

# OURJournal

Oregon Undergraduate Research  
Volume 17, Issue 1, Spring 2020





Volume 17, Issue 1, Spring 2020

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## Cover Art—“Moonrise, Eugene, Oregon”

Audrey Kalman, Art History and History\*

Hayward Field is the quintessential setting for track and field, and the new Hayward Field will be central to the sport moving forward. This embodiment of progress is analogous to the undergraduate research conducted at the University of Oregon. Researchers and athletes alike aim to push past perceived limits—limits on what can be discovered, limits on what the human body can do. Yet they also recognize that their achievements are possible in part because of those who came before them. Researchers build upon existing knowledge; track and field athletes look to exceed the accomplishments of school legends like Steve Prefontaine, Ashton Eaton, and English Gardner. In this sense, the construction of the new Hayward Field encapsulates the spirit of undergraduate research at UO. Just as we have in the past, Ducks will play crucial roles in the future of both academics and track and field.



\*Audrey Kalman is majoring in History and Art History. She enjoys reading, writing, taking photographs, watching SportsCenter, and eating breakfast foods at any hour of the day. Kalman was born and raised in the city of San Francisco. Please direct correspondence to [akalman@uoregon.edu](mailto:akalman@uoregon.edu).



Dear Readers,

It would be an understatement, I think, to say that the last few months have been an unexpected challenge. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the racial injustice sparking civil unrest across the country, the headlines that have dominated my newsfeed since the start of 2020 seem more the products of a fever dream than reality (murder hornets, anyone?). However, despite the tumult that has transpired thus far, I am continually inspired by my fellow students' commitment to educating themselves – for their own benefit and for the betterment of society. This edition of the *Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal* highlights six research papers written by students who exemplify this desire to learn, grow, and share their findings. Taken together, “The Effect of Emotion on Associative Memory: Anger Versus Fear” (Melissa Adler), “Constructions of Identity: A Reciprocal Relationship in Former Yugoslavia” (Taylor Ginieczki), and “Massacre or Genocide: Redefining the Sook Ching” (Lauralei Singsank) provide insight into the politics of identity and memory. “From Nimble NIMBY to Palpable PIMBY: Anti-Blackness in George Deukmejian’s California Prison Boom” (Jakob Hollenbeck) argues that the rise in the number of prisons in the ‘80s and ‘90s was directly linked to white supremacy, while “Milosz the Visionary: His American Experience in *Visions from San Francisco Bay*” (Ania Grudzien) emphasizes “the importance of richly interpreting one’s reality, especially in a time of change and uncertainty” – that is, a time like today. All of these papers seem particularly prescient given the current divide in America on how to reconcile and understand our country’s history (and ongoing battles) with racism. Finally, “Mating Affects Lifespan Differently in Two Strains of Pseudo-Female *Caenorhabditis elegans*” (Ruben Lancaster), while perhaps more difficult to connect to the current zeitgeist, stresses the importance of taking life history into account when studying organisms’ behavior. I don’t think it’s too big a reach to assume we should apply this principle when studying humans, no matter if it’s from a biological, sociological, or psychological perspective, if only to promote empathy – a core value that is perhaps missing in those who refuse to see anti-Blackness today.

If the chaos of recent months has made anything painfully obvious, it is the importance of having access to credible information; this edition’s faculty editorial, written by Assistant Professor of Psychology and Chair of the UO Faculty Senate Subcommittee on Open Access, David M. Condon, discusses the importance of open access publications (like *OURJ!*) in allowing widespread access to scholarly work. Of course, all journals, even open access ones, would not be possible without the work of editors behind the scenes. I owe many thanks to the rest of the editorial board for their commitment to *OURJ*. Josh, Emma, and Kayla – it’s been a privilege working with you, and I wish you the best with your post-graduation plans. To Jay and Shuxi, I look forward to one more year of editing together. Finally, my deepest gratitude to Barbara Jenkins of the UO Libraries, without whom this journal would not be possible.

On behalf of the editorial board, please enjoy this 17<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal*.



## Guest Editorial—“Green Open Access is ‘Just’ Publishing”

David M. Condon, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Chair of the UO Faculty Senate Subcommittee on Open Access

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A shared experience among many graduate students is the dawning realization that the vaunted privilege of having one's scholarly work accepted for publication is also a fleecing. The exact terms of this fleecing depend on a number of different factors – so many, in fact, that it can get a bit confusing – but it's quite common for researchers to pay several thousand dollars to make their work available for others to read. And these are not the expenses incurred to complete their scholarly work. It's merely the cost of having one's work posted on the website of an academic publisher!

It's possible to fix this situation by separating the processes of publication and peer-review. This can be achieved through a new model of publishing called green open access, which is quietly gaining momentum across many fields of scholarly research. With a small group of researchers in my field, psychology, I have been working to develop a sustainable model of green open access publishing called [PsyArXiv](#). Like other green open access options, including [arXiv](#), [bioRxiv](#), and the [UO Scholars' Bank](#), PsyArXiv is free for users everywhere to post and download research, thanks to the support of institutions like UO, OSU, and the University of California system.

Lasting change, however, requires outreach to the research community, and education about the options for disseminating research. There's no better group to champion this cause than undergraduate researchers. In psychology, most research methods courses focus exclusively on the steps needed to prepare an article for submission to a journal. This makes good sense – it's the most time-consuming and, often, the most joyful part of research. But it's not the end of the story.

The next step in making your work accessible to the general public has traditionally been peer-review. Though sometimes harrowing, peer-review almost always makes the research better by highlighting its short-comings. Personally, I find it inspiring that this process occurs without meaningful compensation for the editors or reviewers, all of whom are experienced researchers who would otherwise be working on their own research. Most of the research that ends up being published usually requires two or more rounds of peer-review before being accepted.

After peer-review, the specter of commercialization creeps in. Once the work is accepted, publishers typically give authors a choice between "gold open access" or traditional "paywalled" publishing. The first option requires authors to pay (often large amounts) to make their work



accessible to readers without charge. The second option is free for authors but creates a charge for those who want to read it; it's usually \$20 or \$30 for an individual to buy an article unless they are affiliated with an institution that negotiates a group rate. Some institutions, including universities like UO, pay researchers to conduct the work and then their libraries also have to pay the publishers to make that same work accessible to others in their institution!

It's worth noting that the costs of publishing are higher on average for more prestigious outlets, sometimes several times higher. This suggests that little of the cost is driven by expenses incurred by the publishers. Researchers are paying for the (perceived) rigor of the outlet's peer-review process, even though this process costs the publishers very little. For me, this point is critical.

The imperative of green open access stems from the simple fact that those who cannot pay high fees should not be disadvantaged. Green open access achieves this by separating accessibility and prestige. Those who produce research – especially undergraduates and early-career researchers – have an opportunity to address the injustice of privileged access by submitting their work to open access outlets (including this one!); in so doing they will contribute to a re-shaping of the publishing landscape. The long-term benefit is more diverse and inclusive scholarship.

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**Editor's Note:** To learn more about open access, go to the UO Libraries' guide at <https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/oa>. See also *Green Open Access: An Introduction* at <https://youtu.be/-5Huht3B6pU>. This video was prepared by the University of Oregon Libraries and the Senate Sub Committee on Open Access in Association with Kindea Labs – 2020.



## Meet the Editorial Board

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### KAYLA DAVIS

Kayla is a senior in the Clark Honors College majoring in CDS (communication disorders and sciences) and minoring in special education. She works as a research assistant in the Optimizing Swallowing and Eating for the Elderly Lab where she is researching the impact of post-stroke swallowing disorders on caregiver burden for her CHC thesis. Outside of school, Kayla works as a personal support worker and enjoys knitting, playing piano, reading, and playing tennis in her free time. After graduating in the spring, she plans to attend graduate school to earn her Master's in speech-language pathology.

### EMMA DORINSON

Emma is a senior in the Clark Honors College majoring in math and minoring in Spanish and economics. In terms of research, she will be exploring how the news around assets affects their price for her CHC thesis. Besides her editorial position for the journal, Emma works in the library as a writing tutor, and she will be teaching an introductory course on art history for first year CHC students. Emma's other interests include music, films, and traveling.

### JOSHUA PEARMAN

Joshua is a senior psychology major at the University of Oregon. He is a research assistant in the Social Affective Neuroscience Lab and Personality and Social Dynamics Lab, and is currently working on his thesis researching power, status, and group affiliation. He is interested in the science of teams in organizations and hopes to both conduct and apply group dynamics research in the future. Outside of academics, Joshua enjoys reading sci-fi novels and watching films with his friends.

### JAY TAYLOR

James Taylor is a freshman majoring in Linguistics and minoring in Computer Science and Korean. He currently serves as the Financial Coordinator for the University of Oregon LGBTQA3 office and co-president of the UO Model United Nations club, which he co-founded this year. He recently discovered a strong interest in research and will be presenting on the topic of mental health in South Korea at the 2020 Oregon Undergraduate Research Symposium. He is passionate about learning new languages, non-profit management, and making the world a better place.



## SHUXI WU

Shuxi is a junior majoring in anthropology, Asian studies, economics and international studies. Her research concerns globalization, urbanization, migration and new media. She plans to go to graduate school in anthropology. She is the associate director of the UO Associated Students of Undergraduate Research and Engagement and the vice president of the UO Anthropology Club.



# The Effect of Emotion on Associative Memory: Anger Versus Fear

Melissa Adler\*, Human Physiology

## ABSTRACT

Studies show that emotion enhances memory for individual items but weakens memory for associations between items (Bisby & Burgess, 2014). One explanation for this associative memory impairment is that emotional stimuli capture attention, causing enhanced encoding of the emotional item but reduced encoding of the surrounding environment (Schupp, Junghöfer, Weike, & Hamm, 2003). This explanation generates the prediction that emotional information always impairs associative memory. Alternatively, it may be that emotion orients attention towards threats in the environment, suggesting that emotions' effects on associative memory may differ depending on where they indicate a threat may be coming from (Öhman, Flykt, & Esteves, 2001). For example, seeing an angry face constitutes a direct threat. The angry face itself potentially captures attention and thereby reduces memory for its associated information. In contrast, seeing a fearful face indicates a threat elsewhere in the environment. Therefore, the fearful face may redirect attention towards the surroundings and thus enhance encoding of the associated information. To adjudicate between these hypotheses, subjects studied sets of three images, consisting of two objects and a face with either a neutral, angry, or fearful expression. Subjects were later tested on their memory for the associations between the three items. Supporting the first hypothesis, memory for both angry and fearful associations was worse than memory for neutral associations. Contrary to the second hypothesis, there were no differences in memory for angry versus fearful associations. Thus, emotional information itself seems to capture attention, weakening memory for related information.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. DEFINING MEMORY

Memory is involved in many aspects of our everyday lives, from events as simple as remembering to put a foot on the brake when starting a car, to events as complicated as

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remembering the steps to an intricate heart surgery. We constantly rely on our memories to inform our thoughts, actions, and relationships, and therefore often trust them as an absolute truth; however, our memory is not always reliable. Emotion affects memory in various ways and can decrease the accuracy of certain types of memory, impacting our day-to-day lives.

There are many forms of memory, with only some types of memory—declarative memories—being accessible to conscious report. Two declarative memory functions have been especially highlighted in the context of emotion influence: item memory and associative memory. Item memory refers to the ability to remember specific, individual items. For example, one could have memories of a specific dog one passed on the street walking home from work every day. Another form of memory is associative memory, which involves the ability to learn and remember the relationships between two or more items. An example would be if the same person not only remembered the specific dog, but remembered it with contextual details such as what its collar looks like, who its owner is, etc.

The two types of memory, associative memory and item memory, are believed to be supported by different brain regions. Associative memory is a distinct form of memory due to its heavy reliance on the hippocampus. The hippocampus is a region of the brain that assists in the formation, organization, and storage of memories, as well as connecting them to certain sensations and emotions; it plays a large role in remembering relationships between multiple pieces of information (Cohen & Eichenbaum, 1993; O'Keefe & Nadel, 1978). In contrast, item memory can be supported by regions other than the hippocampus, including the perirhinal cortex as part of the cortical medial temporal lobe (Stark, Bayley, & Squire, 2002). Due to the different mechanisms underlying item memory versus associative memory, the two may be influenced by contextual factors in distinct ways.

## 1.2. EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

Not all events are remembered, and some are remembered more strongly than others. One factor known to influence memory is emotion. The amygdala plays an integral role in our emotional responses to events. It is located near and often interacts with the hippocampus, affecting the processes of memory formation. It helps determine what and where memories are stored and allows for appropriate responses to dangerous situations (Dolcos, LaBar, & Cabeza, 2004). The amygdala modulates emotionally influenced memories and works with the hippocampus and other regions of the brain involved in memory to determine what individual elements of the memory are consolidated and stored (Adolphs, Cahill, Schul, & Babinsky, 1997; Phelps, 2004). It is likely that emotional events are coded differently than neutral events, such as the amygdala being responsible for encoding as opposed to the hippocampus. This distinction could explain the qualitatively different memories resulting from events involving different states of emotional arousal.

For a long time, it was believed that emotion enhanced memory, but the studies from which that conclusion was based mostly focused on memory for individual emotional items, such as angry faces (Bradley, Greenwald, Petry, & Lang, 1992; Brown & Kulik, 1977; Chiu, Dolcos,

Gonsalves, & Cohen, 2013). More recent work shows that associative memory for emotionally related information may be impaired compared to those for neutral information. For example, following the events of 9/11, people remembered the first plane striking the first tower, yet forgot where it hit, how long it took for the tower to collapse, and even where they saw/heard about the event—the majority of people incorrectly claimed that they had witnessed the first strike on video, though it was not televised (Pezdek, 2003). This is likely due to the way that the amygdala affects the hippocampus, weakening and impairing the encoding process for associative memories; this can be seen by low hippocampal activity in the presence of negative emotion, corresponding to reduced associative memory (Bisby & Burgess, 2017). However, increased activation of the amygdala in the presence of negative emotion improves specific item memory. Because of this, a person may remember individual elements of an event yet be unable to form a relationship between multiple elements.

Emotional stimuli often capture attention, which causes surrounding information to be ignored, and, as a result, memory increases for the emotional stimuli while it decreases for the contextual details (Schupp, Junghöfer, Weike, & Hamm, 2003). Attention may also be captured by the presence of potential threats. Past research indicates that attention is driven by physiological arousal via activation of the amygdala; threats evoke emotional arousal that leads to activation of the amygdala, which can then capture attention to the detriment of non-threatening information in the environment (Öhman, Flykt, & Esteves, 2001). Furthermore, item memory involves focusing on a single, independent item, leading to strong memory of it, while associative memory places a different demand on attention. With associative memory, attention is required to be spread across multiple items to ensure encoding of their relationships.

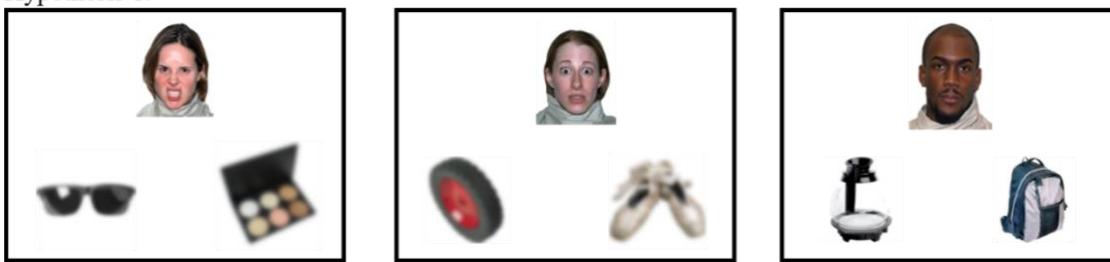
### 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Studies show that specific item memory (e.g., remembering a face or object) is typically enhanced in the presence of emotion; however, associative memory is weakened in the presence of emotional content (Bisby & Burgess, 2017). Therefore, if an angry face is seen paired with an object, a person is more likely to remember the face but less likely to remember the associated object. One explanation for this is that emotional stimuli capture a person's attention, which causes the surrounding environment to be ignored (Schupp et al., 2003). Since attention is what drives encoding, this would lead to a lack of encoding of the surrounding environment. In this case, all emotional stimuli should elicit a deficit in the formation of associative memories. Another explanation is that a person's attention is oriented towards threats in the environment, which may lead to differences in associative memory based on the type of emotional content depicted (Öhman et al., 2001). Angry faces might lead people to forget the surroundings because the threat is the angry face itself. However, if the face is instead fearful, people may direct their attention towards the items in the surrounding environment to locate the source of the threat.

This study compares these two explanations of how emotion affects associative memory, specifically testing whether perceptions of anger and fear have different effects on memory for associated information. We tested two competing hypotheses: 1) that emotional faces, both angry and fearful ones, would inhibit associative memory compared to neutral faces and 2) that fearful

faces would allow subjects to form better associative memories than angry faces (Figure 1). This is because, with the fearful stimuli, subjects' attention would likely transfer from such stimuli to the objects, the potential sources of the threat, while the angry stimuli would act as the sources of the threat themselves and would hold the subjects' attention. These results provide new evidence about the cognitive mechanisms underlying emotional effects on memory. Adjudicating between these two hypotheses not only provides a novel understanding of the basic mechanisms of memory, but also has implications for the reliability of eyewitness testimony and for the types of cognitive impairments that could result from traumatic experiences.

Hypothesis 1:



Hypothesis 2:



**Figure 1:** Potential hypotheses for how emotion affects associative memory. Hypothesis 1: emotion itself captures attention—both angry and fearful faces will disrupt associative memory. Hypothesis 2: emotion signals where to direct attention—angry faces (threats themselves) disrupt associative memory while fearful faces (threats in environment) do not.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. SUBJECTS

Forty University of Oregon undergraduate students participated for course credit (age range = 18-27, mean age = 19.85, standard deviation = 2.48; 30 females and 10 males). All subjects provided informed consent in accordance with regulations set by the University of Oregon and the Institutional Review Board prior to participation and were given a debriefing following their study completion.

### 2.2. STIMULI

Face stimuli were taken from a pool of 125 face images consisting of 18 male-appearing and 18 female-appearing faces. Face stimuli were taken from the database NimStim (Tottenham et al., 2009), which is composed of images from actors and actresses in New York University's theater

department. Each face was photographed with three emotional expressions: neutral, angry, and fearful, though each subject was randomly assigned only one of the three facial expressions provided by the same actor. There were an equal number of male-appearing and female-appearing faces in each of the three emotion conditions.

Each face was paired with two objects to form an associative triad, with the face at the top of the screen and the two objects at the bottom. There were 108 object stimuli taken from the internet that were all categorized as neutral by experimenter judgment. The pairings between faces and objects were random for each subject so they viewed different triads, though every subject viewed all stimuli over the course of the experiment.

Not all objects were presented in triads; some objects were used individually in a different experimental phase to represent “new” items, as in previously unstudied, as a means of assessing subjects’ recognition. The 36 object stimuli that remained after creating the face-object triads were used as “new” items during the recognition phase.

## 2.3. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The study was entirely computer-based and was coded using MATLAB Psychtoolbox software (<https://www.mathworks.com/products/matlab.html>). There were three experimental phases: study, recognition, and testing. The experiment lasted approximately one hour for each subject. Instructions for each of the phases were given to the subjects before the tasks began. Subjects completed practice rounds for the study and testing phases, consisting of the same 14 object stimuli and the same seven face stimuli taken from the entire experimental pool of stimuli, for all subjects. The practice face and object stimuli were not used in the actual experiment. The directions provided and the practice rounds completed did not inform subjects of the emotion manipulation, so subjects were unaware of the specific focus of the study in order to maintain unbiased results.

### 2.3.1. STUDY PHASE

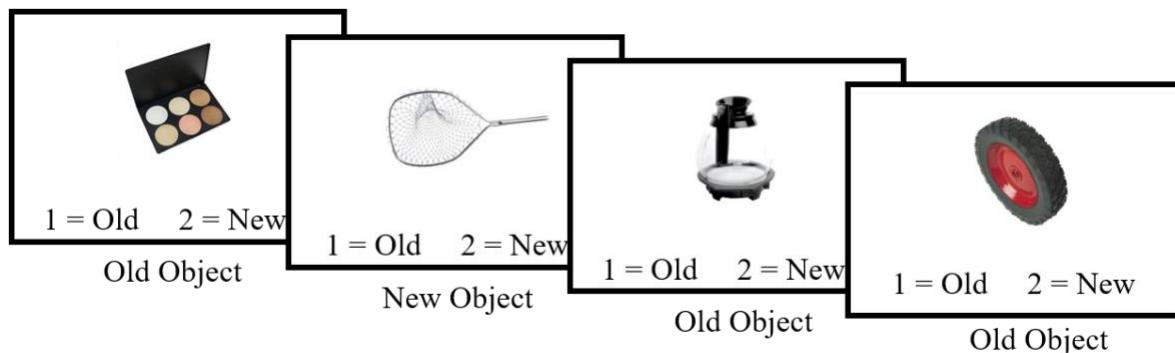
For each study trial, subjects saw a single triad and were asked to create a mental image or story connecting all three items so they could more easily remember the images’ connections in the future (e.g., the angry woman wore sunglasses as she put on her makeup) (Figure 2). Triads were always presented with the face at the top of the screen and the two objects on the bottom. Each triad was present on the screen for six seconds, during which time subjects ranked the quality of their stories on a scale of one to four, one meaning that they were unable to come up with a story to help them remember the relationships between the images, and four meaning that their story was of high quality. Between each triad, a fixation cross was present for two seconds. Thirty-six triads were studied for this phase, 12 of each emotion condition (e.g., of neutral, angry, and fearful facial expressions).



**Figure 2:** Study phase. Each box represents the computer screen during one trial of the study phase. Each trial consisted of one face at the top of the screen with two objects underneath, called triads. Subjects studied these triads, either with a neutral, angry, or fearful face, for six seconds, during which time they came up with stories connecting the three items and ranked the quality of those stories using the rankings provided across the bottom of the screen.

### 2.3.2. RECOGNITION PHASE

Subjects then completed the recognition phase of the experiment, consisting of solely object stimuli (Figure 3). For each round, one object appeared in the middle of the screen and subjects determined if the object was one that they had been shown before, in the previous phase, or if it was one that they had not been shown before. Each image was present on the screen for six seconds, during which time subjects pressed one, indicating that the image was “old”, or two, indicating that the image was “new.” This round consisted of 108 trials. There were 36 “new” and 72 “old” stimuli for each subject.



**Figure 3:** Recognition phase. Each box represents the computer screen during one trial of the recognition phase. Each trial consisted of a single object that remained on the screen for six seconds, during which time subjects determined if the object was “old,” being one that they had studied during the prior phase, or if the object was “new,” being one that they had not studied during the prior phase.

### 2.3.3. TESTING PHASE

Finally, subjects were tested on their ability to form associative memories between the faces and the objects they studied in the first phase (Figure 4). Seven images were present on the screen, with the image on top acting as the cue image, and the six images across the bottom acting as answer choices. Subjects indicated which one of the six images were originally paired with the cue image by typing the number assigned to their chosen answer choice.

The six answer choices across the bottom consisted of two images from neutral triads, two images from angry triads, and two images from fearful triads. Including multiple images from each emotion condition allowed us to test how often participants remembered the correct emotion (e.g., that the cue item came from an angry triad) without remembering the specific face or object associated with the cue (e.g., from Figure 4, not remembering whether the fearful face was associated with the fossil or the hour glass). The two stimuli from each emotion condition were arranged in columns so that there were three columns of two stimuli. For example, the two leftmost images might always be from neutral triads, the middle images from fearful triads, and the rightmost from angry triads. While this arrangement would be consistent across the entire testing phase for a given subject, which condition was associated with which column was counterbalanced across subjects.

Each triad was tested in every possible cue-answer choice combination, meaning that every triad was tested 6 different ways: face cue-object 1 answer, face cue-object 2 answer, object 1 cue-face answer, object 1 cue-object 2 answer, object 2 cue-face answer, object 2 cue-object 1 answer. For example, if a fearful face was paired with an hourglass and an apple during study, then this triad would be tested under the following six permutations: fearful face as cue – hourglass as correct answer, fearful face as cue – apple as correct answer, hourglass as cue – fearful face as correct answer, hourglass as cue – apple as correct answer, apple as cue – fearful face as correct answer, apple as cue – hourglass as correct answer. Testing all possible permutations allowed for a robust estimation of how well individuals had bound all three items together in memory for each triad.

This phase was self-paced and consisted of 216 trials. All answer choices were images that had been studied prior; there were no “new” images.



**Figure 4:** Association test phase. Each box represents the computer screen during one trial of the association test phase. Each trial consisted of one item at the top of the screen, representing the cue item, and six items underneath the cue item, representing the answer choices. Subjects determined which one of the six answer choices were in a triad with the cue item during the study phase. Each triad from the study phase was tested in every possible way. This phase was self-paced.

#### 2.3.4. QUESTIONING

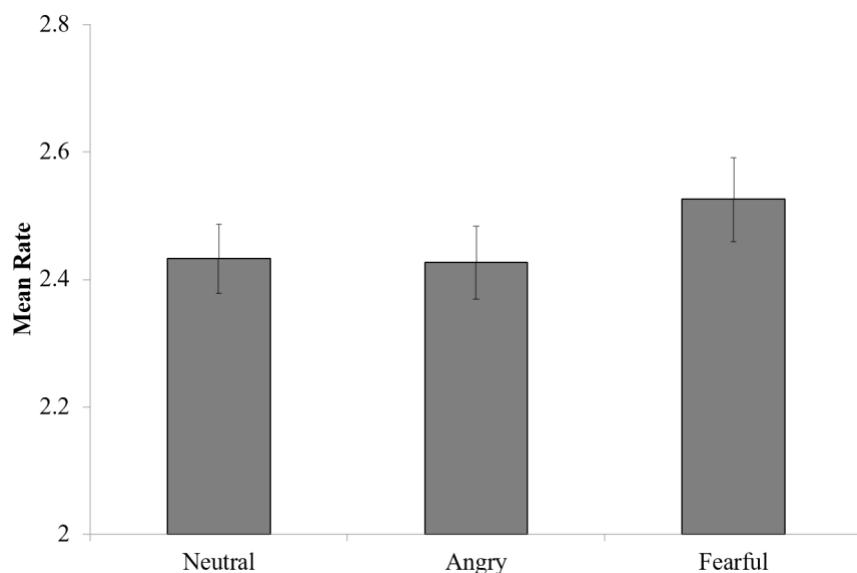
After the three phases were completed, subjects were asked two questions to determine if their emotional arousals were affected by the study. The first question asked if the subjects had any particular feelings while they were completing the study phase of the experiment. The second question asked if the study phase made the subjects feel more negative, neutral, or positive overall. The first question was open-ended so as not to influence the subjects' responses, while the second

question was meant to direct the subjects' responses to specific emotional states. Answers were recorded on each subjects' corresponding line on the sign-in sheet. Notes were also written for any technical issues that came up during the study and for subjects who had any medical conditions or were in a state of mind that may have influenced their results and affected the data.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. TRAINING

In training, our dependent measure of interest was the rating of story quality. For each subject, we computed a mean rating separately for each of the three emotion conditions (Figure 5). We then submitted these mean ratings to a one-way, repeated-measures ANOVA. The effect of emotion condition on training rating was not significant ( $F_{(2,98)} = 2.12, p = 0.13$ ). Though no overall emotion effect was confirmed, we ran exploratory, pairwise comparisons between the fearful triads and the neutral and angry triads. Ratings were numerically higher for faces from fearful triads than faces from angry ( $t(49) = 1.70, p = 0.10$ ) or neutral triads ( $t(49) = 1.66, p = 0.10$ ); however, differences among conditions were not significant.

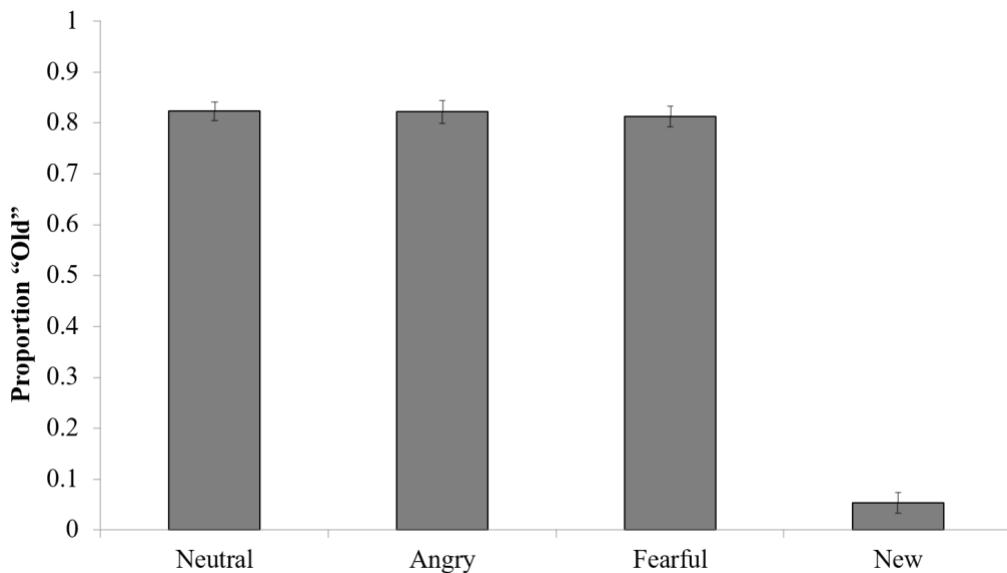


**Figure 5:** Mean ratings during training. The mean quality of story ratings in each emotion condition (e.g., neutral, angry, and fearful). Error bars represent across-subject standard error of the mean. Although fearful triads were rated higher numerically, differences among conditions were not statistically reliable.

