality education in the Global South.

While SolarSPELL is an effective communication technology to combat educational challenges, empower communities, and ensure lasting access to educational materials, it could still be improved. To enhance the effectiveness of the SolarSPELL project and improve user accessibility and experience there are a few changes that could be made. One of the ways to improve effectiveness is by adding subtitles in languages such as Arabic, Spanish, and Swahili, which would significantly improve accessibility for users with limited English proficiency (Paget, 2024). By doing this, SolarSPELL could ensure that a broader audience could benefit from the video tutorials and help more people access quality education. Additionally, creating new videos tailored specifically for SolarSPELL's health and agriculture libraries is crucial due to their distinct needs and specialized content (Paget, 2024). However, it's important to note that these videos should be designed to address the unique needs and interests of the areas where the users are accessing these libraries (Paget, 2024). For instance, information and videos tailored for Western audiences may not effectively meet the requirements of individuals in the Global South.

Given that the majority of SolarSPELL users access the platform via tablets or smartphones, it is also important to develop supplementary videos optimized for mobile devices (Paget, 2024). This is crucial because it ensures that the educational content provided by SolarSPELL is accessible and user-friendly for the majority of its users. By optimizing videos for mobile devices, SolarSPELL can enhance the learning experience for these users, making the content more engaging and easier to consume on their preferred devices, contributing to the effectiveness and reach of SolarSPELL's educational initiatives (Paget, 2024). Additionally, to improve effectiveness SolarSPELL should be recognizing that new users may struggle with navigating the SolarSPELL network and accessing video tutorials, so providing support from experienced local facilitators is essential (Paget, 2024). Incorporating existing videos into the SolarSPELL Training Course can help users build their digital and information literacy skills, making it easier for them to find and understand video tutorials (Paget, 2024). By implementing these changes, the SolarSPELL initiative can effectively address the identified opportunities for improvement, ensuring greater accessibility and usability for everyone (Paget, 2024).

Conclusion:

This research on SolarSPELL focused on how solar-powered devices are used to address quality education in the Global South. SolarSPELL aims to improve access to quality education, promoting social and economic development in developing countries (United Nations, 2023). This research highlights how SolarSPELL effectively improves learning outcomes and empowers communities. By establishing digital libraries and providing educational resources, SolarSPELL

enhances access to knowledge and skills, thus building the capacity and empowering individuals in resource-constrained environments (Hosman et al., 2020).

Additionally, this research highlights the importance of using communication technology to address challenges beyond education. SolarSPELL's success in improving access to quality education in the Global South shows its potential to address other development issues. For instance, as mentioned previously SolarSPELL has effectively addressed issues such as healthcare, agriculture, and climate change concerns in the Global South. In areas with unreliable electricity, solar-powered solutions ensure consistent use of digital devices for learning (Kamat & Nasnodkar, 2019). The SolarSPELL initiative exemplifies that customizing communication technologies to benefit the diverse needs of different countries and communities can promote sustainable development across various areas. However, it is important to acknowledge that although SolarSPELL shows promise as a solution, there are areas where it can be improved and become more effective and accessible. For instance, adding subtitles in different languages, optimizing content for mobile devices, and offering support for users who are new to the technology (Paget, 2024). By making these improvements, SolarSPELL can reach more people and have a greater impact, helping to ensure that everyone has access to quality education.

Ultimately, SolarSPELL highlights how communication technologies can address educational challenges and advance development in the Global South. This research reveals how SolarSPELL as a communication technology, helps to increase social and economic development by overcoming educational challenges, empowering communities, and ensuring sustainable access to educational resources in the Global South.

References

- Global Affairs Canada. (2017, June 8). *Education in developing countries*. Government of Canada. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/education.aspx?lang=eng#
- Grujters, R. J., & Behrman, J. A. (2020). *Learning Inequality in Francophone Africa: School Quality and the Educational Achievement of Rich and Poor Children*. *Sociology of Education*, 93(3), 256–276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720919379>
- Hosman, L., Walsh, C., Comisso, M. P., & Sidman, J. (2020). *Building online skills in off-line realities: The SolarSPELL Initiative (Solar Powered Educational Learning Library)*. *First Monday*, 25(7). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i7.10839>
- Hosman, L., Zermeño, M. G. G., & De La Garza, L. Y. A. (2020). *SolarSPELL Assessment: Impact of a Solar-Powered Digital Library as a Teaching-Learning Resource on Climate Change*. *Sustainability (Basel)*, 12(16), 6636. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12166636>
- J. Mawaka. (2024, February 14). *Developing countries and the impact of ELearning platforms*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeseq/2024/02/14/developing-countries-and-the-impact-of-elearning-platforms/?sh=353d9b2138f1>
- Kamat, Y., & Nasnodkar, S. (2019). *A survey on the barriers and facilitators to edtech adoption in rural schools in developing countries*. *International Journal of Intelligent Automation and Computing*, 2(1), 32-51.

- Paget, E. (2024). *Online Skills in an Offline Environment: Creating Information Literacy Tutorials for the SolarSPELL Offline Digital Library*. Journal of Learning for Development, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.56059/jl4d.v11i1.1006>
- Ross, H. M., Hosman, L., Baikie, B., Blau, E., & Simpson, C. J. (2022). *Solarspell health and education: Global solutions with local impacts*. Journal of Global Health Reports, 6. <https://doi.org/10.29392/001c.38734>
- SolarSPELL. (2023). *2023 SolarSPELL Annual Report*. Arizona State University. <https://solarspell.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/SolarSPELL-AnnualReport-2023-compre-compressed.pdf>
- SolarSPELL (n.d) *Home*. Arizona State University. <https://solarspell.org/>
- SolarSPELL (n.d) *Impact*. Arizona State University. <https://solarspell.org/impact>
- Tikly, L., & Barrett, A. M. (2011). *Social justice, capabilities and the quality of education in low-income countries*. International Journal of Educational Development, 31(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2010.06.001>
- United Nations. (2023, October 19). *Education - United Nations Sustainable development*. United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>
- Warschauer, M., & Ames, M. (2010). *Can One Laptop per Child save the world's poor?* Journal of International Affairs (New York), 64(1), 33–51.

**Baiting the Hook: An Analysis on Artificial Intelligence's Role in Sustainable Fisheries
Management in Indonesia**

Paul Vasquez

Department of Communication, Media and Film, University of Calgary

COMS 401: Global Communication

Dr. Ali Karimi

December 9, 2024

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved as a key tool in addressing various global challenges, particularly in regions with limited resources. While AI development in wealthier nations is typically spearheaded by private corporations and tech startups, Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) has been leading the country's efforts in utilizing AI to boost efficiency in fishing practices and manage natural resources, among other priorities. One of the most significant outcomes of these efforts is the NN Marlin mobile application, an AI-based tool designed to help fishermen optimize their daily catch (Simangunsong, 2024).

Fisheries are a vital part of Indonesia's economy, contributing nearly 3% of the nation's GDP. Millions of Indonesians rely on fishing for their livelihoods, but the sector faces significant challenges (Kaczan, et al., 2023). Overfishing, climate change, and territorial disputes have put considerable strain on fish stocks, making it harder for small-scale fishermen to secure a reliable catch (Global Subsidies Initiative, 2021). Traditionally, fishermen have depended on instinct and experience to locate schools of fish, but dwindling resources and unpredictable weather patterns have made this method increasingly unreliable (Merk, 2022). In response, BRIN developed the NN Marlin application, which uses satellite data and machine learning algorithms to predict the location of fish based on sea surface temperature and chlorophyll levels (BRIN, 2022). This tool provides fishermen with real-time updates on the densest fishing grounds, reducing the uncertainty of their daily trips while increasing the efficiency of fuel consumption and resources used in the fishing process (Simangunsong, 2024).

By making fishing more predictable, it directly impacts the livelihoods of small-scale fishermen and contributes to food security in a nation where millions depend on fish as a primary protein source. While AI tools are often associated with high-tech environments, NN Marlin

brings technology to one of the most traditional and resource-dependent industries in Indonesia. According to a study by consulting firm Kearney (2020, p.1), AI could contribute nearly \$1 trillion to Southeast Asia's GDP by 2030, with Indonesia potentially seeing a 12% increase in its GDP, largely driven by AI applications in industries such as fisheries (p.6).

However, while the app provides invaluable data to those who can afford it, the cost of the tablet and internet subscription—approximately 1.2 million rupiah (\$73)—is prohibitive for many fishermen, particularly in remote areas. Additionally, while the app helps locate fish, it does not yet provide information on fish species, which is crucial for fishermen targeting high-value catches like red or white snapper (Simangunsong, 2024).

Indonesia's approach to AI development also raises questions about data security and privacy. In June 2024, a ransomware attack affected more than 160 government agencies, disrupting services across the country, including major airports (Juwita and Indra, 2024). With vast amounts of data being collected to train AI models, the country is increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks. Despite these challenges, the country aims to transform into a high-income economy by 2045, and AI will be instrumental in achieving “more inclusive and sustainable economic growth,” according to BRIN researchers (as cited in Simangunsong, 2024).

As the Indonesian government continues to push for broader AI adoption across sectors such as agriculture, climate change adaptation, and law enforcement, can AI truly be a sustainable solution for development in resource-limited contexts? In this paper, I will examine the development and impact of the NN Marlin AI tool by focusing on its role in addressing challenges within Indonesia's fisheries sector. By analyzing the Indonesian government's use of AI, I will demonstrate how such technologies can provide innovative solutions in resource-constrained environments, offering a model for AI application in the Global South. In addition, I

will evaluate broader implications of government-led AI initiatives, addressing concerns related to accessibility, data security, and scalability. Through this analysis, I aim to assess the effectiveness of AI as a development tool and explore how these technologies can be optimized for greater impact in developing regions.

Literature Review

The literature on AI's role in fisheries and broader technological development presents interconnected themes, which collectively provide a solid foundation for understanding the potential impact of the NN Marlin AI tool in Indonesia's fisheries sector. This literature review synthesizes research across several key areas, including interdisciplinary collaboration, data transparency, technical efficiency, digital literacy, economic equity, and infrastructure, all of which play a crucial role in the successful implementation of AI in Indonesia's fisheries.

Key Themes in AI and Fisheries Development

Qin et al. (2023) emphasize that AI's potential in addressing development challenges lies in interdisciplinary collaboration. They argue that for technologies like NN Marlin to succeed, they must integrate inputs from diverse fields such as economics, policymaking, and governance, as AI cannot operate effectively in isolation (p. 1760). Similarly, Kshetri (2017) highlights the importance of blockchain in enhancing transparency and reducing corruption in countries with weak governance structures (p.1722). This insight is particularly relevant for Indonesia's fisheries, where corruption and lack of oversight are pressing issues (Juwita and Indra, 2024). His study points out that blockchain's ability to secure data through an immutable ledger especially in areas with weak institutions (Khsetri, 2017, p. 1723).

Mandal and Ghosh (2023) focus on AI's technical potential within aquaculture, demonstrating how AI can improve resource optimization through real-time monitoring of fish health, water quality, and feeding patterns (p. 2814). Their findings parallel the role NN Marlin plays in Indonesia by offering fishermen precise data on fishing zones, reducing resource wastage and increasing yield. While they concentrate on the technical efficiency of AI, their work underscores the broader potential of AI-driven systems like NN Marlin in managing

resources more sustainably (p. 2814). The principles outlined in their work suggest that agricultural systems not only improve operational efficiencies but also contribute to the socioeconomic, environmental, and governance dimensions critical for the sustainable management of fisheries in Indonesia and beyond.

Ebrahimi et al. (2021) highlight the crucial barrier of digital literacy in the adoption of AI technologies in low-resource settings. They argue that even the most advanced AI systems will fail to make an impact if users lack the digital skills necessary to engage with them effectively (p.16). In the case of NN Marlin, this finding stresses the need for capacity-building among fishermen to ensure widespread and equitable adoption of the tool. Okolo (2021), on the other hand, brings attention to the economic disparities in AI's global benefits, emphasizing that while AI has the potential to generate significant economic value, the Global South is likely to receive only a fraction of those benefits. He argues that AI tools must be designed to benefit small-scale fishermen equitably, rather than exacerbating existing inequalities (p.86).

Hilbert (2016) examines the structural challenges that developing countries face in leveraging Big Data and AI, pointing out that inadequate infrastructure, limited human capital, and lack of resources can hinder the successful adoption of technologies like NN Marlin (p.164). His findings emphasize that without addressing these underlying issues, the full potential of AI in resource-limited settings will remain unrealized.

Gaps in the Literature and Research Focus

The existing studies on AI and AI's role in fisheries reveal several gaps, including a lack of understanding of fishers' perceptions and needs regarding AI technologies, insufficient exploration of governance frameworks for ethical AI deployment, and the impact of digital

divides on technology use. In response to these gaps, my proposed study on the NN Marlin AI tool in Indonesia addresses these issues by examining how stakeholders discuss and frame the use of AI in fisheries, providing insights into the perceptions and narratives surrounding AI implementation. Furthermore, I will conduct a comprehensive literature review to synthesize findings from relevant studies on AI in fisheries, particularly in the Global South. This approach will ultimately offer an understanding of the NN Marlin tool's implementation and its broader implications for sustainable fisheries management in Indonesia.

Collectively, these studies offer a comprehensive framework for analyzing NN Marlin by highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration (Qin et al., 2023), data security and transparency (Kshetri, 2017), technical efficiency (Mandal and Ghosh, 2023), digital literacy (Ebrahim et al., 2021), economic equity (Okolo, 2021), and infrastructure development (Hilbert 2016). These insights inform the exploration of how AI can address developmental challenges in Indonesia's fisheries sector, while also pointing to critical areas where improvements are necessary for broader and more equitable impacts. Building on these findings, my research aims to address these gaps by exploring how AI tools like NN Marlin can not only enhance operational efficiency but also contribute to more inclusive and sustainable fisheries management in Indonesia. Through this approach, my study seeks to deepen the understanding of AI's broader social and economic impacts on small-scale fishermen and its potential to bridge existing inequalities in the sector.

Discussion

AI's integration into the fisheries sector offers significant potential for enhancing the economy, productivity, efficiency, and safety. But while NN Marlin promises benefits, its adoption is hindered by challenges. This discussion synthesizes evidence from NN Marlin's

implementation, examining how it improves operational outcomes and addresses safety concerns, while also highlighting the barriers to its widespread use.

Economic Impact

The introduction of the NN Marlin application has significantly influenced fishing efficiency and fuel consumption among fishermen. On a typical day, a medium-scale Indonesian fishing vessel (ships with less than 30 gt). catches around 22 to 33 pounds per day, or 20 to 50 kilograms per day (Muslim, et al., 2023, p. 462). However, a group of small-scale fishermen managed to catch hundreds of kilograms in a single day (NavigasiNelayan Marlin, 2019)—similar to average catches made by medium-scale vessels (FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, 2014), and a huge jump from the usual everyday catch by small fishermen in Indonesia.

A regular, small-scale vessel in Indonesia makes IDR 500 thousand to 1.5 million (CAD 44.63 to 133.90 per day). In contrast, the fishermen who used NN Marlin caught reported incomes ranging from RP one to 16 million (CAD 89.26 to 1,428.04) in a day (NavigasiNelayan Marlin, 2019), which is a significant improvement than usual total day sales.

Table 1

One Day Total Fish Catches among NN Marlin Users, February 17, 2019

Ship Name	Ship Size (in gigaton/GT)	Catch Results (in kilograms/kg)	Worth (Indonesian Rupiah/IDR)
Sri Rizki 1	17	200	4 million
Surya Samudra	17	60	1.2 million

Harya Bima	14	800	16 million
Sri Mulyo1	18	270	5.4 million
God Bless	21	600	12 million
Bima Sakti	20	75	1.5 million
Bunga Nirwana	14	400	8 million
Doa Ibu S	20	280	5.6 million

Note. From *Testimoni Nelayan Sukses Memakai Navigasi Nelayan Marlin* [Video],

NavigasiNelayan Marlin, 2019, from Youtube,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8aaPzb8lqg>.

The positive results brought by the application, as discussed by Mandal and Ghosh (2023), demonstrates the ability of AI systems to optimize resource allocation through real-time monitoring (p. 2814), which aligns with the observed improvements in fishing efficiency among small-scale fishermen using NN Marlin.

However, while the technology has been promising among small players, a report by Indonesia's National Resilience Institute (Hardjunadi, 2024) found that the high upfront cost of instrument procurement restricts the application's use to better-sourced fishermen (p.48). Furthermore, many remote fishing areas report unstable electricity and internet connectivity, which are essential for the full utilization of the application (p.66). This infrastructure gap is a significant barrier to the adoption of the technology by those communities.

Safety Impact and Concerns

The NN Marlin application also incorporates several safety and efficiency features for fishermen but also presents challenges for smaller vessels. One key safety feature is the emergency button, which allows fishermen to signal for help in dangerous situations at sea (Arlinta, 2023). The app also provides real-time weather data, including wave height, wind speed, and direction, enabling fishermen to make informed decisions about venturing out and potentially preventing accidents due to adverse conditions (Wardhani, as cited in Arlinta, 2023).

Furthermore, by guiding users directly to promising fishing areas, NN Marlin shortens fishing trips and reduces the time spent at sea and minimizing exposure to hazards (Teguh, as cited in Arlinta, 2023).

However, safety concerns, especially for fishermen with smaller boats under seven gigatons were reported. Panelewen (2020) reports that the application recommended no fishing points below 12 miles (19.3 kilometers) (p.15), which poses risks for vessels with limited range and resources. For instance, a fisherman named Farikin must travel 46 miles offshore and require 210 liters of fuel (Panelewen, 2020, p.6). While the trip was successful, it highlighted the significant fuel demands and risks associated with accessing distant locations. Hence, there is a need to redesign the application to benefit small-scale fishermen equitably to avoid economic disparity as discussed by Okolo (2021).

Furthermore, while NN Marlin boasts an 85% accuracy rate in identifying productive fishing zones, there are instances where the suggested locations do not yield the expected results or require specific gear not universally accessible to all fishermen (Panelewen, 2020, p.15). Overreliance on the app, without integrating traditional knowledge and personal experience, could lead to ventures into unfamiliar or unsuitable waters, increasing the likelihood of mishaps.

Challenges brought by the Digital Divide

Many fishermen lack awareness of the potential benefits offered by the NN Marlin application (Panelewen 2020, p.15). This knowledge gap stems from inadequate outreach and training programs (Hardjunadi, 2024, p. 68). As Ebrahimi et al. (2021) highlight, digital literacy is a crucial barrier to the adoption of AI tools in low-resource settings. Even with advanced technologies, the lack of basic digital skills among users can significantly limit the effectiveness of these tools (p.16). In the case of Indonesia's fisheries, this suggests that fishermen's

unfamiliarity with digital tools and AI could hinder the widespread adoption of NN Marlin, despite its potential to improve fishing practices and sustainability.

Thus, addressing the digital divide through targeted capacity-building programs, infrastructure investment, and equitable design of AI tools is essential to ensure that technologies like NN Marlin can benefit all stakeholders in Indonesia's fisheries sector.

Challenges in Regulation and Policy

Regional disparities in the implementation of technology-related policies create confusion and hinder uniform adoption across Indonesia's fishing communities (Hardjunadi, 2024, p.69). Additionally, while government incentives exist to support the adoption of modern fishing tools, they are often insufficient or inaccessible to those who need them most (p.69). The fishermen also unaware of government's available incentives, especially from rural areas because of the lack of outreach to them (p.70). Even when fishermen are aware of available incentives, they often encounter bureaucratic hurdles that make it difficult to access support because the procedure required can be time-consuming which discourages many fishermen from pursuing these opportunities, especially those who may not have the resources or knowledge to navigate such processes (p.74). This situation mirrors broader challenges that Hilbert (2016) observes in implementing AI tools like NN Marlin, especially regarding the structural limitations in developing countries (p. 164). For AI technologies to succeed, these bureaucratic and infrastructural barriers must be addressed, and outreach programs must ensure that all stakeholders, including those in rural and underserved areas, are made aware of and able to access available incentives and support.

Blockchain, as argued by Kshetri (2017), in the presence of weak governance structures can play a significant role in securing real-time data for fishermen to optimize their fishing

practices. This could be particularly beneficial for monitoring fishing zones, tracking fish stocks, and verifying the accuracy of catch data. Through the use of smart contracts, blockchain can eliminate bureaucracy as these contracts can automatically execute actions when predefined conditions are met, reducing the need for manual intervention and speeding up processes (p.1718), so it could help in processing the grants and incentives easier, thereby encouraging the fishermen to avail the program designed for them.

Conclusion

In this paper, I addressed the benefits and challenges of applying artificial intelligence (AI) in Indonesia's fisheries sector through Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency's (BRIN) development of the NN Marlin mobile application to optimize fishing practices. My findings suggest that while AI is increasingly recognized as a tool for improving efficiency and addressing global challenges, its success hinges on overcoming key challenges such as digital literacy, infrastructure limitations, and access to technology. These barriers, if left unaddressed, could exacerbate existing inequalities in resource-limited settings. Furthermore, my findings also conclude the need for a holistic approach that integrates traditional knowledge and addresses local needs to ensure AI tools are effective and equitable.

Overall, the arguments presented here apply to similar issues in other regions facing resource constraints. Just as NN Marlin struggles with adoption due to technological and infrastructural challenges, other AI-driven solutions, especially in their infancies, in sectors like agriculture, healthcare, and education in developing countries may encounter the same problems. My research suggests that for AI to truly make a transformative impact, it must be accessible, inclusive, and supported by policies and strong institutions that foster infrastructure development and digital literacy. And while AI has immense potential to drive positive change, its success depends on overcoming the barriers that limit its accessibility and effectiveness.

References

- Arlinta, D. (2023, May 15). *Membantu Nelayan Menentukan Lokasi Penangkapan ikan*.
kompas.id. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/humaniora/2023/05/12/membantu-nelayan-menentukan-lokasi-penangkapan-ikan>
- BRIN - Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional. (n.d.). BRIN - Badan Riset Dan Inovasi Nasional.
<https://www.brin.go.id/news/110938/zppi-inovasi-brin-mudahkan-nelayan-saat-melaut>
- Ebrahimi, S. H., Ossewaarde, M., & Need, A. (2021). Smart Fishery: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda for Sustainable Fisheries in the Age of AI. *Sustainability*, 13(11), 6037.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116037>
- Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profiles: The Republic of Indonesia (2014). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- Global Subsidies Initiative. (2021). Supporting Marine Fishing Sustainably: A review of central and provincial government support for marine fisheries in Indonesia. In *International Institute for Sustainable Development*. International Institute for Sustainable Development. <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2021-07/sustainable-marine-fisheries-indonesia-en.pdf>
- Hardjunadi, I., OPTIMALISASI PEMANFAATAN TEKNOLOGI GUNA NENINGKATKAN HASIL PERIKANAN TANGKAP DI PERAIRAN INDONESIA (2024). Jakarta; Perpustakaan Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional (National Resilience Institute).
- Hilbert, M. (2016). Big Data for Development: A Review of Promises and Challenges. *Development Policy Review*, 34(1), 135–174.
- Hughes, T. P. (2012). The Evolution of Large Technological Systems. In *The Social Construction of Technological Systems, Anniversary Edition : New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*. MIT Press.

- Indra, R., & Juwita, R. D. (2024, June 24). Ransomware attack behind massive disruption to national data center. *The Jakarta Post*.
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/06/24/ransomware-attack-behind-massive-disruption-to-national-data-center.html>
- Kaczan, D., Nurhabni, F., Cheung, W. W. L., Frölicher, T., Lam, V. W. Y., Muawanah, U., Puspasari, R., Reygondeau, G., Sumaila, U. R., & Teh, L. (2023). Hot Water Rising: The Impact of Climate Change on Indonesia's Fisheries and Coastal Communities. In *World Bank*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/publication/hot-water-rising-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-indonesia-fisheries-and-coastal-communities>
- Kshetri, N. (2017). Will blockchain emerge as a tool to break the poverty chain in the Global South? *Third World Quarterly*, 38(8), 1710–1732.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1298438>
- Mandal, A., & Ghosh, A. R. (2023). Role of artificial intelligence (AI) in fish growth and health status monitoring: a review on sustainable aquaculture. *Aquaculture International*, 32(3), 2791–2820. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10499-023-01297-z>
- Merk, J. (2022, October 17). Can fishing in Indonesia be sustainable? *dw.com*.
<https://www.dw.com/en/sustainable-fishing-by-2025-what-is-the-current-situation-in-indonesia/a-60134067>
- Muslim, A. I., Fujimura, M., Kazunari, T., & Salam, M. (2023). Small-scale marine fishers' possession of fishing vessels and their impact on net income levels: A case study in takalar district, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. *Fishes*, 8(9), 463.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/fishes8090463>
- Panelewen, Y. (2020). *Materi Penerapan Dan Tantangan Pemanfaatan Informasi Zppi Bagi Nelayan Indonesia 1* [PowerPoint slides]. PT. MEDIA ENGINEERING LINTAS.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/681509855/02-MATERI-PENERAPAN-DAN-TANTANGAN-PEMANFAATAN-INFORMASI-ZPPI-BAGI-NELAYAN-INDONESIA-1>

Okolo, C. T. (2022). AI in the Global South: Opportunities and Challenges Towards More Inclusive Governance. *Research Journal of Humanities Legal Studies & International Development*. <https://doi.org/10.48028/iiprds>

Qin, Y., Xu, Z., Wang, X., & Skare, M. (2023). Artificial Intelligence and Economic Development: An Evolutionary investigation and Systematic review. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01183-2>

Racing toward the future: artificial intelligence in Southeast Asia. (2020). [Dataset]. A.T. Kearney Inc.

https://www.kenney.com/documents/291362523/291369654/Racing+toward+the+future+_artificial+intelligence+in+Southeast+Updated.pdf/679e501c-aae8-0483-e016-d6b780071540?t=1723147086000

Simangunsong, T., & Chandran, R. (2024, August 12). Indonesian fishermen are using a government AI tool to find their daily catch. *Rest of World*. <https://restofworld.org/2024/indonesia-ai-tools-brin-government-agency/>

Testimoni Nelayan Sukses Memakai Navigasi Nelayan Marlin (By PT. MEDIA ENGINEERING LINTAS [NavigasiNelayan Marlin]). (2019, February). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8aaPzb8lqg>.

**The Rainbow at the End of the Storm: Applying Liberal Institutionalism to LGBTQ+
Human Rights**

Thomas Tri

POLI 381: Introduction to International Relations

Mark Machacek

March 10, 2023

The Rainbow at the End of the Storm: Applying Liberal Institutionalism to LGBTQ+ Human Rights

The criminalization and persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people exist across the world (McElhose, 2023). According to Human Dignity Trust (2023), 67 countries across the world criminalize same-sexual sexual activity, with 11 of these countries having laws that invoke the death penalty for such offences. The persecution of LGBTQ+ people can range from outright discrimination by law to extreme cases such as being stoned to death (Reid, 2020). With the ongoing violence inflicted on LGBTQ+ people, how does institutional liberalism help understand how LGBTQ+ human rights issues are being addressed worldwide? Institutional liberalism can explain the actions of states in addressing LGBTQ+ human rights issues through the change in state behaviour as a result of economic interdependence as well as the influence of institutions. The cooperation of states to address LGBTQ+ human rights concerns is integral in the face of a dynamic human rights regime. For LGBTQ+ people to live a life of dignity, the global community must be united on this issue. This paper will first explore the main tenets of institutional liberalism, and then illustrate the applications of institutional liberalism through the human rights regime, foreign aid and sanctions as well as institutional pressure and economic interdependence.

Early Developments of Institutional Liberalism

A multitude of early thinkers has paved the understanding of modern-day institutional liberalism. Immanuel Kant believed in the inherent goodness of people (Van de Haar, 2009), a view that aligned with John Locke's optimism about human progress within states that guaranteed civil liberties (Sørensen et al., 2022). This belief in human nature extended to the idea that while humans are rational, self-interested, and competitive, they are also capable of

cooperating for the collective benefit of all (Sørensen et al., 2022; Van de Haar, 2009). These ideas later influenced government and international relations. Jeremy Bentham advanced the notion of international governance by advocating for international jurisprudence, a framework aimed at fostering happiness between nations (Baylis et al., 2020). He also argued that it was in the rational interest of states to adhere to international law (Sørensen et al., 2022). Building on this, Kant's work *Perpetual Peace* (Kant, 1784b as cited in Walker, 2008) proposed that the establishment of republics would promote peace between states (Walker, 2008). Woodrow Wilson extended this idea, asserting that a well-structured international organization could end war and bring about lasting peace (Sørensen et al., 2022). He also popularized the concept of "collective security," where nations collaborate to counter any state's aggression (Mingst et al., 2018). These early conceptions of the innateness of human progress, the willingness to cooperate, and the goal of world peace, laid the philosophical groundwork for liberal institutionalism.

Main Tenets of Liberal Institutionalism

The concept of liberal institutionalism emerged following observations of a network of relationships which included trade and communication in the post-war period (Baylis & Owens, 2020). Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye are among the early scholars contributing to the field of liberal institutionalism (Baylis & Owens, 2020). A central tenet of liberal institutionalism is the idea of interdependence in which Keohane & Nye (1977; 1987) characterized as political and economic relations between governments. Interdependence between states can promote "trade, migration, tourism, and cultural and educational exchanges which encourage voluntary political and economic co-operation" (Russett, 1970 as cited in, Rogerson, 2000, p. 418). Additionally, this interdependence is not only subjected between states but also informal interactions by actors

such as corporations (Mingst et al., 2018). States engage in absolute gains as demonstrated through trading and investment, where there is mutual benefit to economic cooperation (Mingst et al., 2018; Sørensen et al., 2022). Furthering the idea of interdependence, Keohane & Nye (1977) discuss the idea of “mutual sensitivity” in which changes occurring in one state will take place in another. Such strong economic ties between states can influence foreign policy to favour stronger economic relations (Beach & Pedersen, 2012). Another core idea of liberal institutionalism is the need for cooperation. When there is high interdependence between states, international institutions will arise to deal with communal problems (Sørensen et al., 2022). International institutions can comprise organizations, treaties, or rules, all of which play a key role in fostering international cooperation (Mingst et al., 2018). To illustrate examples of cooperation, Keohane (1984) discusses the idea of international regimes in which states work together to solve problems. Additionally, if these regimes are properly created, there is a likelihood of states needing to cooperate with each other in the future (Sørensen et al., 2022). Lastly, institutions play a significant role in influencing state behaviour. Institutions can directly impact the attitudes of the state and enforce compliance with rules (Keohane, 1987). The cooperation demonstrated by states is facilitated by institutions, using incentives for action (Beach & Pedersen, 2012). Keohane & Nye (1977) make the argument that when states submit membership in international institutions, they compromise their self-interests to partake in wider cooperation. This can be described as “bargaining” in which states are willing to negotiate away their sovereignty, to an extent, to achieve benefits (Keohane, 2012). Thus, cooperation isn’t merely a form of altruism but developed on the grounds of “self-interest and reciprocity” (Keohane, 2012, p. 127). Liberal institutionalism contends that the international system is

entrenched in a complex interdependent system and that institutions have significant influence on the need for cooperation.

Applications of Institutional Liberalism

LGBTQ+ Human Rights Regime

A liberal institutionalist can explain the development of institutions to promote cooperation in addressing LGBTQ+ human rights issues. These institutions are influential through setting norms, rules, and guidelines that urges for state action, more specifically in adopting LGBTQ+ human rights policies (Velasco, 2018). LGBTQ+ human rights are often referred to as sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in international relations discourse (Keating & Burack, 2016). The human rights framework has been widened to not only address LGBTQ+ as individuals but the freedom of gender identity and sexual orientation (Keating & Burack, 2016). As such, the LGBTQ+ human rights regime emerges to address these issues. A regime is “comprised of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures” (Harrelson-Stephens & Callaway, 2009, p. 437). The oldest LGBTQ+ international rights organization is the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice which was founded in 1977 (Keating & Burack, 2016). Other organizations began to emerge such as OutRight Action International which now consults with the United Nations (UN) pertaining to LGBTQ+ human rights as well as Amnesty International which calls on governments to address their human rights violations (Keating & Burack, 2016). In 2006, came the Yogyakarta Principles which was a guide to LGBTQ+ human rights, and eventually in 2011, the United Nations Rights Council passed a resolution specifically addressing sexuality, sexual and gender identity rights (Keating & Burack, 2016). Baisley (2016) discusses the progress of sexual orientation and gender identity norms under the emerging international human rights regime through four major developments: 1) universality, non-

discrimination, and equality are being applied to LGBTQ issues 2) decriminalization of homosexuality and addressing human rights violations 3) preventing violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender 4) the international community have a responsibility to address such issues. All in all, the development of these institutions is significant in pushing countries worldwide to adopt LGBTQ+ human rights policies.

Cooperation, Multilateral Sanctions and Foreign Aid

The use of multilateral sanctions is consistent with liberal institutionalist ideas of the importance of institutions in utilizing norms to promote cooperation. Rodman (1993) contends that institutions have a role in influencing how states define their interests. Sanctions employ economic relations to mobilize against human rights violations (Moravcsik, 1995), more specifically, Hurd (1999) contends that sanctions can enforce international norms that are established by institutions like the UN. Under the umbrella of sanctions, the use of foreign aid has been prolific in addressing LGBTQ+ human rights across the world. For instance, Uganda passed the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill which outlawed same-sex acts, making them punishable by death (Comstock, 2016). This elicited incredible international backlash with condemnation from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Union (EU) foreign policy chief, and the White House press secretary (Muhumuza, 2014). Following this bill, donors such as Sweden, Austria, the Netherlands, and Norway cut aid to Uganda (Thiel, 2021). Similarly, cutting aid was also seen in Nigeria when a ban on same-sex marriages was warranted by the Nigerian National Assembly in 2006. This prompted the United States to sever foreign aid (Comstock, 2016). Following a similar suit, the United Kingdom urged commonwealth countries to rescind their anti-homosexual laws (Amusan et al., 2019). The cooperative effect of withdrawing aid can also be seen in the reverse, where countries cooperate

to provide aid. Aid has been used to foster the capacity of local organizations in countries abroad. Canada was instrumental in the support of LGBTQ+ human rights in Asia, namely Myanmar, Taiwan, and South Korea (Charbonneau, 2017). Canada has channelled through forms of funding: a post-initiative fund to support local “cultural activities,” the Canada Fund which supports development projects, and Canada’s international assistance fund aimed at larger-scale projects (Charbonneau, 2017). Similarly, the United States has created the Global Equality Fund in 2011 which provides funding during urgent circumstances as well as to advocacy organizations and individuals persecuted for being LGBTQ+ (Keating & Burack, 2016). Additionally, the fund aims to empower LGBTQ+ civil groups and grassroots organizations. Drawing from principles of institutional liberalism, these countries are acting in accordance with the international aid regime. This practice of providing foreign aid can be characterized as a self-interested behaviour to achieve “the humanitarian and egalitarian ideals of a world better for all” (Holdar, 1993, p. 457). The use of aid can be twofold: pressure states to address human rights violations as well as support organizations worldwide.

Institutional Pressure and Economic Interdependence

Institutions have an incredible role in influencing the behaviour of a state. The liberal institutionalist perspective can argue that LGBTQ+ human rights norms enforced by international institutions can influence state behaviour. Additionally, the liberal institutionalist idea of economic interdependence can also explain how institutions foster cooperation. For instance, states aim to connect to the broader world society by engaging in transnational advocacy networks which are often enforced by international non-governmental organizations (Velasco, 2020). Likewise, domestic actors can also engage in these networks (Velasco, 2020). By engaging in such networks, states are more likely to adhere to international norms because

global expectations are translated to the domestic crowd, thus influencing state behaviour (Velasco, 2020). Similarly, a study conducted by Ayoub (2016) finds that when European states engage in these transnational advocacy networks, they are more likely to adopt positive LGBTQ+ policies. Liberal institutionalists will argue that states compromise their self-interests to cooperate in better pursuit of benefits. Velasco (2019) describes this process as the “institutionalization of new ideas within international organizations,” using examples of norms enforced by Amnesty International and the UN (p. 122).

Institutions as well as the economic interdependence of states can also influence state behaviour to adopt LGBTQ+ human rights policies. Croatia can be used as a case study to demonstrate how states will adopt new norms when attempting to enter membership of an institution. Maycock (2019) illustrates how the process of EU accession can encourage states to adopt LGBTQ+ human rights policies. Candidate states attempting to gain EU membership must embark on the process of accession which entails the altering of states’ “laws, institutions and behaviour in order to adhere to EU standards” (European Commission, 2017 as cited in, Overhaart, 2020, p.2). Thus, when Croatia became an EU membership candidate, there was an evident shift toward adopting anti-discrimination policies toward LGBTQ+ people (Maycock, 2019; Winter, 2017). Likewise, Georgia had a shift in considerations of LGBTQ+ equality when qualifying for EU membership (Luciani, 2021). Similar to the tactics of aid, visa liberalization and preferential trade agreements have been used to persuade governments to adopt pro-LGBTQ+ policies. Shevtsova (2020) discusses how the EU has been a vocal influence on Ukraine, pushing for LGBTQ+ human rights. Ukraine is noted to be resistant to the “progression of sexual rights and diversity politics in the Western world” (Shevtsova, 2020, p. 501). However, the EU succeeded through proposing preferential trade agreements to Ukraine, prompting

Ukraine to pass the first legal amendment, offering protection of sexual orientation and gender identity under the Labour Code (Shevtsova, 2020). The liberal institutionalist perspective can explain the economic interdependence between Ukraine and the EU which fostered cooperation. Because of the high degree of economic integration that states engage in to enter the EU, cooperation is more likely to occur (Devetak & True, 2022). A similar phenomenon was demonstrated by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Despite the Trump administration's values against LGBTQ+ rights, they were not vehemently opposed to the adoption of human-rights provisions to include sexual orientation and gender identity (Galbraith & Lu, 2019). This can be explained by the United States' willingness to cooperate because of the economic interdependence between the North American countries. Institutional pressure and economic interdependence are powerful influences on state behaviour to adopt or accept LGBTQ+ human rights.

