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Preface

By James Chappel, PhD (Incoming Director of Undergraduate Studies)

It is my great pleasure to introduce the sixth volume of *Historia Nova*, a historical journal edited and prepared by Duke's marvelous undergraduate students in History. It is no mean feat to put together such a volume: indeed, accomplished faculty members often struggle to manage the deadlines, technology, and collaboration involved. I am pleased and proud to see that the *Historia Nova* team has managed such a professional volume, teeming with wonderful papers from around the world that offer insight into our past and, ultimately, our present.

I'm writing now as the incoming Director of Undergraduate Studies. It is a task that I undertake with some trepidation. As I write, in the Spring of 2023, History seems to be under assault. In my home state of Florida, and in my adopted state of North Carolina, plans are underfoot to control what and how historians teach, and in my view to force historians to bow to a particular political project. It doesn't matter what that political project is: that simply is not how intellectual progress happens, or how the best history is written. As this volume itself shows, the best history is written with a clear eye for evidence and nuance, and a willingness to let the past surprise you. And that is why I am so pleased to write this preface: the papers themselves, and the care with which they have been edited, shows me that the spirit of History is not dead, and that there are still people around the world who are dedicated to this craft that means so much to me.

In my view, history is not just one way of knowing the world out of many. We are story-telling creatures: this is, I think, what distinguishes us from animals. The question is not whether we will need stories or not. Humans always have, and always will. The question is this: will we tell stories well? Using good evidence and taking into account multiple voices? Will we live our lives according to the best and most nuanced and most accurate stories that we can? This, I think, is the task of history. And if you read this volume, you will see what I mean.

Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are excited to present the sixth volume of *Historia Nova.*

This cycle, we received papers from the most internationally-diverse cohort of submissions in our journal's history. *Historia Nova* started as a publication that almost exclusively drew from universities in the United States. It has been a pleasure to see us expand our global reach. Indeed, four out of the five essays published in this edition have come from non-American institutions. Furthermore, every piece included in this issue was written at a university from which we have never previously featured a paper.

The diversity in the geographical backgrounds of our authors is additionally reflected in the variety of subjects which their essays concern. This volume begins in South America, as the first article investigates a sociological phenomenon of organized killings in Colombia, from the 1990s to the present. Moving into the American South, the following paper examines Birmingham, Alabama during the 1960s to explore the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement and Cold War politics. Studying systemic racism in contemporary times, the next essay inspects the place of Black intellectuality within the field of STEM, analyzing why and how Black scholars are regularly excluded by social conventions in academia. Shifting to the Eastern Hemisphere, the following submission critically wrestles with established historiographical approaches for comprehending the Ottoman Empire across the 18th century, ultimately defending a novel framework of explanation. Finally, regarding colonial Indonesia in the late nineteenth century, the last piece in this issue presents a study of the power dynamics and systems of control underpinning the socioeconomic development of Sumatra's plantation belt.

Though seemingly divided across disparate topics and eras, these essays—through challenging canonical conceptions, rethinking old narratives, and deducing novel perspectives—all embrace and exemplify *Historia Nova's* foundational philosophy of uncovering "new histories." As such, we would like to thank the authors of these selected papers for allowing us the privilege of presenting the kind of innovative scholarship that constitutes the *raison d'être* of our journal.

Sincerely,
The Historia Nova Editorial Board

Our Mission

Historia Nova features exceptional historical analysis from undergraduate students at institutions across the English-speaking world. Our publication reveals the field's dynamism and challenges the ways in which history is interpreted and continually re-interpreted by scholars. We hope you enjoy this issue. For more information about our organization at Duke University please refer to our website at (https://history.duke.edu/new-events/undergraduate) or email us at (dukehistorianova@gmail.com).

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A Culture of Cleansing: An Analysis of the Persistent Ubiquity of *Limpieza Social* in Colombia, Since 1990

By Benjamin Goodwin, University College London

Introduction

Every day of 1994 saw at least one Colombian brutally murdered as part of a phenomenon known as *limpieza social,* translated literally as "social cleansing."[1] In fact, from 1988 to 1993 alone, the Colombian Centre for Research and Popular Education (CINEP) calculated that 1,926 Colombians fell victim to these arbitrary killings.[2] However, *limpieza social* was and is not a fleeting phenomenon. It is believed that Colombia's first organised social cleansing operation occurred in 1979; however, it was not until the late-1980s that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began to record incidents. As such, this essay focuses on the post-1990 period.[3] One NGO that has been researching the phenomenon, Human Rights Watch (HRW), proposed an authoritative definition of the violent practice, describing it as "the serial killing of members of a social group in order to clean out or impose order on a criminal or unsightly populace."[4] Though useful, this definition fails to elucidate the complex dynamics of *limpieza social.* The "unsightly populace" targeted by the violence consists of the socio-economically marginalised groups commonly referred to as *desechables* ("disposables"). These groups are often composed of recyclers, prostitutes, *gamines* ("street children"), petty criminals, and those suspected of low-level guerrilla or gang activity.[5] Alternatively, those carrying out the "serial killing" are typically *sicarios* ("mercenaries"), business owners, demobilised paramilitaries, and even state organs such as the police and military—often all coalescing into "social cleansing squads."[6] Moreover, while *limpieza social* occurs nationwide, it is most intense in the *barrios* (neighbourhoods) of

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[1] Paul Jeffrey, 'Where the Poor are the Disposables: Social Cleansing in Colombia', *Christian Century,* 112:12, (1995), 382.