#### 3.2. RECOGNITION

It is possible that attention is captured by emotion itself, which may lead to a lack of encoding of the paired objects in angry and fearful triads. Thus, to determine if emotion influenced object recognition, our dependent measure of interest was the mean proportion correct for identifying old objects when they were in fact old (Figure 6). We submitted these values to a one-way,

repeated measures ANOVA. Data showed no effect of emotion, with subjects performing comparably across all conditions ( $F_{(2,98)} = 0.26, p = 0.77$ ).

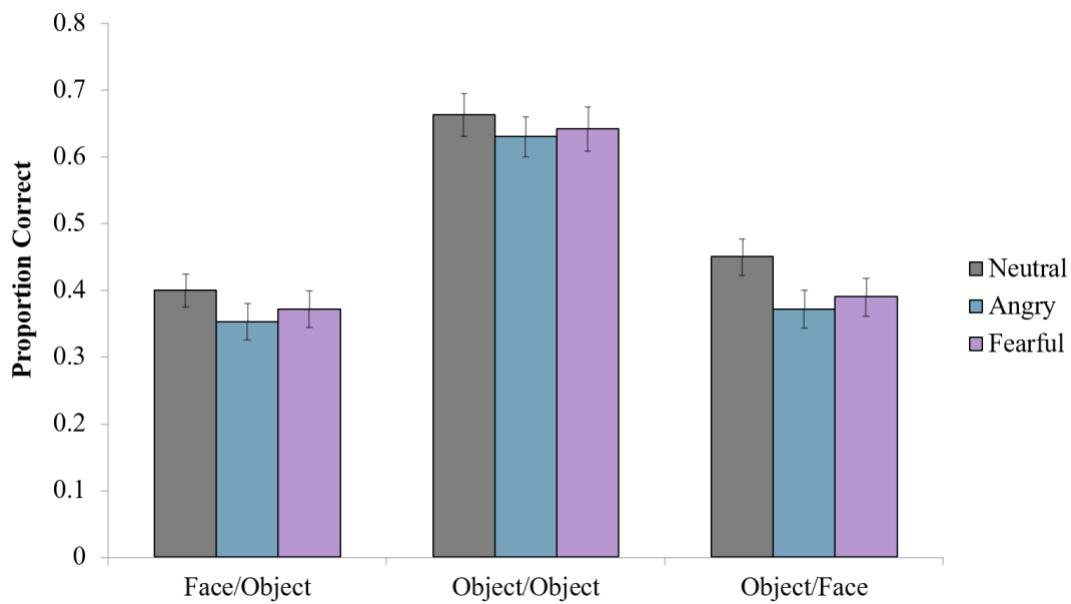


**Figure 6:** Proportion of “old” responses during recognition. The mean proportion of times subjects responded “old” during recognition for each of the emotion conditions. Error bars represent across-subject standard error of the mean. Response accuracy did not differ across emotion conditions.

### 3.3. ASSOCIATION TEST

#### 3.3.1. PROPORTION CORRECT

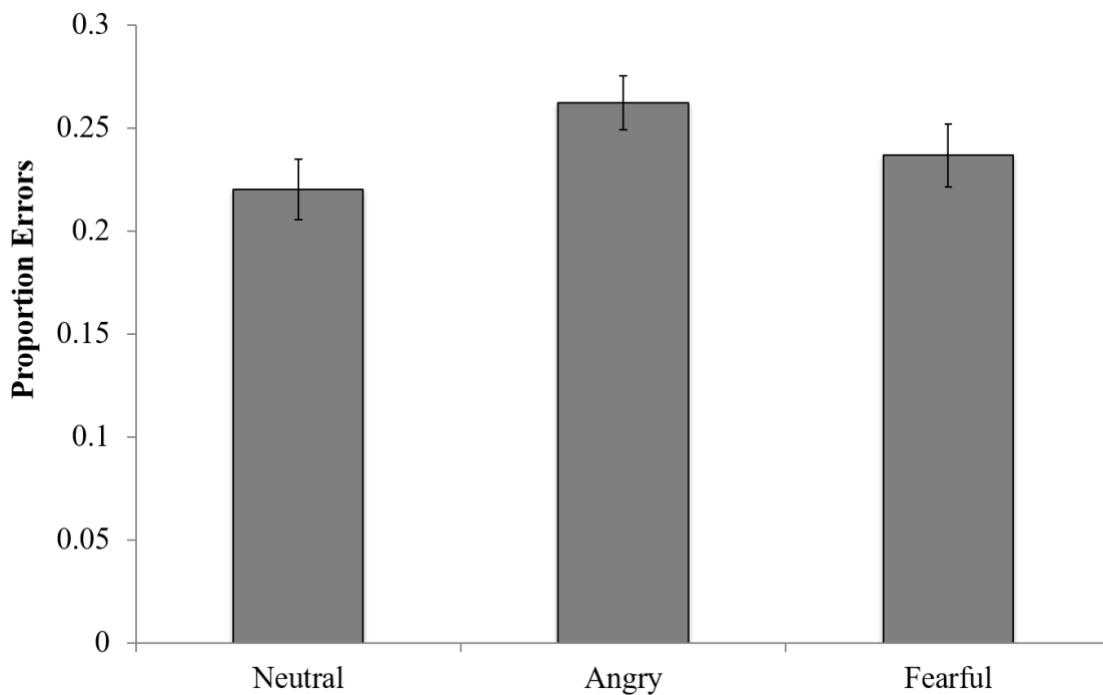
We calculated mean proportion correct to assess associative test performance for each emotion condition, separated by cue-answer choice trial type (Figure 7). A 3 (emotion condition: neutral, angry, fearful) x 3 (cue-answer choice type: face-object, object-object, object-face) repeated measures ANOVA was completed to assess the effects of emotion and test type, along with the interaction between them. Results showed a significant overall effect of emotion ( $F_{(2,98)} = 7.13, p = 0.001$ ). Subjects were better at remembering neutral triads (mean = 0.50, SE = 0.18) compared to both angry (mean = 0.45, SE = 0.17;  $t(49) = 3.40, p = 0.001$ ) and fearful triads (mean = 0.47, SE = 0.19;  $t(49) = 2.58, p = 0.01$ ). Although the accuracy for fearful trials was numerically higher than for angry triads, the difference was not statistically significant ( $t(49) = -1.23, p = 0.22$ ). Results also indicated a significant overall effect of test type ( $F_{(2,98)} = 125.05, p < 0.001$ ). Subjects performed significantly better for the object cue/object answer choices trials than the face cue/object answer choices trials ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the object cue/face answer choices trials ( $p < 0.001$ ). Subjects had significantly greater accuracy when tested with the object cue/face answer choices format than with the face cue/object answer choices format ( $p = 0.002$ ). The interaction between test type and emotion condition was not significant ( $F_{(4,196)} = 1.18, p = 0.321$ ). Subjects’ associative memories were similarly inhibited by negative emotion across all test types.



**Figure 7:** Proportion correct during association test. The effect of emotion on associative memory performance, represented by mean proportion correct, separated by test type. Error bars represent across-subject standard error of the mean. Subjects exhibited higher performance for neutral triads compared to emotional triads, with fearful triad performance being numerically higher than angry triad performance. Subjects performed highest for the object cue-object answer choice testing condition. No interaction between emotion condition and testing condition were found.

### 3.3.2. PROPORTION OF EMOTION-CONSISTENT ERRORS

One possibility is that if emotion itself captures attention, individuals might remember the emotion itself but not the specific face. To test whether subjects had emotion memory but not memory for specific faces, we measured the proportion of incorrect responses where subjects chose the wrong items but where such items were from triads with the correct emotion conditions (Figure 8). Although subjects showed a numerical tendency to select the wrong item from the correct emotion condition for angry or fearful faces more so than neutral faces, the effect of condition was not significant (one-way, repeated measures ANOVA ( $F_{(2,98)} = 2.08, p = 0.13$ ).



*Figure 8:* Proportion of emotion-consistent errors during association test. The effect of emotion on subjects' abilities to recognize the correct emotion in instances when they did not identify the correct, specific face. Error bars represent across-subject standard error of the mean. No overall significance of emotion condition was found.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to better understand how emotion modulates memory. We investigated how the presence of negative emotion affects the formation of associative memories, and if different types of negative emotions cause varying effects. Two competing hypotheses for how negative emotion influences associative memory were tested. The first hypothesis was that the presence of negative emotion, regardless of specific type, would attract attention to the emotional stimulus at the expense of memory for associated information. The second hypothesis was that fear would lead to stronger associative memory formation compared to anger because fear would direct attention to potential threats in the environment. To test these hypotheses, subjects studied three-item pairings consisting of two neutral objects and a face displaying either a neutral, angry, or fearful expression. Subjects were tested on their memory for individual objects as well as associative memories for the three item pairings they studied originally. Although there was no difference in memory for individual items, neutral triads were better remembered. There was no significant difference between the two negative emotions, anger and fear, in terms of subjects' recognition of individual items or associative test performance. Based on this information, our data support the first hypothesis, indicating that negative emotion inhibits associative memory formation independent of specific type.

#### 4.1. NEGATIVE EMOTION INHIBITS ASSOCIATIVE MEMORY FORMATION

Our results support the typical findings of prior research investigating this topic. Many studies have shown that the presence of negative emotion decreases the associative binding of items within their proper context, leading to fragmented associative memories (Bisby & Burgess, 2014, 2017; Madan, Caplan, Lau, & Fujiwara, 2012; Mather & Knight, 2008; Rimmele, Davachi, Petrov, Dougal, & Phelps, 2011). Although the reason behind this is not entirely understood, it has been theorized that negative emotion disrupts associative binding of peripheral information (Touryan, Marian, & Shimamura, 2007), or that negative emotion disrupts associative encoding by impairing pattern completion—a series of neural connections that, if triggered, fire one another and lead to memory recall—and therefore memory of the event as a whole (Bisby, Horner, Bush, & Burgess, 2018). Regardless of the reasoning behind such theories, our data indicate that anger and fear cause similar effects, which leads us to conclude that negative emotion, in general, inhibits associative memory formation.

#### 4.2. ASSOCIATIVE IMPAIRMENT PRESENT FOR BOTH FEAR AND ANGER

Though our second hypothesis predicted associative memory differences between angry and fearful triads due to their varying sources of threat, this was not the case for the present research, as both types of emotional triads produced comparable levels of memory impairment. Prior work has shown that selective attention enhances encoding of highly relevant stimuli, with the most emotional stimuli being of the greatest importance and therefore being encoded the strongest (Schupp et al., 2003). Fearful faces themselves might be less relevant compared to the environments around them since the cause of the emotion must be located in the surroundings. Alternatively, attention may also be captured by the presence of threats. Prior research has shown that people automatically turn their attention towards stimuli that pose a threat, a potential evolutionary trait acquired to alert us to danger (Öhman et al., 2001). Based on this information, one would predict that angry stimuli would capture one's focus and lead to decreased encoding of the surrounding environment, while fearful stimuli would redirect focus towards the surrounding environment and therefore increase encoding of the paired items. Our results instead indicate that the angry and fearful triads did not differentially recruit this selective attention mechanism. This information leads us to believe that it is emotion in general that influences attention, and that anger and fear may not be discriminated in terms of their emotional significance and encoding, leading to the similar associative memory results that our data show. However, it is possible that fearful faces sometimes do direct attention toward the environment, and that our stimuli did not pose any degree of real threat. In future studies, we could use physiological measures of arousal to test for evidence of threat associated with fearful and angry faces, though our data are more consistent with the hypothesis that selective attention is modulated via emotional significance, rather than by threat.

An alternative hypothesis to that of the selective attention mechanism is that negative emotion causes anxiety, which then causes poor associative encoding. Studies indicate that the feeling of anxiety in the presence of an angry or threatening face inhibits processing efficiency, which leads to decreased encoding and poorer associative memory (Derakshan & Koster, 2010). Increased

anxiety may also be present in the fear condition; rather than viewing the face itself as threatening, the threat stems from the environment, causing a similar feeling of anxiousness, though from a different source. Our data show similar associative memory effects from angry and fearful triads, indicating that emotional arousal leads to a poor state for encoding. Thus, our data could be the result of anxiety as a response to the presence of threat.

#### 4.3. DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF ASSOCIATIVE AND ITEM MEMORY

Our results also support prior work showing that negative emotion affects associative memory differently from item memory. A long line of research has shown that portions of the medial temporal lobe (MTL) are critical for forming memories (Stark et al., 2002). One subregion, the hippocampus, is especially important for forming associative memories, while others support memory for individual items (Bisby & Burgess, 2014). Specifically, our data show associative memory deficits without differences in item recognition between conditions. This provides further support for the idea that the two types of memory, associative and specific item, are supported by different mechanisms. Recognition relies upon MTL structures other than the hippocampus, and retrieval of a single item does not necessarily rely on contextual details or item associations and mainly requires extra-hippocampal support (Montaldi & Mayes, 2010), while associative memory relies heavily upon those factors and requires hippocampal involvement (O'Keefe & Nadel, 1978). This may explain why we found differences in how negative emotion affected associative memory versus item memory.

#### 4.4. AMYGDALA INVOLVEMENT

Located near the hippocampus, the amygdala, which is involved in emotion regulation, has been shown to play a role in memory. Via connectivity with the MTL, the amygdala can enhance encoding of relevant information. Some work suggests that amygdala activation indexes fear (Davis, 1992; LeDoux, 2007), whereas later work shows that it responds to salient stimuli more broadly (Cunningham & Brosch, 2012). Our behavioral finding is more in line with this latter account of amygdala processing and shows that negative emotion affects behavior similarly, without a special role for fear in emotional memory.

#### 4.5. AROUSAL STATE INFLUENCES ENCODING AND RETRIEVAL

Finally, the associative memory deficit was present throughout the various ways the information was tested (e.g., the cue vs. answer choice layouts). When subjects were tested on object-object associations (e.g., there was no face and therefore no emotion present during the test trial), the deficit for negative emotion remained. The presence of emotion increases arousal during memory encoding, leading to the release of neurotransmitters that modulate memory strength (Cahill & McGaugh, 1996). When retrieving an emotional event, the amygdala and related brain structures may become re-activated, causing one to be in a similar state of arousal as to when the memory was formed. If this re-activation is too weak or fails to occur, retrieval is suboptimal and memory accuracy decreases (Buchanan, 2007). One potential explanation for the results in our study is that it was not the emotional item capturing subjects' attention during the

test, but the subjects' differing states of arousal during encoding and retrieval that led to our result; the strength of the negative arousal that was present during encoding was likely absent or too weak during retrieval, hindering subjects' abilities to recall the item pairings.

#### 4.6. LIMITATIONS

A primary concern arisen from our behavioral results was that we did not test item memory for the individual faces, so it is possible that the different associative memory effects between the emotional and neutral conditions was reliant upon how well the faces were remembered. Furthermore, we had no measure of amygdala activation or galvanic skin response to ascertain whether subjects' emotional arousal levels were influenced by the faces they were shown. If participants were not emotionally aroused, the differential emotion effect may be due to merely remembering the facial expressions themselves, the emotional facial expressions having more variation amongst them and thus potentially proving more challenging to recall accurately.

### 5. CONCLUSIONS

The present research has important implications for situations where the inference of emotion on memory accuracy is problematic, such as in the criminal justice system. Eyewitness testimonies depend upon witnesses' abilities to remember not only individual elements of events (e.g., having seen a specific person before), but remember how the elements of the event are associated with one another (e.g., having seen the person and the gun together). The events involved are usually emotionally charged, but past studies on the influence of emotion on memory have focused primarily on how people remember individual elements rather than associations between multiple elements. When witnesses provide their testimonies, it is important for them to remember not only the faces of the perpetrators, but the clothes the perpetrators were wearing along with other associated details that may help identify them. It has been shown that eyewitness testimonies are often unreliable, as emotional stress leads to the weakening of memories; negative emotion present during an event or period of recall significantly hinders one's ability to remember details about the event (Kassin, Ellsworth, & Smith, 1989). This is believed to be due to the idea that there is a decreased capacity to process information in a state of heightened emotional arousal (Kaplan, Van Damme, Levine, & Loftus, 2016; Van Der Kolk, 1998). Therefore, these testimonies are filled with gaps that the brain attempts to fill in with information based on other surrounding pieces of evidence, as well as biases due to personal experiences (Loftus & Pickrell, 1995). Results from the present work demonstrate challenges involving eyewitness testimonies. Data show that emotion in general, both anger and fear, disrupt associative memory processes; thus the validity of eyewitness testimonies falls further into question. Data also reveal that anger and fear do not have different effects on associative memory, which implies that witness testimonies involving different types of emotional events provide similar amounts of unreliability.

Furthermore, people who experience trauma with some regularity (e.g., victims of abuse) may have cognitive impairments in addition to emotional trauma (Power, Philippot, & Hess, 2010). Our data suggest that such impairments may be possible not only when an individual experiences direct threats, but when in the presence of any negative emotion like witnessing someone else's

fear. Importantly, results from this study, along with future variations of it, could provide potential clinical applications involving victims of traumatic experiences; if we understand the mechanisms of how negative emotion influences associative memory, we may discover methods of counteracting the impairment via various memory-improving techniques. This could potentially lead to prevention and/or improvement of cognitive impairment resulting from trauma, improved memory accuracy for emotional events, and increased reliability of eyewitness testimonies.

Although current data indicate that fearful and angry stimuli cause similar associative memory effects, it is possible that the fearful faces did not elicit enough threat perception to orient subjects towards the environment. Future research would likely involve the use of stimuli of higher emotional valence to achieve the desired direction of attention. It would also be beneficial to use Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) to monitor subjects' states of emotional arousal via changes in their sweat gland activity. With GSR we could ensure that subjects do not merely view emotional stimuli but become emotionally aroused themselves. With their electrodermal activity being measured, we could also test whether fear and anger cause varying states of arousal. Furthermore, we could utilize Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to measure subjects' amygdala activation; thus, we could determine if anger and fear cause varying levels of amygdala activation and monitor the relationship between associative memory formation and amygdala activation.

The purpose of this experiment was to study two different types of negative emotion and their potential differing effects on associative memory. Overall, our data found the same effect for both emotion conditions, indicating emotional content captures attention, reducing resources available to encode related information. Our results also indicate that the source of threat, whether it be the stimuli themselves if angry or the surrounding environment if fearful, does not influence the strength of associative memories. With this contribution, we further support the idea that negative emotion inhibits associative memory formation and are brought closer to understanding how the effect is modulated.

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# Constructions of Identity and War: A Reciprocal Relationship in Former Yugoslavia

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates the reciprocal relationship between identity and conflict, focusing the inquiry on the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia and the resulting Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. A brief history of nationalist sentiment under communist rule in Yugoslavia is first displayed to contextualize the scope of research. The focus then shifts to how constructions of ethnonationalist identity became the basis of brutal ethnic conflict. Identity as the root of conflict is first discussed theoretically from an international relations perspective, citing the breakdown of a multinational state and the subsequent security dilemma. It is then grounded empirically in real-world evidence, illustrating how power imbalances between the republics and powerful ethnonationalist rhetoric led the region to war. The research then transitions to the secondary and complementary component of the thesis: how conflict shapes identity. The discussion cites incongruent narratives of war among the former republics as well as the tarnished international image of former Yugoslavia. Through a display of relevant evidence and literature, this argument strives to illustrate the power of identity in conflict, unity, and the nation. Further research could address how the weaponization of ethnicity could be avoided and reversed in favor of a stronger sense of collective identity around shared sociopolitical values and ideals.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In academic studies of the relationship between war and the construction of identity, the violent breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) is at the forefront of the literature. A geographically expansive, culturally diverse, and politically non-aligned federation that existed from 1918 to 1991, the SFRY mirrors the entire Balkans in its identity as a geopolitical crossroads of culture, history, and politics (United Nations Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [UN-ICTY], 2017). However, the former country of Yugoslavia has a unique history of ethnonational conflict following the collapse of a multinational state; organized political division,

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propagated by the nationalist rhetoric of powerful political leaders, eroded the concept of a common Yugoslav identity, fueled fear and mistrust between ethnic groups, and accelerated the collapse of the union (UN-ICTY, 2017). The wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo throughout the 1990s were consequences of these opposing nationalist movements, and they demonstrate the central role that constructions of national identity played in the conflicts that took place during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s (McConnell, 2017).

This paper will hence explore how identity constructions in Yugoslavia shaped this era of conflict in the 1990s, as well as how these conflicts, in turn, were shaped by identity. With a timeline of inquiry from the beginning of the federation in 1918 to the end of the Yugoslav Wars at the turn of the twenty-first century, this essay will strive to analyze relevant research and reach a meaningful conclusion about the power of identity in national agendas.

## 2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF NATIONALISM IN YUGOSLAVIA

It is necessary to first outline the role of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia, which was an experiment in a multinational state. It comprised six republics, each with their own national identity: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia (including the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina), and Slovenia (UN-ICTY, 2017). The communist political party, in power in Yugoslavia from 1918-1991, recognized the ethnonational diversity of the Yugoslav demographic, but the predominant belief among party leaders was that equality-based policies and communist hegemony would allow nationalism to “exist, mature, and finally diminish as a political force without jeopardizing political stability and economic development” (Sekulić et al., 1994, p. 83). In short, a shared political agenda, societal modernization, and supranational identity were expected to weaken nationalism.

Despite these expectations, the political and economic rivalries that eventually arose between the Yugoslav republics intensified rather than lessened nationalist feelings (Sekulić et al., 1994, p. 83). The central government weakened while militant nationalism grew, and organized political division was fueled by nationalist rhetoric from leaders like Slobodan Milošević, who turned his promises made to fellow Serbs into “actions that caused blood and ruins” (UN-ICTY, 2017 & Bozic, 1992, p. 10). These influences eroded the concept of a common Yugoslav identity, fueled fear and mistrust between ethnic groups, and accelerated the collapse of the union. By the early 1990s, the Yugoslav experiment saw open hostility and warfare among the South Slavs, marking the start of a long decade of war (Sekulić et al., 1994, p. 83). For context, the following images (Figure 1) illustrate the geopolitical changes that took place from 1991 to 2008 in the former Yugoslavia (UN-ICTY, 2017).



**Figure 1:** Geopolitical changes in the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2008.

While the different ethnic groups in pre-war Yugoslavia were not necessarily “poised on the verge of ‘ancient hatreds’ held tenuously in check for four decades only by the strong arm of Father Tito,” it was these nationalist sentiments that pushed the state toward internal conflict and eventual full-scale war (Wilmer, 2002, p. 8). This era of political violence and the nationalism that fueled it contextualize this essay’s research focus: how identity brought the Yugoslav Wars to fruition, and then how these conflicts shaped identity construction in turn.

### 3. IDENTITY CAUSING WAR

#### 3.1. THEORETICAL INQUIRIES

Regarding the question of how identity becomes divisive in a multinational state when federal leadership dissolves, scholarship from an international relations perspective supplies structural, macro-level insights. For this reason, theories on ethnic conflict will first be explored. Posen (1993) uses Yugoslavia's breakdown of order and the consequent violence to epitomize the security dilemma, a model in realist theory that explains how proximate groups of people under conditions of anarchy suddenly find themselves responsible for their own security (national, political, human, or otherwise). His work supports the notion that when a multiethnic state breaks down, its ethnic subgroups see other identities as offensive threats, resulting in division, mistrust, and eventual violence.

Specifically, Posen (1993, p. 37) explains that a history of brutal conflict between Croats and Serbs that went back hundreds of years, the offensive push to "rescue" nationals who were "marooned" in other republics, the disparity of power between the republics, and violent groups of extremist fanatics contributed the most to the violence. In this way, Posen's argument provides four factors that explain the rise of ethnic conflict when Yugoslavia collapsed. However, this essay strives to take his reasoning further by proposing that his four reasons for conflict share a common link: a sense of shared identity. Each of Posen's (1993) four factors can hence be reframed using the lens of identity. Centuries-old oral and cultural traditions of Croat-Serb warfare fueled their continued animosity; a sense of consanguine brotherhood with "stranded" nationals justified various homelands' rescue efforts; the perceived power differential between republics threatened nationalist rhetoric, which championed ethnonational superiority; destructive bands of impassioned fanatics united under supernationalist banners on the basis of shared identities. Reframing Posen's (1993) reasons for ethnic conflict as the consequences of clashing national identities supports the notion that issues of identity led directly to war in Yugoslavia.

#### 3.2. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

To follow this theoretical line of reasoning, strong empirical evidence supports that the Yugoslav Wars were predominantly the consequences of the rise of conflicting nationalist movements and identities (McConnell, 2017). Ethnic nationalism had always been present in the Yugoslav federation, but it was kept under control while the communist dictator Joseph Broz (Tito) was in power. After his death in 1980, however, there was neither a method nor a framework for resolution in place, and cross-national conflicts became everyday occurrences (Bozic, 1992). In short, ethnic conflicts based on identity were bubbling to the surface and altering inter-ethnic relations. Rising Croat bitterness against Belgrade is a distinct example of how political tensions became realized (Bozic, 1992). The Croats' perception of Serbia as an unequal state fueled ethnic division, and the exacerbated power imbalance between Serbia and the other republics eventually became a focal point of the Yugoslav Wars. Additionally, an "Islamic assertion in Bosnia and Herzegovina" represented demographic changes that affected ethnic balance and further destabilized social attitudes (Bozic, 1992, p. 51). The changing ethnic makeup of the republics

signified the breakdown of traditional society that followed the breakdown of the state. Moreover, these changes accelerated the political tensions in the 1980s rooted in “nationalist passions,” as named by Bozic (1992, p. 51). Each of these societal changes that arose after the collapse of Yugoslavia can be seen as a consequence of ethnic tension as well as a catalyst for the ethnic conflicts that followed.

Moreover, the nationalist rhetoric of Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian leader charged with war crimes and genocide at the turn of the twenty-first century, is a strong indication of identity as the basis of nationalism and war. Milošević, the so-called “Butcher of the Balkans,” was notorious for propaganda campaigns that emphasized alleged injustices against Serbs and portrayed them as victims of the rest of Yugoslavia (Bozic, 1992, p. 72). Ideas of Serbian nationalism and traditional culture, based on the “purity and nobility of the peasant character” which Milošević championed, are popularly seen as the biggest cause of the Yugoslav Wars (Boškovic, 2005, p. 10). The populist and nationalist rhetoric used by Milošević serves as evidence for how identity constructions led to conflict, and this can be seen in how Serbian nationalism directly fueled Serbian militant aggression.

This Serbian nationalist rhetoric finally exploded in spring 1991 when this issue of “maltreated Serbs” provided the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army with a cause to fight, and they consequently started a war in Croatia (Bozic, 1992, p. 118). This is a strong example of how identity can cause conflict as perceptions of ethnic superiority fueled these nationalist military campaigns. This historical event, which is widely accepted as a consequence of Serbia’s desire for Croatian territory that was supposedly inhabited by a Serbian majority, marked the beginning of a “long and tragically unequal war” (Bozic, 1992, p. 72). Prominent analysts of the Yugoslav conflict maintain that the civil war that started in 1991 was largely the logical outcome of Milošević’s proposed policies, and this is evidence that identity-based ethnonationalist rhetoric was a major force of conflict in the Yugoslav Wars.

## 4. WAR’S IMPACT ON IDENTITY

### 4.1. INCONGRUENT NARRATIVE

As this paper has shown, perceptions of identity and nationalism can become weaponized, purposefully or passively, to incite conflict between ethnic groups and tear down multinational states. However, the relationship between identity and conflict is not one-sided; it is dialectical. Identity construction and war shape each other, and this section will illustrate how the latter influenced the former during the Yugoslav Wars.

The first example can be found in how the post-war Yugoslav republics do not share a unified narrative about the wars of the 1990s. There is still external blame for the cause of the Yugoslav Wars in Serbia, widespread contention over the dual identity of Croats as both victims and perpetrators, and vastly different stereotypes assigned (both outwardly and inwardly) to “the ‘barbaric’ Serbs and the ‘civilized’ Croats” (Boškovic, 2005, pp. 10-12). These examples illustrate how perceptions of the perpetrators and victims of violence vary widely across the region. This is

particularly true in the case of Croats and Serbs, who adamantly blame each other for the brutal ethnic violence that took place and maintain strongly opposing perspectives regarding the cause of the conflicts. The mutually exclusive nature of the respective views put forth by Croatia and Serbia is further indicated in their contrasting collective narratives, their antipodal holidays to commemorate war events, and their ethnicity-tailored history textbooks, to give a few examples (Baranovicé, 2001). Each of these three listed elements is a component of identity construction that changed following the war, supporting how the conflicts of the 1990s shaped national identity-building.

Additionally, Slovenia has been largely excluded from the conceptualization of Yugoslavia and even from the entire Balkans region, and their national identity construction reflects a desire for distance from the other former republics — a case study that provides more insight into how war shapes identity (Boškovic, 2005). Slovenia's minor role in the Yugoslav Wars spared the country most of the destruction that happened elsewhere, and the country consequently gained significant cultural and political clout on the global stage for this ostensible display of wartime restraint (Boškovic, 2005). Boškovic (2005) argues that this lent a sense of "civility" to Slovene identity, and Slovenia was seen to belong to a "more civilized" group of nations rather than to war-torn Yugoslavia (p. 12). This shift in Slovene national identity took place as a direct result of the conflicts of the 1990s, which supports how Slovenia's role in the conflict directly shaped their national identity.