Conclusion

Institutions remain steadfast in addressing LGBTQ+ human rights issues. The use of sanctions, foreign aid as well as institutional pressure, push states to consider the need to adopt LGBTQ+ policies and address human rights concerns. The use of liberal institutionalism has been valuable in understanding the development of the human rights regime which enforces international norms, thus encouraging states to alter their behaviour. Additionally, the idea of economic interdependence is valuable in understanding state behaviour as demonstrated through EU accession and integration. However, the use of liberal institutionalism does not address the effectiveness of the human rights regime. Efforts are made to address these concerns but it does not imply rapid social change, especially in the context of countries resistant to LGBTQ+ norms because of religious influence (Amusan, 2019). Furthermore, there is an incredible lack of

consideration for cultural dynamics at play, especially since the Western intervention in developing countries, with respect to LGBTQ+ issues, has been criticized as “imperial” and “colonial” (Thiel, 2021). Despite the ongoing violations of LGBTQ+ human rights, it has not all been bleak with the assistance of states, institutions, and the broader human rights regime. Gradual progress is being made as social movements and institutions strive towards human rights for all.

References

- Amusan, L., Saka, L., & Muinat, O. A. (2019). Gay Rights and the Politics of Anti-homosexual Legislation in Africa: Insights from Uganda and Nigeria. *Journal of African Union Studies*, 8(2), 45–66. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26890403>
- Ayoub, P. M. (2016). *When States Come Out: Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Baisley, E. (2016). Reaching the tipping point?: Emerging international human rights norms pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity. *Hum. Rts. Q.*, 38, 134.
- Baylis, J, Smith, S., & Owens, P. (2020). *The globalization of world politics : an introduction to international relations*. Oxford University Press.
- Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2012). *Analyzing foreign policy* (Vol. 64). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Charbonneau, J. (2017). *Pride Abroad: Canada's Support of LGBTQ Activism: A Study of Canadian Mission Support for LGBTQ Rights in Taiwan, Myanmar, and South Korea* (Report). Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.
https://www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/filefield/lgbtq_final_report_interactive_pages.pdf
- Comstock, A. L. (2016). *Gay Rights and U.S. Foreign Aid: A Look at Nigeria and Uganda. International Relations*.
- Devetak, R., & True, J. (Eds.). (2022). *Theories of International Relations*. Bloomsbury academic.
- Galbraith, J. & Lu, B. (2019) *Gender-Identity Protection, Trade, and the Trump Administration: A Tale of Reluctant Progressivism* . Yale Law Journal Forum, Vol. 129, P. 44, 2019, U of

Penn Law School, Public Law Research Paper No. 19-39, Available at SSRN:

<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3466851>

Harrelson-Stephens, J., & Callaway, R.L. (2009). “The Empire Strikes Back”: The US Assault on the International Human Rights Regime. *Hum Rights Rev* 10, 431–452

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-009-0127-1>

Human Dignity Trust. (2023). *Map of countries that criminalise LGBT people*. Retrieved March 7, 2023, from <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/map-of-criminalisation/>

Holdar, S. (1993). The study of foreign aid: unbroken ground in geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, 17(4), 453-470.

Hurd, I. (1999). Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics. *International Organization*, 53(2), 379–408. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601393>

Keating, C. & Burack, C. (2016). Sexual Orientation, Gender, Identity, and Human Rights in Goodhart, M. (Ed.). *Human rights: politics and practice*. Pp. 380-398. Oxford university press.

Keohane, R. O., & Nye Jr, J. S. (1977). Power and interdependence. *Survival*, 15(4), 158-165.

Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1987). Power and interdependence revisited. *International organization*, 41(4), 725-753.

Keohane, R. O. (2012). Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism. *International Relations*, 26(2), 125–138. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1177/0047117812438451>

Keohane, R. O. (1984). After hegemony: transatlantic economic relations in the next decade. *The International Spectator*, 19(1), 3-9.

Luciani, L. (2021) Where the Personal is (Geo)Political: Performing Queer Visibility in Georgia in the Context of EU Association, Problems of Post-Communism, DOI:

[10.1080/10758216.2021.1937228](https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1937228)

Maycock, H. (2019). Roads diverge: A comparative study of EU accession and LGBT human rights in former Yugoslav states. Political Science Honors Projects. 81.

https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/81

McElhose, R. J. (2023). Are Threats to Impose Financial Sanctions an Effective Approach for the United States to Protect LGBTQ Rights in Africa? Emory International Law Review Recent Developments, 37(1)

Moravcsik, A. (1995). Explaining international human rights regimes: Liberal theory and Western Europe. European Journal of International Relations, 1(2), 157-189.

Mingst, K. A., McKibben, H. E., & Arreguin-Toft, I. M. (2018). Essentials of international relations. WW Norton & Company.

Muhumuza, R. (2014, February 24). *Uganda's president signs anti-gay bill in defiance of western pressure*. CP24. Retrieved March 9, 2023, from <https://www.cp24.com/world/uganda-s-president-signs-anti-gay-bill-in-defiance-of-western-pressure-1.1700824>

Rodman, K. A. (1993). Coercive Cooperation: Explaining Multilateral Economic Sanctions. *American Political Science Review*, 87(4), 1056+. <https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/apps/doc/A14903633/PPCJ?u=ucalgary&sid=bookmark-PPCJ&xid=6c3c3798>

- Rogerson, K.S. (2000) INFORMATION INTERDEPENDENCE: Keohane and Nye's complex interdependence in the information age, *Information, Communication & Society*, 3:3, 415-436, DOI: 10.1080/13691180051033379
- Shevtsova, M. (2020) Fighting “Gayropa”: Europeanization and Instrumentalization of LGBTI Rights in Ukrainian Public Debate, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 67:6, 500-510, DOI: [10.1080/10758216.2020.1716807](https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2020.1716807)
- Sørensen, G., Møller, J., & Jackson, R. H. (2022). *Introduction to international relations: theories and approaches*. Oxford university press.
- Thiel, M. (2021). Development policy and foreign aid: Conditionality and its discontents. In *The European Union's International Promotion of LGBTI Rights*. Routledge.
- Walker, C. T., (2008). Two Faces of Liberalism: Kant, Paine, and the Question of Intervention. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52(3), 449–468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00510.x>
- Winter, B., Forest, M., & Sénac, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Global perspectives on same-sex marriage : A neo-institutional approach*. Springer International Publishing AG.
- Van de Haar, E. (2009). Classical liberalism and international relations. *Policy (Centre for Independent Studies (N.S.W.))*, 25(1), 35–38.
- Velasco, K. (2020). A Growing Queer Divide: The Divergence between Transnational Advocacy Networks and Foreign Aid in Diffusing LGBT Policies. *International Studies Quarterly*, 64(1), 120–132. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqz075>
- Velasco. (2018). Human Rights INGOs, LGBT INGOs, and LGBT Policy Diffusion, 1991–2015. *Social Forces*, 97(1), 377–404. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy030>

**“I’ve always lived here”:
The Métis Association of Alberta’s Land Claims Research Project, 1978-1980**

by

William Devine (30205152)

HTST 300

Dr. Nancy Janovicek

November 29, 2024

On January 28, 1980, a field researcher and a Cree translator from the Métis Association of Alberta's Land Claims Research Department headed to Trout Lake, a Cree-Métis community 330 km north of Edmonton. They sat down to interview Harry Houle, a Métis Elder. The entire interview was conducted in Cree, translated, and then transcribed in English. The Cree translator told Houle, "We want to know where people come from." Houle replied: "I've always lived here."¹

This interview was one of many that the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) undertook in the late 1970s as part of its Land Claims research. By 1978, most Alberta Métis had no recognised landbase and lived in destitute conditions; their primary means of subsistence and way of life was threatened by industrial development and white settlement.² Thus, starting in the early 1970s, the MAA as the government of the Métis Nation and Non-Status First Nations of Alberta, pressed the Canadian government for recognition of their rights as Indigenous Peoples, and a just settlement on land.³

Indigenous Peoples' calls for decolonisation in the 1960s and 1970s forced the Canadian government to adopt legislative reforms that engaged with the inherent and Treaty rights of

¹ *The Métis and the Land in Alberta: Land Claims Research Project 1979-1980*, 1980, 343, CA ACU GBA F1316-S0023-FL0003, Métis Association of Alberta fonds, Glenbow Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

² "With development already occurring in the areas immediately adjacent to the isolated [Métis and Non-Status First Nations] communities, the urgency with which the human rights of the people living there must be considered and equitably dealt with cannot be overemphasized." *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 279.

³ It is important to acknowledge that the usage of the term "First Nations" is problematic, owing to its colonial origin and homogenising effect on the identities of Indigenous Peoples. "The term, First Nations, is racist in tone...[the term] First Nations is part of the imperial vocabulary." Howard Adams, *A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1995), 11. Innes argues that "the ethnic boundaries drawn between Aboriginal groups [such as "First Nations" or "Métis"] is a fiction that has served the purposes of scholars and government officials, but has had no relevance to the actual lives of the people examined. ... For over two centuries, outsiders have viewed the Métis as 'not Indian,' no matter how closely related or culturally similarly they were. Consequently, some First Nations people regard Métis as 'not Indian.' From this perspective, Indians are considered to be more culturally Aboriginal than Métis, and therefore have a stronger claim to Aboriginal rights, raising the issue of cultural authenticity and legal entitlement. For some First Nations leaders and First Nations people of Métis ancestry, then, acknowledging the close relationship with the Métis or Métis ancestry could be viewed as legally and/or culturally detrimental." Robert Alexander Innes, "The Importance of Family Ties to Members of Cowessess First Nation," (PhD diss., University of Arizona, United States of America, 2007), 87-135.

Indigenous Peoples. In 1973, Canada developed its Land Claims Policy to deal with these demands.⁴ In the same year, the MAA developed a draft Land Claims Research Project.⁵ By 1978 the MAA signed a funding agreement with the Federal Government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to research “potential Métis land claims in the Province of Alberta.”⁶

The research produced by the MAA was instrumental in laying the groundwork necessary for pursuing a Métis Land Claim against the Crown, and for accessing funding for economic and community development programs for Métis and Non-Status First Nations people in Alberta.⁷ While the MAA’s Land Claims research covers the history of the Métis Nation in Alberta and the effects of the Scrip System⁸ on Métis and First Nations peoples, this research has broader implications because it explores the alleged extinguishment of Métis and First Nations Aboriginal Title across the province of Alberta.⁹ This research was unique in that it was an attempt to understand the dispossession of the Métis Nation from a Métis perspective with the goal of reaching a “fair settlement”¹⁰; albeit, as will be shown below, this is contested. From the start, the federal government attempted to control and limit the MAA’s Land Claims research,

⁴ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 58.

⁵ *Alberta Métis History and Land Claims Research with Development Plan, 1973-1976*, CA ACU GBA F1316-S0020-SS0004-FL0019, Métis Association of Alberta fonds, Glenbow Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta; “We are concerned about the land rights, mineral rights and most of all, the *human rights* of the Métis and Non-Status Indian people of Alberta.” *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 279.

⁶ *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 2.

⁷ Métis Association of Alberta and others, *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History* (Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1981), ix-x.

⁸ Scrip was “a coupon, issued to individual claimants/grantees [in exchange for surrendering one’s Aboriginal Title] which could be redeemed either directly for homestead lands (i.e. 160 acres of land scrip could obtain 160 acres of land) or money scrip which could be used to purchase the same lands.” Frank Tough and Kathleen Dimmer, “‘Great Frauds and Abuses’; Institutional Innovation at the Colonial Frontier of Private Property: Case Studies of the Individualization of Maori, Indian and Métis Lands,” in *Settler Economies in World History*, ed. Christopher Lloyd and others (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 227.

⁹ The Indigenous Peoples covered in this research include the interconnected Métis-Cree communities of southern and northern Alberta, Sharphead First Nation, the Maskwacis Cree, the Papaschase First Nation, and the Blackfoot Confederacy.

¹⁰ *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 387; *Origins of the Alberta Métis: Land Claims Research Project 1978-79*, 1979, iii, CA ACU GBA F1316-S0023-FL0002, Métis Association of Alberta fonds, Glenbow Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

thereby limiting Indigenous sovereignty and re-entrenching settler-colonial control over Indigenous Peoples' lands. The government's interference in the Land Claims research has been interpreted as a form of colonisation and multiple Métis and First Nations scholars have therefore argued that the Land Claim Process itself is a modern-day form of genocide.¹¹

The MAA Land Claims Reports also details the role of colonial law such as "Aboriginal Title" and "the underlying Title of the Crown" in facilitating the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples.¹² To the Métis Nation, the concept of "Aboriginal Title" is incompatible with their understanding of themselves and their relationship to the land.¹³ Thus, the creation and activities of the MAA Land Claim Research illustrates the struggle of an Indigenous People in asserting their inherent rights while being forced to work within a system they characterised as colonial.¹⁴

¹¹ "Canada's new land claims policy perpetuates and reinforces the understanding of land claims agreements as mechanisms for removing Indigenous peoples from their lands so that the lands can be exploited by non-Indigenous people." Bruce McIvor, *Essays on Canadian Law and Decolonization*, 3rd ed. (Vancouver: First Peoples Law, 2018), 141; "In order to realize the settler society, formalized means of dispossession and ultimately genocide were employed. The Canadian Land Claims process is merely a recent incarnation of this." Colin Samson, "Dispossession and Canadian Land Claims: Genocidal Implications of the Innu Nation Land Claim," in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford and others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 247-248.

¹² "What is the 'underlying title' of the Crown? Simply put, it's the application of the Doctrine of Discovery... The Doctrine of Discovery is an act of theft with no basis in law. It is fiction constructed out of the imaginations of Church and State." Sylvia McAdam Saysewahum, "Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery: A Call to Action," in *Wrongs to Rights: How Churches can Engage the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Steve Heinrichs (Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada, 2023), 117-118; "Although the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledges the title of the Tsilhqot'in people, the conclusions drawn from this case demonstrate how the rationalities of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* still influence contemporary understandings of Indigenous title in Canada." Celine Beaulieu, "The Permanent Rationalities of the Doctrine of Discovery in Canada," *University of Saskatchewan Undergraduate Research Journal* 6, no. 3 (2020): 5.

¹³ "It is important to know that 'Aboriginal title' is a concept developed within Canadian law, which reflects a non-Indigenous perspective about the relationship between people and their environment. Generally, Indigenous peoples, including Dehcho Métis, understand our relationship to the land as one of our responsibilities given to us by the Creator. When we say 'land', we mean more than just the ground we walk upon; we understand it to mean land, water, air, and the living beings such as animals and plants that exist in these places. Therefore we are part of the land itself. It is impossible for us to give up interests or 'sell' land the way non-Indigenous courts understand that concept. To be able to sell or give up the land reflects a point of view that sees people as separate from the land." Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox and Fort Providence Métis Council, *Since 1921: The Relationship Between Dehcho Métis and Canada* (Fort Providence: Fort Providence Métis Council, 2007) 46.

¹⁴ *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 4.

The Context of the MAA Land Claims Research

The creation of Alberta as a settler-colonial state is premised on the genocide of the Métis Nation and First Nations peoples. The invasion of their territories, the destruction of their settlements, the use of starvation and forced sterilisations, the criminalisation of their governance systems, languages, and cultures, and the theft of their children—to name the most common methods of settler-colonial nation-building—was crucial to establishing settler control over the land now called Alberta.¹⁵ By the 1970s, the Métis and Non-Status First Nations were among the poorest people of Alberta with no landbase or legal status as Indigenous Peoples.¹⁶ Hence, the MAA initiated Land Claims negotiations with the federal government in 1973 to address these conditions.¹⁷ Their explanation was, “We as a people have retreated before the advance of white society for just over 100 years in Western Canada. We now find ourselves with no further opportunity for retreat.”¹⁸

The Scrip System (1870s-1930s) was a primary factor in the Métis Nation’s landlessness, poverty, and dispossession.¹⁹ The Scrip System was employed by the federal government to “extinguish” the “Aboriginal Title” of Indigenous Peoples once and for all, as opposed to

¹⁵ “The question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism ... The logic of elimination not only refers to the summary liquidation of Indigenous people, though it includes that. In common with genocide as Raphaël Lemkin characterized it, settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base—as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event...*The positive outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism* [emphasis added].” Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-388.

¹⁶ Excluding the Alberta Métis Settlements.

¹⁷ *Aboriginal Rights - Land Claims Research*, 1973-1976, 1, CA ACU GBA F1316-S0020-SS0004-FL0019, Métis Association of Alberta fonds, Glenbow Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

¹⁸ *Alberta Métis History and Land Claims Research with Development Plan*, 2.

¹⁹ The Scrip “phenomenon gave rise to the growing numbers of landless ‘nonstatus’ Indians who joined the ranks of the dispossessed Métis. Subsequent generations of these people have been doomed to live in Third World conditions in settlements often on the edge of ‘Indian’ reserves, unable by government policy to participate in the community life or the regime of federal administration of reserve populations under the *Indian Act* legislation.” Paul L. A. H. Chartrand, “Aboriginal Rights: The Dispossession of the Métis,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 29, no. 3 (1991): 474.

Treaties which accorded legal recognition and maintained a living relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples.²⁰ The process of individualising Indigenous lands and providing them to settlers was an essential aspect of Canada's genocide of Indigenous Peoples.²¹ The effects of the Scrip System were far-reaching and inter-generational, impacting most Indigenous Peoples of Western and Northern Canada; in fact, entire First Nations reserves were dissolved in exchange for Scrip.²² Furthermore, Scrip was used to decrease the Treaty population, and therefore, the Crown's obligation to Indigenous Peoples.²³ Between 1885 to 1887, one third of all Scrip recipients were former Treaty Indians.²⁴ For the Métis Nation in particular, Scrip severed their connection to the land and their relatives.²⁵ With no legal basis to the land which they had always inhabited, the Métis and Non-Status First Nations were pushed to the margins of settler society. This led to what has been called the "Road Allowance Era."²⁶

²⁰ *Origins of the Alberta Métis*, 113.

²¹ Wolfe argues the "primary motive for elimination [of Indigenous Peoples] is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element ... outcomes of the logic of elimination can include...the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds." Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 388; "If it was known that alienable grants would not protect Métis interests, then the answer to the question posed above must lie in the pressures to promote a free land market for the purposes of the Dominion policy of westward national expansion. The answer lies in the views of such men as Chief Justice Wood who declared that 'as to the Half-Breed reserve, like all other reserves of every kind, they are a curse to the country, and should be distributed without delay.'" Chartrand, "Aboriginal Rights," 473; See Tough and Dimmer, "Great Frauds," 205-250.

²² See, for example, the dissolution of the Peeaysees First Nation and the Papaschase First Nation. While the MAA Land Claims research does not discuss the Peeaysees First Nation, it explores in-depth how the Papaschase First Nation as an entity was illegally dissolved; the Papaschase reserve was dismantled and the land given to settlers, with most band members receiving Scrip. *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 153-166.

²³ "From 1885, a separate scrip commissioner accompanied the western treaty commissions...Any Aboriginal man who could show some non-Aboriginal ancestry was given the option of taking Métis scrip instead of 'treaty status.' Many individuals were tempted by the prospect of a quick cash settlement to leave the ranks of 'treaty Indians' on the reserves and to join the growing ranks of the landless Métis." Chartrand, "Aboriginal Rights," 474; Camilla Augustus, "The Scrip Solution: The North West Métis Scrip Policy, 1885-1887," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Canada, 2005), 83.

²⁴ Augustus, "Scrip Solution," 138.

²⁵ In interviews with MAA researchers, Métis and Cree Elders talk about the arbitrary division created by Scrip and Treaty among, most of the time, people of the same family and Nation. See *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 342-388. Recent scholarship has further explored the colonial divisions that Scrip established between Métis and First Nations and its effect on the Métis Nation's relationship to indigeneity and ceremony; see Chantal Fiola, *Returning to Ceremony: Spirituality in Manitoba Métis Communities* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021).

²⁶ "Road allowance is the term used in Western Canada to describe the crown land that was surveyed and set aside for roadways that would be built in the future as the region developed. It was the surveying of their homeland by the Canadian government that culminated in the Métis resistances of 1869-70 in Red River and 1885 in Batoche. These

By 1978 the Scrip System still directly impacted the lives of the Métis Nation and Non-Status First Nations in Alberta to a considerable extent.²⁷ The only route for the MAA to achieve legal recognition—and hence funding, housing, community development, and land rights—was through the Land Claims Process. The Land Claims Process was developed by Canada in the early 1970s to “settle” the claims of Indigenous Peoples that were not signatories to previous Treaties. While the Land Claims Process differs from the Numbered Treaties (1871-1921), the goal of Canada remains the same: to extinguish Indigenous Peoples’ inherent rights, and thus their existence as Indigenous Peoples.²⁸ Just as with Scrip, the Land Claims process requires the Métis Nation to “extinguish” their inherent rights. In spite of this, the Land Claims Process constituted the most viable path for the MAA to reach an agreement on land and to survive as Indigenous Peoples within the Canadian settler state.²⁹

events led to the dispossession of the Métis and Halfbreeds from there and created a diaspora that is the source of the poverty, rootlessness, and loss of identity being experienced by Métis people today. After the resistances were put down, the leaders hanged, imprisoned, or exiled, and their homelands settled by new immigrants, our people were forced out by fear of violence and imprisonment. Many fled to the United States or to isolated areas of the Northwest and were forgotten by authorities. They settled on crown lands, or road allowances, and were, according to the government, squatters; their inherent right to their land not recognized. They became known as Road Allowance People, and they were left alone, out of sight, out of mind, until it was again time for settlement or resource development.” Maria Campbell, “Foreword: Charting the Way,” in *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. St-Onge and others (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), xiii-xiv.

²⁷ “It is safe to say that the Métis throughout the prairie provinces are among the poorest people in the country...It is not too difficult to trace the contemporary situation to the historical circumstances that originally separated the Métis from their land and means of livelihood a century ago.” *Origins of the Alberta Métis*, 80.

²⁸ “Treaties made Indian subjugation look honorable, or at least legal. There was little doubt about the underlying purpose of treaties. Treaty Six states that ‘all Indians ... do hereby cede, release, surrender, and yield up to the government forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever to the lands included.’” Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View*, rev. ed. (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989), 66. All Land Claims require Indigenous Peoples to “surrender” or “extinguish” their rights to the land: “the land-claims process constitutes a crucial vehicle for the ‘domestication’ of Indigenous claims to nationhood.” Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 67.

²⁹ “We have accepted the necessity to adjust ourselves to the economic, social, and political facts of life in Alberta; to seek the training, skills, and assistance that will allow us over time to move into the mainstream, maintaining at the same time as much as possible our traditional ways and beliefs.” *Alberta Métis History and Land Claims Research with Development Plan*, 2.

The Creation and Activities of Land Claims Research Department

With a proposed funding of \$200,000, the MAA undertook three years of research that examined “the nature of potential Métis claims within the Province of Alberta.”³⁰ Specifically, this research sought to explore the effects of Scrip and Treaty in dispossessing the Métis Nation and creating a Non-Status First Nations population in Alberta. The Land Claims research also detailed the creation of the Métis Nation as an Indigenous people, the role of the Church and Indian Affairs in colonising Métis and First Nations peoples, the history of land settlement schemes relating to the Métis Nation such as the *Manitoba Act, 1870*, the Alberta Métis Settlements, and the St-Paul-des-Métis Reserve, as well as an extensive review of archival and secondary sources.³¹ This research also included oral histories of Métis and Cree Elders and community members, community genealogies, and archeological digs to assess Métis land use and migration patterns. After the research, the MAA published a summary of their findings in a book, *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History*.

The activities of the MAA’s Land Claims research was, however, influenced by funding from the federal government—both materially and ideologically. While the funding dictated the type and extent of research that could be undertaken, it directly impacted the findings of the reports.³² In fact, the research director of the MAA Land Claims Research Department, Joe Sawchuk, argued as early as 1986 that the

³⁰ *Aboriginal Rights - Land Claims Research*, 1; *Origins of the Alberta Métis*, 404.

³¹ For more on the Church’s role in dispossessing the Métis and First Nations of Alberta, see *Origins of the Alberta Métis*, 224-225.

³² “Because land claims is [*sic*] particularly amenable to manipulation for political ends for the Native politician, there were many strings attached to the contract Indian Affairs had signed with the association. The objectives of the contract clearly stated that the association was to limit itself to the politically innocuous task of archival research; it was not to prepare an actual claim. Furthermore, the government had some control over who the director of the research was and what his or her duties were (the contract called for a director “mutually agreeable” to the MAA and Indian Affairs).” Joe Sawchuk, *The Dynamics of Native Politics: the Alberta Métis Experience* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1998), 147.

Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Department [DIAND] tried to influence the direction of the research that was being done...DIAND continually tried to influence contracted consultants as to the depth and direction of the research being conducted...it was typical for the government to try to play off one Métis association against the other in hopes of discrediting each...it was also common knowledge that the government didn't want the Métis associations to politicize the land claims issues.³³

Here, the federal government actively sought to shape the acknowledgement of Métis rights. This is not to say the Métis agency was absent from the situation. Instead, this example reveals the way in which settler-colonial states continued to inform and limit Indigenous Peoples' struggle for recognition.

Twelve years later, in *The Dynamics of Native Politics: the Alberta Métis Experience*, Sawchuk provided more information on his experience as the research director for the MAA. He argued that the Land Claims research was greatly influenced by the federal government and that this was a general theme of Canada's Land Claims Process.³⁴ This is further exemplified in the case of the MAA's Land Claims research when one considers that the MAA's publication of *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History* was also dictated by the federal government.³⁵

Government control over the Land Claims research was also expressed in other ways. For example, Sawchuk described how even

normal [Métis] association activities could be interpreted as a breach of contract and cause for withdrawal of land claims funding. Government officials on the committee that administered the land claims projects were particularly concerned that the [Métis] associations not use the research funding to spread information about the land claims research among the Métis populace.

³³ Ivan Morin, "Government can't keep hands off MAA land claims project," *Windspeaker*, May 23, 1986.

³⁴ "[Canada encouraged] Native organizations to pursue certain policies and strategies, and to abandon others...The heavy government pressure on the Dene Nation and the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories to present a joint land claim is a case in point...[the] minister of Northern Affairs...suspended the funding of the Dene Nation and the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories in 1978 because of their failure to bend to the government's wishes." Sawchuk, "Alberta Métis," 89.

³⁵ "To get the grant [to publish *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History*], the land claims department had to play down the subject of land claims and assure the secretariat that the book was simply to be a cultural history of the Métis people. If it had not done this, the grant would never have been awarded." Sawchuk, "Alberta Métis," 109.

While reluctant to fund the Land Claims research, the federal government, just as with other Indigenous governments negotiating Land Claims, threatened to withhold funding if the extent and reach of the research was not what they wanted. During the MAA's Land Claims research, for example, the government tried to limit the research from reaching other MAA departments.³⁶ Although the true extent of government control over the findings of the MAA's Land Claims research is unknown, these events speak to the fact that the colonisation of Indigenous Peoples persists. Indigenous Peoples's rights assertions are undermined by the coloniser in ways that uphold settler supremacy, rather than Indigenous sovereignty.³⁷

The Aftermath of the Land Claims Research and its Implications for Métis Land Claims in Alberta

The MAA's Land Claims research was a first for the Métis and Non-Status First Nations of Alberta in that it was research produced by Métis for Métis. By the time the final report was published in 1980, the discourse and scholarship on Métis history was dominated by settlers that either justified or denied the genocide of the Métis Nation.³⁸ Therefore, the MAA's Land Claims research constituted a major step forward. Consequently, the findings of these reports have continued to inform the MAA's nation-building efforts and rights assertions in subsequent decades.

The Land Claims research laid the foundation for how the MAA articulated its rights within the framework of Canadian law; instead of rejecting the concept of Aboriginal Title as a colonial tool of dispossession, the MAA instead rejected the Crown's position that the Scrip

³⁶ "The closest the government came to cutting off the land claims funding...was when the committee discovered that the land claims staff had attended the annual assembly of the MAA and had presented a report (as had all other MAA departments) detailing the operations of their department for that year." Sawchuk, "Alberta Métis," 83.

³⁷ For more on Land Claims as a tool of colonialism, see Joy S. Spear Chief-Morris, "Indigenous Land Claims and Reconciliation: The Importance of Land and Relationship Between Indigenous Nations and the Government of Canada," (Master's thesis, University of Western Ontario, Ontario, 2020).

³⁸ See D'Arcy Vermette, "Rejecting the Standard Discourse on the Dispossession of Métis Lands in Manitoba," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 6, no. 2 (2017): 87-119

extinguished the Métis Nation’s Aboriginal Title. According to the MAA, the “irregularities, the illegalities, and the fraudulent practices” of the Scrip System ensured that “the Métis were rendered landless and politically impotent as quickly as possible.”³⁹ Hence, the MAA argued, the Métis Nation deserves the chance to negotiate a modern-day Treaty. This objective is repeated today by the successor organisation of the MAA, the Métis Nation of Alberta, now called the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (OMG).⁴⁰

In 2019, the OMG co-hosted a conference on Métis lands, rights, and the Scrip System. This conference repeated the same points of the MAA Land Claims reports: that the Scrip System was an unjust, illegal system that did not and could not extinguish Métis Aboriginal Title.⁴¹ The Land Claims research no doubt provided the basis for pursuing harvesting rights across Alberta; in fact, the Métis communities detailed in the Land Claims reports—such as Lac La Biche, Fort Dunvegan, Fort Chipewyan, and Fort Vermillion—now have recognised harvesting rights.⁴² While the Land Claims Process—and by extension, the concept of Aboriginal Title—is not inherent in the Métis Nation’s understanding of who they are and their relationship to the land, the OMG is negotiating a modern-day Treaty with the Crown; this treaty is an expression of Métis agency that will ensure the Métis Nation’s inherent rights to land and

³⁹ *The Métis and the Land in Alberta*, 24-25.

⁴⁰ Otipemisiwak Métis Government, “MNA Citizens elect new President, Citizens’ Council, formally becoming Otipemisiwak Métis Government,” news release, September 21, 2023, <https://albertaMétis.com/news/mna-citizens-elect-new-president-citizens-council-formally-becoming-otipemisiwak-métis-government>.

⁴¹ Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research and others, *Métis Scrip in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2018).

⁴² Government of Alberta, *Métis Harvesting in Alberta Policy*. Edmonton: Environment and Parks, 2019. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/Métis-harvesting-in-alberta-policy-2018> (accessed November 18, 2024).

self-determination are implemented and enshrined in law.⁴³ The OMG is hoping this Treaty will be completed and signed by the Summer/Fall of 2025.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The MAA pursued Land Claims research in the early 1970s as a means to address the legacy of Scrip. The Scrip System was a genocidal tool used by Canada to “extinguish” the Aboriginal Title of Métis and First Nations peoples. This system created a landless population of Métis and Non-Status First Nations with no legal recognition as Indigenous Peoples. By the 1960s and 70s, settler encroachment and industrial development continued to negatively affect the livelihood and rights of Metis and First Nations communities. However, these people refused to be known as “the Forgotten People”; they protested, organised, and demanded the government acknowledge the inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous People—specifically the rights Indigenous Peoples that had not signed Treaties.⁴⁵ In response, Canada developed the Land Claims Process to “settle” the claims and rights of Indigenous Peoples through the negotiation of “modern-day Treaties”.

The MAA’s Land Claims research of the 1970s, although conducted to help the Métis re-establish themselves in the face of genocide, was undermined by the federal government; thus

⁴³ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Métis Nation Within Alberta Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement*. n.p., 2023.
<https://albertaMétis.com/app/uploads/2023/02/Self-government-and-Implementation-Agreement-signed.pdf>
 (accessed November 18, 2024).

⁴⁴ Otipemisiwak Métis Government, *Otipemisiwak Métis Government / Government of Canada Co-Developed Way Forward on Métis Self-Government*. n.p., 2024.
<https://albertaMétis.com/app/uploads/2024/08/Otipemisiwak-Métis-Government-Government-of-Canada-Co-Developed-Way-Forward-on-Self-Government.pdf> (accessed November 18, 2024).

⁴⁵ “The decades that followed the 1885 Resistance were a challenging time for the Métis. During this time, they became known as the ‘Forgotten People’ because of the racism and exclusion they experienced. On the one hand, they were often sidelined from non-Aboriginal Canadian society through racism and exclusionary laws and policies. On the other hand, because the colonial government placed the Métis in a separate legal category from First Nations, they were considered ineligible for services that First Nations received and were often restricted from accessing First Nations reserves, which had the result of separating Métis people from their First Nations relatives.” Métis Nation British Columbia, *Kaa-Wiichihitoyaahk: Métis Perspectives on Cultural Wellness* (Surrey: Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia, 2021), 47.

ensuring that aspects of research's results fit within the federal government's interests. Nonetheless, the Land Claims research was an expression of Métis agency; the Métis and Non-Status First Nations of Alberta are here today because they continued to fight against colonisation. The decades of re-building, mobilisation, and protest, led to the MAA negotiating the Land Claims research in the first place. The MAA Land Claims research is an example of an Indigenous People struggling against a colonial system that seeks to define Indigenous Peoples and their rights to suit the needs of the coloniser. This research made the case that the Métis Nation was cheated out of their land and that Canada owes the Métis Nation; that the Métis can only find their place within Canadian society when their inherent rights to land and self-determination are recognized and affirmed through Treaty.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Métis Association of Alberta fonds, Glenbow Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Howard. *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View*. Rev. ed. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989.

Adams, Howard. *A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization*. Penticton: Theytus Books, 1995

Alexander Innes, Robert. "The Importance of Family Ties to Members of Cowessess First Nation." PhD diss., University of Arizona, United States of America, 2007.

Augustus, Camilla. "The Scrip Solution: The North West Métis Scrip Policy, 1885-1887." Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Canada, 2005.

Beaulieu, Celine. "The Permanent Rationalities of the Doctrine of Discovery in Canada." *University of Saskatchewan Undergraduate Research Journal* 6, no. 3 (2020): 1-9.

Campbell, Maria. "Foreword: Charting the Way." *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History*, edited by St-Onge and others. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012.

Chartrand, Paul L. A. H. "Aboriginal Rights: The Dispossession of the Métis." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 29, no. 3 (1991): 457-482.

Chief-Morris, Joy S. Spear. "Indigenous Land Claims and Reconciliation: The Importance of Land and Relationship Between Indigenous Nations and the Government of Canada." Master's thesis, University of Western Ontario, Ontario, 2020.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Métis Nation Within Alberta Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement*. n.p., 2023.
<https://albertaMétis.com/app/uploads/2023/02/Self-government-and-Implementation-Agreement-signed.pdf> (accessed November 18, 2024).

Fiola, Chantal. *Returning to Ceremony: Spirituality in Manitoba Métis Communities*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021.

Government of Alberta. *Métis Harvesting in Alberta Policy*. Edmonton: Environment and Parks, 2019. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/Métis-harvesting-in-alberta-policy-2018> (accessed November 18, 2024).

Irlbacher-Fox, Stephanie and Fort Providence Métis Council. *Since 1921: The Relationship Between Dehcho Métis and Canada*. Fort Providence: Fort Providence Métis Council, 2007.

McIvor, Bruce. *Essays on Canadian Law and Decolonization*. 3rd ed. Vancouver: First Peoples Law, 2018.

Métis Association of Alberta, and others. *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History*. Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1981.

Métis Nation British Columbia. *Kaa-Wiichihitoyaahk: Métis Perspectives on Cultural Wellness*. Surrey: Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia, 2021.

Morin, Ivan. "Government can't keep hands off MAA land claims project." *Windspeaker*, May 23, 1986.

Otipemisiwak Métis Government. "MNA Citizens elect new President, Citizens' Council, formally becoming Otipemisiwak Métis Government." News release. September 21, 2023.
<https://albertaMétis.com/news/mna-citizens-elect-new-president-citizens-council-formally-becoming-otipemisiwak-Métis-government/>.

Otipemisiwak Métis Government. *Otipemisiwak Métis Government / Government of Canada Co-Developed Way Forward on Métis Self-Government*. n.p., 2024.
<https://albertaMétis.com/app/uploads/2024/08/Otipemisiwak-Métis-Government-Government-of-Canada-Co-Developed-Way-Forward-on-Self-Government.pdf> (accessed November 18, 2024).

Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research and others. *Métis Scrip in Alberta*. Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2018.

- Samson, Colin. "Dispossession and Canadian Land Claims: Genocidal Implications of the Innu Nation Land Claim." *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, edited by Andrew Woolford and others. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Sawchuk, Joe. *The Dynamics of Native Politics: the Alberta Métis Experience*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1998.
- Saysewahum, Sylvia McAdam. "Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery: A Call to Action." *Wrongs to Rights: How Churches can Engage the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, edited by Steve Heinrichs. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada, 2023.
- Tough, Frank and Kathleen Dimmer. "'Great Frauds and Abuses': Institutional Innovation at the Colonial Frontier of Private Property: Case Studies of the Individualization of Maori, Indian and Métis Lands." *Settler Economies in World History*, edited by Christopher Lloyd and others. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Vermette, D'Arcy. "Rejecting the Standard Discourse on the Dispossession of Métis Lands in Manitoba." *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 6, no. 2 (2017): 87-119.
- Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

**The Anglo-Irish Country Houses and
the Transition of Power and Space 1903-1923**

Jacqueline Ho

HTST 493. 58: Places and Spaces of Authority In Irish History

Dr. Glenn R. Wilkinson

June 21st 2024

Introduction

The Anglo-Irish Country Houses (Big Houses) as physical locations were useful to understand power and authority are interchangeable, by observing the dynamics between the Protestant Ascendancy and the native Catholic Irishmen in the 19-20th century. Before diving into details, it is crucial to clarify common concepts of power and authority. The particular party who exercised the right to define a specific space is the one who held power. Meanwhile, authority refers to the manipulation of a historical narrative from a perspective, meaning they were legitimate to define a space and take action accordingly.

Studying the Country Houses' intellectual, cultural and social contexts was crucial to understanding the change of space and the reasons behind it.¹ For instance, during the Independence War, the IRA held the power to impact the fate of big houses by destroying them, but the authority of country houses remained in the Irish landed class and the Crown forces, showing power and authority are not always synonymous. The transition of power and authority of a particular party contributed to a drastic change in space. The concept of space refers to how people understand the place they are living in and how it impacts their worldview.² In this case, big houses housed a number of English landlords and colonial officers' families in the 19th century and were transformed into a military barricade of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the Irish Revolution years.

¹ Stock, Paul, ed. *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*. First edition. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, (2015): 7.

² Stock et al, eds., *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*, 17-18.