[2] Carlos Rojas, *La Violencia Llamada Limpieza Social,* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1993), 22.

[3] Lovisa Stannow, 'Social Cleansing in Colombia', (MA Dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1996), 2.

[4] Human Rights Watch, *Generation Under Fire: Children and Violence in Colombia,*, (New York: HRW, 1994), 3.

[5] Eleanor Gordon, et al., 'Power, Poverty And Peacebuilding: The Violence That Sustains Inequalities and Undermines Peace in Colombia', *Conflict, Security & Development,* 20:6. (2020), 700.

[6] Juan Pablo Ordoñez, *No Human Being Is Disposable: Social Cleansing, Human Rights And Sexual Orientation In Colombia,* (San Francisco: International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 1995), 34.

urban centres like Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali where higher concentrations of *desechables* can be found.[7] Considering both its vast geographical and temporal scale, *limpieza social* occupies an area of Colombian history that cannot be ignored.

Acknowledging this, this essay seeks to uncover how this draconic practice has continued unchanged and relatively unchallenged in a contemporary, developing nation. To do this, I propose three main socio-political features that are most responsible for cultivating Colombia's culture of cleansing:

1. Perceptions of "undesirable elements" and the discourse of disposability
2. Ritualistic violence cultivated by decades of internal conflict
3. Ineffective law enforcement aggravated by impunity

I argue that these three factors serve as the preconditions for the creation of an optimal environment for *limpieza social* to thrive in. Perceptions of undesirable citizens as "disposable" provide the motivation for the cleansing, while the hangover from almost six decades of civil conflict that emerged after the political tumult of *La Violencia* provides the logistical means for it. Simultaneously, inefficient policing and elevated levels of impunity have allowed for social cleansing to become a recurring and regular feature of society.

Literature Review

The study of social cleansing represents a lacuna in Colombian history, eclipsed by the attraction of Latin America's role in the US's "war on drugs" and its wealth of English-language sources. In comparison, *limpieza social* sources are sparse. Predictably, there is a lack of official sources as the government, which is often complicit in the killing, seeks to cover up evidence; simultaneously, the victims, struck by fear and mistrust in law enforcement, fail to report incidents. This renders research on the topic difficult as scholars rely on interviews, media outlets, and NGOs for evidence.

Moreover, within the modicum of research that does cover social cleansing, few studies provide a dedicated analysis of its root causes. One has to rely on the equivocal work of a handful of scholars to provide any reasoning for its continuation. These scholars can be divided into two schools of thought: those who blame the shortcomings of the state and those who look to the aforementioned discourse of disposability. Occupying the former, Lovisa Stannow and Elizabeth Schwartz argue that

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[7] Elizabeth Schwartz, *'*Getting Away with Murder: Social Cleansing in Colombia and the Role of the United States*', Miami University Inter-American Law Review,* 27:2, (1995), 394.

"…the practice of social cleansing is effectively condoned by elements of the Colombian state itself," emphasising state negligence and corruption.[8] Alternatively, the latter school is represented by Elena Butti, Sandra Mateus Guerrero, and Juan Pablo Ordoñez. Ordoñez believes that Colombians not only fail to consider the eradication of indigents as a societal loss but "are confident that eliminating them benefits society," illustrating how the concept of human disposability fuels the cleansing.[9]

While these schools carry weight in their own right, reductionism taints both sides. Firstly, much of these scholars' research is conducted within tight geographical constraints, often restricted to cities or even *barrios*, yet findings are extrapolated across the entire nation. For example, the bulk of Stannow's research was done in Bogotá and neglects discussion of other cities. Similarly, Butti's analysis is based almost exclusively on interviews conducted with *gamines* who are neither a reputable nor representative source. Finally, and most importantly, when these scholars do propose reasoning for the continued cleansing, it is often incomplete—pointing only to a singular, isolated cause.

It is from within these holes in the current scholarship that my research emerges. I collate a range of sources from all over Colombia, including interviews and data collected by NGOs, newspapers, and government statistics. Most importantly, I look to material produced by the cleansing gangs themselves, such as pamphlets and posters—a source base rarely explored within the current scholarship. Where possible, I try to prioritise evidence produced by NGOs since, though their humanitarian motivation makes them prone to exaggeration, their research expertise and lack of commercial incentive make them a credible source. Though hindered by both language and logistical barriers in accessing archival sources, I am nevertheless able to propose a comprehensive, three-pronged explanation for the persistence of *limpieza social* while avoiding the shortfalls of previous scholarship.