However, Boškovic's assertion of Slovenian civility can be extended: Slovenia did not passively receive this "civil" image, but rather actively pursued it. Slovenia desired a national reputation that embodied their civility, proved their modernity, and, most importantly, differentiated their narrative from those of the other former Yugoslav republics, which the world associated with chaos and war. Šarić (2004, p. 391) provides direct quotes from Slovene media sources to show the "systematic distancing of Slovenia from the Balkans in its media," which this argument identifies as Slovenia "Othering" the rest of the Balkans. Slovenia's political distancing from the rest of the Balkans can be also seen in politicians who "fiercely reject any connection with the [Balkan] region" (Boškovic, 2005, p. 8) and the media's support for a self-image in which "[Slovenia's] position is somewhere outside the Balkans" (Šarić, 2004, p. 396). These examples are clear indications of how Slovenia actively strove to create its own narrative of peace and civility in order to escape association with the Yugoslav Wars. In summary, both Slovenia's internationally granted and internally created self-image of civility in the wake of the conflicts of the 1990s demonstrate how war is formative in identity construction.

## 4.2. INTERNATIONAL IMAGE

The second way in which the Yugoslav Wars impacted Southern Slavic identity involves the altered international reputation of Yugoslavia and the Balkans as a whole. The international community (as well much of the former Yugoslavia itself) largely agrees that the violence, wars, and ethnic cleansing that took place were characterized by disturbing acts of horror, brutality, and genocide (Wilmer, 2002). This perception has created a negative image of the region overall, depicting the modern republics as places of danger and instability. Yugoslavia became

“increasingly associated with blood and violence... [causing] individuals who could identify themselves with the Balkans to feel guilty of violence” as well (Šarić, 2004, p. 39).

This overwhelmingly negative shift in how the Balkans were viewed by the world evidently instilled collective feelings of shame, despite the incongruent narratives within the former Yugoslavia about which republic or ethnic subgroup was responsible for the violence. This essay highlights this duality—regional guilt existing alongside ethnic-divided narratives—as a testament to the power of war in shaping human identity. Victims, perpetrators, and proximate bystanders alike, although rarely divided along such clean lines in the chaos of war, felt the impact of war on their national and personal identities regardless of their role. Identifying with the region was enough to generate guilt, regardless of their individual nationality or ethnicity. This association between the Balkan region and collective wrongdoing aligns with evidence from Šarić (2004, p. 402, 397) that cites the journalistic term “the Balkan syndrome” to describe something characterized by “unruliness, intractability, and savagery.” Evidently, the conflicts that took place in the Balkan region in the 1990s transformed the self-perceptions of those who identified with the region, and the shame surrounding the violent wars that arose independently of ethnonationality illustrates a direct representation of war’s capacity to change identity.

The concept of “Europeanization” also plays a formative role in this discourse about post-war national identity. As stated by a Macedonian media outlet, the Balkan region “is in Europe and it is not in Europe at the same time” (Šarić, 2004, p. 395). This duality of identity for the Balkan states presents the republics of the former Yugoslavia with two choices: identify either with Europe or with other Balkan countries. This paper proposes that the outcome of this choice largely determines whether the country in question embarks on a “European trajectory” (Subotic, 2011, p. 309) or remains in Balkan “barbarity and savagery” (Šarić, 2004, p. 391). This ostensible decision between connecting to “civilized” Europe or stagnating with other “savage” Balkan states represents how Balkan countries—and subsequently, the identities they contain—are seen as the starting point with Europe as the end-goal. In deciding between Europeanization and Balkanization, the former option has been unquestionably chosen by Croatia and Slovenia, the two Balkan countries with identities and norms that closely resemble Europe (Subotic, 2011, p. 309) and whose media regularly label the Balkans as “the opposite of the international environment” (Šarić, 2004, p. 391, 404). Croatia and Slovenia are also the only former Yugoslav republics to have become members of the European Union (Communication Department of the European Commission, 2020), representing their rejection of the Balkans. Both countries symbolically choose Europe over the rest of their region as a consequence of how the Yugoslav Wars characterized Balkan identity, illuminating the formative role of war in national identity construction.

A display of qualities associated with these two respective regions is found in the image below from Šarić (2004, p. 403), titled “Otherness and Inequality” (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The left column, titled *The Balkans*, describes the Balkan region which includes the former Yugoslav republics, and the right, titled *The non-Balkan world*, essentially represents the values and qualities of Europe and the West.

<i>The Balkans</i>	<i>The non-Balkan world</i>
Instability	Stability
Chaos	Order
Irrationality	Common sense
Crime/corruption	Honesty
Illegality	Legality
Barbarism	Civilisation

This display of traits, arranged in oppositional pairs that connote heavily valenced levels of worth, labels Balkan identity (and by default the former Yugoslav identity) as the “Other” of Europe. Šarić (2004, p. 391) directly supports that discourse about the “barbarity of the Balkans and the need for intervention helped create a sense of common identity and purpose in the European Union,” which affirms the Balkan-Europe identity dichotomy as a direct result of the violent Yugoslav Wars. This notion is validated again by the recent political rebranding campaigns that have taken place in Yugoslavia, ostensibly motivated by “the need to disassociate from the recent past and from regional instability, and to emphasize a ‘Europeaness’” (Hall, 2001, p. 326). In short, both the international and the Balkan community support that the Yugoslav Wars tainted the international reputation of the entire Balkan region. The wars symbolically separated the Balkans from the rest of Europe and consequently galvanized some of the former Yugoslav republics into choosing a European political trajectory and national identity, which demonstrates the capacity of conflict to profoundly change identity construction.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This exploration of the role of identity in the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia has shown considerable support for identity as the basis of brutal ethnic conflict. A brief history of nationalist sentiments and movements during and immediately following the rule of Tito was first described to contextualize the research focus. Then, foundational processes in which identity can lead to war were studied theoretically from an international relations perspective and illustrated empirically as real-world conflicts that stemmed from ethnic differences. The ways in which war impacts identity were further discussed using discrepant narratives from the 1990s that still carry weight in the present, and the international image of the former Yugoslavia, from the perspective of both the former Yugoslavs and the rest of the world, was analyzed.

Through illuminating how organized political division and nationalism delegitimized the common Yugoslav identity in favor of specific ethnonational ones, this paper has delved into the dynamic relationship between ethnic-group identity and the basis of conflict in the region. Yugoslavia’s long history of internal warfare, selective nationalist unity across borders, ethnicity-

based power disparities, and violent ethnic subgroups resulted in the rise of nationalism and precipitated the violence that followed. These conflicts then led to contradictory political histories, a damaged reputation of the region, and negative self-perceptions within the former Yugoslav republics.

This exploration of identity and conflict has therefore illustrated the power of identity in conflict, unity, and the role of the self in the nation, which are wholly essential topics in the study of peace and war. Further research should focus on how the weaponization of ethnicity could be avoided and reversed. There are also gaps in the literature about how animosity could be replaced by a stronger sense of collective identity potentially revolving around shared values and ideals. The violence that occurred upon the collapse of Yugoslavia should serve as an example of how a multinational state can devolve into chaos and destruction without direction, and it is the job of both the global academic community and the world's great powers to learn from this tragic era of war and better pursue the human mission of peace-building.

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# Mating Affects Lifespan Differently in Two Strains of Pseudo-female *Caenorhabditis elegans*

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## ABSTRACT

Mating is vital for sexually reproducing species, yet the ideal mating strategy for males and females can differ. The ensuing conflict between the sexes - namely, sexual conflict - results in a decrease in population level fitness. The degree of sexual conflict can be affected by the behavior, physiology, and life history of a population. Previous studies in the nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans* have shown that mating causes lifespan to decrease in pseudo-females and hermaphrodites, which was interpreted as evidence of sexual conflict. However, it is still an open question whether variations in mating condition and strain type can affect the degree of sexual conflict and lifespan decrease. Here, I investigate whether lifespan is affected by mating in conditions other than sex-skewed individual mating scenarios used in previous work. I conducted population-based mating assays in two different strains of *C. elegans* using both natural and male-skewed sex ratios. Counter to expectations, I found no effect of mating on lifespan in a wild isolate of *C. elegans*, while virgins from a canonical laboratory strain had a decreased lifespan relative to their counterparts mated in groups. My data offers a counterpoint to the literature, which agrees that mating universally decreases the lifespan of *C. elegans* pseudo-females and hermaphrodites. These results highlight the flexibility of reproductive costs and the importance of life histories in experimental populations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Males and females of the same species can have different optimal mating strategies. For example, in fruit flies, males produce maximum offspring at high re-mating rates, limited by the number of females with which they can mate (Bateman, 1948; Fowler and Partridge, 1989). Females produce maximum offspring at intermediate mating rates, limited by the number of eggs they can lay (Fowler and Partridge, 1989). In another example, male beetles are known to damage female beetle reproductive tracts as a by-product of selection for traits that increase male fertilization success (Arnqvist and Rowe 2013; Hotzy et al, 2012; Morrow et al, 2003). The

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disparity between optimal reproductive phenotype and genotype, as well as the resulting negative effect on fitness, is called sexual conflict. This means that an increase in mating success in one sex may not increase the reproductive output of the other sex.

Every mating carries a risk for both sexes, which can include increased probability of predation, direct physical damage to the female, and excessive depletion of stored energy resources. When females mate beyond the mating frequency that maximizes their lifetime reproductive output, their lifespan may decrease (Arnqvist and Rowe, 2013; Fowler, 1989). Here, I investigate lifespan effects of mating scenarios allowing for different rates of re-mating in strains derived from canonical and wild isolate *Caenorhabditis elegans*.

### 1.1. THE *CAENORHABDITIS ELEGANS* MODEL ORGANISM

The nematode *C. elegans* offers natural variation in mating systems that can be taken advantage of when studying sexual conflict. Importantly, post-mating lifespan decrease has been observed in hermaphrodites and pseudo-females in the canonical *C. elegans* strain N2 (Riddle and Gems, 1996; Shi et al, 2014).

*C. elegans* is a microscopic nematode usually found in compost and rotting vegetation (Felix et al, 2015). The species has a global distribution with genetically distinct strains isolated in different geographic regions (Sterken et al, 2015). This genetic variation is especially useful for studying the varying responses in sexual conflict due to a population's life history. Nematodes are ideal for conducting studies on aging and lifespan because they are easy to maintain in large populations and have short lifespans of around three to four weeks. This allows for high-throughput lifespan studies.

Different species of *Caenorhabditis* display different types of mating systems, making them a valuable animal for studies on reproduction (Kiontke et al, 2011). In wild-type *C. elegans*, which reproduce largely through self-fertilization of the hermaphrodite, males occur at a rate of 0.2% of the population and arise due to meiotic nondisjunction events (Zarkower, 2006). Other species of *Caenorhabditis* are obligate male-female reproductive populations with approximately equal sex ratios. Therefore, populations can be dominated by hermaphrodites or have approximately equal numbers of males and females, but natural populations never have male-biased sex ratios.

### 1.2. SEXUAL CONFLICT AND LIFESPAN IN *C. ELEGANS*

Pseudo-female *C. elegans* have been used in previous studies to disentangle the effects of mating and resource utilization due to self-progeny production and to bypass a known effect of lifespan increase during hermaphrodite-selfing that is not present during outcrossing (Carvalho et al, 2012). Pseudo-female worms are created by a deletion of the *fog-2* gene (Clifford et al, 2000; Schedl and Kimble, 1988). Wild type hermaphrodite worms produce sperm during the fourth larval stage, and then irreversibly switch to producing oocytes once they reach adulthood (Zarkower, 2006). However, self-sperm production can be stopped by knocking out the gene *fog-2* in the spermatogenesis pathway, effectively creating pseudo-female worms. Sperm production

in *fog-2* males is unaffected. Because *fog-2* worms reproduce solely through sexual reproduction, this deletion results in a population sex ratio of approximately equal males and females, with every oocyte requiring fertilization from the sperm of a male worm.

Studies of aging and longevity follow two main approaches: observing aging and senescence through a mechanistic lens or through the lens of the life-history of an organism (Caswell-Chen et al, 2005). The mechanisms of lifespan decrease in both female and pseudo-female *C. elegans* are caused by post-mating pathways associated with pheromones, seminal fluid and sperm, and germline-mediated responses leading to somatic collapse (Gems and Riddle, 1996; Shi et al, 2014). While these mechanistic approaches have provided important insights into the functional biology of aging and sexual conflict, a life-history approach holds the potential to reveal additional variation in sexual conflict phenotypes (Caswell-Chen et al, 2005). Such an approach is equally necessary to complement mechanistic studies, and together they provide a powerful tool for understanding the ecological and mechanistic contexts of aging and sexual conflict.

A life history approach requires biologically relevant mating conditions considering mating both in a group context and at natural mating ratios. Previous work in *C. elegans* has focused on mating pseudo-females in individual mating assays with strongly male-biased sex ratios to ensure that mating occurs. However, this setup does not reflect natural population ratios of one male for every one pseudo-female. These male-biased mating scenarios have not been observed in natural mating conditions and potentially introduce re-mating rates not seen in natural populations.

Confounding factors such as temperature and starvation-induced mating variant genotypes are also present in previous work, making it difficult to isolate decreased lifespan due to mating as a sexual conflict phenotype. Additionally, these studies used the standard laboratory strain N2, which is known to have several laboratory-derived alleles with a broad range of phenotypic effects, including behavioral changes (Sterken et al, 2015). These confounding factors bring into question whether the “mating-induced demise” response is unique to N2 in individual mating assays, or whether this response can be replicated in wild isolates of *C. elegans* as well.

I conducted a series of individual and group matings in one *fog-2* natural isolate and one *fog-2* lab isolate of *C. elegans* to investigate whether mating-induced lifespan decrease is impacted by mating ratios and population setting.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. *C. ELEGANS* STRAINS AND MAINTENANCE

I used two pseudo-female strains of *C. elegans*: JK574 (*fog-2(q71)* V), the “canonical strain” derived from N2, referred to as N2*fog-2* in this paper, and PX632 ( $P_{pie-1::TIR-1::mRuby}$ , I:2851009]; *spe-44(fx110[spe-44::degron])* IV; *fog-2(fx111)* V), which is derived from the wild isolate JU2526 and is genetically distinct from N2, referred to as wild*fog-2*. Worms were maintained on 60mm petri NGM plates at 20°C seeded with 200 µL OP50-1 *Escherichia coli* (Brenner, 1974).

## 2.2. LIFESPAN ASSAY DESIGN

Lifespans of nematodes were measured using the *C. elegans* Automated Lifespan Machine (ALM), an automated system comprising office scanners and imaging software, following Stroustrup *et al.* (2013).

## 2.3. GROUP MATINGS

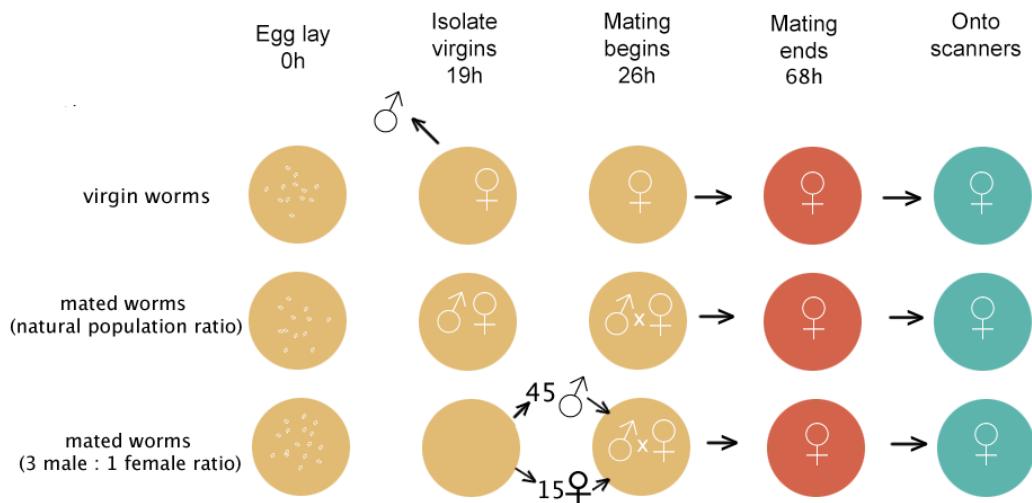
Nematode cohorts were created following the Caenorhabditis Intervention and Testing Program protocol (unpublished, C. Sedore pers comm.).

I created three cohorts to be mated at different sex ratios: one of only virgin pseudo-females, one of pseudo-females mated at a natural population sex ratio, and one of pseudo-females mated at a ratio of three males to one pseudo-female (Figure 1). All nematodes began in age-synchronized cohorts, achieved by letting parent day-two adult pseudo-females lay eggs on plates for 2 hours before removing parent pseudo-females. Therefore, all nematodes in these cohorts are aged within 2 hours of each other. At 19-20 hours post egg-lay, nematodes have hatched and are larval, but are not yet reproductively mature adults. At this stage it is possible to differentiate the sexes based on distinctive sex characteristics. At this time, pseudo-females in the pre-adult virgin cohort were isolated from males on separate plates to ensure they never mated. The nematodes in the cohort of male-skewed mating ratios were transferred to plates with fifteen females for every forty-five males, a 3:1 male-skewed sex ratio. The nematodes in the cohort destined to mate in natural population ratios were left on the plates in the same ratios in which they were laid. For both natural and male-skewed ratio cohorts, mating began after nematodes became reproductively mature at 26-28 hours. Mating was allowed for 42 hours, then males were removed (Figure 1).

Next, all pseudo-females were moved to plates with 51 mM 5-fluoro-2'-deoxyuridine (FUDR) to arrest the germline and assure progeny were inviable. Note the virgin cohort did not produce progeny but was also placed on FUDR as a control. Pseudo-females were transferred again to fresh FUDR plates 24 hours later to ensure no viable progeny remained.

On day five of adulthood, pseudo-females were transferred to scanner plates at densities of approximately 60 worms per plate and placed on the ALM. Images of each plate were taken every hour. Data collection on worm lifespans using the ALM lasted for 25 days, after which the images were compiled. Software identified when a worm had died and noted this time (Stroustrup *et al.*, 2013). Lifespans were calculated using the day of the egg lay as day 0. The experimental design from egg lay to the ALM was the same for all treatments (Figure 1).

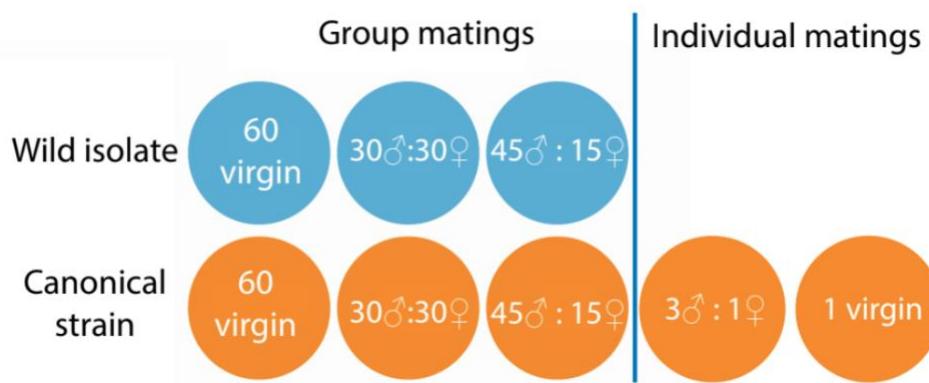
This process was repeated for both *N2fog-2* and for *wildfog-2* nematodes.



**Figure 1:** Schematic of experimental design for population mating from egg lay to placement on the *C. elegans* Lifespan Machine. Circles represent petri plates. Yellow plates, NGM. Red plates, NGM + FUDR. Blue plates, NGM + FUDR on scanners.

## 2.4. INDIVIDUAL MATINGS

Previous work used mating scenarios of one individual female mated to three males in the canonical strain N2, which also had a *fog-2* mutation (Shi et al, 2014). I mated nematodes on individual plates of one female and three males to verify a lifespan decrease in my experimental population of N2*fog-2* (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Group and individual matings in different ratios of wild isolate (blue) and canonical strain (orange) populations. Treatments of each mating ratio, 1 female to 1 male or 1 female to 3 males, and virgin worms are performed in the canonical strain and wild isolate.

## 2.5. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

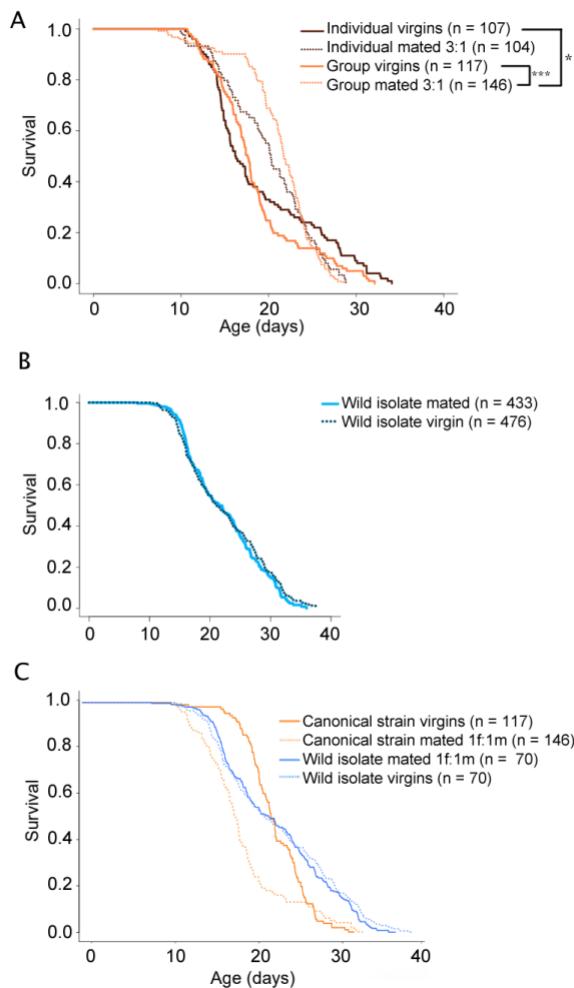
Lifespan data were analyzed using a linear mixed model in *lme4* (Bates et al, 2015) and a mixed effects Cox Proportional Hazards model in *coxme* (Therneau, 2018) in the R Statistical Package (R Core Team, 2013).

### 3. RESULTS

In *N2fog-2*, pseudo-females mated in groups of male-skewed ratios had significantly longer lifespans than virgin pseudo-females mated in both group ( $p < 0.001$ ) and individual ( $p < 0.05$ ) assays (Figure 3A). The shape of the lifespan curves of *N2fog-2*

There were no significant differences between mated and virgin worms in the *wildfog-2* strain, even at skewed mating ratios ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Figure 3B).

Between strains, lifespans of *N2fog-2* virgins were significantly shorter than *wildfog-2* mated at a one-to-one sex ratio ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Figure 3C). Virgin worms of each strain had significantly different lifespans ( $p < 0.01$ ). The shape of lifespan curves of *N2fog-2* and *wildfog-2* strains appeared different, but the power of this study was insufficient to define this difference.



**Figure 3:** Lifespans of the treatments. A. *N2fog-2* analysis. Mated (3:1) and virgin worm lifespans are significantly different in both group ( $p < 0.001$ ) and individual ( $p < 0.05$ ) analyses. Whether the worm was in the individual or group

cohort had no significant effect on lifespan. B. Wildfog-2 analyses. Mated (1:1) and virgin worms do not differ significantly in lifespan. Data from three pooled replicates. C. Lifespans of N2fog-2 (“canonical strain”) and wildfog-2 (“wild isolate”) worms in group mating treatments.

To investigate whether the *fog-2* mutation itself led to changes in lifespan, I compared lifespans of hermaphroditic ancestors. Wildfog-2 lives are shorter than their hermaphrodite ancestor ( $p < 0.05$ ) (C. Sedore pers. comm.). The N2 ancestral hermaphrodite has a median lifespan range of 15 to 17 days (Riddle and Gems, 2000), compared to 17 days (virgin) and 22 days (mated) of the N2fog-2 strain.

#### 4. Discussion

I compared lifespans of mated and virgin worms in two different strains of *C. elegans* using an Automated Lifespan Machine (Stroustrup et al, 2013). I found no significant differences between mated and virgin worms in a wild isolate-derived strain, even at male-skewed mating ratios. In a canonically derived strain, however, virgin worms had significantly shorter lifespans than worms mated at a ratio of three males to one female, contrary to previous work.

The responses to mating stress differed in each strain. This suggests the degree of lifespan decrease is strain-dependent and highlights the importance of using strains outside of the N2 reference strain. The N2 strain is known to have many laboratory adaptations (Sterken et al, 2015), and it is possible that the response of N2 is not reflective of responses of *C. elegans* strains drawn directly from nature. Previous studies in N2 have shown decreases in lifespan after mating in both hermaphrodite and pseudo-female *C. elegans*, while this study showed the opposite effect of increased lifespan relative to virgin pseudo-females.

One interpretation of this effect is simply that life history may dictate responses to mating stress. The previous study that investigated *fog-2* lifespans used a different point mutation to create the null phenotype (Shi et al, 2014). This could demonstrate pleiotropy of a single mutation, such that each point mutation has multiple unique phenotypic effects, resulting in phenotypic changes beyond a spermless phenotype. These differences in lifespan between strains are in agreement with the differences observed between not only various wild isolate strains and N2 strains, but notably within N2 strains from a common ancestor themselves when maintained in different laboratories (Riddle and Gems, 2000).

Another plausible explanation of this difference is the main deviation in methodology, as the use of the ALM could have generated a slightly different response than that previously observed. There are numerous differences between the ALM and manual assays, but two possibilities stand out. First, it is possible previous studies found mated worms have decreased lifespans due to the combined stresses of mating and daily picking in manual assays that is not present when using the ALM. This would explain a lack of decrease in mated worm lifespans. Second, there may be population effects of pheromone signaling present on the ALM that are not present when worms are isolated on plates. *C. elegans* uses pheromone signaling for communicating about food availability, population density, and sexual reproduction; this signaling is known to induce physiological, behavioral, and lifespan changes (Shi et al, 2017). The effects of an increased

concentration in pheromone signaling may alter lifespan as mated worms and virgin worms respond to pheromones differently (Borne et al, 2017). A study investigating the effects of mating when living as a population on the ALM, which has an enclosed and dynamic environment of changing oxygen levels and bacteria availability, compared to the relatively static environment of transferring worms to fresh plates, would give insight into this difference.

#### 4.1. AGING AND THE “FEMALE-LIKE” STATE

Previous studies have shown that changes in gene expression associated with the spermless hermaphrodite, termed the “female-like” state, are also associated with aging and physiological changes (Angeles-Albores et al, 2017). It is possible that a spermless state for pseudo-females induces a fast-aging phenotype unique to the “female-like” state observed in this study. However, while the female-like state may explain *fog-2* associations with aging phenotypes, this explanation fails to reconcile the difference between fast and slow aging in this and previous studies (Shi et al, 2014).

Previous experimental evolution using the same strain of N2*fog-2* (JK574) to generate high-conflict male-female mating systems showed a trend of increased sexual conflict over evolutionary time (Palopoli et al, 2015). N2*fog-2* worms may not be evolutionarily adapted to both mating in a male-female population and the self-spermless state induced by a *fog-2* mutation. This would create a difference between mated and virgin treatments.

I surveyed only a single point in evolutionary time, giving a static window into the sexual conflict phenotypes present in these two populations of *fog-2* worms. It is likely that as evolutionary time progresses from onset of the *fog-2* mutation, *C. elegans* will show differential responses to this artificially imposed mating system. Sexual conflict phenotypes depend largely on the type of mating system, so the change from self-fertilization to outcrossing carries with it the potential for new and distinct sexual conflict phenotypes to emerge.

### 5. CONCLUSIONS

To further investigate the potential for evolutionary adaptation, I would follow an experimental evolution paradigm with N2*fog-2* pseudo-females evolved in a sperm-limited state and compare lifespan responses to mating after several generations.

Explorations in a wider variety of strains of *C. elegans* will shed light on the potentially varied effects of life history on post-mating longevity. Understanding the type of traits under sexual conflict and the ensuing fitness decrease across strains and mating systems will provide important information on mating dynamics in this genus. An increased understanding of strain-dependent mating effects may provide an answer to irreconcilable differences in results previously described in the literature (Riddle and Gems, 1996; Voorhies, 1992). Studies like this and the ones proposed are important for our understanding of how intertwined sexual conflict, mating behavior, and longevity are in *Caenorhabditis* nematodes.

Unique life histories can cause differential sexual conflict phenotypes. The variation present

among sexual conflict phenotypes even within the same species and mating system cannot be taken for granted. Broadly speaking, the potential for variation must be taken into account when investigating sexual conflict phenotypes both in the lab and in the field, and caution must be taken when extrapolating sexual conflict phenotypes to a species as a whole.