Body 1 Big Houses and the Imperial Connection

The Anglo-Irish country house represented prestige and power as it housed aristocrats who ruled Ireland and shared a close connection with the British Empire in the 19th century. They held absolute political authority and power over native Irish tenants until the turn of the century when the landlords sold their lands to local tenants. The Anglo-Irish were a group of landed British settled in Ireland since the Ulster Plantation in Northern Ireland in the 16th and 17th centuries, as part of Britain's plan to extend its political reign of influence to Ireland. The nobles were closely connected to the Crown as their families either served as overseas colonial officers or as members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), a police force that was responsible for keeping peace in Ireland from 1836-1922. Also, they shared the same Protestantism religion with the Crown and they belonged to the Anglican church. These groups of Protestant elites were known as the Protestant Ascendancy and their living places were named 'Big houses' by the native Irish.

The space of Big House projects a sense of authority as people with political authority in Ireland lived there, which served as a symbol of wealth, law and order. As mentioned, a number of Upper-Class members lived in country houses, and they were capable of writing memoirs on big houses' lives. For instance, Irish-British novelist Elizabeth Bowen, who later inherited the Bowen's court from her family, wrote fiction on Big Houses in Ireland, she described the Houses as isolated from the rest of the others with layers of walls. The naming of big houses encapsulates the physical size of these gentry and aristocratic homes and a sense of alienation felt by the majority of the population towards them.³ The big houses also represented the

³ Donnelly, James S. "Big House Burnings in County Cork during the Irish Revolution, 1920–21." *Éire-Ireland (St. Paul)* 47, no. 3 (2012): 185.

Crown's colonialization on Irish Land as they housed landed Protestants from England, when every Irishman passed by the massive mansion, they would be reminded that the houses belonged to alien powers, it provided the visual confirmation of imperial solidity, stability and even majesty.¹⁴

Moreover, the design of country houses further demonstrated that the Big Houses served as an extension of authority from the Great British Empire, by observing its design. Irish big houses and castles in England shared similarities with Renaissance prototypes, namely the Roman Arches and the well-known Roman villa (Villa Suburbana).⁵ Roman villa is a type of country house design that could be dated back to the heyday of the Roman Empire, it is famously known for its suburb location and representing the authority of Roman Emperors, as only aristocratic families were allowed to live in there. The big houses' design echoed the Roman Villa's as they were both surrounded by concrete walls to distance themselves from the native population. By mirroring Roman architecture fashion, big houses projected sovereignty over others.

For instance, Irish writer George O'Brien pointed out that the Irish viewed the presence of Lismore Castle as pre-ordained and possessed by elites like 'nobles, superiors and employers,' in his book *The Village of Longing*. In this case, the owner of Lismore Castle, Duke of Devonshire, was complimented as a decent English Protestant. Meanwhile, the nearby area was viewed as a lawless and ferocious place, full of 'thieves, rapists and murders.'⁶ It proved that by mimicking Roman and English architectural styles and housing prestigious members of the Upper class, it enabled the space of big houses to be a place associated with law and order in rural Ireland.

⁴ Maguire, H. Ireland and the House of Invented Memory. In *Ireland's Heritages*, 1st ed., (2005): pp.161.

⁵ Maguire, "Ireland and the House of Invented Memory" 158.

⁶ Maguire, "Ireland and the House of Invented Memory" 158.

The authority of Irish Big Houses' owners persisted as they shared strong affiliations with the Crown, which enabled them to exercise absolute political authority and power in Ireland, including the power to define the space of their living place in the 19th century. The country houses housed nobles who served as governors in overseas' British colonies. The reason why big house owners had to seek colonial proconsular positions in the nineteenth century was due to the increasing indebtedness of their estates.⁷ For instance, the Big House Myrtle Grove was the home of Sir Henry Arthur Blake (1840-1918) in the 20th century, whose long career in colonial service included five governorships—the Bahamas, Newfoundland, Jamaica, Hong Kong, and Ceylon—between 1884 and 1907.⁸ Besides, he married a prominent Liberal politician Ralph Bernal Osborne's daughter Edith Osborne, who was the heiress to her father's vast estate at Newtown Anner, Co. Tipperary.⁹ Since then, Myrtle Grove became the representative of wealth and prestige in Youghal, Co. Cork.

Besides serving as colonial governors, big house owners also devoted themselves to the local police force to preserve order in the community, namely the RIC. It was a police organization that was directly placed under the authority of Britain. The harsh tactics employed by the RIC were feared by civilians. For instance, Myrtle Grove's owner Henry Blake was a sub-inspector in the RIC before he worked as a colonial governor. It reveals how Ireland was both a target of and an active partner in British imperialism.¹⁰

⁷ Barczewski, S. (n.d.). Country Houses and the Distinctiveness of the Irish Imperial Experience. In *Ireland in an Imperial World* (2017): p. 37.

⁸ Barczewski, "Country Houses," 26.

⁹ Barczewski, "Country Houses," 27.

¹⁰ Barczewski, "Country Houses," 29.

The space of country houses slightly changed during the Great War (1914-1918), from simply a living place of landed elites to a war hospital that housed injured English or Irish soldiers. Ireland participated in the Great War as part of the British Empire against the Central Powers. Patriotic English upper-class members in Ireland supported the British's war effort by offering their homes, which were the Big Houses, as shelters for injured soldiers. For instance, the Countess of Mayo offered Moorefield House for free as a convalescent home for soldiers in March 1916.¹¹ In addition, Lords Longford and De Vesci offered the Corrig Castle in Kingstown, Co. Dublin. They transformed the disused house into a hospital.¹² Specifically, large reception rooms were turned into hospital wards, gardens became soothing locations for healing traumatized front-line combats.¹³

By providing medical care to the injured soldiers and performing other charity work, the big house owners became the role model in the community. They became more influential in that they developed the power to impact other civilians during the war, such as encouraging civilians to enlist or promising to keep the tenants' positions when they participated in the war.¹⁴ The big house owners' collective effort to convince fellow Irish civilians to contribute to the war was useful to reinforce its authority, that they could unite the Irish natives to fight the war for Britain. It proved that big houses and their owners projected power and thus authority fully on the surrounding Irish in the mid-19th century to early 20th century.

Body 2 Big Houses and Irish Land Question

¹¹ Dooley, Terence. *Burning The Big House*, 57.

¹² Dooley, Terence. *Burning The Big House*, 57.

¹³ Dooley, Terence. *Burning The Big House*, 68.

¹⁴ Dooley, Terence. *Burning The Big House*, 68.

The big houses' owners' power over native Irish in the rural area persisted as they provided working opportunities to them, such as managing agricultural lands, tenant farms, or the owners' estates when they were out of Ireland. Thus, the owners established authority in rural Ireland as they held the power to hire or dismiss local Irish tenants, and if they disobeyed the landlord, they could be dismissed. From the tenants' viewpoint, they were being exploited as their lands were confiscated during the plantation era. The Ulster Plantation was the most successful plantation scheme that brought English and Scottish settlers to Irish land.¹⁵ The scheme also featured in confiscating lands from Irish Catholics, under the execution of penal laws in the 17th century. Lands that originally belonged to Irish landowners, were now forcefully transferred to the Protestants. The mass migration of Protestants to settle on confiscated estates changed the Irish's social and cultural landscape, Protestantism was imposed as the state religion and native Irish were denied access to their ancestral land.¹⁶

Irish Catholics lost their lands and they were forced to work as English landlords' tenants or were relocated to remote areas, especially after the Cromwellian wars. Oliver Cromwell (1599- 1658) was an English politician who led the armies from the English parliament and crushed resistance in Ireland, after the Irish Rebellion in 1641. The Cromwellian Wars of 1649–53 fulfilled the goal of re-conquesting Ireland from the Irish Catholic Confederation. Protestant settlers in Ireland who had supported the Crown generally kept their estates and sustained their social status. The nobles understood that Landownership was the only guaranteed access to social standing and that they could be influential within the local rural community.¹⁷ Yet,

¹⁵ Raven, James, ed. *Lost Mansions : Essays on the Destruction of the Country House*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 46.

¹⁶ Raven et al, eds., *Lost Mansions*, 46.

¹⁷ Dooley, Terence. *The Land For The People: The Land Question In Independent Ireland*. (2004), 3.

Officers and administrators who served the defeated Confederate Catholic cause were forced to forfeit their estates and were banished to Connaught by Cromwell where they received much smaller allocations.¹⁸ Since then, Catholics have been progressively deprived of land ownership.¹⁹

The existence of Big Houses further demonstrated the rural inequality in Ireland, which paved way for the heightened agrarian agitation in the 19th century. When local Irish worked as tenants in their ancestral lands, English landlords dwelled in massive mansions, named the Country House. They utilized the landed power and wealth to construct hundreds of Big Houses, which consisted of hundreds of acres of demesne parkland, woodland and gardens, and most were surrounded by high demesne walls.²⁰ Meanwhile, Irish tenants were segregated from the Big Houses and their living space was limited, as one Big House equals the size of an entire Irish village. Besides, landlords were capable of exercising their political authority in the community as the majority of Irish members of parliament (MPs) were drawn from landed backgrounds. They obtained the power to control the local government and the county's infrastructure, and native Irish citizens had to depend on them, without other choices.²¹

However, the land owners' power over tenants gradually declined after the Great Famine as they emigrated back to England and the agricultural agitation intensified. The Great Famine (1845-52) was a period of starvation due to potato plight that resulted in 1 million deaths. Landlords preferred to move back to England under this social hardship. In addition, many rural tenants decided to flee from Ireland to other countries such as the US, Canada and Australia,

¹⁸ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 5.

¹⁹ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 5.

²⁰ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 5.

²¹ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 8.

searching for other opportunities. As a result, estates and country houses were being abandoned, and their sphere of influence gradually declined as their owners no longer accommodated in that area.

The Land War (1879-1882) demonstrated the heightened agricultural agitation that served as a leading force of spatial change of big houses in the 20th century in Ireland. Irish tenants were discontented as they considered the confiscation of Irish Catholic Land unjust, as well as they could not afford the rent. Therefore, they demanded that parliament make extensive alterations to the laws governing the ownership and occupation of agricultural land in Ireland.²² According to Historian Campbell's observation, it was the first social revolution in Irish history which resulted in the transfer of landownership from landlords to tenants, showing in the subsequent Land Acts.²³

The application of Land Acts marked the beginning of landownership transferal from Anglo-Irish landlords to bourgeoisie Irish in the early 20th century, it paved the way for the rise of the tenants' power as they were capable of purchasing the Big House from their landlords. The implementation of the Land Act (1881), transformed the landlord-tenant relationship, and it encouraged landlords to sell out to their tenants. The Wyndham Act (1903) introduced a system of dual-ownership, that successfully bridged the gap between the price that most landowners were willing to accept and the price that most tenants were ready to pay.²⁴ It resulted in the rise of tenants' power and influence on the surrounding community. Most purchasers under the act were not English or Scottish; they were Irish.²⁵ Until 1909, tenants became the owners of more

²² Clark, Samuel. *Social Origins of the Irish Land War* : Samuel Clark. (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1979), 3.

²³ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 42.

²⁴ Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War*, 334.

²⁵ Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War*, 172.

than 326,000 holdings by the early 1920s, when nearly two-thirds of Ireland's total area had ceased to be the property of land lords.²⁶

Though the Land Acts temporarily resolved the Land Question by sharing power between English and Irish landlords partially, the rural inequality problem remained unresolved, in which Irish nationalists demanded the land to be redistributed and thus carried out radicalized protests by burning Big Houses during the revolutionary period. From the Irish nationalists' viewpoint, Country Houses represented a foreign people and government, that they were the hostile enemies of the Republic.²⁷ It paralleled IRA Leader Barry's claim, that IRA members considered the destruction of Big House was essential to facilitate the land redistribution, they encouraged local landless men to settle on the lands and to use them.²⁸ The Land question aroused fierce passions in Ireland and foreshadowed hatred towards landlords projected to burning down big houses, causing a transition of space and power in Irish Big House in post-WWI Ireland.²⁹

²⁶ Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War*, 335.

²⁷ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 106.

²⁸ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 114.

²⁹ Dooley, *The Land For The People*, 6.

Body 3 Big House and Its Destruction in the Revolutionary Years (1919-1923)

The destruction of Big House during the War of Independence and the Civil War (1919-1923) symbolized a power transition from the English Protestant landed elites to Catholic Irish nationalists, namely the IRA members. Though the landed elites living in Ireland could still exercise political authority as the RIC was capable of offering protection, they gradually lost the power to stop the IRA volunteers from destroying their living space. On the contrary, IRA members were competent in obtaining the power to redefine the Big Houses' space, from a symbol of law and order to associating it with conquest and colonial oppression deserving of destruction. They believed that the total destruction of the Big House was an ideal means to break the soon-to-be Irish Free State's connection with Britain.³⁰ IRA members took action to destroy Big Houses and attack elites that were suspected of colluding with the Crown, proved by multiple accounts of IRA volunteers recalling their missions of burning the Big House.

The IRA volunteers held the power to redefine the space of big houses as they were united in a collective nationalistic belief. Irish nationalism was a political ideology thriving in the 19th century which celebrated the uniqueness of Irish culture, including its literature, architecture, language etc, as well as fighting for Ireland's independence from Britain. The anti-colonial nationalists highly emphasized the distinction between Britain and Ireland, and they defined Ireland as Catholic and Gaelic. Therefore, they found the existence of Big Houses and the Protestant landed elites living in Ireland for centuries were an "alien intruder in the Irish landscape."³¹ They were determined to exterminate any British influence on Ireland, that Big Houses served as a perfect target as they were headquarters of British efforts to impose their

³⁰ Johnson, Nuala C. "Where Geography and History Meet: Heritage Tourism and the Big House in Ireland." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 3 (1996): 556.

³¹ Barczewski, "Country Houses," 31.

culture on Ireland.³² As a result, the burning of Big Houses belonging to landed Protestants was one of the most dramatic features of the Irish Revolution of 1919–23.³³

The IRA exercised their power by burning multiple Big Houses across Ireland, especially in Co. Cork, proving though the IRA lacked political authority in Ireland, they had the power to impact the owners and others who were sympathetic to the Crown. For instance, IRA leader Thomas Costello received the order from the General Headquarters (GHQ), that they had to burn the Moydrum Castle (Co. Westmeath), which housed Lord Castlemaine and his family.³⁴ Lord Castlemaine was a member of the British House of Lords, who that destroying the residence of the upper class would be effective in threatening ones who colluded with the British forces. Therefore, Costello mobilized 20 men in the column and went to destroy the castle on July 4th 1921.³⁵ The Moydrum Castle became the last big house burnt before the truce between loyalists and republicans in 1921.³⁶

Moreover, IRA members treated the burning of Big House as revenge as Republicans' homes were being destroyed by the Black and Tans. They chose to burn an equal number of houses belonging to supporters of the British regime as a counter-reprisal.³⁷ Castle, mansions and residences were sent up in flames by the IRA immediately after British fire gangs had razed the homes of Irish Republicans.³⁸ For instance, IRA members notified Lord Listowel's wife Miss Barbara Beecher that their house, the Listowel Castle (Co. Kerry), has to be destroyed as the owner was an anti-Irish person, meaning he was a loyalist that disapproved of Irish

³² Barczewski, "Country Houses," 25.

³³ Donnelly, "Big House Burnings in County Cork," 141.

³⁴ Costello, Thomas. Bureau Of Military History, WS. 21.

³⁵ Costello, Thomas. Bureau Of Military History, WS. 22.

³⁶ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 114.

³⁷ Costello, Thomas. Bureau Of Military History, WS. 21.

³⁸ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 99.

Independence.³⁹ According the IRA commandant who led the destruction of Listowel Castle, he announced that the enemy bombed and destroyed six houses of Republicans. The Listowel Castle was taken down on April 16th, 1921.⁴⁰

IRA raiders held the power to define the space of Big House, as they expelled the Big House's original owners and commandeered the abandoned Houses as military strongholds. IRA believed the owners to be supporters of the British administration and their houses were deemed strategic military targets, as it could house numerous firearms for the RIC and its auxiliary.⁴¹ For instance, the RIC inspector acknowledged that weapons that were used to attack Republicans were 'stored in quantities at the houses of the country gentry'.⁴² Therefore, to prevent the Big Houses from being occupied as military billets, IRA members planned the destruction of big houses across Ireland. Specifically, the above-mentioned Listowel Castle was claimed to be in the battalion area of enemy reprisals, and it was deemed to be demolished.⁴³ It showed that Big Houses served as magazines that enabled the IRA members to raid the stored weapons and that the IRA confiscated a large number of shotguns, rifles, revolvers and ammunition in Moydrum Castle, before burning it down in September 1920.⁴⁴ The found ammunition was useful for carrying out other missions assigned by the GHQ of the IRA, which facilitated the revolutionary movement.

The destruction of Big Houses during the revolutionary years contributed to a drastic transformation of its space. Big Houses no longer served as a living place as there were a

³⁹ Donnelly, "Big House Burnings in County Cork," 165.

⁴⁰ Donnelly, "Big House Burnings in County Cork," 165.

⁴¹ Raven et al, eds., *Lost Mansions*, 51.

⁴² Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 49.

⁴³ Donnelly, "Big House Burnings in County Cork," 165.

⁴⁴ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 113.

significant proportion of the 300 burnings of big houses during the 1920-3 period.⁴⁵ Another reason was the landed elites decided to move back to England. They feared deep-lying hatred expressed by the native Irish due to their strong linkage with Britain. Ireland was no longer a safe space for them. Under this situation, many Big Houses were either in ruins or destroyed, abandoned. Current estimates suggest that more than 500 houses have been destroyed or are in ruins.⁴⁶ However, a minority of them were able to be repurposed as heritage sites, hotels or guests' houses, such as Strokestown Park House (Co. Roscommon), it showed that big houses were no longer radicalized as a symbol of oppression, but rather a national and cultural symbol that represented Ireland's history.⁴⁷

Conclusion

In summation, the Anglo-Irish Big Houses' spatial and power transitions have gone through three major phases. First was the close connection between Great Britain and Ireland after the implementation of the Act of Union (1800), that the big house owners held full political authority and power over native Irish, as they were English Aristocrats who served the Crown by being either a colonial officer or RIC policeman, that their living space was perceived as a manifestation of law and order. Secondly, the aristocrats' authority over native Irish persisted as they were landlords and had Irish tenants working for them. However, Irish landlordism faced a transition of authority in the post-Great Famine and post-Land War era, as they sold big houses under the order of multiple Land Acts. Their power over Irish tenants declined and they were not

⁴⁵ Dooley, *The Land For The People*, 41.

⁴⁶ Johnson, "Where Geography and History Meet," 556.

⁴⁷ Johnson, "Where Geography and History Meet," 551.

the owners of Big Houses. Thus, they no longer had the authority to implement policies and impact the community.

Eventually, the Irish revolutionary ages were a total transformation of power, and the IRA members were empowered by defining the space of Big House as a direct English conquest of Ireland.⁴⁸ Though they lacked political authority, they launched numerous campaigns to remove British influence in Ireland by destroying Big Houses and adding a military purpose to it. The complete transfer of sovereignty from British to Irish occurred after the War of Independence, demonstrated by the establishment of the Irish Free State (1921). Since then, Big House served as a national cultural symbol in Ireland that offered insights into its entwined history of colonialism, landownership and independence.

⁴⁸ Dooley, *Burning The Big House*, 97.

Bibliography

Barczewski, S. (n.d.). Country Houses and the Distinctiveness of the Irish Imperial Experience. In *Ireland in an Imperial World* (pp. 25–48). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Costello, Thomas. Bureau Of Military History, WS. 1296.

Clark, Samuel. *Social Origins of the Irish Land War : Samuel Clark*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1979.

Dooley, Terence. *Burning The Big House*. Yale University Press, 2022.

Dooley, Terence. *The Land For The People: The Land Question In Independent Ireland*. 2004.

Donnelly, James S. “Big House Burnings in County Cork during the Irish Revolution, 1920–21.” *Éire-Ireland (St. Paul)* 47, no. 3 (2012): 141–197.

Johnson, Nuala C. “Where Geography and History Meet: Heritage Tourism and the Big House in Ireland.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 3 (1996): 551–566.

Maguire, H. (2005). Ireland and the House of Invented Memory. In *Ireland's Heritages* (1st ed., pp. 153–168). Routledge.

Raven, James, ed. *Lost Mansions : Essays on the Destruction of the Country House*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Stock, Paul, ed. *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*. First edition. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

**Mexico's *La Santa Muerte*, Beloved and Feared: through the Lens of Ideological
Communitas.**

By

Yessenia Castro

30200757

HIST 376

During my first trip to Mexico City perhaps the most intriguing thing I encountered were the abundance of little glass boxes with an image or statuette of the *La Virgen de Guadalupe* strewn around every street corner, shop, or household. Loud, flashy, decorated with flowers, conchas, tea lights, and banners. What's harder to notice, living in the bad part of town, lurking in alleyways in a dripping display of graffiti, and coming out at night, is the image of a veiled skeleton lady: la Santa Muerte. La Santa Muerte (translated from Spanish: Holy Death) is depicted as a skeletal woman, often wearing a brightly colored veil, mimicking the image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, covered in flowers and surrounded by cigarette buds, she is debatably Mexico's favourite and most feared folk saint.¹

In his book, Frank Graziano states that folk saints are beings that “intermingle with humans and have a casual influence -magical and miraculous- on even the mundane matter of one's day to day routine”.² Graziano's book elaborates that a folk saint is made by a group of individuals in similar situations that have not been accepted by a God or church. This makes the folk saint an alternative belief stemming from a figure in a traditional religion, allowing the devotee to have comfortable and interactive exchanges with the folk saint as they are an idealised version of a being that has not accepted them. This is especially true in the case of la Santa Muerte and her devoted followers. Her devotees consist of characters that make up part of largely unaccepted groups of Mexico, from criminals to the LGBTQ+ communities³.

¹ Roberto Garces Marrero “La Santa Muerte en la Ciudad de México: Devoción, Vida Cotidiana y Espacio Público” *Revista Cultural y Religión* 13, no.2 (2019): 118.
<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/la-santa-muerte-en-ciudad-de-méxico-devoción-vida/docview/2340011519/se-2>.

² Frank Graziano, “Culture of Devotion: *Folk Saints of Spanish America*” (Oxford University Press, 2007), pg. 5-7.

³ Lois Lorentzen. “Santa Muerte: *Saint of the Dispossessed, Enemy of Church and State*” Hemispheric Institute (Blog) (Year not specified).
<https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-13-1-states-of-devotion/13-1-essays/santa-muerte-saint-of-the-dispossessed-enemy-of-church-and-state.html>

The idea of not belonging to a group ironically forms groups. Victor Turner's theories in *communitas* elaborates on this phenomenon. *Communitas* refers to a group of people that share the same experience and adopt a new identity stemming from that experience. Though there are three types of *communitas* determined by Turner, the cult of *la Santa Muerte* relates most closely to the third form: ideological *communitas*. Ideological *communitas* is the the utopian "model based on existential *communitas* (a transient personal experience of togetherness following an event or events) that can be expressed as an outward form of an inward experience of a happening"⁴. In simpler terms, ideological *communitas* consist of making a utopia within a shared experience of liminality, manifested as an idealized vision of society based on shared experiences.

For years Mexico has been known for its white sand beaches and delicious cuisine, but when you're on your dream vacation, you are told to stay in the resort and not to stray. The fear of Mexico has reached new levels of alertness, especially after the senseless fear mongering thanks to President Donald Trump. Unfortunately, good fear mongering starts with some truth. I will explore these issues more thoroughly later in my essay, for simplicity's sake please recognize that the corruption and danger in Mexico, at its core, is caused by the government. Any choice the current and previous governments have made has trickled down to its citizens who now have to live with the consequences. The event that puts Mexicans in a liminal state is this plaguing corruption that increases poverty and insecurity, that then drives people to severe crimes including drug trafficking, murder, and kidnappings. This leads into the coping mechanism of worshipping a folk saint believed to be a miraculous assistance with the threat of everyday life in Mexico, whether you be a targeted individual such as a woman, a child, a criminal, or simply a man on his way to work. This sense of belonging and salvation rooted in the belief in *la Santa Muerte* is Mexico's own reflection of utopia in a time

⁴ John Killinger. "Communitas." *Encyclopaedia of Psychology and Religion* (edited by Leeming, Madden, Marlan), Springer New York (2010): pg. 40.

of crisis. In this essay I will explore the correlation between Mexico's cult of la Santa Muerte and Mexico's current societal situation to understand how the cult promotes ideas of Turner's ideological *communitas* theory.

There are plenty of theories about the origins of la Santa Muerte, we will be quickly discussing la Santa Muerte as she is most commonly considered: an evolution of Mictlantecuhтли and Mictecacihuatl. Kristensen reports in her article on la Santa Muerte that Mictlantecuhтли and Mictecacihuatl are Aztec Gods of death who rule over the Land of Dead, Mictlan. She goes further to say in the same article that during the Aztec civilization, the Aztecs also depicted their Gods of death as skeletons and that during Spanish colonization (early 1500s), they encountered many instances of a practice of worshipping *a* Santa Muerte.⁵ Though this is a perfectly valid argument for the making and origins of la Santa Muerte, la Santa Muerte as we know her now is no longer the Aztec God she could have once been but rather a product of the corruption witnessed by the Mexican people.

As stated before, Mexico is undeniably corrupt. But you can practically pinpoint the moment where everything went from bad to horrible. Stephen D. Morris once again provides insight on the political, economic, and social issues plaguing present Mexico. In his book he explores how when in the 1980s the political groups Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) caused a split in the leading political party of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) which caused major frauds in the election of 1987. The consequences of this election pushed for electoral reforms making PRI lose its majority government and allowed PAN's Vicente Fox to take the presidency and lead the country into a 'democracy'.⁶ Viridian Rios contradicts and elaborates on this in her article about the increase in Mexican violence. She states that the accepted idea in scholarly

⁵ Regnar Albæk Kristensen. "How Did Death Become a Saint in Mexico?" *Ethnos* 81, no. 3 (2016): 402–424, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2014.938093>

⁶ Stephen D. Morris, "Political Corruption in Mexico: *The Impact of Democratization*" (Lynne Rienner Pub, 2009), pg. 3-4.

interpretations is that during the the events mentioned in the 80s, Mexico's authoritarian and single parted governments "enabled corrupt Mexican government officials to play a mediating and regulatory role with drug-trafficking organizations and to explicitly discourage violence. Mexican authorities implicitly agreed on allowing traffickers to continue their businesses as long as a quota of bribes was paid and no major episodes of violence occurred"⁷. This reveals that Vicente Fox wasn't the saviour Mexico had hoped he was, but rather another victim of standing in the Mexican Presidential Office and succumbing to the corruption so many before him have and allowing even further criminal activities to torment Mexico, as seen in Tepito.

Natalia Grisales' article on Tepito says enough just in its title: 'In Tepito everything is sold except for dignity'. Throughout her article she explains how Tepito, a community in Mexico City, is known for its rampant criminal activity and lack of safety in any form. A theory about how Tepito became so violent and dangerous starts with law enforcement, she says "in the beginning, drugs arrived through agents of the Police (Policia Judicial Federal) who practically controlled the business. But when gangs began to grow, the police turned into employees of the *Capo* (drug cartel leader)".⁸

Andrew Chesnut's book highlights the shrine where most devotees come to worship la Santa Muerte located in Tepito in the home of Enriqueta Romero (Doña Queta). Romero offers up her front porch as a makeshift church for worshippers of la Santa Muerte; she welcomes people to pray because she herself is in the same position where she needs the support of la Santa Muerte.⁹ Chesnut further elaborates in his book on Romero's involvement

⁷ Viridiana Rios, "Why did Mexico become so violent? A self-reinforcing violent equilibrium caused by competition and enforcement." *Trends in Organized Crime* 16, no. 2 (2013): 141.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A337185254/AONE?u=anon~5aedfb8e&sid=googleScholar&xid=8dff2f8>

⁸ Natalia Grisales Ramirez, "En Tepito todo se vende menos la dignidad: Espacio público e informalidad económica en el Barrio Bravo." *Alteridades* 13, no. 26 (2003): 81.
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8140690>

⁹ Andrew Chesnut, "Devoted to Death: *Santa Muerte The Skeleton Saint*" (Oxford University Press, 2018), pg.13

and how she is no different than the other residents of Tepito, he states Romero's "colourful blue-collar Spanish, liberally peppered with vulgarities, reflects the tough barrio, Mexico City's infamous Tepito, where drug gangs, kidnappers, prostitutes, and contrabandistas rule the streets." As shown in the SBS Dateline documentary on la Santa Muerte, hundreds of people line up in front of Romero's house to leave offerings including cigarette buds, marijuana, flowers, candles, and candies on her birthday. The film crew takes multiple shots of people laying down towels to help the people travelling to the shrine on their knees with plentiful gifts in their arms. They show mariachi bands singing her *las Manañitas* and people carrying around and dancing with their statuettes of la Santa Muerte.¹⁰

Here, we begin to see the correlation between impoverished, dangerous, and corrupt areas and la Santa Muerte. The constant state of fear felt in Tepito is reminiscent of Turner's *communitas*. The amount of drugs and other illegal activity is a hanging reminder of the constant danger manifested as the fear of death. These people cannot move out of Tepito, the area is so impoverished they simply do the best they can with what they have, this leads to a liminality shared among the residents of Tepito and they subsist by worshipping a saint that can save them: la Santa Muerte. La Santa Muerte is no longer a mythical God of death but has rather become an icon of protection and hope among victims of corruption and vices.

La Santa Muerte is considered a powerful and miraculous saint, in a short documentary by French company CLPBRights, they interview a woman who discusses her experience with la Santa Muerte. She shares her personal story about how she was in prison at the lowest point in her life as an addict and future mother, in her cell la Santa Muerte appeared to her and told her the consequences of the road she was on. More importantly she says (translated from spanish) "I couldn't talk with him, but I could with her."¹¹ By Him, he

¹⁰ David O'Shea, dir, *The Mexican People Worshipping the Saint of Death* (SBS Dateline, 2009) Youtube Video, 12 min, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPzh5BWZ0a4>

¹¹ Pierre-Paul Puljiz, dir. Deborah Chiarella and Andres Peyrot, writers. (CLPBRIGHTS, date unspecified) Video, 1:59 min, <http://www.clpbrights.com/en/Digital/the-santa-muerte-cult-in-tepito-mexico-city>

means the Catholic God and by Her she means la Santa Muerte. Instead of asking for forgiveness to God she looked towards la Santa Muerte for salvation because as she states: “I had a foot in death and one in life.” I’ll return to the concept of turning towards la Santa Muerte in explicit cases of life or death.

There are other factors to why someone would devote themselves to la Santa Muerte. In the same SBS Dateline documentary mentioned previously, a man uses multiple effigies and images of la Santa Muerte to express his devotion, he says “we look for the reality that best suits us...to search for what’s ours.”¹² This encourages the *communitas* idea of togetherness from a shared isolation (liminality) and one that Lois Lorentzen explores in her article for the Hemispheric Institute. Lorentzen states that “(la) Santa Muerte perfectly embodies opposition to contemporary US responses to undocumented migrants, as well as historic (and contemporary) church and state exclusion of LGBTQ migrants...(la Santa Muerte) provides solace and protection against both church and state, while also reflecting their liminal, precarious lives.”¹³ People turn to la Santa Muerte as a form of familiar support when no one else is there. The theme of corruption leading to the worship of la Santa Muerte is often misread as la Santa Muerte being a symbol of violence and drugs or satanic in nature but in its core the cult of la Santa Muerte is a group of people who rely on togetherness and comfort in a plane of liminality where they may not have been accepted by the Church they were brought up in or where nothing is certain and to wake up tomorrow as the person you truly are or to wake up at all isn’t promised.

Nowhere is this more true than in the US-Mexico borderland. It’s no surprise the border is a dangerous place, filled with many emotions good and bad from both sides. On one

¹² David O’Shea, dir, *The Mexican People Worshipping the Saint of Death* (SBS Dateline, 2009) Youtube Video, 12 min, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPzh5BWZ0a4>

¹³ Lois Lorentzen. “Santa Muerte: *Saint of the Dispossessed, Enemy of Church and State*” Hemispheric Institute (Blog) (Year not specified). <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-13-1-states-of-devotion/13-1-essays/santa-muerte-saint-of-the-dispossessed-enemy-of-church-and-state.html>

hand, you could have a couple of university students on their way to Cancun for a fun and relaxing spring break. On the other hand, you could have a mother abandon her child at the border for even the slightest chance they might have a better life where the grass is greener.¹⁴ A place like this could have its own limitless dissertation and so we will be focussing on the evolution of la Santa Muerte in the context of drug dealers and illegal immigrants. The borderland itself is a liminal area in the most literal sense, for drug dealers it is a Schrodinger's cat-esque tale of being in prison, dead, or in possession of money in their back pocket all at the same time. For migrants it's the liminality of a yes or no game where the other half takes their sweet time while they camp out in the harsh environment of the Chihuahuan desert.

As in Tepito, the area between the US and Mexico border is an area with constant risk for everyone. This causes people crossing over whether for good or bad intentions to subconsciously band together on the common ground of fear. A fear so strong the comfort of a familiar Catholic God is useless, for as much as one may pray, he has no dominion in land that is far from holy. In this situation, since individuals can't go back, and can't keep going, they're stuck and people may then resort to look towards divergent practices and folk saints to cope with the liminality that holds their life haphazardly above them. In Amy King's article she further and more clearly elaborates this idea; she states that the harsh environment combined with the personal struggle that individuals might be feeling will make them turn to alternative forms of comfort when the Church and State fails to meet the needs of said individual spiritually, materially, and morally.¹⁵ As for drug dealers and criminals, an assumption as to why la Santa Muerte is also considered the patron saint of narcos is that these individuals encounter death and the possibility of death everyday that the only way to

¹⁴ (Author not specified) *'Incredible video': Anchor reacts to footage showing 1-year-old abandoned at US-Mexico border* (CNN, 2023) CNN News video.

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2023/03/24/child-abandoned-us-mexico-border-cnntm-vpx.cnn>

¹⁵ King, Amy. "Borderland (Narco) Folk Saints and Texas Media" *Journalism and Media* 3, no.2 (2022): 359, 10.3390/journalmedia3020025

cope and handle the scale at which it is being presented to them is to form death into a plausible, bite-sized if you will, concept. This idea is brought up by a woman interviewed in the same short documentary by CLPBRights, the woman they interview is an avid believer in la Santa Muerte and she states “In reality, la Santa Muerte is not a religion for Narcos, rather, they refuge themselves in la Santa Muerte because they recognize the danger they’re risking is death. At any moment, they can lose their lives.”¹⁶

Before my final thoughts, I believe it’d be inappropriate to not mention a very important societal impact that la Santa Muerte has had on society recently. Mexico is a primarily Catholic country, the drastic shift in belief between a strict Catholic Church and a loosely regulated cult has made traditional Catholics in Mexico weary and even frightened of so much as speaking of la Santa Muerte,¹⁷ although I hope this essay paints la Santa Muerte in a good light, I must recognize la Santa Muerte has been used to commit unforgivable crimes that have increased in the past years and has conjured reason to be afraid. According to an article published by Robert J. Bunker in partnership with the FBI, ritualistic killings in the name of la Santa Muerte have taken place throughout borderland and busy Mexican cities. In 2010 Mexican authorities arrested Romo Guillen, a high priest of the cult of la Santa Muerte on kidnapping charges. In 2004, in Tepito, a local car thief offered human sacrifices to the folk saint in exchange for protection and in Ciudad Juarez (a city with a similar reputation to Tepito) in 2008 there were five separate instances of bodies found in terrible conditions. These are the tamest of the cases outlined by Robert Bunker of the FBI’s behavioural science unit.¹⁸ Though these cases do not relate to the concept of ideological

¹⁶ Pierre-Paul Puljiz, dir. Deborah Chiarella and Andres Peyrot, writers. (CLPBRIGHTS, date unspecified) Video, 1:59 min,

<http://www.clpbrights.com/en/Digital/the-santa-muerte-cult-in-tepito-mexico-city>

¹⁷ Claudia Ruiz "Historia y actualidad del culto a la Santa Muerte." *El Cotidiano*, no. 169 (2011):51-57. Redalyc, <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=32519776006>

¹⁸ Robert J. Bunker. “Santa Muerte: *Inspired and ritualistic Killings*” FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (2013)

communitas but rather disrupt it, I believe it's important to highlight and emphasize that what is focussed on here is a small part of the complete story and that there are valid reasons to be weary of unorganized cults such as the cult of la Santa Muerte. Media that glamorize narco culture and cults similar to the cult of la Santa Muerte have become far too common, and while they can be all fun and games it's important to recognize this is a very real issue affecting thousands of people like the ones in Tepito every single day.

To conclude this essay, I wanted to identify what the Utopia is for the cult of la Santa Muerte. The main point of ideological communitas is that instead of passing through to the other side, a Utopia is built right on the threshold, where the liminality of endless possibilities but no outcomes collide. In this case the cult of la Santa Muerte has found Utopia in her worship. Worshippers of la Santa Muerte worship her as a way to cope through the liminality they are in at their present moment. This is a liminality because of isolation some groups feel when approaching the Catholic Church and the possibility of death in the constant danger of their daily lives without the option of leaving and changing their lives, they are stuck, the latter applies to the people in Tepito, Borderland, and the people involved in drug cartels: each one of these won't ever be easy situation to escape from unless the core issue of corruption is solved. Since a solution to Mexico's deep issues won't be solved anytime soon, the only other option to continue with life is the idealized community they've built surrounding a deity that bears a similar image to one they had once trusted and prayed to: *la Virgin de Guadalupe*. This allows for worshippers to create their own social vision in which they can keep their faith and can continue receiving comfort from it no matter if you are or aren't a part of a group the Catholic church does not accept. The people of Mexico have long suffered at the hands of their corrupt government, this has led to mass insecurity in the daily life of Mexicans. La Santa Muerte is presented as a comforting, and loving being towards Mexico's traditionally unwanted population like the LGBTQ+ communities, criminals, and

even teenagers. This familiar bond built between worshippers of la Santa Muerte provides them comfort in togetherness and family under a folk saint they can relate to and speak to in confidence when there is no other way out.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Chesnut, Andrew. "Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte The Skeleton Saint" Oxford University Press 2018.
- Killinger, John. "Animectomy Complex." *Encyclopaedia of Psychology and Religion*, Edited by Leeming, Madden, Marlan, 39-41. Springer New York, 2010.
- Rios, Viridiana "Why did Mexico become so violent? A self-reinforcing violent equilibrium caused by competition and enforcement." *Trends in Organized Crime* 16, no. 2 (2013): 139-155.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A337185254/AONE?u=anon~5aedfb8e&sid=googleScholar&xid=8dfff2f8>
- Grisales Ramirez, Natalia "En Tepito todo se vende menos la dignidad: Espacio público e informalidad económica en el Barrio Bravo." *Alteridades* 13, no. 26 (2003): 67-83.
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8140690>
- King, Amy. "Borderland (Narco) Folk Saints and Texas Media" *Journalism and Media* 3, no.2 (2022): 349-359,
[10.3390/journalmedia3020025](https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia3020025)
- Puljiz, Pierre-Paul dir. Deborah Chiarella and Andres Peyrot, writers, CLPBRIGHTS, date unspecified, Video, 1:59 min,
<http://www.clpbrights.com/en/Digital/the-santa-muerte-cult-in-tepito-mexico-city>
- O'Shea, David, dir, *The Mexican People Worshipping the Saint of Death*, SBS Dateline, 2009.
 Youtube Video, 13 min,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPzh5BWZ0a4>

Secondary Sources

Graziano, Frank "Culture of Devotion: *Folk Saints of Spanish America*." Oxford University Press, 2007.

