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CONTENTS

Volume 7 | Issue III | September 2023

<i>US History</i> Residential Segregation: A Tale of Two Houses**	1
	<i>James Prince '23</i> The Blake School Minnesota, USA
<i>Interdisciplinary: Anthropology, Theology, Women's Studies</i> Magical Spirituality: A Source of Self-Empowerment for African-American Women*	23
	<i>Ava Driggers '24</i> Concord Academy Massachusetts, USA
<i>Sociology</i> Revisiting the Crown Heights Riot: Multiethnic Hostility at the Neighborhood and City Levels*	40
	<i>Isaiab Glick '24</i> Berkeley Carroll School New York, USA
<i>Interdisciplinary: Literature and Sociology</i> Motherhood at the Crossroads: A Deconstruction of Gender, Class, and Race in Leila Slimani's <i>Chanson Douce</i> *	60
	<i>Defne Koyluoglu '24</i> Phillips Exeter Academy New Hampshire, USA
<i>Interdisciplinary: Film and Cultural Studies, History</i> The Battle for Dominance in the Skies: How Sci-Fi Films Reflected Societal and Political Concerns during the Space Race	77
	<i>Luke Collins '24</i> Harvard-Westlake School California, USA

** Summa, selected from magna essays published in the 2022-2023 academic year.

* Magna

<i>Greco-Roman History</i>	96
Politics of Mithras: The Mystery Cult and Matters of State	
	<i>Connor Huard '25</i> Monte Vista High School California, USA
<i>World History</i>	112
The Failure of the Schlieffen Plan and Its Impact on the German WWI Strategy	
	<i>Alexander Knight '23</i> Southbank International School London, UK
<i>Public Policy</i>	130
Global Public Policy Reactions to an Increasingly Political Young Generation	
	<i>Luke Netto '24</i> Milton High School Georgia, USA
<i>US History</i>	153
The Influence of Civil Rights and Unionization on the Women's Rights Movement and Attainment of Suffrage	
	<i>Katherine Buckman '24</i> Mountain View High School Virginia, USA
<i>Philosophy</i>	174
Reasons and Causality: Critiquing the Principle of Alternate Possibilities	
	<i>Patrick Van Hoven '24</i> Woodside High School California, USA

SUMMA

US History

**Residential Segregation:
A Tale of Two Houses**

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Abstract

This tale begins in Minneapolis, where the history of racism continues to impact homeownership in the largely segregated city and its suburbs. Starting in 1910, Minneapolis developers and realtors used a systemic form of racial exclusion to sell homes profitably, exploiting and furthering the underlying racial bias in the community. As the use of these legal mechanisms spread, racially restrictive covenants were further cemented into the Minneapolis and national markets by financial, legal, and government systems. In Minneapolis, racially restrictive covenants exist in over 24,000 homes in Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis. This paper examines the effects racially restrictive covenants had on two communities: one with a racially restrictive covenant and the other without. Even though the self-perpetuating structures became illegal under the 1968 Fair Housing Act, the impact of these once-legal systems continues to be felt. These historical systems contribute to the inequality between white and Black homeownership in Minneapolis, resulting in the biggest disparity in the US today when compared to the 100 cities with the largest Black populations. This story about the forces impacting Black homeownership in two Minneapolis communities is a small microcosm of what occurred across the United States in the 1900s.

Introduction

More than a few houses conceal a history of racial exclusion. If their walls could talk, they would reveal systemic discrimination. Buried deep in the small print of housing deeds, clauses barred people of color from owning or occupying the property, making entire neighborhoods off-limits for non-whites. These legal mechanisms, called racially restrictive covenants, were first used in California and Massachusetts at the end of the 19th century and spread across the country until 1968 when the Fair Housing Act mandated equal access to housing.¹ But the deeds and their racist language remain an unseen scar. It is time to tell one of the stories behind this hidden inequity. In Minneapolis, the history of racial inequality lingers: racially restrictive covenants exist in over 24,000 homes in Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis.² This past exclusion contributes to the inequality apparent in Minneapolis today, as evidenced by the fact that the gap between white and Black homeownership is 50 percent, placing Minneapolis's disparity 100th in the US among the 100 cities with the largest black populations.³ White developers and realtors used systemic racial exclusion to profitably sell new homes, exploiting and furthering the underlying racism in the community.

Two Adjacent Communities Become Divergent

This story begins as a tale of two houses built in Minneapolis in the 1920s, one in a development called Shenandoah Terrace, the other in a neighborhood formerly called Southside. They were similar in many ways, including lot size and proximity to the center of Minneapolis. Adjacent to each other, the neighborhoods had similar patterns of local business owners and thriving neighborhood communities.

When built, these houses and the communities they stood in were comparable; now, they are opposites. The Shenandoah Terrace house, like the others in its neighborhood, included a racially restricted covenant when it was constructed, creating an all-white neighborhood. This precipitated a chain of events through generations – its value appreciated

¹ R. Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, New York, Liveright, 2017, p. 78.

² K. Ehrman-Solberg et al., 'Racial Covenants in Hennepin County,' retrieved from the Data Repository for the University of Minnesota, published 25 November 2020, <https://doi.org/10.13020/a88t-yb14>, (accessed 12 October 2021).

³ A. McCargo and S. Stochak, 'Mapping the Black Homeownership Gap,' *Urban Institute*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/mapping-black-homeownership-gap>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

over the years as more houses were added, along with a nearby park. Owning such an asset allowed a family to create generational wealth.

The story of the Southside house ends differently. Swedish and Norwegian immigrants first populated its neighborhood and gradually attracted more Black residents. By the 1930s, the change in demographics from white to Black led the Southside neighborhood to be redlined, making it difficult for potential property buyers to find financing. Predictably, since Southside was viewed as undesirable by real estate agents, lending institutions, and the government, it withered until it was partially demolished in the late 1950s to make room for an interstate highway that cut it in two.

Today, that Southside neighborhood is 33 percent white with a median household income of \$58k.⁴ Meanwhile, the adjacent neighborhood which includes the Shenandoah Terrace house is 90 percent white, with a median household income of \$94k.⁵ The tale of these houses is rooted in racially restrictive covenants, key influences in the persistent racial inequity in US urban housing.

Racial Diversity in Minneapolis

From its introduction into statehood in 1858, Minnesota had a sizeable non-native-born population. Totalling 172,000, 98 percent were white, 33 percent were foreign-born, 51 percent were under the age of 20, and 91 percent were rural.⁶ With a third of the population being immigrants, Minnesota was an immigrant state from its inception.

⁴ ‘Household Income in Block Group 011703-1, Hennepin County, Minnesota (Block Group)’, *The Demographic Statistic Atlas of the United States – Statistical Atlas*, <https://statisticalatlas.com/block-group/Minnesota/Hennepin-County/011703-5/Household-Income>, (accessed 10 September 2022); ‘Race and Ethnicity in Block Group 011703-5, Hennepin County, Minnesota (Block Group)’, *The Demographic Statistic Atlas of the United States – Statistical Atlas*, <https://statisticalatlas.com/block-group/Minnesota/Hennepin-County/011703-5/Race-and-Ethnicity>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

⁵ ‘Household Income in Tract 110000, Hennepin County, Minnesota (Tract)’, *The Demographic Statistic Atlas of the United States – Statistical Atlas*, <https://statisticalatlas.com/tract/Minnesota/Hennepin-County/110000/Household-Income>, (accessed 10 September 2022); ‘Race and Ethnicity in Tract 110000, Hennepin County, Minnesota (Tract)’, *The Demographic Statistic Atlas of the United States – Statistical Atlas*, <https://statisticalatlas.com/tract/Minnesota/Hennepin-County/110000/Race-and-Ethnicity>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

⁶ US Department of Commerce and Labor, ‘Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Statistics for Minnesota’, *Bureau of the Census*, 1913, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/abstract/supplement-mn.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

Following the Civil War and emancipation, more Black people arrived in Minneapolis and were integrated into the urban community. In the 1880s-1900s, Minnesota and Minneapolis actively took steps towards creating a racially equitable society; both state and city introduced laws against discrimination. For example, in 1885, Minnesota passed the Equal Accommodations Act guaranteeing Black people equal access to all public places and hotels, and in 1897, it passed a civil rights law.⁷ Frank Wheaton, a Black lawyer, won election in 1898 to the Minnesota legislature, where he authored two pieces of legislation that dealt with civil rights and public accommodations.⁸ In Minnesota, Black rights were codified in law and enforced in the courts.⁹

Nonetheless, racial inequity began to surface. In the 1910 census, less than 1 percent of the state's population was Black.¹⁰ Although Minnesota's population grew by over 1,000 percent in the first fifty years of statehood, there were only 7,084 Black people in the state in 1910, most (81 percent) living in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Black population grew to 8,800 by 1920 but was still only 0.4 percent of the state's population.¹¹ Similarities emerge when looking at demographics in Minneapolis itself where the Black population grew far more slowly than the white. According to the 1910 census, Blacks represented 0.9 percent of the city's population and were distributed across the city, representing no more than 15 percent of the total population in any one community. The near-north and northeast areas of Minneapolis were emerging integrated communities.¹²

⁷ Secretary of State, *General Laws of Minnesota: Passed and Approved at the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Legislature*, Minnesota, 1885, ch. 224, p. 296; Secretary of State, *General Law of the State of Minnesota: Passed During the Thirtieth Session of the State Legislature*, Minnesota, 23 April 1897, ch. 349, p. 616.

⁸ 'An Ebony Legislator', *The St. Paul Globe*, 12 February 1899, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=749ae28b-361d-49b0-aedc-a79155e2ac30%2Fmnhi0031%2F1HMADF59%2F99021201, (accessed 10 September 2022); Leg.state.mn.us. 2021, *Wheaton, John Francis 'Frank, J. Frank' - Legislator Record - Minnesota Legislators Past & Present*, <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/fulldetail.aspx?ID=12076>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

⁹ 'Minneapolis: Doings In and About the Great 'Flour City'', *The Appeal: A National Afro-American Newspaper*, 26 March 26 1898, p. 4, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/1898-03-26/ed-1/seq-4/>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

¹⁰ US Department of Commerce and Labor, 'Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Statistics for Minnesota', *Bureau of the Census*.

¹¹ US Department of Commerce and Labor, 'Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Statistics for Minnesota', *Bureau of the Census*.

¹² M. Mills and Mapping Prejudice Project, 'Minneapolis Black Population 1910', *University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy*, 2020, <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/217473>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

A decade later, between 1910 and 1920, the number of Blacks in Minneapolis grew by 51.5 percent (from 2,592 to 3,927) but was still around 1 percent of the city's population.¹³ Fifty percent growth in the Black population over a decade seems significant, yet it was small compared to the growth of other Midwest cities, and the Black population as a percentage of Minneapolis's total population did not change. For context, between 1910 and 1920, Chicago's Black population grew 148 percent, from 44,103 (3.9 percent of the population) to 109,458 (4.1 percent of the population).¹⁴ St. Louis's Black population grew 59 percent, from 43,960 (6.4 percent of the population) to 69,854 (9 percent of the population).¹⁵ Lastly, Detroit's Black population grew 611 percent, from 5,741 (1.2 percent of the population) to 40,838 (4.1 percent of the population).¹⁶ In this broader context, Minneapolis's Black population was not increasing at the same rate as similar cities in the Midwest during the 1910s.

While both state and city were experiencing explosive growth and economic expansion, the Black population remained small with relatively slow growth. One plausible explanation behind this relatively flat growth could be the economic discrimination facing Blacks in Minneapolis. In 1926, an Urban League study found that 76 percent of the 192 employers surveyed would not hire Black people. Furthermore, the average annual earning of a married Black man in Minneapolis was \$1,172 – more than \$1,000 below the federal poverty level of 1919.¹⁷ Minneapolis was not an economically progressive city for Black people.

Another possible factor was the underlying racist sentiment in the expanding and predominately white community. This explanation is

¹³ Mills, 'Minneapolis Black Population 1910'.

¹⁴ US Department of Commerce and Labor, 'Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium for Illinois', *Bureau of the Census*, 1924, <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06229686v8-13ch5.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022); US Department of Commerce and Labor, 'Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Statistics for Illinois', *Bureau of the Census*, 1913, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/abstract/supplement-il-p1.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

¹⁵ US Department of Commerce and Labor, 'Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium for Missouri', *Bureau of the Census*, 1920, <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06229686v20-25ch4.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

¹⁶ US Department of Commerce and Labor, 'Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium for Michigan', *Bureau of the Census*, 1920, <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06229686v20-25ch1.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

¹⁷ T. Thurber, *The Politics of Equality*, New York, Columbia, 1999, p. 26.

supported by the numerous documented high-profile cases of white residents in Minneapolis publicly and actively preventing Blacks from moving into their neighborhoods during the early 1900s. It should be noted that the wealthy areas of Minneapolis were all white in the 1900s; minority groups naturally lacked the economic means to move into these communities. The racial tension occurred primarily in those developing neighborhoods where the growing middle-class and working-class whites vied for the same finite set of new homes as the city expanded, like the homes in the Shenandoah Terrace and Southside neighborhoods.

One example of this growing racial bias in 1909 was when “a party of 125 residents of [Prospect Park], among them many leading business and professional men of Minneapolis, called at the home of a negro family last night and read its members a prepared paper which told in plain language that none of the colored race was wanted in that neighborhood.”¹⁸ That quote, from the *Minneapolis Tribune*, describes how publicly the community sought to segregate Black people. This racial tension continued to gain steam. In December of 1909, Marie Canfield tried to sell her house in southwest Minneapolis to a Black preacher, the Reverend William S. Malone. It allegedly caused a “race war” that was covered for several weeks in the newspaper.¹⁹ Her Black neighbor, Mary Myrick, owned a small house two blocks away and became the subsequent controversy. She had purchased the lot many years previously on which she built her house, but she now refused to sell it to her white neighbors. The neighbors tried to “oust” both the preacher and the “home of the negress” which the reporter pejoratively refers to as a “small shack”.²⁰ The paper described the situation as “race conflicts over negroes trying to make their homes in exclusive neighborhoods.”²¹ Two neighborhood committees, the Prospect Park Improvement Association, and the Lake Harriet District, eventually

¹⁸ ‘Race War Started in Prospect Park’, *The Minneapolis Tribune*, 22 October 1909, p. 1, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=4a0c6900-28ec-40e6-bafa-8705a70f68f8%2Fmnhi0005%2F1DFC5F5A%2F09102201, (accessed 10 September 2022).

¹⁹ ‘Race War at Harriet Involves More Blacks’, *The Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 2 January 1910, p. 1, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnhi0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F10010201, (accessed 10 September 2022).

²⁰ ‘Race War at Harriet Involves More Blacks’, *The Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*.

²¹ ‘End of Both Race Wars is Believed Near at Hand’, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 7 January 1910, p. 8, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnhi0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F10010701, (accessed 10 September 2022).

brokered a deal that used the money raised from each community member to buy out the two Black homeowners in early 1910.²²

Active community intent to create segregated housing had arrived in Minneapolis, and with support in both the Black and White communities, it spread. In response to Blacks purchasing residential property in white neighborhoods, a Black minister's sermon titled "Where Shall a Black Man Live?" was featured on the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune's* front page in January 1910. The Reverend T. W. Stout stated, "Black people should avoid going into a community where their presence is Irritating." The newspaper then editorialized this sermon by adding that the "African preacher" was "wise in his statement." The article openly suggested that Blacks not live among whites. Racial segregation in Minneapolis had a public written voice.²³

This voice emboldened its supporters. In 1931, Arthur Lee, a Black man, purchased a home in a non-covenanted, predominately white neighborhood two blocks north of the previously mentioned Shenandoah Terrace house. Lee, a World War I vet who worked for the Post Office, was met with violence when thousands of whites surrounded and vandalized his home. The incident made the front page of the *Minneapolis Tribune* with a story entitled "Home Stoned in Race Row."²⁴ The Lee family moved out in 1934. While not all Minneapolis residents supported residential segregation, those who did often prevailed. In Minneapolis, despite their relatively small numbers, Blacks faced increased racial bias.

Racial violence was a blunt instrument. What was needed was a set of systems to prevent Blacks from buying homes in specific areas. While systemic discrimination was not unique to Minneapolis (indeed, it was endemic throughout the country), its combination of economic disadvantages and social impediments is a textbook for the examination of racial discrimination.

²² 'End of Both Race Wars is Believed Near at Hand', *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*.

²³ 'Fairness to Negro Urged by Minister', *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 10 January 1910, p. 1, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnh0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F10011001, (accessed 10 September 2022).

²⁴ 'Home Stoned in Race Row', *The Minneapolis Tribune*, 15 July 1931, p. 1, <https://startribune.newspapers.com/clip/88996869/home-stoned-in-race-row-tribune/>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

Restrictive Covenants Codify Housing Segregation

In the early part of the 20th century, Minneapolis saw a majority white population experiencing explosive growth driven by economic prosperity and immigrants. This fueled the city's encouragement of segregated housing, precipitating the creation of legal systems that made it possible to create the all-white Shenandoah Terrace development and forcing Black people into neighborhoods like the Southside slated for stagnation.

The primary instrument behind this turn was a legal device known as a racially restrictive covenant. When buying a property, the purchaser traditionally receives the documentation, called a deed, tracing every time the property has changed hands. A deed is “a written instrument, which has been signed and delivered, by which one individual, the grantor, conveys the title to real property to another individual, the grantee.”²⁵ A warranty deed, the most common way of transferring title, contains promises, called covenants, that the grantor makes to the grantee. Homebuyers want these types of promises, and lenders often require a warranty deed to qualify for financing. These covenants may include simple assurances like the grantor owns the land described in the deed; that the grantor has the right to transfer title to the land; or that there are no undeclared encumbrances on the land. The grantor may also make certain future covenants in the deed. These restrictions track with the deed indefinitely.²⁶ If a covenant is breached, the owner loses the house, and the property reverts to the initial granting party (the person who first attached the covenant).

However, a legal mechanism cannot spread racism without the people who use such tools. The first perpetrators responsible for introducing this legal form of racial bias into Minneapolis were Henry and Leonora Scott. Since racially restrictive covenants did not originate in Minnesota, it is not surprising to learn that the Scotts were non-residents. In 1910 they inserted language into the warranty deed that contained the following restriction: “...the premises shall not at any time be conveyed, mortgaged or leased to any person or persons of Chinese, Japanese, Moorish, Turkish, Negro, Mongolian or African blood or

²⁵ West's Encyclopedia of American Law, 'Definition of a Deed,' *Encyclopedia.com*, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/law/law/deed>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

²⁶ A. Hayes, 'What Is a Warranty Deed?,' Investopedia, 17 August 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/w/warranty-deed.asp>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

descent.”²⁷ Scott’s success in imposing racially biased terms of sale emboldened other individuals and companies to do the same.

Within eight years, 1,158 properties in Hennepin County were similarly covenanted, most of them in Minneapolis proper.²⁸ An investigation into the grantors of these first thousand restrictive covenants reveals there were three key companies responsible for leading the expansion of racially restrictive covenants in Minneapolis: The Seven Oaks Corporation, Thorpe Brothers, and the Estates Improvement Company.²⁹

Although these three companies were independently managed, the men leading these companies were linked through their involvement on the Minneapolis Real Estate Board (Minneapolis Board).³⁰ When the National Association of Real Estate Exchange (National Association) was created on May 12, 1908, in Chicago,³¹ the 19 founding boards included Baltimore; Kansas City, MO; the California State of Realty Federation (now the California Association of REALTORS); and the

²⁷ ‘Henry Scott and Leonora Scott to Nels Anderson’, Transaction on 26 May 1910, *Hennepin County Deeds Book 759*, p. 538, Document 712111, recorded 23 April 1914.

²⁸ K. Ehrman-Solberg, ‘Racial Covenants in Hennepin County.’

²⁹ K. Ehrman-Solberg, ‘Racial Covenants in Hennepin County.’

³⁰ Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, Seven Oaks Corporation File Number 22633-AA, Original Filing – Business Corporation, *State Archives*, St. Paul, Minnesota: Filed 16 November 1914; Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, Thorpe Brothers File 207-AA, Original Filing – Business Corporation, *State Archives*, St. Paul, Minnesota: Filed 22 December 1898; Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, Estates Improvement Company File Number 10113-AA, Original Filing - Business Corporation, *State Archives*, St. Paul, Minnesota: Filed 10 December 1912; ‘Tingdale Brothers, Inc. Advertisement’, *The Minneapolis Tribune*, 17 June 1919, p. 30, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnh0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F19061701, (accessed 10 September 2022); ‘Realty Men Prepared for National Convention’, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 14 June 1910, p. 7, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnh0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F10061401, (accessed 10 September 2022); ‘“Spotless Town” Lots to Go Under Hammer to Minneapolis Homeseekers for Realty Dealers Fund to Entertain Boosters at the Convention’, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 25 April 1910, p. 2, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnh0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F10042501, (accessed 10 September 2022).

³¹ ‘Minneapolis Board Joins National Body: Real Estate Men Take Action Following Meet at Chicago’, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 28 May 1908, p. 8, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=4a0c6900-28ec-40e6-bafa-8705a70f68f8%2Fmnh0005%2F1DFC5F5A%2F08052801, (accessed 10 September 2022).

Minneapolis Real Estate Board.³² The leader of Thorpe Brothers served as the President of the National Association in 1911.³³ Today, the organization is called The National Association of Realtors.

The Minneapolis Board and the National Association were critical venues for real estate industry members to share ideas about implementing racially restrictive covenants. Several members of the National Association used deeds for restrictive purposes before their appearance in Minneapolis. One of the Kansas City, MO members, CJ Nichols, used deeds for restrictions beginning in 1908 when developing the Country Club area in Kansas City. In addition, other communities with members of the National Association, such as Baltimore and Oakland/Berkley, California, were also using racially restrictive covenants in the early 1900s.

As these concepts spread through the Minneapolis Board, various exclusionary phrases appeared in these restrictive deeds. One example was: “The said premises shall not at any time be sold, conveyed, leased, or sublet, or occupied by any person or persons who are not full blood of the so-called Caucasian or White race” (*Minneapolis Deed*).³⁴ By 1919, restrictive covenants moved from a mere phrase in a legal document to a feature of advertisements for real estate. An ad in the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* for the Walton Hills development contained the following language: “The party of the second part hereby agrees that the premises hereby conveyed shall not at any time be conveyed, mortgaged or leased to any person or persons of Chinese, Japanese, Moorish, Turkish, Negro, Mongolian, Semitic or African blood or descent. Said restrictions and covenants shall run with the land and any breach of any or either thereof shall work a forfeiture of title, which may be enforced by re-entry.”³⁵ Racially restrictive covenants had become a marketing strategy.

The escalation of housing segregation continued from 1910 to the 1950s as real estate developers built “planned communities” in undeveloped regions of Minneapolis and its bordering western and

³² ‘About NAR: History’, *National Association of Realtors*, 2022,

<https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/history>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

³³ ‘Realty Dealers Honor Thorpe’, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 19 November 1911, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnhhi0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F11111901, (accessed 10 September 2022).

³⁴ K. Ehrman-Solberg, ‘Racial Covenants in Hennepin County.’

³⁵ ‘Real Estate Mart Advertisement’, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 12 January 1919, p. 10, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/PsImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d%2Fmnhhi0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F19011201, (accessed 10 September 2022).

southern communities, creating over five thousand racially restrictive covenant properties.³⁶ At the same time, neighboring communities to the south and west of Minneapolis (Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, Edina, and Richfield) were developed extensively, leveraging racially restrictive covenants to keep out Black residents. This effectively created a ring around the city where Blacks could not buy property. By the 1950s, over twenty-four thousand restrictive covenants were in place. The Shenandoah Terrace house was outside that ring, and the Southside house was inside the ring. The lines had been drawn, and the figurative walls between the two houses were erected.³⁷

This period of dramatic expansion in the use of racially restrictive covenants resulted in fewer housing options for Black people in the growing Minneapolis area, restricting the increase in the area's Black population. Between 1920 and 1940, Minneapolis's Black population only added 719 people. In the same period, Minnesota's total population grew by 400,000 people, from 2.4M in 1920 to 2.8M by 1940, but the Black population only grew by 2,844 people state-wide. By 1940, Minnesota was home to only 9,928 Black residents, of which 4,646 lived in Minneapolis. The Black population was not significantly increasing anywhere in the state.³⁸

Although the 1940 census shows the number of Blacks remained relatively constant (an increase of .5 percent), the concentration of where Black people lived in Minneapolis shifted dramatically. Once dispersed throughout the city, the 1940 census data showed there no longer was any census district in northeast Minneapolis containing multiple Black residents. Instead, for the first time in the city's history, majority-minority neighborhoods were created. Census data shows that an influx of new minority families did not create these neighborhoods. Instead, they were engineered through the relocation of existing minority families and concentrated into small pockets. One such area was Southside.³⁹

Additional Barriers Preventing Equitable Access to Housing

The division between the two houses was continually reinforced by a system filled with self-perpetuating structures. Besides the barriers

³⁶ K. Ehrman-Solberg, 'Racial Covenants in Hennepin County.'

³⁷ K. Ehrman-Solberg, 'Racial Covenants in Hennepin County.'

³⁸ US Department of Commerce and Labor, '1940 Census of Population: Volume 2, Characteristics of the Population, Minnesota', *Bureau of the Census*, 1940, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1940/population-volume-2/33973538v2p4ch2.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

³⁹ US Department of Commerce and Labor, '1940 Census of Population: Volume 2, Characteristics of the Population, Minnesota', *Bureau of the Census*, 1940.

erected by real estate developers, other institutions were also involved. For instance, the National Association of Realtors, the Federal Housing Administration, the Home Owners Loan Corporation, and a Supreme Court case all supported racially restrictive covenants.

In 1916, the National Association devised the term “REALTOR” to identify a real estate professional who is a member of the National Association and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics was the vehicle used to formalize the agents’ use of racial barriers. In 1924, the National Association modified its “Code of Ethics” in Article 34 that required “A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.”⁴⁰ It was not until 1950 that Article 34’s phrase “members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence...” was removed.⁴¹ The National Association further supported the use of racial covenants when, in 1927, they issued a standard restrictive covenant for members to use in communities across the country.

Such actions of the real estate industry, and the covenants themselves, were authorized by the national and regional legal system. The US Supreme Court first validated the use of covenants in the 1926 *Corrigan v. Buckley* case. Thirty white residents from Washington DC neighborhood sought to uphold a racially restrictive covenant. The property in question had a covenant, making it illegal for it to be used, occupied, sold, or leased to any one of the negro race or blood. The covenant was connected to the land and bound the respective heirs for twenty-one years. The court’s decision in favor of the white residents’ claim supported the constitutionality of covenants.⁴²

Federal lending institutions further validated the use of covenants. In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt formed the Home

⁴⁰ National Association of Real Estate Boards, ‘1924 Code of Ethics, Adopted by the National Association of Real Estate Boards at its Seventeenth Annual Convention, 6 June 1924’, *National Association of Realtors*, 2022, <https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/governing-documents/code-of-ethics/previous-editions-of-the-code-of-ethics>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

⁴¹ National Association of Real Estate Boards, ‘Code of Ethics, adopted in November 1950’, *National Association of Realtors*, 2022, <https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/governing-documents/code-of-ethics/previous-editions-of-the-code-of-ethics>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

⁴² *Corrigan v Buckley* (1926) 271 US 323, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=11135903580197116691&q=corrigan+v.+buckley&hl=en&as_sdt=6,24&as_vis=1>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

Owners Loan Corporation to create government-insured mortgages with fixed interest rates, having the goal of giving all middle-class people the opportunity to purchase a home. To appraise homes, the federal agency established designations to classify neighborhoods based on the occupants of those neighborhoods. This practice laid the groundwork for making it harder for Blacks to purchase any home, no matter the neighborhood.

When, in 1934, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) became law, the federal agency built upon the practice of ranking neighborhoods based on their occupants. For each large city in the United States, the FHA created color-coded maps to show the value of each section in the city. Red = hazardous, Yellow = declining, Blue = still desirable, and Green = the best. The term “redlining” was officially created and institutionalized as a practice where banks refused to extend housing loans in certain geographic areas, often inner-city neighborhoods.

Such financial lending laws led to the eventual deterioration of many Black neighborhoods. The city of Minneapolis participated in the practice of redlining, and as a result, the neighborhood around the Southside house received a “Red” designation because “of a gradual infiltration of Negroes.” Conversely, a Green-lined designation was often not given unless restrictive covenants were already in place. Thus, the Shenandoah Terrace neighborhood received a “Green” rating. This is an important distinction because it shows that a thriving Black community, like Southside, could be redlined based exclusively on its racial demographics, not other race-neutral factors. As a result of the “redlining” practice, less than 2 percent of all mortgages in the US between 1934 and 1962 were granted to non-whites.⁴³

In 1936, the FHA extended the practice of labeling areas to include new development loan applications. This practice appeared in the FHA’s 1936 Underwriting Manual (Manual) which clearly stated appraisers were not allowed to recommend a federal bank guarantee to a suburban subdivision that would include Blacks in a white development. The Manual also informed appraisers that deed restrictions should include a “prohibition of the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended,” and that “inharmonious racial groups” and

⁴³ A. Gordon, ‘The Creation of Homeownership: How New Deal Changes in Banking Regulation Simultaneously Made Homeownership Accessible to Whites and Out of Reach for Blacks’, *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 115:186, 2005, p. 209, <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=4977&context=yjlj>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

“incompatible racial elements” would cause the devaluation of a neighborhood. Furthermore, appraisers could not recommend a federal bank guarantee for an all-white project that was near a Black neighborhood because it would “run the risk of infiltration by inharmonious racial groups.” The Manual also recommended highways be used to separate white neighborhoods from Black neighborhoods. This is exactly what happened to the neighborhood of the story’s Southside house. In 1957, a highway was built right through the middle of the neighborhood, splitting it into two. The community never recovered. The rules established by the federal agency created two additional barriers: neighborhood labeling and uncrossable roads.⁴⁴

Existing racial covenants made it illegal for Black people to purchase homes in certain areas. In areas that didn’t initially have racial covenants, “redlining” institutionalized and spread their use. The federal government created racist policies requiring restrictive covenants to qualify to receive the highest ratings and most favorable loan terms for development projects. Furthermore, the FHA’s practices denied the predominately Black homeowners in the redlined communities access to affordable mortgages. This also made it hard for people in these redlined neighborhoods to sell their homes, leading to declines in home valuations. By contrast, the white families who received the FHA loans benefited from the equity appreciation of their homes. In addition to driving further residential segregation in cities across the country, these practices contributed to the challenges Blacks faced in accumulating wealth over time from homeownership, creating economic disparity.

Conclusion

To bring change, major social shifts were needed in the very systems that prevented equal access to housing. The first major legal victory against restrictive covenants occurred at the US Supreme Court in 1948 in *Shelley v. Kramer*. This case banned courts from evicting Black people who purchased homes with deeds containing racially restrictive covenants. The result of this decision prohibited judicial enforcement, but it did not prevent private parties from writing and voluntarily abiding by them.⁴⁵ The legality of racially restrictive covenants ended with the US Congress passing the Fair Housing Act in 1968, more than fifty years

⁴⁴ Federal Housing Administration, ‘1938 Underwriting Manual, Underwriting and Valuation Procedure Under Title II of the National Housing Act’, *HUD User Home Page*, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Federal-Housing-Administration-Underwriting-Manual.pdf>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

⁴⁵ *Shelley v. Kramer* (1948) 334 US 1, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/334/1/>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

after the first covenant was introduced in Minneapolis. During those years, racially restrictive covenants were placed in over 24,000 homes across Hennepin County, an area that includes Minneapolis.

The introduction of racially restrictive covenants in Minnesota began slowly. The men behind them were colleagues, real estate leaders, and connected to organizations coordinating national real estate activities. Leveraging this interconnection, they tapped into an underlying base of racism in a largely homogenous state to pursue economic gain. As the use of these legal mechanisms spread, covenants were further cemented into the Minneapolis and national markets by financial, legal, and government systems, seeking to pursue economic gain and prevent Black people from purchasing homes in white neighborhoods. The Shenandoah Terrace and the Southside house never stood a chance at parity: racial hurdles were too steep to overcome. Even though changes have reduced the barriers, the impact of these once-legal systems continues to be felt. Although no longer legally enforceable, there is no way to remove the impact of exclusionary language from the deeds today. Minnesota has the highest racial housing gap in the country. In 2013, 78 percent of white families owned the homes they occupied in Minnesota, but only 25 percent of Black families owned the homes they occupied.⁴⁶ Understanding the past, and reading this story, is one step towards a more inclusive future. By doing so, we can start to close the door to a chapter of history that has systematically created “walls” within the community.

⁴⁶ K. Skobba, ‘Understanding Homeownership Disparities Among Racial and Ethnic Groups, Report of Minnesota Homeownership Center,’ *University of Georgia*, 2013, <https://hdl.handle.net/10724/33286>, (accessed 10 September 2022).

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MAGNA

*Interdisciplinary:
Anthropology, Theology, Women's Studies*

**Magical Spirituality: A Source of Self-Empowerment
for African-American Women**

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Abstract

Slavery and Black migration to the Americas forced a coming together of populations from regions across the African continent, resulting in distinctive, broad magical spiritualities such as Hoodoo, Voodoo, and Conjure, that drew on the formalized teachings and leadership elements of African religious traditions. As a system molded by the enslaved, magical practices attended to these peoples' most pressing issues. While institutionalized religions emphasized conformity as a means of empowering the community, informal magical practices emphasized independence as a means of empowering the individual. African-American women used magic as a vehicle to express and overcome their silenced grievances. Magic encouraged these women to explore their psychological landscapes by recognizing their capacity for independent thought and action. This paper analyzes the relationship between African-American women and magical practices, revealing how magic created opportunities for these women to assume leadership roles in the community, gain financial agency, and reverse standard racial and gender power dynamics. Moreover, this paper reviews recent scholarship and first-person accounts that trace magical practices into present times. The analysis aims to provide evidence that these practices continue to empower Black women much as they did historically, pointing to magic as a significant contributor to the foundation of modern Black feminism.

Introduction

Magic was a central element of life in African-American communities of the early United States and often served as a method of communication between people.¹ As a practice, magic was common to communities in the American South, and it played a key role in domestic interactions between African-American men and women. Its accessibility appealed to many of the enslaved, and its capacity to mold to the desires of the individual attracted suppressed populations of women seeking agency. Magic is still relevant to the Black American experience today; many African Americans incorporate elements of magic into their spiritual lives, and contemporary African-American women create businesses based on the spiritual teachings taught by their mothers and grandmothers. Patricia Hill Collins, a noted scholar of Black feminism, describes the roots of modern American Black society in her foundational work, *Black Feminist Thought*:

Every social group has a constantly evolving worldview that it uses to order and evaluate its own experiences. For African-Americans, this worldview originated in the cosmologies of diverse West African ethnic groups. By retaining and reworking significant elements of these West African cultures, communities of enslaved Africans offered their members explanations for slavery alternatives to those advanced by slave owners. These African-derived ideas also laid the foundation for the rules of a distinctive Black American civil society.²

Given that Collins's words on the roots of Black society are framed by her analysis of Black feminism, the historical elements of magical practice itself may also be a part of the distinctive foundation Collins notes. Understanding how magic served women can help reveal the potential connections between these spiritual practices and modern Black feminism.

Origins of Magic in the United States and Their Implications

Slavery and Black migration to the Americas forced a fusion of populations from regions across the African continent, resulting in the melding of previously distinct and independent cultures and traditions,

¹ Throughout this paper I will use "magic" as an umbrella term for Hoodoo, Voodoo, and similar belief systems emanating from Africa. For a perspective on the categorization of magic as religion, see Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, 1-9.

² P. H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought, Knowledge Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 30th Anniversary edn., New York: Routledge, 2022, 33.

including spiritualities. The combination of widely diverse religious and spiritual practices accentuated the cultural through-lines from which magic in the United States originated. Some American belief systems, such as Santeria and Voodoo, drew on the formalized teachings and leadership of African religious traditions. Other belief systems, such as Hoodoo, were more localized and individualistic. For example, Voodoo is structured around the worship of godly figures with ties to West African and Congolese religions and has historically been practiced by people of African descent in the Caribbean and in the United States.³ In application, Voodoo involves rhythm and dance-centered rituals, and worship of the spirits in return for their supernatural aid. Voodoo and Hoodoo were both commonly practiced by enslaved peoples in the United States. Though similarly named and often conflated in modern colloquial usage, the two disciplines have important distinctions in application and cultural context. Hoodoo, sometimes referred to as Conjure, involved no god-like figures and was instead anchored in the creation of naturally derived mixtures and charms with the magical power to create the wielder's desired effect.⁴ Compared to Voodoo, Hoodoo drew more influence from American Indigenous traditions and European folk magic.⁵ In his dissertation, "Acquiescence and Dissent: Slave Religion and Conjure in the Antebellum South," Derek Pace describes the formation of American Hoodoo: "This smattering of beliefs and traditions that slaves carried over from different areas of the [African] continent formed the cultural basis from which Conjure eventually grew."^{6,7} Although magic may seem alien to modern

³ A. Kordas, 'Hex Workers: African American Women, Hoodoo, and Power in the Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century US,' *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs* vol. 3, no.8, 2016, 1.

⁴ Z. Hurston, 'Hoodoo in America,' *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. 44, no.174, 1931, 318.