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# Miłosz the Visionary: His American experience in *Visions from San Francisco Bay*

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## ABSTRACT

Nobel Prize winner Czesław Miłosz is one of the most influential poets, prose writers, philosophers, and diplomats, his works spanning two centuries and multiple continents. Born in 1911, in what is now modern-day Lithuania, Miłosz spent most of his professional life in Europe including Poland and France. In 1960, fleeing the power of the communist regime, he found political asylum in California, teaching in the Slavic languages department at the University of California Berkeley. The following paper examines Czesław Miłosz's perspective on the radical West culture of the 1960s and '70s in his book *Visions from San Francisco Bay*. This work brings attention to previously unnoticed English mistranslations. I propose a new translation to reflect Miłosz's original meaning, which changes the way English readers interpret his American experience as well as his book *Visions from San Francisco Bay*. Specifically, I consider two sets of Miłosz's pros and cons which he crafted to describe the essence of his American experience, and one set of pros and cons I crafted from his writing to frame his experience. These juxtaposing pros and cons ultimately led him to the conclusion of the importance of richly interpreting one's reality, especially in a time of change and uncertainty. By way of comparative literary analysis of Miłosz's *Visions* and selected poems, we change the way we traditionally think of the '60s and '70s, realizing that instead of being a time of explosive interpretive energy, this was a time when Americans fell away from rich interpretation of their metaphysical realities.

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“... I choose to be an incorporeal onlooker, outside the system, in front of a screen on which the planet revolves. In doing, I lose the possibility of dividing things into “above” and “below.” Drawing a vertical line above me, I will not reach the boundary where the world ends and heaven’s spheres begin to circle the throne of God. Neither will any plumb line allow me to bore deeply enough through the geological strata to come upon the caverns of hell. A seething infinity surrounds me on every side and eludes the powers of my mind.” — Czesław Miłosz, “Religion and Space” (*Visions from San Francisco Bay* 30)

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Czesław Miłosz, the Polish poet, proseist, philosopher, and Nobel Prize winner, was born before the time of automobiles and wrote his last lines in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His works cover a wide variety of times and places and examine the evolution of ideas and cultures. His American experience placed him in the heart of the western radical atmosphere. Teaching at UC Berkley during the '60s and '70s shaped his American experience as well as his analysis of the evolving American culture. Analyzing selected essays from his book *Visions from San Francisco Bay*, a memoir with autobiographical reflections, in tandem with selected poems written in the '60s and '70s, gives insight into his unique perspective on western US culture.

In his book *Visions from San Francisco Bay*, Miłosz makes the statement that his American experience could be boiled down to three sets of pros and cons: “for the so called average man, against the arrogance of intellectuals; for the Biblical tradition, against the search for individual or collective nirvana; for science and technology, against the dreams of primeval innocence” (218). Throughout his book and poetry written during the '60s and '70s, Miłosz makes, what may seem at first glance, countless binary comparisons and blunt judgments of American social conditions. His sets of pros and cons are one such example. However, upon deeper reflection and analysis, Miłosz’s binary comparisons instead become carefully crafted juxtapositions, written in order to provide a mental contrast between concepts and states of being and designed to engage and encourage the reader to richly interpret their own American experience. Olga Scherer, in her essay “To Ulro Through San Francisco Bay,” tactfully notices that Miłosz avoids binary and polarizing terms, such as communism/capitalism, left-wing/right-wing, myth/reality, and progressive/regressive, to allow space for the reader’s own conclusions (684). In analyzing *Visions from San Francisco Bay*, and selected poems, I will discover that his thoughts and juxtapositions both encourage greater richness of interpretation and give insight into his own deeply reflective American experience that allowed him and others to form their metaphysical world views.

The very title *Visions from San Francisco Bay* presents Miłosz’s first juxtaposition. The words “visions” and “visionary” evoke the romantic concept associated with the ethos of the counterculture that Miłosz observed from Grizzly Peak, his American home and mountain, where his visions were inspired. A visionary is defined as one who “thinks about or plans the future with imagination or wisdom” (Oxford English Dictionary). In crafting juxtaposing pros and cons, Miłosz plays the role of a participatory advocate for encouraging the interpretation and goodness of mankind, as the only traditional dichotomy he proudly retains is “the battle of good versus evil,” a concept central to understanding his visions. Yet, in the above quote from the chapter “Religion and Space,” he makes it clear that his role is that of an onlooker situated outside of the system. It was Miłosz’s deeply held belief that poets and writers must distance themselves from the reality they capture. In his critique of *Visions*, entitled “Rodzinna America” (“Kindred America”), literary critic Dariusz Pawelec expresses similar sentiments, claiming that Miłosz takes a unique stand in writing his visions by never explicitly stating himself as the subject of his writing. This allows him to maintain distance and humility, thereby shifting the focus to the subject of America in an objective manner. Therefore, in reflecting on Miłosz’s writing style, it is important to recognize that his role in observing American life, and in composing these juxtapositions, is involved yet withdrawn—a complex engagement with culture.

Most importantly, in the above quote from “Religion and Space,” Miłosz disclaims that in composing these juxtapositions, his role as a visionary who is both involved in and removed from the system is not to divide things to “above” and “below.” That is, he does not tell us what is good and evil. By pairing dissimilar concepts like “Biblical tradition” and “collective nirvana,” Miłosz creates tensions to invite the reader to draw their *own* conclusions about what is good and what is evil in the aims of understanding their own metaphysical reality. The “seething infinity” that surrounds him on every side is space for the reader to make their own conclusions based on Miłosz’s poetic prose.

## FOR RICHNESS, AGAINST POVERTY OF INTERPRETATION

Excerpt from “On Censorship”

It would be naïve to forget the great poverty of current information and the various edits made by a censorship which works behind the scenes, but often in the open as well. That, however, is not a poverty of “facts:” the more shocking they are the more marketable. And so the imagination must accommodate pain, debasement, violence, poverty, the absurdity of beliefs and morals the whole world over, nothing is placated, nothing tamed by thought, which, after all, does cure us of our anxiety a little if, asking “Why,” we receive an answer beginning “Because.” The world beats on us like unreason incarnate, like the creation of some mad gigantic brain. Can one accept that entire burden and agree that what is simply is, and that’s that? One can, but only by ruminating in a state of brutish contemplation like a cow. If we are capable of compassion and at the same time are powerless, then we live in a state of desperate exasperation. Here surely is one of the causes of that ferocity which I have elsewhere called neo-Manichean. (*Visions* 113)

I noticed, by reading the original text in Polish, that the above underlined sections were mistranslated by English interpreters and should read the following way:

“It would be naïve to forget the great poverty of current information and the various edits made by a censorship which works behind the scenes, but often in the open as well. **That, however, is a poverty of interpretation, not a poverty of facts; the more shocking they are the more marketable.** And so the imagination must accommodate pain, debasement, violence, poverty, the absurdity of beliefs and morals the whole world over, nothing is placated, **but** tamed by thought, which, after all, does cure us of our anxiety a little if, asking “Why,” we receive an answer beginning “Because.” The world beats on us like unreason incarnate, like the creation of some mad gigantic brain. Can one accept that entire burden and agree that what is simply is, and that’s that? One can, but only by ruminating in a state of brutish contemplation like a cow. If we are capable of compassion and at the same time are powerless, then we live in a state of desperate exasperation. Here surely is one of the causes of that ferocity which I have elsewhere called neo-Manichean.” (*Visions* 113)

In introduction to Czesław Miłosz's American experience, it is insightful to consider his views on censorship to better understand the rest of his insights and juxtapositions. In the above passage, Miłosz shockingly points out that "a censorship" is occurring in the "Land of the Free." To understand this passage, it is of benefit to consider his personal experience with censorship. In his early years, Miłosz lived and wrote in communist Poland, a country that would often censor important facts, such as the details surrounding the Second World War atrocities like in the Katyń forest- where Soviets executed masses of Polish officers and intelligentsia- or any form of speech challenging the supremacy of the communist party and its ideology. Miłosz was deeply involved in Nazi resistance during the regime's occupation of Poland. He worked in the Polish diplomatic service, even serving in the Polish embassy in New York City, after which he became first secretary for cultural affairs in Paris where he sought political asylum in 1951. In 1960, with all of these experiences behind him, he immigrated to the United States ("Czesław Miłosz"). With this perspective in mind, in his essay "On Censorship," Miłosz points out that censorship of facts occurred throughout many cultures. For example, the European colonists censored the truth of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade route, and the Russians censored facts pertaining to the Siberian penal colonies. Thus, a censorship of *facts*, he concludes, occurred throughout history up until most recent times in America and abroad.

The quoted excerpt is a conclusion of Miłosz's reflection on freedom of speech as observed in America, his new homeland. He states in the beginning of the above passage, that censorship of facts is no longer a problem in modern society. Not only in Miłosz's time, but also today, all of the most gruesome facts are presented in the media. Some examples Miłosz encountered in the 1960s included the Buddhist self-immolation in protest to the Vietnam War and the murder of a Vietcong prisoner of war by the chief of the Saigon police. He even points out how American media seeks out these gruesome facts in order to make revenue; shock factor equates to money. This, he asserts, is harmful, because the public becomes desensitized to ugliness, cruelty, suffering and evil. With the freedom to present the horrific facts of this world, we are compelled to accommodate their brutal and unfortunate reality in a very unproductive way. After all, at least we are receiving truthful facts and records. Miłosz postulates that the problem lies in the fact that in America, there is a "poverty" of *interpretations*, not facts, an crucial detail missing from the English translation. One can restate Miłosz's original line referring to a "poverty of interpretation" as a censorship of interpretation because, in order to develop a state of poverty of interpretation, the interpretations must die at some point in the human thinking process. Originally absent from the English translation of *Visions*, this new translation including the poverty of interpretations changes the frame of his American experience and subsequent lessons for readers.

Although not explicitly stated as a "pro and con," the contrast of poverty of interpretation versus poverty of facts is arguably Miłosz's most important juxtaposition. Once one receives the unfortunate facts of this world, Miłosz argues, even if one wanted to use compassion as a motivating force for change, one is unable to interpret them as the imagination constrains the mind. This suggests that censorship of interpretations is more dangerous than the mere censorship of facts. The juxtaposition between facts and interpretations is essential to understand his main argument that Americans are failing to interpret their own reality. Without richness of

interpretation, we cannot change reality or find ways to alleviate its atrocities: we can only “ruminate in a state of brutish contemplation like a cow.” This description of our helplessness demonstrates that censoring our own interpretations reduces us to the state of an animal. We are prevented from voicing our opinions and exercising our values, the very essence of what makes us human. As a result of this censorship, one cannot interpret the painful facts of the turbulent ‘60s, including wars, protests, and social movements, to help steer the public opinion. We are helpless, and, as Miłosz states, “live in a state of desperate exasperation.” In this sense, the self-imposed censorship of interpretations becomes the most dangerous form of censorship yet.

Although not directly addressed by Miłosz, it is important to hypothesize about the mechanism by which this censorship occurs. It seems that registering brutal facts directly leads to a paucity of interpretation. In other words, the registration of shocking facts and unfortunate realities shuts down imagination in the human mind, suggesting that this is ultimately a form of self-inflicted censorship. This is apparent in one of Miłosz’s anecdotes originally expressed in a letter sent during his time at Berkeley to the Polish writer and political activist Jerzy Giedroyc. Miłosz wrote of a time he entered campus with a gas mask in hopes of protecting himself from the dense California smog. To his great horror and surprise, no one laughed, looked, or said a single word in reaction to his appearance, as if passing by an everyday occurrence. In his letter, Miłosz compares this lack of interpretation to the state of brutish contemplation of a cow as it chews cud (Franašek 876). This is another illusion to the state of helplessness described in his chapter “On Censorship” as a “state of brutish contemplation like a cow.” Again, this story suggests that registering strange facts and uncomfortable realities may be causally related to a paucity of interpretation. This seems strangely out of line with the explosive interpretive culture of the ‘60s. One may argue that the student radicals, black revolutionaries, and social activists all used interpretation of the American political reality as a vehicle for social change. However, Miłosz believed that many of these student activist groups were but symptoms of young people’s inability to interpret their own reality leading to great levels of social and spiritual distress. Instead, they were merely following political “fashions.”

The fact that interpretations are self-censored and that we are thus powerless over our destiny shows that Americans have both freedom of facts and speech, without freedom of interpretation. Miłosz came to America fleeing the persecution of communist censorship, looking for a new world in which he had the freedom to express not only hard facts, but also interpretations. Facts and ideas without internalization by interpretation contribute to a decline in social morality. Miłosz alerts the reader to the silent self-inflicted danger of the poverty of interpretations, as without interpretation, there is no meaning, insight, or honest enthusiasm towards the common good. His open-ended reflections in *Visions* are predicated on this concept. Polish author Olga Scherer, in her essay “To Ulro through San Francisco Bay,” states that “Miłosz recognizes their [cultural products of 20<sup>th</sup> century America] non-instinctive, purely artificial character but makes such “visions” serve as a springboard for pondering the function of instinct immanent in individual striving, especially in everything that touches upon religious faith” (682). Not only is richness of interpretation Miłosz’s argument throughout *Visions*, but also the importance of interpretation and creative inquiry is built into the very style of his writing. His juxtapositions are not limiting

human interpretation but rather serve as a leaping-off point to new reflections, personal moral judgements, and open-minded thoughts—his goal to bring people closer to their own inner truth and metaphysical reality.

## “FOR BIBLICAL TRADITION, AGAINST THE SEARCH FOR INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE NIRVANA”

Miłosz describes the movements of the 1960s in the following way: “The many thousands of meetings, sit-ins, anti-war marches, attract both those restoring bohemia on a mass scale and those who are activists and organizers by temperament” (*Visions* 127). In his review of the political situation in Berkeley and the rest of America, Miłosz emphasizes two concepts: the resurgence of the bohemia as a fashion and the participation in political activism as a result of temperament or emotion. I will explore the “fashionable bohemia” or counterculture, as an example of creating collective nirvana and as a juxtaposition to Biblical tradition as expressed in Miłosz’s pro and con “for Biblical Tradition, against the search for individual or collective nirvana (*Visions* 218).” In his essay “The Formless and the New,” Miłosz describes this ever-popular counterculture fashion as the rise of a new bohemia that originally developed in Europe: “Could I be witnessing a rebirth of *fin de siècle* bohemia? Everything, the dress, the disgust for the average man, the philosophical reveries, would indicate that I am” (*Visions* 125). He concludes that this rebirth of the European bohemia is a reflexive reaction to the ever-growing machine which is America’s development and onset of automation; it is a symptom of Americans lacking the capabilities to metabolize their quickly industrializing and developing environment.

Once Miłosz establishes the historical significance of the counterculture, he seeks to explore the concept of bohemian counterculture as a fashion. He states in the beginning lines of “The Formless and the New,” “If I did not live here, where fashions, both intellectual and otherwise originate and then spread across the whole of America, I would be probably asking myself somewhat different questions” (*Visions* 122). This sentence makes an initial bold claim that he considers many of the political movements, including the counterculture, to be nothing other than political and intellectual fashions. Miłosz continues:

Different varieties of subcultures appear and disappear as shown by the so-called Existentialists who congregated in Parisian caves right after the Second World War. In most striking forms, the movement I am discussing is just such a transitory subculture, or rather it is one that melts into the general flow of fashion. It is important only in that it is one of the symptoms of America’s split into two mutually hostile parts. (*Visions* 124)

Miłosz characterizes the counterculture movement as a fashion, a mere transitory symptom of America’s political climate. With this, the question must be posed: does the fact that this political movement is a “fashion” support or refute the idea that the ‘60s fostered explosively interpretive energies? According to Miłosz’s perspective, it would refute this commonly held belief. By characterizing the movements of the ‘60s as fashions, he implies that by joining these fashions, young people are thoughtlessly jumping onto the social bandwagon instead of interpreting and coming to terms with their reality. He notes that even the quality of this new bohemia has

dramatically changed since its original birth in Europe in that it is less genuine and more fashionable. It is, rather, a historical joke. A rebellion against the growing machine, which is industrialized America, instead of an honest interest in the original bohemian philosophy of love, frugality, and voluntary poverty. This further suggests that these movements did not arise from the interpretive culture of the '60s but from a reactionary attitude of many young Americans. This is the first sense in which Miłosz's American experience pitted him against the "collective nirvana," the collective fashions of the '60s.

In the above block quotation, Miłosz plays an important role as a visionary. He predicts that America will split into two mutually hostile parts. Journalist, publicist, and literary critic Renata Górczyńska, in her essay "*Widzenia Nad Zatoką San Francisco Po Trzydziestu Latach*" ("Visions from San Francisco Bay Thirty Years Later"), posits that Miłosz inaccurately predicted the bifurcation of American culture into mass culture and counterculture. In Górczyńska's assessment, although many flower children and hippies are alive today, they have quietly assimilated into society, and most radical groups have retreated from terrorism (140). One could agree with her assessment. Even though political demonstrations in times of unrest still occur, and some bohemian fashions are still present today, neither have occurred on the mass scale observed during the '60s and '70s. In this instance, Miłosz did not predict the future with foresight, allowing the audience who reads his work years later to understand that he was not an infallible "visionary." He was sharing his visions, his thoughts, as he experienced life in America, as a human. To err is human. However, his assessment of the bohemia as a fashion is insightful, as today the cultural bohemia has disintegrated, suggesting that it was indeed transitory.

Once Miłosz establishes the fact that the bohemian counterculture was nothing other than a fashion, he then characterizes it as a collective movement that seeks to create a condition of nirvana: a state of future innocence. He writes,

...there also developed an enormous underground market for "consciousness-expanding" substances; the church and synagogue were equated with the mental inertia of the older generation, and the alcohol culture was seen as the symbol of its customs; therefore, the renunciation of alcohol and its replacement by the marijuana culture had the distinct features of cementing a group, especially since absurd legislation caused the herd to acquire its prophets and martyrs. (Miłosz, *Visions* 123)

Miłosz points out that the bohemians had an overwhelming desire to expand their minds with the use of drugs. In this way, drug culture itself creates a collective nirvana. Importantly, he introduces the juxtaposition of nirvana to Biblical tradition. He notices that the bohemians replace Biblical tradition with their own prophets and martyrs (leaders and role models) and replace the Biblical mental inertia represented in the church and synagogue with their drug induced "expanded consciousness." Instead of expanding their minds by spiritual reflection and interpretation, they do so with drugs, suggesting that they are spiritually lost. Even the use of the word "herd," Miłosz's consecutive illusion to cows, implies that the bohemians are a self-directed group who follow each other blindly in trying to navigate their American reality. Like a group of

trailing cattle, they lack reference to a moral compass and the agency to practice independent reflection and deeper interpretation.

Miłosz believes the bohemians sought this new nirvana, or ideal state, as a coping mechanism to create a futuristic mental and spiritual paradise for themselves. He observed among bohemians a...

...struggle between the desire to believe and the inability to, as when you have almost caught a butterfly and ended up with a handful of air. I do not understand why we have allowed ourselves to be cowed by fashion and have relinquished important fundamental inquiries so that only churchmen, intimidated and constrained by their defenses, will at times admit to their religious troubles. (*Visions* 33)

His review of the counterculture as that of a transitory fashion reveals the state of religious trouble the bohemians developed by jumping onto the social and political bandwagon. In the process, they lost the fundamental right of inquiry. In other words, they lost the fundamental right of interpreting their reality and spirituality, leading them to hopelessly create future nirvanas for themselves with the use of conscious-expanding drugs. Notice that Miłosz is not “for Biblical tradition” simply because he is a traditionalist or unwilling to adopt a progressive mindset. Instead, by providing the mental contrast between the importance of Biblical tradition and the emerging bohemia, Miłosz encourages readers to interpret and inquire in an effort to reform their own metaphysical reality. Even though it may prove difficult, he wants us to use our imagination and the power of our thoughts, not drugs and short-lived intellectual fashions, to transform our minds.

The importance of religion in understanding one’s place within the universe is also prevalent throughout Miłosz’s poetry written during his time at Berkeley. Miłosz wrote a poem peppered with similar juxtapositions entitled “Thesis and Counter-Thesis” (*New and Collected Poems* 236).

—Love of God is love of self.

The stars and the seas are gilled by precious *I*

Sweet as a pillow and a sucked thumb.

—It would be most unflattering for adorning men

If the grasshopper chirping in the warm grass

Could glorify that attribute called *Being*

In a general manner, without referring to its own persona

Comparing the human mind to that of a grasshopper, Miłosz creates another juxtaposition, just as he did with the cow in a brutish state of contemplation in his letter to Giedroyc and in his

essay “On Censorship.” This is another example of highlighting the superior mental capacities of humans over animals in the sense that humans have an innate ability to acknowledge and interpret their reality and existence, which is tied hand in hand with acknowledging their spirituality; if one loves oneself, one loves God. The juxtaposition between the mindless fashions of the counterculture and careful spiritual reflection makes it evident how we fall short of interpreting the facts and analyzing the state of our mental and spiritual existence. This ends in great human suffering as represented in the turbulent environment of the ‘60s and ‘70s. Professor of Romantic Polish Literature Elżbieta Kiślak, in her essay “Visions from San Francisco Bay,” also recognizes the importance of Miłosz’s use of religious themes as a way of restoring man back to a position of sacral order and stability during this troubled time in American history. She agrees that Miłosz stresses the need for religion as a solution to the disintegration of religious imagination in America. In the process of doing so, it is important to note that Miłosz does not impose his Christian faith as the universal faith, but instead he invites the reader to step into a spiritual mindset, encouraging them to interpret and gain insight into their own perception of the world.

## “FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AGAINST THE DREAMS OF PRIMEVAL INNOCENCE”

In the succeeding pro and con, Miłosz again contrasts two dissimilar notions: science and technology versus primeval innocence. First, it is important to establish what is meant by “primeval innocence.” In his essay “Agony of the West,” Miłosz makes the following statement:

...almost from its beginning, almost at its foundation, America dreamed of Arcadia, of harmonious life in concord with nature, of the self-sufficient individual, happy and honest only when he takes just as much as he needs from nature with his ax and rifle, shunning society and the always-corrupt state. Whitman too, glorified this Adam. (*Visions* 121)

Since its European colonization, America was founded as a dwelling for those looking retrospectively to a time of perfection similar to the time before the fall of man in paradise. As an observer, Miłosz develops a strong sense that Americans longed to regress in time to the state of ideal happiness that existed in the times of the perfect man, Adam. In this moment, it is pivotal to acknowledge the evolving nature of Miłosz’s juxtapositions. Although his sets of pros and cons seem to be clearly delineated and separate from one another, all of a sudden, Biblical tradition re-enters the stage and interacts with dreams of primeval innocence, which are related to both nirvana *and* science and technology. Miłosz’s style creates a unique abstraction by interconnecting these concepts on the most fundamental metaphysical level. Here, Miłosz points out two popular lines of thinking observed in American society during the ‘60s and ‘70s: individuals either looked to create a *future* state of perfection and happiness (nirvana) or to *re-create* a state of perfection before the fall of man (primeval innocence). Along these lines, Miłosz repeatedly invokes the bohemia to illustrate the juxtaposition between science and technology and the dream of primeval innocence. As he writes in “The Formless and the New,”

...for the average American citizen, at this current level, freedom from all work would threaten madness; even assuming that Adam's burden could be lifted and he could return to paradise, all the hours he had spent running around to make a living could not be filled by sex, fishing, and stamp collecting. This new movement could thus seem to be a sign of man's instinctive ability to adapt to constantly changing circumstances; the philosophical and poetic bohemians always knew how to find multitude of interesting ways to spend their time, managing without the yoke, which, in their opinion, rightly burdens the stupid squares. (Miłosz, *Visions* 126)

By devising a plethora of ways of spending time other than participating in the burgeoning American machine, the counterculture movement of the '60s and '70s created a coping mechanism for those unwilling or unable to metabolize the reality of the rapidly industrializing American lifestyle. However, Miłosz posits, even if these modern burdens were lifted, and man returned to a state of perfection, man could not possibly make up for lost time, suggesting that these efforts to return to a state of primeval innocence are futile.

Of important detail is the sentiment that part of the longing to return to primeval innocence was a desire for "harmonious life in concord with nature" (Miłosz, *Visions* 121). Miłosz warns against becoming swept up in the consolation of nature in the following excerpt from his poem "Counsels" (*New and Collected Poems* 237):

And yet the Earth merits a bit, a tiny bit, of affection.

Note that I take too seriously consolations of nature,

and baroque ornaments, the moon, chubby clouds

(although it's beautiful when bird-cherries blossom on the banks of the Willa).

No, I would advise to keep further from Nature,

from persistent images of infinite space,

of infinite time, from snails poisoned

on a path in a garden, just like our armies.

There is so much death, and that is why affection

for pigtails, bright-colored skirts in the wind,

for paper boats no more durable than we are...

Miłosz numbered himself among lovers of nature, to the point that when writing on its subject, he writes "Nature" with a capital N, similarly to when writing on the subject of "God," capital G. However, in the context of looking to nature for consolation and spiritual comfort, as was popular

among those looking back to a time of primeval innocence, he points out that nature is full of death, infinite, unknown spaces, and shifty stakeouts represented in the poisoned snails. Looking to the ethereal and the primeval as a spiritual compass is a dangerous and slippery slope to destruction, as the former are fragile and uncertain. For the first time, Miłosz revalues the meaning of his beloved “Nature.” Although he admires its beauty from afar, he learns not to rely on it as his sole spiritual guide. In this way, he discovers a mistrust for nature’s consolation.

Miłosz juxtaposes dreams of primeval innocence with science and technology. This juxtaposition is unique because when discussing the topic of science and technology, Miłosz cannot avoid integrating the topics of nature and God again. The main argument in his essay “On the Effects of the Natural Sciences” is that God is in nature, and nature is in man; it is impossible to separate the three. Most importantly, he acknowledges that God’s majesty and handiwork can be seen in the smallest biological processes like germination, flowering, fructification, etc. Through discovering these biological processes with the help of science and technology, mankind also discovered that he is only part of a “set of given, ready-made elements” (Miłosz, *Visions* 21).

With the development of the Theory of Evolution, Miłosz argues, man discovered that he descended from the monkey. As a result, man developed an attitude of anger and offended dignity, realizing that he is not superior to nature, rather that he *is* nature (Miłosz, *Visions* 23). Because mankind discovered the paralyzing animal in himself, he moves away from seeking harmony with nature and is forced to seek “God’s Spirit,” but according to Miłosz, God is withdrawing from the lives of modern man and is losing His attributes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*Visions* 25). This, Miłosz suggests, causes the “Spirit” to be only human, which forces man to distinguish between good and evil *himself*. This may seem an unusual thing for such a deeply spiritual man like Miłosz to say, yet it is a humbling discovery in two ways. First, there is no need to dream of a time of primeval innocence, since man is nature himself. Second, and most importantly, the development of science and technology is valuable in the sense that, in discovering deeply held secrets about the origin of man; it forced people to interpret and discern their own realities, gain distance from religious tradition, and distinguish good from evil themselves. Faith and religion mean nothing without the ability to interpret. Mankind must experience a dramatic distancing from “the Spirit” to learn these skills. Miłosz’s juxtapositions encourage American society to revalue the truth and substance of the founding principles of American life: religion, nature, and now science. This yet again encourages the reader toward a greater interpretation of their reality.

## A CALL TO REINTERPRET AND REVALUATE

Miłosz’s juxtapositions in *Visions from San Francisco Bay* and selected poems, both encourage greater richness of interpretations and provide insight into his deeply reflective American experience that allowed him and others to form their metaphysical world views. Although his sets of pros and cons seemed to be specifically delineated in the beginning, by way of comparative analysis, it becomes clear that not only are they contrasting, but they are also deeply interconnected. For Miłosz, God, nature, science, and man are inseparable. This points to the conclusion that Miłosz richly interpreted his *own* American experience and revalued the concepts he held dear. He discussed in detail the authority of science and the significance of the Theory of

Evolution, and the dangers of putting all trust in nature versus the benefits of re-defining one's spirituality. In the process, Miłosz encourages his readers to do the same. In reading his reflections we change our thinking. As American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer once wrote, "Good writers are pleasing, very good writers make you feel and think, great writers make you change" (Schulz ix). By creating uniquely interconnected juxtapositions to encourage Americans and readers of *Visions from San Francisco Bay* towards greater and richer interpretation, Miłosz changes our understanding of the '60s and '70s. No longer do we understand this period as a time of diversely interpretive energies, but rather as a time in American history when Americans fell away from deeper reflection and interpretation of the fundamentals of human existence. This begs the question: in today's political and social climate, are we reinterpreting and revaluing the fundamental concepts that construct the foundations of our 21<sup>st</sup> century American society?

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# From Nimble NIMBY to Palpable PIMBY: Anti-Blackness in George Deukmejian's California Prison Boom

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## ABSTRACT

When California Governor George Deukmejian assumed office in 1983, the state had not added to its twelve prisons in eighteen years. During his two terms, Deukmejian oversaw the construction of eight prisons – a 67% increase in eight years. This paper attempts to locate the impetus of this prison boom by analyzing three siting struggles in southern California. It argues that past scholarship fails to account for the interaction between the state and sited communities. Specifically, state-centered research fails to account for the power of city officials while rural-centered research fails to account for systemic factors. Accordingly, this paper introduces the term Please in Your Back Yard (PIYBY) to examine where and why the state sited a prison and how they tried to convince the community to accept it. PIYBYism complements the existing Not in My Back Yardism (NIMBYism) and Please in My Back Yardism (PIMBYism). The paper analyzes the interaction between the three terms, revealing that ideological, not economic concerns, caused the California prison boom. The prison boom emerged from a tough-on-crime moment – one that was necessarily anti-black. The three siting battles support this conclusion because anti-blackness permeated every group's rhetoric. This paper, then, challenges the subject's prevailing scholarship: politics lies at the base of the prison system. Even if one accepts the economic link, the economy only mattered in that it exacerbated an ongoing political movement that attempted to reassert white supremacy.