Morris, D.Stephen "Political Corruption in Mexico: *The Impact of Democratization*" Lynne Rienner Pub, 2009.

Lorentzen, Lois. "Santa Muerte: *Saint of the Dispossessed, Enemy of Church and State*" Hemispheric Institute (Blog) (Year not specified).
<https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-13-1-states-of-devotion/13-1-essays/santa-muerte-saint-of-the-dispossessed-enemy-of-church-and-state.html>

Marrero Garces, Roberto "La Santa Muerte en la Ciudad de México: Devoción, Vida Cotidiana y Espacio Público" *Revista Cultural y Religión* 13, no.2 (2019): 103-121.
<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/la-santa-muerte-en-ciudad-de-mexico-devocion-vida/docview/2340011519/se-2>.

Kristensen, Albæk, Regnar . "How Did Death Become a Saint in Mexico?" *Ethnos* 81, no. 3 (2016): 402–424,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2014.938093>

Ruiz, Claudia "Historia y actualidad del culto a la Santa Muerte." *El Cotidiano* , no. 169 (2011): 51-.57. Redalyc,
<https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=32519776006>

Bunker, Robert "Santa Muerte: *Inspired and ritualistic Killings*" FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (2013)

(Author not specified) '*Incredible video*': *Anchor reacts to footage showing 1-year-old abandoned at US-Mexico border* (CNN, 2023) CNN News video.
<https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2023/03/24/child-abandoned-us-mexico-border-cnntm-vpx.cn>
 n

**Rhetoric vs. Reality: An Examination of Canadian Refugee Policy in Response to
Contemporary Humanitarian Crises**

Asha Nenshi Nathoo

Department of Political Science, University of Calgary

Political Science 509: Public Policy and Politics

Instructor: Dr. Susan Franceschet

Global Refugee Crisis

Highlighting the plight of displaced people worldwide, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated on World Refugee Day 2024, “From Sudan to Ukraine, from the Middle East to Myanmar to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beyond, conflict, climate chaos and upheaval are forcing record numbers of people from their homes and fueling profound human suffering” (United Nations 2024).

There are thousands of heartbreaking anecdotes of refugees whose lives have been turned upside down. In April 2024, a piece of shrapnel ripped through Nyapuot Riak Dup’s house in Omdurman, Sudan. Riak Dup, her husband, mother, and seven children, grabbed a few essentials and started a torturous two-day journey to Alagaya, a refugee camp in Sudan’s White Nile State. Over 61,000 refugees who have fled violence in Sudan are currently living at Alagaya in dire conditions (Hujale et al. 2024).

In the village of Dara-e Shaikha in Afghanistan’s western Ghor province, Said Khanim’s home was destroyed by catastrophic flash flooding in May 2024. As Khanim and her children ran for safety, her four-year old daughter was separated from them – her body was later found washed up in a culvert. The family is currently staying with neighbours but are in deep debt, without fuel for cooking. These heavy rains killed at least 347 people and left over 10,000 homes damaged (Gluck 2024). The stories of Riak Dup and Khanim, among others, demonstrate the urgent need for a strong, consistent, and equitable response to refugee crises.

Canada’s Role in Refugee Response

In 1986, the Hansen medal, recognizing outstanding service to uprooted people, was presented to Canada (Lacroix 2004). Canada also played a major role in the development of the

UN Global Compact on Refugees which was affirmed in 2018 (Milner 2021). According to the most recent UNHCR Global Trends Report, in 2023, on a per capita basis, refugee re-settlement made up 0.13% of Canada's population compared to only 0.02% of the US population.

Furthermore, Canada was the fifth most frequent destination for asylum seekers in 2023 (UNHCR 2023). In this regard, Canada has a long history of utilizing its refugee policy to uphold the country's commitment to humanitarianism and set the stage for the rest of the world.

However, several researchers have critiqued Canada's choice of who has been accepted as a refugee over the last decade as incoherent, inconsistent, and exclusionary (Amnesty International 2022; Khan 2022; Atak et al. 2021). It is likely that the number of individuals seeking refuge will outstrip the capacity to accept them, for the foreseeable future. In that case, the determination of which refugees are welcomed to Canada is of utmost importance. Thus, a further understanding of how and why Canada has responded to the modern refugee crisis is warranted.

Literature Review

Canada's refugee policy is rooted in international treaties and domestic legislation. The 1951 Refugee Convention is the cornerstone of the international refugee regime (Howard 1980). It is based on the principle of non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee is anyone with a "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or membership in a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR n.d., 3). The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the definition of a refugee to remove all time and geographical limitations (Creal 2009). Canada ratified both the Refugee Convention and Protocol in 1969 (Howard 1980).

Since, there has been significant literature on the evolution of Canada's domestic refugee policy. Wydrzynski (1979) explains that Canada's 1976 Immigration Act was the first to officially recognize refugees as a distinct category of migrants. Yet, Kelley and Trebilcock (1998) argue that refugee selection was still done on an ad-hoc basis until the creation of the Canadian Immigration & Refugee Board in 1989. In 2004, Canada and the US implemented the Safe Third Country Agreement which stipulates that refugees are required to request asylum in the first safe country in which they arrive – meaning those who apply for refugee status in one country are not permitted to subsequently seek it in the other (George 2005). Scholars argue that Canadian refugee policy grew more restrictive after amendments to Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act (Bill C-31) and the Balanced Refugee Reform Act (Bill C-11) in 2012 which changed the refugee process to deter potential abuse and protect the safety of Canadians (Huot et al. 2016; Molnar 2014; Reynolds and Hyndman 2014).

Today, refugees can seek protection in Canada through two different streams (Showler 2006; George 2005). First, convention refugees are those that have been referred to Canada, sponsored either by the government or a private group, and receive permanent residence upon their arrival. Second are asylum seekers, who must be physically present in the country to make a claim for refugee status. There is an abundance of literature on the legislative changes to Canadian refugee policy over time. However, without any major, documented changes to refugee policy in the last decade, there is a dearth of analysis on how the policy has evolved in practice.

Hacker et al. (2015) argue that even in the absence of legislative change, the effects of policies can differ based on both the social environment which they exist within and the political actors creating or executing them. In the case of Canadian refugee policy, the legislation has been broad enough to allow the policy to vary greatly in response to each individual refugee

crisis. While there are a few reports and news articles (Bejan et al. 2023; Khan 2022) that discuss Canada's response to refugee crises in the last decade in relation to one another, there remains a lack of academic comparative scholarship. This paper seeks to fill gaps in existing literature by evaluating how Canada's refugee policy has developed in practice in response to three contemporary crises - in Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

Methods

Constructivism is a field in politics and policy that sees the world as socially constructed. Within this subfield, ideational claims “trace actions to some constellation of practices, symbols, norms, grammars, models, beliefs, and/or identities through which certain people interpret their world” (Parsons 2007, 131). With many decisions related to Canadian refugee response being left to the whim of politics, ideational analysis can clarify policy development in response to the Syrian, Afghan, and Ukrainian refugee case studies. Through a descriptive analysis of government announcements, news articles, public opinion data, and parliamentary records, this paper attempts to identify how certain ideas have caused shifts in Canadian refugee policy. It argues that two main ideas - domestic public opinion and dominant international rhetoric – have been driving factors in the contemporary Canadian refugee response.

Syrian Refugee Policy

While the Syrian civil war began in 2011, Canada's Syrian refugee policy was muted until 2015. Prior to the 2015 federal election, the Conservative government had re-settled fewer than 2500 Syrian refugees (CBC News 2015). In examining coverage from eight major Canadian newspapers, Wallace (2018), finds that between 2012-2015, Syrian refugees were predominantly

presented as removed, distant, and at times, a potential threat. House of Commons records indicate that there have been discussions about the Syrian refugee crisis in Parliament since early 2012. Yet, most parliamentary debate was not related to Canada's acceptance of refugees, but rather to providing financial aid to other countries taking in large numbers of refugees including Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan (Canada Parliament Journals 2012).

In the fall of 2015, the viral image of three-year old Alan Kurdi's body lying on a beach in Turkey galvanized the public and was a catalyst for contentious debate about Syrian refugee policy in the Canadian federal election (Molnar 2016). A false narrative that Kurdi's family had applied for asylum in Canada and had their refugee claim denied, put the Conservative government's policy under scrutiny (Siddiqi and Koerber 2020). Although later reports found that the Canadian government had not directly influenced Kurdi's death as only his uncle had applied for refugee status, his story remained a notable public issue (Vieira 2015). For example, an Angus Reid poll reported that 90% of Canadians had some awareness of it (Csanady 2015). The federal Liberal Party and New Democratic Party (NDP) used this as an opportunity to critique current refugee policy and propose their own ideas on refugee reform (Siddiqi and Koerber 2020; Kestler-D'Amours 2015).

The Conservative government's dominant narrative continued to be focused on securitization in the refugee process. During a Facebook question and answer session in September 2015, Prime Minister Stephen Harper wrote "We cannot open the floodgates and airlift tens of thousands of refugees out of a terrorist war zone without a proper process. That is too great a risk for Canada" (MacCharles 2015). Other Conservative politicians made unsubstantiated connections between Syrian refugees, Islam, and terrorism. For example, former cabinet minister, Peter Kent tweeted a photo alleging that two Syrian asylum seekers had once

been terrorists with ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), which was immediately debunked by journalists (Omar 2015).

When the Liberal Party came to power in October 2015, they pledged to welcome over 25,000 Syrian refugees (Geddes 2015). Although this commitment was not met by the end of the calendar year, by October 2016, this target was almost doubled, with close to 40,000 Syrian refugees being re-settled in Canada (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC] 2019). As a result, Canada received praise on a global scale with international organizations and Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at the time, urging other countries to follow Canada's lead (Lenard 2021; Hynie 2018).

However, the terrorist attacks in both Beirut and Paris in late 2015 contributed to fear and insecurity about Syrian refugees in Canada (Showler 2015). This was reflected both in theoretical policy and public behaviour. The Liberal government explicitly created prioritization systems for Syrian refugees – favouring applicants who were seen as a low safety risk (such as families) and excluding single men (Molnar 2016; Kingsley 2015). Furthermore, there were numerous incidents of hate directed toward Syrian refugees arriving in Canada such as the group who was pepper-sprayed at a welcoming ceremony in Vancouver (Baker and Larsen 2016).

Therefore, citizenry pressure was a driving factor in the establishment of Syrian refugee policy that did not take effect until years after the crisis began. These policies were then guided by international events and perceptions.

Afghan Refugee Policy

After the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban regained control of the country in the summer of 2021 (Center for Preventive Action 2024). Images of the country in

crisis and masses of people at the Kabul airport attempting to flee flooded the Internet (CNN World 2021). In July 2021, the federal minority Liberal government established a program to take in Afghans who had supported Canada with its missions in the country (IRCC Newsroom 2021). On August 13th the government announced an expansion of this program in which they pledged to re-settle 20,000 Afghans and focus on particularly vulnerable groups such as women, journalists, and LGBTQI individuals (IRCC Newsroom 2021).

Two days later, on August 15th Prime Minister Justin Trudeau dissolved Parliament and called an early federal election (Ljunggren and Scherer 2021). Although foreign policy issues rarely impact Canadian elections, the Afghan crisis did garner significant attention in the 2021 election cycle. This resulted in the major political parties all campaigning about their proposed solution to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan should they form government (El-Assal and Thevenot 2021). The Liberal Party promised to increase the number of eligible refugees from 20,000 to 40,000 (Liberal Party of Canada 2021). NDP leader Jagmeet Singh wanted to expand refugee eligibility to extended families of Canadian interpreters and staff who supported coalition forces (Berthiaume 2021). The Conservative Party pledged to replace government-assisted refugee programs with private and joint sponsorship ones that they argued were more likely to succeed (Labman and Garnier 2021).

A year after a Liberal minority government was elected, by September 2022, Canada had reached half of its target, welcoming 20,000 Afghan refugees (IRCC Newsroom 2022). In mid-2022, David Fraser, retired major-general who commanded Canadian troops in Afghanistan, reported that over 10,000 former staff troops and their families were still waiting for avenues to come to Canada even though they were the first group of refugees the government was set to accept (Fife 2022). Despite the Liberal government's claims that delays in refugee processing

were due to Taliban restrictions, thousands of Afghans awaiting re-settlement made it to Pakistan but were stuck due to delays in the Canadian security screening process (Carbert 2022; Vickzo and Matsumota 2022).

The government heavily emphasized the importance of collecting biometric information on Afghan refugees, introducing a new multi-stage screening process (Special Committee on Afghanistan 2022). Remarks at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration were made by members of multiple political parties about the importance of including biometric scanning in the Afghan refugee process. Liberal Minister of Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Sean Fraser, declared it would be inappropriate to waive the requirement because biometric data may provide information that would “render someone inadmissible for security purposes” (Canada Parliament Minutes of Proceedings 2022). At the same time the European Union’s (EU) home affairs commission and the US Congress both imposed a stringent vetting process on Afghan refugees (Cerulus 2021; LeBlanc and Hansler 2021). Similar security concerns may have trickled into Canadian public opinion, as a third of respondents to the IRCC’s 2023 Tracking Survey felt that Canada had brought too many Afghan refugees to the country (IRCC Transition Binders 2023).

In a similar manner as the Syrian response, the sentiments of voters during the election drove the creation of Afghan refugee policy. Security concerns both domestically and globally then played into lengthy wait times and additional hurdles for Afghan refugees.

Ukrainian Refugee Policy

In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military attack on Ukraine as an extension of the ongoing conflict since 2014 which caused serious human rights violations and destroyed

livelihoods (Center for Preventative Action 2024; UN News 2024). Extensive satellite technology and hundreds of international journalists travelling to Ukraine led to widespread coverage of the conflict among Western media sources (Mezzofiore and Lister 2022; Aslund 2022). In the following days, several Canadian officials including Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (who is of Ukrainian descent) publicly declared Canada's solidarity with the people of Ukraine in online statements and in front of a crowd of thousands at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto (Turnbull 2022; Draaisma 2022; Noakes 2022).

A government press release indicated that by March 3rd over 6100 Ukrainians had already arrived in Canada (IRCC Newsroom 2022). On March 17th the Canadian Liberal minority government announced the creation of the Canadian-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) which allowed an unlimited number of Ukrainians and their families to work, study, and stay in Canada until it was safe for them to return home (IRCC Newsroom 2022). A year later, by the spring of 2023, over 170,000 Ukrainians had arrived in Canada (Karpa 2023). In July 2023, the government launched a program to provide permanent residence to those who had fled Ukraine and had family members in Canada (IRCC Newsroom 2023; Evans 2023).

Records of parliamentary debate indicate that security concerns about Ukrainian refugees were significantly lower than those about other groups of refugees. Members of Parliament (MPs) from across the political spectrum including Conservative MP Tracy Gray and Bloc Québécois MP Alain Therrien encouraged the removal of visa and biometric requirements for those coming from Ukraine. Minister Fraser agreed to eliminate biometrics for low-risk Ukrainians including "children, seniors, and those with a travel history to Canada" (Canada Parliament Journals 2022). Ukrainians travelling to Canada were also provided with an exemption for meeting vaccine requirements and a waiver for travel and immigration document

fees (IRCC Newsroom 2022; Cosh 2022; Wilson 2022). Furthermore, investigators with CBC News and The Maple disclosed a memo from IRCC staff to Minister Fraser warning that the exceptions provided to Ukrainian refugees could be seen as unfair and setting an unachievable precedent for future crises. Yet, Minister Fraser advised that the programs should be continued based on Canada's "special relationship" with Ukraine (Cosh 2022; Osman 2024).

The IRCC has stated that the process for accepting Ukrainians is not a refugee stream and was developed differently from that of other refugee programs as it is only meant to be temporary (IRCC Newsroom 2022). However, immigration lawyers and advocacy groups argue that such reasoning is irrelevant because temporary options have never been offered to those fleeing other crises (Stewart 2022). The Canadian Council for Refugees, Rural Refugee Project, and Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) have all called on the government to extend the unprecedented measures offered to Ukrainian refugees to humanitarian crises in other countries (Osman 2024; Laucius 2022; OCASI 2022).

In general, Canadian public opinion was favourable to Ukrainian refugees. A Privy Council Office 2022 telephone survey found that only 7% of Canadians were opposed to the government bringing Ukrainians to Canada (IRCC Transition Binders 2024). Another Ipsos poll revealed that the number of Canadians willing to accept more Ukrainian refugees was almost double the number of Canadians in favour of accepting more refugees from Afghanistan, Venezuela, Syria, South Sudan, or Myanmar (Ipsos 2022).

Hence, Canadian response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis was efficient and streamlined with few restrictions (Hamilton et al. 2022; Falconer 2022). Unlike the Syrian and Afghan refugee policy, there was no federal election that influenced Ukrainian refugee policy. Rather, the

policy seems to have been formed based on positive public opinion, media solidarity with Ukraine, and support from individual politicians.

Discussion and Conclusion

As a result of the varying start dates of each refugee crisis, this paper measures the number of refugees Canada accepted from each country during the first year of re-settlement to make a fair comparison between policies. Between October 2015 and 2016, over 40,000 Syrian refugees were re-settled in Canada (IRCC 2019). Between September 2021 and 2022, Canada accepted over 20,000 Afghan refugees (IRCC Newsroom 2022). Between March 2022 and 2023, over 170,000 Ukrainian refugees were welcomed to Canada (Karpa 2023). Although a Liberal government was in power during all three crises, there were large inconsistencies both in numbers and in the regulations instated on those seeking refuge. This demonstrates that Canadian politicians have considerable discretion in how they choose to implement refugee policy.

This analysis reveals that Canadian legislation lacks specific standards to determine how many refugees Canada should accept from a particular country and the processes for doing so. Thus, although domestic refugee bills and international refugee conventions have remained consistent over the last decade, the ideational claims of politicians seem to have played a role in the construction of refugee policy. This means that choices in policymaking “trace more directly to packages of ideas than to objective structural or institutional conditions” (Parsons 2007, 128). In the case of Canadian refugee policy, domestic public opinion and the dominant global discourse can both be seen as ‘packages of ideas’ that shaped policy.

First, politicians often constructed refugee policy based on the views of voters, or at least their perceived sentiment. Both the Syrian and Afghan refugee policies implemented by Liberal

governments were developed during federal election cycles when citizens were being exposed to these crises in the media. Thus, their acceptance of refugees may have been an attempt to differentiate themselves from other political parties in the eyes of voters. Politicians also responded to prevailing public opinion. Despite the absence of discussion on accepting Syrian refugees during the first four years of the civil war, the release of the ‘boy on the beach’ image which drove public outcry led to immediate response from all parties. Furthermore, public opinion toward Ukrainians was significantly more favourable than in the other two crises. This positive public sentiment may have influenced the government’s decision to quickly welcome an unlimited number of Ukrainian refugees.

Second, prevalent international rhetoric has influenced refugee policy. Mainstream media sources provided noticeably more explicit and comprehensive coverage of both the Afghan and Ukrainian crises compared to the Syrian crisis, which may have been a driving factor in Canada’s Syrian refugee policy not being executed until years after the start of the conflict. Terrorist attacks in Beirut and Paris at the time Canada was accepting Syrian refugees as well as increased securitization in the EU and US at the time Canada was accepting Afghan refugees, likely motivated increasingly restrictive Canadian policy. These policies serve as an example of how socially constructed concepts generated at the international level were internalized by Canadian politicians consequently resulting in “real, tangible, and complex impacts on individuals” seeking refuge (Winter 2008, 36).

In conclusion, this paper reveals substantial variation in Canada’s refugee response to humanitarian crises in Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine based on ideation at the time. These findings demonstrate the crucial need to establish objective criteria in Canadian legislation to ensure that the country’s future refugee responses are consistent, transparent, and equitable. In

doing so, Canada will be better positioned to remain a champion of the needs of individuals facing instability and unrest in troubled corners of the globe.

References

- Amnesty International. 2022. "Canada's Response to Refugee Crises." Last modified April 25, 2022. <https://amnesty.ca/features/canadas-responses-to-refugee-crises/>.
- Aslund, Anders. 2022. "A New Perspective on the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis." *EconPol Forum* 23: 3-7. <https://www.cesifo.org/DocDL/CESifo-Forum-2022-4-aslund-ukrainian-refugee-crisis-july.pdf>.
- Atak, Idil, Zainab Abu Alrob, and Claire Ellis. 2021. "Expanding Refugee Ineligibility: Canada's Response to Secondary Refugee Movements." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34 (1): 2593–2612. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa103>.
- Baker, Rafferty, and Kerin Larsen. 2016. "Trudeau condemns pepper spray attack at Vancouver event for Syrian refugees" *CBC News*, January 9. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/pepper-spray-attack-1.3396899>.
- Bejan, Raluca, Marie Mallet-Garcia, Robert Lipinski, Cindy Do, and Vanessa Wolf Aviles. Rep. *A Tale of Two Contexts: The Ukrainian and Afghan Refugee Crises in Canada and the UK*. Dalhousie University and University of Oxford, 2023.
- Berthiaume, Lee. 2021. "Fear, frustration mount over Canada's plan to rescue Afghan interpreters" *Toronto Star*, August 3. https://www.thestar.com/politics/fear-frustration-mount-over-canada-s-plan-to-rescue-afghan-interpreters/article_30480937-985b-5b7c-b63a-9aa8d82c64ad.html.
- Canada. Parliament. House of Commons Debates (Hansard). *Journals*. 1st sess., 44th Parliament, Volume 151, No. 050, March 31, 2022. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/house/sitting-50/hansard>.
- Canada. Parliament. House of Commons Debates (Hansard). *Journals*. 1st sess., 44th Parliament, Volume 151, No. 048, March 29, 2022. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/house/sitting-48/hansard>.
- Canada. Parliament. House of Commons Debates (Hansard). *Journals*. 1st sess., 44th Parliament, Volume 151, No. 037, February 28, 2022. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/house/sitting-37/hansard>.
- Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. *Minutes of Proceedings*. 1st sess., 44th Parliament, Meeting No. 006, February 15, 2022. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CIMM/meeting-6/evidence>.
- Canada. Parliament. House of Commons Debates (Hansard). *Journals*. 1st sess., 41st Parliament, Volume 146, No. 090, March 6, 2012. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/41-1/house/sitting-90/hansard>.

- Carbert, Michelle. 2022. "Canada committed to resettling 40,000 Afghan refugees. So why are thousands still stuck overseas?" *The Globe and Mail*, April 15. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-canada-afghan-refugees-taliban-takeover/>.
- CBC News. 2015. "Conservative government aims to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees by September 2016." *CBC News*, September 19. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-chris-alexander-refugees-1.3235415>.
- Center for Preventative Action. 2024. "War in Ukraine." Last modified October 16, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>.
- Center for Preventative Action. 2024. "Instability in Afghanistan." Last modified July 1, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan>.
- Cerulus, Laurens. 2021. "Europe needs security 'screening' of Afghan refugees, top official says." *Politico*, August 26. <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-needs-security-screening-afghan-refugees-official-says/>.
- CNN World. 2021. "In pictures: Afghanistan in crisis after Taliban takeover." *CNN*, September 9. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/16/middleeast/gallery/taliban-afghanistan/index.html>.
- Cosh, Alex. 2022. "Canada Feared Requests for Equal Treatment When Crafting Ukrainian Refugee Policy." *The Maple*, December 6. <https://www.readthemaple.com/canada-feared-requests-for-equal-treatment-when-crafting-ukrainian-refugee-policy/>.
- Creal, Michael. 2009. "Canadian Refugee Policy: What is To Be Done?" *Canadian Review of Social Policy* 62: 98-104. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45407589>.
- Csanady, Ashley. 2015. "Most Canadians believe their country should do more for migrants: poll." *National Post*, September 4. <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/most-canadians-believe-their-country-should-do-more-for-migrants-poll>.
- Draaisma, Muriel. 2022. "Thousands march in downtown Toronto against Russian invasion of Ukraine." *CBC News*, February 27. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/mega-march-stand-with-ukraine-downtown-toronto-protest-russian-invasion-1.6366410>.
- El-Assal, Kareem, and Shelby Thevenot. 2021. "Afghan refugee crisis: Will it impact Canada's election?" *CIC News*, August 16. <https://www.cicnews.com/2021/08/afghan-refugees-will-it-impact-canadas-election-0818898.html#gs.i7t3nl>.
- Evans, Samantha. 2023. "A News Permanent Residence Pathway for Ukrainians in Canada." *Canadian Immigration Law Firm*, July 17. <https://www.canadim.com/news/a-new-pr-pathway-for-ukrainians/>.

- Falconer, Robert. 2022. "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Russo-Ukraine War." *The School of Public Policy Publications* 15: 1-31.
<https://doi.org/10.11575/sppp.v15i1.75498>.
- Fife, Robert. 2022. "Afghan interpreters press Ottawa to rescue their families." *The Globe and Mail*, April 11. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-former-afghan-interpreters-for-canadas-military-criticize-ottawa-for/>.
- Geddes, John. 2015. "Can the Liberals bring 25,000 Syrian refugees here by the end of 2015?" *Maclean's*, October 25. <https://macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/justin-trudeaus-risky-refugee-promise/>.
- George, Usha. 2005. "Immigration and Refugee Policy in Canada: Past, Present, and Future." In *Canadian Social Policy: Issues and Perspectives*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Gluck, Caroline. 2024. "Communities in Afghanistan struggle to recover after devastating floods." *The UN Refugee Agency*, June 14. <https://www.unhcr.ca/news/communities-in-afghanistan-struggle-to-recover-after-devastating-floods/>.
- Hacker, Jacob, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen. 2015. "Drift and Conversion: Hidden Faces of Institutional Change." In *Advances in Comparative Historical Analysis*, edited by James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Hamilton, Leah, Luisa Veronis, and Margaret Walton-Roberts. 2022. "How Operation Syrian Refugees Informs Canada's Responses to Current and Future Refugee Crises." *Canadian Issues* Fall 2022/Winter 2023: 1-6.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2789304210/fulltext/98DB1547AD244E1PQ/1?accountid=9838&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>.
- Howard, Rhoda. 1980. "Contemporary Canadian Refugee Policy: A Critical Assessment." *Canadian Public Policy* 6 (2): 361-373. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3550005>.
- Hujale, Moulid, Funmi Osibona, and Reason Runyanga. "As Sudan War Drags on, Millions Still Languish in Displacement Camps." *The UN Refugee Agency*, June 24.
<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/sudan-war-drags-millions-still-languish-displacement-camps>.
- Huot, Suzanne, Andrea Bobadilla, Antoine Bailliard, and Debbie Rudman. 2016. "Constructing undesirables: A critical discourse analysis of 'othering' within the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act." *International Migration* 54 (2): 131-143. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1111/imig.12210>.
- Hynie, Michaela. 2018. "Canada's Syrian Refugee Program, Intergroup Relationships and Identities." *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 50 (2): 1-13.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A554181883/LitRC?u=ucalgary&sid=summon&xid=2c600678>

- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Transition Binders. 2024. "Public Opinion Research on Canadians' Attitudes Towards Immigration." Last modified May 24, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/transition-binders/deputy-minister-2024/public-opinion-research.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Transition Binders. 2023. "Public Opinion Research on Canadians' Attitudes Towards Immigration." Last modified November 23, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/transition-binders/minister-2023/por.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Newsroom. 2023. "Canada launches pathway to reunite families and support Ukrainians." Last modified July 25, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2023/07/canada-launches-pathway-to-reunite-families-and-support-ukrainians.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Newsroom. 2022. "Canada marks 20,000 Afghan arrivals with help from partners at home and abroad." Last modified September 22, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/09/canada-marks-20000-afghan-arrivals-with-help-from-partners-at-home-and-abroad.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Newsroom. 2022. "Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel." Last modified March 3, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/03/canada-ukraine-authorization-for-emergency-travel.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Newsroom. 2022. "Canada to welcome those fleeing the war in Ukraine." Last modified March 3, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/03/canada-to-welcome-those-fleeing-the-war-in-ukraine.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Newsroom. 2021. "Canada expands resettlement program to bring more Afghans to safety." Last modified August 13, 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/08/canada-expands-resettlement-program-to-bring-more-afghans-to-safety.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Newsroom. 2021. "Government of Canada offers refuge to Afghans who assisted Canada." Last modified July 23, 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/07/government-of-canada-offers-refuge-to-afghans-who-assisted-canada.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). 2019. "Syrian Outcomes Report." <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/syria-outcomes-report-may-2019.pdf>.

- Ipsos. 2022. "Perception vs Reality? Canadians Believe They're Leading the Way on Refugee Support, But They're Actually at the Back of the Pack." *Ipsos*, July 6. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/Canadians-Believe-Leading-Refugee-Support-Actually-Back-Pack?ref=readthemaple.com>.
- Karpa, Alex. 2023. "Once year since Ukrainian refugees arrived in Canada, thousands still seeking support." *Winnipeg City News*, May 9. <https://winnipeg.citynews.ca/2023/05/09/year-since-ukrainians-arrived-canada/>.
- Kelley, Ninette, and Michael Trebilcock. 1998. "Regulating the Refuge Influx, 1977-1994: The Fraying of the Consensus." In *The making of the mosaic: a history of Canadian immigration policy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kestler-D'Amours, Jillian. 2015. "World mourns Alan Kurdi on social media." *Toronto Star*, September 3. https://www.thestar.com/news/world/world-mourns-alan-kurdi-on-social-media/article_dcac2018-f999-53b1-bff5-74a2c2476c76.html.
- Khan, Themrise. 2022. "The incoherence of Canada's refugee policy." *Policy Options*, January 19. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/january-2022/the-incoherence-of-canadas-refugee-policy/>.
- Kingsley, Patrick. 2015. "Canada's exclusion of single male refugees may exacerbate Syrian conflict." *The Guardian*, November 24. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/canada-exclusion-refugees-single-syrian-men-assad-isis>.
- Labman, Shauna, and Adèle Garnier. 2021. "Federal election 2021: What the Conservatives don't understand about refugee resettlement" *The Conversation*, September 12. <https://theconversation.com/federal-election-2021-what-the-conservatives-dont-understand-about-refugee-resettlement-167033>.
- Lacroix, Marie. 2004. "Canadian Refugee Policy and the Social Construction of the Refugee Claimant Subjectivity: Understanding Refugees." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 17 (2): 147-166. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1093/jrs/17.2.147>
- Laucius, Joanne. 2022. "Still stuck in limbo: Afghans grow increasingly desperate in immigration waiting game." *Ottawa Citizen*. August 12. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/it-is-not-fair-that-we-have-been-stalled-for-months?ref=readthemaple.com>.
- LeBlanc, Paul, and Jennifer Hansler. 2021. "Here's how Afghan refugees coming to the US are being vetted." *CNN*, August 13. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/23/politics/afghan-refugee-vetting-biden-administration-siv/index.html>.

- Lenard, Patti. 2021. "How Exceptional? Welcoming Refugees the Canadian Way." *American review of Canadian Studies* 51 (1): 78-94.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02722011.2021.1874230>.
- Liberal Party of Canada. 2021. "2021 Platform: Promoting Democracy and Human Rights."
<https://liberal.ca/our-platform/promoting-democracy-and-human-rights/>.
- Ljunggren, David, and Steve Scherer. 2021. "Canada's Trudeau takes gamble, calls 'pivotal' snap election for Sept. 20." *Reuters*, August 15.
<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadian-pm-trudeau-announces-federal-election-will-be-held-sept-20-2021-08-15/>.
- MacCharles, Tonda. 2015. "Harper defends government's handling of Syrian refugee crisis." *Toronto Star*, September 9. https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal-elections/harper-defends-government-s-handling-of-syrian-refugee-crisis/article_c51d3196-f6e9-5757-bd26-7391ea1cd5c2.html.
- McAuliffe, Marie, and Linda Oucho, eds. Rep. *World Migration Report 2024*. International Organization for Migration, 2024.
- Mezzofiore, Gianluca, and Tim Lister. 2022. "New satellite images show buildup of Russian military around Ukraine." *CNN*, February 22.
<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/02/europe/russia-troops-ukraine-buildup-satellite-images-intl/index.html>.
- Milner, James. 2021. "Canada and the UN Global Compact on Refugees: A Case Study of Influence in the Global Refugee Regime." In *International Affairs and Canadian Migration Policy*, edited by Yiagdeesen Samy and Howard Duncan. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Molnar, Petra. 2016. "The Boy on the Beach: The Fragility of Canada's Discourses on the Syrian Refugee Crisis." *The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest* 4 (1-2): 67-75.
<https://doi.org/10.3167/cont.2016.040106>.
- Molnar, Petra. 2014. "The 'Bogus' Refugee: Roma Asylum Claimants and Discourses of Fraud in Canada's Bill C-31." *Canadian Journal on Refugees* 30 (1): 67-80.
<https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.38604>.
- Noakes, Taylor. 2022. "Why a photo of Freeland holding a black-and-red scarf sparked a firestorm online." *CBC News*, March 4. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/freeland-nationalist-scarf-1.6372995>.
- Omar, Mohamed. 2015. "Peter Kent, Conservative Candidate, Tweets and Deletes Bogus Photo." *The Huffington Post Canada*, September 8.
https://www.huffpost.com/archive/ca/entry/peter-kent-conservative-candidate-tweets-and-deletes-bogus-pho_n_8107032.

- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). 2022. "Open Letters: Extend Special New Measures to All Refugees." Last modified March 8, 2022. <https://ocasi.org/extend-special-new-measures-all-refugees>.
- Osman, Laura. 2024. "Staff warned immigration minister about setting 'significant precedent' with Ukraine visa program." *CBC News*, July 24. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/rci/en/news/2090819/minister-warned-over-ukranian-visa-program>.
- Parsons, Craig. 2007. "Ideational Explanation" In *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*. Oxford University Press.
- Petrou, Michael. 2015. "How has Canada fared on resettling Syrian refugees?" *Maclean's*, July 15. <https://macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/where-does-canada-stand-on-resettling-syrian-refugees/>.
- Reynolds, Johanna, and Jennifer Hyndman. 2014. "A Turn in Canadian Refugee Policy and Practice." *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 16 (2): 41-56. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/whith16&i=219>.
- Showler, Peter. 2015. "Syrian refugee debate a tale of two stories." *Toronto Star*, November 22. https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/syrian-refugee-debate-a-tale-of-two-stories/article_6238bbb7-5d3e-5d57-888f-11e04030f9be.html.
- Showler, Peter. 2006. "Convention Refugees and the Canadian Asylum Society." In *Refugee Sandwich: Stories of Exile and Asylum*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Siddiqi, Sara, and Duncan Koerber. 2020. "The Anatomy of a National Crisis: The Canadian Federal Government's Response to the 2015 Kurdi Refugee Case." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 45 (3): 411-435. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2020v45n3a358>.
- Special Committee on Afghanistan (AFGH). 2022. "Security Screening." Last modified April 25, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/committees/afgh-apr-25-2022/security-screening.html>.
- Stewart, Ashleigh. 2022. "Afghan refugees approved for Canada relocation languish in Pakistan: We are forgotten" *Global News*, April 12. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8747120/afghan-refugees-canada-resettlement-delays/>.
- Turnbull, Sarah. 2022. "Why Russia's invasion of Ukraine is personal for Chrystia Freeland." *CTV News*, March 5. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/why-russia-s-invasion-of-ukraine-is-personal-for-chrystia-freeland-1.5806555>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2024. "Refugee Data Finder." Last modified June 13, 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

- United Nations News. 2024. "Ukraine: Report reveals war's long-term impact which will be felt for generations." Last modified February 22, 2024.
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/02/1146842>.
- United Nations. 2024. "World Refugee Day 2024 Secretary-General's Message."
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/refugee-day/messages>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2023. "Global Trends Report 2023."
<https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2004. "Protracted Refugee Situations." Last modified June 10, 2004.
<https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/unhcr/2004/en/93484>,
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. n.d. "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees." Accessed September 12, 2024.
<https://www.unhcr.org/media/convention-and-protocol-relating-status-refugees>.
- Vickzo, Melody, and Renata Matsumota. 2022. "Problematizing Access to Higher Education for Refugee and Globally Displaced Students: What's the Problem Represented to Be in Canadian University Responses to Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian Crises." *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* 17 (1): 40-54. <https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29504>.
- Vieira, Paul. 2015. "Refugee Issue Tests Canadian Leader." *The Wall Street Journal*, September 9. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/refugee-issue-tests-canadian-leader-1441845337>.
- Wallace, Rebecca. 2018. "Contextualizing the Crisis: The Framing of Syrian Refugees in Canadian Print Media." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 51 (2): 207-231.
doi:10.1017/S0008423917001482.
- Wilson, Jim. 2022. "Canada eliminated many visa requirements for Ukrainians." *HR Reporter*, March 3. <https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/legislation/canada-eliminates-many-visa-requirements-for-ukrainians/364604>.
- Winter, Nicholas. 2008. "American Race and Gender Schemas" In *Dangerous Frames: How Ideas about Race and Gender Shape Public Opinion*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wydrzynski, Christopher J. 1979. "Refugees and the Immigration Act" *McGill Law Journal* 25 (2): 154-192. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45407589>.

Canada vs the United States Level of Democracies: A Comparative Analysis of Canadian and American Levels of Democracy

Raewyn Muller

30205297

POLI 359

Professor Mark Machacek

Fall 2024

The United States and Canada are often grouped together when talking about democracies as their democracies are often seen to be remarkably similar. This seems to be true for the most part but, on various democracy index's Canada scores higher. So, the question is why does Canada have a higher level of democracy than the United States? This paper will use a most similar design system to compare the United States and Canada and their levels of democracy. This paper argues that Canada has the stronger democracy because of their rule of law, electoral process, and constitutional powers of political leaders.