Precondition 1: Perceptions of 'Undesirable Elements' and the Discourse of Disposability

This section considers the first necessary precondition for Colombia's social cleansing epidemic—motivation—which I argue stems from how the nation's poor are perceived, discussed, and described. Commonly, "undesirables" are depicted as "disposable," a term that was coined by the

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[8] Stannow, 'Social Cleansing', 6; Schwartz, 'Getting Away with Murder', 397 & 418.
[9] Ordoñez, *No Human Being,* 18.

Colombian National Police in the late 1970s but has since infiltrated the national lexicon, serving to represent Colombia's indigents but also to motivate and legitimise their suffering.[10]

Within Spanish-speaking cultures, this concept of "disposability" pertains to the idea that certain members of society have no use, lack feelings or consciousness, and would not be missed if they were to disappear.[11] Eleanor Gordon argues that by conflating all those viewed as part of Colombia's "underclass" under this label, violent acts against them "lose moral gravity" and are perceived as "legitimate efforts to impose security and order."[12] In fact, as part of their 1994 report, HRW surveyed a number of Bogotános and found that many accepted *limpieza social*, describing it as "a necessary and unavoidable evil, like bad weather" while few saw it as a violation of human rights.[13] Even those making up this "underclass" fall for this dangerous rhetoric. Throughout her research, Butti interviewed numerous *gamines*, including one seventeen-year-old, Vicio, who, when asked to comment on *limpieza social*, replied "it's bad, because they are killing people… but it's also good, because they kill people who are really worth nothing."[14] While these interviews with locals indicate the lack of value placed on indigents' lives, it would be unfair to hold them to these opinions. With the government issuing little information on the matter, Colombians are forced to rely on hearsay and a biased and sensationalist media for their knowledge of *limpieza social,* explaining their extreme views.

*Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: '*Map published in El Tiempo, 10 August 1995'*, (Stannow, 'Social Cleansing', 119)

In many cases, the Colombian media takes descriptions of indigents a step further than "disposable" and actively denotes them as "criminal" —a far more dangerous label. Though rarely

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[10] Ordoñez, *No Human Being,* 18.

[11] Ordoñez, *No Human Being,* 18.

[12] Gordon, 'Power, Poverty And Peacebuilding', 700.

[13] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 28.

[14] Interview with Vicio, 2015, in Elena Butti, 'We Are the Nobodies: Youth Violence, Marginality, and Social Cleansing in Colombia', (DPhil Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2018), 186.

covering social cleansing, two of Colombia's largest newspapers, *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador,* tend to describe victims as "delinquents", "anti-social elements", or people with a "criminal past" while frequently describing aggressors neutrally as "unknown armed men."[15] For instance, an issue of *El Tiempo* from August 1995 featured a map marke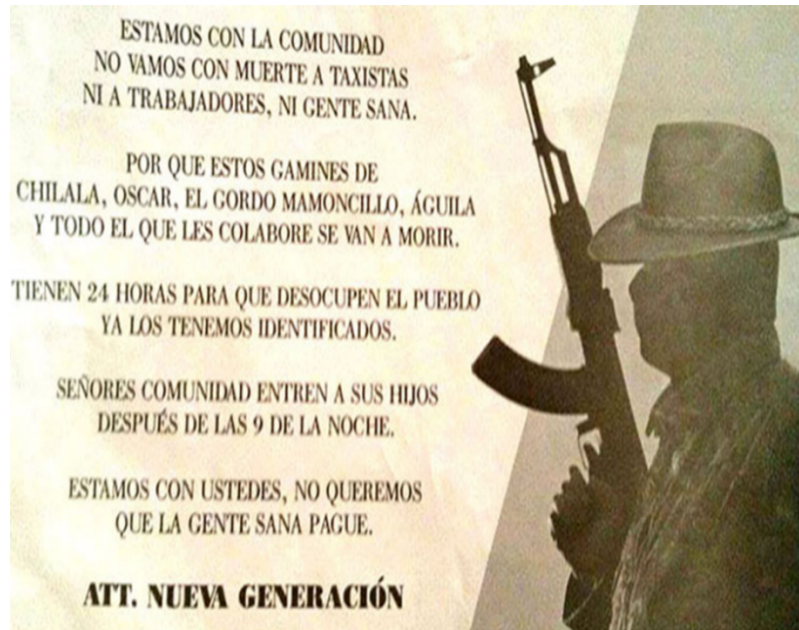d with 27 dots, as shown in figure one, representing groups of indigents believed to be dangerous alongside articles labelling them as "problem people."[16] While these commercial publications are likely trying to pander to a popular public opinion rather than actively incite violence, this manner of reporting is dangerous for indigents who are not only painted as inherently aggressive but blamed for brutal offences committed against them. When this image of innate criminality and aggression is combined with the aforementioned discourse of disposability, an implied sense of legitimacy is created to further motivate the indigents' extermination.