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## INTRODUCTION

When California Governor George Deukmejian assumed office in 1983, the state had not added to its twelve existing prisons in eighteen years. In two terms, however, Deukmejian oversaw the construction of eight prisons – a 67% increase in eight years. This precipitous rise in prisons elicited a dilemma (Skelton 1990). As Larry Boodry, a contributor for Riverside County's *Desert Sun* observed, "Almost everybody wants prisons because almost everybody is against crime. But almost nobody wants prisons in their neighborhood" (Boodry 1990). This paper analyzes the conflict from the perspectives of both the state and the sited community. For the first, this paper examines Please in Your Back Yardism (PIYBYism) – where and why the state sited a prison and

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how they tried to convince the community to accept it. Communities reacted to the state's PIYBYism in two ways: with Not in My Back Yardism (NIMBYism) or Please in My Back Yardism (PIMBYism). The former refers to a hyper-localized movement that opposes a change — in this case, prison construction. These movements clashed with pro-prison PIMBY coalitions. In this way, the paper presents a discussion between state and community to discover the prison boom's driver and hurdles.

These discussions arise from Californian siting battles in L.A., Riverside, and Imperial Counties. In each, I chose a local publication (*The Los Angeles Times*, *The Desert Sun*, and *The Calexico Chronicle*, respectively) and analyzed PIYBY attitudes and the clash between NIMBY and PIMBY coalitions.<sup>1</sup> The method encourages a holistic analysis that considers both state and local



concerns and, crucially, the interaction between them.

**Figure 1:** Map of California counties in which major prison citing battles took place. Pins represent the locations of various publications.

The case studies demonstrate that anti-black ideology directly spurred both PIYBYism and NIMBYism. Anti-blackness, then, drove and hindered the prison boom as it simultaneously led the state to explode the prison population while also ensuring that no community wanted to house the prisoners. Although economic desperation primarily motivated PIMBYism, its supporters, too, adopted anti-blackness. Instead of viewing the prison as a place of black escapees, they viewed them as symbols of law and order. Even though the groups disagreed with one another, anti-blackness underpinned all three.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

Many scholars have explained the prison boom over the past decades. This paper qualifies and disputes their findings. The scholarship diverges into two main schools of thought: state demand to lift the state's economy or rural demand to lift the rural economy. These approaches are incomplete because they ignore the interaction between the community and the state; they focus on rhetoric, not discourse. Only by coupling PIYBYism and PIMBY-and-NIMBYism can scholars understand the causes and hurdles of the prison boom. This section will explain both rural-

centered and state-centered economic approaches, show how they fall short, and offer a better-suited ideological frame.

Scholar John Eason approaches the boom from a rural demand perspective. He suggests that prison construction does not reflect an increase in prison populations, pointing out that, although Illinois and Georgia have the same number of prisoners, Georgia has twenty-seven more prisons. Eason argues that rural demand, not overcrowding, caused the prison boom. He contends that state-centered explanations treat city officials as “conduits of surplus labor and land succumbing to neoliberal policies.” City officials, he argues, controlled the siting process, framing prison building as a function of local demand spurred by economic desperation. Multiracial communities, though, also demanded prisons, which Eason uses to challenge the narrative that only white communities demanded and received prisons to spur job growth. Hence, Eason separates prison construction and anti-blackness, arguing that prisons are not a legacy of environmental or structural racism; they reflect rural economic demand due to faltering economies (Eason 2017, 3, 7, 101–104). His rural-centered approach, however, downplays the systemic factors at play. As Dr. Anne Bonds suggests, “This literature rejects the structural racism and ... the racial capitalist system producing ... the demand for prisons in the first place” (Bonds 2018, 1–4). In other words, his work disregards the community’s interaction with the state. The three siting battles demonstrate that all counties featured powerful NIMBY coalitions, discrediting the narrative that rural demand accounts for the proliferation. In reality, rural demand only reacted to changes in the state. Only by understanding those changes can scholars accurately interpret the prison boom.

Ruth Gilmore provides this perspective in *Golden Gulag*. She attributes the growth to carceral Keynesianism — a form of Keynesianism that pours state resources into prison construction to secure the economy. In the post-War era, the California economy relied on Department of Defense spending. The 1969 recession, however, led to a steady decline in military spending, which ravaged California’s economy (Gilmore 2007, 35). In the ensuing decade, childhood poverty increased by 25%, and farmers took 100,000 acres of land out of production yearly. Taxpayers expressed their discontent by reducing taxes, crippling the state’s budget. Consequently, the state had surplus workers, land, and political capital to undertake more projects (Gilmore 1999, 174, 178). Moreover, the successes of the Civil Rights Movement threatened to destabilize the racial hierarchy. Southern farmers, meanwhile, wanted to sell their abandoned land, but there were few buyers. The state solved all three problems by replacing military projects with prisons. It realized its full capacity, employed hundreds of thousands, and tore black people from their communities while farmers sold their land at a premium. Because she applies a Marxist lens, Gilmore privileges the material explanations, arguing that the “economy lies at the base of the prison system” (Gilmore 1999, 178).

Some scholars, however, have weakened the connection between the economy and prison construction. Hagan and coauthors, for instance, dispute the connection between abandoned farmland and prison siting. They point out that acres taken out of production did not predict a siting as farmers removed acreage across the state, not just the Southland where prison construction occurred. And while the average county lost 9.8% of farmland from 1982 to 1987,

prison counties only lost 5.3%. Moreover, their data demonstrates that the prison boom outlasted the farming crisis, weakening the connection even more. From 1978 to 1997, they find that cropland decreased by 3.9% in prison counties and 5.6 % in others — a vast decrease from the 5.3% and 9.8% of the previous decade (Hagan et al 2015, 96–97). Gilmore's analysis cherry-picks one siting battle — a case study that this paper will demonstrate was outside of the norm.

This paper argues that, contrary to Gilmore's claims, politics lies at the base of the prison system. Even if one accepts the economic link, the economy only mattered in that it exacerbated an ongoing anti-black political moment. The prison boom emerged from a tough-on-crime movement — one that was necessarily anti-black. Anti-blackness has always featured the myth of black criminality. Planters invented the racial trope to cast the slave system as beneficial to both slaves and their masters. The white people who wrote the first fugitive slave narratives, for instance, always ended with the former slave expressing remorse for their escape. Without their white patriarchs, they “plung[ed] into the chaos of their own selfish appetites” (Andrews and Mason 2008, 7). When abolition threatened black subjugation, white supremacists once again used the logic of black criminality to rationalize black codes and vagrancy laws. As one Philadelphia newspaper put it, the laws were necessary to keep slaves from “burden[ing] society” (Anderson 2017, 20). Though free on paper, conceptions of black criminality allowed whites to reestablish “slavery by another name” (Blackmon 2008). This long history has inextricably intertwined blackness and criminality.

When the successes of the Civil Rights Movement again promised to bring about racial equality, Michelle Alexander highlights that racial conservatives once again employed the tool of black criminality to reassert white supremacy — this time, without using explicitly racial language. In this new lexicon, “criminality” stands in for “blackness,” masking Jim Crow’s evolution into mass incarceration. Richard Nixon used this tough-on-crime rhetoric to transform the Republican Party by attracting economically and racially insecure Democrats (Anderson 2017, 102). He denigrated black culture rather than skin, but the result was the same: they restored the inferiority of the black man as the white man’s “fixed star” (Baldwin 1962). This fearmongering worked. In the early 1980s, a record number of Americans said they felt unsafe to walk alone in their neighborhood at night, thought there was more crime than the previous year, and had the least amount of confidence in the police to protect them (Gallup). The public’s fears translated into law-and-order policies, which quintupled the prison population from 350,000 in 1972 to over 2,000,000 in 2012. While Nixon first declared the war on drugs, Reagan transformed his rhetorical devise into an actual war. He championed draconian mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses, gave massive cash grants to police departments who prioritized the war on drugs, and provided police departments with a deluge of military equipment. He justified all this through an intense media campaign that coaxed the media to cover the crime “epidemic.” Sensationalized stories ensued, depicting dangerous drug-addicted black men. Though the phrasing had changed, “criminal” and “black” remained synonymous in the American consciousness (Alexander 2012, 6, 10, 74, 105).

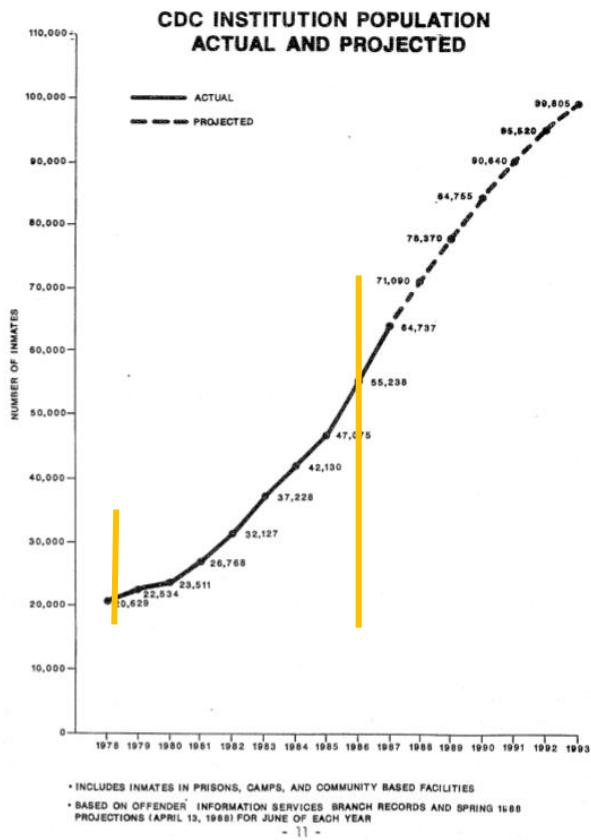
These trends took place in California, too. California’s large Latinx population, though, demands examining the intersection between anti-blackness and anti-Latinx sentiment. African

American media studies scholar Travis Dixon demonstrated that the L.A. local news was 2.5 times more likely to portray black felons and 1.9 times more likely to portray Latinx felons compared to white felons. In L.A., however, Latinx people accounted for 47% of felony arrests compared to 25% for black people and 23% for white people. Moreover, even though black people committed 25% of the county's felonies, they accounted for 44% of felons on the local news. The reverse was true for Latinx and white people (Dixon, Linz 2000). The news ingrained the image of dangerous black and Latinx peoples but especially spotlighted black crime.

Moreover, local polling data demonstrates that Californians were tougher on crime than the rest of the country. In 1981 poll, for instance, 91% of Californians said that criminal danger was higher than a year ago compared to 54% of the national population (U.C. Field Poll 1981). Moreover, 90% of respondents disagreed that the crime problem was overstated (U.C. Field Poll 1981). They isolated the city as the driver of this crime wave as demonstrated by the 69% of polled Californians who thought crime was higher in the city — an admission that paralleled the media's portrayal of crime as an urban, black problem (U.C. Field Poll 1982).

The populace's attitude toward crime meant that in the 1982 gubernatorial election, George Deukmejian entered fertile political soil as he ran against L.A.'s first black mayor, Tom Bradley. Deukmejian exploited his opponent's race for political gain. He even had to fire one of his top campaign staff for insinuating that Deukmejian would win because his opponent was black. Deukmejian attacked Bradley in colorblind language, too, spotlighting his criticism of police who shot unarmed black men. Deukmejian cast this concern as "anti-police" and "soft on crime." In the end, his staffer's prophecy materialized: Deukmejian won by a margin of less than 1% (Hagan et al. 2015). Polling from three years later, reveals that 1-2% of respondents said they disliked Bradley because he was black (U.C. Polling 1985). Hence, scholars attribute Bradley's loss to the "Bradley effect": voters' refusal to vote for a black man (Hagan et al. 2015).

Deukmejian's coded racism translated into racist policies. The Californian legislature explicitly demarcated the change when it, for the first time, stipulated that "Punishment for criminal behavior is the primary purpose of incarceration" (Rowland 1988, 25). This new attitude precipitated harsher laws that reclassified misdemeanors as felonies, causing the prison population to more than triple in ten years.



**Figure 2:** California prison population from 1978 to 1987. The dashed line from 1988 to 1993 shows the projected prison population based on the five-year master plan. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/113034NCJRS>

Consequently, prisons were at 120-330% capacity throughout the decade with the average system-wide overcrowding resting at 176% in 1987. The prison infrastructure could not keep pace. Health services, for example, hovered at 300% capacity. The state needed the new beds to accommodate “increases in the inmate population.” Though Eason tried to decouple prison construction from prison populations, in California, the magnitude of the increase necessitated prisons as the destitute conditions caused prisoners to riot and assault guards (Rowland 1988, 28, 40).

The overcrowding crisis led to three features of the state’s PIYBYism. First, the state argued that they *had* to build the prisons to avoid a crisis. Opposing prisons was politically costly, too, as anti-prison legislators were labeled soft-on-crime, homogenizing politicians’ positions. In the context of this paper, then, the “state” represents both the governor and the legislature as virtually no legislators who did not represent prison communities opposed prison construction. Second, the state needed to build the prisons as quickly as possible, so they sought sites that reduced transport costs and offered community acceptance. These two goals quickly conflicted, though, as the ideal urban areas resisted the most. The state tried to solve the conflict by siting the prisons in predominantly Latinx areas because the Latinx communities lacked the political power to resist. Lastly, the state also chose how to convince a community to accept a prison, leading to the third pillar of PIYBYism: the state spoke of prisons as burdens in urban settings and boons in

rural ones. This discrepancy reflects the populace's view of crime as an urban, non-white problem. In the name of fairness, prison proponents argued, the urban, Latinx communities had to house the scum they created. In rural areas, they changed rhetorical strategies, painting prisons as invisible economic engines. The contradictory strategies demonstrate that the state did not care about how the prison affected the community, only that the community would accept it.

To the state's dismay, most communities vehemently opposed prison construction for two reasons: fears of community corruption and political exploitation. Communities viewed criminals as toxic waste and wanted prisons far away from population centers as a result. The second fear reflected a sense of powerlessness to resist the unloading of the state's society's ills. All communities desired to feel empowered during the siting process. If neglected, these resentments culminated into impassioned opposition — an attempt to reclaim agency. Crucially, though, the second tenant depends on the first because communities only felt exploited because they viewed the prisoners as waste. In two of the counties, PIMBY coalitions emerged. Although they seemed to move past their anti-blackness, they merely channeled it into different forms. Eason argues that PIMBY groups predicated their argument on the prison's economic stimulus, but he overlooks that PIMBY groups also wanted to punish criminals. Prisons became symbols of law and order — of black subjugation. Anti-blackness, thus, never left PIMBY groups; it just took another form.

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY CAST STUDY (1982 - 1992)

By 1982, the state's prison population had increased by 30% in four years, causing the state to plan sites in Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Joaquin Counties (Wolinsky 1987). The move infuriated the rural communities as they saw the sitings as "just another example of urban residents trying to dump on the desert" (Kaplan, Gladstone 1991). Their representatives authored a bill that prohibited the new prisons from accepting prisoners until L.A. built theirs (Wolinsky 1987). They wanted Los Angeles, the producer of California's crime, to shoulder its share of the burden. The newly elected governor, George Deukmejian, concurred and sited the prison in East L.A., a mile outside Boyle Heights, California's historic Latinx capital.

The state's case for the siting initially contained a kernel of a sensible argument, but as the political battle wore on and patience dwindled, the state revealed the punitive intention of the siting. *The Los Angeles Times* first mentioned the prison in an editorial that supported the site. They highlighted that 34% of the state's prisoners came from Los Angeles, not to advocate for the prison as a punishment, but to emphasize the benefit of having a prison near the criminals' homes. Longer distances from the city increased transport costs and meant that fewer families could visit. Moreover, the state "desperately need[ed] prisons" as the system operated at 151% capacity (*Los Angeles Times* 1985). The argument displayed two out of the three tenants of PIYBYism; they underscored the urgency of prison construction and the ideal nature of an urban site without parochially imposing the prison on the community.

To the East L.A. community, the site was far from sensible. They pointed out that the area contained three county jails that housed more than 11,000 people within four miles (Olmo 1986).

Assemblywoman Gloria Molina characterized prison siting as an “unfair social burden,” later lamenting that East L.A. was “being made a dumping ground for prisoners” (Wolinsky 1986). A fear of blackness underpinned the community’s fears of prisoners; the use of “social burden” conveys the community’s anxiety of accepting degenerate black criminals. In what would later become explicit, the Assemblywoman cast prisoners as toxic waste that, through some unnamed mechanism, would radiate into the community. The opposition later built their case, but their initial lack of rational arguments demonstrates that opposition arose from a place of fear, not fact. As Robert Carter, Jr., a member of the state’s Board of Prisons, put it, the opposition “fail[ed] to mention what [the] negatives are.” As a result, the community’s later arguments represent post-hoc justifications for what they instinctually opposed.

Over the coming years, the opposition explained that prisons corrupted the community in two ways: prison escapes and corruption of their children. The Californian populace had very little faith in a prison’s ability to isolate its prisoners largely due to Kevin Cooper’s 1983 prison escape and subsequent murder of four residents. The media’s portrayal of the crime mirrored the national trend of sensationalizing black deviance. The mother of one victim even complained that, “the media continues to sensationalize a vicious crime” (Carter 1985). *The Times* on its own dedicated hundreds of articles to the one crime.<sup>2</sup> They referred to the incident either as a “massacre” or an “Ax-murder,” underscoring the depravity of Kevin Cooper. The media’s fixation on the one crime made prison escapes seem inevitable, propelling prison escapes to the top NIMBY concern. One East L.A. mother lamented, “It’s terrible. There will just be a lot of escaped convicts... The kids won’t be secure playing outside.” Even though prison escapes were extremely rare, the community envisioned an invasion of black criminals hellbent on inflicting pain on the community (Krier 1986). The state, according to the opposition, had to remove prisoners from society to end the terror. Even if the prisoners did not escape, though, they argued that their very presence damaged the community. As opposition leader Berta Saavedra suggested, “Children need role models and different things to consider in their neighborhood besides a prison” (Wolinsky 1986). The prison *itself* would corrupt children. They never explained, however, how children’s exposure to prisoners precipitated their subsequent undoing. The prisoners were so morally debased that their mere existence corrupted society. Thus, the same force that led to mass incarceration produced mass opposition to prison sitings.

In 1986, the Californian Assembly disregarded the opposition and overwhelmingly backed the East L.A. prison siting. Their justifications for the decision highlight the state’s sense of crisis. The chair of the Assembly Public Safety Committee stated, “There is no such thing as a perfect site for a prison ... there will always be a substantial number of people who oppose the location.” Lawmakers believed that if they listened to every community’s concerns, they would never build prisons. This inaction was unthinkable because, as Democratic Assemblyman Richard Katz explained, “You can’t be tough on crime if you won’t put the prisoners away.” The anti-black political climate pushed the state to adopt tough-on-crime policies, but the state failed to build enough prisons to accommodate the surge in prisoners. One community’s opposition paled in comparison to the logistical and political nightmare of arresting criminals without the ability to take them off the streets (Wolinsky 1986).

The Assembly's move infuriated the East L.A. community, who felt that "the entire community opposed [it]" (Wolinsky 1986). The community's powerlessness in the face of the Assembly evoked bitter memories of postwar urban "renewal" when, in the 1950s, L.A. undertook hazardous projects in East L.A. to bring prosperity to white communities. City planners of the time viewed cities as living organisms, which were diseased by communities of color. As a result, cities nationwide used projects as a pretext to decimate communities of color (Rothstein 2017). L.A. city planners, for example, dissected East L.A. with five highways and cleared Latinx housing to make way for high rises (Olmo 1986). The community's lack of political power forced them to watch helplessly as the government displaced over 10,000 people and polluted their community (Sahagun 1989). The East L.A. community drew many parallels to the 1950s during the siting process. They viewed the mandated hearings and environmental reports as the state's attempts to mollify concerns without changing their behavior. They accused the state of downplaying its interest in the site to hinder the community from mobilizing sooner (Salazar 1985). The state did, in fact, change the site from a reception center to an actual prison late in the process (Boyer and Hernandez 1986). Furthermore, the state designated L.A. as the only site that did not require a full environmental report (Wolinsky 1987). Their desire to build prisons as quickly as possible painted prison construction as another form of the environmental racism that the community experienced in the 1950s.

This feeling of helplessness evoked visceral reactions. Michael Woo, a city councilman, argued that the state "was picking on a low-income area" (Boyer and Hernandez 1986). Assemblyman Joseph Montoya sharpened Woo's language, calling the siting "political rape" (Wolinsky 1986). The invocation of rape highlights their acute sense of powerlessness. Former opponents of the site, including Richard Polanco, an Assemblyman representing East L.A., voted for the prison (Boyer and Hernandez 1986). Democratic Assemblymen explained that these reversals represented "political realities" and that the "Democrats [did] not want to be in the position of trying to hold [prison construction] up" (Wolinsky 1986). Polanco's reversal only heightened the perception of their second-class citizenship; even their own representatives abandoned their interests. The community's anger at Polanco was palpable. One East L.A. college student even declared that "What Polanco has done to this community is totally unforgivable. I'd much rather forgive a rapist" (Boyer and Hernandez 1986). The fact that this "political rape" could outweigh actual rape in the mind of this student encapsulates the intensity of the East L.A. opposition. Polanco perfectly symbolized the community's frustration. Even the representative for whom many explicitly voted because he opposed the prison had acquiesced to the state. There was no winning; politicians always said one thing and did another. Politics acted as a rationalizing façade that allowed the state to oppress East L.A. This rage translated into intense mobilization. As Lucy Ramos, a spokesperson for an opposition group, explained, "In the old days if the government said 'Move on' people moved on. It's not that way anymore. There is a limit to how much junk they can dump on a community" (1989). The community saw the prison siting as a continuation of a decades-long struggle, one they could now win.

A month later, they did just that. After applying intense pressure, the community compelled their representatives in the Assembly to use a parliamentary procedure that rendered

the now fifty-four pro-prison votes useless (Wolinsky 1986). As the state faced more setbacks, their rhetoric grew vitriolic. They now weaponized the fact that 38% of the state's convicts hailed from L.A. to imply that the East L.A. community had to accept the prisoners they produced. Governor Deukmejian highlighted the issue in his 1987 State of the State address. To rapturous applause, he declared, "Thirty-eight percent of state prison inmates come from Los Angeles, and yet the county has no state prison. In the name of fairness, it is time to change that fact" (Deukmejian 1987). The state now emphasized the fairness, not the convenience, of the site. He furthered that they could not delay because the state needed to "put more dangerous criminals behind bars and relieve the overcrowd[ing]" (Deukmejian 1987).

In this way, the state villainized the East L.A. community to justify the community's exploitation. Chicano scholar Rodolfo Acuna wrote that the state portrayed the community as "gang-infested and...mostly populated by 'illegal aliens'" (Acuna 1989). Dan Walters, a prison advocate working for *The Times*, exemplified Acuna's observation, arguing that the state should force L.A. to take responsibility for "the inmates it produces in such abundance" (Walters 1990). The notion that a community can "produce" crime speaks to the perceived cultural or racial degeneracy of Latinx people. According to those like Walters, even those in East L.A. who did not commit a crime contributed to the crime wave by fostering a deviant culture. The community's refusal to own up to the crime they produced was further proof of the community's degeneracy.

The *Times* further demonized the community with a bizarre editorial titled "Jobless Turnkeys Punished by Delay in Prison Opening." It followed Danny Garcia, a Vietnam war veteran and East L.A. resident, highlighting his pain due to the community's resistance. The author, Bob Baker, repeatedly characterized Garcia as a "lawman." In dramatic prose, Baker explained that Garcia's great-great-great-grandfather's choice to serve in the Civil War inspired his "patriotic fervor." He narrated Garcia's "burning desire to be a cop" and his disappointment when he discovered he was too short to serve. Then, he applied to become a prison guard and got accepted. The only problem? The prison fight delayed his employment, making the "lawman" suffer while the community resisted. Their struggle did not represent his beliefs as someone who "is as deeply rooted to East L.A. as anyone." The account contains insidious undertones. It valorizes law and order, reinforcing the "need" of the state to remove people of color from their communities. By extension, then, Baker labeled the East L.A. residents as pro-crime. The narrative attempts to elicit sympathy for a small portion of East L.A. by spotlighting a pro-prison Latino, one of the 'good ones.' Denigrating the Latinx community, thus, became a core pro-prison strategy (Baker 1987).

The state's desperation to build the East L.A. prison began to outweigh their anger because the 1982 law meant that two already built prisons would go unused until East L.A. complied (Wolinsky 1987). Consequently, in 1987, prison advocates passed an "equal pain" bill that mandated a prison in Republican Lancaster in addition to Democratic East L.A (Wolinsky 1987). The law represented the state's attempt to ease perceptions of political exploitation by demonstrating that the siting process was not personal. The language of "equal pain" reveals that lawmakers saw prisons as evils to remove a greater evil from the streets. Someone *had* to shoulder

the burden. The producers of this evil were the natural first choice, but the political reality forced Republicans to burden their own constituents.

Perplexingly, though, pro-prison advocates sometimes spoke of prisons as economically beneficial. In his editorial titled “Hypocrisy and Illogic From L.A.” Dan Walters encapsulated his own hypocrisy and illogic within two sentences. He wrote, “As Deukmejian pointed out in January, ‘A prison is an economic boom to the economy’ ... But regardless it is a matter of simple equity that Los Angeles houses its fair share of inmates it produces in such abundance” (Walters 1990). The crime-producing community had to enjoy the benefits of the crime they produced? The state’s embrace of both positive and negative conceptions of prisons demonstrates that they did not care about the effect of the prison. They only wanted to build prisons, causing them to try different strategies until one worked. In the end, no strategy could mollify East L.A. In 1992, Wilson allowed the Lancaster prison to open without East L.A.

The history of East L.A. contradicts and confirms scholars’ popular narratives. The rural demand model falls short because rural communities *opposed* prisons, and the state sited prisons in urban, not rural areas. It does, however, reveal the power that community officials wielded — power with which Gilmore failed to engage. The urban siting also undermines Gilmore because she argued that the state’s end goal was to make use of surplus labor, land, and political capital. The East L.A. case study, however, demonstrates that the state was more reactionary. They expended political capital to force an urban community to accept a prison — a senseless pursuit if the end goal was to use excess farmland. Gilmore asserts that East L.A.’s opposition caused “Landowners from the agricultural valleys [to] sp[y] an opportunity to unload sinking assets” (Gilmore 1990). She contradicts herself as she highlights that the prison boom preceded economic concerns. And, as Hagan and his coauthors demonstrated, these economic arguments were not nearly as strong as Gilmore claimed. Moreover, the battle lasted *ten* years, the lion’s share of the prison boom. If economic concerns dictated the prison boom, then why didn’t the state abandon the urban location over the course of the decade? In reality, politicians reacted to a mandate from voters to incarcerate more people. Political, not economic, motivations primarily drove the prison boom.

The siting struggle, however, confirms Alexander’s thesis. Anti-blackness permeated the process as the East L.A. community feared black criminals, causing their potential presence to engender mass opposition. The community’s perceptions of environmental racism presupposed the toxicity of black prisoners, complicating the question of environmental racism. When examining the state’s role in mass incarceration, many have criticized Alexander for overlooking the connection between mass incarceration and Latinx people (Kilgore 2015). In the East L.A. siting battle, even though the community viewed themselves as separate from the crime wave, the PIYBYists clearly viewed Latinx people as part of it. Some may be tempted to argue that the state’s treatment of Latinx people points to a larger pattern of white supremacy rather than anti-blackness, but one must recognize that race denotes a position of power, not skin color. After all, blackness has never been a concrete category; it has always shifted to meet the goals of the white supremacist state (Lowndes and HoSang 2019). In California, the state still followed the national anti-black movement to undercut the Civil Rights Movement, but they transposed a tool of anti-

blackness — the casting of a subjugated people as criminal — onto Latinx people. It racially targeted Boyle Heights and justified the decision by villainizing the community. Confusingly, though, they sometimes presented prisons as an economic boon. This contradiction further complicates the question of environmental racism because unlike the 1950s' urban renewal, the actual effects of the prison were unclear. What is clear, however, is that the state attempted to build prisons quickly, leading them to site prisons in historically marginalized communities to circumvent the required processes. In all, anti-black laws ballooned the prison population, necessitating mass prison construction. To build prisons as quickly as possible, the state used anti-black categorizations of criminality to justify siting the prison in a historically Latinx community — evidence of political, not economic, concerns.

## RIVERSIDE CASE STUDY (1982 - 1986)

The Riverside siting supports the paper's analysis of East L.A. as the two share many similarities: they occurred contemporarily, the state sited the prison in a Chicano stronghold with a history of activism (Coachella), and the community vehemently resisted. But the Riverside County siting battle is also worth examining for all the reasons it differed: it occurred in a rural area, featured a PIMBY coalition, and revealed the opinions of farmers. A year after the 1982 mandate, the state named potential sites in Beaumont and Coachella (Holland 1983). Beaumont's immediate opposition made Coachella the frontrunner. The state approached Coachella much differently than East L.A., though. Unlike trying to convince the community to accept its vermin, they told the community that their fears were "born of ignorance" (Holland 1984). The state sent officials to local meetings to convince the public of a prison's economic benefits, promising a \$100 million increase in payroll taxes and five hundred new jobs (Holland 1984). They also painted prisons as invisible, trying to dispel the public's perception of frequent escapes. Rural sitings forced the state to adopt this approach because, as the polling demonstrates, Californians viewed the crimewave as an urban problem.