⁵ While Hoodoo and Voodoo differ in the amount of inspiration, they take from non-African spiritualities, many of the characteristics of both can be traced back to their African origins. On the topic of physical symbolism in spiritualities, Pace references the traditions of the BaKongo people, a group that occupies a portion of Africa's Atlantic coast. The BaKongo people interact with "nkisi," spirits who present themselves physically in the form of small items such as shells or carvings. Magical practices in America mirror these West African traditions – charms and elixirs central to Hoodoo mirror BaKongo encapsulations of the supernatural in naturally derived totems, and the presence of multiple nsiki matches the polytheism in Voodoo. See D. Pace, *Acquiescence and Dissent: Slave Religion and Conjure in the Antebellum South*, PhD diss., Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016, 13.

⁶ D. Pace, *Acquiescence and Dissent*, 8.

⁷ Modern media often portray African spiritualities like Voodoo as malicious, satanic, and evil. Modern Voodoo priestess Jessyca Winston explains the racism behind these ideas efficiently, saying "The belief that Voodoo is evil and Voodoo is dark comes from the fact that Voodoo is black." In reality, African spiritualities cannot be satanic; they evolved independent of Christian ideas about the Devil. See S. Romblay, "This

conceptions of religion, Hoodoo, Voodoo and their attendant practices formed a prominent belief system with strong cultural significance. Collectively, these “. . . African-American philosophies shaped gender relations, family life, food preparation, medicinal practice, religion, and work.”⁸

Hoodoo: An Accessible Spiritual Practice Made by and for African Americans

Early American Christianity, a doctrine molded by whites with almost exclusively male authority figures, was not made to attend to the issues most pressing to African Americans, particularly not African American women. “Christianity, with its focus on the afterlife and reliance on God for wellbeing, did not adequately address all of the issues that slaves faced in the plantation societies.”⁹ The enslaved population’s inhumane suffering could not be explained by the Christians’ idea of a benevolent God. Henry Bibb, a Black Christian Methodist who escaped enslavement, captures Black apprehension surrounding his faith in a short anecdote:

[They preach that] God will send them to hell, if they disobey their masters. This kind of preaching has driven thousands into infidelity. They view themselves as suffering unjustly under the lash . . . without protection of law or gospel . . . And they cannot believe or trust in such a religion. . .¹⁰

The danger inherent to life as an African in the Americas, particularly in the era of slavery, necessitated a belief system that offered guidance in everyday conflicts and moral transgressions.¹¹ Thus, magic was able to offer the type of “protection” that Black people needed, but that the Christian gospel could not offer.

Characterized by individualization and accessibility, magical practices such as Hoodoo and Voodoo were distinct among the spiritualities of early America in their ability to speak to the masses and simultaneously entice individuals as a vehicle to express their otherwise silenced grievances. Magic, therefore, brought a form of elasticity to

Priestess is Teaching Others the Truth about Vodou and Hoodoo,’ *Huffington Post*, Sept. 24, 2020, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haus-of-hoodoo-vodou-nSouew-orleans_n_5f6cb31fc5b6e2c912623c13 (accessed May 2023).

⁸ L. A. Wilkie, ‘Secret and Sacred: Contextualizing the Artifacts of African-American Magic and Religion,’ *Historical Archaeology*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1997, 82.

⁹ D. Pace, *Acquiescence and Dissent*, 6.

¹⁰ S. C. Milton, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999, 77.

¹¹ D. Pace, *Acquiescence and Dissent*, 22.

believers that was particularly appealing to the most marginalized populations, notably African-American women. Unlike many institutionalized churches, magic did not call on its Black followers to suppress their pain and frustrations. White preachers offered white-serving perspectives on enslavement that rejected the painful lived experience of the Black population.¹² In contrast, Hoodoo *validated* the intense and intrinsically human emotions that Christianity sometimes dubbed “evils.”¹³ As a system molded by the enslaved, persecuted community, Black belief in the supernatural “... undermined the ‘doctrine of Black Impotence’ that slave-owners and pro-slavery preachers promulgated.”¹⁴ Hoodoo met people where they were, using resources that they had, in a way that was emotionally and physically relevant.

The Unique Accessibility of Magic: Enabling Individuals to Impart Power and Meaning to Familiar Objects

Hoodoo was usually grounded in some physical act, but its meaning was understood spiritually.¹⁵ Pace notes that “For many blacks in the antebellum South, the physical and supernatural were often inseparable. Studies that apply the Western notion of mutual exclusivity between the two fail to capture the dynamic nature of slave religious life.”¹⁶ While institutionalized religions emphasized conformity as a means of empowering the community, informal magical practices emphasized independence as a means of empowering the *individual*. Thus, Hoodoo was appealing because it could be performed with very few resources. The personal allure and convenience of magical practices are perfectly encapsulated by the weaponized herb bottles that enslaved people across the Americas used to retaliate against their enslavers. “In

¹² Often, enslaved populations came to regard white Christianity with contempt and disregarded its teachings because the Church did not follow its own tenets. See A. J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, 293-298.

¹³ In her PhD dissertation, K. L. Martin attests that many of the negative connotations applied to African traditions performed by women are rooted in Christian literature from the mid-1000s. According to Martin, writers like Heinrich Kramer and Johannes Nider asserted that women’s spiritual weakness left them susceptible to the devil. Martin argues that “Nider’s text is also responsible for articulating the most common elements of witchcraft which have since become standard characteristics of the witch stereotype,” such as their most common/cliche misconduct (of the time), preference for nighttime, and partnership with the devil. See K. L. Martin, *Conjuring Moments and Other Such Hoodoo: African American Women & Spirit*, PhD diss., Tallahassee, Florida State University, 2006.

¹⁴ D. Pace, *Acquiescence and Dissent*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the Bahamas, bottles containing needles, herbs, and urine would be buried near houses to cause harm.”¹⁷ In the case of the Bahaman bottles, magic was an easily accessible form of self-expression, using attainable and oftentimes completely free ingredients. Nearby, in the continental United States, the use of Conjure bags gives us another example of physical objects empowered by belief.

An African-American midwife described one such bag that she obtained to rid herself of a ghost: ‘After a time I went to a conjure woman to get to drive off the friendly pirate (the ghost). She made up a strong conjure bag with hog bristles and black cat’s hair and a rabbit’s foot and dirt from the graves of seven murderers and seven little stones from south-running water all tied up in a red flannel rag greased with snake oil and tied with dead woman’s hair.’¹⁸

So-called Conjure bags, medicinal consult Conjure women, and the aid of spirits addressed the immediate harms brought on by enslavement, abuse, and lynching. Hoodoo made emotional release facile for enslaved people and was therefore especially helpful to Black women.

Magic and Authority Roles for Women

Magic in local communities was often performed by experienced and trained practitioners with a variety of specific skill sets ranging from practicing medicine to managing interpersonal conflicts. “Conjure woman,” a title often used to describe the societal role taken on by women with expertise in Hoodoo, is synonymous with terms like “hoodoo woman,” “root worker,” and “root doctor.”¹⁹ Parallel roles exist in other African diasporic religions such as the title “Priestess” in Voodoo. These terms were all used to describe spiritual authorities who used their knowledge of local botany to create herbal remedies for physical ills.

As in formal medicine, some of the doctors are general practitioners, and some are specialists. ...All of the hoodoo doctors have non-conjure cases. They prescribe folk medicine, “roots”, and are for this reason called “two-headed doctors”. Most of the prescriptions have to do with birth and social diseases. There is no formal training

¹⁷ L. A. Wilkie, ‘Secret and Sacred,’ 88.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁹ Although these practitioners were generally thought of as women, there is some controversy as to whether areas of magical expertise were gender specific. Wilkie concludes that “Magical specialists did not seem to be gender-exclusive roles, although midwives were likely to be women who had already raised their own children, and were beyond their childbearing years ...” See L. A. Wilkie, ‘Secret and Sacred,’ 85.

for this. Either men or women may take it up. Often they are not hoodoo doctors, but all hoodoo doctors also practice medicine.²⁰

As problem solvers, Conjure women also prescribed customers multi-step spells involving concoctions, incantations, sequential acts, and other instructions to address any number of issues, including ways to gain the upper hand in disagreements or conflicts. For example, in *Hoodoo in America*, groundbreaking anthropologist and author Zora Neale Hurston details the various spells intended to resolve social conflicts doled out by Ruth Mason, a Hoodoo doctor of the time; “To Move Neighbors;” “To Break a Friendship;” “To Find Out Secret Enemies;” and “To Revenge yourself Upon a Man.”²¹ Hurston also tells us that Mason’s dispensations made her famous, attesting to her power in the community. Practitioners often received high pay for their services. Hurston notes that Ruth Mason once received 100 dollars for service in 1928.²² Thus we see that providing these services necessitated transactions, bestowing the Conjurer with financial agency, security, and respect.

Much like local priests who gained power and standing via perceived proximity to God, Conjure women received respect and reverence from customers for their wisdom and spiritual command.²³ Practitioners were also admired for their practical skills and problem-solving roles. In her article on hex workers, Anne Kordas writes, “The ability to cure, to bring luck, to harm, to protect, to predict the future, and potentially to alter the course of history gave hoodoo women great power within their communities.”²⁴ The Conjure woman’s role as a multi-faceted and effective problem-solver contradicts notions of women as dependent upon men and ascribes wisdom seldom attributed to Black people at the time.

Magic as a Vehicle for Granting Power to Blacks and Women

Many magic rituals and recipes gave Black women exceptional power over others. For example, some Conjure women believed they could use their magic to interfere with the justice system:

²⁰ Z. Hurston, ‘Hoodoo in America,’ 320.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 376-378.

²² *Ibid.*, 369.

²³ “Women are revered in African traditions as essential to the cosmic balance of the world.” See J. K. Olupona, ‘Rethinking the Study of African Indigenous Religions,’ *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Spring/Summer 2021, <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/rethinking-the-study-of-african-indigenous-religions/> (accessed May, 2023)

²⁴ A. Kordas. ‘Hex Workers,’ 5.

Among the specialties of some hoodoo women were “courthouse spells,” which reputedly had the power to interfere with police investigations, silence witnesses, dissuade juries from finding defendants guilty, and encourage judges to impose lenient sentences on the convicted.²⁵

Certain famous Conjurers, such as Mary Leveau of New Orleans, were said to have used their powers to influence legal proceedings.²⁶ Hurston dedicates a portion of her paper, *Hoodoo in America*, to Leveau, whom she called “the greatest Hoodoo queen of America.”²⁷ According to Hurston, “People feared Hoodoo in general and Mary Leveau in particular.”²⁸ Leveau’s power seems to have extended even over *white* authority figures of the time. Hurston tells of how “When she lived in St. Anne Street the police tried to raid her place. One came and she confounded him . . . she did some work at her altar and put the whole force to sleep on her steps.”²⁹ Whether or not Mary Leveau confronted and disarmed the police, her practice of Conjure gave her a powerful reputation that was threatening even to white law enforcement. Similar incidents occurred in other parts of the country and had similar results. For example, a New York Times article from 1880 tells of defense witnesses who were intimidated by rumors that the plaintiff was a Voodoo priestess.

Suit for absolute divorce has been brought by a colored woman named Agamon against a colored man named Charles Trice . . . Counsel for the latter claims that his witnesses are afraid to testify against the plaintiff because she is a Voodoo priestess. The case was sent to a Referee.³⁰

Here again, we see that even an unsubstantiated claim of a woman practicing magic carried weight, a societal acknowledgment of the power of these female practitioners.

Thus, the use of Hoodoo and Conjure became ways for African-American women to use spirituality to transcend prejudice, exercise power over the dominant race, and sometimes gain income in the process. Kordas explains the unusual sway that came with magical expertise, “Hoodoos, unlike most African Americans, could manipulate the behavior of whites and gain assistance from them in times of

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Z. Hurston, ‘Hoodoo in America,’ 326.

²⁸ Ibid., 327.

²⁹ Ibid., 326.

³⁰ ‘Brooklyn,’ *The New York Times*, August 25, 1880, 8.

need.”³¹ Moreover, white people themselves sought the consultation of Conjure women, crossing racial barriers to access their wisdom.³² “Ethnohistorical data clearly demonstrate that many Euromericans [Americans of European descent] consulted African-American conjurers for magical assistance.”³³ Concern about serious diseases sometimes brought whites to Hoodoo doctors, who were also convinced of the Conjurers’ powers.³⁴ The crucial roles that Conjure women played gave them importance and standing as healthcare providers, community leaders, and business owners. Moreover, their acclaim allowed them to sometimes reverse standard power dynamics temporarily between whites and Blacks.

Magic as a Vehicle for Mental and Emotional Liberation

In a broad sense, magic authorized oppressed populations, particularly African-American women, to direct *themselves*, rather than submit to outside authority. Hoodoo encouraged female participants to *act* on their ambitions, independent of approval from others. Magical practices encouraged African-American women to explore their psychological landscapes. Spells and recipes for relationship success, business success, sabotage, etc. served as a catalog of emotion-driven actions for women to pick from, and the existence of this ‘catalog’ effectively permitted women to express, rather than suppress, themselves.

Magic’s capacity for expression could be used to challenge the authority of the early American patriarchal system imposed by whites, specifically the expectation that women should submit to their husbands. While African-American gender roles were relatively equal during slavery in comparison to standard white household dynamics, emancipation eventually led to the adoption of white patriarchal norms in Black society.³⁵ The use of magic among African Americans seemed to resist normalizing an imbalance between men and women. In *Secret and Sacred: Contextualizing the Artifacts of African-American Magic and Religion*, Laurie Wilkie argues that magic could be used within romantic relationships to disrupt patriarchy: “A man and woman engaged in a sexual relationship and cohabiting in a house without plumbing have a great deal of access to those bodily substances which are most potentially harmful to their

³¹ A. Kordas. ‘Hex Workers,’ 5.

³² D. Pace, *Acquiescence and Dissent*, 23.

³³ L. A. Wilkie, ‘Secret and Sacred,’ 83.

³⁴ “‘Voodoo Queens,’ one white writer proclaimed, “know far more [about dangerous plants] than many modern botanists.”” See A. Kordas. ‘Hex Workers,’ 2.

³⁵ C. Morris, ‘Black Slave Gender Roles How They Were Changed by Emancipation,’ *Proceedings of GREAT Day*, vol. 2010 (Article 17), 2010, 125-130.

mate . . . The family must trust its members not to harm each other either directly or indirectly.”³⁶ As a tool provided to both men and women, magic could level the playing field of each household; not only were women dependent on a man’s reliability, but men were also dependent on the reliability of women. Magic created opportunities for a woman to harm or be disloyal to her male partner, recognizing her capacity for independent thought and action. Hurston gives many examples of Hoodoo spells with titles like: “The Lady Who Cannot Face Her Landlord;” “The Lady Who Lost Her Lover;” “The Lady Who Had An Empty House;” “The Lady Who Lost Her Business;” and “To Keep a Man True.”³⁷ Hoodoo served as a means of acquiring power for women seeking financial stability, or control over their relationships, or status in their communities. In essence, these rituals provided a foundation for female autonomy.

Not only was magic present during marriage but also in the context of romantic non-marital relationships. In her research, Wilkie finds “Magical spells abound that are intended to destroy marriages, lead another woman’s husband away, or bind a man’s or woman’s affection to another and so forth.”^{38,39} Control in relationships was particularly important after Emancipation – the necessity for men to travel great distances to find work created opportunities for infidelity.

Following the end of slavery, African American women still faced the problem of “wandering” spouses who, while traveling in search of work, might become involved with other women. “Wandering” husbands likewise feared that their wives might seek the attention of other men while they were gone.⁴⁰

This culture recognized women not as passive objects to be owned, but rather as marital *partners* that needed to be won over. Furthermore, the idea that men needed magical aid to persuade any woman to stay in a relationship implies that women had at least some autonomy when it came to maintaining intimate personal relationships.

While magic-centered spirituality advanced ideas of female agency, it is important to note that the aspirations of women were often constrained by a male-centered worldview. For example, several Hoodoo traditions had to do with women luring in, trapping, or binding

³⁶ L. A. Wilkie, ‘Secret and Sacred,’ 91.

³⁷ Z. Hurston, ‘Hoodoo in America,’ 331-361.

³⁸ L. A. Wilkie, ‘Secret and Sacred,’ 91.

³⁹ “. . .many African Americans placed great faith in the power of the love charms that were made for them by hoodoos and continued to believe in their efficacy despite all evidence to the contrary.” A. Kordas. ‘Hex Workers,’ 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

themselves to men. While this narrative is minimizing in its portrayal of female ambition, uses of magic at least take the step of giving women an otherwise unattainable measure of agency in their relationships with men. Magic was a spirituality for the individual and a guiding force for many, but more than anything it provided an alternative school of thought to a population of women subjected to patriarchy.

The Persistence of Magic and its Presence in Modern Black American Culture

Given the decline in religiosity in America during the 20th and 21st centuries,⁴¹ one might infer that belief in magic dissipated. However, modern scholars have traced the presence of magical practices through post-abolition times, through the 20th century, and into the present day. Black society's cultural connection to magic has been preserved through stories and traditions passed down from generation to generation, thus continuing its influence on African Americans today. In an interview with PBS, Professor Kameelah Martin says, "The tradition didn't go away. It just went underground. It just evolved into something different."⁴²

Oral records tell us that women still used magic in their everyday lives in the late 20th century. A 1975 survey entitled "Hoodoo Tales in Indiana" records stories from nine Indiana University students who related their direct experiences with magic. Many of these stories include recipes that share characteristics with the spells documented by Hurston forty-four years earlier. "Paralysis and Queen Ann," told by Pearlie M., age 35, recounts how Pearlie's mother became paralyzed by a cursed object from her husband's secret lover and was helped by a Conjure woman named "Queen Ann."

My mother became ill and the doctors really didn't know what was wrong with her. She couldn't help herself up or use her body at all. So finally we took her to a lady called Queen Ann who suppose to have been able to cast demons out . . . Queen Ann looked at her for a while and then told us to take her back out, and then she told us to go home and look in the west, the southwest corner of her bedroom. To strip, take up the linoleum and things that were on the floor and in that southwest corner, ah

⁴¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, 'Belief in God in US Dips to 81%, a New Low,' *Gallup News*, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/393737/belief-god-dips-new-low.aspx>, (accessed July 15, 2023).

⁴² K. L. Martin, "Uncovering the Power of Hoodoo: An Ancestral Journey" [television broadcast], PBS Voices, 2023, aired May 16, 2023.

whatever we find, to take a metal shovel and shovel it up, and then take lye, ammonia, and scrub the entire room and repaint and everything.

And so we went home and sure enough in that corner under the linoleum was a dark ugly-looking ball of something and we did scoop it up and take it out and put it in an open fire outside and burned it . . . by the time we had finished the cycle she was back to normal.⁴³

This story is reminiscent of early Hoodoo spells that offered recipes for ridding oneself of a curse such as “The Lady Who Wishes to Be Uncrossed,”⁴⁴ which similarly instructs the hexed to pay attention to corners of rooms and to scrub the floor. Another tale recounted in the 1975 survey, “Love Potions,” touches on magic as a way for women to gain control in romantic relationships. Ms. Marilyn B., age 30, recalls as a child hearing her mother and her friends talking about love potions as the best method to seduce men.

Well . . . all I could do is remember things I used to hear my mother and older ladies sitting around the house talking about when I was a kid and I was supposed to be playing . . . I do remember two or three incidences I heard my mother and some of the older ladies talking about and they would say that the best way for a woman to get to her man was to fix him; and of course they say the best way to fix somebody was . . . through something that they ate . . . Well, they said that through urine and they said that this one lady made a habit of *peeing* in her husband’s food.⁴⁵

This story also shares traits with many spells in *Hoodoo in America*, for example, “To Make One Love You,” which instructs a woman to regain her lover by adding her urine to his food.⁴⁶ As a part of family culture, magic contributed to the late 20th-century environment in which Pearlle M. and Ms. Marilyn B. were raised. Similarities between their accounts and examples from the early 20th century show a retention of common features in magic, such as the prominence of Conjure women like Queen Ann, the use of hexed objects for malicious social intent, and the popularity of methods for controlling relationships. The fact that these common features have carried on in magic demonstrates that they were useful in survival. Martin summarizes magic’s integral role in

⁴³ E. Kullii, ‘Hoodoo Tales Collected in Indiana,’ *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, vol. 16 (no. 1/2), 1979, 77.

⁴⁴ Z. Hurston, ‘Hoodoo in America,’ 333.

⁴⁵ E. Kullii, ‘Hoodoo Tales Collected in Indiana,’ 91.

⁴⁶ Z. Hurston, ‘Hoodoo in America,’ 372.

African American survival, saying, “You and I are able to sit here today because our ancestors at some point believed and persevered because they had Conjure and Hoodoo and Voodoo and all these different spiritual traditions that allowed them to survive.”⁴⁷

Moving to the present day, evidence of the current adherence to magic in the African-American community can be found in the Pew Research Center’s 2021 study on “Faith Among Black Americans.” While the Pew researchers acknowledge that few Blacks are committed to African diasporic religions, they discovered that otherwise affiliated worshippers still engage in *elements* of magical religion such as ancestor worship; consultations with diviners; and burning candles, incense, or sage for spiritual purposes.⁴⁸ The survey also revealed that most Black Americans believe that evil spirits can cause problems in people’s lives,⁴⁹ demonstrating that Voodoo-type beliefs survive in this community.

The same adherence to magic discovered by the Pew researchers is reflected in modern Black women’s testimonies. Interviews conducted by CNBC and Huffington Post support the theory that magic has been passed down through familial oral histories into the 21st century and has reached the consciousnesses of Black women today.^{50,51} These women have credited their grandmothers with teaching them magical traditions,^{52,53} and recent scholarly work on the Black female use of magic affirms the importance of grandmothers as spiritual teachers.⁵⁴ Jacob K. Olupona, an expert in African religious traditions, explains the rise in popularity of magic among Black women: “African American women are turning more and more to goddess religions and [West African religious] practices, as they find African religion offering them

⁴⁷ K. L. Martin, “Uncovering the Power of Hoodoo: An Ancestral Journey,” 2023.

⁴⁸ T. Thompson et al., *Meet the Entrepreneurs using African Spirituality to Create Businesses*, from CNBC [video], Feb. 19, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/19/black-women-entrepreneurs-find-niche-in-spirituality-inspired-business.html?&qsearchterm=African%20Spirituality%20to%20create%20businesses>, (accessed May, 2023).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁰ T. Thompson et al., *Meet the Entrepreneurs* [video], (Feb. 19, 2022).

⁵¹ S. Romblay, ‘This Priestess is Teaching Others the Truth about Vodou and Hoodoo,’ *Huffington Post*, Sept. 24, 2020, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/haus-of-hoodoo-vodou-new-orleans_n_5f6cb31fc5b6e2c912623c13 (accessed May 2023).

⁵² T. Thompson et al., *Meet the Entrepreneurs* [video], (Feb. 19, 2022).

⁵³ S. Romblay, ‘This Priestess is Teaching Others the Truth about Vodou and Hoodoo,’ *Huffington Post*, Sept. 24, 2020.

⁵⁴ K. L. Martin, “Uncovering the Power of Hoodoo: An Ancestral Journey,” 2023.

greater religious autonomy than other Western religions.”⁵⁵ Olupona’s explanation of the draws of magic in the modern day mirrors the draws it held for Black women in the early United States as an alternative to white, patriarchal, and institutionalized theologies.

Today, magic creates opportunities for Black female practitioners to profit from their practice, while celebrating their ancestral cultures and uplifting other women. CNBC, the business news network, has noted a recent “surge”⁵⁶ in spiritual businesses. For example, Shontel Anastasia, an American woman of Caribbean, Indian, and African descent, owns a profitable business called the “Urban Gurvi Mama Shop.” “I started the Urban Gurvi Mama Shop due to the Afro-Cuban traditions that my grandma actually taught me at a young age, so I wanted to create a shop that was specifically for women, that not only guided them but taught them. . . . My grandma always told me my hands, my hands were powerful.” Notably, Anastasia transitioned from the white and male-dominated corporate world to the spiritual industry and found that she has done well, even as a Black, female small business owner.⁵⁷ Likewise, Jessyka Winston, a Voodoo Priestess and the owner of the “Haus of Hoodoo” in New Orleans, uses her magic-oriented business to uplift women. In a 2020 interview, Winston described how burning her “success candles” and “job candles” has helped her clients achieve life goals, and how her advice has taught them to prioritize their own needs over the needs of their male family members. “Every day I’m fulfilled and rewarded whenever I hear that someone benefitted from my work.”⁵⁸ These women are generating businesses that cater to Black women and encourage self-love and empowerment through magic, echoing the self-preservation, philosophy, and ingenuity of their Conjure women ancestors.

Conclusion

By molding magic to their needs, Black women contributed dynamic and woman-centric elements to African-American culture. The ease of obtaining magically significant objects and ingredients made it a convenient practice for the under-resourced African-American population and enabled believers to create their catharsis through spells, curses, and concoctions. In their positions as magical practitioners,

⁵⁵ J. K. Olupona, ‘Rethinking the Study of African Indigenous Religions,’ *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Spring/Summer 2021, <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/rethinking-the-study-of-african-indigenous-religions/> (accessed May, 2023).

⁵⁶ T. Thompson et al., *Meet the Entrepreneurs* [video], (Feb. 19, 2022).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ S. Romblay, ‘This Priestess is Teaching Others the Truth about Vodou and Hoodoo,’ *Huffington Post*, Sept. 24, 2020.

Conjure women were able to earn an income and gain social standing. In essence, these women found a way to define their power, becoming pioneers of Black female autonomy in the process. This power allowed them to sometimes bypass white patriarchal systems of control. Magical practices required agency from their female followers, contradicting notions of Black women as passive chattel. Magical spells and concoctions offered them mechanisms for emotional release and self-assertion. Magic's continuation as a cultural heirloom has preserved its role as a source of female independence. Today, magic creates opportunities for African-American women to become business owners, celebrate their culture, and support other women. Its integral role in uplifting Black women throughout American history points to magic as a cornerstone in the foundation of modern Black feminism. As Patricia Collins tells us,

US Black women participated in constructing and reconstructing these oppositional knowledges [resisting injustice while remaining subjugated]. Through the lived experiences gained within their extended families and communities, individual African-American women fashioned their own ideas about the meaning of Black womanhood. ... These self-definitions of Black womanhood were designed to resist the negative controlling images of Black womanhood advanced by whites as well as the discriminatory social practices that these controlling images supported.⁵⁹

Given the historical evidence and modern testimony by Black women that magical practices empower them, further exploration of the connections between magic practiced by Black women in the early United States and modern Black feminism promises to increase awareness of this overlooked but powerful tool for building social resilience.

⁵⁹ P. H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought, Knowledge Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 30th Anniversary edn., New York: Routledge, 2022, 33.

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MAGNA

Sociology

**Revisiting the Crown Heights Riot:
Multiethnic Hostility
at the Neighborhood and City Levels**

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Abstract

The 1991 Crown Heights riot in New York City represents one of the more significant recent examples of inter-ethnic urban violence. When the rioting was finally contained after three days of chaos, 38 civilians and 152 police officers had been injured, local businesses had suffered millions of dollars in property damage, and an innocent man was murdered by a mob. The speed and severity of the anti-Jewish fury, both violent and rhetorical, suggests considerable built-up hostility from the Afro-Caribbean Blacks of Crown Heights to their Lubavitcher neighbors. The 'power-threat' hypothesis argues that as a minority group increases in size, the majority will become increasingly antagonistic. However, findings based on a survey of American cities in the early 90s (MCSUI) suggest that neighborhood tensions may be most intense when the minority group is smaller. Respondents in neighborhoods that are more ethnically mixed and integrated are least likely to be hostile to other ethnicities. The theory appears to work at the citywide level, where a diverse city will lead to tensions between its ethnic groups competing for power and resources. Both offer reasonable explanations in the case of Crown Heights and New York City more broadly, though further study is required. The analysis of explanations for the 1991 riot offered in this paper provides a relevant context for understanding other multiethnic dynamics throughout the world.

Introduction

The Crown Heights Riot in 1991 was a nadir in Black-Jewish relations. Even observers who were unsentimental about those two communities' historic 'alliance' were shocked by the speed and severity of the anti-Jewish rhetoric and violence. Numerous explanations for this hostility have been offered in the three decades since. Many have argued for the primacy of antisemitism as a root cause. Others point to inequities and incompetence among civic institutions, especially the New York City Police Department, that ignored growing local tensions. Still, others locate the source of the conflict in the unique dynamics of Caribbean immigrants interacting with an ultra-orthodox Hasidic sect. Underneath all of these explanations is an assumption that the underlying cause of the Black community's hostility was the encroaching demographic presence of Lubavitcher Jews. This notion echoes the 'power threat hypothesis,' which argues that punitive actions from a majority group to a minority will increase as the minority grows in size and power. However, data from ICPSR's Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) suggests that this assumption may be true at the metropolitan area level, but not at the neighborhood level. Indeed, the Crown Heights crisis manifested differently at these two levels. It began in the neighborhood, where the death of a Black child by a car driven by a member of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's retinue enraged feelings of injustice among the Caribbean community. At the city level, it was exacerbated by the involvement of partisans who extrapolated the crisis to a Black versus Jewish frame, to promote their larger political mission. As analyzed by J. Eric Oliver and Janelle Wong, the MCSUI data provide a helpful explanation for this difference and insights into why the post-riot reconciliation efforts independently pursued by neighborhood community leaders were successful.

Theories of Intergroup Dynamics

The Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI), conducted from 1992 to 1994, provides data that offers insights into ethnic relations in neighborhoods like Crown Heights. Organized by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, the MCSUI was an omnibus survey project that aimed to "broaden the understanding of how changing labor market dynamics, racial attitudes and stereotypes, and racial residential segregation act singly and in concert to foster contemporary urban inequality." Using multistage sampling, adult residents in four metropolitan areas were surveyed: Atlanta (April 1992-September 1992), Boston (May 1993-November 1994), Detroit (April-September 1992), and Los Angeles (September 1993-August 1994). The

survey posed questions about how whites, Blacks, Asians, and Latinos perceive each other, including “amount of discrimination, perceptions about wealth and intelligence, ability to be self-supporting, ability to speak English, involvement with drugs and gangs,” and similar issues. In addition to a broad range of demographic questions, it also asked respondents about their current satisfaction with their neighborhood and their preferences for its ideal ethnic and racial makeup.¹

By integrating MCSUI’s attitudinal data with the 1990 Census demographics by census tract, social scientists J. Eric Oliver and Janelle Wong were able to establish several powerful findings concerning multiethnic urban environments. In “Intergroup Prejudice in Multiethnic Settings” (2003), and developed further in Oliver’s *The Paradoxes of Integration*, the data is used to persuasively suggest that, contrary to common assumption, hostility between ethnic groups at the neighborhood level does not increase with the size of a minority ‘out-group.’ The logic of this assumption is easily appreciated and is elaborated within the sociological tradition as the ‘power-threat’ hypothesis. Developed by sociologists Herbert Blumer and Hubert Blalock in the 1950s and 1960s respectively, the hypothesis argues that hostility and punitive actions from a majority group to a minority will increase as the minority grows in size and power.² This argument was developed from and for the context of Black-white relations and, as Oliver and Wong outline, may not necessarily correspond to situations where both groups are ‘minorities’ in the context of American society and where inter-communal dynamics emerge from specific contexts nothing like the Black-white tragedy of coerced immigration, slavery, and repression.

Their findings show that, in a variety of urban American multi-ethnic neighborhoods, the results are the opposite of what the ‘power threat’ model would suggest. They demonstrate that negative attitudes held by members of an ethnic ‘in-group’ that demographically dominates a neighborhood are consistently higher when the size of their majority is larger. Conversely, the hostility an ethnic group feels towards its minority neighbors decreases as they are closer in size, precisely the situation where a ‘power threat’ would expect greater animosity. Paradoxically, the predicted effect does appear, but only at the metropolitan level. Using

¹ Lawrence Bobo, et al. “Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992-1994: [Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles].” Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], April 4, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR02535.v3>

² Herbert Blumer. “Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position.” *The Pacific Sociological Review* 1, no. 1 (1958): 5. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1388607>. John Shelton Reed. “Percent Black and Lynching: A Test of Blalock’s Theory.” *Social Forces* 50, no. 3 (1972): 356-60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2577039>.

the same MCSUI data, Oliver and Wong indicate that more diverse cities, where several different similarly-sized ethnic groups are competing for resources, prominence, and power, will suffer from greater intolerance.³ The more evenly powered these ethnic groups are at the city level, the greater the hostility between them. In other words, an extremely segregated neighborhood that is in a metropolitan area where ethnic factions actively contend for status should generate the most interethnic animosity and potential for violence. This precise combination of factors applied to Crown Heights in the 1990s. At the time of the riots, the area had an 80 percent Caribbean Black population as compared to 10 percent Hasidic Jewish, within the most racially diverse urban area in the country.⁴ Given these unique demographics and the findings derived from the MCSUI data, it is not surprising that neighborhood-level tensions between the Blacks of Crown Heights and the much smaller Lubavitcher community would be exacerbated by the hyperactive racial politics of New York City and explode into open conflict. All that was required was a trigger.

The Crown Heights Riot

Crown Heights is located in central Brooklyn within New York City, bounded on the west by Prospect Park, to the north and east by the sprawl of Bed-Stuy and Brownsville, and on the south by Flatbush. In 1940, Rebbe Joseph Isaac Schneerson moved his ultra-Orthodox dynasty, known as Chabad or the Lubavitchers from Poland to 770 Eastern Parkway in the center of Crown Heights. Originating in the 1700s as a branch of the revivalist Hasidic movement, Chabad prioritized outreach to non-Lubavitcher Jewish communities, while remaining relatively insular within their community.⁵ Over the next decades, the Lubavitcher population in Crown Heights grew, bolstered by the arrival of Holocaust survivors from Europe. By the 1960s, Hasidim outnumbered the secular Jews who had populated the neighborhood since the 1920s.⁶

³ J. Eric Oliver, and Janelle Wong. "Intergroup Prejudice in Multiethnic Settings." *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 4 (2003): 573. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3186119>.

⁴ Richard Girgenti. *A Report to the Governor on the Disturbances in Crown Heights: A Review of the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Yankel Rosenbaum and the Resulting Prosecution*. Vol. 1. Albany, N.Y.: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, Office of Justice Systems Analysis, 1993, 39.

⁵ A. S. Ferziger, "From Lubavitch to Lakewood: The Chabadization of American Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 33, no. 2 (April 2, 2013): 102.

⁶ Edward S. Shapiro, *Crown Heights: Blacks, Jews, and the 1991 Brooklyn Riot*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006. 73.

Beginning in 1965, changes to federal immigration laws allowed more immigrants from the Caribbean. This group replaced the secular Jews who were by then abandoning Crown Heights, both due to the unwelcome presence of the Lubavitchers and to move to the suburbs.⁷ In 1960, the neighborhood was 70 percent white; within a decade the neighborhood had become 70 percent Black.⁸ Most of these new arrivals came from the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica, along with Guyana in South America. By 1991, four in five residents of Crown Heights were Black. Most of the remainder were Lubavitchers.⁹ The Black population was mainly Caribbean immigrants who arrived after the removal of immigration quotas in the 1965 Hart-Celler Act; many still lacked citizenship.¹⁰ The Lubavitchers were most concentrated in a dense enclave around 770 Eastern Parkway and maintained a lifestyle that necessitated limited engagement with their Black neighbors.¹¹ Despite this separation, the two communities had come into growing conflict. The state investigation on the Crown Heights riot, which published its findings in the Girgenti Report, named for the lead investigator, indicated underlying tensions that led to the conflict. In 1977, five hundred Blacks protested in front of the 71st Precinct on New York Avenue and Empire Boulevard over alleged brutality by the Lubavitch anti-crime patrol.¹² Public housing and community board disputes were perpetual sore spots, but the most potent cause of Black anger toward the Jews of Crown Heights was their close relationship with the New York Police Department. The report cites “deep resentment in the black community over... the practice of closing public streets and barricading a service road during the Jewish Sabbath...and, at times, black residents have been required to identify themselves to gain access to the streets.”¹³ To the Black community, these were examples of their white Jewish neighbors, a minority, imposing their will on the Black majority. Echoing these sentiments, Reverend Al Sharpton later described the Lubavitch community in

⁷ Rachel Buff, “Teaching Crown Heights: The Complex Language of Identity.” *Shofar* 15, no. 3 (1997): 26.

⁸ Henry Goldschmidt, *Race, and Religion Among the Chosen People of Crown Heights* (Rutgers University Press, 2006). 94.

⁹ Richard Girgenti, *A Report to the Governor on the Disturbances in Crown Heights*. Albany, NY: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, Office of Justice Systems Analysis, 1993. 40.

¹⁰ Carol B. Conaway, “Crown Heights: Politics and Press Coverage of the Race War That Wasn’t.” *Polity* 32, no. 1 (1999): 98.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹² “Jewish Anticrime Patrol Brings Protest by Blacks,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 1977, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/07/10/archives/jewish-anticrime-patrol-brings-protest-by-blacks.html>

¹³ Quoted from Girgenti, 45.