The literature on democracy and the measures of democracy is well developed and constantly added to. The definition for democracy is highly debated as most everyone has a different opinion as to what it should be. It was (Dahl, 1971) who gave one of the most widely accepted definitions of democracy, which includes civil liberties such as freedom of expression and of the press, as well as the right to participate in elections and run for office. There have been other definitions of democracy, some of which includes how a democracy is divided or configured. (Lipset, 1959) added to the literature by looking at democracy as a dichotomy between social structures and democracy. This was added to by (Cutright, 1963) who developed an index of political development, which measured political institutions, economic development, and some parts of social factors, which added to the development of the dichromatic system of democracy proposed by (Lipset, 1959).

Along with trying to define what a democracy is, there is also deep literature on the measures that should be used to determine the strength of democracy, as well as if it is present. There are various kinds of democracies, which use different measures to determine if a democracy is present. The Western world usually focuses on liberal democracy. It is (Bollen, 2009) who takes a closer look at it, he defines it as political liberties with democratic rules and

voter turnout as its measures. There are some indicators that are used to decide if democracy is present, these can be indicators like democratic rights and political rights (Alexander et al, 2011). There are also indicators such as freedom of expression and whether there are alternative sources of information (Geissel et al, 2016).

This paper employs a most similar systems design (MSSD). An MSSD is used by comparing two similar cases that have different outcomes. By using this design system, it should be easier to figure out what variable is making the outcomes different. This design allows for variables to be organized and the ones that are irrelevant can be left out of the mix and makes it clearer to determine what the causal variable could be (Steinmetz, 2019). With this paper the MSSD will be used to help determine why the United States has lower levels of Democracy than Canada. These two states are very similar, thus making it applicable to use the MSSD. This Paper will use indicators of democracy such as political right and civil liberties, as well as constitutional differences when using the MSSD to compare The United States and Canada's level of democracies.

To start, Canada and the United States are similar in their scores for certain measures of democracy. Some of which being civil liberties and associational and organizational rights, as of 2023 reported by Freedom House. Both Canada and the United States do have some discrimination with civil liberties, Canada's being Bill 21, which is the restriction of religious clothing in Quebec. The United States somewhat struggle with keeping education free from political indoctrination as some states have restrictions on discussions of race and gender in classrooms (Freedom House, 2023). Canada does have a perfect rating for their associational and organizational rights, but there is only a one-point difference between the US and Canada in that category, so it seems to be insignificant in determining the difference of democracy levels. Since

these indicators are scoring similarly for both countries, they do not seem to explain the difference in the levels of democracy, thus are not indicators that will be used.

There is quite a difference in the scoring by Freedom House in 2023 for the Rule of Law. Canada scores a 15/16, whereas the US scored a 11/16. The United States has faced increased polarization in the past few years, which has been displayed in civil society through discrimination and violence. There have also been threats to the independent judiciary. An example of this is Donald Trump denouncing judges when they did not agree with his policies, as well he tried to stand in the way of the Russian interference investigation for the 2016 presidential election (Klarman, 2020, p 22). By doing these things Trump politicized the judiciary system, which goes against strong rule of law as the judiciary should be independent from the political leaders' views and use laws and precedents to make their decisions in a democratic state. Also, when Trump tried to hold up an investigation on Russian interference in the 2016 election, he was obstructing justice, which goes against the rule of law of the country, thus contributing to the weakening of democracy.

Along with the threats to an independent judiciary, there have also been discriminations made in laws, some of which that have existed for a longtime, but there was also the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. This was a law that controls what women can do with their bodies, as it decreased the right to have an abortion. This decreases the strength of the rule of law in the United States because the law in a democratic state should allow for equality in their laws. The reversal of *Roe v. Wade* discriminates against gender in the laws, as it puts restrictions on women's bodies, whereas there does not seem to be any laws in the US that restrict men's bodies. Not only is there discrimination against gender but there has also been high levels racial discrimination in the US. People who are Black face a higher chance of being incarcerated in the United States than White

people. There have been some decreases in this disparity, but "Black adults still were imprisoned in 2020 at five times the rate for White adults." (The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Racial disparities persist in many U.S. jails* 2023). This shows how racialized the legal system is in the US, which downgrades the rule of law in the country, especially regarding equality, as all should be equal under the law.

Canada on the other hand, has strong rule of law. They have an impartial Judiciary, keep authorized force and coercion to a minimum. Canada also has issues around equality as well, which is seen in some racial groups and more prominently with discrimination against Indigenous Peoples. Canada has struggled with systemic racism and discrimination of Indigenous Peoples since they were colonized, historically this was done with Residential Schools and the *Indian Act*, which limited areas such as ceremonial activities (Government of Canada, *Overrepresentation of indigenous people in the Canadian criminal justice system: Causes and responses* 2023). Though Canada does treat their Indigenous population as less than, they do acknowledge it, as they have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that is trying to make a difference for these Indigenous groups. Because Canada is recognizing their issues and actively trying to make a difference, they differ in their strength of rule of law, as they are striving for the equality that is advertised under democracy.

The difference between Canada's level of rule of law and the United States is quite large, because of this the conclusion can be drawn that the differences in the rule of law could be a factor as to why Canada has a higher level of democracy. As having a strong rule of law is a major factor in democracy, if the rule of law is weak it tends to indicate an autocratic as the law lies with the leader.

Another reason Canada has a stronger democracy than the United States could be the electoral process, more particularly, free, and fair elections. There has been an increasing threat to free and fair elections in the States over the past decade. In the US there have been an increase in voter ID laws, which have been put in place to help crack down on voter fraud at polling stations. Though there has not been a large amount of evidence to support that there is voter fraud. Instead, the ID requirements "adverse impact on Democratic-leaning voter populations — people of color, young people, and the poor" (Klarman, 2020, p. 48). This is an issue for them as not all of them have photo ID, as there has been a shift to getting drivers licences later, or not having a passport is also a common occurrence, especially in poorer populations. This is a restriction on how fair elections are because there are parts of the population that are not able to be represented. Thus, lowering the standards of democracy because one of the main requirements of a democracy is free and fair elections.

Canada differs from the States when it comes to voter ID, for federal elections in Canada some sort of proof of residence and identification is needed. But, to help mitigate issues of not having ID, Canada also has voter registration cards and allows bill to be used as proof of residence, and a person can be vouched for as well. This makes voting more accessible helping Canada have free and fair elections.

The United States also faced a challenge to free and fair elections with the storming of Capitol Hill on January 6, 2020. This was a direct challenge to the democracy as it was based on alleged election fraud, which "means the foundation of democracy — free and fair elections followed by a peaceful transfer of power — has itself become a political issue." (Drutman, 2021). Because Trump questioned the validity of the election results and was on the verge of refusing to step down, it jeopardized the peaceful transition of power. This shook democracy, the

elections freeness was put into question. This is a tactic that is used in autocratic regimes. If this occurs in a democratic regime it can lead to the degradation of democratic institutions and a turn towards autocracy (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019). These are just two examples of threats to the democratic electoral process in the United States, which could help explain why their level of democracy is lower than Canada's. Canada also has not had the issue of refusal to transfer power between governments, which keeps their elections free and fair, and the electoral process free and fair. Therefore, showing that the differences in the electoral processes could be a reason Canada has a higher level of democracy.

Another possible explaining factor for the higher level of democracy in Canada compared to the United States could be the constitutional powers. Canada and the US have similar rights in their constitutions, but there are a couple differences that could have an impact on the levels of democracies in both countries. In the U.S., a president can get impeached, this is the only way they may be removed from power during their term. This can only occur if it is for "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." (U.S. Const. art II, § 4). This means if they are doing a poor job of governing the country and putting democracy in danger they cannot be removed. Whereas in Canada under section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the members of the house of commons or legislative assembly can call for a vote of no confidence, if this happens a Prime minister must step down if they lose, and results in a change of government. This process allows for people to hold the government accountable, which is harder to do in the States as impeachment does not function the same way.

In addition, the American Constitution also has a presidential veto (U.S. Const. art. I, §7) built into it. Which might undermine the democratic process, as it places the power to decide whether a bill passes in one person. In Canada there is no veto power, this means a bill cannot be

shot down at the end of its process by one person, the vote may fail by one person, but the process does not include a trump card, which can be seen as more democratic. There is the argument that if the Prime Minister in Canada does not agree with a bill it will not pass, but there is no built-in veto like there is in the States, which gives the illusion of democracy for Canada. The presence of a constitutional veto can give the perception that everyone's vote is not equal, which is not usually considered fully democratic. With these differences in the two constitutions, these could be possible factors as to why Canada has a stronger democracy than the United States.

This paper uses a most similar system design (MSSD) to compare the United States and Canada, and their levels of democracy. Canada has a higher level of democracy than the United States, and this paper proposes some of the reasons that may be because of their rule of laws, electoral processes, and constitutional powers for leaders. This paper examines the threats to the US has faced in the past few years to their rule of law and compared it with Canada's. It looked at the inequality that has grown in the US and how it differs from the inequality seen in Canada and how weak rule of law can be a signal that a democracy may be struggling. For the electoral process, the voter ID laws for both countries were examined. So was the alleged election fraud and refusal by Trump to accept election results in the States. Canada does not have an equivalent to that which shows how the differences in free and fair elections could be a possible reason as to why Canada has a stronger democracy. Lastly, this paper looked at the constitutional powers that leaders of both countries have. Though they have similar constitutions there are differences in powers, such as impeachment (United States) vs a vote of no confidence (Canada), and a veto power (United States). These differences change the power each leader has, thus being a possible reason to Canada having a stronger democracy.

This paper looks at the rule of law, which was one of the biggest differences between Canada and the United States. The rule of law in the States has changed, and decreased in the recent years, while Canada's has stayed pretty level. It will be interesting to pay attention to the trajectory of it in the US, as rule of law is often used as strong indicator for the levels of democracy in a state. Usually, it is weaker democracies and autocratic regimes that have weak rule of law. Thus, it should be considered the impact of a weakening rule of law on the future of democracy in the United States.

Bibliography

- Alexander, A. C., Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2012). Measuring effective democracy: A defense. *International Political Science Review*, 33(1), 41-62.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512111414682>
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, s 3, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c11
- Cutright, P. (1963). National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis. *American Sociological Review*, 28(2), 253. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2090612>
- Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Drutman, L. (2021, January 7). *Trump supporters storm the Capitol to attack democracy. here's how Congress can save it*. NBCNews.com.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/trump-supporters-storm-capitol-attack-democracy-here-s-how-congress-ncna1253105>
- Expanding freedom and democracy*. Freedom House. (n.d.). <https://freedomhouse.org/>
- Geissel, B., Kneuer, M., & Lauth, H.-J. (2016). Measuring the quality of democracy: Introduction. *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, 37(5), 571–579. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26556872>
- Government of Canada, D. of J. (2023, January 20). *Overrepresentation of indigenous people in the Canadian criminal justice system: Causes and responses*. Causes of Overrepresentation - Research and Statistics Division. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/oip-cjs/p4.html>
- Klarman, M. J. (2020). Foreword: The degradation of american democracy—and the Court. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3671830>
- Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2019). *How democracies die*. Broadway Books, an imprint of Crown Publishing, a division of Penguin Random House.
- Liberal Democracy Series I, 1972–1988: Definition, measurement, and trajectories
- Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy. *The American Political Science Review*, 53(1), 69–105.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1951731>
- Steinmetz, J. (2019). *Chapter 8: Comparative Politics*. Politics Power and Purpose An Orientation to Political Science.
<https://fhsu.pressbooks.pub/orientationpolisci/chapter/chapter-9-public-law-and-pre-law-training/>

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2023, May 16). *Racial disparities persist in many U.S. jails*.
<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2023/05/racial-disparities-persist-in-many-us-jails>

U.S. Const. art. I, §7

U.S. Const. art II, § 4

How have Afghan Women's International Human Rights Changed in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime compared to The Former Afghan Government?

Wazhma Rahmani
30120149
POLI 481 L01: The Politics of Human Rights
Dr. Mark Machacek
March 11, 2024

Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of Afghan women's international human rights under the Taliban regime compared to the former Afghan government. Using the Most-Similar-Systems Design (MSSD), it analyzes how two regimes, operating in the same cultural and geopolitical environment, differ significantly in their treatment of women's educational, social, and political rights. The study finds that while the former Afghan government facilitated modest but meaningful progress in women's rights, the Taliban's ideological stance has resulted in severe regression, institutionalizing gender-based persecution. The Taliban's policies, including bans on education and employment, demonstrate a systemic rollback of fundamental freedoms. This paper highlights the urgent need for international engagement to prevent the complete erasure of Afghan women from public life. Ignoring this crisis risks normalizing oppression and undermining global commitments to human rights.

"It's like having a flower or a rose. You water it and keep it at home for yourself, to look at it and smell it. It [a woman] is not supposed to be taken out of the house to be smelled" (Syed Ghaisuddin, Former Taliban Minister of Education).

In a given society, the promotion and ability of women to have the same rights and opportunities as men is a crucial factor, though often neglected, for maintaining lasting peace. Like every conflict in the history of this world, the women in Afghanistan, like every other woman in a conflict, endure the weight of agony (Farhoumand-Sims, 2007, p. 649). Their ability to make choices and engage in social interactions as humans is frequently hindered in a society where they are relegated to subordinate roles, serving the objectives of others (Riphenburg, 2004, p. 420). Across generations, Afghan women have persistently struggled for freedom and equality. Their most intense challenge has been to gain recognition and a meaningful role in public life, aspiring for their identities to be recognized, their voices to resonate, and their presence to be acknowledged and appreciated (Chalabi, 2023). Now, under the Taliban's extremist rule, Afghan women, their primary victims during both regimes, have again been pushed to the margins of society.

There is no more sight to be seen, any voices to be heard, nor any presence to be acknowledged of the once fierce Afghan women who have now been pushed out of Afghanistan's social, political, and economic life because of the Taliban (Sumitra et al., 2023, p. 2). This paper aims to examine and answer the overarching question of how Women's International Human Rights Changed in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime compared to The Former Afghan Government. Owing to space limitations, this paper will focus on Afghan women's educational, social and political rights as part of their international human rights. Using the Most-Similar-Systems Design, the paper argues that compared to the former Afghan Government, the Taliban's ideological beliefs have always been repressive towards Women's Educational and Social and Political rights. Examining the evolution of Afghan women's international human rights under both the Taliban regime and the previous Afghan government is crucial for understanding the impact of oppressive regimes on women's rights, illustrating the challenges faced by women in such contexts. The dangers of allowing regimes like the Taliban to go unchecked by the international community are evident in the potential erosion of fundamental human rights, especially for vulnerable groups such as women. Ignoring or tolerating such oppressive regimes poses a severe threat to global efforts for human rights, fostering an environment where authoritarianism can thrive, leading to widespread suffering and the erosion of principles that underpin a just and equitable world. The paper will begin by giving a brief introduction of who the Taliban are and why their regime became notorious concerning women's international human rights. Next, using the Most-Similar-Systems Design, the paper will compare Afghan women's educational, social and political rights under the current Taliban regime with those of the former Afghan government. The paper will conclude by arguing that before the Taliban takeover in 2021, Afghan women made some progress regarding their human rights, which they risk losing under the Taliban regime.

Who is the Taliban?

Throughout Afghanistan's dynamic political environment, women's rights have been instrumentalized and exploited by different groups (*Women in Afghanistan: The back story*, n.d.).

Modebadze (2022) calls the Taliban's first regime "one of the tragic periods in the history of Afghanistan [...] a 'dark age'" (p. 277). The Taliban emerged in 1994 to unite Afghanistan and establish an Islamic state. Dominating most of Afghanistan from 1996-2001, the group became notorious for its human rights violations, especially that of women (*Women in Afghanistan: The back story*, n.d.). Mullah Omar, the founder of the Taliban, argued that respecting women's rights was opposed to Islam and that the social participation of women in society led to moral corruption. And thus, after coming to power, in their first decree, the Taliban prohibited women's presence in public (Sumitra et al., 2023, p. 3). The law oppressed Afghan women and nearly every facet of their everyday existence (*Women in Afghanistan: The back story*, n.d.). In 2001, after the events of 9/11, the Taliban were ousted from power, and a new government was established, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. With the rise of the new government, women slowly started returning to public life, this time their rights being entrenched in the 2004 constitution of the new state (Sumitra et al., 2023, pp. 4 & 7). However, with the fall of the government into the hands of the Taliban in August 2021, concerns regarding the human rights of Afghan women rose again (Qazi et al., 2022, p. 1). Hours after the fall of the capital to the Taliban, the first images that came out were those of women's photos being taken down from shops, walls, and advertisement boards. Every aspect of women's lives changed again, and they became the primary targets of the Taliban again (Akbari & True, 2022, p. 625). The hard-fought gains of Afghan women, even if modest, are yet again being torn to pieces by the Taliban (*Women in Afghanistan: The Back story*, n.d.; *Afghanistan: UN experts say 20 years of progress for women and ...*, 2023).

Literature Review

Women in Afghanistan have been at the center of the struggle for their rights due to the various conflicts affecting the country, especially under the Taliban regime. However, according to the Taliban, they are only applying Sharia law, and thus, they should not be accused of any violations regarding women's rights (Sumitra et al., 2023, p. 13; Ahmadi & Worden, 2023). In *Post-Taliban Afghanistan – Changed Outlook for Women?*, Rippenburg (2004) argues that while Afghan women did make gains, such as becoming more active in their social and political lives like joining the police force, they continued to significantly fall behind the vast majority of women globally in terms of the opportunities available to them. By analyzing women's status in terms of family, health and production, and cultural expression, the article argues that improvements may have occurred for women in the capital. However, for those in rural areas, little had changed, especially for women living in areas controlled by warlords.

On the other hand, Deo (2014) argues that despite some limitations, there is hope that the rise of the new government in 2001 will have positive benefits for women, especially in terms of education. Pointing to the 2004 Afghan constitution, Deo argues that the guaranteed right to education is a promise that seems to be kept. In contrast, Kamali (2008) argues that one of the major challenges of the various constitutions of Afghanistan had been fostering unity.

Similarly, Reddy (2014) argues that women's rights have been an issue from the beginning of modern Afghan politics. In the post-Taliban government in 2001, women's emancipation began to look like a threat to conservative powerholders. It soon turned into a significant issue between

forces who, on one side, wanted to empower women and, on the other side, who saw them as nothing but threats to their power.

In *A New Feministic Wave in Afghanistan under Taliban Regime: Building Postmodern Narrative*, Qazi et al. (2022) argue that the Taliban are portrayed to the world as a brutal force focused on violating women's rights, but in reality, matters are different. Women had suffered before the Taliban takeover, where violence against women was at its peak. The article further argues that the Taliban regime has learned from their past mistakes; they have empowered women and have ensured their security in every sector, treating them equally to men; however, the only issue that remains is that the Taliban have yet to take a clear stance regarding women's political participation. In contrast, Sumitra et al. (2023) argue that under the Taliban regime, women have experienced nothing but poverty, hunger, unemployment, deprivation, and suffering. After the Taliban takeover, conditions have worsened, and that same old scenario is being repeated despite assurances from the new Taliban regime. The article argues that women have made much progress in the past 20 years, but because of the Taliban, the reversal of women's rights has been swift and substantial.

In *One year on from the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan: re-instituting gender apartheid*, Akbari & True (2022) argue that for the Taliban, it is essential to have "markers" to distinguish themselves from the former government and the repression of women's rights serves as such (p. 629). Modebadze (2022) further argues that the Taliban regime is made up of incompetent people with no ability to lead the country in times of crisis. Despite many assurances, the Taliban have again broken their promise and have begun restricting women's rights and freedoms. The Taliban are "as ruthless and backward as they were 20 years ago" (p. 281).

Overall, Afghan women's fight for fundamental human rights has never been easy, be it under the former government or the Taliban. However, under the former, hope existed for women's empowerment; in the latter, even hope finds it hard to exist.

Most-Similar-Systems-Design (MSSD)

When using the Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD), selecting research subjects involves systems that closely resemble each other, differing primarily in the phenomenon under investigation. The reason behind choosing similar systems is the aspiration to know the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variables while keeping all other factors constant (Anckar, 2008, pp. 389 & 391). This paper will apply a "strict application of an MSSD," that is, it will choose two regimes in the same country, Afghanistan, that are similar in many ways and different in one aspect, the independent variable (Anckar, 2008, p. 390).

For the case of the current Taliban regime compared to the former Afghan government, the variables similar to those of both regimes will be the cultural context, geopolitical location, religious influence, and economic constraints. The independent variable will be their ideological beliefs.

Both regimes have operated within the cultural and societal framework of Afghanistan. Specifically, most of both governments' leaders come from the same ethnicity, Pashtuns

(Dorronsoro, 2009, pp. 14 & 27). Both regimes have operated within the geographical context of Afghanistan. Islamic principles influence the Taliban regime and the former Afghan government (Dorronsoro, 2009, p. 9; 3). Furthermore, economic factors, including challenges related to development, poverty, and resource management, have been common factors in both regimes (*The World Bank In Afghanistan*, 2023). The difference between these two regimes would be that although women's rights have suffered under both, there was a modest improvement in women's empowerment in the former Afghan government compared to the Taliban regime (Sumitra et al., 2023, p. 13).

Education

"Article Forty-Three: Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be offered up to the B.A. level in the state educational institutes free of charge by the state" (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004).

Former AFG Govt. In the former Afghan government, education was one of the rights that appeared to be upheld. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan witnessed the highest school enrollment rate in history. Demands for girls' education surmounted. At the beginning of 2002, 18,000 students applied to Kabul University alone. In 2003 alone, a third of all children enrolled in schools nationwide were girls (Reddy, 2014, pp. 126-127). The removal of the Taliban brought an immense sense of freedom, particularly for the female population in Afghanistan (Alvi, 2004, p. 3). By 2010, Afghanistan had moved from 177 to 155 on the Human Development Index (Deo, 2014, p. 6). Student enrollment at all education levels increased tenfold; in 2018, around 10 million students were pursuing their education in Afghanistan. By August 2021, out of every ten students in primary education, 4 were girls (*Let Girls and Women in Afghanistan Learn*, 2023). For Afghan people, even in rural areas, girl's access to education and employment is seen as inherently tied to long-lasting pieces in Afghanistan (Firchow & Urwin, 2020, p. 60).

Taliban Regime. During the Taliban's 20-year armed conflict with the former Afghan government, girls' schools were usually singled out for attacks. Schools were burned down, and students were physically attacked (Deo, 2014, p. 18; Alvi, 2004, p. 3). After the fall of the Afghan government to the Taliban in 2021, the Taliban announced that girls would have the right to education, just not alongside men (Qazi et al., 2022, p. 6). This announcement from the Taliban is yet to take place; meanwhile, girls have been banned from attending high schools and universities (Neyazi et al., 2023, p. 1). It can be said that the Taliban are returning, if not promptly, to their oppressive style of ruling of the 1900s (Modebadze, 2022, p. 281). Girls above the age of 12 are prohibited from going to school. Today, Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls are not legally allowed to pursue secondary education. For the Taliban, other types of education that do not involve any version of the Taliban's Islamic education are deemed as a "source of evil" (Akbari & True, 2022, p. 626). Thus, educational curricula have been replaced with religious topics, and classrooms are subject to regular check-ins by armed Taliban militia. These changes have significantly dropped even male students' attendance (Akbari & True, 2022, p. 626; Ahmadi & Worden, 2023). Women in Afghanistan have been banned from obtaining education, and their presence has been limited to either home or grave, "the two prominent places where a woman is permitted to occupy space," one the site of increased

domestic violence and the other the result of death from preventable diseases and childbirth. The impact of restricting education for girls is so severe that it entails collective harm to all Afghan women's welfare (Ahmad & Haqmal, 2023, p. 653).

Social & Political Rights

"Article Twenty-Two: Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law" (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004).

Former AFG Govt. After the establishment of the Republic of Afghanistan in 2001, Afghan women slowly began participating in public life again. Women were taking up jobs in sectors that used to be dominated by men (Sumitra et al., 2023, p. 5). For instance, for the first in the history of Afghan media, women were being trained to use video cameras (Riphenburg, 2004, p. 419). Another major accomplishment for Afghanistan was the establishment of the first Ministry for Women's Affairs and the Independent Human Rights Commission (Reddy, 2014, p. 130). However, what mattered the most was that Afghan women were back in the public domain. Women were everywhere, in schools, government ministries, and NGO offices (Farhoumand-Sims, 2007, p. 645). Afghan women also played a prominent role in the formation of the Afghan civil society, which highlighted not only the role of these women in shaping their communities but also in making them economically independent. There is no question that after the Taliban's downfall, women were legally allowed to enjoy their social rights (Sumitra et al., 2023, pp. 4 & 6). Afghan women also significantly advanced regarding their political rights, marking notable progress in their participation and status within the political landscape. From serving as members of parliament (Deo, 2014, p. 12) and in the police force (Riphenburg, 2004, p. 402) to being appointed as governors (Reddy, 2014, p. 131) and allowed to run for presidency (Kamali, 2008, p. 280), all of these were remarkable achievements, no matter how small compared to other societies, for women who had been at the center of decades of conflict. What mattered was that Afghan women were there, filled with dreams and hopes.

Taliban Regime. Since the takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, the Taliban have issued more than 140 edicts, with the majority of those directly targeting women (Chalabi, 2023; Ahmadi & Worden, 2023). Following the Taliban's assumption of power, the modest progress achieved by women in the preceding two decades was reversed (Saboor et al., 2022, p. 893). In the immediate aftermath of the Taliban taking control of Kabul, images emerged of shopkeepers covering up images of women on their premises and beauty parlours removing advertisements featuring female models. Every aspect of life changed for Afghan women (Akbari & True, 2022, p. 625). Apart from the ban on education, women are also banned from working (Modebadze, 2022, p. 280). According to Human Rights Watch, the Taliban are instituting gender persecution against women, which is a crime against humanity. Despite the twenty years of progress, the Taliban are currently denying Afghan women their fundamental rights because of their gender (*Afghanistan: Taliban's Gender Crimes Against Humanity*, 2023; Ahmadi & Worden, 2023). The international human rights of Afghan women keep deteriorating in the country. So far, any protest against the regime and its repressive policies has been met with violence from the Taliban members (*Women in Afghanistan: The back story*, n.d.; Qazi et al., 2022, p. 8; Modebadze, 2022, p. 280). With the elimination of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, civil society-led protection

and empowerment programs, and the ban restricting women from working with the U.N. and NGOs (Ahmadi & Worden, 2023), the human rights of women in Afghanistan are getting diminished day by day with rising fears of Afghan women getting overlooked and neglected by the global community, left at the mercy of the Taliban again.

Conclusion

By comparing Afghan women's international human rights, namely their educational, social and political rights, under the former Afghan government and the Taliban regime, MSSD reveals how two regimes similar in many ways but different in their ideological aspects can end up producing a striking difference. While this design undoubtedly helps make sense of the Taliban's violations of women's human rights, it also has its weaknesses, mainly regarding its application to only several cases (Anckar, 2008, p. 398). Afghanistan is not the only nation experiencing a regression in women's rights; however, the unfolding events within the country serve as a warning for all. The situation underscores how years of advancements in gender equality and women's rights can be eroded within a short span. It resonates as a clear message to the global community that the struggle for women's rights in Afghanistan is interconnected with a broader global endeavour, emphasizing that it is universal and concerns every corner of the world (Chalabi, 2023). The existence of women's human rights not only benefits women and their families but also their communities (Deo, 2014, p. 16). Afghan women's international human rights situation was imperfect; however, something did exist in the name of a right. Under the Taliban regime, there is no such thing as a woman or a right. And while on the 8th of March, the world celebrates women, Afghan women suffer under the shadow of oppression, enduring restrictions on their basic rights, no access to education, and severe restriction of personal freedoms.

Bibliography

- Afghanistan: Taliban's Gender Crimes Against Humanity*. Human Rights Watch. (2023, September 18). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/09/08/afghanistan-talibans-gender-crimes-against-humanity>
- Afghanistan: UN experts say 20 years of progress for women and ...* UNITED NATIONS Office of the High Commissioner. (2023). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-un-experts-say-20-years-progress-women-and-girls-rights-erased>
- Ahmad, A., & Haqmal, M. (2023). The Taliban's ban on Afghan women attending university is eroding hopes for the future. *BMJ*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p653>
- Ahmadi, B., & Worden, S. (2023, September 14). *Two years of the Taliban's "gender apartheid" in Afghanistan*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/09/two-years-talibans-gender-apartheid-afghanistan>
- Akbari, F., & True, J. (2022). One year on from the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan: Re-instituting gender apartheid. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 76(6), 624–633. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2022.2107172>
- Alvi, H. (2004). Reconstruction in post-Taliban Afghanistan: women and education. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 30(3–4), 1–22.
- Ankar, C. (2008). On the applicability of the most similar systems design and the most different systems design in comparative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), 389–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401552>
- Chalabi, M. (2023, August 15). *Women in Afghanistan: From almost everywhere to almost nowhere*. UN Women – Headquarters. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/08/women-in-afghanistan-from-almost-everywhere-to-almost-nowhere>
- The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. France Diplomatie. (n.d.). https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/The_Constitution_of_the_Islamic_Republic_of_Afghanistan.pdf
- Deo, N. (2014). THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 21(1), 1–27.
- Dorransoro, G. (2009). *The Taliban's winning strategy in Afghanistan*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf

- Farhoumand-Sims, C. (2007). Unfulfilled promises. *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 62(3), 643–663. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200706200312>
- Firchow, P., & Urwin, E. (2020). Not just at home or in the grave: (mis)understanding women's rights in Afghanistan. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 16(1), 59–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1812893>
- Kamali, M. H. (2008). References to Islam and women in the Afghan Constitution. *Arab Law Quarterly*, 22(3), 270–306. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157302508x336629>
- Let girls and women in Afghanistan learn!*. UNESCO.org. (2023). <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/let-girls-and-women-afghanistan-learn>
- Modebadze, V. (2022). Afghanistan under Taliban: A new regime poses a threat to international stability. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, Institute for Research and European Studies - Bitola*, 8(1), 277–291. <https://doi.org/10.47305/jlia2281277m>
- Neyazi, A., Padhi, B., & Sah, R. (2023). Girls' education and the future of healthcare in Afghanistan. *BMJ*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p561>
- Qazi, M. S., Ud Din, B., & Ayaz, M. (2022). A New Feministic Wave in Afghanistan under Taliban Regime: Building Postmodern Narrative. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 1(1), 1–10.
- Reddy, S. (2014). Women In Afghanistan. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 18(2), 124–143.
- Riphenburg, C. J. (2004). Post-taliban Afghanistan: Changed outlook for women? *Asian Survey*, 44(3), 401–421. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.3.401>
- Saboor, L., Ahmad, L., & Ahmad, A. (2022). The bleak future of afghan women's health under the Taliban. *The Lancet*, 399(10328), 893–894. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(22\)00283-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(22)00283-5)
- Sumitra, S., Hakimy, M. R., & Rokba, B. A. (2023). AFGHAN WOMEN AFTER TALIBANIZATION. *Indian Journal of Integrated Research in Law*, 3(1), 1–16.
- Women in Afghanistan: The back story*. Amnesty International UK. (n.d.). <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/womens-rights-afghanistan-history>
- The World Bank In Afghanistan*. World Bank. (2023). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>

To What Extent Do the Taliban's Violations of the Law of Armed Conflict influence the perceived Significance and Standing of these laws within the International System?

Wazhma Rahmani
30120149
POLI 543 L01: Law and Armed Conflict
Dr. Maureen S. Hiebert
April 9, 2024

Abstract

This paper examines the Taliban's violations of the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), including attacks on civilians, the use of human shields, child soldier recruitment, and suicide bombings. Despite LOAC's role in regulating armed conflict, the Taliban's actions and their rise to power have weakened its credibility and enforcement. The lack of accountability and international response sets a dangerous precedent, undermining compliance and risking Afghanistan becoming a haven for terrorism. Without meaningful consequences, LOAC's effectiveness in protecting civilians and upholding humanitarian principles remains in question.

“We asked the Taliban why they did this, and they told us, when it is the time of conflict, everyone dies, it doesn’t matter if you have guns or not. It is the time of war.”
(Afghanistan: No escape: War crimes and civilian harm during the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, 2021, p. 13).

In 1994, a group named the Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan. Driven partly by tribal customs and partly by the continuous war, the Taliban first introduced themselves as rescuers of the country, liberating it from the lawless rule of the Mujahideen (Collins, 2011, pp. 10 & 12; Ghufuran, 2001, p. 462; Armajani, 2021, p. 357). By 1996, the Taliban invaded Kabul, ousting the Mujahideen from power. The Taliban swiftly became notorious for their human rights violations and ties with other terrorist organizations (Collins, 2011, pp. 37 & 38; Armajani, 2021, p. 366). Despite the appalling nature of their domestic policies, the most egregious aspect of the Taliban's rule was essentially embracing Al-Qaeda.

On September 11, 2001, the US came under attack by Al-Qaeda hijackers (Paust, 2003, p. 325; Brooks, 2004, p. 6). The US government asked the Taliban for the turnover of Bin Laden; however, they refused to cooperate (Collins, 2011, p. 45). The US government knew that it was impossible to target Al-Qaeda without removing the Taliban regime, which was the de facto government of Afghanistan at the time. Thus, on October 7, 2001, US air attacks against the Taliban regime began (Collins, 2011, p. 46; Brooks, 2004, p. 6; Greenwood, 2002, p. 309; Bellal et al., 2011, p. 47; King, 2022, p. 923; Geib & Siegrist, 2011, p. 14). The attacks ended with the subsequent establishment of an independent Afghan Government, which then found itself embroiled in a NIAC with remaining elements of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces who had found a haven in Pakistan (Collins, 2011, p. 49; Saul, 2014, p. 199). The Taliban soon regrouped and started their operations against the Afghan government and its Western allies. Bound by LOAC (Bellal et al., 2011, p. 58), the Taliban and the Afghan government, along with the US and more than 40 nations, got into an armed conflict for almost twenty years, with the conflict ending "ignominiously" on August 30, 2021, with a Taliban victory (King, 2022, p. 925). Throughout the twenty-year armed conflict, numerous reports documented violations of LOAC by all parties with minimal or absent accountability. Central to these violations was the Taliban's failure to uphold the Principle of Distinction, a fundamental tenet of LOAC designed to protect civilians and civilian objects from the effects of war. Their tactics, which blurred the line between combatants and non-combatants, not only exacerbated civilian suffering but also raised broader concerns about the enforceability and credibility of LOAC in contemporary conflicts.

I. Distinction

“The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants. Attacks may only be directed against combatants. Attacks must not be directed against civilians.”
 (Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005, p. 3).

One of the cornerstones of LOAC is the Principle of distinction (*Afghanistan: No escape: War crimes and civilian harm during the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, 2021, p. 37*). Swiney (2005) calls distinction the strongest doctrine of LOAC, which is both unequivocal and inflexible

(p. 733). Applicable to both IACs and NIACs, the Principle of distinction dictates that combatants must differentiate themselves from civilians, those who are not combatants, leading to the obligation for combatants to refrain from intentionally targeting or causing indiscriminate or disproportionate harm to them (Quénivet, 2010, pp. 160 & 161; *The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, 2007, p. 83; Swiney, 2005, pp. 733 & 734). Despite the widespread acknowledgment of the Principle, it is consistently breached by state and non-state actors (Swiney, 2005, p. 735). Although, as a non-state armed group, the Taliban were permitted to carry out their operations against those actively participating in the hostilities, most of the victims of this group were civilians. Deliberately violating the Principle, the Taliban allocated a broad definition for legitimate military targets, anyone from the belligerent parties to those who opposed the Taliban (Badalič, 2019a, pp. 228-230). This led to the blurring of the distinction between civilians and combatants and civilian objects and military objects (Geib & Siegrist, 2011, p. 21; Abbott, 2000, p. 509).

i. Civilians

“Civilians are persons who are not members of the armed forces. The civilian population comprises all persons who are civilians”
(Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005, p. 17).

Civilians are individuals who are neither part of any armed forces nor take a direct part in hostilities; thus, they enjoy protected status under LOAC (Kawka, 2020, p. 89; Quénivet, 2010, p. 167; Swiney, 2005, p. 733; Sassòli, 2004, p. 206). Although not all civilian casualties occurring in an armed conflict necessarily violate LOAC, it is the indiscriminate and intentional nature of casualties that result in a LOAC breach (*The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, 2007, p. 4). Civilians in Afghanistan were at the center of the armed conflict between the Taliban and the belligerent parties. The Taliban systematically terrorized them to undermine their support for the former Afghan government (*Insurgent Abuses Against Afghan Civilians*, 2008, p. 3). Since re-grouping after 2001, the Taliban started intentionally targeting those civilians whom they portrayed as criminals supporting, in any form, the former government and the US forces (*The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, 2007, p. 2; Badalič, 2019b, p. 260; Samim, 2022). These targets mainly included teachers, aid workers, religious scholars, day labourers, civilian workers, translators and even the family members and relatives of government workers (*Insurgent Abuses Against Afghan Civilians*, 2008, p. 3; *The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, 2007, p. 5; Badalič, 2019b, p. 260; Badalič, 2019a, p. 219; Bellal et al., 2011, p. 51).

ii. Civilian Objects

“The parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives. Attacks may only be directed against military objectives. Attacks must not be directed against civilian objects”
(Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005, p. 25).

According to LOAC, military objects are those "which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage" (Schmitt, 2009, p. 318; Greenwood, 2002, p. 315). However, during the armed conflict with the government and its allies, the Taliban was accused several times of attacking objects that were used solely by civilians, such as hospitals, schools, and hotels.

In 2017, the ICRC claimed that in two years, more than 240 medical facilities were attacked by armed groups, including the Taliban. Because of these types of attacks on clinics and hospitals, many were killed or wounded, including health professionals and civilians. Thus, in a country already recognized as being extremely dangerous for humanitarian workers, hospitals were turned into battlefields with health professionals placed at the very forefront of the armed conflict (*Afghanistan: Hospitals are under attack, and children are paying the price*, 2017). For instance, in one of the Taliban's attacks on a hospital, the armed conflict took place within the hospital rooms, which left 43 civilians dead and at least 65 wounded (*Taliban attack a hospital in eastern Afghanistan*, 2009).

The Taliban are also accused of attacking and burning schools, especially girls' schools, during the armed conflict in Afghanistan. In 2019, the Taliban burned two girls' schools in one of the provinces, ceasing classes indefinitely for nearly 1,700 girls (Rahim & Zucchini, 2019). Apart from schools, teachers and students were also targeted by the Taliban because they perceived them as "tools of the infidels" (Badalič, 2019a, p. 223).