The strategy convinced some like community member Frank Duran, who highlighted that Coachella's residents had an average income of \$4,400 and that "prison jobs would raise that figure" (Love 1984). Duran, one of the few PIMBY voices, tied economics to prison support. The majority of people, however, derided the state's potential benefits (Holland 1984). Their NIMBYism mirrored East L.A.'s fears of community corruption and political exploitation. Like the East L.A. population, Coachella residents incessantly cited Kevin Cooper's escape.<sup>3</sup> When the prisoners inevitably escaped, the residents feared, they would have free reign to destroy the community because the prison was "too close to major population centers" (*Desert Sun* 1984). Like the East L.A. community, NIMBY translated into Not in Anyone's Back Yard. In fact, the NIMBY group suggested an abandoned mining town as an alternative. That way, if the prisoners escaped, the community would not have to worry about them "mixing up with our people" as a resident put it in a thinly veiled reference to racial mixing (Holland 1984).

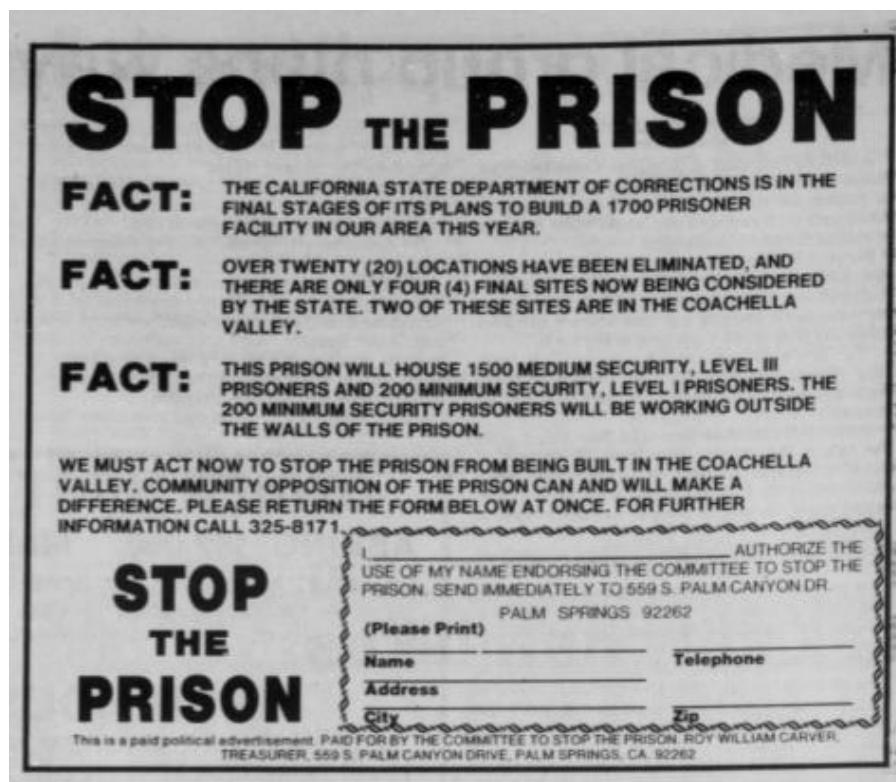
Opponents of the siting argued that this "mixing up" process happened even without escapes. The rural location meant that prisoners' families would relocate. Former school superintendent, Bobby Duke, referred to the process as an "influx of an undesirable element" (Holland 1984).

Nadine Radovicz, a member of a different prison community, explained, “That’s what makes me the most nervous... Let’s face it. That’s usually not a good cycle of life” (Krier 1986). Radovicz’s bluntness highlights that rural Latinx communities viewed urban, black people as degenerate. Their “cycle of life” made the black man’s descent into crime inevitable, destroying the community in the process. Anti-blackness, thus, caused NIMBY groups to fear both prisoners and their families.

The NIMBY group explained East L.A.’s vague notion of community corruption, introducing the stigma of being a “prison town.” Boodry explained that he worked in Joliet, Illinois, one of the most famous prisons town in the country. Despite Joliet’s other attractions, people only knew it as “where the prison is” (Boodry 1984). Many Coachella residents expressed this fear of becoming the prison town (Holland 1984). They viewed themselves as a tourist town, a conception that the prison would upset. Patricia Larson, the head of the prison opposition, decried, “If there’s a riot at the prison, the dateline won’t be in Coachella, it’ll be Palm Springs” (*Desert Sun* 1984). The mention of Palm Springs highlights the county’s racial tension as the largely impoverished, Latinx Coachella already felt insecure competing against rich, white Palm Springs. Being associated with dangerous black criminals would further discourage tourism. Prisons, thus, affect how the world views a town and how a town views itself. Coachella resisted so fervently because their identity depended on it.

Again, perceptions of political exploitation heightened this resistance. In Coachella, Latinx people accounted for the vast majority of the population, and it was the only town in the county with majority Latinx representation (Borders 1983). Like in East L.A., their leaders charged that the state treated white-led Beaumont differently than Coachella. State officials told Beaumont of the potential siting before Coachella, allowing Beaumont to pass a resolution against the siting months before Coachella knew (Holland 1983). Moreover, Coachella residents complained that the state failed to publicize their hearings (Love 1984). Just like the East L.A. opposition groups, they accused the state of merely going through the mandated motions. These feelings of exploitation exacerbated the community’s resistance. Larson declared, “They’re waiting for us to go to sleep, and then hoping the opposition will go away” (*Desert Sun* 1984). The state did not care about their interests, but the community knew that through fierce opposition, they could make them care.

This distrust of the government reflected Coachella’s central role in Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers (UFW) resistance. From the 1960s onward, UFW clashed with the exploitative agribusiness protected by then-governor Ronald Reagan. Chavez summed up the community’s orientation towards the state, declaring that UFW had “no trust in Reagan” (Holmes 2010). The city hosted rallies and promoted UWF boycotts (Mahr 1988). These experiences not only entrenched the community’s distrust of the government but also engendered successful mobilization strategies. They distributed the following petition, for example, and in one year, collected 21,000 signatures (*Desert Sun* 1984).



**Figure 3:** Petition to stop the prison, June 18, 1984. California Digital Newspaper Collection, Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research, University of California, Riverside.

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DS19840616.2.82.3&srpos=1&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-stop+the+prison-----1>.

The petition demonstrates the power of the prison stigma. It never mentions any harms of the prison, only that the Coachella siting was likely and that two hundred prisoners will work outside the prison (Committee to Stop the Prison 1984). The petition evokes fears that the prison walls could not keep out the black invasion; they would escape and “mix up” with the town. As Eason suggested, the prison stigma caused towns to oppose prisons by default. Poverty, though, made rural areas care less about their fear of black people and more about their wallets. Although Coachella was largely destitute, its identity as a tourist-town caused them to view prisons as antithetical to their economic interests, and their anti-black ideology worked in tandem with their economic concerns as a result.

In July of 1984, Blythe, a town of 7,000 people on the Arizona border, expressed interest in the prison. On the surface, the community presented a purely economic argument. City manager Dick Milkovich explained that Blythe could “use the economic impact.” But the PIMBY group viewed the prison as more than an economic engine; they viewed it as a monument to law and order. Milkovich expounded, “Blythe attracts many undesirable transients and they would be less likely to visit with a prison” (Love 1984). While the NIMBY group in Coachella thought the prison would attract black people, the PIMBY group in Blythe thought it would repel them. Though Blythe officials privileged the economic argument, the fact that they channeled anti-blackness to support their argument highlights the power of the ideology.

Blythe forced the state to choose between siting the prison in the obstinate Coachella or much further from California's coastal cities. Senator Presley, a guiding figure in the prison boom, explained that Blythe's remoteness made the prison extremely expensive. Moreover, the proximity to the Arizona border meant that the prison's economic stimulus would trickle into the neighboring state. On the other hand, he explained, "Corrections would much prefer to locate it in a community where they are wanted rather than where they have to fight their way in" (Love 1984). A prolonged political battle would delay the construction of critically needed beds. In the end, they chose to site the prison in Blythe. In Riverside County, when the state explicitly considered both economic and political factors, it privileged the political ones.

Gilmore would argue that the decision reflected the farmers' destitution. She would be wrong. The state chose sites with "prime farmland," according to Steve Quesenberry, a soil conservationist with the US. Department of Agriculture. The leaseholder of a site grew asparagus on the land, employing hundreds (Love 1984). The purchase of farmland was state-driven as the landowner sold it not because the land was no longer profitable, but because the state offered more profit. Moreover, farmers in Blythe created a NIMBY coalition called Stop the Prison Committee. They argued that the prison would deplete the town's dwindling water supply and waste productive farmland. At the same time, they reiterated past NIMBY groups' racial concerns, contending that the prison would "attract an undesirable element, raise the crime rate, scare off winter visitors, and destroy the rural, small-town atmosphere" (*Los Angeles Times* 1986). They attributed this process to the literal toxicity of prisoners as their picket signs read, "Today. A prison. Tomorrow. Nuclear Waste" (Love 1984). The signs make East L.A.'s insinuations explicit. Prisoners were radioactive and would destroy the idyllic "small-town atmosphere." Like the other NIMBY groups, the Blythe farmers felt politically exploited. They were not residents of the city and held no political power as a result (Love 1984). Protesters held another sign that read, "Sold Out by City Hall," perfectly encapsulating the two sides of the NIMBY coin (Love 1984). Without political power, the farmers, whose district controlled the water, refused to sell it to the state (Hussar 1985).

The move infuriated Californian officials because they were racing against the clock. Presley admitted that the site was far from perfect but reminded onlookers that they "had to locate it somewhere" (Love 1984). He later clarified that the state "hoped to get the prison started before summer — a time when potential prison riots are likely to occur," again demonstrating that California's overcrowding crisis led to prison construction (Hussar 1985). The state overcame the farmers' antics by siting the prison outside of the farmers' jurisdiction in an abandoned desert seventeen miles from Blythe (Ramirez 1986). The town officials celebrated, declaring that "a renaissance is at hand for the town." The siting appeased NIMBY attitudes, too, because as one community member pointed out, "Escapees would probably die in the desert before they reached the town" (*Desert Sun* 1986). That way, less mixing could occur. The siting enabled the state to build the prison and the local economy to grow while isolating prisoners from the town.

The Riverside siting battle underscores this paper's analysis of Gilmore and Eason. First, it heavily undermines Gilmore's thesis. The initial siting was on productive farmland that the renter still used. The final site did not take abandoned farmland off agricultural giants' hands; they

settled in the desert. In fact, the city officials clashed with the community's agribusiness, supporting Hagan's statistical analysis. Second, it confirms Eason's portrayal of the strength of local communities. In one county, three communities successfully expelled a prison. The power of a community to resist, however, does not prove a community's power to demand. The state obviously wielded this power as they mandated the prisons *before* any PIMBYism ever existed. They explicitly wanted to build prisons to avoid the collapse of the prison system. Hence, the state's PIYBYism stemmed from anti-black ideology, not any economic concerns. This anti-blackness also worked against the state because the Californian populace's anti-blackness led to extensive NIMBYism. Economic desperation allowed certain towns to overlook the fear of neighboring black criminals by channeling their anti-blackness into new forms. Examining the interaction between the state and the chosen community demonstrates that ideology, not economics, drove PIYBYism while ideology and economics clashed to determine the community's response.

## IMPERIAL COUNTY CASE STUDY (1986-1990)

The Imperial County siting reinforces the patterns of NIMBY-and-PIMBYism. This time, however, the state knew the causes of NIMBYism and touted the prison's benefits to an economically depressed community with no tourism industry. They also stressed the prison's isolation, assuaging any fears of black infiltration and instead, presented the prison as a way to punish black people. Like in Blythe, the town-dwelling communities supported the prison while the farmers opposed it. In Imperial County, however, two communities desired the prison — one white and one Latinx. The battle between the two PIMBY coalitions revealed that when politicians viewed a prison as a political favor, they diverted the supposed economic benefits to white communities.

The state initially selected the Mount Signal site, a stretch of land nestling the Mexican border near Calexico (*Calexico Chronicle* 1988). Due to Mexican immigration, the southern end of the county was disproportionately poor and Latinx. Unlike the previous two sites, Calexico had no history of Chicano activism, contributing to a more favorable view of the state. The *Calexico Chronicle* voiced the community's support of the site. Their articles demonstrate that, like in Riverside, race plagued the county's politics (Steppling 1989). Attitudes towards the site fell along racial lines with Latinx proponents and white opponents. The Latinx population formed the coalition dubbed "Jobs, Opportunities, Business, Stability" (JOBS) to emphasize the prison's economic stimulus while whites formed Southerners Totally Against Mount Signal (STAMP).

In Imperial County, the state exploited their knowledge that economic desperation engendered PIMBYism. They promised that, "the economic benefits [of the prison] would loom large." They fomented fears of forgoing economic opportunities by highlighting other counties' inhabitants who were "delighted to tell [them] all about the advantages brought by the prison" (*Calexico Chronicle* 1986). The committee asserted that a prison would revitalize the county's floundering economy. In a later hearing, the speaker, Sam Sharp elaborated that each prisoner came with a price-tag. Because the census treats prisoners as "members of the community," the prisoners would inflate the county's population, translating to a \$300,000 annual tax break (*Calexico*

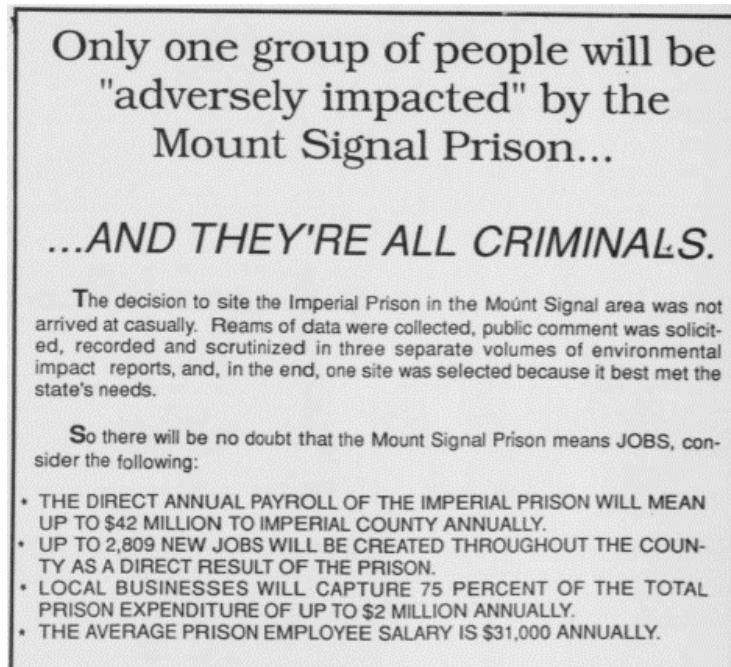
*Chronicle* 1988). The tax breaks, however, are a zero-sum game; by uprooting black men from their communities, they effectively transferred subsidies from black-urban spaces to rural ones. Moreover, they created rural prison jobs by removing black men from their urban employment. Accordingly, the potential benefits to Calexico represented a transfer of wealth from poor urban areas to poor rural ones.

The report and hearing also addressed the community's fears of black people. The researchers explored the "problem" of prison families who relocated from the city, explaining that less than 1% of families did so. In doing so, they attempted to mollify fears that new prison families would "stress the welfare state," a common trope surrounding black families. The anxieties of changing demographics precipitated fears of declining safety. The report assuaged these concerns, finding that "prison communities have lower crime rates than non-prison communities." The researchers assured Imperial County that urban black families and prisoners would not infiltrate their community (*Calexico Chronicle* 1986). In the hearing, Sharp emphasized the invisibility of the prison while also satisfying the community's urge to punish criminals. Responding to community concerns of parole release, Sharp emphasized that the prison staff escorted parolees to the bus station, after which they had a limited time to report back to their place of arrest. The prisoners would have no opportunity to "mix up" with the community. He then discussed the prison's security features, which ensured the area's safety at the cost of prisoners' livelihoods. The new protocols prohibited community-building activities, such as communal eating. They demeaned them by handcuffing them before letting them exit their cells and by "scrutinizing" them in the shower (*Calexico Chronicle* 1988). Overall, he underscored that the procedures created an "isolated citizenry as far as the prisoner is concerned" (*Calexico Chronicle* 1988). The state knew that it had to change the community's expression of anti-blackness. They wanted the town to view the prison as a place of inescapable punishment. The forum demonstrated that, though the community welcomed the prison's economic stimulus, they did not extend the hospitality to its prisoners. The community sought to bar the black people from their towns while reaping the pecuniary benefits of the "isolated citizenry." It confirms that the battle between NIMBY and PIMBY attitudes was one between fears of anti-blackness and desire for economic vibrancy. It also suggests a top-down demand as the state felt compelled to print propaganda to convince the community.

Southern white farmers did not accept the state's reasoning. Instead, they formed STAMP to oppose the Mount Signal Site and support locating the prison in Calipatria, a town in the far Northern stretch of the county (*Calexico Chronicle* 1989). They waged their campaign through the *Imperial Valley Press*, which only archived volumes from 1998 onwards, meaning that all of the information in this paper comes through the biased *Calexico Chronicle*. Nevertheless, the publication's perception of STAMP highlights the conflict between Latinx and white people. The *Chronicle* almost exclusively referred to the movement as representing "a couple Anglo farmers," only once revealing that the group had over a thousand members (Steppling 1989). In the *Chronicle*'s telling, these farmers only followed their "self-interest" and "the weirdest reasons," such as that the prison would "mar [their] view of the sunset" (Legaspi 1989). In later issues, they

elaborated on STAMP's "bogus" arguments, such as "farm land loss, heavy use of streets, [and] congestion" (*Calexico Chronicle* 1989).

In the likeliest case, the farmers knew that the prison would not benefit them because they had no need for prison work and would not have enjoyed increased sales. Instead, the prison would waste precious resources. By advocating for the prison siting in Calipatria, they could enrich the county through tax breaks and the increased taxable income while avoiding the prison stigma.



**Figure 4:** Advertisement paid for by JOBS in the *Calexico Chronicle*, April 13, 1989. California Digital Newspaper Collection, Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research, University of California, Riverside.

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=CC19890406.2.29.2&srpos>

The vast majority of the southern population, however, desperately needed jobs. They viewed STAMPS' movement as a betrayal of their region to benefit the county's whites at the cost of its Latinx population.

STAMP's movement led to the creation of Calexico's JOBS, which celebrated the prisons' economic benefits while denigrating criminals (*Calexico Chronicle* 1989). In an advertisement displayed in multiple issues, the coalition declared that "Only one group of people will be 'adversely affected' by the Mount Signal Prison ... AND THEY'RE ALL CRIMINALS" (JOBS 1989). It then listed all of the economic vitality that the prison would bring.

JOBS appropriated STAMP's language of "adversely impacted," not only to assuage concerns of the prison's presence, but also to highlight the harm that would come to prisoners. Consequently, JOBS *itself* explicitly viewed the economic prosperity of the area at the expense of prisoners. The group muddles common narrative that authors such as Gilmore present; Latinx communities, too, coveted the benefits of prison construction. In this way, the driving force behind prison proliferation was anti-black attitudes, not just pro-white ones.

The *Chronicle* expressed that the southern county's economic desperation justified the Mount Signal site. John Steppling, the editor of the publication, tellingly described the area as "our Bagdad," referencing an abandoned town to their north. Councilman Victor Legaspi concurred, writing that everyone knew the Southern end of the county was "poor and depressed" (Legaspi 1989). The Southern coalition viewed the prison as their only path to prosperity because, as the councilman explained, "exploitation of our Southern neighbors" cut wages for local citizens. Prisons, however, could not hire undocumented workers. Legaspi concluded that the prison would cause the economy of the whole county to "grow tremendously" (Legaspi 1989). To them, prison siting reflected the need of the surrounding area. In this way, the Southern county treated prisons as any other public works project. Unlike infrastructure investment, however, the profits that JOBS sought necessitated black suffering. Prison construction, then, represented the rural counties' attempts to alleviate their suffering by exacerbating the suffering of urban, black communities.

In the end, the state selected the Calipatria site, promising a second prison at the Mount Signal within the year. In a piece titled "SUE SUE SUE ... battle cry for Calexico," the *Chronicle* excoriated the decision, disclosing that JOBS intended to sue the Chamber of Commerce, the State of California, the CDC, and STAMP for acting without authority. The desperate move reflected the town's collective sense of indignation due to the fact that the Calipatria siting would cause the economic benefits to leak to nearby counties (*Calexico Chronicle* 1989). The *Chronicle* blamed the change of heart on their lack of political sway and financial backing, demonstrating that they viewed prisons as a political favor to spur economic growth. The director of the CDC, James Rowland, attributed the change to STAMP's pressure — pressure that Calexico believed reflected the size of their checkbooks, not their movement. Victor Legaspi concurred and lamented that "the losers in this case are not only Southend, but also, integrity." He continued sardonically, "How sad that hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent towards the selection of the best site ... only to have them renege on their findings. (Oh well, it's only taxpayer's money!)" (Legaspi 1989). Editor Steppling furthered, "such is life in the big city of Sacramento," alluding to the political clout of agribusiness in California and the political representation of the northern part of the county. To add insult to injury, the CDC reneged on their promise to site the second prison at Mount Signal, leading Steppling to exclaim, "It is blatantly a result of influence and accommodation to the power structure" (Steppling 1990). Four years of hope culminated into nothing. After hiring a special lobbyist and reimbursing all of CDC officials' plane and hotel costs, the town felt used (*Calexico Chronicle* 1990).

The Imperial County siting encapsulates key themes of this paper. It cements that, contrary to Gilmore's thesis, the agribusiness often opposed the prison boom. Anti-blackness elicited Calexico's fear of black migration and their view of the prison as a punitive institution. Only when communities combined anti-blackness with economic desperation did PIMBY groups emerge. Rural demand for prisons entered late in the prison boom, undermining Eason's argument. Only in Imperial County did sections within the county fight for placement near their neighborhoods. Here, politicians were happy to provide for their constituents as they enabled tough-on-crime

policies. Race factored into the narrative again as politicians overlooked the Latinx community's desires, instead capitulating to the will of white constituents.

## CONCLUSION

By examining how the state and community communicated, this paper has challenged economic-based explanations for the prison boom. Gilmore's thesis explains none of the three examined siting battles. The state tried to site prisons in urban areas, but when it begrudgingly turned to rural ones, agribusiness heavily *resisted*. The state's crisis was primarily political, not economic. Though Eason correctly highlights that economic desperation drove rural demand, this happened much later in the California prison boom and only after the state propagandized the prison's benefits. Moreover, he willingly overlooks rural racism and their use of law-and-order rhetoric.

Anti-blackness underpins PIYBY, NIMBY, and PIMBY coalitions. The state's PIYBYism repeatedly invoked a "need" to remove criminals from the streets to fight "criminal terror." In reality, the state used prisons to curb black advancement, exploding the prison population far beyond capacity. The state privileged ideological, not economic, concerns. This anti-black ideology ensured that few wanted this "terror" in their backyard. NIMBY coalitions, too, viewed prisons as brimming with black filth. The constant allusions to pollution, trash, ills, and nuclear waste demonstrate that anti-blackness was the basis of NIMBYism. On the surface, PIMBY coalitions seem to escape the pull of anti-blackness as they lobbied for economic benefits, but they intertwined economic benefits with black subjugation.

These economic benefits did not materialize. Last year, *The Desert Sun* published a story about Blythe, asking "Can marijuana save this 'dying' town on the California-Arizona border?" (DiPierro, 2018). Unlike what the city officials thought in the 1980s, a renaissance was not at hand for Blythe. The town still struggles because the state used the prison to fix a political, not an economic, problem. Blythe's search for a miracle elixir has now brought them to marijuana, meaning that many of the town's five thousand inmates do time for a now legal crime — one that the surrounding community uses to soothe their economic woes. In the 1980s, Blythe listened to the state and accepted thousands of prisoners for profit. Now, the town will profit off the plant that put many of the prisoners there in the first place. In perhaps the best suiting metaphor, black men convicted of minor drug possession will be surrounded by fields of marijuana growing in the desert to fix a problem that the prison could not.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> All sources found through California Digital Newspaper Collection and the *L.A. Times* Archive.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://search.proquest.com/hnplatimes/results/96C6CB6FC5A14D6EPQ/2?accountid=14698#scrollTo> for endless coverage of the Chino Incident.

<sup>3</sup> See: Carl Love, "Coachella council opposes state prison siting proposal," *Desert Sun*, June 20, 1984; Holland, "Four possible prison sites"; Love, "Turnout for prison hearing."



# Massacre or Genocide? Redefining the Sook Ching

## Lauralei Singsank\*, Political Science and Music

### ABSTRACT

Sook Ching is a Chinese term meaning “purge through cleansing.” Operation Sook Ching took place in Singapore from February 21 to March 4, 1942. It was a military operation carried out by the Japanese with the intent of executing anti-Japanese Chinese men between the ages of 18 and 50. Ultimately, it is impossible to know exactly how many people were killed; the official Japanese figure is 5,000, while unofficial estimates reach as high as 50,000. Men were called into screening centers where disorganized screening procedures determined if they were anti-Japanese. The Sook Ching’s legacy lives on as one of the greatest tragedies in Singapore’s history.

The intent of this paper is to argue for a redefinition of the Sook Ching as a genocide rather than a massacre. The cornerstones of this research are the United Nations’ Genocide Convention and contemporary sources discussing the crime. This research is important because it sets a precedent of accountability, as well as acknowledging the crimes the Japanese committed during the Second World War. This thesis will discuss the Sook Ching, its legacy, and the steps required to address the incident and right the wrongs that occurred. It will also examine the racial and political environment that set the stage for the tragedy, as well as the scars it left behind.

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On February 3, 1942, artillery shells reached Singapore from Johore, part of modern day Malaysia.<sup>1</sup> It was the beginning of the end. Singapore was Britain’s southernmost post on the Malay peninsula and was considered almost impenetrably secure. This hubris would ultimately hurt residents; many shores were defenseless, as Arthur Percival, Lieutenant-General in charge of the island, believed reinforcing them would only harm morale.<sup>2</sup> When members of the British army realized they would likely lose the city, panic broke out. Many abandoned their uniforms and disguised themselves as civilians to avoid capture, while members of the Chinese Mobilisation Council, a local volunteer force, haphazardly sewed new ones to take up the flag and fight to their deaths in the northeastern suburb of Kranji.<sup>3</sup> On February 14, Japanese forces reached Alexandra Hospital in southern Singapore. Claiming that they had seen British sniper fire, they entered the operating theatre and killed everyone inside. Over 200 staff and patients died.<sup>4</sup> After this, chaos reigned. When families tried to escape the oncoming Japanese, they were met with unfought fires,

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bomb craters, debris, and human bodies.<sup>5</sup> February 15<sup>th</sup> marked British surrender of the island—a feat that took two weeks rather than the expected six months.<sup>6</sup> It was also the first day of the Chinese New Year.

Six days later Operation Sook Ching began.

## INTRODUCTION

Operation Sook Ching was a twelve-day long cleansing of ethnic Chinese Singaporeans during World War II. The Japanese forces occupying the island rounded up Chinese men and killed those they determined to be untrustworthy. Before it was called off, the Sook Ching left somewhere between 5,000 and 50,000 people dead, and it is remembered as the largest recent tragedy of the country.<sup>7</sup> Despite the integral role race played in the crime, the Sook Ching has been memorialized as a massacre rather than a genocide. To gain a better understanding of the events that transpired, we must ask: what drove this decision, and what has the significance of the Sook Ching been in the years and decades after?

I will begin with an overview of the invasion and Sook Ching itself, with a focus on the targeting of ethnic Chinese. The tragedy that occurred in Singapore was not isolated; it followed the Rape of Nanking and other war crimes committed against ethnic Chinese throughout east and southeast Asia. Viewing the Sook Ching as part of a lineage of racially driven crimes expands our understanding of it. The second section will overview of the history of genocide studies. This covers contemporary times, from World War II forward. Included are a variety of sources that provide a context of genocides and genocide studies that the Sook Ching fits into. I will then define genocide as it is used in this paper and lay out how I conceive the Sook Ching should fit in this framework. I use the United Nations Genocide Treaty as the basis for my argument by stating that the Sook Ching fits three out of their five determinants of genocide. This is followed by addressing potential reasons for why Singapore as a country does not view the crime as a genocide. Reasons include economic ties to Japan and the ethnic tensions that led to Singapore's independence. This is followed by a series of counterpoints from both first- and second-hand sources arguing against a genocide classification. These arguments question the significance of the number of people killed, point out the gendered targeting of victims, and discuss the baselessness of the Japanese idea of Chinese guilt due to race.

In section three, I also discuss the politics of memory and how it can help us better understand the legacy of the Sook Ching. I address both Singaporean and Japanese perceptions here. For Singaporeans, a series of impactful war shrines and monuments reflected changing perspectives. From demands for justice to cries for racial harmony, Singapore's relationship to the Sook Ching has varied over the years. Japan has had an even more conflicted view of its wartime activities. Many people still visit the Yasukuni shrine each year, a site where several class A war criminals (those who committed crimes against peace) are interned.<sup>8</sup> There has been a move towards acknowledgement of war crimes, but a sense of Japanese victimhood still often surrounds such discussions. This is caused in part by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, tragedies so enormous they may be seen to eclipse any suffering inflicted during the war. The differing

memories here are of particular importance because they give us insight into how war crimes and genocides can be understood and misunderstood with time. I will close with a comparison of the Sook Ching to the Cambodian Genocide, which had a more successful conviction of war criminals. This acts as a case study for future genocide prevention and war crime trials. I will also discuss what genocide prevention success stories look like and why they're so difficult to identify. Ultimately, I argue that the Sook Ching should be redefined from a massacre to a genocide because of its compliance with the United Nations Genocide Treaty standards for defining genocide.