Crown Heights as a ‘Fort Apache,’ likening it to a colonialist outpost amid Native Americans.¹⁴

On August 19, 1991, Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson was returning home from the cemetery with a police escort in front and a station wagon behind him.¹⁵ The station wagon veered into an apartment building and hit two Black children, Gavin and Angela Cato.¹⁶ An ambulance run by the Hasidic emergency service, Hatzolah, arrived to take away the driver of the station wagon but not the seriously injured children.¹⁷ While the Cato children were eventually taken to Kings County Hospital, the largely Black crowd that formed around the scene began roving the streets.¹⁸ One group of Black teenagers encountered a young Orthodox student, Yankel Rosenbaum, and attacked him.¹⁹ Rosenbaum was also taken to Kings County Hospital, where he died early the next morning.²⁰ Over the next day, more NYPD officers were dispatched to Crown Heights to suppress disturbances, but violent protests and street fighting continued. A group of youths assaulted Lubavitcher Isaac Bitton and his son on Schenectady Avenue between President and Carroll Streets.²¹ On Wednesday, Dinkins was mobbed by rioters and, when he tried to calm the raucous crowd, received boos and objects thrown at him.²² Finally, the next day, First Deputy Commissioner Raymond Kelly deployed more aggressive tactics.²³ With officers now empowered to make immediate arrests and use force to disperse crowds, incidents were limited to an evening demonstration in

¹⁴ Dovid Margolin, “Jews Don’t Run: The Rebbe and Lessons from Crown Heights - On the 30th Anniversary of the Riots, How Crown Heights Survived to Remain a Thriving Jewish Neighborhood,” Chabad.org, August 19, 2021.

¹⁵ Shapiro, 2.

¹⁶ Girgenti, 55.

¹⁷ John Kifner, “A Boy’s Death Ignites Clashes in Crown Heights,” *The New York Times*, August 21, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/21/nyregion/a-boy-s-death-ignites-clashes-in-crown-heights.html>.

¹⁸ Girgenti, 57.

¹⁹ Philip Gourevitch, “The Crown Heights Riot & Its Aftermath,” *Commentary Magazine*, January 1, 1993, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/philip-gourevitch/the-crown-heights-riot-its-aftermath/>.

²⁰ Conaway, 96.

²¹ Joseph P. Fried, “Vivid New Court Statements Detail Crown Heights Clash,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/03/nyregion/vivid-new-court-statements-detail-crown-heights-clash.html>.

²² Lynne Duke, “Racial Violence Flares for 3rd Day in Brooklyn,” *The Washington Post*, August 22, 1991, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/08/22/racial-violence-flares-for-3rd-day-in-brooklyn/719de3c5-766a-4a24-b344-883f6ac72953/>.

²³ Girgenti, 102.

front of 770 Eastern Parkway.²⁴ There were no incidents on Friday or Saturday. The Crown Heights riot was over, but everyone was aware that the conditions that had led to the violence remained. As *The New York Times* described it, a “yawning psychic chasm between uneasy neighbors was still apparent on the streets.”²⁵

Citywide Actors and the Response to the Riots

Throughout the riots and the aftermath that followed, local hostilities were magnified by the involvement of powerful city-level actors and factions with their interests. For these players, the real battleground was not street protests and violence, but rather their performance in local media and city elections. ‘Crown Heights’ was only one chapter in a narrative of injustice they claimed existed for much longer and on a greater scale than this specific event and were energetic in fulfilling the role of a champion to address it. Most importantly, the interplay between these two levels of multi-ethnic competition – neighborhood and city – had the intention and effect of broadening the public’s perception of the crisis from a Caribbean Black-Lubavitcher clash into a Black-Jewish or even a Black-white conflict.

Two individuals deserve recognition for their role in generalizing and amplifying racial tensions between the Lubavitchers and the Crown Heights Black community during the three-day conflict, as well as for impeding early efforts at reconciliation: the Reverend Alfred C. Sharpton and the former United States Attorney for the Southern District Rudolph W. Giuliani. In 1991, Sharpton was one of America’s highest-profile civil rights activists, an advocate for victims of racially motivated crimes like Michael Griffith and Yusuf Hawkins. He had also been criticized for his involvement in the controversial Tawana Brawley rape incident.²⁶ To Sharpton, the death of Gavin Cato was another example where those who murdered Black people were not brought to justice. Sharpton was involved in demonstrations during the week of the riots, some of which devolved into violent confrontations, although he was not personally involved in the fighting. On the second day, Reverend Al Sharpton and activist Lenora Fulani led a rally on Utica Avenue that became a charge on police lines.²⁷ But it was the Reverend’s campaign for attention in the weeks that followed the riots that threatened to break

²⁴ Shapiro, 41.

²⁵ “In Crown Heights, Simmering Tensions and a Fragile Peace,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/23/nyregion/in-crown-heights-simmering-tensions-and-a-fragile-peace.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

²⁶ Shapiro, 20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

the fragile ‘ceasefire’ between the two communities. Gavin Cato’s funeral was on August 26, 1991. Both Mayor Dinkins and Sharpton attended. While Dinkins offered brief remarks that called for peace and reconciliation, Sharpton delivered a fiery eulogy. He declared that “[t]hey don’t want peace. They want quiet. If they want peace, look at the arrangements in Crown Heights and make it equal.”²⁸ Infamously, he compared Jews to diamond dealers in South Africa, suggesting that the Jews who lived in Crown Heights were connected to the apartheid regime.²⁹ The shocking cries of “Heil Hitler” heard during the riots were a spontaneous street-level sentiment, but Sharpton deliberately used his speeches to imply that Lubavitchers were part of a larger conspiracy of Jews working to undermine Blacks in New York and America. He used the riots as an opportunity to promote his city-level political agenda, even when it did not necessarily reflect the realities of tensions in Crown Heights.

The other city-level actor, aligned with the Jewish community, was Rudolph Giuliani. In 1989, he ran as a Republican for mayor against Dinkins and lost, but he planned to run again in 1993. Giuliani saw in the Crown Heights riot a wedge issue to divide the Black and Jewish communities that were core components of the Democratic coalition in New York, as well as to undermine Dinkins’ persona as a racial healer and Jewish ally. A version of this strategy was ‘previewed’ in 1992 by Republican Senator Alfonse D’Amato, then struggling for his re-election. His campaign claimed that the Senator was the first public official to call the riots a ‘pogrom,’ insisting that his Jewish opponent, Abrams, was “hiding” on the issue.³⁰ In his close victory, the Senator managed to win a plurality of the Jewish statewide vote, nearly 40 percent, far higher than a Republican would normally receive.³¹ As the mayoral election in 1993 approached, Giuliani planned to use the Crown Heights riot to sabotage Dinkins’ Jewish support, essential to winning what was likely to be, like 1989, a very close election.³² On November 26, 1992, more than a year after the riots, the mayor delivered a televised Thanksgiving sermon that

²⁸ Dick Sheridan, “No Indictment: Calm Follows Storm,” *Daily News*, September 6, 1991, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/468908227/>.

²⁹ Shapiro, 158.

³⁰ Lally Weymouth, “On the Stump with Al D’Amato,” *The Washington Post*, November 1, 1992, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1992/11/01/on-the-stump-with-al-damato/12b68d26-9cb7-4143-a13f-44db9ac3b102/>.

³¹ Alessandra Stanley, “The 1992 Elections: New York State -- U.S. Senate Race; D’Amato: Combining Money, Attacks and Foe’s Blunders,” *The New York Times*, November 5, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/05/nyregion/1992-elections-new-york-state-us-senate-race-d-amato-combining-money-attacks-foe.html>.

³² Edward S. Shapiro, In conversation with the author, May 7, 2023.

included a defense of his conduct in Crown Heights and called for healing and unity. Jewish politicians and allies attacked the speech for failing to engage with his mistakes and for characterizing his detractors as “rabble-rousers.”³³ Giuliani castigated Dinkins for refusing to address what happened to the victims of the riots. “The people who are the most emotionally involved in this...are sitting out there with all the same questions they had the day before the speech.”³⁴ As the election approached, Giuliani began describing the events of August 1991 as a ‘pogrom,’ which Dinkins and other Democratic commentators argued was “race-baiting” and divisive.³⁵ When the election arrived in November, Giuliani’s strategy had paid off. With nearly the same margin as the election of 1989, he defeated Dinkins.³⁶ According to exit polls, Giuliani won nearly two-thirds of the Jewish vote that year, including 97 percent of the Jewish vote in Crown Heights itself and nearby Williamsburg.³⁷ Both Sharpton and Giuliani gained stature from the crisis, proving the political utility of making a neighborhood crisis into a city-wide symbol.

Intergroup Socialization as Reconciliation

Over the months that followed, the post-riot campaigns of Sharpton and Giuliani, which were trumpeted on the front pages of the city’s tabloids and in mass demonstrations, became increasingly disconnected from the realities of peace-making efforts on the ground in Crown Heights. Work to reconcile the communities was already underway, focused on making change from the ground up rather than messaging in the media. Leaders in both communities hoped that success could be found by bringing their people together to communicate rather than throwing rocks or racial slurs at one another. Oliver’s *The Paradoxes of Integration* offers support for the integration-building efforts of the Crown Heights community leaders in its analysis of the MCSUI survey data. In every urban area studied, friendship relationships with members

³³ Joel Siegel, “Dave in Pitch for Peace,” *Daily News*, November 26, 1992, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/469955487/>.

³⁴ James C. McKinley Jr., “Dinkins, in TV Speech, Defends Handling of Crown Hts. Tension,” *The New York Times*, November 26, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/26/nyregion/dinkins-in-tv-speech-defends-handling-of-crown-hts-tension.html>.

³⁵ Edward S. Shapiro, “Interpretations of the Crown Heights Riot.” *American Jewish History* 90, no. 2 (2002): 106.

³⁶ Janet Cawley, “Giuliani Defeats Dinkins in Down-to-Wire New York Mayor’s Race,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 3, 1993, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1993-11-03-9311030172-story.html>.

³⁷ “Jewish Voters Back Giuliani in New York Mayoral Upset,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 4, 1993. <https://www.jta.org/archive/jewish-voters-back-giuliani-in-new-york-mayoral-upset>.

of other ethnic groups are shown to have a significant effect on lessening neighborhood racial hostility. There is a nearly 20 percent increase among respondents who “feel close with blacks” or “feel close with whites” among the opposite race for those who report relationships with the other group.³⁸ Forging racially and ethnically mixed connections lowers racial prejudices, even in neighborhoods with dangerous levels of ethnic divide. Wong and Oliver are cautious about the reasons for this effect.

Given that the conditions in which interracial contact promotes racial understanding (e.g., equal status and goal sharing), it may simply be mere social exposure that leads to increased tolerance.... [R]esidents of integrated neighborhoods are more likely to participate in integrated civic associations that can often provide the ideal circumstances for interracial contact and may weaken negative racial attitudes.³⁹

Similarly, Crown Heights neighborhood leaders intuitively recognized that interracial contact could heal the tensions not only from the riots but those that had developed over the decades between the Blacks and Jews.

When the news of Gavin Cato’s death arrived at 770 Eastern Parkway, the initial response of the Lubavitcher leader, Rebbe Schneerson, was to not discuss the incident at all.⁴⁰ As the riots spiraled out of control, the Rebbe offered a vague gesture of goodwill: “It’s not in the nature of the Jewish people to have war,” which to many seemed like it did not adequately address the causes of the violence nor the anger in the Black community.⁴¹ To their credit, the Lubavitchers recognized that they had to reach out to their neighbors to ensure the violence would not return.

Since 1964, the West Indies Labor Day Parade has provided a celebration of the numerous ethnicities who made up the Afro-Caribbean community of Crown Heights. The Lubavitchers had long disliked the event, which encroached on their enclave on Eastern Parkway. In 1991, they used the Crown Heights riot as an opportunity to see it canceled due to the risk of the crowd turning violent.⁴² However,

³⁸ Oliver, 125.

³⁹ Wong and Oliver, 580.

⁴⁰ David Gonzalez, “As Racial Storm Rages, Hasidic Leader Is Aloof,” *The New York Times*, August 26, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/26/nyregion/as-racial-storm-rages-hasidic-leader-is-alooof.html>.

⁴¹ Shapiro, 9-10.

⁴² Manuel Pérez-Rivas, “Looking to Have a Good Time,” *Newsday*, September 1, 1991, <https://newsday.newspapers.com/image/706198907/>.

Mayor Dinkins, who was to serve as Grand Marshal of the parade, brokered a compromise where an increased police presence would be put in place and the event went on as planned.⁴³ Lubavitcher representatives even joined the Afro-Caribbean leaders and the mayor, sending a hopeful message amidst the increased police presence and an atmosphere of distrust between the two groups.⁴⁴ Hasidic institutions also tried to rectify the mistakes that led to the violence. Hatzolah was the Jewish ambulance service that many Blacks held accountable for taking Yosef Lifsh, who crashed his car, instead of bringing the Cato children to medical attention. A week after the fatal accident, Hatzolah refurbished an ambulance owned by a Black organization for a joint service that would help both Jews and Blacks rather than discriminate.⁴⁵ In April 1992, community leaders held a “Seder of Reconciliation,” which would foster cultural exchange between the two groups and would “bridge the divide between Blacks and Jews.”⁴⁶ Even while the public sphere was consumed by the seeming failure of the message of reconciliation with Sharpton’s Cato eulogy, community leaders took the lead in moving forward and healing the wounds that had been opened by the week of August 21. It remained necessary to build organizations that would prevent an event like the riots from happening again.

After the riot, two youth group leaders, Richard Green, a Black, and David Lazerson, a Jew, joined together to set up Project CURE to provide activities that might unite teenagers from the two communities and help build tolerance.⁴⁷ Green and Lazerson started by hosting pickup basketball games where Lubavitchers and Afro-Caribbeans got to know each other, helping to dispel stereotypes each group had of the other.⁴⁸ Soon the program grew into after-school activities that discussed the “rich friendship between blacks and Jews historically” while providing extracurricular activities to young people who might not otherwise have access.⁴⁹ Green also worked on street outreach that

⁴³ Jeff Neverson and Don Singleton, “A Time to Heal, Celebrate,” *Daily News*, September 1, 1991, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/469093249/>.

⁴⁴ Leslie Wines, “Rabbis March in Caribbean Parade - UPI Archives,” *UPI*, September 2, 1991, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1991/09/02/Rabbis-march-in-Caribbean-parade/1869683784000/>.

⁴⁵ “A Gift of an Ambulance,” *The New York Times*, August 28, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/28/nyregion/a-gift-of-an-ambulance.html>.

⁴⁶ Henry Goldschmidt, *Race, and Religion Among the Chosen People of Crown Heights* (Rutgers University Press, 2006). 139.

⁴⁷ Shapiro, 222.

⁴⁸ Andrew L. Yarrow, “Blacks and Jews Take It to the Hoop,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/12/nyregion/blacks-and-jews-take-it-to-the-hoop.html>.

⁴⁹ Reuven Blau, “Amid Hate Spike, A Crown Heights Leader Pleads for Peace,” *The City*, January 13, 2020,

would “intercept these young people before it got to the critical point” that might lead to further violence. These actions lowered local rates of youth crime.⁵⁰ In January 1993, Project CURE hosted a scrimmage at halftime during a Knicks game, Racial Harmony Night, that celebrated the camaraderie and breaking of barriers that sports could achieve.⁵¹ Project CURE continues to provide programs to bring together young Blacks and Lubavitchers, using interethnic socialization to lower tensions between the two groups.⁵²

Anna Deavere Smith’s one-woman play, *Fires in the Mirror*, based on interviews conducted with Crown Heights residents, follows in the same communitarian ethos that motivated Project CURE and other efforts. By presenting the transcripts without edits, Smith centers the individuals and their stories and, crucially, the different perspectives to show the complexity of the situation. Along with narratives of the riot itself, she tells the story of a Lubavitcher woman asking a Black boy for help turning off the radio on the Sabbath and a Black girl’s view on the fashion choices of other ethnicities at her high school. She brings together both firebrands like Minister Conrad Muhammad of the Nation of Islam and activists like Norman Rosenbaum. The latter is portrayed both to deliver a speech about the need for justice for his brother, the murdered Yankel, and in a more personal reflection about how he learned the news of his brother’s death and how he felt. The spirit of the project might be best described by Richard Green when Smith quotes him arguing that men like Sharpton “didn’t have any power out there really. The media gave them power... Those young people had rage like an oil well fire that has to burn out.” The line emphasizes the centrality of individual choices and emotions to the conflagration that emerged. Smith’s play criticizes the role played, and not played, by citywide figures in events like the riots. She focuses her hope on the neighborhood

<https://www.thecity.nyc/brooklyn/2020/1/13/21210620/amid-hate-spike-a-crown-heights-leader-pleads-we-have-to-do-better>.

⁵⁰ David Mark Greaves, “Interview Richard Green Co-Founder, Crown Heights Youth Collective Patriarch, American Hero” *Our Time Press*, July 7, 2019, <https://ourtimepress.com/interviewrichard-greenco-founder-crown-heights-youth-collectivepatriarch-american-hero/>.

⁵¹ Ira Berkow, “Sports of The Times; Question: Can We All Run Together?” *The New York Times*, January 25, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/25/sports/sports-of-the-times-question-can-we-all-run-together.html>.

⁵² Eli Cohen, “Three Days of Rioting Shattered Crown Heights. Thirty Years of Peacemaking Helped Put It Back Together.” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 19, 2021, https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/three-days-of-rioting-shattered-crown-heights-thirty-years-of-peacemaking-helped-put-it-back-together/?preview_id=1318742&utm_source=NYJW_Maropost&utm_campaign=NYJW_Daily_Update&utm_medium=email.

people at its center, and in doing so indicates that change is possible when focused on the community.

Conclusion

Explanations for the Crown Heights riot have ranged from a socioeconomic disparity between the two communities, inequity, and bias in treatment by the police, specific dynamics within the Caribbean Black and Lubavitcher cultures of Brooklyn, as well as a more general resurgence of that ancient hatred, antisemitism. To some extent, all of these are likely true. But the broadest potential explanation, and the most instinctual, echoes the ‘power threat hypothesis’ developed in the 1950s and 60s to explain structural racism. Applied here, this hypothesis would suggest that hostility from the Black community of Crown Heights was the result of the growing and encroaching demographic presence of Lubavitcher Jews, an argument that has common-sense parsimony, as well as less admirable resonance with antisemitic discourse.

The 1992-1994 MCSUI data, however, implies that this theory may not be sufficiently explanatory at the neighborhood level that any explanation for Crown Heights requires. From surveys of Atlanta, Detroit, Boston, and Los Angeles, results show that hostility between Blacks, whites, Latinos, and Asian Americans does not increase as minority out-groups grow in size. In contrast to expected results from the ‘power threat’ model, hostility declined in neighborhoods in which ethnic groups became closer in size and connection. With the postulation that New York City should exhibit similar dynamics to the four surveyed cities and that Caribbean Blacks and Hasidic Jews behave similarly in multi-ethnic settings as those other surveyed groups, one explanation for Crown Heights, then, is not that the Black population perceived its hegemony to be eroding and threatened by the Lubavitchers, but rather that ethnic demographic dominance causes or is accompanied by interethnic hostility. Further study is necessary to suggest whether this theory is broadly applicable where the demographics might not align with Oliver’s model as well as Crown Heights.

The so-called paradox further suggested by Wong and Oliver’s analysis of the data is that the ‘group threat’ hypothesis does, however, operate at the metropolitan level. More evenly diverse cities suffer from greater interethnic hostilities while those with one dominant group feature less. While the reason for this clear difference between the two levels of analysis remains unclear, it is useful to consider how they might interact, at times with pernicious effects. A more diverse city, like New

York, will have vigorous competition and resentment between ethnic groups. This may function to amplify and disseminate the hostility generated by highly segregated settings, like 1990s-era Crown Heights. When the riots are examined with the benefit of time, it seems probable that this neighborhood/city dynamic provided at least a contributing factor. If so, it is likely that the efforts at reconciliation diligently pursued by Crown Heights local leaders, to ignore their city-level advocates and partisans and develop deeper relationships between members of their very distinct communities, is partly responsible for the decades of enduring peace between Blacks and Jews in the neighborhood. It points to a possible solution to multiethnic tensions in other cities, given similarly diverse populations on the neighborhood and city levels.

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**Motherhood at the Crossroads:
A Deconstruction of Gender, Class, and Race
in Leïla Slimani's *Chanson Douce***

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Abstract

This study examines the portrayal of femininity, motherhood, and race in Leïla Slimani's novel, *Chanson Douce*. More specifically, it analyzes Slimani's storytelling and character depictions to uncover both implicit biases against working mothers and racial preferences in nanny hiring. The research delves into how the 2016 novel prompts readers to confront their own biases toward working women and women in non-traditional roles, making it pertinent to contemporary discussions on neo-momism and womanhood. The research is based upon Slimani's novel, interviews, other published works, and personal views and role in how race is perceived in France; and also, upon various additional feminist theorists' works, including Hélène Cixous and Simone de Beauvoir. Utilizing feminist theories and French cultural context, *Chanson Douce* implicitly alludes to the aforementioned themes. Her nuanced representation of these themes enriches comprehension of modern feminist literature, providing distinct perspectives that challenge societal norms and prejudices. This is particularly true when discussing race, as Slimani purposefully chooses when and when not to acknowledge the racial dynamic present between her characters. *Chanson Douce* effectively sheds light on crucial aspects of human experiences and societal dynamics, allowing Slimani to comment on neo-momism, class, and ethnicity in contemporary France.

Introduction

Femininity, while present in all cultures, takes different forms and is subject to several gender stereotypes that honor centuries-old patriarchal traditions. Indeed, women have been relegated to the domain of maternity, care, and affection due to their biology and other traits that are often associated with their gender. These include archetypes like the 1950s housewife, Victorian etiquette, and the chief role of wife and mother.

Femininity, womanhood, and differences associated with gender and biology have been heavily discussed and debated by a large number of female authors and gender equality advocates. Hélène Cixous was among these pioneering feminists from the last century. In her 1975 piece, *Le Rire de la Méduse*, Cixous discusses *l'écriture féminine* or how women can use writing as a space to reclaim power, autonomy, and freedom:

Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely at the loss of words, ground and language slipping away – that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak—even just open her mouth – in public.¹

Here, Cixous comments on the simultaneous difficulty and importance of being a female author and speaking about the issues that matter most to women within society through the process of writing. Simone de Beauvoir, another renowned thinker, explored the same concepts. In her famous 1949 book, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, she reflects on the “social, not biological, construction of femininity,”² by arguing that, “The ideal of feminine beauty is variable; but certain requirements remain constant; amongst other things, since the woman is destined to be possessed, her body must offer the inert and passive qualities of an object.”³ Beauvoir considers the job that is assigned to women to fulfill its inhuman realities, such as complete objectivity. Complexities of this quote are revealed when compared to the writings of her peer, Michel Foucault, a contrarian transdisciplinary theorist. In Foucault's writing, he develops the idea of thinking differently about the opposite sex, however, this difference is not an othering factor, it is neutral and disengaged.⁴ The neutrality introduced by Foucault ends the perpetuity of the required

¹ Hélène Cixous. *Le Rire de la Méduse*. 2010.

² UNC Chapel Hill. *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex) (1949)* by Simone de Beauvoir.

³ Simone de Beauvoir. *Le Deuxième Sexe*. 1949.

⁴ Roe Sybylla. *Making Our Freedom: Feminism and Ethics from Beauvoir to Foucault*.

objectivity that Beauvoir claims is vital. It is female theorists like Cixous and Beauvoir, as well as philosophers like Foucault, who paved the way for modern-day female authors and feminists to continue fighting for female liberation within the patriarchal order.

A third author, Leïla Slimani, brings a new twist to these feminist discussions. She further expands on these sociological debates by involving more topical feminist preoccupations, such as race and class. This research explores how Slimani's 2016 novel, *Chanson Douce*, weaves together themes of femininity, race, and motherhood, resulting in an engaging story that seeks to deconstruct the intricacies of human connections and societal norms. Through her two female protagonists, Myriam and Louise, Slimani presents a nuanced portrayal that exposes the intricate relationships between womanhood, motherhood, class, and race in today's globalized society.

Dissecting Racial Constructs: Insights into Slimani's Personal and Literary Worlds

Leïla Slimani is a French-Moroccan journalist whose work explores the boundaries of psychological, biological, and historical fiction. After leaving her native Morocco to study political science and media studies at Sciences Po and ESCP Europe, she worked as a journalist for *Jeune Afrique* until 2011. Three years later she published her first fictional novel in 2014 titled *Dans le Jardin de L'ogre*, which explores a French woman of North African descent's struggle with sex addiction. In 2016, she won the Prix Goncourt for her second novel, *Chanson Douce*, which allowed her to become an internationally known novelist. Lauren Collins in 2017 discussed the novel in *The New Yorker* claiming, "I was both beguiled and a little shocked by Slimani's audacity in laying claim to [the story of *Chanson Douce*]." ⁵ One can argue that her highly visually detailed but casual writing style and exploration gave new perspectives on harmful societal norms.

Slimani is currently in the process of writing her third novel in a trilogy called *Le Pays des Autres*. This trilogy's stories are rooted in her own family's experience during Morocco's period of decolonization in the 1950s. This research, however, focuses strictly on her novel *Chanson Douce* – the most-read book in France in 2016 given its complex and troubling exploration of motherhood, femininity, and their interconnectedness with issues of race and class. In this novel, Slimani troubles her readers with a subtle and raw portrayal of motherhood through one of the most gruesome and tragic infanticides known to

⁵ The New Yorker. The Killer-Nanny Novel That Conquered France. 2017.

French literature. The first sentence of the novel reads, “The baby is dead,”⁶ immediately portraying death as a central theme throughout the novel. Here, Slimani appears to be influenced by Albert Camus’ *The Stranger*, whose famous first line is “Today, Mom is dead.”⁷ In a published interview, *Comment J’écris*, Slimani admits that motherhood was at the forefront of her mind while writing this novel, given that she is a mother herself. However, she is also conscious of how motherhood intersects with the graphic and gruesome details of infanticide, inspired by the 2012 infanticide of two children in New York by their nanny, portrayed in the book. She describes how her family was shocked upon reading the novel, indicating the impact of the narrative’s content: “This is the scene that traumatized my whole family. When they read the manuscript before publication, they said, ‘No, but really, that you can imagine such horrible things, we will forever be amazed.’”⁸

Slimani is also the personal representative of Emmanuel Macron, the current French president, within the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*. This role is interesting, as it puts her in a position where she is expected to be an advocate for diversity in the Francophone world, which conflicts with her troubling and color-blind statement about not believing in race: “I don’t believe in race. In France, we never use this word. You have a nationality, or maybe you have an ethnicity, an identity, but I don’t like this word.”⁹ This statement is both troubling and opens the opportunity for readers to question her intersectional activism. Readers can wonder whether or not she is more than an acolyte to French values with no true understanding of the implications that race plays in the lives of women in France and beyond. On one hand, she is the face of la Francophonie and la *diversité* in France, yet she perpetuates French Republican values of color blindness, which conflict with her prior claims of using her writing to fight for women of all races and walks of life.

In France, students are taught that race does not scientifically exist and should not be used in relation to French citizens. The idea of racism is taught to secondary-school-aged students; however, there is a theoretical finger pointed at the United States, blaming the country for the existence of racism, a dramatic oversight of colonial history in France, and racism as it exists in France. In these classroom settings, race

⁶ Leïla Slimani. *Chanson Douce*, 2016. 1.

⁷ Albert Camus. *L’Étranger*. 1942. 1.

⁸ Leïla Slimani. *Comment J’écris*. 2017.

⁹ Rebecca Carroll. REBEL: Author Leila Slimani Explains Why She Doesn’t Like the Word ‘Race’. *Gothamist*. February 27, 2019.

is not used to refer to people, as it is considered inhumane. The word “race” was even removed from the French Constitution in 2018.¹⁰

Slimani does, however, acknowledge her racial and ethnic background. In an interview with *Words Without Borders* discussing postcolonial trauma, she says, “I’m a mixed-race person: I’m both French and Moroccan, I speak Arabic and French, and I’m part Muslim, part Christian.”¹¹ As she continues to reflect on her study of post-colonial Morocco for her newest trilogy, *Dans Le Pays des Autres*, she acknowledges the scandal of her grandmother’s marriage to an Arab man, as a white woman. She reflects, “It was accepted when it was a Frenchman having sex with an Arab woman (Frenchmen conquered the country, so they could conquer the women, too) but it was different when it was a white woman having sex with my grandfather, who was dark-skinned and very manly.”¹² During the period after Morocco gained independence, in the second half of the 19th century, a new conversation was inspired regarding subjectivity and the subjectivity of ethnicity. Foucault writes in *The Subject and Power* “...nowadays, the struggle against the forms of subjection – against the submission of subjectivity – is becoming more and more important, even though the struggles against forms of domination and exploitation have not disappeared.”¹³ In her comments about the conquering of Moroccan women and culture, Slimani emphasizes the forms of domination present, but, by focusing on her grandmother’s scandal, she follows Foucault’s argument that the interest has since changed to forms of submission. Throughout the rest of the interview, Slimani reflects on her childhood, including how speaking French at home in an Arab country was one of the scars that colonialism left on her family. She mentions that in France, colonialism is a topic many do not want to speak about, so she tries to gloss over it. While she discusses the colonization of Morocco and race issues and analyzes French culture’s intersection with that of Morocco, she, nor her publishers, ever use her ethnicity as a marketing point. However, Slimani’s government role as the face of the Francophonie inherently includes discussions of race, especially about the French versus Francophone peoples throughout the world.

¹⁰ Rokhaya Diallo. Opinion: France’s Dangerous Move to Remove ‘Race’ from Its Constitution. The Washington Post.

¹¹ Madeleine Feeny. “You Belong Nowhere”: Leïla Slimani on the Trauma of Colonialism and Her Forthcoming Novel. *Words Without Borders*. July 29, 2021.

¹² Madeleine Feeny. “You Belong Nowhere”: Leïla Slimani on the Trauma of Colonialism and Her Forthcoming Novel.

¹³ Michel Foucault. *The Subject and Power*. 1982. 6.

In the same interview with *Words Without Borders*, Slimani reflects on themes and struggles of motherhood and its relationship with freedom:

You feel hurt when you look at your children and want to abandon them, be alone, or return to the time before motherhood...How do you live with this metaphysical, very universal, very complex feeling that is simultaneously love and entrapment? You can also feel it in marriage, in work; sometimes the thing you love the most is also the thing that makes you feel most alienated. As a human being, you are always seeking freedom, and the more you grow up, the more you understand that freedom is very complicated. To be truly free, you would need to have no attachments.¹⁴

These themes of motherhood were explored in Myriam's character throughout *Chanson Douce*. Throughout the story, she struggles with wanting to return to her professional life, but having to also take care of the children, or feeling as though she inadequately does so, leaves her trapped between both lives. Like Myriam's character, Slimani is also a working mother. Her introspection to her experience is shared through her books, and because she is one of the first to explicitly acknowledge these difficult feelings, it has become part of her brand.

Distorting the Mary Poppins Archetype: Louise the Monstrous Caregiver

Slimani's *Chanson Douce* was inspired by the 2012 death of two American children, murdered by their Dominican nanny. She imagines a similar story, except she bases it on Paris and portrays the nanny as a white, French woman. The book starts in the present day, amidst a gory murder scene of two infant children, Adam and Mila, who are being rushed to the hospital. Myriam, their mother, is described thoroughly throughout this chapter. Slimani uses phrases like, "The mother was in a state of shock," or, "It only took a couple seconds."¹⁵ These types of phrases mimic a police report, portraying the image of the scene and allowing the reader to get emotionally involved and become a part of this investigation.

The rest of the book is a flashback starting a year before the murder when Myriam was ready to end her career as a stay-at-home housewife and return to her career as an attorney. Myriam is unique to

¹⁴ Madeleine Feeny. "You Belong Nowhere": Leïla Slimani on the Trauma of Colonialism and Her Forthcoming Novel.

¹⁵ Leïla Slimani. *Chanson Douce*, 2016. 13, 14.

the story in the context that she is Moroccan, and married to a white man, Paul Massé. When she and Paul look for a nanny for their children, they find Louise to be the *Perfect Nanny*.¹⁶ Louise was a native French speaker, well-mannered, seemingly clean-cut, and above all, white. Quickly, she became a vital member of the Massé household, cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children, as well as giving herself and her time to the job, sometimes staying the night there. Paul and Myriam later decide to bring Louise along on a family vacation to Greece. During this trip, Louise reveals that she does not know how to swim, a revelation that deeply upsets Paul as he feels embarrassed by her, and so he commits the rest of his vacation to teach Louise how to swim. This is one of the first times Paul and Myriam confront the class differences between themselves and Louise. Throughout the rest of the novel, similar class and race-based tensions arrive more and more frequently. Through these tensions, the reader learns more about Louise's background with an abusive husband, Jacques, and a runaway daughter, Stéphanie.

As Patricia Uberoi writes in *Sociology, Gender, Family Studies: Regressive Incorporations*, "The family is a basic source of domination and oppression: of...men over women and children...the family is (or could or should be) the source of important social values – of love and caring... – that 'healthy' families are the basis of 'healthy' society."¹⁷ In combining this idea – that if someone comes from a healthy family, they will become a healthy contributor to society – with the storyline of *Chanson Douce*, Slimani adds layers to Louise's character. Without having come from a healthy family, Louise falls into a pattern of idolization in the Massé household, pretending it is flawless. She begins to live vicariously through the Massé household, believing that she deserves to be a part of their family as a way to escape the reality of her miserable life of poverty and loneliness.

After shifting the focus away from Louise and the Massé family, the final chapter does not continue to build up to the murder; rather, it is an epilogue written from the perspective of the detective in charge of the murder case. The final note that is implied is that the detective does not know, and will never know, why Louise killed the children – a narrative tactic used by Slimani to empower her readers to reach their conclusions. The race and class-based tensions against Louise, as well as an expectation of Myriam to never return to her law profession because of

¹⁶ The *Perfect Nanny* is the title of *Chanson Douce* when translated for British audiences. The direct translation of *Chanson Douce* is Sweet Song, similar to the American translation of the title: *Lullaby*.

¹⁷ Patricia Uberoi. *Sociology, Gender, Family Studies: Regressive Incorporations*.

its long hours, identical to those of her husband, turn the reader against Myriam for choosing to confide her children to a stranger to pursue her career goals. By leading the reader to believe that the murder of her infant children is Myriam's fault, rather than that of Louise, Slimani makes a point of the tasking expectations put upon the working mother. Through the use of this narrative thread, Slimani brings attention to the unreasonable expectations that are put on the modern woman who is expected to both care for her children and yet continue to contribute to the household by joining the labor force, even though the infanticide was committed by someone else. Myriam is indirectly blamed for the death of her kids, while her husband, who was equally involved in the selection of their perfect nanny, is not.

To add further layers to this commentary on the complexity of gender relations and the unreasonable expectations put on women in modern society, Slimani decides to bring race into the mix. Her choice to make Louise's character simultaneously white, and less rich than the Massés points out a disturbance in the country's historically sound system rooted in monarchy, colonialism, and racial prejudices. In an interview with *Vogue*, Slimani said, "The fact that Louise performs work that is usually done by immigrants only adds to her feeling of being socially downgraded."¹⁸ Louise's race gives her a significant advantage over other candidates for the nannying position, being that the rest were immigrants and women of color. This is one of the many ways the racial dynamic – Louise being white and Myriam being a woman of color – is used as a tool for Slimani to make a point of unconscious biases that may be ingrained in her reader's minds. The couple wishes to have a white nanny, believing that she will do a better job of raising their children than a woman of color. However, they overlook the fact that Myriam, herself, is a woman of color on the basis that she is wealthy, further complicating the novel. In the scene where Paul and Myriam are interviewing babysitting applicants, "Myriam was very clear. She did not want to hire a *Maghrébine*¹⁹ to babysit."²⁰

In addition to this classism, the first half of the timeline in Slimani's book continues to depict Louise as essentially flawless. Only later is vital information regarding her inability to take care of her daughter, Stéphanie, whom she severely abused and neglected, revealed. The relationship between Louise and Stéphanie is extreme, to the point where Louise is disgusted by her own daughter. Halfway through the

¹⁸ Leïla Slimani for *Vogue*. 'It's Impossible to Tell the Story of Morocco Without Employing Sensuality': An Interview with Author Leila Slimani. 2022.

¹⁹ Term for a North African person.

²⁰ Slimani. *Chanson Douce*. 29.

book, Slimani writes, “Louise, definitely, hates the weekends...Stéphanie complained of doing nothing on Sundays, of not having the right to engage in the activities that Louise organized for the other children.”²¹ This background information tells a story contradicting the pre-existing notion of Louise’s seemingly picturesque resume, thus further complicating the Massés’ racially motivated approach to choosing the perfect nanny, which sadly led them to choose the most unfit caregiver. Incorporating Stéphanie into Louise’s archetype allows Slimani to play into the ideologies of authors such as Terry Caesar in *Motherhood and Postmodernism*; “...in the space where the mother is, there is room for one story only: the child, as a child, is to be referred to its origin, where the mother stands ready to provide care and nurture.”²² Allowing Louise to be defined by the children (both from Louise’s and the Massé family) agrees with Caesar’s claim, making Louise’s failing relationship with Stéphanie, and Myriam’s continuation of a professional life, define them both as “bad” mothers.

Louise was quick to disown her background when she began working for the Massé family. Believing she deserves to live the lavish, central Parisian life of her employers, Louise loses herself in her work and loves Adam and Mila obsessively. However, this obsession slowly veers into her viewing them as her very own children, and she begins feeling as though she is the fifth member of the family by making herself indispensable. When the children start gaining independence, she goes as far as wanting to arrange for the couple to have intercourse to conceive a third child, which would potentially enable her to extend her presence in the family home. When she realizes that the couple has no intention of having another child and that the clock is ticking, Louise’s mental state deteriorates and she transforms into the monstrous and murderous caregiver that Slimani’s readers know her to be from the very first line of the novel.