In 2018, the Taliban targeted the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. In an attack that lasted more than 12 hours, six gunmen entered the hotel in army uniforms, killing around 43 civilians as well as taking others as hostages. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. According to one of the witnesses, the Taliban were shouting, "Don't leave any of them alive, good or bad. Shoot and kill them all." (*Afghan Intercontinental Hotel Attack: Death Toll in Kabul Reaches 22*, 2018; Safi & Janjua, 2018). The attack on this hotel, like other civilian objects, had devastating effects not only on the victims and their families but the whole civilian population of the country.

II. Human Shields

"The use of human shields is prohibited"
(Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005, p. 337).

Human shielding entails the utilization of individuals protected by LOAC, such as POWs or civilians, to deter attacks on combatants and military targets. Although it is not a novel battlefield phenomenon, and the ban on employing human shields is absolute, it is often violated in contemporary asymmetrical warfare, thus challenging the core principle of LOAC, specifically the interplay between humanity and military necessity (Schmitt, 2009, pp. 293 & 294; Schaack, 2017, p. 317). Resort to human shields may seem appealing to non-state actors because it may prevent assaults for which these actors lack effective defence using their available weaponry, and it disadvantages armed actors who prioritize and make efforts to adhere to LOAC (Schaack, 2017, p. 317; Schmitt, 2009, p. 297). Although LOAC is indecisive on determining the issue of voluntariness in regard to human shields, generally, human shields are to be treated like

other civilians; they must be protected from indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. Using human shields unquestionably puts restraints on the opposing forces to carry out operations effectively. Thus, the primary responsibility for civilian deaths that may occur from such incidents rests on the party initially employing this method (Schaack, 2017, pp. 322 & 321). During the armed conflict, the Taliban would enter civilian homes and engage in hostilities with the government forces (Dunlap, 2011, p. 321). Even when government troops would claim that they took all precautions while targeting the Taliban, civilian deaths would occur. An example of this was during the US-led attacks on Marjah in southern Afghanistan, where the government forces and their allies accused the Taliban placing women and children on rooftops and firing from behind them, forcing the troops to either not shoot back or advance very slowly in order to distinguish Taliban fighters from civilians. As a result of the attacks, approximately 15 civilians were killed (*Official: Taliban use civilians (Shields*, 2010; Norton-Taylor, 2010).

III. Child Soldiers

“Children must not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups”
(Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005, p. 482).

Contemporary warfare's military tactics include the exploitation of children, an example of which can be the UN report on the Taliban, which documented the group torturing and suffocating children by placing them in metal containers. Armed groups such as the Taliban deliberately terrorize children through methods like rape, landmine deployment, and coercing them into frontline combat roles. However, the most egregious breach of LOAC principles occurs through the recruitment of underage children as child soldiers, a practice prevalent among both state and non-state armed groups involved in IACs and NIACs (Abbott, 2000, pp. 505, 506 & 507).

According to Human Rights Watch, the Taliban recruited children onto the battlefield for more than two decades, during which they were used for fighting, planting IEDs, and committing suicide attacks. According to reports, thousands of children have been recruited into their army until now (Becker, 2021). Child soldiers are mainly utilized because they are considered expendable and easier to manipulate. Although a high number of children are recruited by using threat or actual physical force (Abbott, 2000, p. 514; Becker, 2021), an essential source for the recruitment of child soldiers for the Taliban is the madrassas (Becker, 2021; Goodson, 2010, p. 418; Alvi, 2003, p. 17; Johnson & Mason, 2007, p. 73).

Madrassas. Throughout the 1980s, hundreds of madrassas were established in Pakistan near the Afghan border because they were not well received in Afghanistan. Offering free food, shelter and basic needs, these madrassas became the only source of free education for young boys from poor families. In exchange, the children were required to live within the compounds of the school, isolating themselves from their families and entirely devoting themselves to the madrassas's curricula. After getting enrolled into the madrassas to get a free education, children are often taught about warfare. Children as young as six are indoctrinated, and by age 13, they often learn how to use a firearm (Alvi, 2004, p. 18; Becker, 2021; Armajani, 2021, pp. 353 & 362). The Taliban themselves emerged from these madrassas (Johnson & Mason, 2007, p. 73;

Alvi, 2004, pp. 17 & 19; Armajani, 2021, p. 354; King, 2022, p. 933), and soon the same madrassas turned into a breeding ground for the group (Becker, 2021; Azami, 2014).

Though, in most cases, madrassa children come from poor families or are picked up from the streets, there have also been instances where the families of these children were unaware of their recruitment in the armed conflict in Afghanistan. The BBC reported such a case about a 10-year-old kid who had disappeared from his madrassa in Pakistan and was found after five months when his uncle recognized him on an Afghan TV station while watching a police lineup of insurgents detained in Afghanistan (Azami, 2014).

Additionally, the Taliban are accused of buying children as young as 7 in Pakistan to fight in the armed conflict in Afghanistan. The average price for a child bomber has been reported to range from \$7,000 to \$14,000 depending on the urgency and the expected deliverance of the child against a target.

Although children taking arms in an armed conflict was not uncommon in Afghanistan, the usage of individuals as human bombs was unprecedented in the country's lengthy history of warfare (*Exclusive: Taliban buying children for suicide bombers*, 2009; Dunlap, 2011, p. 321).

IV. Suicide Bombings

“Launching an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, is prohibited”
(Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005, p. 46).

Suicide bombings are among the most lethal strategies employed in contemporary warfare. Suicide bombings, a prominent type of suicide attack, are characterized by the use of explosives and the death of the perpetrator. Armed groups resort to suicide bombings due to their tactical benefits; they allow armed groups to strike harder targets with enhanced accuracy, overcoming challenges they might otherwise face (Martin, 2021, pp. 172, 174, & 179). While the concept of suicide bombings may be traced back to ancient times, suicide bombings are a contemporary manifestation of political violence. It was not until the post-9/11 era that the frequency of suicide bombings surged dramatically, solidifying them as a prominent feature of global terrorism. As the War on Terror started, suicide bombings evolved from an unconventional method of political violence to a widely adopted tactic by insurgents in warfare (Ahmadzai, 2021, p. 17; Becker, 2021). However, LOAC does not explicitly discuss the employment of suicide attacks during times of war, nor does it directly address the deaths of individuals carrying such attacks. Thus, due to the absence of specific provisions regarding suicide attacks in LOAC, the interpretation of their legality often relies on existing principles governing an armed conflict. So, if a suicide attack intentionally targets civilians or is perfidious or disproportionate, then it violates LOAC (Wijenayake, 2022, pp. 17 & 19; *Insurgent Abuses Against Afghan Civilians*, 2008, pp. 5 & 28; Geib & Siegrist, 2011, p. 18; *The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, 2007, p. 90).

The rise of the Taliban post-9/11 is in parallel with their adoption of suicide bombings. In 2003, by carrying out their first attack in Kabul, the Taliban introduced the concept of suicide bombing in the country. In 2016, the Taliban became the leading terrorist organization accountable for the highest number of suicide bombings in the world (Ahmadzai, 2021, p. 20; *Insurgent Abuses Against Afghan Civilians*, 2008, p. 6). The Taliban recruited mainly children to carry out their operations as they are easier to manipulate and less likely to raise doubts than adults (Becker, 2021); thus, within a short time, the Taliban established a notorious practice of producing "human bombs" (Ahmadzai, 2021, p. 30). And despite the Taliban claiming that their attacks were meant for military targets, the actual victims were predominantly civilians. By feigning civilian status and carrying out suicide attacks indiscriminately and disproportionately, the Taliban violated LOAC numerous times (*The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, 2007, pp. 93 & 94; Fujita, 2003, p. 74).

In 2021, the Taliban government honoured the families of suicide bombers for the deaths of their children at the Intercontinental Hotel. The Taliban's minister of interior, Sirajuddin Haqqani, who has a \$10 million bounty over his head by the FBI (*Sirajuddin Haqqani*, 2010), and is accused of carrying one of the deadliest suicide bombings in Kabul since 2001 that killed at least 150 people, honoured the families of the attackers promising them condolences payments and land (Gibbons-Neff et al., 2021).

The individuals who should face prosecution for violations of LOAC are currently acting as representatives of a state within the international system, placing LOAC in jeopardy (Sánchez Frías, 2020, p. 81). Where once there were concerns about non-state actors taking up arms and participating in armed conflicts, there is apprehension about holding them accountable under international law. (Andreopoulos, 2017, p. 171).

Moreover, while mechanisms may exist to hold the Taliban accountable, their efficacy seems limited. For instance, in 2020, the ICC authorized the Chief Prosecutor to investigate allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by all parties in Afghanistan. However, after the Taliban takeover, the ICC Prosecutor insisted on focusing first on the Taliban, raising controversy about the court's approach (Leisner, 2022, p. 95). Additionally, the ICC jurisdiction is limited by the Principle of complementarity, which entrusts the majority of investigations and prosecutions to domestic authorities, which in the case of Afghanistan is the de facto government of the Taliban (Cohen & Shany, 2011, pp. 44 & 57).

Another mechanism, according to some scholars, can be the ICJ and its assistance in the protection of LOAC values. However, apart from the ICJ's ability to determine facts, it may also be challenging to hold States accountable, specifically regimes like the Taliban (Coleman, 2015, pp. 244 & 266). Moreover, since now it seems like the Taliban will be staying in power in Afghanistan, accountability for LOAC violations, if it happens, will be largely imperfect and filled with compromises (Murphy, 2023, p. 952).

Conclusion

In a nation where insurgents have seized power by violating the fundamental principles of the LOAC and where becoming a suicide bomber is perceived as more honourable and prestigious

than pursuing an education, what can be anticipated of a child who chooses to abandon the pen in favour of the gun? Moreover, what does this say about the standing of LOAC within the international system, that despite its existence, the Taliban could ascend to power through its violation? Taliban's violations of LOAC directly impact its credibility by undermining compliance, legitimacy, and trust in its ability to protect civilians and uphold humanitarian principles during the conflict. Taliban's undisguised violations of LOAC undermine compliance and respect for the law, setting a dangerous precedent that other non-state actors may follow, or it may even turn Afghanistan into a haven for terrorism once again, eroding the credibility of LOAC as a universally respected framework for regulating armed conflicts (Modebadze, 2022, p. 281). The Taliban's actions diminish the legitimacy of LOAC in the eyes of the international community, sending a message that adherence to LOAC is optional rather than obligatory. Lastly, the lack of international response further impacts the credibility of LOAC, sending a signal to other actors, especially insurgents, that there are no real consequences for violating LOAC, as well as eroding the trust of the victims of the Taliban in the effectiveness of LOAC in protecting them.

Although LOAC "has been one of the great successes of international law" (Stephens, 2015, p. 182), the actions and responses associated with the success of groups like the Taliban have been the primary contributors to the erosion of fundamental standards within LOAC (Andreopoulos, 2017, p. 174).

Bibliography

- Abbott, A. B. (2000). CHILD SOLDIERS-THE USE OF CHILDREN AS INSTRUMENTS OF WAR. *SUFFOLK TRANSNATIONAL LAW REVIEW*, 23(2), 499–538.
- Afghanistan: Hospitals are under attack, and children are paying the price*. International Committee of the Red Cross. (2017, August 21).
<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/afghanistans-hospitals-are-under-attack-and-children-are-paying-price>
- Afghanistan: No escape: War crimes and civilian harm during the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban*. Amnesty International. (2021, December 15).
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/5025/2021/en/>
- Ahmadzai, A. (2021). Dying to live: The “Love to death” narrative driving the Taliban’s suicide bombings. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 15(1), 17–38.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26984795?refreqid=fastly-default>
- Alvi, H. (2004). *Reconstruction in post-Taliban Afghanistan: Women and education - document - gale literature resource center*. Gale Literature Resource Center.
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA125957094&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=07078412&p=LitRC&sw=w&userGroupName=anon~8130edbb>
- Andreopoulos, G. J. (2017). The impact of the War on Terror on the accountability of armed groups. *The Law of Armed Conflict*, 171–191. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315238753-6>
- Armajani, J. (2021). The Taliban. *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, 348–348.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004435544_020
- Azami, D. (2014, December 15). *How the taliban groom child suicide bombers*. BBC News.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27250144>
- Badalič, V. (2019a). Eliminating “pernicious individuals”: Civilian victims of the Afghan Taliban’s targeted killing program. *The War Against Civilians*, 215–235.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12406-9_11
- Badalič, V. (2019b). Taking “civilian criminals” as hostages: Civilian victims of abductions by the Afghan Taliban. *The War Against Civilians*, 257–271. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12406-9_13
- BBC. (2018). *Afghan Intercontinental Hotel Attack: Death Toll in Kabul reaches 22*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-42774198.amp>
- Becker, J. (2021, September 20). *This is our opportunity to end the Taliban’s use of child soldiers*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/20/our-opportunity-end-talibans-use-child-soldiers>

- Bellal, A., Giacca, G., & Casey-Maslen, S. (2011, March 1). *International law and armed non-state actors in Afghanistan*. International Review of the Red Cross. <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/international-law-and-armed-non-state-actors-afghanistan>
- Brooks, R. E. (2004). War everywhere: Rights, national security law, and the law of armed conflict in the age of terror. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 153(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150665>
- Cohen, A., & Shany, Y. (2011). Beyond the grave breaches regime: The duty to investigate alleged violations of International Law Governing Armed Conflicts. *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law*, 14, 37–84. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-6704-855-2_2
- Coleman, A. (2015). The ICJ's role in determining accountability for violations of International Humanitarian Law. In *Accountability for Violations of International Humanitarian Law* (pp. 244–266). essay, Routledge.
- Collins, J. J. (2011). *Understanding War in Afghanistan*. National Defense University Press.
- Dunlap, C. J. (2011). *Lawfare Today ... and Tomorrow*. Duke Law Scholarship Repository. https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/faculty_scholarship/2465/
- Fast, L. (2015). SECURITIZATION AND THREATS TO HUMANITARIAN WORKERS. In *The Routledge Companion to Humanitarian Action* (pp. 313–324). essay, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9780203753422/routledge-companion-humanitarian-action-roger-mac-ginty-jenny-peterson?refId=a0750107-1d0b-4095-9de9-0d2a7571c23f&context=ubx>.
- FBI. (2010, August 2). *Sirajuddin Haqqani*. FBI. <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorinfo/sirajuddin-haqqani>
- Fujita, H. (2003). INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW: “WAR ON TERROR” IN AFGHANISTAN. *ISIL Year Book of International Humanitarian and Refugee*, 59(3), 59–82.
- Geib, R., & Siegrist, M. (2011, March 1). *Has the armed conflict in Afghanistan affected the rules on the conduct of hostilities?*. International Review of the Red Cross. <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/has-armed-conflict-afghanistan-affected-rules-conduct-hostilities>
- Ghufran, N. (2001). The Taliban and the Civil War Entanglement in Afghanistan. *Asian Survey*, 41(3), 462–487. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2001.41.3.462>
- Gibbons-neff, T., Hassan, S., & Khapalwak, R. (2021, October 23). *Taliban honor suicide bombers' “sacrifices” in bid to rewrite history*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/23/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-suicide-bombers.html>

- Goodson, L. P. (2001). Perverting Islam: Taliban social policy toward women. *Central Asian Survey*, 20(4), 415–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930120104618>
- Greenwood, C. (2002). International law and the ‘war against terrorism.’ *International Affairs*, 78(2), 301–317.
- Henckaerts, J.-M., & Doswald-Beck, L. (2005). *Customary international humanitarian law*. International Committee of the Red Cross. <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/customary-international-humanitarian-law-i-icrc-eng.pdf>
- The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*. Human Rights Watch. (2007, March 28). <http://pantheon.hrw.org/reports/2007/afghanistan0407/>
- Insurgent Abuses Against Afghan Civilians*. ICC Legal Tools. (2008). <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/b961fc/>
- Johnson, T. H. (2008). The Taliban insurgency and an analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters). *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 18(3), 317–344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310701674176>
- Johnson, T. H., & Mason, M. C. (2007). Understanding the Taliban and insurgency in Afghanistan. *Orbis*, 51(1), 71–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2006.10.006>
- Kawka, W. J. (2020). Legality of the use of improvised explosive devices in armed conflicts. *BELLONA QUART*, 700(1), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0014.0214>
- King, A. (2022). Why did the Taliban win? *Armed Forces & Society*, 49(4), 923–938. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327x221096702>
- Leisner, K. (2022). Prioritizing the Taliban at the ICC: Is the Court Able to Curb Political Prosecutions? *Maryland Journal of International Law*, 37, 93–121.
- Martin, S. (2021). Explaining suicide bombings. *Theories of Terrorism*, 172–198. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003026303-9>
- Modebadze, V. (2022). Afghanistan under Taliban: A new regime poses a threat to international stability. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, Institute for Research and European Studies - Bitola*, 8(1), 277–291. <https://doi.org/10.47305/jlia2281277m>
- Murphy, C. (2023). Accountability for violations of the laws of armed conflict: Domestic first, international second. *Mind*, 132(528), 952–958. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzad024>
- Norton-Taylor, R. (2010, February 17). *Taliban using human shields, says Afghan Army general*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/17/taliban-human-shields>

- Paust, J. J. (2003). War and Enemy Status After 9/11: Attacks on the Laws of War. *Yale Journal of International Law*, 28(2), 325–336.
- Quénivet, N. (2010). The “War on Terror” and the Principle of Distinction in International Humanitarian Law. *ACDI Anuario Colombiano de Derecho Internacional (Colombian Yearbook of International Law)*, 3(Special Issue), 155–186.
- Rahim, N., & Zucchini, D. (2019, May 22). *Attacks on girls’ schools on the rise as Taliban make gains*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/21/world/asia/taliban-girls-schools.html>
- Safi, M., & Janjua, H. (2018, January 22). *Kabul hotel attack: Guests “sprayed with bullets as they ran.”* The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/21/kabul-hotel-attack-guests-sprayed-bullets-terror-afghanistan>
- Samim, S. (2022, August 20). *The cost of victory: How the Taleban used ieds to win the war, despite the misgivings of some*. Afghanistan Analysts Network - English. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/war-and-peace/the-cost-of-victory-how-the-taleban-used-ieds-to-win-the-war-despite-the-misgivings-of-some/>
- Sassòli, M. (2004). Use and Abuse of the Laws of War In the 'War on Terrorism'. *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice*, 22(2), 195–222.
- Saul, B. (2014). Terrorism and international humanitarian law. *Research Handbook on International Law and Terrorism*, 192–209. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9780857938817.00021>
- Schaack, B. V. (2017). HUMAN SHIELDS: COMPLEMENTARY DUTIES UNDER IHL. *AJIL Unbound*, 110, 317–322. <https://doi.org/10.1017/aju.2016.5>
- Schmitt, M. N. (2009). Human Shields in International Humanitarian Law. *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, 47(2), 292–338.
- Stephens, D. (2015). Accountability for violations of the Law of Armed Conflict and the question of the efficacy of International Criminal Law in ameliorating violence in armed conflict. In *Accountability for Violations of International Humanitarian Law* (pp. 179–197). essay, Routledge.
- Swiney, G. (2005). Saving Lives: The Principle of Distinction and the Realities of Modern War. *International Lawyer (ABA)*, 39, 733–758.
- Sánchez Frías, A. (2020). Bringing terrorists to justice in the context of armed conflict: Interaction between international humanitarian law and the UN conventions against terrorism. *Israel Law Review*, 53(1), 71–99. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021223719000220>

- The Washington Times. (2009, July 2). *Exclusive: Taliban buying children for suicide bombers*. The Washington Times. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/02/taliban-buying-children-to-serve-as-suicide-bomber/>
- Wijenayake, V. (2022, January 1). *Suicide attacks and international humanitarian law: A study of culturally plural agency in combatant deaths*. McGill University. <https://escholarship.mcgill.ca/concern/theses/n583z118q>
- 2009 (صدای امریکا, July 19). *Taliban attack a hospital in eastern Afghanistan - حمله نمودند طالبان بر یک شفاخانه* - در شرق افغانستان. Voice of America - صدای امریکا. <https://www.darivoa.com/a/a-48-2009-08-26-voa2-94169624/1434798.html>

Examining the relationship between mild circadian disruption and spatial navigation using the Morris water maze

Allison K. Yang¹, Michael C. Antle^{1,2}

¹Department of Psychology, University of Calgary

²Hotchkiss Brain Institute, University of Calgary

Abstract

Prolonged disruption to circadian rhythms in humans have been observed to result in both physical and mental health disorders which has been mirrored in rodent models. Spatial navigation is a key cognitive function that is reduced following sleep deprivation. Previous research suggests extreme alterations to sleep decrease spatial learning and memory, however these manipulations do not reflect nuanced circadian misalignments experienced by humans, such sleep phase disorders or social jet lag. The current study used a 22.75 h light-dark (LD) cycle to observe effects of mild disruption on spatial navigation using the Morris Water Maze task. Both short cycle mice and control mice exhibited comparable learning effects over training days. No significant between-group differences in active swim speed were observed ($t(950) = 1.113, p = .133$). During the probe trial, short cycle mice spent more time in the adjacent quadrant compared to controls ($t(46) = -1.884, p = .033$).

Introduction

Circadian rhythms are ubiquitous, biological processes that govern the behaviour and physiology of organisms, persisting independently of external cues (Cox & Takahashi, 2019). Slight variations exist in the human circadian clock, with most adults (>18 years) having a freerunning cycle falling between 23.76 to 24.63h (Crowley & Eastman, 2018). Light serves as the primary cue for entraining circadian rhythms in humans, synchronising internal clocks to the external environment. However, exposure to light during sleep-phases can lead to desynchronisation of the circadian cycle resulting in impairments to physiological and behavioural processes (Duffy & Wright, 2005). Understanding how circadian rhythms impact cognitive abilities is essential for addressing broader implications of rhythm disruptions in health and performance.

Disruptions to circadian rhythms have been linked to numerous negative health outcomes including increased risk of poor cardiovascular health, cancer, and mental health disorders (Reinganum & Thomas, 2023; Samanta & Ali, 2022; Siddique et al., 2022). The effects are evident within populations who experience desynchronised circadian cycles such as in cases of shiftwork, insomnia, chronic jet lag (Siddique et al., 2022). Naturally occurring disruptions, such as sleep phase disorders, are observed in individuals with a delay or advancement of 2 or more hours in their circadian cycle leading to circadian misalignments and associated negative health outcomes (Reid & Zee, 2011). Similar mild patterns of disruptions can also be observed in individuals experiencing social jet lag, where the individual's circadian rhythm is not aligned with their imposed social schedule which leads to similar health risks (Lotti et al., 2021; Mendoza, 2019; Taillard et al., 2021).

Proper alignment of circadian rhythms is critical for cognitive functions, particularly learning and memory as these rhythms influence the consolidation of new memories, maintenance of synapses, and neuronal plasticity (Petzka et al., 2021; Tononi & Cirelli, 2014; Wang et al., 2011). Following disruptions to the circadian cycle, executive functions are significantly impaired with studies highlighting reduced processing speed and working memory in individuals experiencing a poor rest-to-wake ratio (Leahy et al., 2024). Chronic shift-workers have also demonstrated deficits in sustained attention and information processing speed compared to the general population, which is similarly observed in individuals experiencing chronic and social jet lag as well as sleep phase disorders (Chellappa et al., 2019; Fan Nils Yang et al., 2023; Horsey et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2023). However, human data on these effects are often confounded by demographic variables such as socio-economic status (SES), diet, and substance use. These confounding variables make it difficult to determine how much of a deficit in cognition is the result of a circadian disruption (Gu et al., 2010).

Limitations of human populations highlight the value of animal models, which provide a controlled environment for studying the effects of circadian disruptions using altered light-dark cycles (LD cycle), or T-cycles, to observe behavioural and physiological changes. Disruptions to circadian rhythms in rodent models are associated with an array of physical and behavioural changes that mimic those seen in human populations. In wild-type mouse models, entrainment of circadian clocks have been observed to occur between T22 to T26 while desynchronisation occurred in cycles shorter than T21 or longer than T27 (Casiraghi et al., 2012; Hasan et al., 2018; Ouk et al., 2019). In mouse models of severe disruptions mice display decreased survival rates, higher anxiety levels, and lower hippocampal neurogenesis (Acosta et al., 2023; Davidson et al.,

2006). These findings underscore the utility of animal models and provide insights that are difficult to obtain from human data alone.

Despite significant research in both human populations and animal models on physiological and executive changes related to circadian disruption, spatial navigation is commonly overlooked. Spatial navigation is a hippocampal-dependent process essential for locating and recalling environments and vital in professions that demand high spatial cognition, such as taxi-drivers and pilots who have exhibited higher spatial navigation performance (Eichenbaum, 2017; Maguire et al., 2000; Sutton et al., 2014). Behaviourally, disrupting daily rhythms through sleep deprivation has been found to hinder the consolidation of spatial memories, resulting in poorer performance on spatial wayfinding tasks (Ferrara et al., 2008).

In the context of spatial navigation, animal models offer a controlled environment allowing for the investigation of the effect of circadian disruptions on spatial navigation, avoiding the confounding variables seen in human studies as mentioned previously. The Morris water maze (MWM) is commonly used to assess spatial memory and learning in rodent models, proving to be a reliable measure strongly correlated with hippocampal synaptic plasticity (Biessels et al., 1998; Vorhees & Williams, 2006). The task involves a large pool with a concealed platform in one quadrant. To assess spatial learning and navigation, the platform remains in one quadrant of the pool; however, when measuring learning and plasticity, the platform is moved to different quadrants of the pool daily, requiring animals to adapt. Mice in severely manipulated LD-cycles, such as chronic shift-work models, demonstrated markedly poorer performance and adaptability on this task (Karatsoreos et al., 2011).

While previous research has explored the effects of severe disruptions of the circadian cycle on spatial learning and memory, these disruptions are unrealistic and have limited external validity. Extreme alterations to the circadian cycle, such as complete desynchronization or highly unnatural light-dark schedules, do not accurately reflect the more nuanced circadian misalignments commonly experienced by humans, such as those caused by sleep phase disorders or social jet lag. The aim of the current study is to explore the relationship between circadian misalignment and spatial navigation in wild-type mice experiencing a mild disruption. We hypothesised that mice housed in the disrupted LD cycle would demonstrate poorer spatial memory on the MWM task which would involve a higher latency to platform time, and increased thigmotaxis (circling the edge of the pool). This study will provide insight into how subtle circadian shifts affect spatial learning and memory, particularly in more common disruptions such as sleep phase disorders and social jet lag.

Materials and Methods

Animals

Mice were bred using C57BL/6J mice housed in the Life and Environmental Sciences Animal Resource Centre (LESARC) at the University of Calgary. Mice were bred in a 24 h LD cycle ($n = 24$) or a 22.75 h LD cycle ($n = 24$). Mice were weaned at 20 days (± 2 days) and housed with same-sex littermates in the LD cycle they were born in. Animals were provided food and water *ad libitum* and cage changes were performed weekly in accordance with the Canadian Council of Animal Care Guidelines. All procedures performed were approved by the Life and Environmental Sciences Animal Care Committee at the University of Calgary (protocol number AC22-0202).

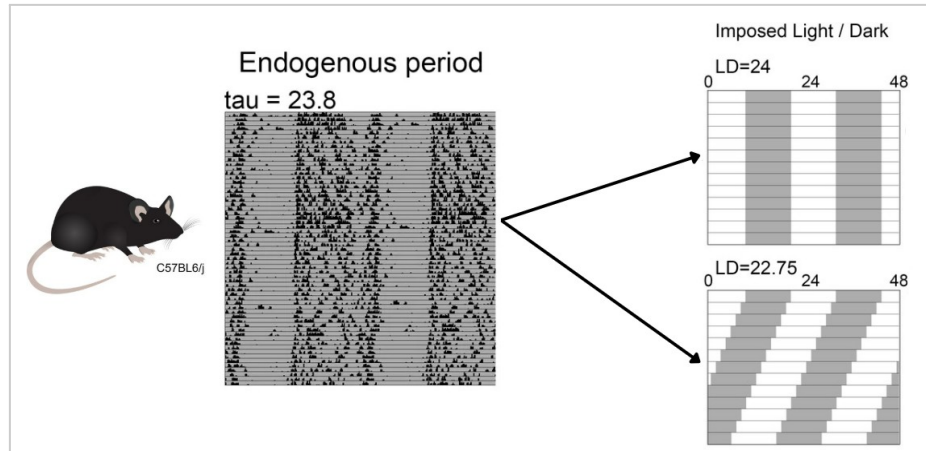


Figure 1. Actograms of C57/BL6 Mice and Imposed LD Cycles.

Actogram depicting the freerunning period of the C57/BL6 mouse with a tau of 23.8 (left) along with the imposed 24-hour LD control cycle (top right) and the imposed 22.75 LD disrupted cycle (bottom right).

Behaviour

The Morris water maze (MWM) task was used to assess behavioural responses to circadian disruptions related to spatial navigation and memory. The maze consists of a pool (120 cm in diameter) filled with water made opaque using non-toxic white paint, maintained between 23 to 26°C. The pool was divided into four equal imaginary quadrants (NE, NW, SE, SW), along with three annular zones (centre, middle, and outside). Assorted visual cues were placed around the room as distal cues to facilitate navigation.

Mice underwent a five-day training phase with a transparent platform submerged in the NE quadrant 1 cm below the surface of the water (Figure 2). Mice were released randomly from each quadrant during each training day, and completed the task a total of 20 times during the training period. Mice that failed to locate the platform within 60 seconds were guided to it and

allowed to rest on the platform for 10-15 seconds. Inter-trial intervals lasted a minimum of 13 minutes to prevent hypothermia as the animals performed multiple trials within a single session. During training, path length time spent in the four quadrants and annular zones was measured along with latency, heading angle, swim speed, and floating time.

Spatial memory retention was assessed during the probe trial conducted on the sixth day, for which the platform was removed from the pool. Mice were allowed to swim freely for 60 seconds. Similar variables were measured during the training period, with the addition of crossings over the platform location. MWM SOP was from the University of Calgary's Animal Care Unit.

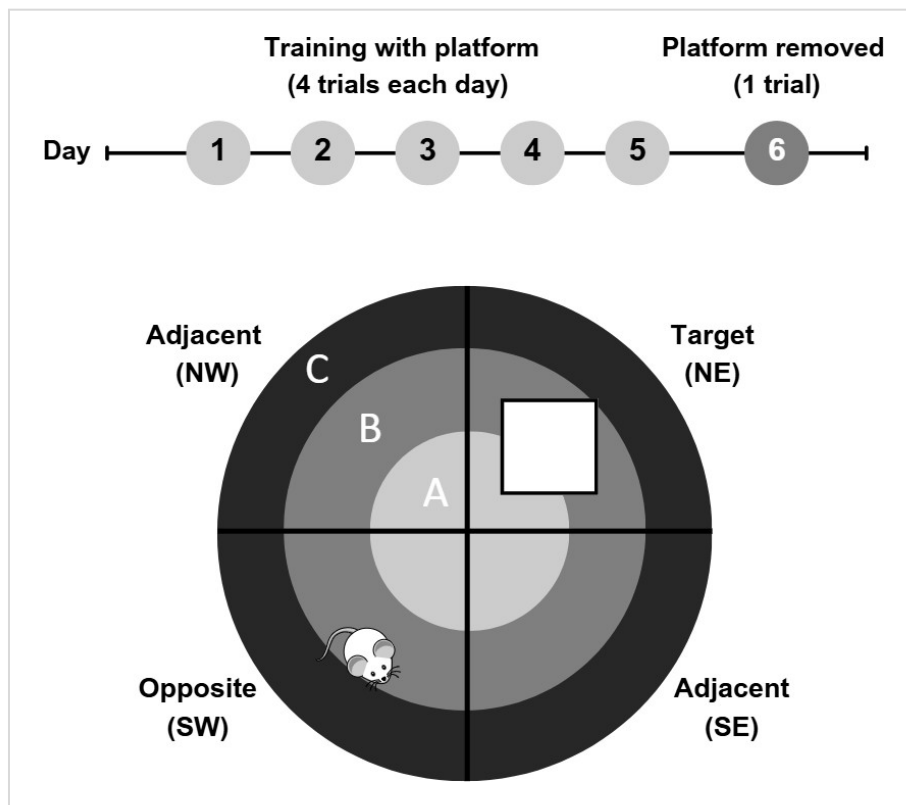


Figure 2. Timeline of Training and Probe Trial using the MWM Water Maze.

MWM training took course over five days, with four trials each day. Following training,

mice participated in a probe trial where the platform was removed. The pool was divided into four equal quadrants and three annular zones for analysis.

All trials were recorded with the software Any-Maze 2020 which measured all previously mentioned variables. Data was analysed using SPSS (version 28) and independent T-tests were used to identify significant between-group differences, repeated measures ANOVA was used to assess learning effects during training day, and multiple regression including correlations and ANOVA analyses were used to identify potential interactions between groups and sex.

Results

Spatial Navigation and Memory Performance During Training Period

Over the training period, both short LD cycle mice and control mice exhibited comparable learning effects over the course of the training days as evidenced by similar latency reduction (Figure 2, top). The two groups did not differ significantly in the amount of time spent in the target quadrant (NE) during training days ($t(942.677) = 0.011, p < .496$) (Figure 2, middle). LD cycle had a significant effect on the amount of time mice spent in the annular zones of the pool (centre, middle, and outer rings of the pool). Short LD cycle mice spent increased amounts of time in the centre ($t(937.543) = -2.555, p = .005$) and middle ($t(950) = 3.552, p < .001$) annular zones, while control mice spent significantly more time in the outer annular zone ($t(939.619) = 3.549, p < .001$) (Figure 2, bottom). Differences in average speed trend towards significant between groups as controls swam faster on average compared to disrupted mice ($t(938.277) = 1.608, p = .054$), however no significant between-group differences in active swim speed were observed ($t(950) = 1.113, p = .133$).

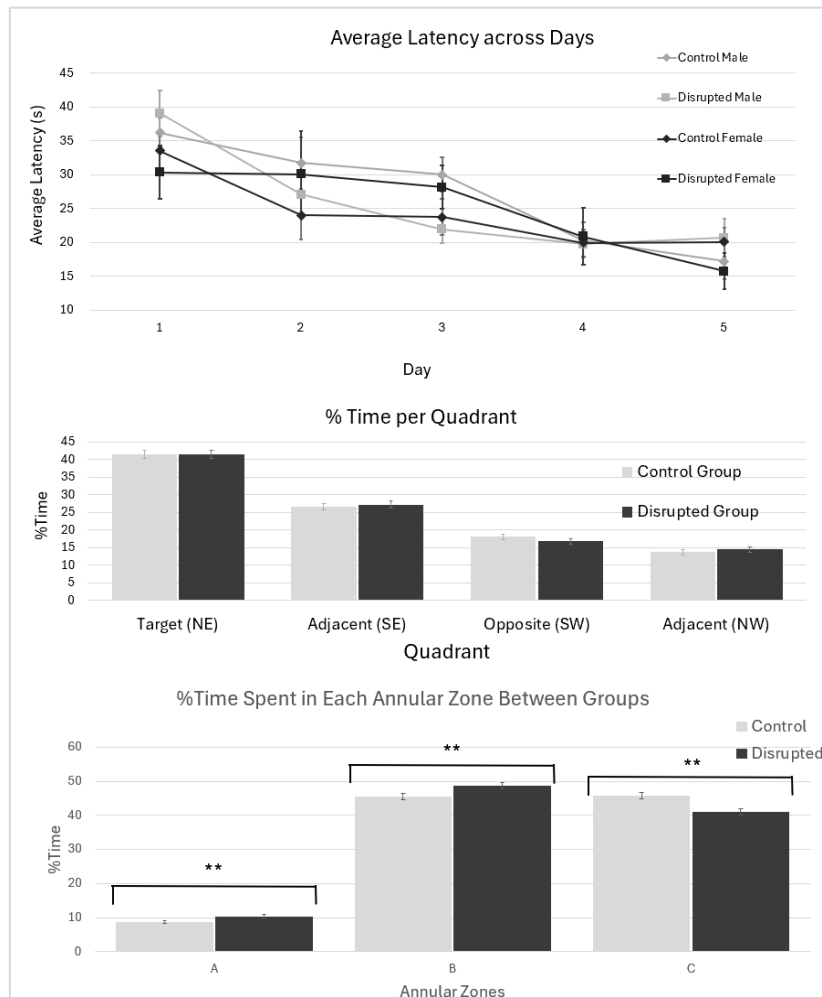


Figure 3. Latency to Platform, %Time Spent in Quadrants, and %Time in Annular Zones During Training Between Experimental Groups and Sexes.

Graphs show (top) average latency (s) to the target platform across five training days, (middle) the percentage of time spent in each quadrant averaged across training days, and (bottom) the percentage of time spent in the annular zones averaged across days between experimental groups. Error bars represent the standard error of the mean. Significant differences between groups (**) indicate $p < .01$. $N=24$ per group ($n_{Female} = 19$, $n_{Male} = 29$)

Spatial Navigation and Memory Performance Probe Trial Performance

During the probe trial, short LD cycle mice spent significantly more time in the adjacent

SE quadrant compared to controls ($t(46) = -1.884, p = .033$) (Figure 3). Although disrupted mice spent less time in the target quadrant as the control mice, this difference did not reach significance ($t(46) = 1.553, p = .064$).