Figure 2: 'Nueva Generación' Pamphlet, taken from 'Social Cleansing threats flood towns in northwest Colombia', *Colombia Reports,* (16/11/2015), [URL], accessed 13/12/21

The effects of this inflammatory reporting is seen in the activity of the social cleansing gangs that are commonplace across Colombia. These groups take it upon themselves to act, often violently, on these manufactured perceptions of indigents, citing their criminality and disposability as justification. Much of this is done through threatening pamphlets and posters that regularly appear throughout Colombian cities. For example, one poster from a group calling themselves "New Generation" (shown in Figure 2), which surfaced in towns across northwest Colombia, gave all *gamines* and so-called "bums" twenty-four hours to leave or face death. Similarly, in Tulua, a group calling themselves the '*Grupos Unidos por Colombia*' distributed pamphlets calling for a sweep to "kill all the rats" and threatened to visit homes "distributing lead" (as shown in Figure 3). While these suggest that perceptions of "undesirables" are sufficient to motivate violence against them, it is important to note

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[15] Stannow, 'Social Cleansing', 118.
[16] Stannow, 'Social Cleansing', 118.

that, firstly, there is no evidence that either of these threats were acted upon and, secondly, that many of these pamphlets are frequently traced back to benign copycat groups, thereby somewhat undermining their significance.

In contradiction to the idea that perceptions of the "underclass" as disposable and bad-natured motivate the killings, some researchers, such as Ordoñez, have also proposed that social cleansing stems from economic incentives.[17] In 1994, FENALCO, Colombia's merchants' organisation, issued a report against some 4520 beggars in Bogotá's Santa Fé borough that they claim were responsible for the "pauperisation" of downtown Bogotá and the cause of the city's lack of productivity and wealth.[18] In fact, in a 2008 interview with *El Espectador,* the police commander of the Ciudad Bolívar borough of Bogotá, Colonel Julio César Alvarado, revealed that many of the borough's *limpieza social* killings were conducted by groups paid by merchants seeking to rid their

Figure 3: GUPC Pamphlet, taken from 'Pamphlets Threaten Social Cleansing in Southwestern Colombian City', *Colombia Reports,* (7/7/2014), URL, accessed 13/12/21

shopfronts of homeless.[19] Some instances have had even more direct economic incentives. For example, the infamous *limpieza social* killings at the Barranquilla Free University in 1992, which claimed the lives of at least fifty of the city's trash recyclers, were motivated by the promise of $200 for every cadaver security guards could provide to the medical school.[20] However, though noteworthy, these proposed economic motivations merely fuel this paper's argument. The only reason these struggling

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[17] Ordoñez, *No Human Being,* 26.
[18] FENALCO, *El Problema de los Mendigos: Localidad de Santa Fé*, cited in 'En 24 Cuadras Hay 4520 Mendigos', *El Tiempo,* June 15, 1995, URL.
[19] Interview with Colonel Julio César Alvarado, 2008, in 'It's Cheaper to Kill Them', *El Espectador,* September 5, 2008, URL.
[20] 'Colombian Says He Killed 50 to Supply School With Bodies', *LA Times,* March 6, 1992, URL.

merchants and money-hungry criminals view the murder of indigents as a viable solution is because of the aforementioned preconceptions surrounding their disposability and corrupting influence that are peddled in the media and public discourse. If Colombia's poor were perceived as normal, innocent members of society, their mass murder would not be viewed as a financial opportunity.

Overall, this section has laid the foundations for understanding Colombia's cleansing phenomenon by illuminating the motivation behind it. As Guerrero and Butti have insisted, it is clear why so many have no qualms with carrying out or supporting the extermination of the nation's poor when they are constantly referred to as "disposable." Worse still, when this rhetoric is combined with manipulated narratives of their innate criminality, many see it as their duty to purge the streets of indigents. However, possessing the motivation alone to carry out these grotesque acts is not sufficient; perpetrators must also acquire the tools to do so—a precondition discussed in the following section.

Precondition 2: Ritualistic Violence Cultivated by Decades of Internal Conflict

With the motivation behind the cleansing killings made clear, we must turn next to what facilitates their occurrence. In this section, I propose that the impact of Colombia's long Civil Conflict has provided the population with the necessary means to exterminate those seen as "disposable."