Distorting the Perfect Mother Archetype: Myriam’s New-Age Motherhood and Internalized Racism

As the mother of the story’s victims, Myriam’s character takes an interesting role. She is split between being a good mother who is expected to take care of her children, and her dreams and aspiration to succeed in her career as a lawyer. After Louise manages to make herself indispensable to the family in an attempt to never leave her new life, Myriam has close to no role in the children’s lives, and she hands off all her parental duties to Louise who steps in at the most essential mother-

²¹ Slimani. *Chanson Douce*. 99.

²² Terry Caesar. *Motherhood and Postmodernism*. 1995.

child moments and takes full care of the kids' daily needs. Paul, of course, still sees Myriam as his wife and does not acknowledge Louise all that much. He is very dismissive toward her and after the previously mentioned Greece trip, he begins to dislike her, as she is no longer seen as the perfect nanny in light of her poverty. As Cixous writes in *Le Rire de la Méduse*, "...a woman is never far from 'mother' (I mean outside her role functions: the 'mother' as non-names as a source of goods). There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink."²³ Here, Cixous writes about the societal constraints of motherhood, which Slimani portrays through Myriam, who, while minimally acting as a mother, cannot escape the maternal role in the novel. This is apparent both in the home and at work, because of the multitude of expectations placed on her. Among these, due in part to Paul's lack of involvement, is Myriam's role as Louise's primary employer. This job is an addition to her "motherly duties." It gets added onto her long and tasking work schedule, which is identical to her husband, who is not nearly as participatory in the household. This is why, as the story retraces the year leading up to the murder, the reader subconsciously begins to blame Myriam for the children's deaths. The reader asks questions such as, why did she trust the children with someone who would eventually murder them? Were there signs of violence from Louise that Myriam overlooked out of convenience to continue her job? What if Myriam came home earlier every day, and spent more time observing Louise's interactions with her children? But the question that Slimani is asking is, why is Myriam the one blamed when she and Paul worked an equal number of hours and came home late an equal number of days? The answer is that there is a preexisting expectation for mothers to live only to serve their duty to society as maternal contributors, with no room for forgiveness. In *Deviant Care: Chanson Douce and the Killer Nanny*, Julie Rodgers writes "It is clear from the outset in *Chanson Douce* that the myth of motherhood does not correspond to the lived experience...Myriam's sense [is] that she is being physically consumed and psychologically unhinged by mothering..."²⁴ The guilt of not having a traditional spot in her children's lives eats at Myriam. She struggles with splitting her commitment between herself and her children, rather than fully committing to them.

Unlike her relationship with Louise, Myriam's race is not a point of tension in her relationship with her husband. During the period of French colonization of Morocco, it was fully accepted for a white man to be romantically or sexually involved with an Arab woman. These types of relationships just became extensions of the conquering of Morocco

²³ Hélène Cixous. *Le Rire de la Méduse*. 2010.

²⁴ Julie Rodgers. *Deviant Care: Chanson Douce and the Killer Nanny*.

and its culture. Especially evident in one scene of the book, Wafa, another nanny that Louise befriends at the park, and someone who is clearly of immigrant status in France, shows the race difference and alienation applied to and expected of nannies in Paris. Another notable detail is that Myriam, being a biblical name coming from the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, and Saint Mary Magdalene, is a popular name in both France and Morocco. Miriam is the traditional French spelling, but this name choice was entirely intentional on Slimani's part for its fluidity in both countries' cultures. Her name has a deep history in both countries and continues the dynamic of her representation in both countries.

Throughout the story, it also becomes evident how Myriam's financial standing bestows upon her certain advantages that other women of her race may not readily enjoy. Her character is used to show how socioeconomic dynamics and wealth impact a person's life. Being that her wealth status undoubtedly puts her in a powerful position compared to other women of her race, she is an educated and ambitious professional with an expanded roster of opportunities. Ultimately propelling her career forward, her well-paying job and high education are a rarity among other Moroccan women mentioned in the book. Her greatest wealth-based advantage is having the ability to hire a nanny like Louise. Because of this advantage, she can dedicate more time to forwarding her career. Myriam's wealth effectively relieves the burdens of domestic labor and eases her children's impact on her life. As well as this, she has the choice of which nanny to choose and decides based on a racial preference. Myriam's wealth-based privilege is subtly shown throughout the book. Enjoying cultural and leisurely activities out of reach for others, her financial status shapes her identity and self-perception. Her wealth, however, does not entirely shield her from the reality of racial prejudice and discrimination. She still faces subtle bias and microaggressions explicitly mentioned in the story, as well as the implicit awkwardness of the racial preference of a white nanny, by an Arab woman.

The Crossroads of Care: Disturbing Encounters of Motherhood and Mother-work

The nanny-mother or employee-employer dynamic between Louise and Myriam is the central theme of *Chanson Douce*. It shows the intricacy of power, dependency, and blurred boundaries in their relationship. Originally, Louise's entry into Myriam's life seems promising, but as faults such as underlying tensions and complexities become apparent, it is clear this is not the case. Louise's character is

introduced with an unassuming and nurturing presence. Slimani portrays the power dynamics with Myriam in the dominant role as the employer, and Louise is dependent on her employment for financial stability. As Louise weasels herself into the family, she starts to become an integral member. She maintains a possessive affection toward Mila and Adam, often asserting her authority over them and making decisions without consulting Myriam. The trip to Greece raised concerns for Myriam since it is where she begins to grapple with gratitude for Louise's commitment as well as discomfort in her level of involvement in their lives. Slowly, throughout the novel, the power dynamic shifts. The revelation that Louise has secretly been living in the family's apartment further disrupts the balance. This hidden living arrangement not only invades Myriam's personal space but also alters the dynamic, as now Louise has further insight into the family's private life. Myriam's sense of security shatters and she begins to feel vulnerable in her own home.

Louise also envies Myriam's affluent lifestyle. The slight tension there causes Louise to be simultaneously in awe of and resentful towards Myriam's privilege. That dynamic is visible in scenes such as when Louise accompanies Myriam to a high-society party. At that moment, her discomfort and sense of inadequacy are evident, furthering the divide between the two women. Louise's financial dependency on the family keeps her in a position of subservience. She is acutely aware that her livelihood is tied to her ability to maintain a *façade* of being the perfect nanny, causing her to suppress her frustrations and insecurities. This is visible as Louise goes to great lengths to appear agreeable and devoted to Myriam. Near the climax of the novel, Myriam decides to part ways with Louise.

Paul's initial views of Louise align with Myriam's. However, as the narrative progresses, Paul and Louise's interactions take on a different tone than those between Myriam and Louise. Paul becomes increasingly uncomfortable with Louise's intense attachment to their children, perceiving it as excessive and possessive. He also goes to lengths to embarrass her, when she embarrasses him. During the Greece trip, after Paul lashes out at Louise, he commits the remaining vacation time to teaching her how to swim and infantilizing her, by requiring her to wear children's floaties on her arms to show her childlike knowledge of swimming. He is also continuously disgusted by her thinness because it reminds him of her poverty. He says, "You are so petite that even children's armbands fit you!"²⁵ Louise's presence also causes a greater distance between Paul and Myriam's relationship. He feels excluded and replaced in some aspects of parenting. This leads to feelings of jealousy

²⁵ Slimani. *Chanson Douce*. 81.

and insecurity for Paul, and his interactions with Louise bring to light the issue of gender dynamics within the employee-employer relationship. Louise's traditional characteristics of caregiving and domestic responsibility evoke a sense of masculine pride in Paul. He is discomfited by Louise's ability to effortlessly care for the children and maintain the household, as he feels the urge to assert his significance and contribution to the family. Louise challenges Paul's preconceived notions about social class and privilege. He is often embarrassed by her working-class background, in social events together.

One of the key traditional traits of being a good mother is selflessness and undivided dedication to one's children. Myriam, as a mother, is expected to prioritize her children above all else. However, as she immerses herself in her career, the boundary between motherhood and professional life is blurred. Myriam struggles with guilt, conflicted feelings, and a desire to excel in her career while staying present for her children. She fears that Louise is replacing her role as the mother. Louise takes on the traditional caring role of the mother figure. She cares for Adam and Mila deeply and her excessive devotion removes the children's autonomy. There is competition and jealousy between Myriam and Louise.

Another traditional maternal trait is being able to provide for one's children. Myriam's professional and financial success allows her to ensure a comfortable life for her children with access to plentiful opportunities. Louise struggles to provide for her own family, much less the Massés. Myriam holds the upper hand in this dynamic, and Louise is left vulnerable at the mercy of her employers who slowly develop a deep hatred and disgust towards her and her poverty. The societal expectation of mothers as caregivers and homemakers impacts Louise's perception of her worth and identity. She finds purpose and validation in her role as the nanny, equating her value as a person with her ability to care for the children. This blurring of boundaries between her personal identity and professional role leads to a sense of possessiveness and pride over the children, which later escalates into a chaotic scene resulting in a monstrous infanticide. Effectively, Louise's self-worth becomes tied to her position within the family – she would rather be in jail for murder than be alone and vulnerable.

Conclusion

In *Chanson Douce*, issues of class, gender, race, and motherhood intertwine to create a compelling narrative that delves into the complexities of human relationships and societal expectations. Through

the characters of Myriam and Louise, Slimani skillfully examines the dynamics of power, dependency, and blurred boundaries in the nanny-mother or employer-employee relationship. Slimani's masterful storytelling weaves together the racial, gender, and class dynamics of modern Paris, challenging social norms and shedding light on the complexities of motherhood and womanhood. The characters of Myriam and Louise represent the broader struggle that women face in modern society, balancing their aspirations with societal expectations and the ever-evolving notion of femininity. *Chanson Douce* serves as a thought-provoking exploration of the multifaceted nature of womanhood and the impact of race, class, and motherhood on human relationships. Slimani prompts the reader to reflect on their own biases and societal pressures that shape individual experiences.

After publishing *Chanson Douce*, Slimani made a profound impact on the French literary world and beyond, and the novel's success catapulted her into international fame. Her other texts, specifically *Dans Le Jardin de L'Ogre*, continue to explore themes of femininity and monstrosity in ways that keep the readers intrigued by her disturbing narrative choices. Her leading female characters always have a vice that exposes them to society's harsh realities and they are all seen undergoing psychological fights that reveal the harsh battles that many modern women universally face. In *Chanson Douce*, Myriam's voice was her seeming inability to reconcile between motherhood and work, and not only did it cause a psychological dilemma for her, but it even cost her the lives of her own children. Beyond the literary realm, Slimani's work sparked vital conversations on gender, race, and class dynamics, fostering greater awareness and empathy for the complicated lives that women lead throughout the world. As such, her contributions continue to inspire and shape discussions on social issues worldwide.

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*Interdisciplinary:
Film and Cultural Studies, History*

The Battle for Dominance in the Skies: How Sci-Fi Films Reflected Societal and Political Concerns during the Space Race

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Abstract

The Cold War era coincided with a rapid rise in the popularity and influence of science fiction films. These movies often used allegories to track the political atmosphere of the times, such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), an examination of foreign infiltration released at the height of McCarthyism and the Red Scare. Other early Cold War-era films, such as *Destination Moon* (1950) helped to set the stage for acceptance of space exploration as a realistic and achievable goal. Once the Space Race was in full swing, the American public was exposed to more films highlighting the dangers posed not only by potential nuclear annihilation but also by technology itself. Prominent examples are two masterpieces, both directed by Stanley Kubrick: *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). President Kennedy relied on two main themes to justify the immense costs involved with the Space Race: a fear of Soviet domination paired with appeals to American Exceptionalism and American national identity as explorers of new frontiers. This paper examines how contemporaneous films tracked societal and political concerns during the Cold War and pivotal years of the Space Race, thus helping the American public contemplate and understand the risks and benefits associated with new technologies and space exploration.

Introduction

“Listen now, for the sound that forevermore separates the old from the new.”

– NBC radio network announcer on the night of October 4, 1957, describing the beeping sound emanating from the Sputnik satellite as it crossed over the United States.¹

American fears about the Cold War escalated dramatically when the Soviet Union suddenly announced to the world that they had successfully deployed the world’s first artificial satellite, Sputnik I. By the time the American public was made aware of Sputnik, the satellite had already passed over the US twice without being detected.² With the launching of Sputnik, the morale of US citizens was severely tested. Stephen King, the horror writer, recalled years later that he was watching a movie when an announcement interrupted, telling the audience about the launch of Sputnik. King describes the utter disbelief that followed and how America’s national image as a nearly invincible country was shattered in an instant.³ During World War II, while Europeans suffered heavy damage from the Nazis, not a single bomb was dropped on the continental United States, which added to this heightened sense of American invincibility going into the Cold War.

By the time of the Sputnik launch, the Cold War was already a decade old. Throughout the entire Cold War, popular films played an important role in both shaping public thought toward the Soviets and in garnering support for the United States’ immense military spending to combat this new adversary. During these years, the science fiction genre markedly flourished. Sci-fi books and films revealed to the public, often hyperbolically, both the risks and opportunities of venturing into space. Science fiction films from the Cold War era helped the American public contemplate and understand the issues associated with new technologies and space exploration and eventually helped support the decision to push forward and explore space and push humanity toward the unknown.

¹ Paul Dickson, “Sputnik’s Impact on America,” PBS, November 5, 2007, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/article/sputnik-impact-on-america/>.

² Roger Launius, *Reaching for the Moon: A Short History of the Space Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

³ William McConnell, *Living through the Space Race* (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 104.

The Early Years of the Cold War

The first decade of the Cold War is distinguished by America's extreme anti-communism and an intense apprehension of nuclear war. Americans had recently witnessed the power of atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sci-fi literature had eerily foreshadowed the dropping of the atomic bomb decades before; the use of atomic weaponry was common in science fiction magazines and comics prior to the bombing. Ray Bradbury, the science fiction author, claimed in response to the bombings that he was not surprised and that he, "had read about it and thought about it for years!" Additionally, H.G. Wells, another science fiction author, predicted the atomic bomb decades prior.⁴ Since the representations of the atomic bomb in science fiction proved correct, the American public could hardly be blamed for their paranoia of aliens, space exploration, and technology as we entered the Cold War.

After the conclusion of World War II, Soviet forces, led by Stalin, began to push into Eastern Europe. To the democratic nations of the world, the Soviet Union had seemingly replaced the Nazis in trying to spread their radical political ideas. Churchill chillingly described the division in Europe by stating, "An iron curtain has descended."⁵ The rise of communism in China and North Korea added to the fears of Americans, implying that communism was spreading like wildfire and that the US might be the next to succumb to its grasp. Another fear common in the US was the idea that communist spies had infiltrated the government and were in abundance in everyday society. Joseph McCarthy, a Wisconsin senator, stated (with scant evidence) that there were 205 "known communists" in the State Department. McCarthy, having been put into the spotlight by the media, planted the idea in the public that communist subversion could be genuine. In the face of these threats, both real and perceived, the global stage was set for intense competition between the superpowers.⁶

Science fiction films during the 1950s, exemplified by Don Siegel's 1956 classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, reflected and intensified the prevailing Cold War anxieties by allegorically portraying the fear of communist infiltration and forced conformity in American society. *Body*

⁴ For information on sci-fi literature, Ray Bradbury and H.G. Wells see Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994), 257.

⁵ For info on Churchill and resources sent into Europe, see Charles Bahmueller, *The 1950s in America*, (Hackensack: Salem Press, 2005).

⁶ For info on McCarthyism and the Red Scare, see Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in the Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

Snatchers presents a chilling narrative where extraterrestrial beings replace humans with emotionless duplicates, mirroring the perceived threat of communist infiltration during the Cold War era. The film captures the fear of losing individuality and succumbing to conformity, a concern deeply rooted in the societal climate of McCarthyism and the Red Scare. The film's narrative unfolds in a small town where residents are gradually replaced by pod-like replicas, mirroring the paranoia and distrust prevalent during the time. The film effectively amplifies the audience's anxieties by capitalizing on the political climate of the era, emphasizing the importance of vigilance and the preservation of individuality in the face of a perceived outside threat. *Body Snatchers'* underlying threats of conformity and the loss of individuality resonated with audiences who were already grappling with the notion of a potential communist invasion, making it a significant cultural artifact of the era.

In parallel with the dystopian vision of *Body Snatchers*, these early Cold War years also planted the seeds of the possibilities of space exploration. *Destination Moon* (1950) depicts a story of four astronauts who must overcome several obstacles to successfully land on the Moon.⁷ This groundbreaking film not only kickstarted the rise of science fiction media in the 1950s but was also praised for portraying space travel in an accurate way to appeal to a wide range of audiences, something that was rare in sci-fi media up to this point.⁸ One film reviewer pointed out that even though a scientist in the film mentioned how the first nation to have missiles on the Moon would control Earth, the most captivating aspect of the film is that, "it is exciting to climb aboard the ship with those four men ... to wiggle and squirm with them in agony as their silver tube roars into space."⁹ To American citizens who were invigorated by ideas of American Exceptionalism after having prevailed in WWII, space offered a seemingly new goal that was previously thought to be unreachable.¹⁰ *Destination Moon* helped further motivate the American people by making it seem like the audience was right there on the ship with the astronauts; through this film, science fiction was close to becoming reality.

One other major theme of the early Cold War science fiction films is that Americans and the US Government were unquestionably the "good guys." In this period with rapid new technological

⁷ Irving Pichel, *Destination Moon* (Eagle-Lion Classics), 1950.

⁸ Bradley Schauer, "The Greatest Exploitation Special Ever": *Destination Moon* and Postwar Independent Distribution (Film History 27, no. 1 (2015)), 1-28.

⁹ Bosley Crowther, *Destination Moon, George Pal Version of Rocket Voyage, New Film at Mayfair*, (*New York Times*, June 28, 1950).

¹⁰ Robert Allison, *History in Dispute* (Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2000), 241.

development, the government had to justify its efforts to the public; science fiction media helped bolster public support for the government by demonstrating how the government could help if things went awry. *The War of the Worlds*, a film released in 1953 based on the famous book by H.G. Wells, depicts an alien invasion of Earth and the government's efforts to fight back against these hostile Martians. It bolsters the idea that when humanity ventures into space, the US military would be willing to defend against any threats found.¹¹

The Rise of the Space Race

The Space Race became the key battlefield in the Cold War and kicked into high gear in the late 1950s through the 1960s. Several years after the historic achievement of the Sputnik satellite, the Soviets achieved another milestone when Yuri Gagarin successfully completed the first human orbital flight. Americans began to question the strength of the Soviets in comparison to their own, and since scientific advancements in space were seen as representative of military might on earth, these early Soviet achievements were seen as signs that the US was falling behind and helped to kickstart America's full engagement in the Space Race.¹²

In partial response to the Soviet's achievements, President Eisenhower enacted the National Aeronautics and Space Act in 1958. This pivotal legislation created NASA, an independent agency dedicated to the peaceful exploration of space.¹³ In essence, Eisenhower's act was a tangible response to the public sentiment that had been nurtured by science fiction films like *Destination Moon*. By establishing a national framework for space exploration, the United States demonstrated its readiness to step beyond the confines of Earth, a move that was as much a product of the Space Race's geopolitical importance as it was a response to the societal excitement that space travel was possible. The US had come to recognize that space exploration was becoming a military necessity.¹⁴

President John F. Kennedy was quick to realize the importance of the Soviet's early superiority in the Space Race. In his inaugural address, JFK described the situation as one where each superpower, despite the

¹¹ Byron Haskin, *The War of the Worlds*, (Paramount Pictures, 1953).

¹² Lily Rothman, "Read TIME's Original Report on the Sputnik 1 Launch," *Time*, October 3, 2017, <https://time.com/4958422/sputnik-1957-report/>.

¹³ Miles Waggoner, "Space Act Signed 15 Years Ago," *NASA Technical Reports Server*, July 29, 1973, <https://ntrs.nasa.gov/api/citations/19730019136/downloads/19730019136.pdf>.

¹⁴ Allison, *History in Dispute*.

immense costs involved and despite already having the capacity to fully destroy the other, was “both racing to alter the uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind’s final war.”¹⁵ JFK realized that this idea of the Balance of Terror (later known as the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)) would quickly become imbalanced if the Soviets were able to expand upon their Sputnik achievement and extend their lead in the Space Race.¹⁶

In JFK’s famous 1962 “We Choose to Go to the Moon” speech, he sets out the importance of the US fully entering and winning the Space Race.

We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own. Whether it will become a force for good or ill depends on Man, and only if the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence can we help decide whether this new ocean will be a sea of peace or a new terrifying theater of war.¹⁷

Elsewhere in this speech and other related speeches to Congress, President Kennedy sets forth the goal of landing a man on the Moon by the end of the decade. In addition to the fear and danger of Soviet space superiority, Kennedy also alludes to ideas of American Exceptionalism in arguing for the importance of the space program to uphold the idea that the US was the leading technological power.¹⁸ In its way, space represented the same frontier that the New World was to the early colonists, and this call for America to uphold its legacy of exploration helped bolster national support for the Space Race.¹⁹ All these factors, from fear of Soviet superiority to this hopeful message about American Exceptionalism, helped JFK and his successors maintain Congressional and public support for the prodigious investments that were crucial in the Space Race.

¹⁵ John F. Kennedy, “President John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address,” Speech, January 20, 1961.

¹⁶ For information on nuclear deterrence theories and doctrines see David McDonough, “Nuclear Superiority or Mutually Assured Deterrence: The Development of the US Nuclear Deterrent,” *International Journal* vol. 60 no. 3 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.2307/40204064>.

¹⁷ John F. Kennedy, “Address at Rice University on the Nation’s Space Effort,” Speech, Rice University, September 12, 1962.

¹⁸ Allison, *History in Dispute*, 256.

¹⁹ Allison, *History in Dispute*.

Kennedy's dual justifications of fear and hope become central themes throughout the Space Race. His inaugural address recognition that a war between the superpowers would be "mankind's final war" was quickly put to the test in October 1962 by the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Not even two decades removed from the end of WWII, the Cuban Missile Crisis forced humanity to again confront the terrifying prospect of global devastation. In response to this crisis, the US, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union passed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963, which signaled an international acknowledgment of the need to limit the development of nukes.²⁰

At the same time as geopolitical tensions during the Cold War escalated, the threat of nuclear annihilation provided a grim backdrop for the era's science fiction narratives. Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* released in 1964 is a stark reflection of this reality that satirically portrays the absurdity and grave consequences of nuclear warfare.²¹ Released only two years after the Cuban Missile Crisis concluded, the film tells a dark and comedic story of a worst-case scenario where one crazed general can launch bombs at the USSR, causing imminent nuclear destruction. A critic in the *New York Times* stated that the film "manifests no reverence for American ideals" and it "indulges in the most insidious and highly dangerous form of public opinion tampering."²² While the film was not initially well-received by the public, talk of Dr. Strangelove in the media certainly had US citizens thinking about atomic annihilation. The fact that the film implied that one person could bring about nuclear annihilation was a terrifying idea that most people initially dismissed as an exaggerated hyperbole. In retrospect, the film was reasonably accurate in displaying the ease of access to the US nuclear arsenal. President Eisenhower had agreed to let high-ranking officers authorize nuclear weapons in the case of an emergency if the President was not available, and nuclear weapons worldwide were often poorly handled, stored without any locks, and transported by unsafe means. For example, Harold Agnew, a Los Alamos physicist, mentioned how he saw German planes with Iron Crosses carrying American atomic bombs.²³

²⁰ Boyer, *Bomb's Early Light*, 356.

²¹ Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, (Columbia Pictures, 1964).

²² Michael Getler, *Strangelove Reactions*, (*New York Times*, March 1, 1964).

²³ For information on Eisenhower, nuclear bombs, and Harold Agnew, see Eric Schlosser, *Almost Everything in 'Dr. Strangelove' Was True*, (*The New Yorker*, January 17, 2014).

Through its biting wit and exaggerated characters, *Dr. Strangelove* magnifies the anxiety surrounding the nuclear arms race, showcasing the potentially catastrophic outcomes resulting from human error, miscommunication, and the inherent dangers of an unchecked nuclear arsenal. The film serves as a scathing critique of the geopolitical tensions and a haunting reminder of the devastating power of nuclear weapons.

Kennedy's parallel hopeful message and appeal to American Exceptionalism and frontier spirit was reflected in the film *First Men in the Moon* (1964) directed by Nathan Juran and based on the novel by H.G. Wells. Released in the same year as *Dr. Strangelove*, this film depicted a fictional lunar expedition and the discovery of an advanced lunar civilization. *First Men* presents an alternative realm of wonder and adventure, providing a temporary respite from the all-consuming fear associated with nuclear annihilation on Earth.

President Kennedy argued that the US was not losing the Space Race because we lacked resources or brainpower, but because we lacked unity and a common goal.²⁴ Kennedy's speeches and early American space programs such as the *Mercury* and the *Apollo* missions set off a period highlighting what Americans could accomplish when the best minds come together for the singular goal of getting to the Moon.²⁵ This sense of hope and solidarity was underscored by stories of the human spirit prevailing in sci-fi films. *Marooned*, a popular film in theaters in 1969, tells the story of three American astronauts who get stranded in orbit.²⁶ Suspense continues to build as the crew's oxygen level decreases. *Marooned* highlighted the strength of unity and the need to stay together during desperate times, with the film's last scene ending when the rescue shuttle is launched.²⁷

With the Space Race in full swing by the mid-1960s, films began to examine not just the dangers of space exploration, but of advanced technology itself. The best and most famous of these is Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey*, where a crew is attempting to find the origins of mysterious black monoliths found on both Earth and the Moon; the crew is accompanied by a seemingly infallible artificial

²⁴ McConnell, *Living through the Space Race*, 36.

²⁵ For information on the early American space programs, see John Logsdon and Roger Launius, eds., Volume VII, *Human Spaceflight: Projects Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo* (Washington DC: National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2008), 387-439, digital file.

²⁶ John Sturges, *Marooned* (Columbia Pictures, 1969).

²⁷ Howard Thompson, *The Screen: Marooned, Space Film, Opens the New Ziegfeld*, (New York Times, December 19, 1969).

intelligence named HAL 9000, which in the end decides to kill the crew rather than disclose classified data about the monoliths.²⁸

This film deeply resonates with the idea that our technological creations, for example, atomic bombs or artificial intelligence, could potentially become destructive to us. This fear was particularly exemplified in the development of ICBMs and the deployment of automated systems in various aspects of society, from applications ranging from domestic life to space exploration. A well-known example of these continuing atomic fears is a political advertisement aired by the Lyndon B. Johnson campaign in the election of 1964, known as the “Daisy” ad, which depicts a young girl counting the petals as she plucks them off from a daisy and then cuts to an explosion of a nuclear bomb.²⁹ The fact that politicians were using the threat of nuclear annihilation as a primary justification for their election shows just how strongly this fear was rooted in society at that time.

While world leaders and later presidents recognized the need for solidarity to triumph over the Soviets, they also recognized how space could be a mechanism to not only beat Communism but also bring together democracy. JFK’s successor Lyndon B. Johnson acknowledged the risk of space exploration but also realized that it could usher in a new age of peace since space did not hold past legacies that plagued international relations up until that point.³⁰ If nations proceeded on their own, they would just extend their policies into space. Therefore, unity not only among the US citizens but also among all democratic countries was necessary.

The Late Years of the Cold War

On July 20, 1969, an estimated 600 million people worldwide (one-fifth of the world’s population) watched as Neil Armstrong became the first man on the Moon.³¹ The Moon Landing was a significant victory for the United States and fulfilled the promise of a lunar landing made by President Kennedy nearly a decade earlier. In another parallel to the movies, news coverage of the Moon Landing was cinematic in scale,

²⁸ Stanley Kubrick, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1968).

²⁹ Dan Nowicki, “Daisy Girl’ political ad still haunting 50 years later,” USA Today, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/09/07/daisy-girl-political-ad-still-haunting-50-years-later/15246667/>.

³⁰ McConnell, *Living through the Space Race*, 30-36.

³¹ Tiffany Hsu, “The Apollo 11 Mission Was Also a Global Media Sensation,” New York Times, July 15, 2019, accessed July 29, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/15/business/media/apollo-11-television-media.html>.

with the lead producer of CBS News describing their 32 hours of coverage as “a big blockbuster kind of motion picture,” with costumes, animation, and a news coverage team so large that the end credits lasted for seven minutes.³²

By the early 1970s, the superpowers had spent enormous amounts on the Space Race and expanding their respective military power. Finally realizing that they each had enough nuclear weapons to destroy the other many times over, both sides began to seek a thawing of their relationship. A major consequence of this easing of tensions was the movement towards nuclear arms control, including the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) signed in 1972 resulting in the United States and the Soviet Union agreeing to limit the number of nuclear warheads, marking a significant change in the environment of the Cold War. SALT represented a recognition from both superpowers that a perpetual arms race would benefit no one.³³ At the same time, the growing acceptance of the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (a successor to Kennedy’s Balance of Terror) helped to somewhat calm the public that nuclear annihilation would be kept at bay, at least for the time being.

These improved relations extended directly to the Space Race itself. JFK himself foresaw this ideal of unified mankind working together in this new frontier. One less well-remembered aspect of Kennedy’s *Moon Speeches* was the vision he laid out for cooperation between the great powers.

There is no strife, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation may never come again.³⁴

The idea that the Soviets could cooperate with us in space was reflected in both *Destination Moon* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Both movies feature scenes in which Soviet astronauts attempt to come to the aid of American astronauts in distress. These scenes would likely have been unimaginable to American audiences in the early years of the Cold War, but now we see depictions again of the Soviets as part of our shared humanity. JFK’s original vision of cooperation in space between the

³² Hsu, “The Apollo 11 Mission”

³³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 199-201.

³⁴ John F. Kennedy, “Address at Rice University on the Nation’s Space Effort,” Speech, Rice University, September 12, 1962.

great powers was reflected in the “Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes,” signed by President Nixon and Soviet Premier Kosygin in Moscow in May 1972. This newfound spirit of cooperation reached its apex with another major milestone on July 17, 1975, when the superpowers embarked on their first joint space mission, the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, marking the end of the Space Race.³⁵

Throughout the 1970s, science fiction films and television continued with the dual themes of hope and fear that Kennedy had originally set forth. *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) is a film that explores the government’s handling of a public health crisis utilizing science and technology when a deadly virus is brought to Earth from space.³⁶ *Star Wars* (1977) highlighted an epic space battle between the forces of good and evil.³⁷ One of the top-grossing movies of all time, the cultural importance of *Star Wars* was recognized by the National Society of Film Critics as the most influential film of the 1970s.³⁸

In 1983, the world perhaps came the closest to a nuclear disaster since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Stanislav Petrov was an officer in the Soviet Air Defense Forces whose role was to monitor any potential nuclear launch by the US. On the morning of September 26, 1983, the computer systems Petrov was looking at indicated that the US had launched five nuclear missiles at the Soviet Union.³⁹ It was a time of heightened tension between the superpowers because, just three weeks earlier, the Soviets had shot down a Korean Airlines Boeing 747 passenger plane, killing all onboard, including a US Congressman.⁴⁰ It was against this backdrop that Petrov had to react to the signals coming from his computer screen, while all his training and protocol required that he immediately respond to a US nuclear attack by launching Soviet nuclear missiles in return. Petrov had a hunch that his computer system

³⁵ Eric Betz, “Apollo-Soyuz Mission: When the Space Race Ended,” *Astronomy*, July 21, 2020, accessed July 29, 2023, <https://www.astronomy.com/space-exploration/apollo-soyuz-mission-when-the-space-race-ended/>.

³⁶ Robert Wise, *The Andromeda Strain*, (Universal Pictures, 1971).

³⁷ George Lucas, *Star Wars*, (20th Century Fox, 1977).

³⁸ Jay Carr, *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics’ 100 Essential Films* (Cambridge (Mass.): Da Capo Press, 2002).

³⁹ Greg Myre, “Stanislav Petrov, ‘The Man Who Saved the World,’ Dies At 77,” NPR, September 18, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/18/551792129/stanislav-petrov-the-man-who-saved-the-world-dies-at-77>.

⁴⁰ Philip Taubman, “Theories and Conspiracy Theories,” *The New York Times*, April 21, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/21/books/theories-and-conspiracy-theories.html>.

was malfunctioning, which turned out to be correct. The story of this false alarm incident did not emerge until many years later.⁴¹

In cinemas, 1983 also saw the release of the thriller *War Games*, which brought together several of the major Cold War science fiction themes of the prior decades. A teenage hacker accidentally sets off a US military AI computer system designed to retaliate against the Soviets in the event of a nuclear attack. The hero causes the AI to run multiple simulations of “unwinnable” scenarios by first teaching it Tic-Tac-Toe, and then the AI applies its new knowledge to conclude that any nuclear war is unwinnable. Kennedy’s doctrines of the “balance of terror” and MAD had held true – our common humanity and survival relied on neither superpower being able to win the Cold War to achieve this balance.

Just six short years after the Petrov false alarm incident and the release of the *War Games*, President George H.W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declared an end to the Cold War at the Malta Summit in December 1989.⁴² Two years later, on Christmas Day, 1991, the Soviet hammer and sickle flag was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time as the Soviet Union collapsed.⁴³

Conclusion

At its core, the Cold War was a battle of communist versus capitalist ideologies as well as a battle for military superiority. While the Space Race was the major proxy battle for highlighting each side’s technological abilities and potential military might, it also catalyzed social movements and other arenas where this ideological battle took place. For example, one major consequence of the Space Race was the rise of the environmental movement. Images of Earth taken from space helped people appreciate the fragility of the planet, and commentators have noted that it is no coincidence that the first Earth Day occurred within a year of the Moon Landing.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Myre, “Stanislav Petrov.”

⁴² Joshua Shiffrin, “The Malta Summit and US-Soviet Relations: Testing the Waters amidst Stormy Seas,” Wilson Center, accessed July 29, 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-malta-summit-and-us-soviet-relations-testing-the-waters-amidst-stormy-seas>.

⁴³ US Department of State Office of the Historian, *The Collapse of the Soviet Union*.

⁴⁴ Mike Wall, “Earth Day at 50: How Apollo 8’s ‘Earthrise’ Photo Helped Spark the First Celebration,” Space.com, April 14, 2022, accessed July 29, 2023, <https://www.space.com/earthrise-image-apollo-8-earth-day-50th-anniversary.html>.

While the Space Race deeply affected films during the Cold War era, the battle for space supremacy extended its influence on popular culture beyond the movies and onto multiple arenas. In the sports world, the 1980 United States Olympic hockey team's "Miracle on Ice" victory over the Soviet Union is still widely considered the greatest upset in the history of sports.⁴⁵ In entertainment, technology, and futurism became prominent themes. Disneyland created an entire section of its amusement park called Tomorrowland, with themed rides and attractions such as the Astro-Orbiter, the Flight to the Moon, and the still-running Space Mountain roller coaster.⁴⁶

Soviet art during this period was controlled by the state and consisted almost entirely of themes of Socialist Realism, focused on images of heroic workers and farmers. With state restrictions on the type of art permitted, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is not a single prominent individual Soviet artist from the Space Race era.⁴⁷ In contrast, this era saw the rise in the popularity and influence of Abstract Expressionism in the United States, led by artists such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.⁴⁸ Abstract Expressionism, with its emphasis on the avant-garde, individualism, and freedom of expression, stood in stark contrast to the ideas of conformity and the collective good represented in Soviet art.

But movies, with their wide reach and ability to be watched and re-watched by millions of viewers, remain perhaps the best cultural artifact with which to understand the Cold War. The deep interplay between science fiction cinema and societal and political concerns has proven to be a persistent relationship that continues to shape and reflect our collective consciousness to this day. Through examining this genre, particularly about the Space Race, we gain a window into both the common fears and hopes that were often mirrored in political speeches and acts of the time. Even near the end of the Cold War, the fact that President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative to deter nuclear attacks against the US was nicknamed "*Star Wars*" reflects the symbolic resonance of science fiction imagery in political thought. The nickname

⁴⁵ Jeff Chase, "The 50 Biggest Upsets in Sports History," Bleacher Report, January 26, 2012, accessed July 29, 2023, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1036181-the-50-biggest-upsets-in-sports-history>.

⁴⁶ Herb Leibacher, "The History of Space in Disney World," World of Walt, April 3, 2019, accessed July 29, 2023, <https://worldofwalt.com/the-history-of-space-in-disney-world.html>.

⁴⁷ For an overview of Soviet art during the Cold War, see Evgenij Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴⁸ Eva Cockcroft, *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 127.

was a fitting coda to science fiction's role in helping the American public frame and contemplate the many difficult public policy decisions we faced because of the risks created by the Cold War.

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Politics of Mithras: The Mystery Cult and Matters of State

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Abstract

The mystery cult of Mithras had a significant influence on the government of the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries CE. With a prominent affiliation with the military, as well as imperial elites and even emperors serving as initiates in the cult, Mithraism wielded vast political control across the empire. Mithraism's impact on the Roman Empire is often understated or overlooked in modern scholarship. Studies of Mithraism tend to analyze its beliefs, migration, and theology. However, examination of inscriptions, textual evidence, and secondary scholarly sources suggests highly plausible evidence of the link between Mithraism and the Roman government. For instance, an inscription on a Mithraic altar in Rome names "Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius" as both a pater (a high-ranking member of the cult of Mithras) and a magistrate in Spain. This inscription is explored in greater detail in this paper. Understanding these links in the context of Late Antiquity sheds new light on our knowledge of the Roman Empire. Most scholarly studies on the Roman Empire focus on one of two extremes: the sacred Christian Rome or the solely secular empire. This paper analyzes an alternative religion often overlooked among studies of Roman theology: Mithraism. Rome was not just the origin of Christianity's popularity, but a melting pot of many different religions that all impacted the politics and populace in their ways. The analysis provided in this paper recognizes Mithraism, amongst many beliefs, as an important influence on Roman statecraft.