## SECTION ONE: THE SOOK CHING

Operation Sook Ching lasted from February 21 to March 4, 1942. It was a military operation carried out by the Japanese with the intent of executing anti-Japanese Chinese men between the ages of 18 and 50.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the Sook Ching began only a week after Japan initially invaded Singapore means that it is likely they had plans for the cleansing beforehand.<sup>10</sup> General Yamashita Tomoyuki was in charge of the occupation of Singapore. Although he clearly had a role in the Sook Ching, he argued that his men exceeded his expectations in executing a "severe disposal" of hostile Chinese, as he left his troops and marched on to Sumatra during the operation.<sup>11</sup> He was eventually hanged in the Tokyo Trials after the war without ever being tried for his crimes in Malaya.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to understand the demographics and layout of Singapore in order to understand the Sook Ching. In 1957, the date closest to the Sook Ching for which data is available, Singapore was 75.4% ethnic Chinese, 13.6% Malay, and 8.6% Indian.<sup>13</sup> These percentages were likely similar to those during the Sook Ching. In addition, I have included below a map of killing and burial sites to help orient the reader (Figure 1).

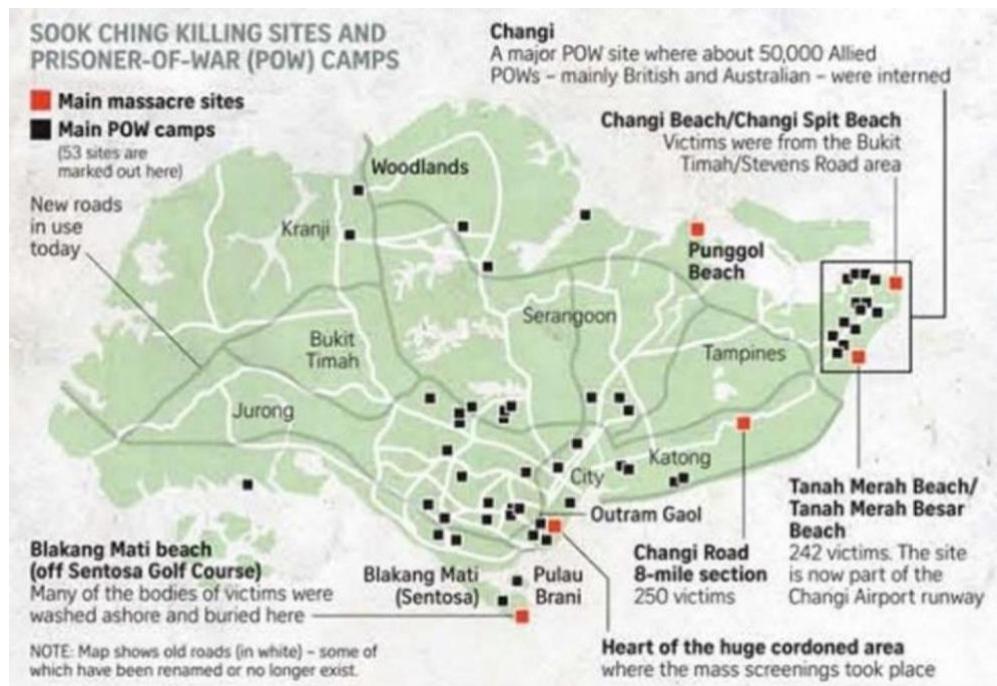


Figure 1: Sites of killings and burials<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, it is impossible to know exactly how many people were killed; the Japanese official figure is 5,000, while unofficial estimates reach as high as 50,000.<sup>15</sup> Japanese Lieutenant Colonel Hishakari Takafumi, who was at that time a newspaper correspondent, stated that the troops had been instructed to kill 50,000 Chinese and had reached half that number by the time the operation was called off.<sup>16</sup> One cause of uncertainty was the method used to dispose of bodies. They were typically taken to shorelines around the island and shot so that their bodies could be washed out to sea by the waves.<sup>17</sup> Despite the inability to specify the number of deaths, the Sook Ching was certainly the largest single atrocity in the Southeast Asian portion of World War II, and served to strengthen, rather than weaken, the Chinese identity of Singapore.<sup>18</sup> It serves as a good example of how national identities can be built around collective suffering, which I discuss in-depth in my later section titled “Politics of Memory”.

During the Sook Ching, Chinese Singaporean men were called into screening centers, where the *Kempeitai*, the Japanese military police, determined whether they were anti-Japanese.<sup>19</sup> Five groups were targeted in these procedures:

(1) members of the volunteer force;

(2) Communists;

(3) looters;

(4) those possessing arms; and

(5) those whose names appeared in lists of anti-Japanese suspects maintained by Japanese intelligence.<sup>20</sup>

There are several accounts, however, that state these qualifiers were not strictly upheld, and that the decision of whether someone was innocent or guilty was often arbitrary. For instance, all men who spoke the Hainanese dialect were targeted, as they were all considered communists.<sup>21</sup> At Jalan Besar, one of the screening centers, men who wore glasses were selected because they were assumed to be educated and therefore guilty, something with no ties to the five official categories.<sup>22</sup> Once a man was determined to be guilty, he was loaded onto a lorry alongside other Singaporeans and transported to a remote portion of the island to be gunned to death.<sup>23</sup> Known execution locations are Punggol, Changi, Katong, Tanah Merah and Blakang Mati, and several other sites are acknowledged by local people, although no concrete proof has been yet discovered.<sup>24</sup> The operation was initially meant to last three days, but the Chinese population of Singapore was 600,000 in 1941, far too many to be processed in that time.<sup>25</sup> For this reason the Sook Ching was extended.

Surprisingly, the Japanese required little force to get these men to screening centers. In interviews sourced from the Singapore National Archives, Charlie Fook Ying Cheah, an eyewitness to the invasion, stated, “The people were very calm. You can say they just simply took it lightly. Because the British put up the propaganda: ‘Oh, these Japanese, they got these match-box aeroplanes. They can’t do much harm.’ So the people were, more or less, quite confident.”<sup>26</sup>

Singaporeans, for the most part, believed that as bad as the invasion might seem, the British would come back and take care of things. This did not occur, and Japanese forces took Singapore and began to round up Chinese men. Cheah confirms that people were compliant with the summons: “Of course not knowing what [the summons] were all about, the people and myself were in fear that if the response was not there, they would use their soldiers to come out and physically check each individual flat. And that would make it worse for those of us caught remaining behind in the flats. So the bluff worked.”<sup>27</sup> The fact that civilians voluntarily presented themselves to Japanese soldiers makes it clear that most were not expecting to be killed, making their unjust deaths all the more tragic.

There is one notable case of Japanese resistance to the Sook Ching. Mamoru Shinozaki, a civilian administrator during Japanese occupation, actively helped to save tens of thousands of straits Chinese (the portion of the Chinese diaspora living in Singapore) and Eurasians during the proceedings.<sup>28</sup> In his words, the Sook Ching was “a crime that sullied the honour of the Japanese army.”<sup>29</sup> There were many other Japanese that also helped the locals in a more limited fashion. One helped a man because he spoke some Shanghaiese, a language the soldier spoke; another saved a family by telling them to stay inside during the summoning after seeing their mother praying to a Buddhist shrine for the Goddess of Mercy.<sup>30</sup> It is thus clear that the Japanese forces were not a unified whole, but rather were a diverse ensemble of individuals capable of making their own choices. In this light, those who aided the Chinese are all the more heroic, and those who followed orders to kill much harder to defend.

Chinese men were not the only victims of Japanese occupation. Although this thesis focuses on their suffering, it is important to note that many Singaporean women were victims of rape during Japanese occupation. Chinese women tended to be primary targets, as their ethnic group was already viewed with more disdain than their Malay peers.<sup>31</sup> During the beginning of the Sook Ching, many families hid their female children in fear of a repeat of the Rape of Nanking, a crime fresh in the region’s collective memory.<sup>32</sup> It was also common for girls and women to darken their faces, leave their hair untended, and wear conservative clothing to make themselves less attractive to Japanese men.<sup>33</sup> There are no concrete statistics on these rapes, and we are left with only sparse eyewitness accounts. Women were mistreated in other ways as well. I’ll include here a brief mention of the comfort women system; it was instituted by the Japanese military to decrease rapes, a goal that ultimately failed.<sup>34</sup> Somewhere around 139,000 women were taken from Japanese occupied territories to serve the army full time, often getting shipped straight to battle fronts under the listing of “military supplies.”<sup>35</sup> According to Lee, “80 per cent of these ‘women’ were aged between 14 and 18.”<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, Singaporeans at the time were aware that the Japanese occupation was driven by race. In her seminal book *The Syonan Years*, Lee Geok Boi quotes Thambiraju Paramasivan, an Indian man who lived through the period: “Serangoon Road residents would go to Race Course Road open field and put up Indian flag so that Japanese bombers would not drop their bombs there.”<sup>37</sup> She also quotes a European who feared for his daughter’s safety: “There was a trend of feeling also that [the Japanese] will not harm the Malay families.”<sup>38</sup> Contemporary residents’ awareness of the Sook Ching’s racial dimensions is a very persuasive argument for the event’s

revision from massacre to genocide. Had the killings been more indiscriminate, they could be viewed as part of a wartime massacre.

The legacy of the Sook Ching took several forms. An important one to note is that of ethnic identities in Malaysia as a whole. Many influential British residents had hoped to form a multiracial identity in Malaysia, but the Sook Ching drove home the idea that racial splits within the country were still of great importance.<sup>39</sup> Schools were formed in an attempt to unite the colony, but few Malays attended, and the Chinese majority was distrustful of the Western-centered education they received.<sup>40</sup> This distrust led to a widespread independence movement that ultimately failed due to a lack of Malay support, and independence only came once the nation formed coalitions of ethnically unified groups.<sup>41</sup> This early emphasis on ethnic divides set a precedent for Singapore's eventual independence.

## SECTION TWO: A CASE FOR GENOCIDE

This section contains an overview of the history of genocide studies, definitions of genocide, an explanation of the United Nations Genocide Treaty, an analysis of the Sook Ching through this lens, and counterpoints to my argument

### THE HISTORY OF GENOCIDE STUDIES

Any discussion of genocide must begin with Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin was a Polish Jew famous for the coinage of the term genocide as well as for his subsequent study of the subject.<sup>42</sup> His work began prior to World War II but did not become truly popular until after the war ended. His ultimate goal was to outlaw genocide not only as a war crime, but as a crime in and of itself.<sup>43</sup> As he states in his work titled "Genocide," "Genocide is not only a crime against the rules of war, but also a crime against humanity."<sup>44</sup> Lemkin recognized the importance of delegating the responsibility of trial to an international body to ensure true justice.<sup>45</sup> Essentially, he set the standard for genocide studies in following years. Lemkin's desire for international courts was fulfilled by the post-World War II trials, of which the Tokyo Trial is of greatest significance in relation to the Sook Ching. Unfortunately, perpetrators of the Sook Ching were not brought to justice at these trials, setting the stage for my research in modern times.

Gregory Stanton published his Ten Stages of Genocide framework in 1986, helping to further refine the study of genocide. These stages are Classification, Symbolization, Discrimination, Dehumanization, Organization, Polarization, Preparation, Persecution, Extermination, and Denial.<sup>46</sup> Stanton's suggested prevention methods for each stage are significant in the context of my argument, as they reflect events and processes that occurred during the Sook Ching. At the Classification stage, he recommends the building of institutions that transcend racial or ethnic boundaries to encourage cross cultural communication. At the Denial stage, he suggests that the perpetrators be tried by an international body to bring some semblance of justice for the victims.<sup>47</sup> These suggestions are fairly in line with the trajectories of genocides that have occurred before and after Stanton structured his framework, and portions of it can be effectively applied to the Sook Ching.

Adopted in 1998, The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court established the International Criminal Court and four main crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.<sup>48</sup> This was a step in the right direction for genocide prevention, as it created a framework with which to prosecute these varieties of war crimes. Since this court is fairly new, we will have to wait and see what real effects it has in the long term. However, it does bode well for the future of genocide prevention. Although it was created long after the Sook Ching, I would argue that some acts committed in its duration would qualify as genocide under this statute.

In 2002, Samantha Power published *A Problem from Hell*, an analysis of the United States' understanding of and responses to genocides around the world. It is a comprehensive book that covers the history of genocide beginning with the Armenian genocide in 1915 to present day issues. One important point Power makes is her suggested cause for increased US interest in anti-genocide laws. She attributes this to the newfound awareness that the United States' refusal to engage in discussions about anti-genocide law has damaged its international reputation.<sup>49</sup> I point this out as a counter to Japan's response, which has been a widespread disinterest in pursuing anti-genocide legislation. I will expand upon their reasoning in my section addressing politics of memory, but I include this here as an introduction to the idea.

In 2006, The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle was formally endorsed by the United Nations Security Council.<sup>50</sup> Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon released a report titled *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect* that same year, which endorsed the R2P. Under R2P, individual governments agreed to do as much as possible to prevent mass atrocities from occurring. It is also stated that a UN mandate is required to give legitimacy to any movement to follow R2P, a safeguard against states using it to justify intervention into other countries.<sup>51</sup> According to Ban Ki-Moon, cases of R2P being invoked without force outnumber those with force: "If you actually look at the last several years, we've invoked the responsibility to protect, at least on the [UN] Secretariat side eight or nine times. Only in one of those cases, with Libya, was it tied to the use of sanctions or military force."<sup>52</sup> The Responsibility to Protect is a strong resource to help prevent and address war crimes. Although R2P has no impact on the Sook Ching, I include it here to suggest that any push towards preventing genocide should be examined critically from all angles. For this reason, I have been meticulous with my research and have run my ideas past multiple critics.

In 2014, the United Nations published their Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes. This document provides guidelines for detecting early signs of an impending genocide, establishing risk factors and matching indicators.<sup>53</sup> Genocide is one of the crimes targeted under this framework. They state, "Genocide, according to international law, is a crime committed against members of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Even though the victims of the crimes are individuals, they are targeted because of their membership, real or perceived, in one of these groups."<sup>54</sup> This framework will hopefully be used with success to decrease genocides in future years.

I would like to note here that the sources I have addressed so far have a regional bias. We have just overviewed what genocide studies tend to look like in the West, as most efforts for defining it have taken place in that hemisphere; these studies are altered a bit in an Eastern Asian context. David Frank argues that international anti-genocide norms and their institutional incorporation have led to a quick decrease in genocide risks in East Asia.<sup>55</sup> He points out that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) nations have entered a relatively peaceful period, particularly when compared to just 50 years ago. The one clear exception is the current genocide of the Rohingya in Myanmar, in which a minority Muslim group is facing violent persecution by a Buddhist majority; this stands out even more starkly when compared to the relative peace of its surrounding countries.<sup>56</sup> Frank also cites Alexander Bellamy, who lists four reasons that genocidal activities have slowed in Asia:

The dramatic and sustained decline of genocide and mass atrocities in East Asia was not produced by any single factor, but by the combined effects of at least four important ones: a reduction in the deliberate targeting of civilians in war, growing incomes across the region, creeping democratization, and changing ideas about the nature of sovereignty and the responsibilities for protection.<sup>57</sup>

All these points are important, but for my purposes I will refer to the fourth. Essentially, this point demonstrates that norms can and do change. ASEAN's incorporation of the R2P doctrine caused a shift in norms, leading to a decrease in genocidal action. These changes do not come about organically, but are rather pushed forwards by initiatives such as translated versions of the R2P and incorporation of the ideas into educational curriculums.<sup>58</sup> I bring this article up to show how the study and prevention of genocide has formed in Asia, and what initiatives have succeeded in preventing further atrocities.

## ARGUMENT FOR SOOK CHING AS GENOCIDE

There are many definitions of genocide, such as that by Mark Levene, a professor and author specializing in genocide. He writes, "Genocide occurs when a state, perceiving the integrity of its agenda to be threatened by an aggregate population—defined by the state in collective or communal terms—seeks to remedy the situation by the systematic, *en masse* physical elimination of that aggregate, *in toto*, or until it is no longer perceived to represent a threat."<sup>59</sup> This definition makes the distinction that the event needs not have fully destroyed a population, but only needs to have decreased it to the point of no longer being perceived as a threat. This definition has the advantage of being concise and easy to read; however, for the purpose of my paper, I will use the United Nations' definitions and qualifications of genocide. I do so to ensure that I utilize the most widely known and embraced delineation of the term, so that if one contests my points it results from faulty premises, rather than faulty definitions.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted its genocide convention on December 9, 1948 as a result of World War II atrocities.<sup>60</sup> This treaty defines genocide as

"... any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."<sup>61</sup>

I claim that the Sook Ching qualifies as a genocide due to its fulfillment of three points on this list. Point A, killing members of the group, occurred when Japanese soldiers executed thousands of Chinese men *en masse*. Point B, causing serious bodily or mental harm, occurred in line with point A and also encompasses those citizens who faced attempted murder but survived (such as Cheng Kwong Yu, whose words will later be used as reference to prove the lack of distinction used when selecting victims). Point C is particularly important to my argument as it specifies that an act committed to destroy a group "in part" may be designated a genocide; it is clear that the Sook Ching was indeed intended to destroy a significant portion of the Singaporean Chinese population. As far as my research shows, no substantive evidence of points D or E exists in relation to the Sook Ching. However, as the Sook Ching fulfills three of the above criteria when only one is necessary to qualify an event as a genocide, I state that the Sook Ching should indeed be labeled as such.

One important point in determining if the Sook Ching was a genocide is that Japanese forces had a premeditated number of killings they were to commit, at least according to Lieutenant Colonel Hishakari Takafumi.<sup>62</sup> The government had established plans for the Sook Ching in their "Implementation Guideline for Manipulating Overseas Chinese," drawn up in late December 1941.<sup>63</sup> As a reminder, the operation had five categories of targeted Chinese: members of the volunteer force, Communists, looters, those possessing arms, and those whose names appeared in lists of anti-Japanese suspects maintained by Japanese intelligence.<sup>64</sup> There are several accounts, however, that state these were not strictly upheld, and the decision of whether someone was innocent or guilty was often arbitrary. In a *Straits Times* interview, Cheng Kwong Yu, a survivor of the massacre, described the selection process: "There was a crowd that came and picked us out. They had a liking for those who were big."<sup>65</sup> He also stated that there were neither trials nor additional questions asked. All of the people around him were Chinese.<sup>66</sup> These accounts demonstrate that there were ulterior motives beyond simply weeding out opposition. In postwar trials, Hishakari also stated that he had been instructed to kill 50,000 Chinese in Singapore; he was later told it was impossible to kill this number, and the massacre was called off.<sup>67</sup> This is a

condemning statement: if the killings were executed not to target threats to the state, but rather to fill a quota, it negates any claim of justified killing.

Of additional importance is the question of genocide versus politicide and democide. Rudolph Rummel, a professor at the University of Hawaii, differentiates genocide from other forms of state violence.<sup>68</sup> He believes that genocide is a killing of people due to group memberships such as religion and race, while politicide is a killing due to political ideology or for political purposes.<sup>69</sup> Democide encompasses these two, along with mass murders, as long as they are committed by a government. The Sook Ching would fall somewhere between genocide and politicide on this scale, depending on how significant one believes race to have been in the proceedings. Although the United Nations genocide qualifications is the main framework used in this paper, definitions such as Rummel's serve to complement it.

Gregory Stanton's "Ten Stages of Genocide" is another useful tool to use alongside the UN's Genocide Convention. The seventh stage, Preparation, rings particularly true. As Stanton states, "Leaders often claim that 'if we don't kill them, they will kill us', disguising genocide as self-defense. Acts of genocide are disguised as counter-insurgency if there is an ongoing armed conflict or civil war."<sup>70</sup> This is reflected in the Kempeitai's targeting of Singaporean Chinese, particularly with their portrayal of the men as a threat to Japanese occupation due to their race. Stanton's system proves useful for identifying the stages of genocides and can potentially help us to prevent further crimes.

## REASONS FOR SINGAPORE'S ACCEPTANCE OF MASSACRE DESIGNATION

Singapore's history is important to consider when analyzing reasons for the Sook Ching not being labeled a genocide. After the Japanese occupation period, the British took back Singapore in 1945; it remained under British control until September 16, 1963, when it merged with Malaysia.<sup>71</sup> Singapore remained part of Malaysia until August 9, 1965, when it became independent.<sup>72</sup> This independence came about as a result of clashes between the majority ethnic Chinese population in Singapore and the Malay population in Malaya and in Sabah and Sarawak states in Borneo.<sup>73</sup> This will be discussed in more depth in the section titled "Singapore's Memory." Singapore's trajectory of nation-building subsequently broke off from the route taken by most other Southeast Asian countries. Their emphasis was not on creating a mythological history for themselves or shunning foreigners but rather on modernizing as quickly as possible and making themselves an indispensable part of the region.<sup>74</sup> This, when compared to the trajectories of neighboring countries such as Cambodia and Thailand, differentiated Singapore and helps to explain the importance of a cohesive Singaporean identity. Singapore's small size also became a blessing; infrastructure overhauls for the entire country were possible, and centering itself as a commercial center was feasible.<sup>75</sup> Ultimately, it is likely that an initial lack of independence and subsequent turmoil made it hard for Singapore, either as a colony or young nation, to focus its energy on re-qualifying the Japanese war crimes.

Singapore's precarious geopolitical standing also contributed to forward-looking policies. I've already discussed some issues stemming from clashes with Malaysia, but Singapore had another

neighbor who began making bold international moves in the 1960s. Indonesia announced their *Konfrontasi*, or Confrontation, on January 20th, 1963.<sup>76</sup> It lasted from 1963 to 1966 and was a response to the perceived “neo-colonialist project” of creating the Federation of Malaysia.<sup>77</sup> The *Konfrontasi* included bombings, armed incursions, and propaganda in conflicted regions such as Singapore.<sup>78</sup> Indonesia’s government had no initial issues with the Malaysian government’s plan, but the Brunei Revolt of December 1962 changed its position. The revolt was instigated by insurgents who did not want Brunei to join Malaysia and was quickly silenced by British forces.<sup>79</sup> This signaled to Indonesia that the Malaysian government was still a pawn of the British, and an armed insurgency was superior to a diplomatic solution. Singapore was one of several targeted areas, with the first bomb attack occurring eight days after it joined Malaysia.<sup>80</sup> International threats to Singapore’s security likely dissuaded the government from pushing for retribution against Japan, one of its few allies (as I will discuss momentarily).

A lack of international pressure may have also played a role in Singapore’s reluctance to push for more comprehensive recognition of the Sook Ching. The International Military Tribunal was active during the late 1940s, and tried war crimes.<sup>81</sup> Since Singapore was not independent until the 1960s, the majority of public awareness of the crimes had vanished. It is also likely that Singapore as a young nation had little interest in further destabilizing its relationship with other countries. It had broken with Malaysia and desperately needed allies; Japan became one of its very first.

Japan also has a history of crimes against the Chinese, setting a precedent for the Sook Ching Massacre. This may also contribute to why it has not drawn international attention; the crimes in mainland China were so violent and numerous that they may dwarf it in comparison. The 1937 “Rape of Nanking” sticks in collective memory as one of the greatest crimes of the Second World War, in which Japanese soldiers massacred hundreds of thousands of Chinese and raped 300,000 in three months.<sup>82</sup> The fact that Nanking was the capital of China when it was sacked makes the tragedy all the more poignant. Events in mainland China such as the Nanking Massacre typically outweigh the comparatively smaller atrocities enacted in Southeast Asia, both in the criminal courts and in collective history. This makes it harder for countries such as Singapore to push for recognition of Japanese war crimes.

Another reason that Singapore has not pursued charges against Japan may be the economic relationship between the two countries. Because Singapore was not independent until 1965, it could not establish an individual relationship prior to that point. It is also important to note that soon after independence, Singapore and Japan agreed on a reparations payment of \$50 million Singapore dollars.<sup>83</sup> This 1967 agreement set a strong precedent for diplomatic relations between both parties. In the same year, the Civilian War Memorial, the primary location for remembrance of the Sook Ching, was unveiled. At its unveiling, Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister of an independent Singapore, stated: “We meet not to rekindle old fires of hatred nor to seek settlements for blood debts. We meet to remember the men and women who are the hapless victims of one of the fires of history. We suffered together. It told us that we shared one destiny.”<sup>84</sup> Clearly, there had been a move towards forgiving the crimes of history.

The choice to establish diplomatic relations with Japan aided Singapore greatly in the decades that followed. In the 1970s, Japan became Singapore's largest trading partner and foreign investor.<sup>85</sup> Singapore also began to incorporate many aspects of Japanese society and culture, such as neighborhood police posts and Japanese food.<sup>86</sup> These ties made it both impractical and undesirable to focus on the country's violent past. This is still true in the modern day; currently, Japan is Singapore's fifth largest foreign investor (making up 6.9% of investment), and Singapore is Japan's fourth largest (13.2%).<sup>87</sup> The two countries have also engaged in multiple trade agreements. By increasing economic involvement, Singapore is increasingly unlikely to push for a revitalization of post-World War II anger. As two regional superpowers, Japan and Singapore have a responsibility to maintain diplomatic relations, something that could become destabilized if Singapore publicly called for a revision of the Sook Ching Massacre.

It is very difficult to categorize and prosecute genocide. This is particularly true when examining a regime like that of wartime Japan, in which a verdict on Hirohito's guilt is itself difficult to reach. He was never tried for his involvement in World War II.<sup>88</sup> In an environment as contentious as this, it becomes all the more difficult to address the question of genocide guilt. Who would be held accountable? Perhaps the leaders of the Kenpeitai, or military police, in Singapore; however, these were simply the people acting out orders given by their superiors. The people issuing the orders would likely be next in line. These would be either Chief of Planning and Operations Tsuji Masanobu, or Chief of Staff Hayashi Tadahiko.<sup>89</sup> However, what about Hideki Tojo, the prime minister during the Sook Ching Massacre? He was found guilty of waging war illegally and violating international law, as well as inhumane treatment of prisoners.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps he would be the best choice, as he has already been found guilty of comparable crimes. This discussion highlights the difficulty of genocide trials, in that the appropriate object of trial is often not a single entity but the entire system. This is complicated further when the perpetrating system has dissolved, as the Japanese military government guilty for the Sook Ching Massacre has. Addressing these difficulties is a long and arduous task that garners little international attention. Although not impossible, the idea of reviving a crime as old as the Sook Ching seems unrealistic. The Cambodian Genocide is still being legally hashed out over 40 years after it began; how can we expect this same diligence for a 77-year-old crime of a comparatively tiny scale?

## COUNTERPOINTS

One argument against the qualification of the Sook Ching as a genocide was its focus on quantifying the people killed. Because the death count, which ranges from 5,000 to 50,000, pales in comparison to events such as the Holocaust and the Khmer Rouge Genocide, some argue that the Sook Ching does not fit the definition. However, the UN genocide convention does not mention any number of deaths needed to qualify an event as a genocide. Indeed, some qualifiers do not even require deaths to occur. For this reason, I argue that the number of deaths does not disqualify the Sook Ching from being defined as a genocide.

Another possible point of contention is the fact that the Sook Ching Massacre did not focus on killing all Chinese Singaporeans, but targeted only men aged 18-50. This, however, does not disqualify it, as there is a precedent set by the Srebrenica Genocide of 1995. In this small Bosnian

town, 8,372 Muslim males were massacred by the Serbian military government.<sup>91</sup> Although this tragedy was limited to men, and thus was clearly not meant to destroy Muslim Serbs in their entirety, the act was ruled a genocide in the 2007 International Criminal Tribunal.<sup>92</sup> After all, the United Nations uses the language “in whole or in part,” and men are certainly a part of the population. Because of the ruling on the Srebrenica Genocide, I argue that the Sook Ching should qualify as a genocide as well.

I will also mention here a more fundamental criticism of my argument. Robert Cribb, Professor of Asian History at the Australian National University, pointed out potential issues with this thesis’s usage of the statement “in whole or in part” pulled from the UN treaty. He writes:

The specification 'in whole or in part' in the Genocide Convention is problematic. Clearly it can't be just 'in whole' or genocidaires would escape by sparing (or not reaching) a single potential victim. On the other hand, it feels to me that it seriously stretches the definition if any killing of some members of another ethnic group is identified as genocide. The extended definition would make it difficult to exclude the killing of enemy soldiers in battle from being regarded as genocide. In choosing a definition of genocide, I think it's important to consider what other cases would become genocide and whether the overall effect is morally or analytically acceptable.

It feels to me that genocide should refer to an attempt to destroy a community, even if that community is only part of its overall ethnic/religious/national group. Thus, the murder of all the members of an ethnic community in a town, district or province could be considered genocidal, as in Bosnia, whereas the assassination of political leaders of that community or the execution of militia members would not.

In the case of Sook Ching, it seems to me that although the victims were all Chinese, they were not targeted because of their ethnicity but because they were identified (by a flawed and ramshackle method) as individuals likely to resist Japanese rule. Many Chinese were 'screened' and released because they were judged to be harmless. Release in that way is not usually a characteristic of genocide.<sup>93</sup>

Cribb’s words allow us to have a thoughtful discussion, and he raises many valid points, which I will take a moment to counter here. Firstly, I argue that the very fact that Chinese men were targeted specifically is due to their race. It is true that there was significant Chinese resistance to Japanese rule; however, this is because there was a significant Japanese presence in China. Chinese people were not inherently more prone to dissent. The fact that Japan was occupying areas with large Chinese populations simply made it more likely that those pushing back against it would be Chinese. General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the man in charge of the Singaporean occupation, believed that Singaporean Chinese were more combatant due to a small group’s strong resistance to Japanese occupation of the island.<sup>94</sup> I argue that this misrepresents the population, as due to a demographic majority of Chinese in Singapore, it is most likely that any resistance group there would be primarily ethnic Chinese.