The Colombian Conflict emerged in the early 1960s after a decade of hostility between the Conservatives and Liberals during *La Violencia*.[21] Following this, the government entered into vicious warfare with leftist guerrillas who would eventually form well-known organisations such as FARC, ELN, and M-19.[22] In opposition to the guerrillas, many, usually right-leaning, Colombians organised into self-defensive paramilitary units, ultimately merging into large groups like the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) by 1997, exacerbating the violence into the 2000s .[23] By 1995, the UN found there to be over 140 paramilitary groups operating illegally across Colombia, 43 of which Minister for Government, and soon-to-be President, César Gaviria could identify as known social cleansing squads.[24]

As ceasefires were agreed upon in the 2000s, these paramilitaries began flooding into Colombia's cities where, according to Aldo Civico, they became the "mediators of terror."[25] Figure 4

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[21] Juan Vargas, 'The Persistent Colombian Conflict: Subnational Analysis Of The Duration Of Violence', *Defence and Peace Economics,* 23:2 (2012), 204.
[22] Vargas, 'Colombian Conflict', 205.
[23] Vargas, 'Colombian Conflict', 205.
[24] Rojas, *Limpieza Social*, 74.
[25] Aldo Civico, '"We are Illegal, but not Illegitimate": Modes of Policing in Medellin', *Political and Legal Anthropology Review,* 35:1 (2012), 87.

displays a heat map produced by the University of Arizona showing the concentration of armed paramilitaries in major cities during this period. While this map provides a good indication of their distribution, it likely underestimates the number and concentrations of paramilitaries. The map only marks those armed actors implicated in human rights violations, omitting those who are present in an area but not currently exercising violence, possibly where tight control has already been secured over a territory.[26]

Upon their arrival in the cities, many of the demobilised paramilitaries reorganised into BACRIM groups (short for "*bandas criminales*") and started orchestrating social cleansing campaigns.[27]
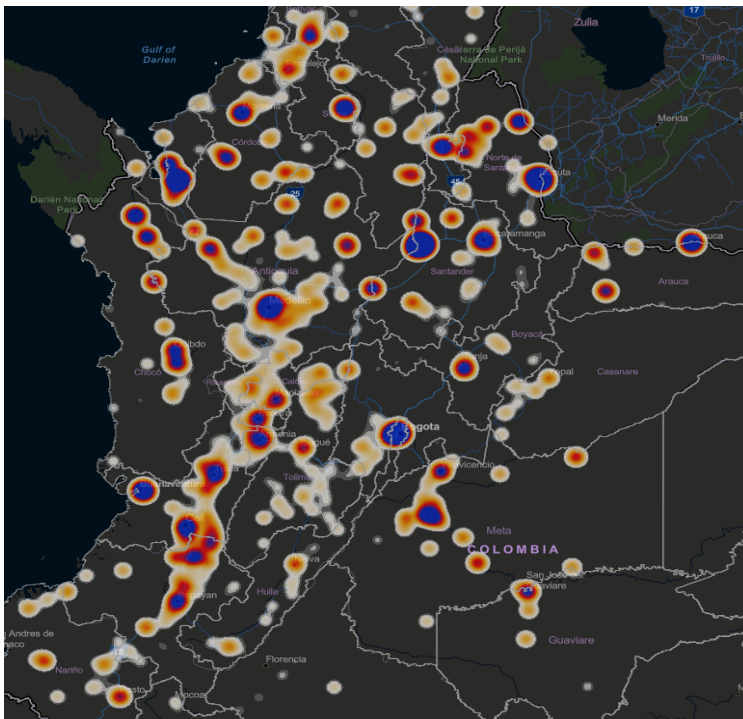

Figure 4: Javier Osorio, *ViPAA Interactive Heat Map*, (2019), URL, accessed 13/12/21

Before long, these groups, drawing on their weaponry, combat skills, and radical, ultra-nationalist views from their time at war, were recruiting local youths to form urban social cleansing squads, much like those discussed in the previous section.[28] Initially, the squads persecuted suspected guerrilla-sympathisers. However, in an effort to impose their twisted moral codes, assert dominance, and intimidate rivals, they soon targeted petty criminals, drug users, and homosexuals.[29] Additionally, in some cities, paramilitaries would collaborate with the police in the removal of "undesirables", such as in the case of demobilised AUC members in the early 2000s in Medellín who vowed to patrol the city and beat up petty criminals on behalf of local police.[30]

More generally, the widespread violence of the Civil Conflict helped to indirectly enable social cleansing by desensitising the Colombian people to mass killing. During a UN visit to Colombia in

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[26] Javier Osorio, et al., 'Mapping Violent Presence of Armed Actors in Colombia', *Advances of Cartography and GIScience of the International Cartographic Association,* 1:16 (2019), 1-9.
[27] James Bargent & Mat Charles, 'Inside Colombia's BACRIM: Murder', *InSight Crime,* July 13, 2017, URL.
[28] Butti, 'Nobodies', 86.
[29] Bargent & Charles, 'Inside Colombia's BACRIM'.
[30] Civico, 'Policing in Medellin', 78.

1994, interviewers reported that "a long history of armed conflict…has created a culture of violence in which the settlement of differences by violent means is a common occurrence."[31] This is reinforced by human rights lawyer, Juan Carlos Gutiérrez, who believes the population "has grown accustomed to killing" and are "immune to death." [32] When this is compounded by the negative perceptions discussed in section 1, *limpieza social* becomes even more normalised in society, allowing it to recur unhindered via public protest and counter-vigilantism.