Introduction

Although few are familiar with Mithraism, it had a significant impact on the political state of Rome. When looking at inscriptions in Roman *Mithraea* and secondary scholarly analyses of the Mithraic cult's members, it is evident that the cult was very popular among the Roman military, and had deeply infiltrated the government and social hierarchy of the Roman Empire.¹ The cult of Mithras was present in Roman society's religion, politics, and military, the cornerstones on which the colossal empire was built. Mithraism's influence reached its height in the third century CE. By observing the connections between the army and politics of the Roman Empire of Late Antiquity and Mithraism, one can gain a new perspective from which to view the religion and politics of Rome.

Besides merely expanding scholarly understanding of religion and Rome, this paper illuminates a new facet of the cult of Mithras overlooked by most scholars. Although there is limited information on Mithraism, consistent with its moniker as a "mystery" cult, most studies done on the pagan religion revolve around its theology. Roger Beck goes so far as to claim that scholarship has found three schools of reference for modern studies of the cult of Mithras: the lore and history of Mithraism, the Iranian religion and its beliefs, and astrology and astronomy.² All three of these schools study the inner workings of the Mithraic Mysteries. Noticeably absent is the study of the influence of Mithraism on the greater and secular Roman world. While most scholars seek to learn about the structure, beliefs, and iconography of the cult, this paper specifically examines the overlap of Mithraism and other aspects of the Roman empire. This overlap allows us to observe how the cult of Mithras influenced the greater, outer world of Roman statecraft during the second, third, and fourth centuries CE.

To detail the influence of Mithraism on the Roman Empire, it is necessary to first explain what the cult of Mithras was, how it spread throughout the empire, and why it was so appealing to Roman citizens. Having laid this context, research into and analysis of two Roman elites, as well as two emperors, serve as specific examples of Mithraists in the empire. By using their inscriptions found in *Mithraea*, as well as other contemporary textual and material evidence, this paper shows the

¹ Roger Shaw, "Bellum Romanum" in *The Military Engineer* 35, no. 216 (1943): 523-526.

² Roger Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun*. Oxford University Press Oxford, 2007. 72.

integration and influence of the Mithraic Mysteries on the Roman government.

Mithraism and Religious Rome

In the chapter “The New Mood” in his 1971 book *The World of Late Antiquity*, Peter Brown expounds on the religions of Rome during this late antique era. The gods were an integral part of Roman life. Statues, symbols, and artwork of various Roman deities could be found everywhere one went, and the motto of *providentia deorum* (which meant “the gods are looking after us”) summed up the public’s feelings for the beings they worshiped.³ For the countless non-Christians of the empire before Constantine, that of the second and third centuries, these gods were the recipients of adoration, sacrifice, and general worship. The term “pagan” could be applied to the majority of Rome, for the polytheistic practices of the ancient world continued deep into the centuries of late antiquity.

The cult of Mithras (also known as Mithraism or the Mithraic Mysteries) was a mystery pagan cult that primarily operated in the Roman Empire during the first to fourth centuries CE. Mystery cults were religions that required followers to be initiated before participating in rituals and prayers.⁴ Their belief systems were kept secret from figures outside of the religion. Mithraism primarily followed the Persian god Mithras, and Mithraic temples (or *Mithraeums*), known for being underground and cavernous in appearance, were found throughout the empire, stretching from Britain to Northern Africa. Within the cult itself, members were structured in a hierarchy of different ranks: *Corax* (raven), *Nymphus* (male bride), *Miles* (soldier), *Leo* (lion), *Perses* (Persian), *Heliodromus* (sun-courier), and the highest, the *Pater* (father).⁵ It is known that the position of *pater* held the most power in the cult and was the most exclusive. This is likely due to the patriarchal *paterfamilias* system of Roman society, in which the father held absolute autocratic authority over his family and household.⁶

³ Peter Brown, “The New Mood” in *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (New York City, W. W. Norton, 1971), 50.

⁴ Reinhold Merkelbach, “Mystery Religion.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 9, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mystery-religion>.

⁵ Jonathan David, “The Exclusion of Women in the Mithraic Mysteries: Ancient or Modern?” in *Numen* (Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers; 2000). See also Roger Beck, “Mithras” in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 7 Mar. 2016; Accessed 20 Feb. 2023 for more information on the structure of the cult of Mithras.

⁶ “The Roman Empire: In the First Century. The Roman Empire. Life in Roman Times. Family Life,” PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), accessed March 9, 2023,

Because of the secrecy of the cult of Mithras, there is little knowledge about the specifics of the cult. Most scholarly knowledge comes from iconography and sculptures of Mithras, as textual evidence is difficult to find. To the benefit of modern researchers, much Mithraic art has been preserved over time due to the underground nature of *Mithraea*. While this is not a paper on the religion of the cult of Mithras, these images will prove to be important in connecting the Mithraic Mysteries to the Roman elite. The two most common symbols of Mithraism were the *Mithraeum* itself, the underground cave temple, and the *tauroctony*, a common iconography that depicted the god Mithras killing a bull in the cave that inspired the design of the *Mithraeum*. Commonly repeated Mithraic symbols are visible throughout the image: a scorpion pinches the bull's testicles, a snake and dog drink the bull's blood, Sol (the sun) and Luna (the moon) watch, and the Mithraic "torch-bearers" *cautes* and *cautopates* flank Mithras's side.⁷ The iconography of *Mithraea* is likely why so many scholars choose to examine the theology of the cult of Mithras – there is more archaeological work detailing the religion of the Mithraic Mysteries than its influence.

Mithras, Magistrates, and the Military

Scholars have, however, learned that the military played a major role in the cult of Mithras. Although the official Roman deity of war was Mars, he became a figurehead that Mithras could stand behind and use to infiltrate the legions.⁸ The Roman military was the foundation of the Roman imperial system, and its policies of religious tolerance helped strengthen the empire. The original Roman religion, adapted from the Greeks, was very polytheistic: the king of the gods, Jupiter, ruled over a whole host of minor gods and major deities. As Rome expanded, many of the people it conquered also worshiped multiple deities. Mithras himself was originally an Indo-Iranian deity before he was adapted by the Romans for the Mithraic Mysteries.

As the Roman military traversed the lands of the empire, they would have been the first to encounter and adopt new beliefs. Unlike farmers back in the mainland or senators in Rome, the military would have played a significant role in the spread and growth of religion. This is how the cult of Mithras is believed to have spread across the Roman

<https://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/family.html#:~:text=At%20the%20head%20of%20Roman,over%20his%20household%20and%20children>.

⁷ "The Tauroctony," accessed March 9, 2023,

<https://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/mithras/display.php?page=tauroctony>.

⁸ Shaw, "Bellum Romanum," 525–526.

empire in a relatively short amount of time.⁹ The location of numerous *Mithraea* aligning with military outposts is a sign of the connection between the military and Mithras.¹⁰ In certain cases, entire legions (a group of soldiers consisting of five to six thousand Roman citizens) were members of the cult of Mithras, and dedicated altars as a group. This can be seen in the cases of *Legio V Macedonica* and *Legio XIII Gemina*, two legions that dedicated at least four monuments to Mithras.¹¹

Manfred Clauss discussed the involvement of government officials and the Roman military as members of the cult of Mithras in chapter six, “Recruitment,” of his acclaimed 1990 book *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and His Mysteries*.¹² According to Clauss, the earliest known Mithraic cult members were Roman soldiers who took the religion to the various lands they traveled to and fought in. Clauss found that altar dedications were relatively common among officers and under-officers of Rome, but less so among standard soldiers. This is to be expected, as dedications such as altars (which took time to craft) were more costly than the average soldier could afford. It is possible that being a part of the cult of Mithras may have aided lower-level soldiers in climbing the ranks of the military hierarchy. While lower-ranking soldiers have left less of an imprint on the historical record of Mithraism, the appeal of the cult to this group is not far-fetched.

The bull has often been a simple symbol of masculinity and strength, something that likely attracted the attention of male soldiers in the Roman military. In addition, the *tauroctony* was a piece of iconography to which soldiers could likely relate. It features Mithras fighting a bull, a creature familiar to ancient Romans. In contrast, the stories of many other religions center on defeating supernatural monsters. Mithras does not fight a hydra or chimera; he fights a common animal. The god’s task is a difficult one, but it is achievable. Additionally, the action of the *tauroctony* was one of aggression, something the military would highly value in a soldier. Due to the relatability of the *tauroctony*, it is plausible that members of the military of all ranks would be drawn to the cult of Mithras. This idea of achievement or ascension through the killing of a strong, but common creature is likely why many members of the cult of Mithras ascended to such high places within the Roman Empire: like

⁹ Jocelyn Godwin, “Mithras and Aion” in *Mystery Religions of the Ancient World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 98.

¹⁰ Manfred Clauss, “Recruitment” in *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and His Mysteries* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

¹¹ Clauss, “Recruitment,” 34.

¹² *Ibid.*, 35.

Mithras, they rose to the top through struggle and violence, conquering their dominions.

In addition to high-ranking officers in the Roman military, initiates of the cult of Mithras included numerous Roman magistrates. One notable member of the cult of Mithras from both military and politics was a senator from the 2nd century, Marcus Valerius Maximianus. Valerius is reputed as one of the most successful of Marcus Aurelius' generals. The role of the senator in Roman society was a position of great imperial importance. A Roman senator could pass new laws, would own vast areas of land, and was a primary advisor to the emperor himself.¹³ Valerius was a very successful general, credited as a hero of the Marcomannic wars, in which the Roman Empire waged war against various Germanic tribes for thirteen years.¹⁴ Lauded and praised for personally killing the Germanic chieftain Valao, Valerius became a senator after the war in recognition of his valiant deeds. Valerius is credited with the spread of Mithraism during his time as a *legate* or commander of a legion.¹⁵ Altars dedicated to Mithras by Valerius have been found in the former fortress of Apulum (in modern-day Romania), as well as in Lambaesis (modern-day Tazoult in Algeria).¹⁶ The fact that one of the emperor's most successful generals and senators, a highly regarded soldier in his own right, was one of the primary diffusers of the cult of Mithras demonstrates the degree of integration Mithraism held in the upper echelons of ancient Roman society.

Although the majority of the elites in the cult of Mithras entered the cult through the military, there are also known cases in which Roman officials became Mithraists. An inscription on an altar within a *Mithraeum* in the city of Rome, dated to 376 CE, was allegedly dedicated by a high-ranking imperial official, Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius, who was also a *pater* in the cult of Mithras:

To the Great Gods, to the Mother of the Gods, and to Attis, the honorable Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius, the worthy Solicitor in the African court, Imperial Councilor, President of the Supreme Commission on Petitions and Investigations, Head of the Chancellery, Captain of the

¹³ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Senate." Encyclopaedia Britannica, November 5, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Senate-Roman-history>.

¹⁴ Jakub Jasiński, "Marcomannic Wars (167-180 CE)" *Imperium Romanum*, 15 Oct. 2021. Accessed 24 Feb. 2023. <https://imperiumromanum.pl/en/wars/marcomannic-wars/>.

¹⁵ "The Roman Legion," n.d., Accessed March 2, 2023 https://penelope.uchicago.edu/%7Egrout/encyclopaedia_romana/britannia/wales/legio.html.

¹⁶ Clauss, "Recruitment," 35.

Prefects in Spain in all the most important matters, Father of Fathers of the Invincible Sun God Mithras, Hierophant of Hecate, Chief Shepherd of Dionysus, reborn unto eternity through the sacrifice of a bull and a ram – has dedicated the altar, on the Ides of August, while our Lords Valens, for the fifth time, and Valentinian the younger, the Augusti, were consuls.¹⁷

This inscription begins by addressing the “great gods” of Rome, including the “mother of gods,” a title related to beings including Cybele, Gaea, Demeter, Rhea, and occasionally even the Virgin Mary who was the principal figure of worship for another Greco-Roman mystery cult. It also addresses Attis, a formerly Phrygian deity who was regarded as a solar deity in Rome, similar to Mithras, and then names the dedicator of the altar, Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius.¹⁸ This acknowledges an important aspect of Roman religion: polytheism. Although this inscription is part of an altar to Mithras, it acknowledges other deities as well, which are further explored below. After naming Agesilaus, the inscription goes on to list many of his important political titles. These duties, in conjunction with the title “father of fathers,” are sufficient to identify this significant political figure as a high-ranking member of the Mithraic Mysteries. Agesilaus’s title “father of fathers shows his status as a *pater* in the world of Mithraism, while his other title, the “captain of the prefects in Spain,” shows his power in the greater Roman world. The term prefect applied to many different magistrates and high officials in Rome, and a *praetorian prefect* was responsible for maintaining law and order in the Roman Empire. As a “Solicitor in the African court,” Agesilaus would have wielded significant legal power in parts of the Roman empire. Although “imperial councilor” might not have been an official job, the title plausibly suggests that Agesilaus was one of the primary advisors to the emperor of Rome.

The quote continues by moving from describing Agesilaus’ political titles to describing his religious titles. In addition to being a *pater* of the cult of Mithras, Agesilaus was a “hierophant of Hecate” and a “chief shepherd of Dionysus.” Hecate and Dionysus were both Greek deities, the gods of witchcraft and wine respectively. This hints that Agesilaus was likely an initiate of other pagan cults as well as the cult of Mithras, further evidencing that polytheism was active throughout Rome. The mystery cult of Dionysus was well known for its immense

¹⁷ Frederick C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953), 147.

¹⁸ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. “Attis.” Encyclopedia Britannica, July 20, 1998. Accessed March 13, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Attis>.

popularity in ancient Greece and Rome, and Hecate was worshiped alongside the Greek deities of Demeter and Persephone in the Eleusinian Mysteries.¹⁹ The inscription concludes by stating that Agesilaus had been “reborn unto eternity with the sacrifice of a bull and a ram” and then giving an idea of the period the altar was dedicated (based on who was in charge of Rome at the time). Although the exact meaning of this inscription is unknown, the cult of Mithras was associated with its primary myth of the eponymous deity killing a bull and tied to a cycle of rebirth.²⁰ In particular, this inscription reflects the Mithraic concept of salvation by divine rebirth. Of course, even though the religious meanings of this inscription can be debated, the titles attached to Agesilaus offer a visible link between great political power and the cult of Mithras in ancient Rome.

Agesilaus is a prime example of how deeply integrated the cult of Mithras was into Roman statecraft. Although military men would have had the most interaction with border religions as Rome expanded its empire, statesmen who made frequent but brief trips across the empire would also have encountered these cults. A statesman, such as Agesilaus, who would not travel as extensively as a soldier or general, was not likely to be interested in every new border religion he encountered. From Agesilaus’ other titles, he can be identified as a participant in both the Dionysian and Eleusinian Mysteries, which were both very popular and widespread cults in the ancient Mediterranean. Agesilaus’ involvement in the Mithraic Mysteries would have put the cult of Mithras on the same tier as these other mysteries and would define it as something far more important than a small fringe cult. The fact that an imperial official, an elite who was not a part of the Roman military, would have entered the cult of Mithras and climbed the ranks to become a *pater*, suggests the significant influence Mithraism had on Roman statecraft.

Mithras and Emperor Diocletian

The integration of the Mithraic Mysteries into the Roman military defined the majority of its influence on the political state of the Roman Empire. The military was the foundation of the Roman imperial system and led the expansion, conquest, and colonization of the ever-growing Roman empire. However, there were multiple cases in which the cult of Mithras had a much more direct impact on the imperial government. In Frothingham’s article in the *American Journal of Archaeology*, he details a

¹⁹ Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987). Refer back to Burkert for more information on mystery cults in the Mediterranean at this time.

²⁰ Brown, “The New Mood” 56.

relief built into a sculpture in Rome that claims the emperor Diocletian revered Mithras as the protector god of the empire.²¹ The sculpture has been mutilated since its original conception, and the original art depicting Mithras is largely destroyed. However, what remains of the scene arguably illustrates the mystery cult's deity. The sculpture is one of victory: a sign of the triumph of Diocletian. It shows Diocletian performing a sacrifice, a traditional Roman ritual. As Diocletian preceded Constantine, the emperor who established Christianity as a major religion of the empire, it is important to note the non-Christian nature of a sacrifice, as seen in this sculpture. This sacrifice is dedicated to Roma, a representation of Rome, Mars, the god of war, and a figure whose face is destroyed, but still visibly has radiant rays beaming from their head. Roma is holding this deity up to Diocletian, likely signifying that this unknown entity is the one to whom Diocletian is offering a sacrifice. Frothingham argues that this figure is Mithras, who has been shown in many pieces of iconography as a sun god.²² While other scholars, such as Henry Thédénat, have said that this sun god is Apollo, its appearance is starkly different from the formerly Greek deity.²³ Frothingham himself linked Mithras's depiction to being similar to the Roman god of Sol. Although the appearance is similar, Mithras has repeatedly been both compared to Sol and described as synonymous with Sol.

Also key to Diocletian's connection to the cult of Mithras is an inscription found at Carnuntum on the Danube (in modern-day Austria), the site where Mithras was originally named as the protector of Rome:

“D(eo) S(oli) i(nvicto) M(ithrae) | fautori imperii sui |
Iovii et Herculi | religiosissimi | Augusti et Caesares |
sacrarium | restituerunt.”²⁴

Without translating the entire inscription, keywords and phrases naming Mithras make this inscription important. The beginning, “D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae)” translates to “Mithras the Unconquered Sun God.” This description of Mithras is not unique to this inscription – Mithras has been called the *deus sol invictus* across Rome, and the mystery cult's deity has been compared to Sol Invictus (or simply Sol), another imperial sun deity with a cult, many times before. However, this inscription is particularly notable for the section directly afterward, which names

²¹ A. L. Frothingham, “Diocletian and Mithra in the Roman Forum” in *American Journal of Archaeology* 18, no. 2 (1914): 146–155. Refer for more information on the sculpture.

²² Frothingham, “Diocletian and Mithra in the Roman Forum,” 151-153.

²³ Henry Thédénat. *Le Forum Romain et Les Forums Impériaux* (Librairie Hachette, 1898), 262-263.

²⁴ Manfred Clauss, Anne Kolb, Wolfgang A. Slaby, and Barbara Woitas, *Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby*, Accessed 22 Feb. 2023.

https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi.php?s_sprache=en.

Mithras as the “fautori imperii sui,” or “protector of their [the Romans] empire.” This implies that Diocletian was acknowledging Mithras’s important standing in the Roman government. Not only was he a deity followed by many soldiers of the imperial army, but Mithras’s significance to Rome was such that the emperor praised him in a sculpture of his triumph. Although this inscription is far from a state edict, its status as a symbol of victory in war still shows the influence Mithras had on the government. In an age in which many emperors won their position through war, triumph in battle was a deeply political move.

Examining the connection between Diocletian and Mithraism is doubly important due to the period during which the emperor ruled. 10 years after this inscription is estimated to have been written, Diocletian’s successor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity in the Roman Empire. An additional 10 years later, Christianity became the official religion of Rome. But until that point, Mithraism and Christianity had long competed for worshippers in Rome.²⁵ Diocletian provides an example of the influence held by Roman pagan religions even in the years preceding Christianity’s rise in popularity across Rome. The empire of old was not a secular state. Everyone, from the soldiers to the emperor, was engaged in the traditions and rituals of various polytheistic religions.

Mithras and Emperor Julian

Diocletian was not the only Mithraist emperor or the last. Emperor Julian (who ruled from 361 to 363) is thought to have been a member of the Mithraic Mysteries, though the validity of this assumption is heavily disputed. This paper follows the assumption that Julian, nicknamed “the Apostate” (meaning he completely renounced Christianity) by his Christian enemies, was indeed a member of the cult of Mithras. First introduced by Franz Cumont, considered by many to be the father of modern studies on the cult,²⁶ the affiliation was further analyzed by Polymnia Athanassiadi in her 1977 article in *The Journal of Theological Studies*.²⁷ Julian was widely known for being anti-Christian, which is noteworthy as his uncle, Constantine, was the emperor who established Christianity as the primary religion of Rome. Julian openly accepted many pagan and historically Hellenistic religions and spent

²⁵ Clyde Pharr, “Constantine and the Christians” in *The Classical Outlook* 16, no. 6 (1939), 57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44005884>.

²⁶ Franz Cumont, “Mithra and the Imperial Power” in *The Mysteries of Mithra* (Dover Publications, 1956), 89.

²⁷ Polymnia Athanassiadi, “A Contribution to Mithraic Theology: The Emperor Julian’s ‘Hymn to King Helios.’” in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 28, no. 2 (1977), 361.

significant time during his rule attempting to suppress Christian influence in the empire. Athanassiadi uses many of Julian's writings to support her argument that the apostate emperor was a Mithraist.²⁸ In *Caesars*, Julian not-so-subtly writes that the god Hermes granted him knowledge of Mithra, after which Julian began to worship "Father Mithra." Earlier, in *Contra Heraclium*, Julian wrote that he wished to "become [a] god" like Athene (Athena), Hermes, and Helios. Because of Helios' status as a sun deity and Mithras often being called "Helios-Mithras," Athanassiadi claims that Julian is talking about Mithras in this passage.²⁹

The claim that Julian's referral to "Helios" is referencing Mithras is further supported in other works by the emperor. In *Hymn to King Helios*, Julian specifically references the *cautes* and *cautopates*, two figures shown in almost every *Mithraeum's tauroctony*.³⁰ The two torch-bearers each held their torches in opposite directions: *cautes* with the flame pointing up and *cautopates* with the flame pointing down. The torch-bearers represent the movement of the sun, signifying Mithras' importance as a solar deity. Given this symbolism, it is plausible that the sun god Julian is referring to is not Helios, but instead Mithras. This sheds an important light on a relatively unexplored area of the Mithraic Mysteries. Having not one, but two Roman emperors that actively worshiped Mithras shows that Rome was neither secular nor solely Christian and that the cult of Mithras was significantly influential in the Roman government. The cult was not only integrated into the Roman military but also managed to gain a foothold in the highest echelons of the Roman government, even during the rise of Christianity's power in the empire.

In analyzing how emperors came to power at this time, it is logical that many would be a part of the cult of Mithras. The "Crisis of the Third Century," which lasted from 235 to 284 CE, dominated the Roman Empire during the peak of Mithraism's popularity. This crisis led to the quick succession of fourteen emperors in 50 years. These so-called "barracks emperors" gained their power through military support, and almost always by assassinating their predecessors.³¹ The Rome of this era was thus controlled by a series of strong military leaders who ascended to imperial leadership. With the cult's popularity in the military, it seems

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 362.

³⁰ For more information on *cautes* and *cautopates*, see Roger Beck, "Cautes and Cautopates: Some Astronomical Considerations" in *Beck on Mithraism: Collected Works with New Essays* (Routledge, 2020).

³¹ Joshua J. Mark, "The Barracks Emperors." *World History Encyclopedia* 13 Nov. 2017; Accessed 23 Feb. 2023. https://www.worldhistory.org/Barracks_Empereors/.

probable that a series of emperors rising from the ranks of the military would be part of the Mithraic Mysteries. This demonstrates how the cult of Mithras was able to integrate itself into the Roman government and eventually influence the emperor himself. The last emperor of the Crisis of the Third Century and these “barracks emperors” was none other than Diocletian, who was referenced earlier as the dedicator of the sculpture at Carnuntum to Mithras.

Even if these specific emperors were not Mithraists themselves, one can hypothesize that the cult of Mithras had a heavy hand in their actions. As in the case of Valerius and countless other Mithraic soldiers,³² Mithraism had a foothold within the Roman military. When looking at a situation like the Crisis of the Third Century where the Roman military took an active stand against the government, one could make a well-educated assumption that the cult of Mithras was part of the conflict. And, when considering that Roman law might have also been influenced by Mithraists, such as Agesilaus the *prefect*,³³ it appears the cult of Mithras infiltrated every aspect of the Roman government once the “barracks emperors” gained official power.

Mithras: Church and State

It is widely accepted that the ancient Roman Empire was a state of varied religions. Christianity was not the dominant religion of Rome in Late Antiquity. It was always greatly contested by other religions. Rome had a diverse array of faiths from various sources. However, while Christianity was not the primary Roman religion, neither was Mithraism. There is very little information to suggest that Mithraism was particularly popular among the peasant or merchant classes, and it seems that most of its worshippers were members of the military or the government. In addition to the cult of Mithras, other mystery cults such as those of Isis, Cybele, Dionysus, and Hecate were common throughout Rome, and Judaism and Christianity have had at least a small foothold in Rome since their very founding.

However, of these many systems of faith, the cult of Mithras seems to be unique in its reach and membership. Mithraism exemplified the concept of social conformism. Its popularity was likely because it was a reflection of many qualities that were highly valued in Roman society. Masculinity, strength, ascension, and accomplishment were all traits every Roman man was supposed to demonstrate in his everyday life. Other cults were not integrated into the military to the extent of

³² Clauss, “Recruitment,” 34.

³³ Grant, *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism*, 147.

Mithras, and other mystery cults of the time did not have such elite initiates as the imperials that made up the Mithraic Mysteries. This was the result of the widespread belief in Mithraism and the sway it held over the upper echelons of Roman society. As a male deity, Mithras was more likely to have high-status followers: in the patriarchal society of Rome, men would have had the most power.³⁴ It would be rare to find followers of Isis, whose mystery cult was predominantly made up of female initiates, among the influential elite of the Roman empire.

Arguably, Mithraism heavily influenced those directly responsible for carrying out critical matters of the government. The influence of the male initiates of the cult of Mithras analyzed in this paper is well documented. Marcus Valerius Maximianus, Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius, and the emperors Diocletian and Julian were four significant examples of Roman Mithraic elites, but they were certainly not the only high-ranking members of the Mithraic Mysteries. *Mithraea* and their altars required funding from Roman patricians who could afford to spend money on the cult's decorations and shrines. The countless *Mithraea* across the empire would mean that many different wealthy Romans were supporters or members of the cult. Sculptures and inscriptions such as the ones created by Agesilaus and Diocletian are only examples of many, many dedications to the great god Mithras.

Conclusion

It is a common mistake to interpret the past through the lens of the present. Yet, as Peter Brown warns in the updated foreword to his book *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, nothing is immune to changes over time.³⁵ General assumptions about topics as important as religion and politics should never be made. However, the knowledge gained about the religious makeup of the Roman Empire of Late Antiquity, in the right context, can help change the modern perspective of the world's civilizations. Due to Christianity becoming the "normative" religion of the Western world, there is a tendency to think in terms of monotheism, making it difficult to comprehend just how polytheistic the ancient world was. The Roman Empire had a much different kind of religiosity than the world today. Rome should not be viewed as a Christian state, because for most of its life, it was a polytheistic empire. Additionally, the separation of church

³⁴ For further information on the Roman patriarchal society, see Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁵ Peter Brown, "Introduction" in *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (New York City, Columbia University Press, 2008), 23-24.

and state that is customary today is a modern invention and does not apply to ancient Rome, where religion and politics were deeply intertwined.

Even with the intrinsic nature of mystery cults making it difficult to truly know the extent of the cult of Mithras's influence on Roman statecraft, it is evident that the Mithraic Mysteries held significant sway over the Roman Empire of Late Antiquity. Its integration into the Roman military and government, imperial initiates, and Mithras' ability to mesh well with other gods worshiped in Rome, was such that its sphere of influence reached across the empire. Analyzing inscriptions suggests that it was the cult of Mithras that counted many important governmental figures among its initiates. The same cannot be said for other mystery cults of this time. Religion and politics went hand in hand in Rome, as priests and other holy people also served as government officials. Although more is known about other religions of the Roman Empire, scholars should never overlook Mithraism. No other cult had as many elite members or imperial followers as that of Mithras, and the land the cult occupied due to the marauding military initiates that made up its numbers put the Mithraic Mysteries in a league of its own, worthy of further study and exploration.

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The Failure of the Schlieffen Plan and Its Impact on the German WWI Strategy

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Abstract

During the outbreak of World War I, influential figures across Europe failed to predict a prolonged war. While the preliminary forecast by European powers that the war would be truncated has often been cited as evidence of the incompetence among those in power, the fact that these ideas were generally accepted among senior military theorists and strategists suggests that the prolonging factors were hard to detect. This research, therefore, provides an overview of the war and identifies conditions of the war considered as factors contributing to the prolongation of the war. Primary sources were used to substantiate and evaluate perspectives and claims from secondary sources. The analysis uncovered the debate over whether the plan was ever executed; certain perspectives suggested there only ever was a German *Moltke* plan. While Moltke did make amendments to the plan, many were simply revisions in response to international developments. Moltke's plan for a large part also used the strategies and principles of warfare outlined by Schlieffen. However, it must be noted that the research indicates that the failure of the Schlieffen plan as well as the amendments by Moltke while preventing a truncated war only extended the war due to trench warfare which was facilitated by developments in health and sanitation conditions as well as technology. As analysis of factors determining the length of a conflict offers valuable insight into forming post-war political and economic decisions, the prolongation of World War I is worthy of study.

Introduction

World War I was unprecedented in scale with 16 million deaths by the time of Allied victory (Britain, France, and Russia among others) in 1918 against the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire). The war was also *modern*, with it being fought on land, in the air, and at sea with new technologies including tanks and machine guns. The strategies of the war not only adapted to these developments but also to the cult of the offensive that developed among military strategists of the time.¹ The cult of the offensive describes the belief held by military leaders of the time that the advantages of the offensive were so great that failing to strike first would leave a state in the precarious position of being on the defensive. This cult was patently connected to the idea that continental war would be short and truncated.

In 1905 German General Chief of Staff Schlieffen devised a battle plan to successfully wage a two-front war, a plan that exemplified the cult of the offensive. Otto Von Bismarck's fear of a war on two fronts was fulfilled in 1894 after a Franco-Russian alliance that guaranteed mutual military aid in the case of a German attack.² The strategic handicap along with increasing tensions between Germany and the alliance provided the rationale behind the Schlieffen Plan. Schlieffen proposed that the fact France and Russia were separated was a German advantage. Schlieffen wrote that in a war on two fronts "the whole of Germany must throw herself upon one enemy, the strongest, most powerful, most dangerous enemy and that can only be France."³ This notion of a 'decisive battle' was vital to the German military doctrine of offensive battle, as the oracle of German military strategy, Carl Von Clausewitz believed that the occupation of enemy territory and resources were secondary to speed and an early decision as he feared a war of attrition. This inspired Schlieffen to devise a plan of envelopment as he wrote "The enemy's front is not the objective. The essential thing is to crush the enemy's flanks....and complete extermination by attack upon its rear."⁴

¹ Evera, Stephen Van. (1984) 'The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War.' *International Security*, vol. 9, no. 1, 58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538636>.

² Limbach, R., n.d. Schlieffen Plan | German military history. Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Schlieffen-Plan>. [Accessed 20 December 2021].

³ Ritter, G., 1958. *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth*. 2nd ed. London: Oswald Wolff Limited, 171.

⁴ Ibid.

The plan was thus completed, Germany would spread a heavily one-sided right wing across Belgium sacking the French forces with Germany's deliberately weak left wing and descending upon Paris. However, in the opening months of the war, just over a year after Schlieffen's death, the Schlieffen plan along with the desired "decisive battle" failed.

The failure of the plan raises questions about its importance in the subsequent prolonging of the war. An understanding of factors that determine the length of conflicts such as the war in Ukraine can provide insight for peace-makers intent on hastening the end of the war. Furthermore, insight into the length of war can inform policy-makers tasked with strategizing for economic fallout that reduces living standards through inflation. This study aims to determine the primary reasons for the war's prolongation.

Reasons for Prolongation

Factor 1: The Schlieffen Plan

By 1906 Schlieffen intended on allocating six weeks and seven-eighths of the German forces to eliminate France while one-eighth held her eastern border from Russian incursion until the bulk of the army could be mobilised in the east. This was based upon German arithmetic that predicted that French and German mobilisation required two weeks while Russia would require six weeks due to the empire's rudimentary railroads, geographical size, and large numbers.⁵ This was believed to be an adequate time for a 'decisive battle' with the French.

In 1905 however, the right wing's envelopment necessitated a march through Belgium violating its neutrality guaranteed by Britain in a treaty in 1839. One could argue that the question regarding Belgium and her neutrality was a decisive factor in the prolonging of the war and the failure of the plan. King Albert I of Belgium responded to the German ultimatum by saying "Our answer must be no...Our duty is to defend our territorial integrity. In this, we must not fail."⁶ Before the first shot and casualty of the war, an assumption of the war plan was refuted. The German assault began on the forts of Liege where the fortresses held strong and in the first interactions of the war it was the German forces who were disproportionately killed. The German soldiers were also not aided by the hot weather, roadblocks, and blown-up bridges. The Germans who had calculated a free passage of their right-wing were free

⁵ Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin, 23.

⁶ Ibid.

to continue their march on the 17th of August.⁷ This did not change the fact that the German march through Belgium took 11 days rather than the anticipated two days. Buchan wrote that the German victory had portrayed their army as having “clay on their feet” to the rest of the world.⁸ Thus one could assert that the elimination of the image of a completely efficient army created in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 undermined Germany’s ability to achieve a decisive victory. Cruttwell however argued that the Liege resistance, while surprising the Germans, did not significantly interfere with their plans, instead arguing that the demolition of railroads was a more significant blow.⁹ Echevarria argued that the ‘rigid timetable’ the Schlieffen plan required to be successful would have inevitably led to the plan’s failure, suggesting that Schlieffen overlooked the inevitability of the ‘fog and friction of war.’¹⁰ Mombauer on the other hand asserted that it was not the Schlieffen Plan that led to the delay in Belgium as the original plan involved the violation of Holland. Mombauer went on to suggest that Schlieffen had done this to march around Liege through Dutch territory and that it was Moltke’s decision to respect Holland’s neutrality that led to battles at Liege.¹¹ Tuchman disagreed with all perspectives presented by downplaying the impact of the Belgian resistance. Tuchman outlined that the German delay was only two days and not eleven. She argued that the march into France had not been scheduled to begin before the 15th of August.¹² Arguably the significance of the Belgium resistance was not in the equipment, personnel, or days lost by the Germans but in the fact that the war began contrary to the forecast of the Schlieffen Plan. In many ways, it could be argued that this error typified the reasons why the Schlieffen Plan failed to bring about a decisive victory.

Another perspective is that the Schlieffen Plan’s inability to cope with Britain’s expeditionary forces as anticipated led to an extended war by denying Germany a swift victory. Schlieffen had assumed that the right wing of the German army would defeat any British expeditionary forces. Trachtenburg for example argues that while Germany did what it could to keep Britain out of the war, it did not base its military

⁷ Edmonds, J., 1926. *Military Operations France and Belgium: Military Operations France and Belgium, 1914: Mons, the Retreat to the Seine, the Marne, and the Aisne August-October 1914*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 33.

⁸ Buchan, J., 2009. *A History of the Great War*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: BiblioLife.

⁹ Cruttwell, C., 1936. *History of the Great War 1914-18*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Academy City Publishers.

¹⁰ Echevarria II, A.J. (2001) ‘An Infamous Legacy: Schlieffen’s Military Theories Revisited,’ *Army History*, 53, 1.

¹¹ Ehlert, H., Epkenhans, M., Gross, G., Zabecki, D. and Foley, R., 2014. *The Schlieffen Plan*. 1st ed. University Press of Kentucky, 50.

¹² Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin, 210.

calculations on this hope.¹³ Furthermore, he placed a high value on Britain's blockade capabilities rather than its army.¹⁴ However, the importance of Britain's army in preventing the decisive victory of Germany is evident in the battle of Marne that took place after the Allies' great retreat between the 24th of August and the 5th of September. By September Moltke's army was at the doors of Paris and the 'Decisive victory' on the 39th day of battle was in sight. In the words of the French chief of staff, France needed the British "at any price" for the battle that would determine the "future of France."¹⁵ In the battle, the British army played a decisive role in forcing the German retreat as they exploited the gap in the German army and pushed through the centre of their line.¹⁶ Therefore the Schlieffen Plan failed to account for the British army's impact on their invasion of France. Taking that into consideration, it is reasonable to assert that the British navy, not the army, allowed the country to sustain its battle after the opening months.

A further view is that the Schlieffen Plan wrongfully assumed that Britain would not commit to a continental war leading to the prolongation of the war. While Schlieffen's logic was arguably sound surrounding his scepticism of an old treaty between Britain and Belgium, it failed to appreciate the strength of the Entente Cordiale. The British and French 'Cordiale' in 1904 was motivated by the British desire to secure the quickest trading route to the crown jewel of the empire, India, which was through the Mediterranean. This meant that the security of Britain's route to India was dependent on France's control of the Mediterranean.¹⁷ Therefore the involvement of Britain in the war due to an alliance with Belgium can be viewed as a *casus belli* and Britain would have opposed the Germans either way. Albertini was in favour of this perspective contending that Britain could not stand by while a war ensued on the main continent.¹⁸ However, Ferguson argues that Britain's involvement was unnecessary.¹⁹ If Ferguson's argument is accepted, arguably the involvement of Britain is less attributable to the failure of the Schlieffen Plan and more to British belligerency. Either due to the

¹³ Trachtenberg, M. (1990) 'The meaning of mobilization in 1914,' *International Security*, 15(3), 120. doi:10.2307/2538909.

¹⁴ Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin, 30.

¹⁵ Mott, C., 1934. *The Personal Memoirs of Joffre Field Marshal of The French Army*. 1st ed. New York: Harper and Brothers.

¹⁶ Herwig, H., 2009. *The Marne, 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle that Changed the World*. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 254.

¹⁷ Rogers, K. and Thomas, J., 2015. *Causes and Effects of 20th Century Wars*. 2nd ed. London: Pearson Education Limited, 20-23.