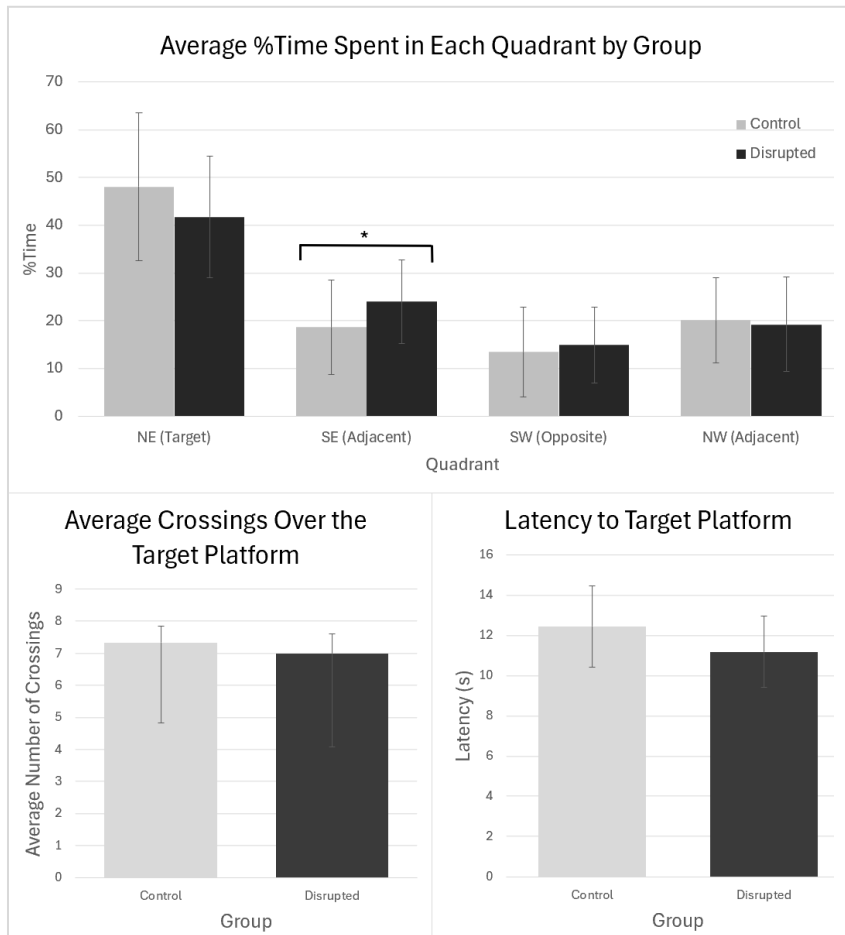


Figure 4. Average %Time in Each Quadrant, Crossings, And Latency to Target During Probe Trial

The top graph depicts the average percentage of time animals spent in each quadrant during the 60-second probe trial. Error bars represent standard deviation. The difference between groups was significant in the SE quadrant (*) at $p < .05$. Lower graphs represent the number of crossings over the target region (bottom left) and latency to the target platform (bottom right) between groups. Error bars for bottom graphs represent the standard error of the mean. $N = 24$ per group.

Sex Differences in Spatial Navigation and Memory Performance

Significant differences in performance in regards to sex ($n_{female} = 19$, $n_{male} = 29$) were observed during the training period but not during the probe trial. Female mice exhibited longer path lengths of 0.5 meters across each trial compared to males ($t(707.299) = 2.192$, $p = .014$), however females also demonstrated significantly higher swim speed ($t(950) = 9.503$, $p < .001$) resulting in a similar latency to the platform during training ($t(950) = -1.354$, $p = .088$). Additionally, female mice spent more time in the outer ring of the pool ($t(950) = -3.561$, $p < .001$) while males spent more time in the middle ring of the pool ($t(950) = 2.971$, $p = .002$). No significant interaction effects between LD cycle and sex were found ($F(3,948) = 9.079$, $p = .4366$).

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to investigate the effect of a mild circadian disruption (T22.75) on learning and memory in mice using the MWM task. Our findings suggest that being raised on a T22.75 circadian cycle does not significantly alter spatial memory performance. Notably, latency to find the platform did not differ during the training period between groups, nor did the number of crosses over the target platform during the probe trial. However, differences in swim speed between disrupted and control groups approached significance, with control mice swimming slightly faster compared to disrupted mice during the training period. Additionally, during the probe trial, control mice spent more time in the target quadrant compared to their disrupted counterparts, with the associated p -value trending towards significance.

When examining existing research using stronger manipulations of the circadian cycle, similar results can be observed. In a study conducted by Ameen et al. (2022), an 8 h advance every second day was employed in mice from the day of birth to weaning. Mice exposed to this

disruption experienced slower learning effects, requiring more time to locate the target platform, and demonstrated a faster swim speed compared to control mice during training on the task. A similar study, using a more moderate disruption conducted by Deibel and Al. (2022) exposed rats to a disrupted cycle of T21 for a period of 6 days before returning to a regular T24 cycle. They observed that animals who had been exposed to a disruption in their LD cycle spent significantly less time in the target quadrant during the probe trial, indicating poorer performance. Rats in this study were unable to entrain to their shortened LD cycle, aligning with previous research showing that forced desynchronisation occurs below T22 (Schwartz et al., 2009). As opposed to these more extreme forms of circadian disruption, our mild paradigm did not elicit the same deficits. It is worth noting that in both studies, groups did not differ significantly in time spent in the target quadrant during training, consistent with the results of our study. This indicates that the lack of significant differences may reflect a true absence of group-level effects, supporting the validity of our approach.

During the training period of our study, we did not observe significant differences in latency between groups, reflecting the study conducted by Deibel et. al (2022) which used a moderate disruption of 3 hours, however differing from the study conducted by Ameen et al. (2024) which used a severe 8 hour disruption. This suggests that the strength of disruption significantly affects learning behaviours in rodent models. In contrast to results reported by Ameen et al. (2024), which demonstrated that disrupted mice swam faster than controls, differences in active swim speed in our study were not significant. Similarly, the difference in time spent in the target quadrant during the probe trial was not statistically significant, contrary to existing literature, however, results are trending towards significance indicating that greater circadian disruption may increase the between group differences of this variable. Additionally,

previous research suggests that mice are capable of entraining to cycles of T22 to T26, suggesting that entrainment may mitigate spatial memory differences between groups (Casiraghi et al.).

Differences in time spent in the annular zones of the pool were significant, as disrupted mice spent greater amounts of time in the centre and middle of the pool compared to control mice by the end of the training period. Existing literature suggests that increased time spent around the walls of the pool (thigmotaxis) is an indicator of stress; however, the absence of significant differences in latency during training and platform cross-overs during the probe trial suggests that overall search pattern was not significantly different between groups (Higaki et al., 2018). A pronounced distinction of our study is that mice were maintained in their respective LD cycles from gestation without exposure to any phase shifts or alternative cycles. This consistency in circadian disruption may play a role in reducing the impact of a disruption on spatial learning and memory. Further research would be needed to fully understand this relationship.

Latency was not significantly different between sexes, however, females demonstrated a significantly longer path length compared to males, along with a faster swim speed during the training period. These differences were no longer observed during the probe trial, suggesting that main effects of sex were not significant in acquisition of the task. Differences in sex observed during the training period align with existing literature, suggesting that females generally tend to perform worse compared to male mice on the MWM task and swim faster (Cimadevilla et al., 1990; Fritz et al., 2017). Literature examining sex differences on spatial tasks generally suggests that male rodents outperform females, however in studies that examine effects of acute stress or social environments on spatial learning, female rodents outperform males (Gresack & Frick, 2003; Lipatova et al., 2018; Mifflin et al., 2021). Generally, C57/BL6 mice have demonstrated

some baseline sex differences during the training period of the MWM task and similar performances during probe trials, reflective of our current findings (Melgar-Locatelli et al., 2023).

Despite slight differences in performance between sexes in the current study, no group and sex interactions were present, indicating that inclusion of both sexes of mice does not lead to a relevant increase in data variability. Future studies should continue to investigate the effects of sex differences on spatial tasks as these variables appear to interact with environmental and task conditions.

Study Limitations

The MWM, despite robust assessment of spatial performance, is an inherently stressful task due to the immersion of rodents in water and the need for escape. As we used a very mild disruption, potential significant effects may have been confounded by the stress experienced from the task itself. Previous research has found that following exposure to a water maze, animals will experience a significant rise in corticosterone levels in both experimental and control groups (Harrison et al., 2009). Additionally, both chronic and acute stress, resulting from environmental factors, or participation in a task have been related with decreased spatial memory, especially in the absence of spatial cues, such as in tasks like the MWM (Akan et al., 2023; Kleen et al., 2006). Alternative behavioural paradigms, such as the Barnes Maze and Radial Arm Maze may offer further insights while mitigating stress associated with a swimming task.

Despite the lack of significant between-group differences in latency during the MWM, changes to the LD cycle have been associated with variability in adult neurogenesis within the hippocampus of rodent models (Bahiru & Bittman, 2023). The hippocampus is highly

implicated in spatial learning and memory, as demonstrated by studies finding that rodents with lesioned or damaged hippocampal formations demonstrate decreased performance on spatial tasks compared to healthy controls (Safari et al., 2021). Additionally, previous studies examining models of shift work and jet lag on rodent models have discovered significantly reduced adult neurogenesis of up to 50% (Bahiru & Bittman, 2023; Gibson et al., 2010). To comprehensively examine the effects of a mild disruption to the LD cycle from gestation, it may be pertinent to examine potential differences in the proliferation and survival of neurons of mice in our control and disrupted LD cycles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that raising mice on a T22.75 LD cycle did not significantly impair their spatial learning or memory, as assessed with the Morris water maze task. Previous research finds that significant disruptions to the LD cycle affect spatial memory and performance on the MWM task. Our findings indicate that differences in time spent in the target quadrant during the probe trial trends towards significance. Sex differences were observed during training, which aligned with existing research on the MWM task. Non-significant differences in performance on the MWM task indicate that our mild circadian disruption was not enough to elicit a significant change in spatial memory. Findings from our study suggest that individuals experiencing sleep phase disorders or social jet lag may not exhibit significant impairments in spatial learning and memory compared to the general population. Future research should explore the impact of the timing of circadian disruptions and investigate the potential mitigating role of entrainment in determining the extent of circadian disruption effects on spatial learning and memory.

References

- Acosta, J., Crespo, M. T., Plano, S. A., Golombek, D. A., Chiesa, J. J., & Agostino, P. V. (2023). Chronic jet lag reduces motivation and affects other mood-related behaviors in male mice. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2023.1225134>
- Akan, O., Bierbrauer, A., Axmacher, N., & Wolf, O. T. (2023). Acute stress impairs visual path integration. *Neurobiology of Stress*, 26, 100561. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ynstr.2023.100561>
- Ameen, R. W., Warshawski, A., Fu, L., & Antle, M. C. (2022). Early life circadian rhythm disruption in mice alters brain and behavior in adulthood. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 7366. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-11335-0>
- Bahiru, M. S., & Bittman, E. L. (2023). Adult neurogenesis is altered by circadian phase shifts and the duper mutation in female syrian hamsters. *Eneuro*, 10(3), ENEURO.0359-22.2023. <https://doi.org/10.1523/eneuro.0359-22.2023>
- Biessels, G.-J., Kamal, A., Urban, I. J. A., Spruijt, B. M., Erkelens, D. Willem., & Gispen, W. H. (1998). Water maze learning and hippocampal synaptic plasticity in streptozotocin-diabetic rats: Effects of insulin treatment. *Brain Research*, 800(1), 125–135. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0006-8993\(98\)00510-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0006-8993(98)00510-1)
- Casiraghi, L. P., Oda, G. A., Chiesa, J. J., Friesen, W. O., & Golombek, D. A. (2012). Forced desynchronization of activity rhythms in a model of chronic jet lag in mice. *Journal of Biological Rhythms*, 27(1), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0748730411429447>
- Chellappa, S. L., Morris, C. J., & Scheer, F. A. J. L. (2019). Effects of circadian misalignment on cognition in chronic shift workers. *Scientific Reports*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-36762-w>

- Cimadevilla, J. M., Conejo, N. M., Miranda, R. M., & Arias, J. L. (1990). Sex differences in the Morris water maze in young rats: temporal dimensions. *Cimadevilla, Fenton and Bures*, 16(4), 611–614. <https://www.psicothema.com/pdf/3040.pdf>
- Cox, K. H., & Takahashi, J. (2019). Circadian clock genes and the transcriptional architecture of the clock mechanism. *Journal of Molecular Endocrinology*, 63(4). <https://doi.org/10.1530/jme-19-0153>
- Crowley, S. J., & Eastman, C. I. (2018). Free-running circadian period in adolescents and adults. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 27(5), e12678. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsr.12678>
- Davidson, A., Sellix, M., Daniel, J., Yamazaki, S., Menaker, M., & Block, G. (2006). Chronic jet-lag increases mortality in aged mice. *Current Biology : CB*, 16(21), R914–R916. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2006.09.058>
- Deibel, S. H., Higdon, S., Cassell, T. T. S., House-Denine, M. L., Giberson, E., Webb, I. C., & Thorpe, C. M. (2022). Impaired Morris water task retention following T21 light dark cycle exposure is not due to reduced hippocampal c-FOS expression. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2022.1025388>
- Duffy, J. F., & Wright, K. P. (2005). Entrainment of the human circadian system by light. *Journal of Biological Rhythms*, 20(4), 326–338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0748730405277983>
- Eichenbaum, H. (2017). The role of the hippocampus in navigation is memory. *Journal of Neurophysiology*, 117(4), 1785–1796. <https://doi.org/10.1152/jn.00005.2017>
- Fan Nils Yang, Picchioni, D., & Duyn, J. H. (2023). Effects of sleep-corrected social jetlag on measures of mental health, cognitive ability, and brain functional connectivity in early adolescence. *SLEEP*, 46(12). <https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/zsad259>

- Ferrara, M., Iaria, G., Tempesta, D., Curcio, G., Moroni, F., Marzano, C., De Gennaro, L., & Pacitti, C. (2008). Sleep to find your way: The role of sleep in the consolidation of memory for navigation in humans. *Hippocampus*, 18(8), 844–851.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hipo.20444>
- Fritz, A.-K., Amrein, I., & Wolfer, D. P. (2017). Similar reliability and equivalent performance of female and male mice in the open field and water-maze place navigation task. *American Journal of Medical Genetics. Part C, Seminars in Medical Genetics*, 175(3), 380–391.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ajmg.c.31565>
- Gawel, K., Gibula, E., Marszalek-Grabska, M., Filarowska, J., & Kotlinska, J. H. (2018). Assessment of spatial learning and memory in the Barnes maze task in rodents—methodological consideration. *Naunyn-Schmiedeberg's Archives of Pharmacology*, 392(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00210-018-1589-y>
- Gibson, E. M., Wang, C., Tjho, S., Khattar, N., & Kriegsfeld, L. J. (2010). Experimental “jet lag” inhibits adult neurogenesis and produces long-term cognitive deficits in female hamsters. *PLoS ONE*, 5(12), e15267. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0015267>
- Gresack, J. E., & Frick, K. M. (2003). Male mice exhibit better spatial working and reference memory than females in a water-escape radial arm maze task. *Brain Research*, 982(1), 98–107. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0006-8993\(03\)03000-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0006-8993(03)03000-2)
- Gu, D., Sautter, J., Pipkin, R., & Zeng, Y. (2010). Sociodemographic and health correlates of sleep quality and duration among very old chinese. *Sleep*, 33(5), 601–610.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/33.5.601>

- Harrison, F. E., Hosseini, A. H., & McDonald, M. P. (2009). Endogenous anxiety and stress responses in water maze and Barnes maze spatial memory tasks. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 198(1), 247–251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2008.10.015>
- Hasan, S., Foster, R. G., Vyazovskiy, V. V., & Peirson, S. N. (2018). Effects of circadian misalignment on sleep in mice. *Scientific Reports (Nature Publishing Group)*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-33480-1>
- Higaki, A., Mogi, M., Iwanami, J., Min, L.-J., Bai, H.-Y., Shan, B.-S., Kan-no, H., Ikeda, S., Higaki, J., & Horiuchi, M. (2018). Recognition of early stage thigmotaxis in Morris water maze test with convolutional neural network. *PLOS ONE*, 13(5), e0197003. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0197003>
- Horsey, E. A., Maletta, T., Turner, H., Cole, C., Lehmann, H., & Fournier, N. M. (2020). Chronic jet lag simulation decreases hippocampal neurogenesis and enhances depressive behaviors and cognitive deficits in adult male rats. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2019.00272>
- Karatsoreos, I. N., Bhagat, S., Bloss, E. B., Morrison, J. H., & McEwen, B. S. (2011). Disruption of circadian clocks has ramifications for metabolism, brain, and behavior. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(4), 1657–1662. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1018375108>
- Kleen, J. K., Sitomer, M. T., Killeen, P. R., & Conrad, C. D. (2006). Chronic stress impairs spatial memory and motivation for reward without disrupting motor ability and motivation to explore. *Behavioral Neuroscience*, 120(4), 842–851. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7044.120.4.842>

- Kohler, J., Mei, J., Banneke, S., Winter, Y., Endres, M., & Emmrich, J. V. (2022). Assessing spatial learning and memory in mice: Classic radial maze versus a new animal-friendly automated radial maze allowing free access and not requiring food deprivation. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2022.1013624>
- Leahy, S., Xiao, Q., Ho, C., & Figueiro, M. G. (2024). Associations between circadian alignment and cognitive functioning in a nationally representative sample of older adults. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-64309-9>
- Lipatova, O., Campolattaro, M. M., Dixon, D. C., & Durak, A. (2018). Sex differences and the role of acute stress in the open-field tower maze. *Physiology & Behavior*, 189, 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2018.02.046>
- Lotti, S., Pagliai, G., Colombini, B., Sofi, F., & Dinu, M. (2021). Chronotype differences in energy intake, cardiometabolic risk parameters, cancer and depression: A systematic review with meta-analysis of observational studies. *Advances in Nutrition*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/advances/nmab115>
- Maguire, E. A., Gadian, D. G., Johnsrude, I. S., Good, C. D., Ashburner, J., Frackowiak, R. S. J., & Frith, C. D. (2000). Navigation-related structural change in the hippocampi of taxi drivers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 97(8), 4398–4403. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.070039597>
- McGowan, N. M., & Coogan, A. N. (2013). Circadian and behavioural responses to shift work-like schedules of light/dark in the mouse. *Journal of Molecular Psychiatry*, 1(1), 7–7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2049-9256-1-7>
- Melgar-Locatelli, S., Gavito, A. L., Rivera, P., Rodríguez-Pérez, C., Castilla-Ortega, E., Castro-Zavala, A., & Mañas-Padilla, M. C. (2023). Sex-specific variations in spatial

- reference memory acquisition: Insights from a comprehensive behavioral test battery in C57BL/6JRj mice. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 459, 114806–114806.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2023.114806>
- Mendoza, J. (2019). Food intake and addictive-like eating behaviors: Time to think about the circadian clock(s). *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 106, 122–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2018.07.003>
- Mifflin, M. A., Winslow, W., Surendra, L., Tallino, S., Vural, A., & Velazquez, R. (2021). Sex differences in the IntelliCage and the Morris water maze in the APP/PS1 mouse model of amyloidosis. *Neurobiology of Aging*, 101, 130–140.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neurobiolaging.2021.01.018>
- Ouk, K., Aungier, J., Ware, M., & A. Jennifer Morton. (2019). Abnormal photic entrainment to phase-delaying stimuli in the R6/2 mouse model of huntington's disease, despite retinal responsiveness to light. *ENeuro*, 6(6), ENEURO.0088-19.2019.
<https://doi.org/10.1523/eneuro.0088-19.2019>
- Petzka, M., Charest, I., Balanos, G. M., & Staresina, B. P. (2021). Does sleep-dependent consolidation favour weak memories? *Cortex*, 134, 65–75.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2020.10.005>
- Reid, K. J., & Zee, P. C. (2011). Circadian rhythm sleep disorders. *Handbook of Clinical Neurology*, 99, 963–977. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-444-52007-4.00017-5>
- Reinganum, M. I., & Thomas, J. (2023). *Shift work hazards*. PubMed; StatPearls Publishing.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK589670/>
- Safari, S., Ahmadi, N., Mohammadkhani, R., Ghahremani, R., Khajvand-Abedeni, M., Shahidi, S., Komaki, A., Salehi, I., & Karimi, S. A. (2021). Sex differences in spatial learning and

memory and hippocampal long-term potentiation at perforant pathway-dentate gyrus (PP-DG) synapses in Wistar rats. *Behavioral and Brain Functions*, 17(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12993-021-00184-y>

Samanta, S., & Ali, S. A. (2022). Impact of circadian clock dysfunction on human health.

Exploration of Neuroscience, 4–30. <https://doi.org/10.37349/en.2022.00002>

Schwartz, M. D., Wotus, C., Liu, T., W. Otto Friesen, Jimo Borjigin, Oda, G. A., & de la Iglesia a, H. O. (2009). Dissociation of circadian and light inhibition of melatonin release through forced desynchronization in the rat. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 106(41), 17540–17545.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0906382106>

Siddique, R., Awan, F. M., Nabi, G., Khan, S., & Xue, M. (2022). Chronic jet lag-like conditions dysregulate molecular profiles of neurological disorders in nucleus accumbens and prefrontal cortex. *Frontiers in Neuroinformatics*, 16.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fninf.2022.1031448>

Sutton, J. E., Buset, M., & Keller, M. (2014). Navigation experience and mental representations of the environment: Do pilots build better cognitive maps? *PLoS ONE*, 9(3), e90058.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0090058>

Taillard, J., Sagaspe, P., Philip, P., & Bioulac, S. (2021). Sleep timing, chronotype and social jetlag: Impact on cognitive abilities and psychiatric disorders. *Biochemical*

Pharmacology, 191(114438), 114438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bcp.2021.114438>

Tononi, G., & Cirelli, C. (2014). Sleep and the price of plasticity: From synaptic and cellular homeostasis to memory consolidation and integration. *Neuron*, 81(1), 12–34.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2013.12.025>

- Vorhees, C. V., & Williams, M. T. (2006). Morris water maze: Procedures for assessing spatial and related forms of learning and memory. *Nature Protocols*, 1(2), 848–858.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/nprot.2006.116>
- Wang, G., Grone, B., Colas, D., Appelbaum, L., & Mourrain, P. (2011). Synaptic plasticity in sleep: Learning, homeostasis and disease. *Trends in Neurosciences*, 34(9), 452–463.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tins.2011.07.005>
- Yang, L., Xiao, X., Yu, L., Shen, Z., Luo, Y., Zhao, G., Dou, Z., Lin, W., Yang, J., Yang, L., & Yu, S. (2023). Neural mechanisms of working memory dysfunction in patients with chronic insomnia disorder. *Sleep Medicine*, 112, 151–158.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2023.10.014>
- Yavuz, E., Gahnstrom, C. J., Goodroe, S., Coutrot, A., Hornberger, M., Lazar, A. S., & Spiers, H. J. (2024). Shorter self-reported sleep duration is associated with worse virtual spatial navigation performance in men. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 4093.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-52662-8>

**Radicalism via the Online Sphere: Female Youth as Targets and Actors for the Islamic State
of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**

Amar, Uraib, 30077789

Dr. Michael Adorjan

Introduction

Youth are considered integral in the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Gerstel, 2015). For male youth, fighting for ISIS has been compared to playing “Call of Duty”, and internet propaganda heavily revolves around a militarisation of masculinity (Seedat, 2016). Propaganda targeting female youth, on the other hand, revolves around morality, in which recruiters emphasize notions of righteousness, Islamic fulfillment, and communal preservation (Gerstel, 2015).

This essay will advance upon this anomaly, analysing female youth’s manifestation of and engagement in extremism disseminated through media channels. Firstly, this essay will examine the ideological motifs present within online propaganda, and subsequent internalization of such motifs. This essay will discuss certain social media platforms that ISIS utilize in the recruitment of female youth, and will examine how “ISIS fangirls,” engage with this social media propaganda. Finally, Jean Baudrillard’s analysis in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2013) will be abstracted from the September 11, 2001, terror attacks and applied towards two brief case studies. The first will be of Aqsa Mahmood, an online recruiter, and the second will be of Hoda Muthana, a girl who fled the United States to join ISIS after interacting with online propaganda.

Narratives of Marriage, Family, and Gender in Propaganda

ISIS relies on the recruitment of female youth through media channels as female youth bring forth ideological cohesion within ISIS terror frameworks (Gerstel, 2015). In fact, it has been argued that ISIS would cease to exist without the influx of female youth, as female youth are essential in birthing the next generation of ISIS soldiers and caregivers (Spencer, 2016).

Researchers have gone as far to suggest that young girls are the “glue” that holds ISIS together (Ben-Israel, 2018).

A key aspect of ISIS ideology is the creation and maintenance of an *Ummah* (united Muslim community) and *Caliphate* (Islamic State); these concepts are heavily centred around family (Gerstel, 2015). ISIS takes advantage of female youth through the manipulation of these Islamic notions of family and gender, emphasizing in their propaganda themes of sisterhood, belonging, and the role of mothers and marriage (Gerstel, 2015). Familial notions propagandized by ISIS online depict girls as fulfilling support duties, which involves preparing food, gathering supplies, providing medical treatment, and maintaining camps (Darden, 2019).

In their propaganda, ISIS employ cherry-picked examples of Islamic scripture to legitimize the potential role that female youth may occupy (Frissen et al, 2018). For instance, ISIS urge female youth to flee their homes and to submit to marriage before they turn seventeen (Spencer, 2016). The rationale for this is because ISIS argue that in Islam a woman should marry while they are youthful, with notions of purity, attractiveness, and fertility heavily emphasized in propaganda (Spencer, 2016). This is legitimized by Quranic verses suggesting that marriage is an essential structure in Islam, and by proclaiming that the Prophet Muhammad too had a child bride (Spencer, 2016).

Ideological narratives of family, marriage, and gender utilized by ISIS are frequently used themes in social media propaganda to groom and recruit female youth. ISIS relies upon social media in their recruitment strategy for a variety of reasons. Firstly, social media is difficult to regulate; while certain accounts and websites can be shut down, propaganda often resurfaces within hours (Gerstel, 2015). Secondly, ISIS can utilize the anonymity social media provides to their advantage; thirdly, social media encourages a limitless stream of content directly from

individuals or groups; social media has a lower barrier of access, in which propaganda is not constrained to a physical location, as one can stumble upon propaganda accidentally through clicking a link; and, finally, social media has been shown to be efficient in recruiting female youth to join ISIS ranks (Lieberman, 2017).

Internalization of Family, Marriage, and Gender Narratives

Female youth may internalize ISIS propaganda disseminated via social media channels for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to feelings of persecution, anger and sadness at a perceived lack of international justice, depression, familial financial comfortability, and social isolation (Ben-Israel, 2018). Female youth may want to break free from social norms present within patriarchal traditional Muslim systems, which may either be amplified or mitigated depending on family dynamics (Ben-Israel, 2016). Female youth who find themselves in these contexts may experience limited freedoms in offline settings due to cultural norms or family pressure, which in some instances can result in a lack of access to employment, education, and other social ties (European Commission Report, 2022).

Female youth may be inclined to join ISIS because online propaganda promises equality from an Islamic standpoint, in which both women and men are held in the same regard albeit while fulfilling different social roles (Ben-Israel, 2018). Bhatia (2015) furthers this by arguing that there has been a rise in female youth joining ISIS, which may stem from the desire to obtain self-empowerment, political recognition, and gender equality. Furthermore, the average age of female youth being recruited by ISIS online is decreasing (Ben-Israel, 2018). One possible explanation for this is because ISIS recruiters insist that they cannot send marriage proposals online, as doing so would be in contradiction with Islamic law and therefore be *haram* (unlawful); this leads to ISIS actively encouraging these young girls to join their ranks to

capitalize on their emotions (Khaleeli, 2014). Notions of sisterhood and respect are leveraged against young girls, in which feminist narratives are employed in rationalizing one's desire to flee a hypersexualized Western social climate (Petrou, 2015).

Social Media and Propaganda Dissemination: Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and TikTok

On Twitter ISIS rely on the reproduction of stereotypes in which hyper-masculine, patriarchal, and traditional roles are emphasized (European Commission Report, 2022). Accounts that target female youth in particular make sure to outline their beliefs and “their purpose”. For example, one ISIS recruiters' account based in Norway had a Twitter banner that read “Motherhood is my superpower”, and a personal biography that exclaimed “Women are the biological and sexual reservoir of a race, a people, and a genetic patrimony (European Commission, 2022).

Tumblr was once used as a primary means of providing practical instructions on how to get into Syria and showcased the various rewards awaiting female youth for marrying a “soldier of God” (Miranda, 2015). In 2013, the term *Jihad al-Nikah* appeared in circulation on Tumblr, which briefly translates to “love jihad”; the term was used in propaganda to urge female youth to become “comfort women” as to maintain the morale of fighters (Ben-Israel, 2018). Many recruiters utilize Tumblr to blog day-to-day events in ISIS camps in an attempt to normalize and encourage female youth to join their “Islamic lifestyle”. Grace “Khadijah” Dare, for instance, operated a blog that discussed cooking, caring for children, and Islamic dress; across her blog, the slogan “If I thought Islam was an oppressive religion, I would have left Islam” is plastered periodically (Ben-Israel, 2018).

Although now attracting a decreasing number of youths, Facebook was also once an essential platform in the propagation of ISIS extremism. In 2021, Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee, revealed that Facebook's algorithm actively encouraged teenagers in engaging with extremist beliefs through the interaction of potentially harmful content (Alter, 2021). Facebook's algorithm exploited and enabled the insecurities of youth, and in particular female youth, as some users were pushed towards polarizing online figures by Facebook's recommendation system after voicing their insecurities online (Zadrozny, 2021). Through Facebook groups or private chats, ISIS recruiters would create posts that seemed initially benign; certain posts discuss the need for female youth to be educated in self-defence, or the anti-refugee and anti-Islamic sentiments that exist in European politics (European Commission Report, 2022). After trust has been established between recruiters and female youth, posts and messaging tend to display clearer signs or themes of extremism. One notable image that was circulated among these communities and pushed further by Facebook's algorithm was a man and a woman, symbolizing family and marriage, making a "heart symbol" with their hands while jointly holding an assault rifle (European Commission Report, 2022).

TikTok is also an essential platform utilized by ISIS recruiters, as unlike Facebook, TikTok's main audience are teenagers. ISIS transmits extremist propaganda through TikTok's "for-you page", an algorithm similar in effect to how Facebook operates (Wells, 2019). In these videos fighters posed with guns, and women chanted that they were "Jihadist and proud" or that they were "Jihad Lovers"; scenes of torture, rape, and murder juxtapose colourful confetti, heart stickers, and emojis (Rakhman et al, 2024). Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and TikTok are not the only social media platforms employed by ISIS in targeting female youth; other platforms include Telegram, Reddit, ISIS operated websites, WhatsApp, Kik, Ask.FM, and even Amazon through

Amazon Drive (European Commission Report, 2022) and (Spencer, 2016) and (Weimann and Vellante, 2021).

ISIS – Fangirls on Tumblr

Nacos (2015) presents the research of Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl who together coined the term “para-social interaction” to denote the relationship between mass media personalities and respective audiences. In application to ISIS propaganda, Nacos (2015) argues that for the socially isolated, the media persona can become an object of love. Social media interactions between ISIS and female youth depict this relationship, in which many come to have an admiration for ISIS and jihadists.

These girls are referred to as “ISIS-fangirls”, and actively participate in the dissemination of propaganda on social media; in 2014 it was estimated that between 46,000 – 90,000 fangirl accounts existed on Twitter (Ben-Israel, 2018). Social theorists argue that this fangirling online is like celebrity fangirling in the West, in which female youth, particularly those from the ages of 14 to 16 years old, view ISIS as harboring the Brad Pitts or the Justin Biebers of the jihadi world (Ben-Israel, 2018).

Researchers also argue that these fangirls are not so different than from any other online subculture, in which feelings of marginalization in the real-world result in a hyper-fixation for an alternate reality offered by the internet (Ben-Israel, 2018). This marginalization may occur due to young Muslim girls becoming victims or feeling as though that they may be targeted in Islamophobic attacks, which may translate to lower levels of employment and disenfranchisement. Fangirls therefore instigate a compelling message: notions of *ummah*, identification, and a worldwide community become appealing online (Ben-Israel, 2018).

Fangirl Al-Amriki, for instance, hosts an Instagram account that went from criticizing ISIS to saying ISIS are the “true celebrities” that she would like to meet; on her Instagram stories Al-Amriki glamorizes terror attacks and posts Jihadi soldiers cuddling with kittens (Ben-Israel, 2018). According to her Ask.FM page, Al-Amriki has had many of her social media accounts deactivated; on these social media platforms, her personal biography usually states that she is a 19-year-old vegan who posts pictures of Islamist militants, usually with flowers and animals, and sometimes romantic poetry about jihad (Ben-Israel, 2018). The symbolism Al-Amriki employs within her fangirling is not out of the ordinary, as both fangirls and ISIS employ softer imagery when aiming propaganda at young girls (Ben-Israel, 2018). Other symbols in online propaganda include green birds to personify or reference *hadith* (teachings or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), lion cubs to symbolize future generations, and honeybees as a “gentle proof of creation” (Dearden, 2016) and (Ben-Israel, 2018).

Theoretical Analysis

Jean Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2013) argues that terrorism cannot exist, and does not exist, without the media; Baudrillard goes as far to say that terrorism is a “theatre of cruelty”. This theatre extends beyond regions confined to perpetual violence, conflict, and humiliation, and gives the warning that anybody may be an enemy. Through the media terrorism exists purely, allowing the terrorist organization to call upon their designation: to exist for the sake of terror (Baudrillard, 2013).

The cementing of the scenes that encapsulated the September 11, 2001, attacks is such an example: the videos of airplanes crashing into the twin towers; the images of people, reduced to mere specks against the crumbling infrastructure, falling to their death; and the emergence of conspiracy theories calling into question the United States security, the Hamburg Cell, and

Osama Bin-Laden became legitimized through media discourse. Such events existed for a brief moment in time and have since passed; yet such events persisted through limitless broadcasting. This allowed the terrorists to live indefinitely, within sociological, political, and psychological discourse; through photography, film, and art; through oral and written communication, and thus transforming the very notion of a suicide, an infliction of the self, into societal collapse. A “veiled criminality” is revealed, in which the terrorists’ secret weapon isn’t through sadistic violence, but rather through a ritualistic commodification of the terrorists’ body in which a symbolic exchange occurs in death for social death (Baudrillard, 2013).

Prior to the events of September 11, the actions, behaviours, and the individuals themselves were largely unknown to many, existing as though the reality of terror camps, of rape, of starvation, and of mass murder were in a different world, existing as a figment of our imagination. Through the media as Baudrillard (2013) insists, terrorism obtains a spirit, as broadcasting legitimizes violence and calls into question the West’s comfortability, privilege, and esteem to claim to us that the terrorist’s world is our world too. This forced subjugation to the terrorist’s reality came in collectives, through groups of individuals gathering around television screens in shock, unaware of what to do yet now fully aware that the figment was no longer such. The “images” of September 11, images we still see today, has become the “real”, existing indefinitely, embossed permanently into the conscious of globalized society and humanity (Baudrillard, 2013). The spirit of terrorism lingers, enabling a double meaning: as the essence of the terrorist’s task, and as the unforgettable remains of what occurred in the form of a poltergeist haunting the West through the media.

Baudrillard's The Spirit of Terrorism and ISIS Social Media Propaganda

Since September 11, media and technological landscapes have changed; the release of a cellphone with a built-in camera was taking the world by storm at that point (Mogg, 2024). Still, Baudrillard's analysis in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2013) can be abstracted to discuss ISIS propaganda strategies in targeting female youth on social media and online. Through smartphones, this spirit of terrorism has become atomized; instead of calling upon collectives as September 11 did, the terrorist's message is carefully articulated and circulated through social media channels, targeting female youth (Ben-Israel, 2018). As presented in the research, a key element in ISIS propaganda is the manipulation of Islamic values, in particular those revolving around marriage, family, and gender (Gerstel, 2015). The spirit therefore has shifted to encapsulate these values in propaganda, as Baudrillard suggests that "we would forgive them any massacre if it had a meaning...this is the moral axiom of good violence" (Baudrillard, 2013; p.18).

Case Study: Aqsa Mahmood

Aqsa Mahmood, a girl who fled the United Kingdom to join ISIS as a teenager back in 2015, is an ISIS recruiter who utilizes social media to push ISIS propaganda (Gerstel, 2015). Mahmood achieves this by reaching out to young girls on social media platforms, arguing that female youth have a duty to surrender themselves to jihad and to become "jihadi brides" (Gerstel, 2015). Mahmood at one point operated various Twitter accounts, with one having more than 2,000 followers (Zakaria, 2015). One notable tweet from Mahmood's twitter read

Our role is even more important as women in Islam, since if we don't have sisters with the correct *Aqeedah* (conviction) and understanding who are willing to sacrifice all their

desires and give up their families and lives in the West in order to make *Hijrah* (migration) and please Allah, then who will raise the next generation of Lions? (Zakaria, 2015, 1).

Mahmood was heavily active on Tumblr, in which she routinely professed to other users the extreme joy brought by beheading *Kafirs* (non-Muslims) (Ben-Israel, 2018). Mahmood played an essential role when it came to evaluating a young girl's potential as a wife. If deemed inferior by ISIS standards, Mahmood would recruit young girls as sex slaves, which was, of course, unbeknownst to them (Ben-Israel, 2018). These young girls, brought by the promise of marriage, would be forced into a sexual economy, exchanged between martyred soldiers as “gifts” (Seedat, 2016). Mahmood has been known, however, to also openly recruit female youth as “comfort women” to keep the morale of soldiers high (Ben-Israel, 2018).

In applying Baudrillard’s analysis to the case of Aqsa Mahmood, we see an amalgamation of ISIS ideological values administered through social media platforms under the guise of holiness, purity, and righteousness. Whether Mahmood acts through sadism or genuine Islamic intent is not part of the question; the ideologically charged media propaganda acts as the moral axiom that legitimizes terrorism, calling upon female youth to become part of the event (Baudrillard, 2013).

Algorithms also play an integral role in establishing the “image” as the “real”, as terrorist propaganda solely exists as a piece of information, or as an act, and does not have a source of movement on its own. While recruiters like Mahmood do exist, the dissemination of propaganda relies on an intrinsic failure in Western media to catapult a perverse circulation (Baudrillard, 2013). This is what Baudrillard (2013) refers to as the “automatic writing” of terrorism, in which terrorism can exist beyond direct action. Just as the September 11 hijackers have long since died,

their actions, faces, and perceived virtues live on; while Mahmood was presumed to be dead in 2019 (Mcginty et al, 2019), her tweets, images, and propaganda remain in an online void, allowing the continuation of terror despite an absence. Hence, Mahmood, as a proponent of ISIS propaganda that targets female youth online, embodies the spirit of terrorism.

Case Study: Hoda Muthana

Hoda Muthana grew up in Alabama with an extremely controlling and strict father; one notable complaint was that Muthana's brothers were allowed to use social media while she was not. When her father gave her a smartphone, Muthana secretly created her own social media profile, where she eventually interacted with an ISIS recruiter and fled to Syria to pursue marriage (Nacos, 2015). Muthana claimed that she was not brainwashed but instead had a religious awakening; she argued that her life was no longer "bland", that she had become a true Muslim, and that she had finally had autonomy (Nacos, 2015). For Muthana, a primary motivation for the internalization of ISIS propaganda online and subsequent radicalisation was an attempt to create a new identity (Ben-Israel, 2018). On her Twitter, Muthana was active in disseminating propaganda, encouraging other young girls to join ISIS, and advocating for terror attacks similar to September 11 (Elbein, 2020). Through her WhatsApp messages and posts, Muthana seemed content with her choice, insisting that ISIS was a righteous way of life, and even tried to convince her parents that she was "on the right side" (Elbein, 2020).