Following his election in 2002, President Álvaro Uribe took a hard line against the guerrillas and paramilitaries, using the army to round up and demobilise combatants.[33] However, many of these demobilisation programs saw indigents become entangled in military operations that often became a façade for their murder. The most well-known instance of this was the 2002 "False-Positives Scandal," in which soldiers recruited to hunt down guerrillas began illegitimately inflating their kill counts to fulfill quotas.[34] Soldiers did this by murdering marginalised, often indigent, civilians, dressing and posing their bodies as guerrilla soldiers, then reporting them as enemy combatants they had killed—a process that claimed the lives of over 3000.[35] This coincided with "Operation Orion" of the same year in which over a thousand uniformed police arrived in Medellín's *Comuna 13* to cleanse the area of paramilitaries and dissidents.[36] The operation descended into a campaign of indiscriminate violence against any suspicious civilians, most of whom were marginalised peoples—resulting in the wounding of 38, the disappearance of eight, and the arbitrary detainment of a further 385.[37]

Despite the Civil Conflict's long duration and significant geographical reach, it is important to note that cartels also helped to facilitate social cleansing. Butti contends that the criminal dynamics of Medellín were "revolutionised" between the 1980s and 1990s while under the influence of Pablo Escobar and his cartel.[38] The Medellín Cartel consistently recruited local youths as *traqueteros* to perform low-level work as mules and *sicarios*.[39] This local youth militia orchestrated murder on a massive scale, targeting the poor that inhabited the *comunas* overlooking the city, facilitating a 311%

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[31] Nigel Rodley, Bacre Waly Ndiaye and United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 'Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions', (Geneva: UN, 1995), 17.
[32] Jeffrey, 'Where the Poor are 'The Disposables', 381.
[33] Juan Morales, 'Legislating during war: Conflict and politics in Colombia', *Journal of Public Economics,* 193:3 (2021), 3.
[34] Human Rights Watch, *On Their Watch: Evidence of Senior Army Officers' Responsibility for False Positive Killings in Colombia,* (New York: HRW, 2015), 1.
[35] HRW, *On Their Watch,* 25.
[36] Civico, 'Policing in Medellin', 88.
[37] Civico, 'Policing in Medellin', 88.
[38] Butti, 'Nobodies', 83.
[39] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 32.

increase in Medellín's homicide rate between 1986 and 1991.[40] Once Escobar was killed in 1993, he left behind a vast amount of weapons and an army of ruthless, radicalised youths, many of whom would join the BACRIM social cleansing groups, thus compounding the problems created by the Civil Conflict.[41]

In sum, this section has demonstrated how Colombians, already possessing the motivation to exterminate those of the "underclasses," were endowed with the means to do so through the impacts of the Civil Conflict. Had the Conflict not provided a population of violent armed actors, a society apathetic to mass killing, and the opportunity to disguise this killing under the pretense of military activity, social cleansing campaigns would have been difficult to execute. With the motivation and logistical means made clear, we must now turn to the factors that allowed this phenomenon to entrench itself as a regular feature of society.

Precondition 3: Ineffective Law Enforcement Exasperated by Impunity

Although the motivation and logistics behind *limpieza social* are now clear, they are still not sufficient to explain how it has metastasised into the gruesome, national phenomenon that it is today. In this concluding section, I argue that ineffective policing and a legal system plagued by impunity are responsible for this. This view is shared by HRW which claims that, "…paired with inaction to protect the targets of social cleansing from organised extermination, impunity ensures that social cleansing squads can continue their night rounds unimpeded."[42]

The first aspect of this claim, the "inaction to protect," refers to the drastically low success rates in countering social cleansing that comes as a result of poor law enforcement. During their 1994 visit to Colombia, the UN concluded that there are "virtually no attempts to dismantle or disarm [social cleansing] groups."[43] In fact, as of 1994, not a single member of a social cleansing group had ever been arrested in the act.[44] In an interview with the regional attorney for Medellín, Iván Velásquez Gómez, HRW found that 98% of homicides in the city go un-investigated with Gómez concluding that, in Medellín, "criminal investigation does not exist."[45] In many cases, this is down to police negligence in gathering witnesses and utilising evidence. For instance, in December 1993, after a wave

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[40] Carlos Mario Restrepo, et al., 'Profile of Homicide Victims In The City Of Medellín January 1986-May 1993', (LLB Dissertation, Universidad de Antioquia, 1993), 26, 102-110.
[41] Butti, 'Nobodies', 87.
[42] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 5.
[43] Rodley, Ndiaye, and UN Commission on Human Rights, 'Joint report', 16.
[44] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 25.
[45] Interview with Iván Velásquez Gómez, June 11, 1994, in HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 36.

of *limpieza social* killings in Bogotá, it was discovered that the police coroner had not gathered any forensic evidence from bodies in the morgue and, instead, had washed and shaved them, preventing the identification of victims.[46]

The second aspect of HRW's statement, the "impunity," alludes to the lack of convictions levelled against social cleansers due to an overstretched and under-resourced judicial sector. By the early 1990s, the Colombian judicial system was highly congested, facing a backlog of over 4 million pending cases - half of which were criminal.[47] Consequently, a 1994 report from the National Planning Department found that the average criminal case was taking ten years to reach trial, allowing 97% of suspects to evade immediate conviction.[48] In addition, many have accused the judiciary of corruption after the introduction of Colombia's new constitution in 1991 that extended the jurisdiction of military courts to include police, preventing them from being tried in open, public courts.[49] This allowed the state to exculpate the police, who, as discussed, are often complicit or negligent in cases of social cleansing, by covering up or manipulating trials in closed courts, further reducing the number of those who face conviction for the killing.