Despite this, one could say that Japanese forces had an inclination that ethnic Chinese abroad might side with their countrymen and cause disruptions. This was, according to Cribb, mostly due to their significant population in Singapore and a history of involvement in mainland Chinese politics.<sup>95</sup> However, there was no direct evidence of potential insurgency, as Japanese forces had not previously occupied Singapore. The idea that racial ties might cause problems is one that may at first seem compelling but upon further examination becomes more problematic. Indeed, this approach appears to me to be similar to that used in Japanese American internment, where ethnic ties were seen as an inherent sign of guilt.

As for the fact that these Chinese Singaporeans were killed for political reasons, I will again reference my point about the obscurity of politicide in my “Definition of Genocide” section. Although I do agree that there are many elements of the Sook Ching that tie in with political violence, and that ideally it would fall somewhere on the scale between politicide and genocide, this differentiation strikes me as divisive. When race plays as strong of a role as it did in the Sook Ching killings, I believe it irresponsible to dismiss its importance under the aegis of political killings. This detracts from the fact that these men would simply not have died had they been a race other than Chinese. By saying that they died for political reasons, one implies that it was acceptable that Japanese forces determined political leanings by ethnic ties. If this mentality is accepted for the Sook Ching, how is it different from saying that Japanese American internment was in fact a legitimate, non-racist decision on the part of the United States’ government?

## SECTION THREE: POLITICS OF MEMORY

In this section I will lay out the Singaporean and Japanese politics of memory relating to the Sook Ching, focusing on their significance as represented by physical monuments as well as presenting possible reasons for the differences we see.

### SINGAPORE’S MEMORY

In modern day, each February 15 is a day of remembrance during which Singaporean school children are instructed to think about the suffering that their people underwent during the period of Japanese occupation. This remembrance is not limited to those of Chinese ancestry and instead is meant as an experience of collective suffering amongst all ethnicities.<sup>96</sup> This was an intentional strategy that Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew enacted prior to Singapore’s expulsion from Malaysia. This unification around a tragic event serves to create a sense of national identity, regardless of accuracy. After all, it was primarily Chinese Singaporeans who suffered, but the focus on collective suffering serves to soothe these racial divisions.

War memorials were important for both Singapore and Japan. On Singapore’s side, the Civilian War Memorial, the centralized post for remembrance of the Sook Ching, is particularly notable. As seen in Figure 2, it is composed of four pillars known as “The Chopsticks,” each meant to represent an ethnic group of Singapore that suffered under Japanese rule: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Eurasian.<sup>97</sup> They represent racial unity by merging at their bases. Racial unity, however, was not the initial goal of the monument. It was constructed in response to widespread

demand by the Chinese Singaporean community as an acknowledgement of their suffering in particular.<sup>98</sup>



**Figure 2:** The Civilian War Memorial<sup>99</sup>

What explains this shift in commemoration? Kevin Blackburn's article "The Collective Memory of the Sook Ching Massacre and the Creation of the Civilian War Memorial of Singapore" gives a possible answer. An essential argument Blackburn makes is that the Sook Ching was harnessed by leaders of the young nation after its independence as a method of creating a national identity.<sup>100</sup> Singapore's independence was not voluntary. It had become a part of Malaysia in 1963, but within two years, racial and political tensions came to the forefront of politics. Chinese Singaporeans felt discriminated against due to affirmative action policies put in place to benefit Malaysians, and racial tensions reached a peak during the July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1964 riots between Malay and Chinese youths in Singapore.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, Singapore's strong economy was a perceived threat to the central power of Kuala Lumpur. In conflict with past agreements, Singapore continued to face internal trading restrictions.<sup>102</sup> For these reasons, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman expelled Singapore from the nation with a vote of 126-0, leaving Lee Kuan Yew, previously the leader of the People's Action Party--the primary party of Singapore--the unexpected head of a nation.<sup>103</sup> He had only been warned of the impending separation three days before and was unable to mend the rift despite his best efforts. A tearful quote from the press conference reads "For me, it is a moment of anguish. All my life, my whole adult life, I have believed in merger and unity of the two territories."<sup>104</sup> Lee Kuan Yew voiced the opinion of many Singaporeans in this quote, and the new country was left to create a sense of self.

The nature of this separation is significant because it drives home the importance of creating a national identity for the new leaders of Singapore. Typically, nations have a sense of national identity prior to being formed. Whether it be ethnic, political, or simply strong geographical ties, it is atypical to encounter a nation such as Singapore in which its very existence was, to some degree, nonconsensual. For this reason, leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew used the tragedy of the Sook Ching to foster a sense of national cohesion. His sponsorship of the Civilian War Memorial represented this goal of racial unity. Although it, to some degree, diluted the suffering of Chinese Singaporeans by claiming that all citizens suffered equally, it did present a more unifying message. Lee Kuan Yew was not necessarily acting selfishly. It may seem to our eyes that he determined the Sook Ching an insignificant enough crime that one could reinterpret it without much consequence; however, he was himself a survivor of the genocide. Lee had escaped off one of the lorries transporting men to be killed, barely escaping death.<sup>105</sup> Clearly, he was acting not from self-interest but from what he believed would be best for the nation.

There was one subversive addition that commemorated Chinese losses. 600 funeral urns were interred below the monument, signifying the ashes of Chinese victims quietly settling into their final resting place.<sup>106</sup> The bodies of those murdered in the Sook Ching form the foundation for the memorial we see today. When I visited the memorial in 2018, I was unable to find any English note of the urns' presence. Although I do not know if they were mentioned in any other languages, this silent acknowledgement of Chinese suffering fills a gap left by the race-blind acknowledgements of the memorial itself. The complex history of the Civilian War Memorial demonstrates how collective memory can both be used and subverted for national interests.

There is also an argument to be made that the Japanese occupation influenced Singapore's eventual independence. Under Japanese rule, residents of Singapore were forced to contemplate their own racial and political identities. During the occupation, Malays were typically treated well, and often became pro-Japanese.<sup>107</sup> Straits Chinese typically held opposing views because they were treated poorly. After Japanese forces were driven out, the divides within communities often became contentious. Ahmad Khan, a Singaporean who investigated wartime collaborators, stated, "If the Japanese Occupation may not have achieved anything else...it did create...political awakening."<sup>108</sup> It is quite possible that the racial rifts which formed during occupation played a role in Singapore's eventual expulsion from Malaysia.

Once Singapore was independent, it had to create its own identity. As I mentioned before, Lee Kuan Yew wanted to avoid a racial split for this determination, so he decided to emphasize collective suffering to unify the country. Wang Gungwu, a Singaporean scholar of China and the Chinese Diaspora, discusses another route and reason for creating a collective Singaporean identity. He references Singapore's national heritage and nation-building. Singaporean leaders made a conscious decision to de-emphasize any sense of history in their early years.<sup>109</sup> According to Minister S. Dhanabalan, this was because "we were all too preoccupied with surviving the present to worry about recording it for the future."<sup>110</sup> This sentiment was pushed even further by a fear that hunting for history would divide the nation. As a multiethnic country born of a colony, worries were that searching for history would either lead back to Europe or to each ethnicity's home country.<sup>111</sup> These concerns ran so deeply that history as a subject was dropped from primary

school curriculums in 1972.<sup>112</sup> All of this is to say that for a period, Singapore had little, if any, cohesive sense of history or identity.

It was only in the 1980s that people began to speak seriously about the detriments of lacking a national history. Essentially, people worried that without any binding history, Singapore would risk dissolution if ever threatened by a conquering force.<sup>113</sup> In other words, if their economic power and physical location were shaken, what cultural ties would remain? For this reason, the 1990s saw the beginning of a nation building initiative. This led to a standardized National Education in 1997, which also stemmed from the fact that “it was found that many Singaporeans...did not know how Singapore became an independent nation...[,] when Singapore gained independence, and that Singapore was once part of Malaysia.”<sup>114</sup> At the same time, the memoir of Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew--who had retired from his post as Prime Minister-- was published, driving home the point that history was now of value.<sup>115</sup> The 1964 and 1969 race riots were referenced in this memoir as an example of what can happen if a nation does not address its racial tensions and create a sense of shared history.<sup>116</sup> Lee Kuan Yew’s memoir became the definitive telling of Singaporean history. The problem with this was that it made this history distinctly political. Lee Kuan Yew was the leader of the People’s Action Party (PAP), the single party that has run the country since its inception.<sup>117</sup> Using his memoir made Singapore’s history a partisan tale, and indeed made it more vulnerable to criticism.

The Sook Ching did not play a large role in this nation-building, because it was primarily one ethnic group that suffered during it. It would have weakened the national identity to focus too much on the suffering of only Chinese Singaporeans. It would also have harmed Singapore’s image after its breakup with Malaysia, as it fought hard to portray itself as multicultural rather than as only Chinese. It was easier to focus on events that preceded and followed the break than World War II era events, which would have less widespread sympathy with a 1990s population. This concern over racial tensions helps to explain why the Sook Ching was not redefined as a genocide. The attention that would have been paid to a mostly Chinese-based war crime would have re-emphasized racial divisions in Singaporean society.

It is also important to note that the Sook Ching was not an isolated incident. It was part of the larger occupation of Singapore by Japan, which had wider cultural impacts. One example is the education system set in place during *Syonan-to*, or occupation, which lasted from 1942 to 1945. After a one-month closure for reorganization, Japan reopened schools in April of 1942, just over a month after the Sook Ching.<sup>118</sup> Primary schools began mandatory Japanese classes in July, with students learning the Japanese anthem and celebrating Japanese festivals.<sup>119</sup> School attendance declined during the Japanese occupation. Families who could homeschooled their children, a custom enhanced by the fact that no secondary schools were open during *Syonan-to*.<sup>120</sup> This was likely due to the lowered quality in education, as much attention was paid to assimilation into Japanese culture and little to academic success. These same traits were found in the few universities left open, where many students likewise ceased attendance. It is likely that this shortage of good education played into postwar resentment of the Japanese, enhanced by the fact that education under the occupation focused on immersing students in the culture of the conquerors.

The war crime trials in Singapore are also important for our understanding of memory and retribution. Tsuji Masanobu, the primary architect of the Sook Ching, was never convicted for crimes relating to the genocide; it is likely the Kuomintang, the governing party in China, were sheltering him back in mainland China during the trials.<sup>121</sup> The war crime trials lasted from 1946 to 1948, and tried 1,101 men.<sup>122</sup> One thing that prevented the Sook Ching from receiving adequate attention in these trials was its timing. These trials addressed crimes from many parts of Asia and Oceania, not just those that occurred in Singapore. The Sook Ching was addressed last in the trials, which meant that many of the prosecutors and witnesses were tired and ready for the process to end.<sup>123</sup> Only seven men were tried. Two of these, Kawamura Saburo and Oishi Masayuki, received the death sentence, and the other five received life sentences that ended after five years when Japan regained its sovereignty.<sup>124</sup> There were 133 recipients of the death penalty from other crimes addressed in the Singapore trials. Compared to these, those responsible for the Sook Ching seemed lightly punished.<sup>125</sup>

It is likely that this comparatively light sentencing prevented victims from feeling free of their wartime experiences. This is echoed in the memories of some survivors. The Overseas Chinese Appeal Committee was formed during these trials with the singular goal of securing a death sentence for all convicted Japanese. The committee, along with two war widows, were permitted to watch the two hangings that did occur.<sup>126</sup> They wanted to watch these hangings so that they could feel some sort of justice for the crimes committed against them. Indeed, after the hangings one of the widows is quoted to have said, “I’m not satisfied. I want to see their faces to make sure they are dead.”<sup>127</sup> Even seeing two men put to death for their crimes did not satiate a need for justice. I believe that this lack of any collective sense of justice among Chinese Singaporeans is one of the main reasons the Sook Ching’s collective memory is so complex, as many believe those who perpetrated the crime were not held accountable.

In the decade following World War II, Singapore struggled to figure out how to deal with the Japanese who remained on the island. Organizations such as the Singapore Japanese Association reopened, and many members of the Japanese community returned to the island as “advisers” who succeeded in reviving themselves socially and economically with the use of wartime connections.<sup>128</sup> Local Japanese were thus able to regain their stature in Singaporean society, something that would likewise happen for non-Singaporean Japanese a couple decades later. In this case, stature is regained through economic, not social, means. As Bayly and Harper remind us,

By 1972 Southeast Asian countries purchased nearly 12 per cent of total Japanese exports and supplied 16 per cent of total imports. By 1979, 35.4 per cent of Japan’s total manufacturing investment...and 43 per cent of investment in mining was in Southeast Asia...’Even after the war,’ one Japanese historian has observed, ‘many Japanese businessmen and entrepreneurs still thought of Indonesia as a sort of second Manchuria.’<sup>129</sup>

Japan's economic superiority over newly independent Singapore made them a strong ally. This ties back into my earlier section discussing potential reasons for the Sook Ching not being acknowledged as a genocide. Economic ties can erase many historical injustices, and Singapore struggled with this dilemma after the war.

In the 1990s, Japan began to spread its influence socially, politically, and economically into the Southeast Asian region once again. This came as a result of their attempts to work as peacekeepers during the Gulf War.<sup>130</sup> Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki visited member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) from April to May of 1991 in an attempt to strengthen relations with the region, and in Singapore issued an apology for Japan's actions during the Sook Ching. He stated his "strong feeling of remorse for our country's act that caused unbearable suffering and grief among many people in the Asia-Pacific region," an apology that was not fully accepted by Singaporeans.<sup>131</sup> Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew stated that Japanese peacekeeping forces were unpopular because it was "like giving chocolate filled with whisky to an alcoholic."<sup>132</sup> Japan had not properly apologized for their actions during World War II, so why should they be trusted to once again arm themselves and interfere with international conflicts? Singapore's dissatisfaction with Japanese intervention 50 years after the Sook Ching demonstrates that the wrongs committed by their army had not been properly apologized for.

I will also include reference to Paul Slovic's study on psychic numbing here in order to further explain how genocide is viewed on a global scale. He proposes that a psychophysical function, the connection between the physical world and one's reaction to it, may explain why people have a difficult job registering the magnitude of mass killings. This model suggests that psychophysical numbing may result from being exposed to numbers too large to easily conceptualize.<sup>133</sup> However, this model suggests that empathy caps out at a certain point, but is maintained at that level of magnitude. Slovic, therefore, proposes another idea for why genocides may be received with little to no empathy. An earlier study that Slovic helped facilitate found that people were twice as likely to donate winnings to an identified child in need than to a general cause.<sup>134</sup> Shockingly, however, when another group was exposed both to the child in need and the statistics about a larger issue, their contributions to the child declined. Additionally, a follow-up study showed that when participants were primed with calculative thoughts, "simple arithmetic calculations," rather than emotive ones, they donated less.<sup>135</sup> Even more concerning is the fact that when Slovic and others ran an experiment to see how large a group must be to demonstrate a decrease in empathy, they found that a group as small as two may determine a significant drop in empathy.<sup>136</sup> It is likely that the Sook Ching's treatment was influenced by psychic numbing. The sheer number of people killed is enough to overwhelm the brain's capacity for empathy, something not helped by the fact that we typically discuss the genocide in terms of numbers, rather than personal stories or specific people.

Ultimately, Slovic determines that an important move to increase genocide prevention is an emphasis on rational thought. He references the successful ratification of the United Nations' Genocide Treaty, a rational choice made in 1948 to draw up a document with which genocide

might be prevented and punished.<sup>137</sup> I agree with his approach, and hope to contribute to this rational field of thought by constructing this thesis in a logical, straightforward manner.

## JAPAN'S MEMORY

I will include here a short discussion of Japan's memory of World War II, as I believe it is important to examine both sides' memories of the Sook Ching in order to better understand the crime. Comparisons between Germany and Japan are popular in the postwar period, and it is of note that Japan is typically considered to have the "better" postwar period, despite Germany arguably fighting a better strategic war overall.<sup>138</sup> This was largely due to the lack of acknowledgement of war crimes on the Japanese side, paired with a lack of public awareness after the war. Japan was allowed to move forward from their war legacy without the same punishment that Germany faced. The Yasukuni Shrine is a good example of problems with Japan's war memory. As seen in Figure 3, it is a shrine to those killed during war in Japan with a contentious history; several Class A war criminals, those who committed crimes against peace, were secretly interned there in 1978.<sup>139</sup> Public officials also made several visits to the shrine in the far right period of the 1980s, when many Japanese became more nationalist.<sup>140</sup> Among them was Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro in 1985, whose visit sparked widespread controversy due to the perceived tacit approval of those war criminals interned at the shrine.<sup>141</sup> This created tensions between those who had lost people close to them in wars, and those who treated the shrine as a physical embodiment of Japanese nationalism.



Figure 3: Yasukuni Shrine<sup>142</sup>

American General Douglas MacArthur established the Tokyo Trials, Japan's postwar trials, which played a great role in the determinations about Japan's future. The main issue was that Allied Powers had significant issues among themselves. The late 1940s brought about the escalation of the Cold War, and MacArthur decided that democratization and demilitarization were less important for Japan than reconstructing and rearming.<sup>143</sup> This allowed the allies to use the country as a supporter, but this came with many consequences. Nineteen Class A war criminal suspects were released, and only microfilms of the trial records were made available in select places.<sup>144</sup> This meant that there was an immense decrease in external pressure to fix war legacies in Japan. Because of this, it was not until the 1990s that Japan began to investigate its World War II era war crimes in greater detail. According to historian Sheila Miyoshi Jager, this was because "the newly current concept of 'memory' provided a broad public with a lens through which to reexamine the entire postwar order and discover missed chances or unresolved issues that might explain the current social and political instability."<sup>145</sup> It was also hastened by the fact that most eyewitnesses and victims were aging or dying. This revival in interest about World War II crimes contrasted with previous periods when Japan was notorious for ignoring wrongs committed in the eastern hemisphere during the war.

Another explanation of Japan's reluctance to confront their crimes relates to the Tokyo Trials. After the war concluded, victorious countries ran these trials to hold Japanese forces accountable for both starting the Pacific theater of the war and for their various war crimes.<sup>146</sup> The idea of "war responsibility" here alienated many Japanese citizens. Essentially, Japan was held entirely responsible for the wars with Allied powers and China during 1931 to 1945.<sup>147</sup> Many contemporary Japanese citizens, as well as later historians, disagree with this verdict. The fact that victor countries prosecuted Japan made it all but impossible for them to take any form of responsibility for beginning the war, both out of fear that Japan would thus avoid responsibility and because it would undermine their presentation of a "good war" that vindicated their actions.<sup>148</sup> Anger over this perceived hypocrisy made many in Japan less regretful of their country's war crimes. It is understandable that they felt this way; when the country prosecuting your war trials bombed civilians with nuclear weapons not once, but twice, it would likely be difficult to be as compassionate as during an impersonal trial. This demonstrates the importance of assigning responsibility on all sides, whether or not one force is considered the victor. Perhaps if other countries such as the United States had taken more responsibility for their wartime crimes, Japan might have had less reluctance to face their own.

An important note for why Japan may have been reluctant to acknowledge many crimes was because of the way their veterans were treated in the postwar period. The military bore the brunt of the blame for postwar destitution, and most discharged veterans had difficulty reestablishing themselves in the civilian world.<sup>149</sup> Because they were so disdained, many veterans were reluctant to speak out about their experiences in the war, and 48.3 percent of veterans wanted to speak but "found it perhaps impossible to be understood."<sup>150</sup> An additional problem was that of the people who did choose to share their experiences in immediate postwar times, as many bragged shamelessly about their victories and crimes without guilt.<sup>151</sup> It was not until the 1970s that many

veterans who felt shame spoke out, and by that time, a precedent of bravery and victory had already been set.

This all shows that Japanese memory and approach to war reconciliation was complex. Their desire to forget war crimes in the immediate postwar period did not stem from a collective evil or a diminution of the value of human life, but rather came in large part from civilian horror and misplaced blame. Many Japanese citizens who did not fight abroad did not know the extent of their army's crimes, and those who did often felt too socially threatened to speak out. Being aware of these reasons helps explain why memories of the Sook Ching have not been fully explored in Japan and may give us a leg up in preventing any similar forgetfulness in the future.

## COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSION

In this section I will discuss a comparison of the Sook Ching to the Cambodian Genocide, a discussion of success stories in genocide prevention, and my conclusion. The Cambodian Genocide is a good comparison because of its wider impact and more successful war crime trials. I bring up the issues relating to successful genocide prevention because it is not easy to determine what impact intervention had on a crime that never occurred. It might have been prevented due to this intervention, or for any myriad of other reasons. This makes studying histories such as that of the Sook Ching all the more important by providing context to discussions about future prevention.

### COMPARISON TO CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE

The Cambodian Genocide is particularly strong as a comparative case due to its regional proximity. Its history has little overlap with that of the Sook Ching, but the repercussions and eventual conviction of the Khmer Rouge's leaders set a precedent for the sort of verdict the Sook Ching deserves.

The Cambodian Genocide began in 1975, after the Khmer Rouge took power. They were a communist insurgent group that had been working for over a decade to gain power and named their regime Democratic Kampuchea (DK).<sup>152</sup> Their origin was built atop a legacy of US bombing in Cambodia. Lasting from 1969 to 1973, this violence gave the communist Pol Pot and his followers effective anti-US propaganda and a defense for their murder of enemies.<sup>153</sup> Killings were particularly violent and widely distributed; almost anyone could be perceived as an enemy of the state, for almost any reason.<sup>154</sup> There were three main groups targeted: religious groups, ethnic and racial minority groups, and the eastern Khmers, who lived near Vietnam.<sup>155</sup> Here, ethnic Chinese were again targeted. This time it was not because of their perceived dissidence but because of perceived laziness derived from their city dwelling.<sup>156</sup> Of their original population of 425,000 in 1975, only 200,000 had survived by 1979.<sup>157</sup>

Out of a population of 8 million, approximately 1.5 million Cambodians are estimated to have died during this time, many from executions and many from starvation.<sup>158</sup> Although we have learned much of this through oral histories, the prosecutors of the Cambodian Genocide also had

a bit of luck. Kang Khek Iev, often known as Deuch, oversaw the Khmer Rouge prison and extermination center Tuol Sleng. When the regime fell, he did not destroy the prison archives that documented the crimes which occurred there; instead, he made sure to murder almost all remaining prisoners.<sup>159</sup> These documents formed the foundation of many arguments by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia that investigated the genocide. This was a common thread throughout the Cambodian Genocide. Many top officials meticulously documented their actions, both out of ignorance of their coming fall and of the coming of the internet, which would allow their documents to be widely circulated.<sup>160</sup> This sort of written documentation is perhaps the most helpful tool genocide researchers can have. Unfortunately, the Sook Ching has significantly less written documentation, and so I must focus more on oral histories.

The Khmer Rouge was ousted by Vietnamese forces in 1979, but Pol Pot continued to lead an insurgent group from the Thai border until the group collapsed inward during 1996 to 1998.<sup>161</sup> Pol Pot died of illness in his sleep, never facing trial for his crimes.<sup>162</sup> Throughout this all, the United States and China continued to support the Khmer Rouge, and up until 1992, the United Nations supported Pol Pot's regime and considered the exiled Khmer Rouge government to be Cambodia's legitimate representatives.<sup>163</sup> This legacy of genocide acceptance, or even denial, shows us an alternative of how the Cambodian Genocide could have remained in collective memory had it not been for institutions such as the United Nations (which improved its handling of the situation after 1992) and their Genocide Convention. The establishment of international courts of law is of huge importance for the trial of crimes of this magnitude. Without the UN, Cambodia's legitimate government would have needed to face the power of both the United States and China to gain recognition for crimes committed. It is quite possible that these two countries could have used their economic and political influence to force Cambodia to do their will without ever using a military threat.

Despite these difficult circumstances, the situation is improving. Infrastructure is being rebuilt, land mines dug up, and new professionals are getting trained. Additionally, in November of 2018, the United Nations-backed Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia convicted two of Pol Pot's assistants of genocide.<sup>164</sup> This is the first ever verdict of its kind, as the organization had spent years collecting evidence (and faced widespread criticism for its slow movement). An important point here is how long it took the UN to establish an international tribunal to begin hearings. They did not begin this process until 1999, a full 20 years after the Khmer Rouge was removed from power.<sup>165</sup> Despite this long wait, the courts have successfully brought several criminals to justice. This long wait proves that the age of a crime does not make it ineligible for genocidal study. Although the Sook Ching is a significantly older crime, we have many firsthand records of what happened, along with documents from both sides of the genocide. The 20 years that passed before the Cambodian Genocide was officially examined by the UN proves that immediate action after a crime is not a prerequisite for bringing about justice.

The most important part of these proceedings for my argument are the methods through which the tribunal convicted these men of genocide. Prosecutors used the same language from the United Nations Convention on Genocide that I have used here in my own argument, namely that

the Khmer Rouge had the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”<sup>166</sup> This was then corroborated by the Khmer Rouge’s mass killings and deportations of ethnic Vietnamese, along with the ethnic Cham minority<sup>167</sup> and ethnic Chinese populations. The fact that prosecutors successfully used this language to convict people of genocide is very valuable to my case, as it sets a precedent for historical crimes such as the Sook Ching Massacre.

## SUCCESS STORIES

The importance of my research is to strengthen the precedent of genocide identification to prevent further crimes. The fact that the Sook Ching is an old crime does not diminish the net gain that would come of using it as a precedent in future preventative measures. Unfortunately, the very nature of genocide studies makes it difficult to identify failed genocides. Even when they have indisputably occurred, there tend to be deniers. As Christina Cliff, professor of political science at Franklin Pierce University stated, “[When] a regime (or group) has plans to commit a genocide but were stopped by external forces...[it] is difficult to discern, although you could argue that the NATO intervention in Libya prevented Qaddafi from mass slaughter, although whether his plans would have been legally defined as genocide is questionable.”<sup>168</sup> Herein lies the problem. Although we know that NATO intervened to halt Qaddafi’s mistreatment, we cannot determine with any great level of certainty that his regime would have progressed to genocide. Due to this uncertainty, we can only say that it is possible that an intervention prevented a genocide, not that it did so definitively. Using historical evidence of crimes such as the Sook Ching helps us identify dangerous patterns, and ideally allows us to intervene early enough that no tragedy occurs. It is crucial to build a definition of genocide and a catalogue of examples which we can pull from to address future crimes.

One of the strongest forms of genocide awareness comes from the communities that have formed online to keep people informed about potential and current genocides. Genocide Watch is perhaps the best known of these. Its website features a tab titled “Current Genocide Watch Alerts” that informs readers about potential areas of genocide around the world.<sup>169</sup> Features such as these allow public citizens to learn about global conflicts, and demonstrate that there is some level of care taken by those determining whether or not to intervene in other countries. Genocide Watch, and other websites like it, can enhance confidence in governing bodies, along with giving people the information needed to make personal decisions about activism or intervention. This is a clear marker of improvement in public awareness about genocide. At the time of the Sook Ching, it would have been near impossible to spread the news of it to distant countries in any sort of timely manner. Since the entire crime took only twelve days, and itself only began a week after Japanese occupation began, it is unlikely prevention could have happened concurrently. Nowadays, with publicized watches going on, it will hopefully become easier to predict and prevent future genocides. Redefining the Sook Ching will add to the catalogue of past genocides and will provide evidence and information that can be used to prevent future crimes.

## CONCLUSIONS

I have discussed a variety of reasons that the Sook Ching should be considered a genocide rather than a massacre. My argument utilizes the United Nations Genocide Convention's five qualifications for genocide, and states that because the Sook Ching fulfilled three, it should thus qualify as a genocide. I also give readers a background on the history of genocide studies, along with an in-depth history of the Sook Ching itself. This is accompanied by a series of counterpoints that defend the view that the Sook Ching was not a genocide, which I respond to. I then discussed the politics of memory on both sides of the invasion. I specifically focused on the use of war shrines and memorials in Singapore and wrote about how they were used by both Japan and Singapore to back up a political agenda. I finish with a comparison to the Cambodian Genocide and its similarities and differences to the Sook Ching. I will add a disclaimer here that my research is somewhat incomplete. Some sources I used here are tertiary because I was unable to procure more direct sources. Hayashi's writing about the Sook Ching is an example, as I was unable to read the Japanese plans myself. Finally, my argument is not merely an academic one, as I think the alteration of the label is important to set a precedent for future genocides. By labeling something like the Sook Ching a genocide, it will leave a record which we can reference in the future to bring justice to other mass tragedies.

In November of 2018, the Khmer Rouge was convicted of genocide in Cambodia for their crimes of the 1970s.<sup>170</sup> This ruling sets a strong precedent for genocide trials. Rather than only finding individuals guilty (though this is necessary as well), the government and system within which the genocide occurs were found guilty. I hope that this reaps benefits in the form of continued genocide convictions around the world, including the Sook Ching.

History, of course, is subjective. I will end with a quote from Talaat Pasha, initiator of the Armenian Genocide: "I have the conviction that as long as a nation does the best for its own interests, and succeeds, the world admires it and thinks it moral."<sup>171</sup> Perhaps if Japan had succeeded in conquering Southeast Asia and winning the war, the conversation we have would be a very different one.

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