This is a false reality, held in the realm of the "image" over the "real", in which online propaganda takes upon an ambiguous shape, consuming the reality of the event and taking it hostage (Baudrillard, 2013). The spirit of terrorism manifests in a different way, in which the internalization of terror propaganda online is not through the obeying of a destructive logic of violence, but rather through what Baudrillard (2013) calls a "genuine adversarial relation". ISIS

calls upon these female youth to abandon their Western lifestyles, which ISIS argue are a humiliation of Islamic narratives politically and socially (Ben-Israel, 2018). ISIS therefore urge female youth online to become “jihadi brides” as to manifest “...the opposite of the cowardice of which they stand accused...” (Baudrillard, 2018; 15). These relations and sensation of heroism occurs through social media, where female youth, including Muthana, interact with in agreement to exchange their life for a place in paradise (Baudrillard, 2013).

Conclusion and Limitations

It is well known that ISIS identify female youth as being integral to their operations, and a primary means of communicating, grooming, and recruiting female youth occurs through social media (Ben-Israel, 2018). This essay fundamentally seeks to highlight how ISIS propaganda targets female youth online and outlines essential factors related to ideology, as well as encompassing existing literature discussing social media platforms used by ISIS. Furthermore, through an abstraction of Jean Baudrillard’s discourse presented within *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2013), certain cases of propaganda dissemination and internalization can be analyzed.

There are limitations that should be addressed, however. Primarily, there is an academic impasse when referring to female youth targeted by online propaganda as being “groomed” or as being “victims” (Ben-Israel, 2018). This is because this may potentially enable the idea that these girls can return home (Ben-Israel, 2018). Secondly, the dynamics between recruiters and the girls may remain relatively obscure; for example, we have no way of verifying if female recruiters, or fangirls, the girls interact with are, indeed, female to begin with (Ben-Israel, 2018).

References

Alter, C. (2021, October 5). How fixing Facebook's algorithm could help teens—and democracy. *Time*. <https://time.com/6104157/facebook-testimony-teens-algorithm/>

Baudrillard, J. (2013). *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Verso Books.

Ben-Israel, G. M. (2018). Telling a story via Tumblr analytics: Europe's young Muslim female attraction to ISIS. *International Annals of Criminology*, 56(1–2), 55–78. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2018.6>

Bhatia, K. (n.d.). *Understanding the Contradictions of the Islamist Jihad part ii: the Moral, jurisprudential, and philosophical contradictions*. NAOC. Retrieved November 26, 2024, from <https://natoassociation.ca/the-moral-jurisprudential-and-philosophical-contradictions-of-the-islamist-jihad/>

Dearden, L. (2016, August 2). Isis using kittens and honey bees in bid to soften image in Dabiq propaganda magazine. *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-kittens-honey-bees-dabiq-propaganda-recruits-photo-soften-image-terror-a7168586.html>

Extremists' targeting of young women on social media and lessons for P/CVE, february 2022. (n.d.). Migration and Home Affairs. Retrieved November 27, 2024, from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/extremists-targeting-young-women-social-media-and-lessons-pcve-february-2022_en

Frissen, T., Toguslu, E., Van Ostaeyen, P., & d'Haenens, L. (2018). Capitalizing on the Koran to fuel online violent radicalization: A taxonomy of Koranic references in ISIS's Dabiq. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(2), 491–503. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.01.008>

Hawley, E. (2018). ISIS crimes against the Shia: The Islamic State's genocide against Shia Muslims. *Genocide Studies International*, 11(2), 160–181.

<https://doi.org/10.3138/gsi.11.2.02>

Islamic state turns to teen-friendly tiktok, adorning posts with pink hearts. (n.d.). WSJ – MediaWell. Retrieved November 26, 2024, from <https://mediawell.ssrc.org/news-items/islamic-state-turns-to-teen-friendly-tiktok-adorning-posts-with-pink-hearts-wsj/>

Khaleeli, H. (2014, September 6). The British women married to jihad. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/06/british-women-married-to-jihad-isis-syria>

Lieberman, A. V. (2017). Terrorism, the Internet, and Propaganda: A Deadly Combination. *Journal of National Security Law & Policy*.

McGinty, B. (2019, February 16). *Family of Brit ISIS poster girl say “jihadi brides better in prison than dead.”* The Mirror. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/family-brit-isis-poster-girl-14009711>

Mogg, T. (2024, February 9). Watch how this 2001 news item reported the first (super basic) camera phone. *Yahoo Tech*. <https://www.yahoo.com/tech/watch-2001-news-item-reported-061523123.html>

Nacos, B. L. (2015, May 5). *Young Western women, fandom, and ISIS*. E-International Relations. https://www.e-ir.info/2015/05/05/young-western-women-fandom-and-isis/#google_vignette

Petrou, M. (2015, March 7). *What's driving teen girls to jihad?* Macleans.Ca. <https://macleans.ca/society/teen-girl-jihadists/>

Seedat, F. (2016). Sexual economies of war and sexual technologies of the body: Militarised Muslim masculinity and the Islamist production of concubines for the caliphate. *Agenda*, 30(3), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2016.1275558>

Spencer, A. (2016). The Hidden Face of Terrorism: An analysis of the women in Islamic state. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 9(3), 74–98. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.9.3.1549>

Wiemann, G., & Vellante, A. (2021). The Dead Drops of Online Terrorism. *Terrorism Research Initiative*, 15(4).

Women and Islamic militancy. (2015a, February 23). Dissent Magazine. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/why-women-choose-isis-islamic-militancy/>

Women and Islamic militancy. (2015b, February 23). Dissent Magazine. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/why-women-choose-isis-islamic-militancy/>

Zadrozny, B. (2021, October 26). What Facebook knew about how it radicalized users. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-knew-radicalized-users-rcna3581>

Intersectional Approaches in Interdisciplinary Research: A Pathway to Addressing Systemic Discrimination Against Ethnic and Racial Minorities

Shafaq Batool

ASHA 422: The Nature of Research

Instructor: Dr. Paul Stortz

April 22, 2024

Abstract

This paper argues that intersectional practices in interdisciplinary research are essential to addressing systemic discrimination faced by racial and ethnic minorities. By integrating diverse perspectives from social sciences, public health, and law, intersectionality challenges essentialist frameworks and reveals the interconnected nature of oppression. Case studies in social work, policy, and public health illustrate the necessity of intersectional approaches in identifying and dismantling structural inequities. Interdisciplinary research, when combined with intersectionality, fosters comprehensive solutions by uncovering hidden biases and institutional barriers. This paper highlights the importance of embracing these methodologies to advance equitable policies and create inclusive social systems.

Introduction

Systemic discrimination is defined as discrimination resulting from established procedures, practices, or systems within organizations, often unintentionally perpetuates unequal treatment and disadvantages certain groups (Braveman et al., 2022). In practicality, this form of discrimination reinforces discriminatory beliefs and attitudes both within and outside affected communities. Despite strides towards equality, marginalized communities continue to face barriers rooted in historical injustices ingrained within systemic structures.

Racial minorities¹ are at a greater risk of experiencing systemic discrimination due to the existence of policies and practices throughout society that lead to unfair advantages for some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race. The urgency of systemic discrimination experienced by racial and ethnic minorities has gained greater attention in recent years. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, fights to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state (Amnesty International, 2023). The BLM movement has been at the forefront of the racial justice movement and kindled the movement toward dismantling the systemic racism and discrimination against Black individuals and communities². The movement has organized rallies and protests worldwide to bring attention to racial injustice and advocate for change. In this fight for change, it becomes essential to understand the many intersecting factors with other forms of oppression such as patriarchy, colonialism, and slavery, which disproportionately affect marginalized communities. The movement for racial justice aims to

¹ A racial minority refers to a group of people who are categorized as being in the minority based on their race or ethnicity within a particular society or country. The word "racialized" is frequently used to characterize individuals who have been subjected to discrimination, unfair treatment, and disadvantage because of their race or ethnicity. People of color include African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and Latinos and Hispanics. Discriminatory behaviors, laws, policies, and attitudes that are ingrained in social systems and structures frequently affect racialized people, exacerbating their disadvantage in society.

² For a visual depiction of an example of the type of factors that perpetuate 'racist' systems, see Figure 4 in the Appendix.

address these factors and work towards systemic change and solutions by targeting the root causes of discrimination. Rooted in the fight against systemic discrimination lies a need for a preliminary understanding of the interrelated systems of discrimination and how they preserve systems of discrimination.

Systemic discrimination takes many forms, including the disproportionate impact on racial minorities in areas such as policing and the criminal justice system, or else access to education and healthcare, and discrimination against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Additionally, systemic racial discrimination intersects with other factors such as gender, class, and caste, leading to deep-rooted discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or national origin. The intersections of these factors create cumulative challenges for racial minorities, making them more vulnerable to systemic discrimination. Systemic discrimination is a complex topic, with several impediments to its research and solutions. The majority of literature on the issue of systemic discrimination faced by racial and ethnic minorities emphasizes the importance of deeper exploration of inherent classifications of race and ethnicity as well as context and personal experience informed investigations to occur.

Recent literature across various disciplines, including public health, social sciences, law, and practical applications, stresses the need to integrate intersectionality into research methodologies and organizational practices. Intersectionality, which emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categorizations and the multifaceted dimensions of discrimination, is crucial in fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and action. Many policies and research practices have yet to fully embrace intersectional approaches, particularly concerning issues of racism and discrimination.

This paper examines the limitations of current policies and research methodologies that need to incorporate intersectionality. It explores the application of intersectionality in fields such as women's studies, public health, and law, advocating for a shift away from

essentialist and culture-specific approaches. Additionally, it critiques the depoliticization of intersectional approaches in specific policies and emphasizes the importance of recognizing historical contingencies and systemic structures perpetuating discrimination.

Proactive measures are necessary to challenge and discourage harmful practices and attitudes to combat systemic discrimination effectively. Historically, research has embedded essentialist practices in researching race and ethnicity, limiting holistic understandings and overlooking intra-group differences. Empirical research on race and ethnicity provides a vital exploration of the nuances within racial and ethnic identities, shedding light on the constant negotiation and change within these groups. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and a commitment to intersectionality, addressing systemic discrimination can move beyond essentialist frameworks and toward more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Premise 1: Intersectional practices, which consider the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and class, are integral to understanding systemic discrimination across diverse disciplines.

Intersectionality, in the context of this paper, refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Braveman et al., 2020)³. In practice, intersectionality reveals the nuances and complexities of how different social categories intersect and influence people's lived experiences rather than reducing individuals to a single category of difference. Intersectional practices contrast essentialist categorizations⁴, which oversimplify and fix individuals into rigid identity categories. Since the vitality of intersectional practices lies in their help in

³ An example of an intersectional approach to systemic discrimination is shown in *Figure 1* of the Appendix.

⁴ Essentialism gave rise to essentialist categorizations by imputing fundamental, timeless, and unchanging qualities to racial and ethnic groups. The construction of rigid and homogenized categories obscured the complexities and variations within these groups and the normalization of these categorizations perpetuated the false notion of internal sameness and external difference, reinforcing racial and ethnic stereotypes.

understanding the barriers of systemic discrimination imposed upon individuals, such practices employed in the issue of systemic discrimination offer an essential means for their resolution. Intersectional practices offer a significant benefit when coupled with interdisciplinary collaboration in understanding the overlapping nature of systemic discrimination. By embracing intersectional practices, researchers and practitioners can better understand the diverse and multifaceted aspects of human identity and social relations.

Within the discipline⁵ of social work, individual communication plays an essential role in navigating the foster care system, especially for those who are a part of racial and ethnic minorities. Social workers and the "same race placement" is explored by Gail Lewis's study of 'black women' social workers in England. Avtar Brah's conceptualization of difference is the methodological framework for interpreting aspects of Lewis's qualitative interviews with 32 'black and Asian' women social workers. Brah's formulation of difference involves a multidimensional framework encompassing the four modalities of 'experience,' 'social relation,' 'subjectivity,' and 'identity' (Gunaratnam, 2011). Theoretical frameworks like Brah's emphasize the simultaneous distinctiveness and connectivity of collective and individual experiences of difference while also considering historical, social, and material relations, providing a sophisticated analytic framework with the basis of intersectionality for working with categories of 'race' and ethnicity in ways that are neither reified nor reductionist.

The interactions between social workers and service users continue to have a nuanced relationship as workers negotiate and challenge essentialized notions of 'race' and ethnicity in their everyday professional interactions. Practices within social work often result in the essentialization of both social workers and minority service recipients into predetermined groups, evidenced by policies such as 'same-race' placement rules within adoption and foster

⁵ "Disciplines" is referring to the fields that examine systemic discrimination through research as well as nonacademic sources that provide practical explorations of the issue.

care programs for Black children. Though such practices have historically favored hiring Black social workers under the assumption of possessing a necessary cultural understanding, they are often reductionist in their application to individuals. Lewis's interviews revealed that despite some social workers embracing and utilizing essentialist ideas to navigate their professional roles and relationships, others questioned the oversimplification inherent in racial categorizations, deeming that outside of race, the workers were unable to find similarities that could assist their working relationships with the service seekers.

The concept of 'exact race placement' places reductionist values on racial categorization, and instead of assisting the foster care system with cultural sensitivity, it hindered many social workers ability to connect due to the lack of many other overlapping factors such as region of origin, migration histories as well as superficial language differences. Though essentialist categorizations have been pervasive as a means of researching race in the past, the same categorizations, when upheld without being challenged, are contributing to the systemic barriers that prevent the holistic understanding of race.

On an international scale, organizations have remained persuasive in perpetuating the continued systemic discrimination faced by marginalized communities. *The European Union's Anti Racism Action Plan*, launched in 2020 by the European Union, delves into its institutional approach to prioritize antiracism efforts in order to dismantle such systems of discrimination. Central to the plan is the incorporation of intersectionality as the foundational principle, aiming to combat systemic racism within the EU, addressing discrimination in various spheres such as work, housing, education, and access to goods and services while also targeting racism in online spaces and providing legal protection for victims (European Commission, 2020). This plan, despite its intersectional focused approach, remains under scrutiny for its efficacy in addressing the structural oppression it seeks to dismantle, particularly its lack of critical engagement with the EU's historical discriminatory practices.

The ubiquitous concern is the lack of comprehensive delineation regarding the concept of intersectionality and its intended operationalization (Muller et al., 2021). Muller's critique extends beyond mere oversight to the language employed within the plan, which Muller suggests depoliticized intersectionality and marginalizes racism, to encompass the lack of considering the plan's failure to adequately address the historical baggage⁶ of European states, encompassing actions like past and present migration policies, racial profiling, and border strategies, which have disproportionately impacted minority communities. By failing to address the intersectional nature of systemic discrimination, the EU overlooks critical opportunities to engage with previous legislation and to address the historical contingencies that perpetuate discrimination (Muller, 2021). Instead of dismantling systems of discrimination, it is perceived as perpetuating the structures of European imperialism by positioning anti racism efforts as merely a facet of the broader EU integration agenda (Muller, 2021). Given the Commission's entrenched position within the structures that uphold national principles and objectives, the inherent mission of the new action plan must be distinct from the overarching framework of European imperialism. Consequently, a more rigorous examination of past legislation and the application of intersectionality as a conceptual framework remains imperative for effectively grappling with the historical complexities that perpetuate systems of dominance while avoiding the reinforcement of racial historicism.

A prominent field that witnesses systemic discrimination as an interaction of individual and systemic factors in the field of public health, thus a multifaceted understanding of public health accessibility and its impact on health disparities is crucial. Habib (2012) took a specific approach to understanding health care screening services of South Asian immigrant

⁶ Historical baggage, in the context of racism and anti-racism efforts, encompasses the long-standing legacy of systemic oppression, discrimination, and inequality that has been perpetuated over time. An example of historical baggage is the enduring impact of colonialism and imperialism on the social, economic, and political structures of nations, as well as the persistent effects of slavery and segregation on racial dynamics in societies.

women in Canada, aiming to explicitly uphold intersectionality to understand racialized women's health as shaped by the interlocking systems of gender, race, class, and immigration. In Habib's interview analysis, she expresses the importance of acknowledging her role as a south asian woman herself and her ability to understand the varying aspects of the interviewees' lives that culminate to affect their ability and willingness to get preventative cancer screening. By employing intersectionality and addressing the incorporation of the theoretical approach, Habib links individual experiences to larger discourses and systemic processes, embedding their experiences in social, economic, historical, and political contexts.

From Habib's Research, many themes arise. Primarily, accessibility for healthcare services like cancer screening services was a complex intersection of various factors, including age, length of stay since immigration, educational and generational status, family history, and symptoms, with systemic and structural issues such as financial stability, access to income, employment, settlement services, and community resources (Habib, 2012)⁷. The culmination of these factors provided a comprehensive analysis as a framework for understanding the barriers this specific population faces in accessing healthcare services, specifically cancer screening services. For example, findings revealed how both age and education level had a compounding role in the usage of cancer screening services. These findings isolated the role of both individual factors such as age, but also larger systemic factors that can be derived from being a racialized minority such as being unable to advocate for your health due to language barriers and hence, not getting a physician recommendation for screening (Habib, 2012).

Habib's exploration emphasizes the shift away from the static 'South Asian culture' to the intersections of the broader structures and interlocking systems that produce health inequities and inequitable access to health care (2012). The importance of considering the

⁷ See Appendix 1, Figure 1 and 2 for a visualization of these barriers that contribute to accessibility of cancer screening services among South Asian Immigrant Women in Canada.

broader social dimensions and the impact of systemic and structural factors on women's lives, rather than viewing people according to a single static identity, an idea that is prominent in cultural essentialism⁸, helps to undermine the under-researched areas of health accessibility and women's studies under the guise of generalization to cultures wherein the variabilities of experiences provide a plethora of differing ideas and conclusions.

The recurrence of intersectional practices remains prominent across these disciplines emphasises the importance of recognizing the complexity and nuance inherent in systemic discrimination. Along with the importance of intersectionality, essentialist categorizations, which oversimplify individuals' identities, are critiqued for their inability to capture the multifaceted nature of discrimination. Intersectional practices, on the other hand, challenge essentialist assumptions by acknowledging the interconnectedness of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of individuals' experiences within systems of discrimination. As a theoretical framework in the public sphere as well as within academia, intersectionality is posited as a valuable methodology for complicating currently oversimplified research on racial and ethnic minorities. Through complicating the processes in theory as well as applying these complications through methodology such as the “outsider” research practice, intersectionality serves as critical to understanding the systemic discrimination experienced by racial and ethnic minorities.

Premise 2: Applying intersectional practices within interdisciplinary research frameworks enables a holistic approach to generating solutions for systemic discrimination.

⁸ Cultural essentialism, similar to classical essentialism, refers to the belief that certain cultural or ethnic groups possess inherent, unchanging, and fundamental characteristics that define their identity.

Intersectional practices have begun to build the foundations of explorations of race and ethnicity within disciplines. With the complexities introduced within disciplines, interdisciplinarity emerges as the framework for creating a holistic outlook. Historically, methodological and theoretical frameworks originate and specialize according to discrete disciplines. The integration of multiple disciplines, however, can generate a shared methodology against the strict confines of disciplines.

Exposure to new or different research domains helps challenge the long-held assumption of previously successful research (Bucarius, 2013). Combining knowledge and theory from multiple sources gives rise to new information, taking on a broader, more holistic context, often more accurately reflecting the topic. Studying racialized and ethnic groups in itself is a complex breadth of research by nature, as evidenced by the varying intersectional identities of those being studied. The nuances of identity formations and the effects of racial categorizations make it a suitable target for interdisciplinary research.

Individuals who experience systemic discrimination experience it to varying degrees and for various reasons. The contextualization of the individuals and their identities is a prevalent feature of racial and ethnic research (Gunaratnam, 2011). The relational and socially constructed aspects of racial and ethnic categories are crucial to acknowledge in understanding how they are systematically patterned and contingently connected to individuals and their social contexts. Without such context, invaluable information is lost to oversimplifications in research practices.

In focusing the attention on race as less of an individual problem and instead a systemic concern, the incorporation of an interdisciplinary approach to address it is essential (Lentin, 2004). Lentin argues that the failure of mainstream antiracism to engage with the history of the relationship between 'race' and state continues its endorsement (2004). The failure of such movements, as argued by Lentin, is that the common sense depiction of

antiracism is simply the inverse of racism (2004). As a result, antiracism's diverse and complex nature, differing political allegiances, aims, and representative functions have yet to be noticed. On the other hand, intersectionality employed across the various systems in the public sphere as well as academic disciplines offer a vital pathway to view discrimination as systemic.

Gunaratnam furthers the notion that the integral role of interdisciplinary research in dismantling systemic discrimination in academia enables a nuanced understanding of complex social issues such as race and ethnicity (2011). By integrating perspectives and methodologies from various disciplines such as anthropology, criminology, communication and media studies, and education, researchers can gain a more holistic view of the multifaceted nature of racial and ethnic dynamics. This interdisciplinary approach enables scholars to challenge essentialist notions of race and ethnicity, recognize these categories' relational and socially constructed aspects, and develop subversive and marginalized representations of difference.

The basis for understanding systemic discrimination also lies in understanding the current lack of racial and ethnic voices in various fields. *The Permanent Forum for People of African Descent*⁹, created by the Canadian Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (CCUNESCO), addresses intersectionality by ensuring intentional inclusion and representation on policy development platforms, providing a regular "seat at the table" when decisions are being made. The goals of the Forum are to incorporate complete and intentional participation within the forums, summits, and conferences where human rights issues impacting Black communities are fully integrated into mainstream policy discussions and actions for implementation. By incorporating the voices of those who are marginalized and whom the Forum aims to serve, it seeks to dismantle systemic barriers to

⁹ See the logo of the International Decade for People of African Descent in the Appendix, Figure 3.

participation and actively work towards achieving equitable outcomes for Black communities in areas such as economic justice, home ownership, and access to quality education (Kotchapaw, 2023). The core of this Forum lies in not only incorporating the voices of marginalized communities but also understanding the holistic nature of systemic discrimination in education systems and even home ownership.

While interdisciplinarity enriches academic methodologies and critical examinations of various social structures in society, these practices are essential in their implementation within intersectional frameworks. Different disciplines bring unique perspectives and methodologies, enriching understanding complex social phenomena. Intersectional practices on race, when applied across disciplines, help to create an overlapping theoretical framework that has potential to bridge disciplines, allowing for a more holistic approach to studying and addressing systemic discrimination.

Research on race and ethnicity must be handled with care and consideration due to its widespread effects in informing government or organization policies and framing the narratives through which discussions on race and ethnicity are undertaken. Interdisciplinarity further provides a practical outlook on research applications (Gunaratnam, 2011). In applied research, practical outcomes are expected outside of just the generation of knowledge. Thus, while interdisciplinarity has been employed widely in research environments, it extends beyond such confines. Notably, interdisciplinary methodologies cannot be extrapolated from their research applications nor their practical ones and must be considered a collective unit especially when overlapping to study and provide practical solutions for systemic discrimination experienced by racial and ethnic minorities.

Conclusion

Racism is often misunderstood as solely an individual attitude rooted in ignorance when, in reality, it is a systemic issue that is deeply embedded in societal structures, laws,

policies, and practices. The history of racism being scapegoated as an individual rather than a systemic issue has perpetuated the misconception that it is solely a matter of personal beliefs and actions rather than acknowledging the broader impact on entire communities and societies. This notion hinders research on systemic discrimination beyond its current confines.

Conversations on the issues faced by marginalized individuals based on their race and ethnicity often limit experiences to solely stemming from the confines of race and ethnicity, underrepresenting the heterogeneity within broad racial classifications. Systemic discrimination underlies these discussions, complicating considerations necessary to understand the structural barriers faced by racial and ethnic minorities. Discussions on race, racism, and systemic discrimination are often treated with utmost caution and contempt, viewed as issues embedded within emotional binds, leaving such discussions no longer objective. Being part of a racial or ethnic minority becomes weaponized as an argument against the objective "non-racialized" view. Such ideas of adopting an outsider perspective as a non-racialized individual become the breeding ground for justifications and upholding systems rooted in discriminatory practices.

Introducing a variety of disciplines that research racial and ethnic minorities offers the potential to alter the paradigm of these issues. The value of interdisciplinary practices lies in their ability to employ intersectionality to observe research and the effects of systemic discrimination on racial and ethnic minorities. By implementing these practices, "non-racialized" narratives dominating discussions on racism can be deconstructed to include racialized voices and implement the heterogeneity of individuals to address the root of discriminatory practices. Intersectional practices in interdisciplinary research have the potential to create space for the voices of those experiencing systemic discrimination to address the issues with input from those who face them.

Isolation of disciplines and, further, isolation embedded within the racial and ethnic categories promote the essentialist practices that work to perpetuate the very systems that have been built. The many considerations of the opposing argument suggest that manifestations of intersectionality within research work complicate the practices.

Approaching knowledge from the essentialist perspectives that are common perpetuates the status quo. With the integration of the multitude of pervasive perspectives, complications of the simple essentialist categories serve not only as a basis for complicating current research methodologies but also as a way to complicate and understand the holistic nature of the existing perspectives. The basis of intersectionality within research on discrimination is simply to understand the holistic nature of systemic discrimination. Interdisciplinary collaboration furthers this approach by not separating racial and ethnic issues and research by discipline but by generating connections between those.

Though interdisciplinary collaboration creates a substantial threshold for a multidimensional issue such as systemic discrimination, integrating methodologies from different disciplines remains a concern as it can be complex and may result in methodological inconsistencies. Despite seeking simplicity and categorizations within research practices to simplify research methodologies, such practices have yet to acknowledge the complex nature of the categorizations and their nature in further perpetuating reductionist methodologies. While methodological inconsistencies remain a concern in practicing research, the complication in of itself allows researchers to question the current methodological frameworks. Research on new methodologies like the "doubled research approach" is a theoretical basis for such research by challenging essentialism and recognizing the multiple meanings and effects of racial and ethnic categories in lived experiences (Gunaratnam, 2011). This approach encourages researchers to work with and against racial and ethnic categories at the epistemology and methodology levels.

The prevailing narratives in the media on race and ethnicity are rooted in the “fallacy of composition”. This fallacy happens when one thinks what is valid for a particular part of a group is necessarily true for the whole group. The fallacy of composition can arise in the context of race and ethnicity when someone generalizes or assumes something about a whole racial or ethnic group based on the traits or actions of a small number of group members. Such generalizations can result in prejudice and stereotyping as they ignore the richness and variety that exist within any one racial or ethnic group. Such fallacious interpretations have led to predominant "othering" language that perpetuate discrimination, a fallacy that will be dismantled with intersectional practices.

The argument above makes a case for a collaborative process rooted in thoroughness and the perspectives of victims of systemic discrimination. Often, fear of the unknown and the 'other' has limited research on racial and ethnic minorities. Whether it is critiquing systems that hinder progress for these groups or examining research practices that uphold systemic barriers, collaboration in research is necessary. Adjusting the frameworks through which information is sought to favor intersectional practices provides opportunities to shift attitudes towards people of different races and ethnicities.

A more comprehensive study of interdisciplinary approaches would involve an integrated approach working directly with communities to generate practical solutions. A substantial aspect of research lies in its practical application of knowledge. Thus, the ultimate goal would be to mobilize synthesized solutions based on this methodology. Holistically speaking, encouraging more intersectionality based research on systemic discrimination and the applications of interdisciplinary studies should expand the horizons for many disciplines and challenge and complicate the existing notions of research.

Appendix

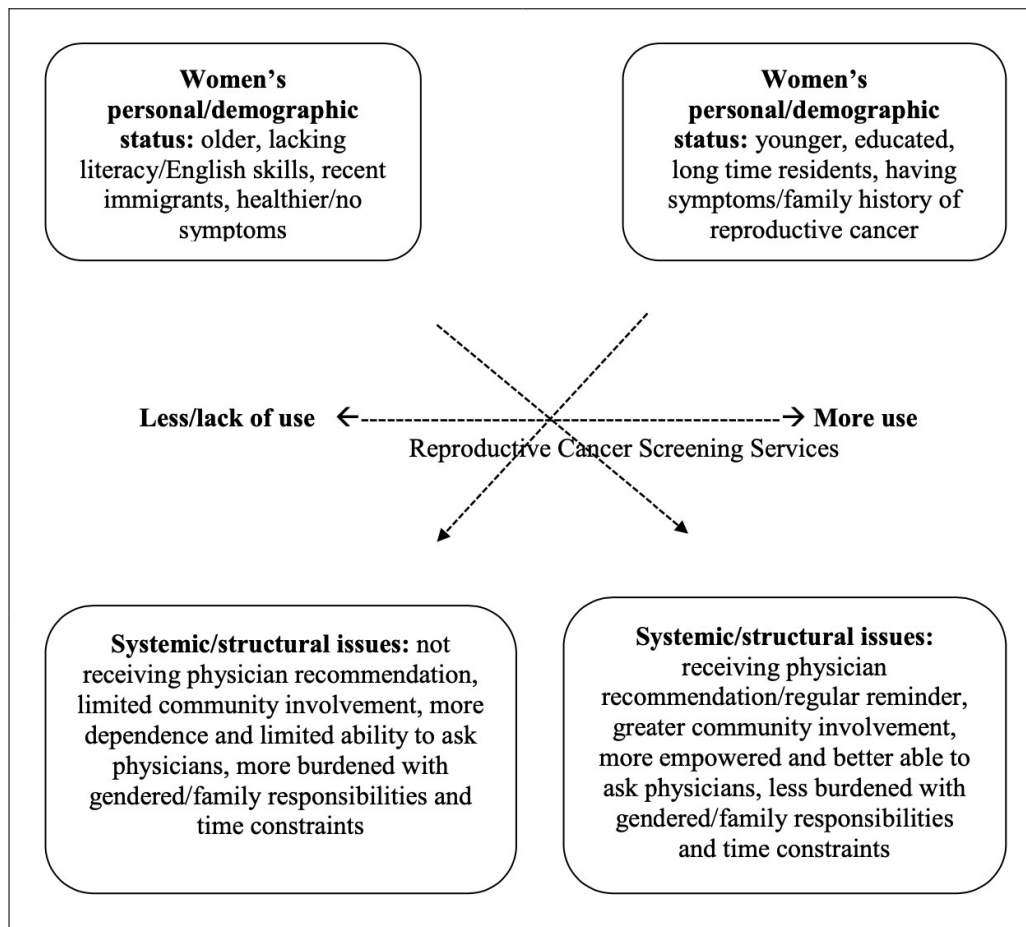


Figure 1: The figure shows the Intersections between a personal and structural issues that underlie a women's participation in cancer screening Retrieved From:

Habib, Sanzida Zohra. "Culture, Multiculturalism and Diversity: A Feminist Anti Racist Examination of South Asian Immigrant Women's Utilization of Cancer Screening Services." *International journal of diversity in organizations, communities and nations* 8, no. 4 (2008): 187–196.

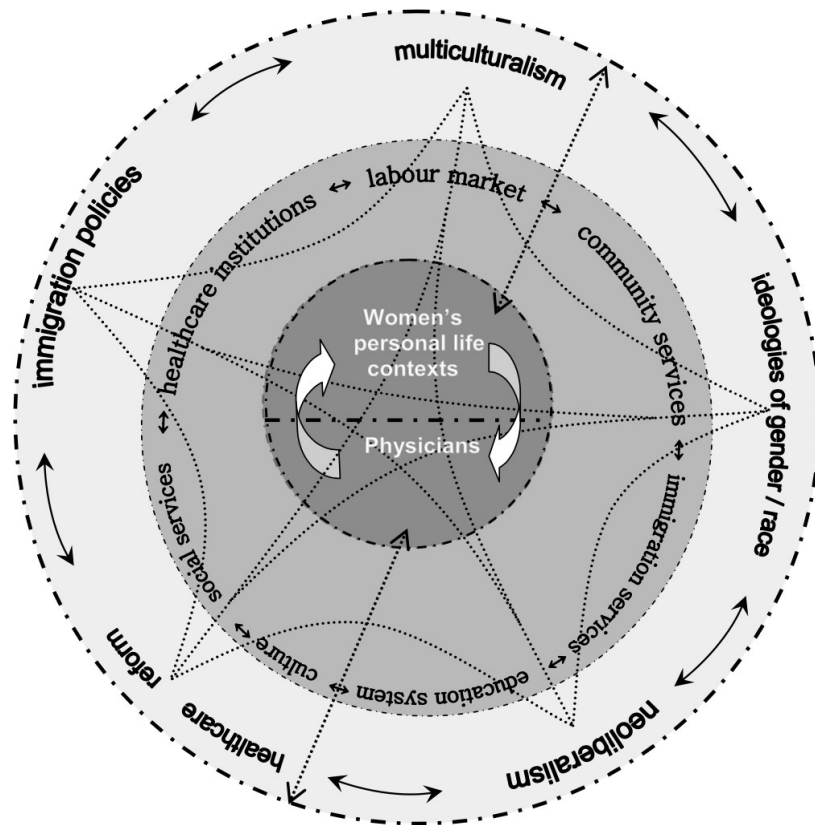


Figure 2: The diagram depicts women's access to and experiences with cancer screening. The innermost circle takes into account the women's demographics and personal experiences, as well as their health views, understandings, and cancer screening expertise. The two outer circles or layers represent the overlapping social and structural circumstances of their lives.

Retrieved From:

Habib, S. Z. (2008). Culture, Multiculturalism and Diversity: A Feminist Anti Racist Examination of South Asian Immigrant Women's Utilisation of Cancer Screening Services. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 8(4), 187–196. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9532/CGP/v08i04/39636>



Figure 3. The logo of the International Decade for People of African Descent is made available in all UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish). As described by CCUNESCO, the International Decade for People of African Descent logo design implies progress both today and in the future, anchoring Afro-descendants in both realms. The design suggests combining all individuals of African origin into a single group with a shared past and culture. The abstract shape of a spiral with Africa (the "origin") in its centre that radiates outwards depicts the history, present, and future of people of African heritage. The spiral itself is a representation of the world, migration, and progress.

Retrieved From:

UN Department of Global Communications, United Nations Secretariat. "Promotional

Materials." United Nations. Accessed April 13, 2024.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/promotional-materials>.



Figure 4: The figure shows a digital cartoon regarding the various factors that perpetuate the ‘racist’ system.

Retrieved From:

Slane, Chris. “Digital Cartoon.” Natlib.govt.nz, August 21, 2019.

<https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22860653>.

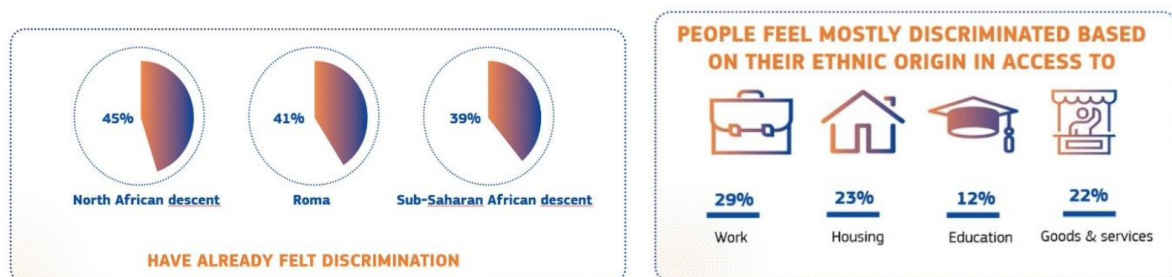


Figure 5: The results of the second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) conducted by FRA, which gathered data from over 25,500 respondents from all 28 EU Member States who were members of various ethnic minorities and immigrant backgrounds, are displayed in this graphic.

Retrieved From:

The fight against discrimination and hate towards minorities still fails to deliver nearly 10 years on, November 22, 2019.

[https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/fight-against-discrimination-and-hate-towards-minorities-still-fails-deliver-nearly-10.](https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/fight-against-discrimination-and-hate-towards-minorities-still-fails-deliver-nearly-10)

Bibliography

A. Primary Sources

Amnesty International. (2023a, October 25). *What is racial justice?*. Amnesty International.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/racial-justice/#casestudy:palestinianapartheid>.

European Commission. (n.d.-b). *EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025*. European Commission.

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en

European Commission. (2019, November 22). *The fight against discrimination and hate towards minorities still fails to deliver nearly 10 years on*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/fight-against-discrimination-and-hate-towards-minorities-still-fails-deliver-nearly-10>

Kotchapaw, C. (n.d.). *Idealab*. Recognition, Justice and Development: The Promise of Black Diplomacy and the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

<https://en.ccunesco.ca/idealab>.

Slane, C. (n.d.). *Digital Cartoon*. Natlib.govt.nz. <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22860653>.

B. Secondary Sources

Bucerius, S. M. (2013). Becoming a “Trusted Outsider”: Gender, Ethnicity, and Inequality in Ethnographic Research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 42(6), 690–721.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241613497747>

Gunaratnam, Y. (2003). *Researching Race and Ethnicity: Methods, Knowledge and Power* (1st ed., pp. ix–ix). SAGE Publications, Limited.

Habib, S. Z. (2008). Culture, Multiculturalism and Diversity: A Feminist Antiracist Examination of South Asian Immigrant Women's Utilization of Cancer Screening Services. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 8(4), 187–196. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9532/CGP/v08i04/39636>

Lentin, A. (2004). Racial States, Anti-Racist Responses: Picking Holes in 'Culture' and 'Human Rights.' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7(4), 427–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431004046699>

Müller, C. (2021). Anti-Racism in Europe: An Intersectional Approach to the Discourse on Empowerment through the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025. *Social Sciences*, 10(4), 137-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10040137>

End.

Thank you!

On behalf of the Academic and Advocacy Team, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the inaugural edition of our Research Journal. This publication would not have been possible without the incredible dedication, insight, and passion of our student researchers, faculty mentors, peer reviewers, and supporters.

Your commitment to advancing scholarly dialogue and fostering a spirit of inquiry embodies the very mission of our team—to champion academic excellence and empower student voices. We are proud to celebrate the diverse range of research presented in this journal and look forward to witnessing the continued impact of your work within and beyond our academic community.

Thank you for helping us build a foundation for future innovation, critical thinking, and advocacy.

With appreciation,
The Academic and Advocacy Team (2024/25) and Vice President Academic Amisha Grewal