¹⁸ Albertini, L., 1957. *Origins of the War of 1914*. 1st ed. London: Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ Rogers, K. and Thomas, J., 2015. *Causes and Effects of 20th Century Wars*. 2nd ed. London: Pearson Education Limited, 39.

failure to predict British entry into the war or miscalculations about their impact; the question of Britain contributed to the plan's failure.

An additional perspective is that the failings of Germany in the battle of the Marne are less attributable to the Schlieffen Plan than Britain's unpredictable entrance. An argument is that the Secretary of State Sir Edward Grey's speech to parliament 3rd of August is what brought Britain into the continental war.²⁰ An extract of the speech can be found below:

“It may be said, I suppose, that we might stand aside, husband our strength, and that, whatever happened in the course of this war, at the end of it intervene with effect to put things right, and to adjust them to our point of view. If, in a crisis like this, we run away [Loud cheers.] from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost.”²¹

Grey, arguably, did not appeal to practical reasons for entering the war but to pathos. He stressed the honourable obligations of Britain and after this speech, an ultimatum to Germany to stop the invasion of Belgium was sent. The arguable lack of practical rationale for Britain's entrance (pathos not logos) means the Schlieffen Plan could not have prepared for this unpredictable event of Britain's entry. Tuchman however claimed that while Grey did appeal to Britain's honour, the deciding factor was his appeal to the practical factors such as the control of the Mediterranean.²² However, Barnett's thesis is that Britain underwent a moral revolution whereby ethical standards were more important than the opportunistic interests of Britain.²³ If Britain did undergo a moral revolution Britain's entrance into the war due to Grey is arguably evidence of this. On the other hand, it could be argued that if Barnett is correct Britain's entrance into the war due to moral reasons was part of a pattern suggesting that Schlieffen could have predicted Britain's action. Barnett however did suggest this revolution began in the early 20th century making it too early for Schlieffen to account for it. Either due to an incorrect assumption or the oratory skills of Grey, Britain was drawn into the war due to the invasion of Belgium.

²⁰ The Long, Long Trail. 2022. Sir Edward Grey's speech on the eve of war: 3 August 1914 - The Long, Long Trail. Available at: <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/sir-edward-greys-speech-on-the-eve-of-war-3-august-1914/>. [Accessed 12 February 2022].

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin.,127-130.

²³ Barnett, C., 2002. *The Collapse of British Power*. 3rd ed. London: Pan Books, 24.

Counters

Factor 2: The Moltke Plan

While there were parallels between the Schlieffen plan and the plan Moltke carried out, his changes, dubbed ‘the Moltke plan,’ could be argued to have undermined the decisive victory Germany had sought, thus prolonging the war. According to Zuber, there was only ever the Moltke plan and the Schlieffen plan was simply a postwar invention.²⁴ Thus, Mombauer questions Zuber’s thesis, noting that Moltke himself referred to Schlieffen’s ideas saying the plan was a topic of debate before the outbreak of the war. Gerhard P Gross took a stern stance in response to Zuber by stating that the plan did exist and was “the basic operational strategic doctrine” for Germany.²⁵ Regardless of Zuber’s thesis, this investigation will explore the changes made by Moltke to the deployment plan before and during the war.

There is an argument that the difference between the plans on the question of the eastern front extended the war by preventing a victory in September of 1914. This was because Moltke was less inclined to expose his eastern front for a stronger right wing. Not only did Moltke say in a memorandum in 1912 that “we need to increase our troops in the area [Eastern Front]” but also considered an offensive in the east. All of which were contrary to Schlieffen’s ideas. In the build-up to the Battle of Tannenberg in the East, Moltke (on August 25th) decided to withdraw two corps from the Western Front to be deployed as reinforcement in the East. This was possibly the deciding factor in the battle of the Marne as it led to a 50-kilometre gap in the German offensive line that was discovered by Allied air reconnaissance.²⁶ Both the British and French armies exploited this gap and forced a German retreat between the 9th and 13th of September marking the end of the Schlieffen Plan. It is possible that one of the two corps that were sent to the Russian frontier could have filled the gap in the German offensive line and thus completed the siege of Paris. Moltke’s adjustments to the plan were justified by the Russian military’s advancements since 1905 evidenced by their mobilisation in two not six weeks. Therefore, one could argue that Germany’s failure was inevitable regardless of Moltke’s decision. This perhaps substantiates the ideas put forward by historians such as Ritter who had found Schlieffen’s memorandum and other documents in 1953

²⁴ Zuber, T. 1999. ‘The Schlieffen Plan Reconsidered.’ *War in History* 6(3), 262-305. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26013926>. [Accessed 27 March 2022].

²⁵ Ehlert, H., Epkenhans, M., Gross, G., Zabecki, D. and Foley, R., 2014. *The Schlieffen Plan*. 1st ed. University Press of Kentucky., 85.

²⁶ Mead, P., 1983. *The Eye in the Air*. 1st ed. London: HMSO., 52.

in the US National Archives after many of Schlieffen's documents in German military archives were lost due to bombing in World War II and argued that the plan was 'deeply flawed and reckless.'²⁷ However, the two corps that were transferred to the eastern front arrived after the German victory in the east, thus they played no role in either battle.²⁸

Holmes however questions the notion that Moltke did weaken the western flank. He argues that while Moltke's ratio of the left wing to the right wing was 3:1, he also suggests that Schlieffen's plan did not dictate the 7:1 ratio assumed by most historians. Instead, Holmes argues that Schlieffen's plan also dictated a ratio of 3:1.²⁹ Most other historians disagree with this analysis and Zuber highlighted the fact that Holmes based his conclusions on a short, garbled, and tendentious summary of the exercise in the 1938 article by Generallieutenant Von Zoellner.³⁰ While Zuber's assertion is part of his greater critique of the Schlieffen plan's existence, the fact that other historians such as Mombauer and Strachan prescribe to the 7:1 thesis suggests that Holmes's findings have not been sufficiently persuasive.

The Moltke plan prolonged the war due to his rejection of the order in the Schlieffen plan to violate Holland's neutrality. Moltke wanted Holland to serve as a "windpipe" so that, if necessary, a longer war "could be survived." Therefore, one perspective is that the Moltke plan's stance on Holland was evidence of a strategy for a longer war. In fact, in 1906 Moltke predicted that a "national war" will not be "settled by a decisive battle but a long wearisome struggle with a country."³¹ Holland remaining neutral meant that the Entente, under international law, could not blockade the country, so despite any blockade attempts by the Entente, Germany could receive goods through Holland. For example, between 1913 and 1915 Dutch Cheese exports to Germany had doubled.³² However, Moltke still followed a strategy with the intention of a decisive victory. Tuchman's perspective was that planning for the more predictable and simple short war was easier, leading to him doing exactly that.³³ Tuchman's argument is weakened by the fact that Moltke did not violate Holland's neutrality which would have benefitted a short

²⁷ Lieber, K.A. (2007) 'The New History of World War I and What It Means for International Relations Theory,' *International Security*, 32(2), 160-161.

²⁸ Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin, 339

²⁹ Holmes, T.M. (2014) 'Absolute Numbers: The Schlieffen Plan as a Critique of German Strategy in 1914,' *War in History*, 21(2).

³⁰ Zuber, T. (2001) 'Terence Holmes Reinvents the Schlieffen Plan,' *War in History*, 8(4), 470-471.

³¹ Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin., 339

³² Strachan, H., 2014. *The First World War*. Simon & Schuster UK., 210.

³³ Tuchman, B., 1962. *The Guns of August*. 1st ed. Penguin, 27-28.

war, suggesting he did have preparations for a long war. This is because Germany would have been able to avoid the forts of Liege and utilise the Dutch Railways. However, Herwig argues that despite the Schlieffen Plan, most senior military planners accepted the notion of a long war.³⁴ Perhaps, it was the indecision that arose from the desire to execute the Schlieffen Plan in accordance with the Cult of the Offensive and the realisation that the war may be extended, that ultimately led to an inability to plan for either, thus promulgating the war.

Factor 3: Trench Warfare

After the battle at the Mons in 1914 the predominant warfare became those of trenches in the Western Front. These long and deep ditches were fortified and strung out in a stepped pattern running back to support lines. Ahead of the trenches were wires of 'double aprons' intent on stalling infantry movement through battlefields. The spaces between opposing trenches became known as 'No Man's Land.'³⁵ The objective behind trenches was to defend one's position and attempt to break through the enemy's rear.

The advent of trenches led to warfare that favoured the defensive, stagnating military progress and extending the war. The fact that the biggest losses in the war came when either side was on the offensive is evidence of this. German deaths for example were highest in the Western Front, Eastern Front, and Western Front in 1914, 1915, and 1918 respectively. This indicated that casualties were highest when their army was on the offensive as these dates correspond with the years when German forces were on the offensive. Furthermore, during the battle of the Marne in September of 1914, French soldier deaths peaked at 238,000. The next worst month for France was in October of 1915 when 180,000 soldiers died during the French offensive in Champagne. Deaths only exceeded 100,000 three times after this and two took place in 1918 when the war became mobile.³⁶ Strachan argues that this was because trenches protected soldiers from the firepower of the nineteenth century. This, therefore, stagnated progress as both armies were discouraged from advancing. A view contrary to Strachan's is that increased deaths

³⁴ Herwig, H.H. (2002) 'Germany and the "Short-War" Illusion: Toward a New Interpretation?,' *The Journal of Military History*, 66(3), 681. doi:10.2307/3093355.

³⁵ Dunleavy, B., 2021. 'Life in the Trenches of World War I. HISTORY.' Available at: <https://www.history.com/news/life-in-the-trenches-of-world-war-i#:~:text=the%20Civil%20War,-,Trenches%E2%80%94long%2C%20deep%20ditches%20dug%20as%20protective%20defenses%E2%80%94are,common%20throughout%20the%20Western%20Front.> [Accessed 22 January 2022].

³⁶ Strachan, H., 2014. *The First World War*. Simon & Schuster UK,160.

during offensives did not encourage entrenchment as casualties were simply a part of military advancement. However, the battle of Champagne proves that the death toll of the attacking army typically exceeded that of the defender, as in this battle 30,000 more French soldiers (on the offensive) died than German soldiers. This idea was shared by Napoleon I who asserted that a battle where the enemy is entrenched must be avoided.³⁷

The tactic of attrition behind trench warfare was arguably another prolonging factor. Following the failures of the initial war plans and subsequent offensives the powers reverted to a tactic of attrition, creating stalemate. This was best encapsulated by William Robertson, a British Army officer who said “We can only end the war in our favour by attrition or breaking the German Line.”³⁸ As mentioned breaking the German line was not possible as trenches made large offensives impractical. Furthermore, General Rawlinson of the British army argued that attacks should aim only to take “bites” out of the enemy line.³⁹ The dangers of the offensive and the protection of the trenches lead to the armies attempting to exhaust one another instead of implementing a decisive blow. According to Schmitt however, the inability to break the deadlock reflected poorly on the general’s ‘imagination.’⁴⁰ Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France from 1906-1909 and again from 1917-1920, reflected this sentiment stating that “War was too important to be left to generals.”⁴¹ This indicates that the tactic of attrition was not adopted out of necessity but incompetence. However, Boff believes that there was not any realistic alternative to attrition that would have reduced bloodshed and hastened progress.⁴² This is arguably supported by the fact that major offensives were constrained by the lack of real-time communications, not just the realities of trenches and attrition. This is because the main method of communication was through human runners who often carried outdated information, assuming they even survived. Boff’s perspective suggests that attrition was not a prolonging factor but was necessitated by other prolonging factors. An assumption underpinning this argument however is that strategies for a longer war could not have been drafted by the powers. It is possible that had major

³⁷ Hart, P., 2014. *The Great War*. 2nd ed. London: Profile Books, 124.

³⁸ French, D., 1988. *The Meaning of Attrition*. 1st ed. The English Historical View, 398.

³⁹ Strachan, H., 2014. *The First World War*. Simon & Schuster UK, 178.

⁴⁰ Evera, S.V. (1984) ‘The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,’ *International Security*, 9(1), 58. doi:10.2307/2538636.

⁴¹ Mallinson, A. (2016) *Too important for the generals: Losing and winning the First World War*. Rearsby, Leicester: WF Howes Ltd.

⁴² Boff, J., 2018. *Fighting the First World War: Stalemate and attrition*. British Library. UK. Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/fighting-the-first-world-war-stalemate-and-attrition> [Accessed 15 March 2022].

powers had the foresight to forecast the stalemate and strategized beforehand, there could have been a break in the deadlock.

Factor 4: Sanitary and Health Conditions

Despite the poor sanitary conditions inherent in trench warfare, the advancements in medicine and healthcare helped prolong the war by making such warfare feasible. The trenches along the Western Front were ideal conditions for the spread of disease. There were rats that not only spoiled food but spread diseases, blood-sucking louse that infected 95 percent of British soldiers departing from the Western front, and lice that spread trench fever and typhus. The well-tilled, cultivated, and manured soil also meant wounds were rapidly infected, with 21 percent of French soldiers dying from wounds in the legs or thighs as a result. Furthermore, approximately 1 million soldiers were infected with trench fever during the war.⁴³ However, these were the first armies to reap the rewards of antiseptics, mass inoculation programmes, and a greater understanding of bacteriology.⁴⁴ This is arguably evidenced by the fact that despite the trench warfare, battle not disease was the major killer. This is significant as in wars before 1914 disease had been the principal cause of death. In the Napoleonic Wars *eight times* more British soldiers died from disease than battle wounds.⁴⁵ These preventive military medicines allowed the attrition tactics of trench battles to occur and thereby prolong the war since deaths caused by battle were not augmented by the spread of diseases. This however is potentially weakened by the fact that the quantity of soldiers, not their health, may have mitigated the issue of disease-related death. For example, in France, the population grew by 2 million between 1810 and 1914 while the number of conscripts rose from 60,000 to 2.9 million during the wars on both dates.^{46,47,48,49}

⁴³ Anstead, G.M. (2016) 'The Centenary of the Discovery of Trench Fever, an Emerging Infectious Disease of World War 1,' *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 16(8). doi:10.1016/s1473-3099(16)30003-2.

⁴⁴ Strachan, H., 2014. *The First World War*. Simon & Schuster UK, 159.

⁴⁵ A Connolly, M., 2002. 'Deadly Comrades: War and Infectious Diseases,' *The Lancet*, 360(1), 23-24. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(02\)11807-1.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(02)11807-1.pdf) [Accessed 16 April 2022].

⁴⁶ Napoleon-series.org. n.d. World Population: Europe 1810. Available at: https://www.napoleon-series.org/research/abstract/population/population/world/c_world2.html. [Accessed 6 September 2022].

⁴⁷ France-pub. 2014. '1st August 1914, General Mobilization in France.' Available at: <https://www.france-pub.com/forum/2014/08/01/mobilization-france/#:~:text=With%20the%20First%20World%20War,general%20mobilization%20in%20France%20begins.> [Accessed 6 September 2022].

The increased health can also be attributed to improved nutrition. George puts forward the idea that the division of rations into trench, emergency, and reserve were an important innovation in the development of a more effective rationing system.⁴⁸ While improved nutrition increased health, arguably its impact was not as great as the impact of improved general healthcare and sanitary conditions. This is because improvements in these areas directly prevented death through the treatment of infections and other ailments. However, others may argue that while infections were an issue that was somewhat mitigated in the trenches of the Western front, other diseases in other theatres of the war were of greater significance. For example, 1.5 million soldiers died of malaria, many of which occurred in sub-Saharan Africa where prevention initiatives were often lacklustre and disorganised.⁴⁹ While war outside of Europe was of importance to the war, it is undeniable that the main theatre of the war was Europe. Stevenson for example argues that the Western Front was where the war was decided.⁵⁰ Thus, it could be argued that conditions on the Western Front were of greater significance, despite the importance of casualties in other theatres.

Factor 5: Technology

It could be argued that munitions production prolonged the war. Many factories among the industrial powers converted to the production of munitions for the war. This allowed battles, which would have been called campaigns in years previous, to last for months. Strachan argued that in the short term, the increased output led to decreased quality in munitions. He argues that despite the mitigation of shell shortages, other issues arose. For example, in the battle of Somme, 25 percent of British guns were not functional due to design flaws and poor materials.⁵¹ Therefore it is possible that the increased production did not help prolong attritional battles. However poor-quality munitions may have helped lengthen the war as it denied any power a technological advantage or means of breaking through the deadlock. The importance of poor production is arguably low as both sides of the war switched from lighter weapons to medium and heavier ones suggesting an emphasis on

⁴⁸ George, E., 2012. *Then & Now: The Evolution of Army Rations*. Army Historical Foundation, 17(4), 67. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26363064>. [Accessed 19 April 2022].

⁴⁹ Brabin, B.J. (2014) 'Malaria's Contribution to World War One - the Unexpected Adversary,' *Malaria Journal*, 13(1). doi:10.1186/1475-2875-13-497.

⁵⁰ Stevenson, D., 2004. *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*. London: Allen Lane.

⁵¹ Strachan, H., 2014. *The First World War*. Simon & Schuster UK, 167-169

sophistication (for example Britain after 1915).⁵² Therefore the nearly simultaneous switch allowed the powers to use their munition production as a force multiplier sustaining their attritional battles. Either due to poor quality in munitions or advancements in munitions the stalemate on the western front was arguably a result of munitions that supported attritional battles.

Moreover, the improved and increased railway systems helped sustain the war. In order to support the large armies, bullets, bandages, artillery, and many more items had to be manufactured and transported to the battlefields. By 1918 a division of 12,000 men required 1,000 tonnes of supply every day.⁵³ This level of supply, regardless of production capabilities, was only feasible through efficient transportation provided by railways that only became widespread in the late 19th century. The light railways allowed the quick-firing rifles that dominated trench warfare to be re-supplied.⁵⁴ Other forms of transportation were inadequate at the time as poor roads, heavy rainfall, and the bogging down of mud roads by heavy lorries reduced the efficiency of motor vehicles.⁵⁵ However, the importance of railways is arguably overstated as it is possible that the ability of the railway to supply the fronts was dependent on a static war. Thus, it is sound to assert that the advent of railways itself is not a factor that extended the war but a factor that perpetuated the prolonging of other factors. This idea is shared by Shimshomi who argues that the means of transportation in the Great War strongly favoured the defender and thus incentivised a defensive strategy, just as trenches did.⁵⁶ A different perspective however is that technology is the factor that prolonged the war to the greatest extent, since attritional battles and mass production could arguably only be a factor that contributed to the war's prolongation when paired with the railway networks. This is because the attritional battles needed to be supplied and the munitions needed to be transported. Furthermore, the failure of the Moltke plan can be attributed to technology. Moltke's (arguably fatal) mistake of sending troops to the Eastern Front was only rationalised by Russia's improved railway that enabled their army to

⁵² Fleischer, W., 2017. *Military Technology of the First World War*. 1st ed. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 70-74.

⁵³ IWM. 2022. 'Transport and Supply During the First World War. Available at: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/transport-and-supply-during-the-first-world-war>. [Accessed 2 June 2022].

⁵⁴ Strachan, H., 2014. *The First World War*. Simon & Schuster UK, 164-169

⁵⁵ IWM. 2022. 'Transport and Supply During the First World War. Available at: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/transport-and-supply-during-the-first-world-war>. [Accessed 2 June 2022].

⁵⁶ Shimshoni, J. (1990) 'Technology, Military Advantage, and World War I: A Case for Military Entrepreneurship,' *International Security*, 15(3), 188. doi:10.2307/2538911.

mobilise quicker than anticipated. This would suggest that technology, specifically the railway, has a crucial role in the lengthening of the war. This is weakened by the fact, as previously mentioned, that regardless of Russia's mobilisation Germany may have been able to achieve swift victory had it not committed soldiers toward the Eastern Front.

Conclusion

World War I was arguably extended due to not one but multiple factors. This would also explain the reason why experts of the time were unable to forecast the prolongation of the war as it was an amalgam of different factors. While it is true that had the Schlieffen or Moltke plan not failed the war may not have been prolonged, this does not necessarily explain the continuation of the war for over four years thereafter. It is possible that the two sides of the war being of equal strength nullified the alliances' ability to advance after the failure of the initial war plans. This potentially led to the battles of attrition. However, the battles of attrition may have been shorter or not feasible had it not been for the mitigation of disease and infection due to improvements in sanitary and health conditions. Furthermore, the advancements in technology namely munitions and railways, arguably allowed for attritional battles to occur on a technical level. Additional technology did not shorten the war as each side of the war managed to mirror one another's advancement. Thus, while the Schlieffen and Moltke Plan prevented a short war, trench warfare, made sustainable by improvements in sanitary and health conditions and by improvements in technology, ultimately led to the extension of the war.

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Global Public Policy Reactions to an Increasingly Political Young Generation

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Abstract

The successful introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 revolutionized the way countries regarded youth opinions, pushing for greater youth involvement in policymaking. Consequently, the Convention marked an era that saw the rise of youth parliaments (deliberative bodies of young citizens connecting youth members and policymakers), allowing for youth influence on lawmaking and policy development. From the late 20th century to the present, governments of ratifying states like the United Kingdom, Israel, South Korea, and New Zealand established youth parliaments with varying levels of legislative influence to fulfill the ideal that young people deserve representation in governmental proceedings. As is typical of government initiatives, these newly-established bodies faced intense scrutiny by the public, academics, and politicians. The United States, the only state to have not ratified the Convention, has no established youth policy or youth parliament. This essay reviews the history of youth parliaments, considers the merit of critiques of youth parliaments, and weighs whether the long-awaited ratification of the Convention by the United States of America and the implementation of a youth parliament (or variations) would impact American political culture or institutions. As will be shown, a youth parliament would shape a new era of intergenerational cooperation in the United States.

Introduction

In 1990, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a landmark treaty establishing youth rights as a global concern alongside issues like peace treaties, environmentalism, and humanitarianism. The CRC is one of the most ratified human rights treaties with 196 parties to the treaty including non-UN members like the State of Palestine and the Holy See.¹ Even partially recognized states such as Taiwan have incorporated the CRC into their laws and institutions.² Following the adoption of the CRC, an ‘unprecedented right of the child – the right of the child to be heard – ... has become [one] of fundamental importance worldwide.’³

Article 12 of the CRC is the defining and most revolutionary component of the Convention. It stipulates that:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.⁴

By examining how state parties have applied the CRC, particularly Article 12, to policy and institutional reform, the significance of this provision becomes clearer.

The inclusion of youth in decision-making and policy-making directly aligns with to the introduction of the CRC into global culture. Article 12 triggered a widespread movement of youth participation in

¹ United Nations Treaty Collection, *UNTC* [website], https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=_en#bottom, (accessed 1 June 2023).

² Child and Youth Welfare and Rights Promotion Group, *Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Republic of China, 2017, 3-4.

³ A. Parkes, ‘Tokenism versus Genuine Participation: Children’s Parliaments and the Right of the Child to be Heard Under International Law’, *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2008, 3.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, New York, November 20, 1989.

government. UNICEF's Stephen Lewis⁵ was quoted in a speech he delivered to the Commission of Human Rights as saying:

The most powerful change wrought by the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] is the way in which children have become visible. ... civil society feel[s] a clear obligation to include children... You can't ignore children any longer and get away with it. The Convention has raised consciousness in a dramatic fashion.⁶

Youth participatory models in non-governmental bodies began to spread following the adoption of the CRC in 1990 after having undergone a 'slow, evolutionary process' since the 1980s.⁷ Post-CRC ratification, youth engagement on socio-political issues found new structures and institutional homes through charities, youth organizations, and, eventually, government bodies. Perfecting the niche for impactful youth participation became a goal for national governments; thus, the idea that would become youth parliaments began to form.

Creating youth participatory organizations and outlets requires an understanding of the various facets of the CRC and Article 12, especially the 'due weight' implication in Article 12(2) which asks state parties to place a quasi-formulaic emphasis on the maturity of the child in proportion to the views expressed. Laura Lundy of Queen's University proposes a model for applying Article 12 to the institutionalization of youth 'representative bodies,' as propounded in Article 12(2). Lundy's model prioritizes four key elements of youth participation under Article 12: space, voice, audience, and influence. Lundy summarizes each element, arguing that the elements for effective and impactful youth representation are:

Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view.

Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views.

Audience: The view must be listened to.

Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.⁸

⁵ Lewis served as the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa (2001-2006), Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF (1995-1999), and as the Canadian Ambassador to the UN (1984-1988). Lewis holds 42 honorary doctorates, is a Companion of the Order of Canada, and was honored as a Knight Commander of the Most Dignified Order of Moshoeshoe in Lesotho by King Letsie III.

⁶ K. Dürr, "The School: A Democratic Learning Community. The All-European Study on Pupils Participation in School", *Pupils, Parents, Teachers - a democratic community* [website], <https://rm.coe.int/090000168097c7fe>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁷ E. Middleton, "Youth Participation in the UK: Bureaucratic Disaster or Triumph of Child Rights", *Children, Youth and Environments*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2006.

⁸ L. Lundy, "Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child", *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 6, December 2007, 931-933.

For this essay, the representative bodies that fulfill the ideals of both CRC's Article 12 and the four elements identified by Lundy will be called 'youth parliaments.' Variations of this youth parliament title apply based on the terminology of the constituency. Youth councils, assemblies, and congresses are all variations of youth parliaments.

The emergence of youth parliaments has direct ties to Article 12 of the CRC and, more recently, CRC signatories have referenced their respective youth parliaments as manifestations of youth policy objectives.⁹ The CRC's broad ideals manifested in the ever-growing youth parliament movement. Take, for example, the United Kingdom and its introduction of a Youth Parliament by MP Andrew Rowe. On June 9, 1998, almost a decade after the adoption of the CRC, Rowe moved to establish the 'parliament of young people.'¹⁰ Rowe prefaced his parliamentary motion with three reasons as to why a British youth parliament ought to be established. Rowe argued young people should be consulted before laws affecting them are made; youths will inherit the nations they inhabit and deserve to have some say in their future inheritance; and including young people in policymaking would alleviate the voter apathy felt by youth in British society.¹¹ The arguments propounded by Rowe have distinct parallels to CRC Article 12.

Just as in the United Kingdom, other non-European nations implemented youth parliaments as a way of fulfilling the aims of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, as well as granting youth democratic participation that they lacked before. In 1991, Zimbabwe established the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe to bring the voices of children into policymaking.¹² The Junior Parliament has impacted Zimbabwe. Multi-lateral dialogue between the Junior Parliament, the government of Zimbabwe, and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) led to productive conversations about nutrition and health in Zimbabwe.

⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2022', United Nations, 11 November 2022.

¹⁰ A. Rowe, *Hansard*, London, England, June 9, 1998.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² P. Katete et al., 'Promoting youth leadership on nutrition through junior parliamentarians and junior council engagement in Zimbabwe', *Field Exchange*, 2021, <https://www.ennonline.net/fex/66/promotingyouthleadership>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

Slovenia¹³ and New Zealand¹⁴ formed youth parliaments towards the end of the 20th century as well, establishing these groups in 1990 and 1994, respectively. The Republic of Ireland established its youth parliament, the *Dáil na nÓg*, in 2010, with a collective of several local youth groups collectively called the *Comhairle na nÓg*.¹⁵ South Africa introduced their version of a youth parliament in 2013 and, per a government statement, the South African government aims to create ‘an opportunity for the youth to engage with Parliament’.¹⁶

Youth parliaments sprung up around the world with globalist cooperation and inspiration driving signatories of the CRC, as well as subsidiary constituencies, to adopt structured programs to include youth. The development of youth parliaments at the national level drives regional youth parliaments and youth councils to form, including municipal youth councils in the United Kingdom¹⁷ and the Republic of Ireland,¹⁸ district youth councils in the State of Israel, and others.

As can be expected, the diverse policies and practices of CRC-ratifying states inform the development of each nation’s youth parliaments and their impact and abilities. Despite these variations, these youth parliaments share a common characteristic: their influence on government institutions. As previously established, ‘influence’ is a key element of effective youth representation under the provisions of the CRC. Influence – that youth parliamentary decisions are acted on by a larger deliberative body – is critical to ensuring the impact of youth within their country’s government. For example, an act by the Youth National Assembly of the Republic of Korea can be submitted to the National Assembly of Korea, the country’s unicameral legislature, for consideration. This influence has enabled the Youth National Assembly of the Republic of Korea to propose legislation that has included amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Labor

¹³ Zveza Prijateljev Mladine Slovenije, *Otroški parlamenti - Zveza prijateljev mladine Slovenije* [website], <https://www.zpms.si/programi/otroski-parlamenti/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

¹⁴ Ministry of Youth Development, *Youth Parliament - MYD* [website], <https://www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-parliament/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

¹⁵ Comhairle na nÓg, *What We Do | Comhairle na nÓg* [website], <https://www.comhairlenanog.ie/who-we-are/what-we-do/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

¹⁶ South African Government, *Parliament launches Youth Parliament* [website], <https://www.gov.za/parliament-launches-youth-parliament>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

¹⁷ Bradford-Keighley Youth Parliament, *How BKYP Works* [website], <https://web.archive.org/web/20120304012018/http://www.bkyp.com/how-bkyp-works.php>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

¹⁸ Comhairle na nÓg, *What We Do | Comhairle na nÓg* [website], <https://www.comhairlenanog.ie/who-we-are/what-we-do/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

Standards Act, and the Framework Act on Education, as well as the introduction of the Guarantee of Student Human Rights Act.¹⁹

In essence, the continuous development of youth parliaments represents a new paradigm in youth policy internationally. The inclusion of youth voices comes at a crucial time. As the global population grows so does the youth population but older politicians disproportionately hold positions of power compared to younger people. Ideological differences and different socio-economic realities have historically caused political conflict,²⁰ a fact which, if unaddressed, will become glaringly apparent. By establishing intergenerational cooperation on a host of issues, especially with people under the age of majority (the age of legal adulthood) and without the ability to vote, governments reform institutions to make government more accessible.

Critiques: Then and Now, by Politicians and by the Public, Academic, and Political

Reforms by the government, or any kind of institutional change for that matter, face scrutiny, criticism, praise, and general debate by politicians, academics, and the public. Various critiques grouped by topic follow, which examine the political and academic reactions to youth parliament models across the world.

Why Youth Only?

The most common criticism of youth parliaments is that they are redundant or unnecessary. Why should a specific demographic of the citizenry be given special access to the government? The theme recurs almost every time the UK Youth Parliament is invited for its annual sitting in the House of Commons. For context, the UK Youth Parliament was permitted to sit in the House of Lords in 2008. In March of 2009, Sir Chris Bryant, the Labour Party Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, moved to let the Youth Parliament ‘hold its 2009 annual meeting in the Chamber of this House [of Commons].’²¹ As the House of Commons debated the motion, Conservative MP Richard Bacon questioned if the Commons allowed any such sittings in their chamber, why would a board of ‘pensioners’ or older citizens not also be able to

¹⁹ The Youth National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, *History* [website], https://youthassembly.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=history, (accessed 1 June 2023).

²⁰ A. Foner, “Age Stratification and Age Conflict in Political Life,” *American Sociological Review*, Rutgers University, Vol. 29, April 1974.

²¹ C. Bryant, *Hansard*, London, England, 12 March 2009.

debate matters in the public eye?²² Deputy Leader Bryant retorted sardonically that, in consideration of the makeup of the House of Commons, older citizens already occupied the halls of Westminster Palace.

Although said in jest, this remark points to a harsh truth about the age representation in the existing government body. Youths coming of age in the first three decades of the 21st century are incredibly political and increasingly discontent with the status quo. Some commentators have described the current era of social tension and youth-driven rejection of norms as a new age of dissent in which the outspoken generation is vocally rejecting the ‘business-as-usual’ culture.²³ In the United States, the age of elected leaders does not reflect that of the average American. The average age of members of the US House of Representatives at the beginning of the 118th Congress was 57.9 years; the average age of Senators was 64.0 years.²⁴ In contrast, per the 2021 US Census, the median age in the United States is 38.8.²⁵

Youth parliaments, as previously established, serve the populations addressed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC defines ‘child’ as one under the age of eighteen or the age of majority if the age of majority is lower than eighteen.²⁶ Therefore, youth parliaments are the only bodies that represent a majority of a nation’s unenfranchised citizens. Other groups that cater to specific religious sects, ethnic groups, employees, or nationalities cannot claim the same status as a youth parliament.

Six years after the initial debate on the motion to let the Youth Parliament sit in the UK House of Commons, another debate was held on the same topic with similar speaking points. Conservative MP and then-Deputy Leader of the House of Commons Dr. Thérèse Coffey presented a practically identical motion for consideration by the members of the Commons. She, on behalf of herself, the Leader of the House of Commons, the shadow Leader of the House, and the Scottish National Party’s shadow Leader of the House argued for another sitting of the Youth Parliament in the chambers of the House of Commons.

²² R. Bacon, *Hansard*, London, England, 12 March 2009.

²³ K. O’Brien et al., ‘Exploring youth activism on climate change: dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent,’ *Ecology and Society*, Vol, 23, No. 3, October 2018, 41.

²⁴ J. Manning, ‘Membership of the 118th Congress: A Profile,’ *Congressional Research Service*, 13 March 2023.

²⁵ US Census Bureau, *Nation Continues to Age as It Becomes More Diverse* [website], <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/population-estimates-characteristics.html>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

²⁶ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Philip Davies, a Conservative MP, opposed the motion because the Youth Parliament should not be given ‘a separate rule’ when it comes to the ability to sit in the benches of the Commons.²⁷ Fellow Conservative MP Tim Loughton countered, saying that ‘Members of the UK Youth Parliament... do not have the opportunity to vote or stand in elections.’²⁸

The argument that youth parliaments are unnecessary or redundant disintegrates upon analysis of facts and statistics. ‘Why youth only?’ is the question. To be frank, youth are the only persons within the borders of a democratic nation with no guaranteed recourse to be heard without the ideals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Youth parliaments provide a method for young people to convey their opinions and beliefs to governments that have, for decades, dismissed young populations as dissenters, radicals, or immature and underdeveloped miscreants.

The Difficulty of Choosing Delegates

Representative government has always faced criticism about how representatives are chosen, and youth parliaments are no different. Elections by peers, elections by local youth councils, appointments by legislators, tests, exams, and training; are all methods of choosing members of youth parliaments. No system is universally or unanimously acclaimed but, instead, complaints about the selection of youth parliament members abound. It is entirely understandable to have reservations about the selection process for a quasi-governmental institution with significant influence. As most youth parliament members are youth under eighteen who lack the education held by actual elected officials and almost certainly lack the education of the average citizen, these reservations can be well founded.

Dr. Aisling Parkes of the Willamette University College of Law critiques various youth parliament electoral techniques for the *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution*.²⁹ She writes that direct, transparent, democratic elections like that of the Scottish Youth Parliament fulfill many of the democratic goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Scottish Youth Parliament is open to members aged fourteen to twenty-five,³⁰ an age range not supported by the CRC

²⁷ P. Davies, *Hansard*, 23 June 2015.

²⁸ T. Loughton, *Hansard*, 23 June 2015.

²⁹ A. Parkes, ‘Tokenism versus Genuine Participation: Children’s Parliaments and the Right of the Child to be Heard Under International Law,’ 3.

³⁰ Scottish Youth Parliament, *SYP Elections 2023* [website], <https://syp.org.uk/get-involved/elections/>.

which considers a child to be under eighteen.³¹ The lack of representation of youth under fourteen and the inclusion of adults who have attained the Scottish age of majority is in conflict, or at the least, discord with the CRC, a fact Parkes notes.

Alternatively, Parkes notes that the Junior Parliament in Zimbabwe requires a speech-writing and public-speaking competition to help choose members. Zimbabwe boasts one of the highest literacy rates in the English language among African nations but less-educated and non-English-speaking young Zimbabweans are entirely prevented from becoming junior parliamentarians because of the academic competition. The subjectivity of skills-based admissions processes leads to confusion and inconsistency, writes Parkes.

New Zealand utilizes a unique system of delegate selection. Individual constituencies of the New Zealand Parliament appoint youth members with various methods including peer voting, selection by the area's Member of Parliament, or skills-based competitions akin to those in Zimbabwe.³² The lack of a cohesive selection strategy could create confusion.

The process to become a Youth Parliament member in South Africa is considered exclusionary and non-democratic by many South African youths. A report by the South African Institute of International Affairs argues that the process, in which political parties select youth to represent them, is pure tokenism and amounts to little meaningful change.³³ By selecting youth on the basis of ideology, members of the South African Youth Parliament feel compelled to echo the beliefs of its adult counterparts rather than authentically representing South African youth.

Fighting Tokenism Through the Lundy and Lansdown Models

As youth parliaments are given sizeable influence and media coverage,³⁴ adults attempting to indirectly influence the processes of government find impressionable youth parliament members as eager

³¹ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child.

³² Ministry of Youth Development, *Youth Parliament 2019* [website], <https://www.myd.govt.nz/young-people/youth-parliament/youth-parliament-2019.html#YouthParliament2019Participants2>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

³³ South African Institute of International Affairs, 'Youth Submission to the APRM in South Africa 2020/2021,' 1 May 2021, 19-20.

³⁴ J. Kenny et al., 'UK Youth Parliament: Get involved, says Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle,' *BBC*, 10 November 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-63575058>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

targets for manipulation. As was previously mentioned, South African Youth Parliament members find themselves being encouraged or forced into the ideological constraints of an adult-majority party.³⁵ Youth are impressionable and susceptible to the influence of an older role model, especially if that role model is a politician who tapped them to represent their country.