Not only does negligent policing and a flawed legal system allow social cleansing to recur with impunity, but they also encourage further campaigns. Sonia Zambrano, of Colombia's Andean Commission of Jurists, believes that "the judicial system is so discredited that it never even occurs to anyone to resort to the law," hence why 80% of crimes go unreported.[50] Instead, many Colombians, acting under the knowledge that they can offend unpunished, take the law into their own hands—culling petty criminals who constantly escape conviction. These select individuals usually form or join pre-existing social cleansing squads seeking to make up for police inactivity.[51] This justification is conveyed in pamphlets produced by the squads. Firstly, Figure 5 shows a pamphlet distributed by an unknown group in Bogotá declaring that "since criminal acts are out of control by the public force and other state entities, a new social cleansing is essential… ." Additionally, a similar pamphlet (shown in Figure 6) issued in Medellín by an anonymous group calling themselves "Citizens Tired of Crime" ("*Cicarya*) calls for social cleansing "due to the ineffectiveness of some police quadrants." The fact that

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[46] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 25.
[47] Stannow, 'Social Cleansing', 109.
[48] Armando Montenegro-Trujillo*,* 'Report on Justice and Development', (Bogotá: National Planning Department, 1994), 4.
[49] Stannow, 'Social Cleansing', 106.
[50] Interview with Sonia Zambrano, January 6, 1994*,* in Ken Dermota, `Social Cleansing Targets Street Children', *Christian Science Monitor,* (Massachusetts: CSM, 1994), [URL](URL); Montenegro-Trujillo, *Report on Justice and Development*, 4.
[51] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 13.

these groups feel the need to commit murder as a result of non-existent law enforcement, and believe they can advertise this publicly, is highly indicative of Colombia's legal ineptitude.

While this analysis seemingly places the entire blame for recurring social cleansing on Colombia's National Police, there is evidence that indicates that it is not entirely within their control. Despite groups like HRW calling for greater police funding to counter social cleansing, this seems an

Figure 6: 'Cicarya' Pamphlet, taken from 'Medellín group announces social cleansing operations', *Colombia Reports,* (January 17, 2014),

unlikely fix for the issue.[52] During the last few decades, the Colombian government has spent an annual average of $80 per capita on policing while, comparatively, the Brazilian government has spent an average of $108.[53] Consequently, one would assume that issues of mass violence are less common in Brazil, however, this is far from the truth. In the year of 1992 alone, an estimated four street children

died through social cleansing campaigns every day, much like the situation in Colombia.[54] This implies there may be other factors at play that make the prevention of social cleansing so difficult, such as the nature of the crimes themselves. In many instances, attacks are carried out at night by
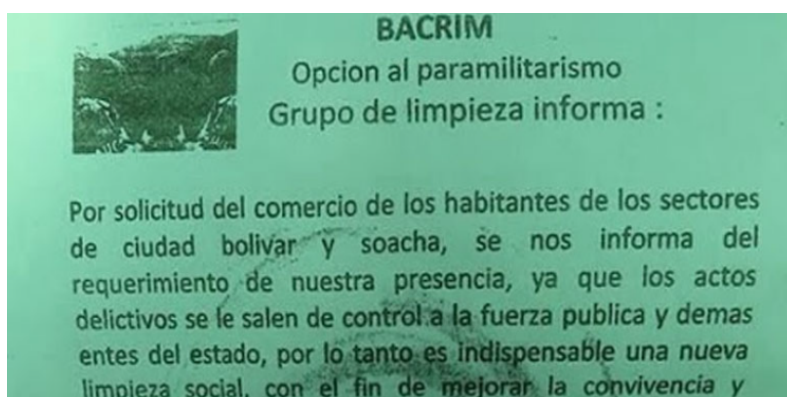
Figure 5: Pamphlet from anonymous group, taken from 'Flyer warns of imminent social cleansing in Bogotá', *Colombia Reports,* (January 30,

disguised men in blacked-out cars with registration plates removed, making reporting and identifying perpetrators very difficult.[55] This became clear in 1994 when, six months after initiating a crackdown

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[52] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 64.

[53] Dirección General del Presupuesto Público Nacional, 'Informe de Ejecución Presupuesto General de la Nación Accumulado a Junio de 2020', (Bogotá, 2020), 7; Camila Gomes, *Crime and Government Expenditure in Brazil*, (Washington D.C: Inter-American Development Bank, 2018), 6.