Per the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, tokenism is defined as the ‘practice of making only a symbolic effort [to do something]’.³⁶ In the scope of youth participation in decision-making, tokenism can be found when any of the four elements of youth representation are denied. As a review, the ‘Lundy model’ of children’s participation in decision-making includes four key concepts: space, voice, audience, and influence. This model, adopted by the European Commission^{37,38}, the World Health Organization,³⁹ World Vision,⁴⁰ and UNICEF⁴¹, provides a framework through which institutions can fight tokenism in youth participatory bodies.

Gerison Lansdown, an international children’s rights consultant, proposes another model for understanding youth participation levels. Lansdown recognizes three processes: a consultative process, a participatory process, and a self-initiated process.⁴² In a consultative process, adult decision-makers consult youth, acknowledging that, as adults, they lack a complete perspective. This adult-initiated process does not allow children to control outcomes as adults still hold all the power. The participatory process allows children to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate projects and programs. Similarly, this process is

³⁵ South African Institute of International Affairs, ‘Youth Submission to the APRM in South Africa 2020/2021,’ 19-20.

³⁶ Merriam-Webster, *tokenism* [website], <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tokenism>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

³⁷ European Commission, *Child participation in political and democratic life* [website], https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/child-participation-political-and-democratic-life_en, (accessed 1 June 2023).

³⁸ European Commission, *Lundy Model of Participation and Lundy Voice Model Checklist* [website], https://commission.europa.eu/document/e4dd1d64-473b-4a2a-9de2-e2e1648fd52d_en, (accessed 1 June 2023).

³⁹ World Health Organization, *How young people can engage in global health and development* [website], <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/coming-of-age-adolescent-health/adolescence---global-health-development>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁴⁰ P. Cuevas-Parra, ‘Children and Young People’s Participation,’ World Vision, 12.

⁴¹ G. Lansdown, ‘Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation,’ UNICEF, March 2018, 8.

⁴² G. Lansdown, ‘Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them,’ Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, The Netherlands, May 2005.

adult-initiated but allows youth to influence and review outcomes and methods. The process that gives children the greatest autonomy is the self-initiated process in which issues are identified by children and discussed by children, in which adults are facilitators rather than leaders, and in which youth control the operations. Youth parliaments, youth councils, and other Article 12 bodies float between these three processes. There are valid criticisms of all processes including that only consulting youth is tokenistic or that letting them run things is entrusting youth with too much responsibility. Under the ‘due weight’ implication of Article 12, institutions must consider whether they are hindering the voices of youth or uplifting them.

It is also important to note that adults have previously assumed, and presumably continue to assume, the opinions of youth and only include them for tokenism. A member of the Children and Youth Board of the United Kingdom’s Department for Education and Skills expressed concern when a young person on the aforementioned board stated that they were simply tokenistic choices. The young person complained that decisions were made before they were brought into the fold.⁴³ Referring back to the model proposed by Lundy in ‘Voice’ Is Not Enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,’ the relationship between influence and audience is interrupted by tokenism. Lundy argues that the right to have views given due weight is derived from influence over policy and an audience of policymakers.⁴⁴ With this understanding, it is a violation of the CRC to deny the audience of youth (defined as the right to have their views heard) and the influence of youth (the right to have those views acted upon). By making decisions on behalf of youth but still claiming to include them, organizations and governments ignore the right of youth to have their views given due weight.

The process of participatory youth inclusion and expression is cyclical and multi-faceted. While youth parliaments are an outlet for Article 12 expression of views, if youth are not directly influencing the structure and operation of those youth parliaments, a hypocritical dilemma emerges. Feedback by youth, in a youth-accessible manner, for youth parliaments is critical for meaningful participatory democracy on behalf of youth.⁴⁵

⁴³ E. Middleton, “Youth Participation in the UK: Bureaucratic Disaster or Triumph of Child Rights”, 182.

⁴⁴ L. Lundy, “Voice’ is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,’ 932

⁴⁵ A. Parkes, ‘Tokenism versus Genuine Participation: Children’s Parliaments and the Right of the Child to be Heard Under International Law,’ 20.

Studies show that ignoring the views of youth, or simply demonstrating that their actions result in little change, can both decrease youth self-esteem and prevent retention in a program.⁴⁶ To reject the tokenism that can be expected to occur, youth must be just as invested and listened to as there is continuous development in the model for participatory involvement as the youth would be speaking from said model or body for youth participation.

Government responses to youth parliaments and clear intent and willingness to listen to the voices of youth play a key part in establishing Article 12's rights to be heard. In 2001, following the first sitting of the UK, the Youth Parliament compiled its 'Youth Manifesto' and, since then, major parties in the United Kingdom have responded to the Youth Manifesto with their thoughts on major issues.⁴⁷ By taking the time to listen to and respond to the Youth Parliament, the parties of the United Kingdom provide the audience and influence that, together, give it due weight. This model of youth engagement with leaders demonstrates a willingness to listen and also gives youth the opportunity to meaningfully impact policy.

Youth parliaments across the globe have the ability to impact policy, giving them the element of influence that yields Article 12 fulfillment under the Lundy model. The State of Israel listened to its National Student and Youth Council and passed the Pupils' Rights Law in 2000, codifying student rights in Israeli education;⁴⁸ the law passed despite objections from the Ministry of Education, Members of the Knesset, and teachers' organizations. As previously discussed, the National Youth Assembly of Korea has the ability to introduce laws and has successfully done so over the few decades of its existence.⁴⁹ Youth parliaments are not limited to national legislation in terms of their impact, as a rejection of the appearance of tokenism. The UK Youth Parliament is noted by the Library of the House of Commons as being heard and listened to by the local government, various government

⁴⁶ K. O'Malley, 'Children and Young People Participating in PRSP Processes,' *Save the Children*, 2004, 2, 10.

⁴⁷ A. Babar, 'Political Parties respond to British Youth Council Manifesto,' *British Youth Council*, 20 April 2015, <https://www.byc.org.uk/news/political-parties-respond-to-british-youth-council-manifesto>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁴⁸ *The Student's Rights Act 2000* (Edu), <https://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Zchuyot/ChukimVeamanot/Chukim/PupilsRightsLaw>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁴⁹ The Youth National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, *History* [website], https://youthassembly.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=history, (accessed 1 June 2023).

agencies, and even providers of services to young people like public transportation groups.^{50,51}

Overall, many youth parliaments in CRC party states make an earnest effort to avoid tokenism. There are, as expected, flaws in many of the systems in which youth make their voices heard. Politicians and academics alike find these flaws and ameliorate or exacerbate them. When youth parliaments include conversations about continuous development and about the continued implementation of the CRC, they ensure continued progress towards a more inclusive, accessible, and meaningful model of youth participation in decision-making. Global leadership by nations like the United Kingdom, Israel, the Republic of Ireland, the Republic of Korea, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, and countless others left undiscussed have aided and continue to aid in the universal adoption of youth parliamentary models. Signatories to the CRC continue to make efforts and actions that bring youth parliaments out from the shadow of tokenism and into the light of meaningful, effective, and impactful youth participation in decision-making.

Youth Politics in the United States from the Later 19th Century to the Present

The United States of America maintains a complicated relationship with its youth, a relationship that causes strife and tension between younger generations and older generations. The root of this tension is the inability of youth to have the views expressed and given due weight because, unlike every other country in the world, the United States has neither ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child nor implemented its own guarantees of student rights. Throughout the course of roughly a century and a half, from the Civil War and Reconstruction era to the present, youth established themselves as socio-political actors capable of forcing public perception and government action towards a more progressive, pro-youth stance. Internationally, youth have long been at the forefront of social justice and human rights movements,⁵² especially so in the United States.

⁵⁰ For example, Merseytravel, the public transport coordinator agency for the North West city of Liverpool, provides a unique transport ticket for fifteen to eighteen-year-olds for cheaper prices so young people can commute without a higher cost burden. Other localities across the United Kingdom have offered cheaper fares to young people following campaigns by youth councils and the UK Youth Parliament.

⁵¹ P. Lester et al., 'Youth Parliaments and young people's participation in politics,' House of Commons Library, 24 January 2007.

⁵² C. Petcu, 'Recognizing Youth as Peacebuilders,' *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programming with Colombia's Youth*, Stimson Center, 1 July 2020, 7.

The United States, along with other Western industrialized nations, continued to have widespread child labor into the twentieth century. The exposure of children to workplace politics and, more importantly, the blossoming labor movements of post-Reconstruction industrial America, proved to be a crucial factor in the organizing power of youth.

In 1888, women and girls went on strike against poor working conditions in a match factory in London. Although this event did not occur on American soil, the success of the match girls' strike marked the emergence of stronger, bolder female youth activism.⁵³ Such events in the United Kingdom spilled over to the United States where industrial unrest, driven by poorer working conditions, a rapidly-increasing wealth gap, and the emergence of leftist political ideologies like socialism and communism, created the perfect storm for a movement of youth organizing power to be born.

Just eleven years later, boys selling newspapers on the streets of New York City went on strike against some of the largest and most powerful media conglomerates in the United States in response to low pay. Industry giants like Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst faced a rebellion from schoolboys. Newsboys took pride in the 'contradictory image' of being both exploited children and 'plucky entrepreneurs.'⁵⁴ The social reformers of the late 19th century and early 20th century immediately took offense to the idea of young boys laboring on the sides of the road. *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* notes 'these [social reform] campaigns rarely involved the newsboys themselves, who often saw themselves as exploited but sought to redress the situation by negotiating for better terms.'⁵⁵

Applying both the Lundy and Lansdown models of youth participation in decision-making, it is clear that, although noble in cause, these social reform campaigns did not actively listen to youth and thus cannot be considered youth-involved movements. However, the youth-led aspects of organizing can be considered 'self-initiated' in the Lansdown model. The 1899 Newsboy Strike represented a youth-led movement for meaningful change. The initial leader of the strike was an eighteen-year-old and a vast majority of strikers were children per US legal standards and CRC definitions. In the Lansdown model, self-

⁵³ S. Koven, *The Match Girl and the Heiress*, Princeton University Press, 2014, 88, 100.

⁵⁴ J. Bekken, *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History*, M.E. Sharpe, 609

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 610

initiated youth participation campaigns yield better results, encourage greater involvement, and involve youth to the greatest extent.⁵⁶

Despite no formal institution or existing body for child laborers to express their views, attempts to establish both audience and influence, as defined in the Lundy model, persisted. The Newsboys Strike succeeded with this youth involvement and both strikers and media magnates negotiated for an acceptable deal. Labor organizing consisted of more than the industrial workers with socialist sympathies; labor organizing included the growing desire among youth for social change, a desire which spread outside of the workplace quickly.

As public-school enrollment increased in the post-Civil War era of American history, so too did youth movements in schools. Mirroring their industrial counterparts, students began to adopt striking tactics, cementing student protest as a standard part of history.⁵⁷ Student strikes continued into the late twentieth century in response to issues like teacher pay and school hours.⁵⁸ Even non-strike actions showed student resistance and a desire among youth to impact culture and decision-making in their community. ‘Gay/Straight Alliances’ became a simple, but effective, method of youth rebellion against established norms and policies by creating organizations that accepted and recognized queer youth in a rejection of the ‘subtle forms of homophobia [youth] experience[d] at school’.⁵⁹

Youth further demonstrated their intense desire to shape public policy and decision-making in the Civil Rights Era and in protests against the Vietnam War. Social justice movements from the late 20th century to the present showcase youth at the forefront of organizing. Dr. V.P. Franklin, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, notes that youth in the mid to late 20th century organized their own social justice campaigns before, during, and after the well-known civil

⁵⁶ G. Lansdown, ‘Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them.’

⁵⁷ Ivy, *We Don’t Need No Education*, <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/blog/2013/06/01/we-dont-need-no-education>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁵⁸ H. Sunderland, ‘Children’s strikes, school walk-outs, and youth political activism,’ *Doing History in Public*, 6 March 2018, <https://doinghistoryinpublic.org/2018/03/06/childrens-strikes-school-walk-outs-and-youth-political-activism/#comments>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁵⁹ W. Blumenfeld, ‘“Gay/Straight” Alliances: Transforming Pain to Pride,’ *The High School Journal*, Vol. 77, No. ½, *The Gay Teenager*, October/November 1993 - December 1993/January 1994, 113.

rights campaigns of SNCC,⁶⁰ SCLC, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged.⁶¹

Youth participation in decision-making was not fully realized in the 19th and 20th centuries but the desire to be involved in decisions that affected policy and practice manifested itself through rebellion and resistance. Student strikes, in addition to youth-led and youth-organized groups, truly fulfill what Lansdown envisioned in the self-initiated process of her model for youth participation. The youth history of the United States shows a clear wish to establish itself in American institutions and yet youth have historically been denied the space, voice, audience, and influence required for meaningful impacts.

Role of Youth in Current US Institutions and Conflicts with the CRC

The United States has long opposed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, despite playing a critical role in the Convention's drafting, negotiation, and international adoption.⁶² The CRC shifted away from the perception of children 'as passive objects of the authority of parents and governments', a departure from longstanding US laws and customs that focus on adult rights.⁶³ The CRC would directly impact highly contentious laws in American culture including family law and reproductive rights;⁶⁴ for example, the Supreme Court has affirmed parents have the right to privacy and the liberty to 'establish a home and bring up children.'⁶⁵ Furthermore, medical decision-making and psychiatric commitment rules conflict with youth autonomy outlined in the CRC.⁶⁶ Despite the United States being a CRC signatory, American institutions and systems are at odds with the concepts in the CRC. Under current laws, American youth lack the rights and representation the CRC aims to codify.

⁶⁰ The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was the principal organization through which youth organized during the American Civil Rights Movement.

⁶¹ V.P. Franklin, 'Documenting the Contributions of Children and Teenagers to the Civil Rights Movement,' *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 100, No. 4, 2015, 668.

⁶² L. Blanchfield, 'The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', *Congressional Research Service*, 2015, 1.

⁶³ S.J. Lee, 'A Child's Voice vs. a Parent's Control: Resolving a Tension Between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and US Law,' *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 117, No. 3, April 2017, 687.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 700.

⁶⁵ *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), 262 US 390.

⁶⁶ S.J. Lee, 'A Child's Voice vs. a Parent's Control: Resolving a Tension Between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and US Law,' 711-717.

In reviewing the history, critiques, and evidence regarding the United States' lack of CRC ratification and youth strategy, it becomes apparent that the US is an outlier in the global community regarding the government's relationship with youth. US culture is one that forces a broader conversation about reconciling the rights of parents and youth, and the role of the government and institutions in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Notably, localities and states within the US have established bodies that give students some or all of the concepts in the Lundy model: space, voice, audience, and influence, thus proving that youth representation is not incompatible with American systems. Some of the states and municipal governments that have implemented youth councils with the ability to impact policy include the states of Indiana,⁶⁷ Iowa,⁶⁸ Louisiana,⁶⁹ Massachusetts,⁷⁰ Minnesota,⁷¹ New Hampshire,⁷² and Washington;⁷³ and municipalities like Albuquerque, New Mexico.⁷⁴

The United States has staked its heritage as a nation founded on the ideals of liberty and freedom. Despite acting as an international conflict mediator and a global defender of human rights, the United States has yet to ratify a human rights treaty with some of the highest adoption numbers of treaties in global history. Numerous attempts and actions by presidential administrations in the United States have pushed the CRC into the national public policy conversation, all attempts falling short of the 'advice and consent' of the Senate for ratification. An act of the US Congress or an executive order could establish a body within the existing institutions of the federal government and provide the opportunity for youth voices to impact public policy, policy debates,

⁶⁷ Indiana Bar Foundation, *Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council* [website], <https://www.inbarfoundation.org/indiana-legislative-youth-advisory-council/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁶⁸ Iowa Department of Human Rights, *SIYAC* [website], <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/siyac>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁶⁹ Louisiana Commission on Civic Education, *Legislative Youth Advisory Council* [website], https://house.louisiana.gov/civiced/default_LYAC, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁷⁰ Governor of Massachusetts, *Governor's Statewide Youth Council* [website], <https://appointments.state.ma.us/BoardDetail.aspx?brdid=100425>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁷¹ Minnesota Alliance with Youth, *Minnesota Youth Council* [website], <https://mnyouth.net/myc/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁷² Office of the Governor of New Hampshire, *Governor's Youth Advisory Council* [website], <https://www.governor.nh.gov/youth>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁷³ Legislative Youth Advisory Council, *Washington's Official Youth Voice* [website], <https://www.walyac.org/>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

⁷⁴ City of Albuquerque, *Mayor's Youth Advisory Council* [website], <https://www.cabq.gov/mayor/mayors-youth-advisory-council>, (accessed 1 June 2023).

policy implementation, and policy review effectively and meaningfully. Until such actions are carried out, the international community will continue to recognize the United States as an outlier among UN member states, as American youth continue to lack the rights and liberties of the CRC and the representation propounded by Article 12.

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The Influence of Civil Rights and Unionization on the Women's Rights Movement and Attainment of Suffrage

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Abstract

The women's rights movement blossomed in the late 19th century in the US following the Civil War, industrialization, and the inclusion of women in the Constitutional Clause for civil liberties. However, the path taken to transform women's social and political standing so significantly in a mere century is often overlooked in favor of highlighting the noble but scattered protests that occurred in the early 20th century. While the bulk of women's movements occurred in neoteric 1900s society, the foundation of the organization began nearly a century prior with the slow expansion of the labor movement. Many modern historians fail to account for the underlying collaborative force in their research and reflect on unionization as a separate entity rather than a vital aspect of the women's rights movement. This essay adopts an analytic approach in the investigation of unionization and its relationship with the women's rights movement. It explores the nature of the factors and circumstances that contributed to the success of the women's rights campaign. The examination of these topics provided in the essay suggests that 1) although some would claim otherwise, in the early 1800s, women's unions in America were a part of the women's rights movement; 2) the unions played a requisite role in women's enfranchisement; 3) the existence of civil rights in America was crucial in allowing women the freedom to experiment with activism and unionization.

Background of Oppression

Oppression is an “unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power.”¹ Throughout history, women have been the subjects of exploitation, sexualization, and condescension. The causes of gender inequality are multifaceted and rooted in entrenched socio-cultural norms.² However, the origins of gender inequality emerged comparatively recently. As it is known now, female oppression emerged with the growth of modern society. For most of history, humanity was sustained by a hunter-gatherer way of life.³ Though men and women experienced specialization in their roles to some degree as a result of biological dissimilarities, both were integral contributors to the production of food.⁴ As society transitioned away from an egalitarian way of life, however, women became increasingly confined to household chores and childrearing.

The thought process is elucidated by Marx and Engels who, though controversial for their radical theory on class structure, societal makeup, and socialist ideology, provide crucial insight into the development of the social hierarchy.⁵ Their most famous contribution comes from *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*, which took a revolutionary approach in applying enlightened reason to typical gender roles 1) to identify the history of female oppression and 2) to examine ways in which to liberate women from societal constraints.⁶ Written and published by Friedrich Engels who hugely contributed to Marxist socialism, *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State* adopts a progressive perspective in its exploration of women’s oppression.⁷ Influenced in part by their socialist beliefs, both men identified societal inequality as the foundation upon which the system of female inequality was built. Engels applied materialism to his analysis of historical evidence and refined an argument regarding the relationship between contemporary institutions and social structure.⁸ He maintained that

¹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (10th ed.). (1999). Merriam-Webster

² Leacock, Eleanor. “INTERPRETING THE ORIGINS OF GENDER INEQUALITY: CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL PROBLEMS.” *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1983, 263–84. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29790079>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

³ Hogan, Richard. “Class, Race, and Gender Inequality.” *Race, Gender & Class*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2001, 61–93. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41674972>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Engels, Friedrich, 1820-1895. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. New York: International Publishers, 1942.

⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

traditional conventions of dominance and economic dependency between men and women were unnatural and born of ‘capitalist ideology,’ and he believed that with the advancement of society harmful gender stereotypes developed in a correlative pattern.⁹ Women’s rights and freedoms regressed drastically during this period, and society evolved to a point at which restrictive legislation was implemented and immortalized. While this argument may be tainted by ideological bias, it nonetheless provides an insight into the history and basis of female oppression. Engels’ publication proved to be politically incendiary and planted a seed of doubt in many as to the maltreatment of women by societal conventions.

Within the context of this paper, this theory of the development of women’s oppression is ironic. The division between men and women first ignited the shift to a cottage industry way of life, which resulted in the proliferation of a conservative traditionalist perspective.¹⁰ The gender-segmented division of labor inherent in the nature of the cottage industry lifestyle gave birth to the conventions that implicated women for centuries after. Therefore, dismantling this antiquated system beginning with unionization and the labor movement brings the history of women’s oppression full circle.

Civil Rights and Unionization

During the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women’s unionization in workplaces established a foundation upon which the later women’s rights movement was constructed. As one of the first formal mechanisms of women’s activism, unionization was the substratum of the women’s rights movement that served as a point of reference for following actions.

Originating in Great Britain, the Industrial Revolution was a period of transition from a typical agrarian society to a society based on mass production and consumerism.¹¹ The technological growth experienced during this time catapulted the world into an era of rapid advancement in production. However, despite the positives accompanied by the development, the Industrial Revolution was a time

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Leacock, Eleanor. “INTERPRETING THE ORIGINS OF GENDER INEQUALITY: CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL PROBLEMS.” *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1983, 263–84. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29790079>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

¹¹ Heller, Henry. “The Industrial Revolution: Marxist Perspectives.” In *The Birth of Capitalism: A 21st Century Perspective*, pg 189. Pluto Press, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p671.10>.

in history characterized by harsh and inhumane working conditions, rampant poverty, and mass urbanization.¹² As a marginalized group, women were a largely exploited resource during this time. According to the University of Massachusetts Lowell, “[Women] could not vote, own or inherit property, keep any wages they earned, or hold any but the lowest paying jobs.”¹³ Because they had no voice in the legal sphere, women were easily taken advantage of by corporations. Factories were able to subject women to subhuman living and working conditions. The article published by the University-affiliated Tsongas Industrial History Center recognizes women’s obstacles in its research. To a degree women were constitutionally protected; however, many critical rights, like enfranchisement, were excluded. Because women could not vote on workplace policy to any degree, the exploitative system was perpetuated.¹⁴ The perspective on women’s deprived status expounded by the Lowell Tsongas Industrial Center brings to light the inequalities that existed in the workplace as a result of women’s inferior legal status. However, few employment opportunities could be found elsewhere, and many women were forced into dangerous low-paying jobs to contribute to household income.¹⁵ Women entered factories to support their families, but hazardous working conditions, low wages, and long working hours made factory life not only unappealing but oftentimes life-threatening.¹⁶

While before they were largely excluded, the capitalistic desperation to mass produce during the Industrial Revolution wrested women into the workforce.¹⁷ This step was instrumental in bridging the gap in equality between men and women, but it cannot be glorified. Although women were permitted to labor in positions that had been restricted, they tolerated severe distress while laboring, and still received pay unequal to that of men.¹⁸ This system is demonstrative of the deceiving nature of women’s early presence in the workplace. While women ultimately proved themselves to be valuable instruments in the

¹² Ibid., 175.

¹³ “The Role of Women in the Industrial Revolution,” *Tsongas Industrial History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell*, <https://www.uml.edu/tsongas/barilla-taylor/women-industrial-revolution.aspx#:~:text=Though%20they%20protested%20working%20conditions,b ut%20the%20lowest%20paying%20jobs.,> Accessed 22 July 2023

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Nicholas, Stephen, and Deborah Oxley. “The Living Standards of Women during the Industrial Revolution, 1795-1820.” *The Economic History Review* 46, no. 4 (1993): 723–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2598255>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

workplace and capable of carrying out labor of a similar nature to men, the initial decision to integrate them was solely an economic strategy.

Engels, a preeminent critic of the Industrial Revolution, described the role of women, “In truth, they were not human beings; they were merely toiling machines [...]. The industrial revolution has simply [...] [taken] from them the last trace of independent activity, and so forcing them to think and demand a position worthy of men.”¹⁹ In his assessment of the conditions of the Industrial Revolution, Engels highlights the fact that women were stripped completely of any trace of independence and autonomy, and, in their laboring, sought to achieve a social position equal to that of men.²⁰ The bleak perspective is demonstrative of the poor conditions women were subjected to, especially with regard to factory work. But, the veracity of Engels’ position may be compromised by his political ideology.²¹ His comment gives valuable insight into the nature of the labor standards seen in workplaces during the Industrial Revolution; however, it is tainted by prejudice against the societal and technological development seen in the 19th and 20th centuries.²²

Women themselves were well aware of the cruelties of the current system. Engels’ comment, though biased, reflected a common sentiment echoed by women throughout the workforce. The injustice of the workplace circumstances women were subjected to encouraged them to speak out for the first time and demand labor equality. The basis of this activism is derived from the First Amendment’s civil rights of assembly, press, and speech, which were used to call out the hypocrisy of the system.²³

The importance of civil rights in the United States during the early 19th century cannot be understated. The inception of the Industrial Revolution saw mass societal upheaval across the world, and in many cultures and countries, women’s rights went unaccounted for in legal spheres. However, in America women’s rights were incorporated into the Constitution, resulting in greater access to freedoms.²⁴ Though women were still severely constrained, these rights allowed for free

¹⁹ Engels, Friedrich, 1820-1895. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 52.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 73-75.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Nef, John U. “The Industrial Revolution Reconsidered.” *The Journal of Economic History* 3, no. 1 (1943): 1–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2113419>.

²⁴ MACDONALD, HEIDI. “Women’s Suffrage and Confederation.” *Acadiensis* 46, no. 1 (2017): 163–76. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44784956>.

speech, press assembly, petition, and religion.²⁵ Depending upon marital status, women additionally had the opportunity to enter into contracts, obtain their property, or support themselves in a profession that was not restricted by educational achievement.²⁶ On paper, women experienced a spectrum of rights that allowed them to participate in society and advocate for themselves in the form of activism.²⁷ However, these civil rights did not necessarily translate into the degree of equality that would be expected from such protections. The *de jure* oppression women faced largely kept them constrained according to societal standards, which, depending on the precise period, varied from homemaker duties to childrearing, to laboring in a factory.²⁸ As a result of this, it is difficult to generalize the nature of women's civil rights during this period in the United States. Basic rights did not experience severe restrictions, and First Amendment freedoms were for the most part left intact, but workplace parity and enfranchisement were largely excluded. It was access to basic rights that ultimately propelled the beginning of the women's rights campaign.²⁹

Abetted by Constitutionally protected rights and liberties, women began to experiment with activism as a method of challenging the establishment. Though during the time, it was socially unacceptable for women to assume the role of an activist, legally there was little to be done to prevent women from vocalizing their opinions. In this way, Constitutional rights were necessary for the success of the women's rights movement. Had harsh legal barriers existed to prevent women from campaigning, it is unlikely that the movement would have been able to progress as preponderantly as it did. In an extrapolation of the tactics of the women's rights movement, a Library of Congress article supports this argument claiming that women "effectively commanded the attention of politicians and the public through its aggressive agitation, relentless lobbying, clever publicity stunts, and creative examples of civil disobedience and nonviolent confrontation."³⁰ The article illuminates the importance of civil rights in promoting women's activism but adopts an edifying tone in its explanation. For this reason, it

²⁵ Nef, John U. "The Industrial Revolution Reconsidered." *The Journal of Economic History* 3, no. 1 (1943): 1–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2113419>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ MACDONALD, HEIDI. "Women's Suffrage and Confederation." *Acadiensis* 46, no. 1 (2017): 163–76. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44784956>.

³⁰ "Tactics and Techniques of the National Womans Party Suffrage Campaign." *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/women-of-protest/articles-and-essays/tactics-and-techniques-of-the-national-womans-party-suffrage-campaign/>

Accessed 22 July 2023

is important to be wary that the message conveyed in this article may be tainted by an overly moralistic interpretation of the actions of the women's rights movement. Regardless, the article highlights several important facets of activism employed during the women's rights campaign. Without expansive basic legal protections, these movements would have been squashed. Though women suffered public reproach for their actions, because they had First Amendment freedoms of press, petition, speech, assembly, and religion they were able to incite activist movements with limited legal consequences. For the most part, this activism appeared in the form of strikes, unions, and protests.

Manifesting first in the textile industry, soon enough women's protests, strikes, and reform groups pervaded all industries across America.³¹ Preceding the women's rights campaign of the early 20th century, female unions protested unjust working conditions, discriminatory employment, disparity of pay, sexual harassment and violence, infringement upon reproductive autonomy, paid family leave, and more.³² Despite the wide range of requests put forth by women's unions, very few were met with any real degree of serious reform. The government's unwillingness to respond to the demands of protesting women demonstrates adherence to precedent and a reluctance to stray from entrenched social standards. Additionally, anti-suffrage campaign groups sprung up in abundance to further sway public and government opinion. Many anti-suffragists claimed women did not want the vote, some claimed they lacked the intellectual capacity to vote, and others said that women were too busy to stay up to date on current affairs.³³ Nonetheless, this opportunity to speak up as a result of First Amendment freedoms gave women the liberty to experiment with activism.

American historical author Rhoda Blumberg explains that, although many women's unionization efforts were met with disdain, the growing influence of progressive, liberal values began to shift popular

³¹ Blumberg, Rhoda Lois. "WOMEN IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: REFORM OR REVOLUTION?" *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 15, no. 2/3, 1990, 133–39. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29790343>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

³² Blake, Ben and Edison, Jennifer, and Berry, Erin, and Watchel, Jennifer. "Women's Rights," *Labor and Workplace Studies Special Collections and University Archives*, The University of Maryland, <http://exhibitions.lib.umd.edu/unions/social/women's-rights>.

³³ Lange, Allison. "Opposition to Suffrage: History of US Women's Suffrage." *National Women's History Museum*, <https://www.crusadeforthetvote.org/naows-opposition> Accessed 22 July 2023.

opinion in the United States in a favorable direction.³⁴ Yet, this is not to say that the shift was significant. Blumberg's work vaguely outlines the transition that occurred over several decades; however, she fails to take into account the vast majority of the population that clung to traditional values well into the 20th century. Her publication lacks the nuance of a cohesive, comprehensive argument, and she, like many other modern historians, fails to account for the fact that unionization was only successful after several decades of near-stagnation. Though perspectives ultimately shifted, most individuals still adhered to a relatively reactionary school of thought.

Nonetheless, traditional paradigms were challenged over time as a result of women's activism, and the conventional docile image of women was replaced by the idea of a strong, steadfast visionary. This shift was largely a result of increased educational access.³⁵ The modern woman boasted the power to articulate her thoughts in a meaningful way. She recognized the injustices of the surrounding system and identified protest as the tool with which to accomplish change. With a push from women's unions in the 1800s, higher education institutions slowly began opening their doors to women, resulting in a generation of intelligent, motivated individuals eager to see change.³⁶ The increase in women's access to educational equality demonstrates an abrupt transition from the stereotypes of domesticity and docility that characterized women in the previous decades.

The earliest examples of the movement against social norms were seen in the labor unions that emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries. The primary push originated predominantly in the garment and textile industries, which were saturated with frustrated, impecunious women.³⁷

Stimulated by a shift towards progressive values, Garment Worker activism became a popular and widely recognized example of

³⁴ Blumberg, Rhoda Lois. "WOMEN IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: REFORM OR REVOLUTION?" *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 15, no. 2/3, 1990, 133–39. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29790343>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

³⁵ Wozniak, Jim. "Women's education grew in the 19th Century as attitudes changed, but challenges remained." *Tusculum University*, 28 February 2019 <https://www3.tusculum.edu/news/news/2019/womens-education-grew-in-the-19th-century-as-attitudes-changed-but-challenges-remained/#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20the%20Civil%20War,Tusculum%20following%20suit%20in%201875>. Accessed 22 July 2023.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

women's unionization.³⁸ The Ladies Garment Worker Union was established in 1900 as one of the largest labor unions in the United States and gained traction in America, especially following the tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.³⁹ The devastating loss of life seen in this fire brought to light fissures in current legislation and policy and illuminated the reality of the expendability of women's lives. As gruesome as it was, the death of these women gained national attention. American society was confronted with the undeniable injustice of the contemporary system, and many individuals began to support the women's cause of reform.⁴⁰ Not only was this a step towards labor equality for women, but the reverberations of this event could be felt across working America. Urban analyst and professor Peter Dreier highlights the implications of this event as they appeared in legislation that impacted universal workplace policy. In his assessment of labor laws and workplace regulations following the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, Dreier comments on the significance of this event in propelling the women's unionization movement and the labor movement as a whole.⁴¹ The sheer scale and devastation of this event helped unite men and women behind a common goal and broke down barriers that had before separated the genders.⁴² As survivor Rose Schneiderman says, "This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city... The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if 146 of us are burned to death."⁴³

Though none as macabre or significant as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, many events occurred across the United States to promote workplace equality and standards. Urban textile and garment industries, especially, were epicenters of anger and dissatisfaction. As female-dominated areas, many women's unionization efforts can be seen originating here.⁴⁴

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Louis, Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924), 112.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Dreier, Peter, and Donald Cohen. "The Fire Last Time: Worker Safety Laws after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire." *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2011, 30–33. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41555308>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Walsh, Treva. "Jewish Women, Labor Leaders: After the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire." *Museum of Jewish Heritage A Living Memorial To The Holocaust*, 25 March, 2021, <https://mjhnyc.org/blog/jewish-women-labor-leaders-after-the-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire/>.

⁴⁴ Howard B. Furer. "The American City: A Catalyst for the Women's Rights Movement." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 52, no. 4, 1969, 285–305. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634459>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

The first official women's union was established, albeit somewhat unsuccessfully, in the 1830s.⁴⁵ During this time, women's movements were in no way cohesive or organized and failed more often than they were successful. Despite this, the girls of Lowell mills were eager to see change in their workplaces.⁴⁶ Although it was regarded as one of the most successful textile mills, the Lowell mills notoriously lacked conscience when it came to pay and labor standards.⁴⁷

However, it was not until 1834, when pay cuts were made, that the women collectively revolted.⁴⁸ Their severely depleted paychecks galvanized the working women, who organized the first women's union in American history. The women gathered and went on strike to protest the unfair wages, miserable conditions, and grueling work hours. They refused to return to seek employment at the mill until their pay was restored and, despite the relatively foreign nature of this activism, the Lowell mill girls were able to gain support from surrounding textile mills and factories.⁴⁹ These events were unfortunately common throughout the textile industry.⁵⁰ Across Massachusetts, and in neighboring states as well, women protested working conditions in one of the few ways they were able: strikes.⁵¹

Strikes were widely popular because they had heavy economic consequences for corporations, which made factories and businesses more inclined to cede to the demands of striking workers simply to return to production. Unfortunately, in the case of the Lowell mill girls, the demands of the workers came down to a conflict between the striking mill girls and the management. With no vote, no political voice, and few legal protections, the Lowell mill women's campaign was quickly squashed. The vacant positions in the textile mills were almost instantly returned to full capacity, and the Lowell mill women's protest appeared to be a defeat.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dublin, Thomas. "Women, Work, and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830-1860." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1/2, 1975, 30-39. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3518953> . Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸ Dublin, Thomas. "Women, Work, and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830-1860." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1/2, 1975, 30-39. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3518953> . Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Despite the best efforts of the Lowell mill girls, very little fundamental change was seen in textile mills.⁵² Not only did policy and regulation remain untouched, but the striking women were quickly replaced in the workforce. Without jobs and hope, the girls of Lowell mills were confronted with the harsh reality of their expendability in the workplace. However, these first strikes ultimately matured into an extensive movement against labor inequality. The girls refused to give up and, in 1945, received nearly 2,000 signatures on a petition to reduce workday hours.⁵³ They did not stop there and organized chapters in other nearby mill towns in New Hampshire and Massachusetts.⁵⁴ This shift to legal activism was strategic because it explored avenues that fomented real, widespread change. However, with no legal place in the political sphere, little was accomplished. Despite this, the Lowell women's union was a critical first step for the later unions that appeared in the United States and acted as a pioneer in the way of women's activism.⁵⁵ As the first official instance of women's unionization, the Lowell mill girls' strike represented a future of possibility for women across America. American author and historian Edward Lengel remarks that "The scale of this women's labor movement was unprecedented."⁵⁶ Though the girls of Lowell mills did not see an immediate change in their workplace, their actions incited protests and strikes in areas across the country. The event is critical because it represents the first official step women took toward gender equality. From the failures of this initial movement, women's unions across the country grew invigorated and began to explore formal unionization as a legitimate avenue to obtaining workplace equality and rights.

Although unionization was foundational to the women's rights campaign, it is often disregarded in favor of emphasizing the organized, collected efforts that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Linda Briskin and Patricia McDermott in *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy, and Militancy (Heritage)* highlight the historical incorporation of the feminist agenda into the labor movement; however, their discourse lacks sufficient attention to the crucial relationship between American civil rights, unionization, and the women's rights

⁵² Dublin, Thomas. "Women, Work, and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830-1860." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1/2, 1975, 30-39. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3518953> . Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Lengel, Edward and The National World War II Museum. "The Lowell Girls." *Bill of Rights Institute*, <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/essays/the-lowell-girls> Accessed 22 July 2023.

movement.⁵⁷ Instead, their work regards unions as detached from the women's rights movement. Unionization was an important development in the way of women's rights. However, the subconscious tendency to differentiate between these early unions and the women's rights protests of the early 20th century resulted in the exclusion of unionization from this campaign. Unionization was a critical first step in promoting the women's rights movement.

The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention is considered the official beginning of the women's rights campaign, but initial movements were scattered and weak.⁵⁸ Small rallies occurred across the US, but the nature of women's oppression during this time was so divisive that these efforts made little impact. At the time, women were so legally disadvantaged that their initial efforts for bargaining and negotiation were almost completely ineffectual. "Given women's political and legal disabilities [...] the outcome of bargaining with men of their class in households and across classes with employers [...] institutionalized gender inequality," says Jonathon Mann, founder of *Health and Human Rights*.⁵⁹ In his holistic approach to interpreting the history of human rights, Mann references the inequality between men and women in America during the Industrial Revolution. However, the issue of work injustice could be felt by women across the country, and familiar social impediments did not permanently obstruct the organization of a women's rights campaign.⁶⁰ Not only did unionization first expose women to protest as a means of obtaining certain rights, but it also united women toward a common goal.⁶¹

Ultimately, women's unionization efforts spiraled into a desire for more extensive rights. Though real progress was not seen until much later in the campaign for gender equality, women set their eyes on their next big objective: enfranchisement. With some advancement in the way of workplace equality and significant experience with protest and activism, women began "to campaign for the vote and to seek a fuller

⁵⁷ Briskin, Linda and McDermott, Patricia. "Challenging the Male Standard" in *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy, and Militancy (Heritage)*. University of Toronto Press, 15 November 1993.

⁵⁸ Parker, Alison M. "The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848: A Pivotal Moment in Nineteenth-Century America." *Reviews in American History*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2008, 341–48. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40210932>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁵⁹ Mann, Jonathan, and Sofia Gruskin. "Women's Health and Human Rights: Genesis of the Health and Human Rights Movement." *Health and Human Rights*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, 309–12. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4065245>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2023.

⁶⁰ Salmon, Marylynn. "The Legal Status of Women in Early America: A Reappraisal." *Law and History Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1983, 129–51. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/744005>. Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

measure of citizenship.”⁶² According to Mann, the right to vote would not only represent a voice in political processes, but it would be representative of almost complete political equality for women.⁶³ Having been given the opportunity to explore avenues of societal change, women were invigorated by the possibility of more. The heightened spirit spurred the actions that culminated in the battle for all-encompassing women’s rights throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Suffrage

Unionization protests, which emerged during the height of the Industrial Revolution, paved the way for the use of protests during the women’s rights movement. To fight against the injustices of factory life, women formed unions and exploited their First Amendment freedoms.⁶⁴ By exercising their rights of free speech, assembly, and press, women were able to advocate for themselves.⁶⁵ Unions, as a unique and targeted form of activism, accomplished little on the broader spectrum of women’s rights. However, at the turn of the 20th century, unionization efforts evolved into a larger campaign influenced by progressive, socialist values.

The transition from workplace-based protests to civil rights-based protests resulted in a leap in progress for women. Not only did these protests serve to be significant in raising awareness for the campaign, but the unwavering effort demonstrated by many activists ultimately put pressure on lawmakers. These actions catalyzed critical legislation. The 19th Amendment, for example, was successfully passed following persistent activism and demand for real change.⁶⁶ Because women, until the 1800s and 1900s, had been considered naturally inferior, protests were an important tool in establishing women’s individuality, proclivity for sentient thought, and intellectual ability.⁶⁷ While the success was indicative of the strength of the movement, it also displayed judicial willingness to stray from precedent, and conviction for the protection of

⁶² Mann, Jonathan, and Sofia Gruskin. “Women’s Health and Human Rights: Genesis of the Health and Human Rights Movement.” *Health and Human Rights*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, 309–12. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4065245>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2023.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Nef, John U. “The Industrial Revolution Reconsidered.” *The Journal of Economic History* 3, no. 1 (1943): 1–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2113419>.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁶ Mintz, Steven. “The Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.” *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2007, 47–50. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25162130>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁶⁷ Cohen, Sascha. “The Day Women Went on Strike.” *Time Magazine*, 26 August 2015, <https://time.com/4008060/women-strike-equality-1970/>. Accessed 2 July 2023.

human rights for all citizens. With the newfound right to vote, women at last had a voice in the political sphere. This step forward allowed women to legally express their opinions and influence policymakers.

The emergence of protest in labor unions fomented the use of protest in the women's rights movement. While historical accounts tend to distinguish between 19th-century unionization efforts and the late 19th-century/early 20th-century women's rights campaign, in truth the small, scattered labor movements that took place beginning in 1830 were just as much a part of the women's rights movement as the organized efforts seen in the following decades. Because significant changes, like the right to vote, are associated with the late protests of the 20th century, unionization is often disregarded. However, it was the early women's unions that established the foundation upon which equal education, pay, and enfranchisement were built.

It was not until the 20th century that emphasis switched from workplace equality to enfranchisement. Not only would obtaining suffrage provide women with the right to vote, but it was representative of a new social role for women. The passage of the 19th Amendment would officially mark women as intellectual political entities.⁶⁸ This was the first step in breaking away from the traditional gender roles that saw women as incapable of independence. Not only this, but women wished to attain the right to vote to have a position in the political sphere. This would allow them to prevent the exploitation that had occurred when they were voiceless in society.

In obtaining this crucial right to vote, protests were key.⁶⁹ Women's unions in the early 19th century established a foundation for later movements. The recent familiarity of protest appealed to those looking to see change beyond the factory. Not only this, but many women, through their unions, had grown comfortable using their voices and their actions to protest social injustice.⁷⁰ Though not completely successful, many of the protests carried out by unions had an impact on workplace policy and legislation.⁷¹ Women gained the confidence to pursue further rights. After a history of outright suppression, women were eager to exploit the power of activism.

⁶⁸ Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod. "Feminism and the Meaning of the Vote." *Signs*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1984, 4–26. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174234>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁰ Dickason, Gladys. "Women in Labor Unions." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 251, 1947, 70–78. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1024881>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Enfranchisement for women was not universally supported. Many individuals regarded the women's rights movement pejoratively. Nietzsche even claimed that "When a woman has scholarly inclination there is usually something wrong with her sexual organs."⁷² Many anti-suffragists adopted such lines of reasoning as sufficient evidence to support the argument against women's voting rights. Thus, these opinions hindered women as they fought for suffrage. "Contemporaries kept up the pretense [...] that the vote for women was an isolated fad, and the agitation an epidemic madness that would presently pass."⁷³ As illuminated by Neale, a renowned British historian, many anti-suffragists hoped that the women's rights movement was a single instance of an outburst, and would blow over within the decade.⁷⁴ This demonstrates the popular perspective that limited the authority of the women's rights movement. With critics claiming the campaign was a result of the typically unstable temperament of women, the validity of the campaign was undermined. Despite the reactionary forces that impeded women's initial protests, ultimately popular opinion gave way to progressive values.⁷⁵

Obtaining the right to vote represents one of the most significant accomplishments in the history of women's rights. Because suffrage is representative of political equality, the 19th Amendment marked the beginning of a new era of equality for women.⁷⁶ Before 1920, women were voiceless in American society. They had no input on the selection of legislators that passed influential policies, nor did they have any say on legal matters. But suffragettes regarded enfranchisement as more than just the right to vote. Instead, they recognized it as political and legal equality for men.⁷⁷ One of the primary facets of the fight for enfranchisement was the opportunity to act as members of society. Without the critical right to vote, women were largely considered the property of men. Attaining the right to vote would officially identify

⁷² Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future." Translated by Zimmern, Helen. New York: Courier Dover Publications, 1997.

⁷³ Neale, R. S. "Working-Class Women and Women's Suffrage." *Labour History*, no. 12, 1967, 16–34. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27507859>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2023.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Huddy, Leonie, et al. "Trends: Support for the Women's Movement." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2000, 309–50. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3078722>. Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.

⁷⁶ Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod. "Feminism and the Meaning of the Vote." *Signs*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1984, 4–26. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174234>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

women as human beings.⁷⁸ Not only did this open doors for women in political and legal spheres, but in educational, social, and professional fields as well.

Women were given more opportunities to engage educationally. Though already provided a comparatively significant degree of access to education, women suddenly found themselves with the opportunity to pursue education at a more rigorous level than before.⁷⁹ With this emerging generation of intelligent, vocal, educated women, protest campaigns increased in size, organization, and influence. The abilities of the women's rights movement expanded in size, and over time the campaign accumulated success after success. With each new policy passed, women bridged the vast divide between the genders. However, the road to ultimate equality was riddled with obstacles. Though much work was still required, the right to vote gave women an edge that had not existed before – the crucial step that propelled the women's rights movement down a path of success.

The Success of the Campaign

The campaign of the 19th and 20th centuries was one of the broadest and most cohesive instances of political mobilization in American history. Millennia of oppressive conventions fomented the eventual development of this crusade against traditionalist ideologies. Though the objectives of the women's rights movement were vast and varied, from the modern perspective it may be said that the campaign was a success.⁸⁰ In contemporary society, women in the United States are provided nearly all the same rights and opportunities as men.⁸¹ The protests of the women's rights movements, in the span of a century, took women from a place of outright suppression to one of almost equality. Unionization played a decisive role in the protests that allowed the women's rights movement to prosper, as unions established a foundation upon which the women's rights movement was constructed. This activism allowed women to experiment with using their voices to

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Howe, Florence. "Feminism and the Education of Women." *The Journal of Education*, vol. 159, no. 3, 1977, 11–24. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42773080>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁸⁰ MacGregor, Molly Murphy. "Living the Legacy of the Women's Rights Movement." *The Public Historian*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1999, 27–33. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3379288>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

⁸¹ Botting, Eileen Hunt. "A Philosophical Genealogy of Women's Human Rights." *Wollstonecraft, Mill, and Women's Human Rights*, Yale University Press, 2016, 26–69. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kft8kh.5>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

advocate on behalf of themselves and encouraged them to pursue rights beyond the workplace.

Although many women in the modern world experience almost the full spectrum of rights, some are still faced with varying degrees of oppression.⁸² The women's rights movement played a significant role in the establishment of modern gender equality. In their fight for gender parity, activists managed to accomplish an array of goals ranging from voting equality to educational opportunity, to workplace protections.⁸³ However, despite the marked developments championed by the women's rights movement, bias, discrimination, and prejudice based on gender persist.⁸⁴ As such, the success of the women's rights movement must be studied from multiple perspectives. In recognizing the factors and circumstances that contributed to the achievements of the women's rights campaign, we can gain insight into understanding the causes of systematic gender inequality and developing policies to alleviate gender disparity that has long inhibited women economically, educationally, and politically.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Cook, Rebecca J. "Women's International Human Rights Law: The Way Forward." *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1993, 230–61. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/762538>. Accessed 3 July 2023.

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Reasons and Causality: Critiquing the Principle of Alternate Possibilities

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Abstract

When discussing methods of evaluating moral responsibility, one criterion is referenced by both laypeople and academics with undeniable frequency: the Principle of Alternate Responsibilities (PAP). This principle holds that in instances where agents cannot refrain from doing an action, or cannot do any other action, they cannot be considered morally responsible for that action. As moral philosophers such as Daniel Dennett and Harry Frankfurt have pointed out, PAP is often taken to be trivially obvious in cases where people act due to obvious coercion. However, PAP is not always so useful. This paper presents a critique of PAP and proceeds in two parts. First, a definition of moral responsibility, namely a *reasons-responsiveness definition*, is presented and lightly defended. Second, PAP is shown to fail to adequately account for moral responsibility in relation to the reasons-responsiveness definition in three categories of situations. These situations reveal that there is a plenitude of instances in which agents are precluded from acting otherwise, or from preventing certain consequences from occurring, and yet by virtue of their acting on account of internal reasons they earn moral responsibility. This leads to the conclusion that criteria of moral responsibility that make evaluations based on external circumstances have the structural flaw of not paying due attention to the specific moral agent in question.

Introduction

The moral evaluation of agents is a practice endemic to the human experience. In politics, in family, in friendships, and in most other areas of life, we make moral judgments all the time. Moral judgments form the core of our stances on certain political issues, assist us in determining whom to avoid and whom to associate with in a social context, and allow us to evaluate the merits of certain actions that we are considering. But these judgments, these moral evaluations, all depend on a key assumption, one taken to be trivially obvious in many instances: that whoever or whatever is being judged is somehow deserving of that judgment. This key assumption, necessary to justify moral evaluation, is the concept of moral responsibility.

On a base level, moral responsibility is the property that a person can justifiably be held morally accountable for an action that they performed. That is, if someone is morally responsible for an action, it makes sense to apply moral labels to that person based on their action.¹ If a person acts and it is determined that they are not morally responsible, it cannot then be said that *the person* acted morally or immorally. The question of whether or not *the action itself* was moral or immoral, or whether actions separated from agents can have moral value at all, are separate questions altogether but are not the question of moral responsibility. Moral responsibility concerns the degree to which we can fairly morally evaluate *an agent* in light of an action they performed.

One of the first criteria that philosophers reach for when discussing moral responsibility is known as the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP). As stated most influentially by Harry Frankfurt, PAP holds that a person is morally responsible for an action only if they could have refrained from doing that action, or could have done another action.² This paper argues that while PAP may make intuitive sense on a surface level, it does not hold up under closer examination as a viable criterion for moral responsibility.

PAP is often casually invoked in discussions of both moral responsibility and free will, which are related, but different, topics. Importantly, this paper will not lay out an alternate or supplemental list of appropriate criteria for moral responsibility, and will also not discuss

¹ T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 248.

² Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (December 4, 1969): 829–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2023833>, 829; PAP is not a definition of moral responsibility, but a condition used in its evaluation.

the relationship between PAP and free will. It will only critique the single PAP criterion as it pertains specifically to moral responsibility.

It is worth discussing why PAP is such a common, and intuitive, principle. First, PAP has been an element of conceptions of freedom of action throughout history. PAP has appeared in some form in ancient and medieval philosophy, and the work of early-modern thinkers like John Locke,³ and is rarely critiqued by philosophers.⁴ This reveals how ingrained it is in discussions of moral responsibility. Outside of academic philosophy, PAP is also casually invoked in everyday discussions of moral guilt and responsibility,⁵ typically regarding a specific type of scenario that Daniel Dennett calls a “local fatalism.”⁶ When analyzing an agent’s moral responsibility, it is common, in both juridical and common life, to search for circumstances that controlled that agent’s action by ensuring that they could not do otherwise, regardless of intention or desire. Circumstances such as being locked in a room or having a gun held to your head are common examples of local fatalisms that are assumed to disavow someone of moral responsibility.⁷ Importantly, though, typical searches for and analyses of local fatalisms of this nature not only overlook other types of situations in which an agent might not be able to do otherwise but also ignore key aspects of the moral and decision-making process of the agent, aspects that have a substantive bearing on moral responsibility. This paper will unpack the limitations of such local-fatalism analysis.

Defining Moral Responsibility

Definitions are often some of the most debated and analyzed elements of philosophy, and this is for good reason. Meaningful and productive discourse is almost impossible without well-defined terms. Interestingly, there has been only relatively limited debate over what defines the condition of being morally responsible, at least compared to

³ Robb David, “Moral Responsibility and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, fall 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/alternative-possibilities/>; William L. Rowe, “Two Concepts of Freedom,” *The American Philosophical Association Centennial Series* 61, no. 1 (September 1987): 43–64, <https://doi.org/10.5840/apapa2013170>.

⁴ Daniel C. Dennett, “I Could Not Have Done Otherwise – So What?,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 81, no. 10 (October 1984): 553–65, <https://doi.org/10.5840/jphil1984811022>, 553.

⁵ *Guilt* and *responsibility* will be used interchangeably. *Guilt* will be used not in the legal sense of conviction by a jury but in the same sense of *responsibility*, referring to everyday interpersonal evaluations of moral responsibility.

⁶ Dennett, “I Could Not Have Done Otherwise – So What?,” 554.

⁷ *Ibid.*

other philosophical definitions of topics such as free will or knowledge. Of course, there has been some debate, debate that has resulted in two primary definitions of moral responsibility. Fortunately, they are fairly intuitive.⁸

One popular approach to moral responsibility was first formulated by P. F. Strawson in his influential paper “Freedom and Resentment.”⁹ Strawson’s approach is essentially inductive; for Strawson, moral responsibility is not normatively deductible *a priori* but is rather based on the justified reactions of others to action. Strawson labeled these justified reactions as “reactive attitudes.” For example, if doing an action warrants the reactive attitude of disgust directed *towards the agent*,¹⁰ then the agent who performed the action would be morally responsible for that action. This responsibility emerges from a historical process of *taking responsibility*; as children grow up, they observe the effects of their words and actions on others, and, provided they are of relatively sound mind,¹¹ children begin to view those reactions as justified, due to the child’s own similar reactions to the words and actions of others. It is through this process that human agents *take* moral responsibility for their words and actions; in this sense, moral responsibility is somewhat of an emergent property. Strawson’s conception of moral responsibility is useful for two reasons. One, Strawson’s account avoids metaphysical or normatively ethical claims about responsibility, and the endless complexity that comes with such claims.¹² Two, it is intuitive, based on phenomenological reactions to actions, reactions that most people have experienced. Moral responsibility, unlike related topics like free will, is a quality that we frequently externally gauge in each other. It makes natural sense that moral responsibility could be defined in relation to that external evaluation.

The second notable conception of moral responsibility is a family of related conceptions known as *reasons-responsiveness views*,¹³ most notably articulated by John Fischer and Mark Ravizza.¹⁴ The reasons-

⁸ David, “Moral Responsibility and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities.”

⁹ Peter F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 187–211.

¹⁰ It is important that in Strawson’s definition, only reactions directed at the agent himself matter; reactions at the agent’s action are irrelevant here.

¹¹ Psychopathy, sociopathy, etc. may annul moral responsibility under a Strawsonian framework.

¹² This isn’t to devalue such normative or metaphysical approaches. However, it passes a sort of Occam’s Razor test due to its relative simplicity, and is as such useful for moral analysis.

¹³ David, “Moral Responsibility and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities.”

¹⁴ John Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1994); John Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*

responsiveness definition of moral responsibility is easier stated than Strawson's reactive attitudes approach: if an agent does an action because of internal reasons or motivations, that agent can be held morally responsible for that action. In other words, an agent is morally responsible for an action if "there is a nomologically possible world... in which the same mechanism operates, there is sufficient reason to do otherwise, and the agent recognizes the reason, chooses, and acts on it," the "mechanism" being the set of external, incidental, and possibly limiting circumstances of the situation.¹⁵

As illustrated, reactive-attitude and reasons-responsiveness approaches align with intuitive notions of moral responsibility, and simply approach defining moral responsibility from different directions. Strawson takes a dialectically-external approach to moral responsibility in his reactive attitude definition, defining it in terms of the justified reactions of other agents. Fischer takes a dialectically internal approach, identifying the condition of moral responsibility with the inner conditions and deliberative processes of the agent.

The problem, though, with Strawson's definition is that its social approach to defining moral responsibility makes it difficult to rationally determine the moral responsibility of a person without leaning on pure intuition. Gauging whether someone's action warrants justified reactive attitudes is largely a question of precedent, intuition, and ultimately, moral opinion. Such a definition is not suited for examining the logical components of moral responsibility, as will be done throughout the rest of the paper, and thus Strawson's definition will be of no use in this context. In order to evaluate the extent to which PAP acts as a viable criterion for moral responsibility, we shall proceed in relation to a reasons-responsiveness (RR) definition of moral responsibility, according to which moral responsibility can be evaluated based on facts about the internal deliberative processes of an agent.

A note on methodology: Evaluations of PAP against the RR definition attempt to determine the extent to which an agent acts on their own internal reasons, regardless of external limitations. If scenarios can be found that involve agents that cannot do otherwise, but that act on account of their own reasons, PAP would fail under the RR definition.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511814594>.

¹⁵ Kadri Vihvelin, "Review: The Metaphysics of Free Will by John Martin Fisher," *Nous* 32, no. 3 (September 1998): 406–20, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2671941>, 408.

PAP's Inconclusiveness

As mentioned earlier, moral responsibility is an external quality as much as an internal one. As such, examples and illustrative scenarios are especially effective in shedding light on aspects of moral responsibility. Note that the following scenarios will be dramatized – this is merely to aid in building intuition. Furthermore, there are three primary varieties of situations in which agents may not be able to do otherwise: cases of historical blame, Frankfurt-style cases, and transfer of non-responsibility cases. These will be examined in turn.

Cases of Historical Blame

This first type of case will not reveal the inconclusiveness of PAP, though further cases will. What this first case will do is shed light on how PAP as typically formulated is too narrowly defined to account for the moral responsibility it is designed to evaluate. To reiterate, PAP holds that an agent is morally responsible for a certain action if and only if they could have refrained from performing that action. This principle, though, fails to account for the effects of our past actions on our future actions over time. Specifically, in cases in which we were morally responsible for an action in the past that is directly causing a present action that we cannot avoid doing, PAP would hold that we are not morally responsible for the present action, at least in a temporally limited interpretation of PAP. This, however, is not true.

Imagine a situation where an agent, Ben, concocts a drug that, when taken, causes the recipient to spontaneously feel an irresistible compulsion to murder someone exactly 24 hours later. Imagine that Ben, knowing the effects of the drug, takes this drug himself and kills someone 24 hours later. In evaluating Ben's level of moral responsibility for the killing, it might be noted that in a certain limited sense, he could not have refrained from the killing, due to the overpowering effects of the drug on his internal reasons, intents, and dispositions. And yet, he did choose to take the drug in the first place with full knowledge of how it would affect him and was thus morally responsible for doing so. Is Ben morally responsible for the killing, even though he could not have refrained from doing so? The answer is clearly yes.

This example reveals a flaw in the common formulation of PAP: it doesn't account for cases in which actions were responsibly performed in the past that cause or influence present actions. This is not an end-all-be-all argument against PAP. A defender of PAP might respond that Ben could have done otherwise when he chose to take the drug in the

first place and thus was morally responsible for the killing. This – assuming for a second that PAP is valid – is true. What cases of historical blame illustrate is that for PAP to function well as a criterion for moral responsibility, it must take a wider view than merely the circumstances of the action at hand. For PAP to make sense at all, it must also take into account the past actions of an agent for which that agent *was* morally responsible. If an agent is morally responsible for putting themselves in a situation in which they cannot do otherwise, their moral responsibility evidently carries over, even if, examined locally, they act in that situation without being able to refrain from thus acting. If an agent has the ability to avoid a situation in which they may be unable to do otherwise and does not, then it is clear that the agent assumes moral responsibility for their future actions in that situation. PAP, as typically formulated, does not specify such a wider view as it focuses on incidental present circumstances and thus fails to adequately prove what its adherents desire it to.

Frankfurt-Style Cases

In contrast to cases of historical blame, which illustrate problems with the analytical scope of PAP, Frankfurt-style cases provide evidence for a direct critique of the central normative claim of PAP. Two scenarios will be presented. Observe that the scenarios differ from each other in only a few ways, none of which have any relation to the freedom to do otherwise. Also, observe the probable evaluations of moral responsibility included in each example; the examples were chosen so that those evaluations are intuitively obvious. They will be normatively justified *post hoc*.

Scenario A: John is a vegan, and is abducted by a group of mysterious individuals. He is told that unless he eats a bite of meat, he will be killed. He eats the meat. His vegan friends rightly do not blame him for this; they rightly do not believe he was morally responsible for transgressing on his veganism.

Scenario B: Mike is *not* a vegan, but he is *very* hungry and is abducted by a similar group of mysterious individuals. He is told that unless he eats a bite of meat, he will be killed. He eats the meat. His vegan friends rightly *do* blame him for this,¹⁶ as they believe that eating meat is immoral; they rightly hold him morally responsible for his action.

¹⁶ *Rightly* in the sense that Mike is a philosophically-appropriate target of blame, not that what he did – eating meat – is bad or blameworthy.

First, note that the only difference between the two scenarios is the agent's preordained attitude toward eating meat. In the first scenario, scenario A, the agent, John, is a vegan; his preordained position is to not eat meat. In B, Mike is not a vegan and is quite hungry. In A, removing the coercive threat from the scenario would lead to John not eating the meat. In B, removing the coercive threat would likely do nothing to change the outcome – Mike is hungry and has no aversion to eating meat. It would make sense that he would consume the available food.

These two scenarios are of a kind made prominent by Harry Frankfurt and are commonly referred to as “Frankfurt-style counterexamples.”¹⁷ Such scenarios are compelling arguments against PAP. Note that in the first example, the coercive force of the threat is strong enough that it is fair to say that John could not have done otherwise, not with the threat of certain death as the price for maintaining his vegan piety. It would be right in that instance to hold John morally responsible.

By the RR definition of moral responsibility, it is clear that John ate the meat not because of internal attitudes, dispositions, or reasons, but rather due to the external threat of death. He was not reasons-responsive. If there were to be an alternate but nomologically possible world in which the abductors were absent, it is likely that John would have had internal reasons to not eat the meat due to his vegan morals, would have recognized those reasons, and would have acted on those reasons, not eating the meat.¹⁸

It has been established that in A, John was not morally responsible under the RR definition. This is not the case in B – Mike is guilty under the RR definition in this example, as he is reasons-responsive. It is likely that, should the coercive threat be removed from the scenario, he would still eat the meat, because he is a hungry meat eater. He would recognize his internal reasons to eat the meat, and would likely act on those reasons – in that sense, he has moral responsibility.

To reiterate, in both scenarios, there was a coercive force of sufficient strength to preclude the ability to do otherwise.¹⁹ If the agent

¹⁷ Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” 831.

¹⁸ Vihvelin, “Review: The Metaphysics of Free Will by John Martin Fisher,” 408.

¹⁹ If the reader is not convinced of this, it should be noted that the thought experiment can be refined to address almost any objection to the strength of the coercive force. See Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” 835; and Vihvelin, “Review: The Metaphysics of Free Will by John Martin Fisher,” 407.

could not have done otherwise in both scenarios but *was* morally responsible in one of them, scenario B, PAP fails as a criterion for moral responsibility in cases such as this. The problem with PAP is that “[t]he fact that he could not have done otherwise clearly provides no basis for supposing that he *might* have done otherwise if he had been able to do so.”²⁰ The relevant question, the question overlooked by PAP, is not if the agent *could* have done otherwise. It is if the agent *would* have done otherwise.

When examining cases of coercion such as the examples presented above, it is usually implicitly assumed that the coercive impulse was the preeminent, and indeed the only, factor in the agent’s decision-making process. This makes salient the fact that what matters in assessing moral responsibility is not the mere existence of coercion, but the way in which coercion impacts the agent’s eventual decision. If a person was about to get out of their car, and a gunman appeared and told them to get out of their car or face death, it would be unfair to say that that person got out of their car solely because of the gunman’s coercion, because the person was *already* internally motivated to do so. According to Frankfurt, “[s]ituations in which a person who does something cannot do otherwise because he is subject to coercive power are either not instances of coercion at all, or they are situations in which the person may still be morally responsible for what he does if it is not because of the coercion that he does it.”²¹

One possible objection here is that when an agent is coerced to do an action that they already had internal reasons to do and end up doing that action, it is because of the coercive force and not of the internal reason that they do the action, despite the preexistence of the internal reason. In the context of the previous example about eating meat, Mike was predisposed to eat the meat, and then was coerced to eat the meat, and then in fact ate the meat. It could be reasonably proposed that the final reason for Mike eating the meat was coercion, and thus the inability to do otherwise caused by the coercion does in fact relieve him of moral responsibility. There are a few reasons such a view of moral responsibility should be rejected. First, there is little reason to assign moral weight to reasons for action in terms of the order in which those reasons appear, especially when considering a local and narrow timeframe. While it is true that the coercive impulse to eat the meat was the *last* reason Mike was introduced to before eating the meat, there is no reason to suppose that it was the *primary* or most *morally relevant* reason that he acted the way that he did. The fact an agent has internal reason

²⁰ Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” 837.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 833–834.

and intention to perform an action and is soon after confronted with a coercive impulse to do that same action provides no reason at all to ignore that original internal reason and intention. Second, the irrelevance of an agent's inability to do otherwise in the face of coercion or local fatalism is made salient when the coercive reasons are hidden from the agent's deliberative view, and are thus not present in the agent's decision-making process. Frankfurt offers a refined illustration of the inconclusiveness of PAP by examining an instance in which coercive force remains hidden from the agent.²² He imagines an instance in which a coercer, Black, decides in the following way to ensure that an agent, Jones, does a certain action: Black will wait in hiding until Jones has made up his mind, and decide accordingly what steps to take.²³ If Jones decides to perform the action that Black does not desire, Black will intervene and coerce Jones into acting how Black wants. If, on the other hand, Jones decides to perform the action that Black does desire, Black will do nothing, and Jones will never even know of his existence or conditional intent to coerce him – Jones will never know that he could not have done otherwise. As such, in the case where Jones acts according to Black's wants, he does so solely on the merits of his own internal reasons, as he was never even aware of Black's desires or conditional intent to coerce him. This is an instance where Jones could not have done otherwise – Black would have stopped him – and yet was utterly morally responsible, on an RR account of moral responsibility, as he decided to perform the action solely due to his internal reasons.

Specifically, in regard to the RR definition of moral responsibility, it can be seen that PAP is not a necessary *or* sufficient condition. RR does not require PAP as a criterion because it is possible to act in the presence of coercion, or in any other circumstance where all alternate possibilities are blocked, and still act primarily under internal reasons. While additional reasons stemming from coercion or local fatalisms may also play a role in deciding how to act, the preexistence of internal reasons to do that action is morally significant and often rises to the level of responsibility. In that light, evaluations of moral responsibility in cases where coercion is present must go further than merely denying moral responsibility based on the presence of coercion. Evaluations in such instances must evaluate the extent to which the coercion directly influenced the agent's decision, whether or not the coercion aligned with the agent's previous internal reasons (or lack thereof), and whether or not the agent's eventual action would be identical in a nomologically-possible world absent of coercion. If it can be reasonably argued that the

²² *Ibid.*, 835–836.

²³ For the sake of illustrative convenience, Black is assumed to have a way of determining Jones' intention before Jones acts on it.

coercion contradicted the internal reasons of the agent, and if it can be reasonably argued that should the coercion not have been present, the agent would have acted differently, then it can be reasonably argued that the coercion was the causal force behind the action and thus the agent would be disavowed of moral responsibility. The mere presence of an inability to do otherwise, though, provides no conclusion in and of itself. The causal force of the coercion on the agent's action must be proven.

Cases of the Transfer of Non-Responsibility

A second variety of PAP, known as the transfer of non-responsibility, or transfer-NR, is commonly invoked as a logical entailment of causal determinism. Causal determinism is the principle that any event is the direct and only result of the antecedent events and conditions along with the governing laws of nature.²⁴ In light of that definition, the following argument is often presented: "If no one is morally responsible for the fact that P, and no one is morally responsible for the fact that if P then Q, then it follows that no one is morally responsible for the fact that Q."²⁵ The key element here is that determinism mandates that if P is a past state, then Q, where Q is a present state, must obtain because determinism holds that present states are completely determined by past states. If P is a state in the past, and Q is a current state where an action is being performed by an agent, determinism principally holds that Q is inevitable as a result of natural law, and thus nobody is morally responsible for Q, as it did not arise as a result of a choice made on the account of an agent's internal reasons. Thus, if Q is a present state that contains an action being performed by an agent, and nobody is morally responsible for the state Q, nobody is morally responsible for any actions occurring within Q, or so it is argued. This is the transfer-NR argument.

First, let us examine why this should be considered a variant of PAP. PAP, recall, is the idea that if an agent could not have refrained from performing an action, they are not responsible for that action. Determinism holds that every action is the direct result of past states and natural laws, and thus every action is outside the real control of agents. Thus, agents cannot refrain from acting in certain ways as those actions are just steps in an inevitable deterministic process. The idea, then, that determinism implies a lack of moral responsibility translates to the idea

²⁴ See Shirley Matile Ogletree and Crystal D Oberle, "The Nature, Common Usage, and Implications of Free Will and Determinism," *Behavior and Philosophy* 36 (2008): 97–111, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27759547>.

²⁵ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*, 156–157.

that because of determinism, agents have no real choice over their actions, *and thus cannot do otherwise*, and thus are not morally responsible. Transfer-NR is a clear variant of PAP.

Importantly, this paper takes no stance on the validity of determinism. Why? It doesn't need to. The argument in focus in this section, transfer-NR, is the one stated previously, that "if no one is morally responsible for the fact that P and no one is morally responsible for the fact that if P then Q, then it follows that no one is morally responsible for the fact that Q." As some philosophers have argued, such as the aforementioned John Fischer and Mark Ravizza, this argument is not valid, and can be shown to be invalid without impugning the underlying determinist principle.

Fischer and Ravizza present the following scenario as a counterexample to transfer-NR:

Betty plants her explosives in the crevices of the glacier and detonates the charge at T1, causing an avalanche that crushes the enemy fortress at T3. Unbeknownst to Betty and her commanding officers, however, the glacier is gradually eroding (in a certain way). Had Betty not placed the dynamite in the crevices, some ice and rocks would have broken free at T2, starting an avalanche that would have crushed the enemy camp at T3.²⁶

First, observe that this scenario is of a transfer-NR form. Nobody is morally responsible for the fact that the glacier is eroding, and nobody is responsible for the fact that the glacial erosion may cause an avalanche, and yet, as Fischer and Ravizza note, "in virtue of Betty's freely detonating the explosives at T1, she is at least in part morally responsible for the enemy camp's being destroyed at T3."²⁷ Betty's detonation did in part contribute to the avalanche – that we know. Betty was (as is assumed in the example) morally responsible for the detonation she caused; she planted and detonated the explosives due to internal reasons. Thus, Betty was morally responsible for an action that partially contributed to the destruction of the camp.

One specification to make here is that the transfer-NR variant of PAP concerns the responsibility of an agent for the *consequences* of an action they perform and not for the action itself. This can be seen in the Betty example; what is under examination is not that Betty could or could not have done otherwise regarding setting and detonating the

²⁶ Ibid., 157.

²⁷ Ibid.

explosives, but whether or not Betty could have prevented (by not planting the explosives) the eventual consequence of the destruction of the camp. The answer is no, of course – remove Betty and the causal force she emanates from the situation altogether and the same consequence would occur. And yet, by virtue of being morally responsible for an action that contributed to that eventual consequence, Betty at least earns partial responsibility for the eventual consequence. Because transfer-NR is about the consequences of actions and not the actions themselves, the flaw in the transfer-NR argument is that it presumes that a consequence must have only one cause. But this is true only of actions, not consequences. Actions are performed by the agent that performed them, and only that agent. Consequences, on the other hand, can be the aggregate result of a large panoply of causes. If an agent is *wholly* morally responsible for one of those many causes, then the agent must be at least *partially* responsible for the end consequence.

This translates to a more general principle: if there is a situation where you were to remove an agent from the situation and the consequence of that agent's actions still occurs, the agent can still be held morally responsible. This principle is, fortunately, consistent with common intuitions about similar occurrences in life. Take, for example, voting. In an election, many people come together to elect a candidate for some office. Each one of the voter's actions – their action being the casting of their ballot for their preferred candidate – contributes directly to the eventual consequence. When a candidate wins, it is commonly felt, and indeed is true, that each voter who voted for that candidate is in some small part responsible for that candidate's victory. And yet, if you were to remove a single voter's ballot, the result would still occur. The transfer-NR argument would lead to the conclusion that if a single specific voter is not responsible for the votes of every other voter, and not responsible for the fact that those votes determine the winner of the election, then they must not be responsible for the result of the election. But this is false. When agents are morally responsible for contributory actions that lead in part to a specific consequence, they are morally responsible in part for that consequence.

One possible determinist challenge to this argument is that what matters about transfer-NR cases is not that non-human occurrences may lead to a certain consequence – such as the glacier causing an avalanche – but that human agents cannot be responsible for their own actions, and thus cannot be responsible for the consequences of those actions. Why can't human agents be responsible for their own actions? The determinist answer is that because their actions are just the result of past states and natural laws impacting their deliberation and internal reasons,

their action is inevitable – this is, after all, the determinist thesis. Because their actions are just the mechanical output of a natural deterministic formula, the agent never could have not done the action, and thus is not responsible.

This argument fails for reasons unpacked in the previous section. As shown, in evaluations of moral responsibility the inability of an agent to do otherwise is an inconclusive factor. If an agent acts on account of internal reasons, they remain morally responsible on an RR account of moral responsibility. Determinism does not affect this conclusion.

Closing

What this critique of the Principle of Alternate Possibilities reveals is that attempting to use an external principle to gauge moral responsibility is a fool's errand. What matters, in the end, about what makes a person deserving of moral evaluation is the nature of their internal processes and not the external circumstance in which those processes occur. The external circumstances can matter, of course, but they do not matter intrinsically, as PAP holds. They only matter instrumentally, insofar as they directly exert causal influence on the deliberative mechanism and internal environment of the agent in question. However, this causal influence is not always present when agents are simply unable to do otherwise. PAP fails to adequately account for moral responsibility when the grounds for moral responsibility for a given action are found outside the local temporal window of that action; when coercion is present but does not supersede the agent's internal reasons for action; and when an agent's action is the partial cause of a consequence. Such instances reveal that as an evaluative metric, PAP is simply not useful.

In a more abstract sense, it seems only reasonable that moral responsibility be evaluated based on the merits of the individual at hand – the rich inner moral life of the individual deserves to lie at the heart of moral inquiry. Evaluative rules such as PAP attempt to gauge morality – a distinctly human quality made possible by our unique capacity for rational moral analysis – by analyzing external conditions, and fail to adequately focus on the individual moral subject as the center of moral importance.²⁸ What any authentic evaluation of moral responsibility must

²⁸ In regard to humans' unique capacity for moral analysis, see Grace Clement, "Animals and Moral Agency: The Recent Debate and Its Implications," *Journal of Animal Ethics* 3, no. 1 (season-01 2013): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.5406/janimalethics.3.1.0001> and S.F. Sapontzis, "Are Animals

do is derive its conclusive strength from an analysis of the individual agent in question. To do otherwise would be folly.

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