[54] Anthony Dewees & Steven Klees, 'Social Movements and the Transformation of National Policy: Street and Working Children in Brazil', *Comparative Education Review,* 39:1 (1995), 91.

[55] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 24.

on social cleansing, the Bogotá authorities failed to receive a single formal report as victims and witnesses struggled to testify.[56]

Nonetheless, this section has still expressed how both the police and courts must shoulder the majority of the blame. Through negligence, inactivity, and inefficiency, it is clear that both law enforcement and the judiciary are responsible for facilitating the sustained, and unpunished, recurrence of social cleansing in Colombia.

Conclusion

In studying Colombia's social-cleaning issue, the majority of scholars have devoted their time to the phenomenon's effects, seeking to express its scale and brutality. However, it is already a well-known fact that Colombia has a violence problem, and repetitive studies reiterating this are not beneficial to any party. Alternatively, this essay has focused on social-cleansing's cause, answering three of the most important questions for understanding how the barbaric practice has become ingrained into the fibres of Colombian history: What is motivating the killing? What has provided the logistical pre-requisites for the killing? And finally, how does this killing continue free of state intervention?

In answering question one, I revealed how long-standing perceptions of the poor as "disposable" and a national media that paints them as intrinsically criminal have perpetuated the idea that the murder of Colombia's "underclass" is acceptable and morally dutiful. Regarding the second question, I explained how the hangover of sixty years of Civil Conflict has made the killing possible by leaving behind urban concentrations of violent, armed actors among a civilian population unfazed by mass murder, particularly when it is disguised as military activity. Finally, in response to the third, I demonstrated how an inept police force, backed by a crippled judiciary, has failed to rid the streets of social cleansers and condemn them to prison, facilitating its recurrence and creating a perceived need for further campaigns. Through this analysis, I have revealed that, for the small minority of scholars who do focus on the cause of social-cleansing, a single-factor explanation is not sufficient. In order to comprehensively understand the persistent ubiquity of *limpieza social*, one must adopt a multiple-factor explanation such as the one exemplified by this paper.

However, these answers are not absolute in explaining the phenomenon and require some nuance. Firstly, it is important to note that there is often economic motivations behind the killing,

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[56] HRW, *Generation Under Fire,* 25.

even if based on the pretense that indigents' lives are disposable. Secondly, the role of the cartels in arming and radicalising Colombia's youth and normalising mass violence must be considered. Thirdly, though mostly at fault, the clandestine nature of social cleansing killings makes their prevention exceedingly difficult for the police and judiciary, regardless of funding.

Although for logistical purposes this essay has focused on Colombia, social cleansing occurs throughout Latin America, particularly in Brazil and Venezuela. This leaves considerable scope for additional research into the root of the phenomenon across the wider region. This is especially important at a time when the international media, particularly film and television, continue to portray Latin Americans as fundamentally-violent people living in a region where phenomena, like social cleansing, are a "natural product" of a society in which violence is a way of life. Only through research like this can a solution be found to end this perpetual-violence and reverse-damning stereotypes.

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'The Moment of Truth': Cold War Civil rights in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963

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Introduction

In spring 1963, while Cold War fear froze the world, the 'flames of discord and frustration' burned in Birmingham, Alabama, ignited by a campaign designed to capitalize on the antagonistic international context.[1] Several African-American writers, including activists Bayard Rustin and Jackie Robinson, referred to Birmingham as the 'moment of truth', in which black citizens' boldness, the media's motivations, and the President's priorities were showcased to the nation and the watching world.[2]

The Civil Rights Movement had always been linked to international relations, inspired by African independence and ignored by American leaders focused on the USSR. However, in Birmingham, the bastion of segregation, the struggle for equality reached a flashpoint, cementing its pivotal position in

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[1] John F. Kennedy, 'Report to the American People on Civil Rights', Washington D.C., 11 June 1963, in https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/TNC/TNC-262-EX/TNC-262-EX.

[2] Bayard Rustin, 'The Meaning of Birmingham', *Liberation*, June 1963, in https://www.crmvet.org/info/bham mean.htm; Jackie Robinson, 'Birmingham Poses Moment of Truth for JFK on Rights', *The Chicago Defender (National)*, 18 May 1963, p. 8, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493104304/73DC5 FF57928406APQ/128; 'Dogs Versus Human Rights: An Editorial', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 6 May 1963, p. 1, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493960848/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/157.

foreign affairs. From April to May, Fred Shuttlesworth's Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) collaborated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to undertake 'Project C' (for 'confrontation'), aiming to expose the harsh reality of the South to moderates in the North. Initially, they struggled to command attention, even when Martin Luther King Jr. (famous SCLC President) was arrested. But the tide shifted when thousands of young activists marched on 'D-Day' (2 May) and Commissioner Eugene 'Bull' Connor responded violently the next day ('Double D- Day'). Images of police dogs and fire hoses used against the 'Children's Crusade' circulated globally and pressured President John F. Kennedy to assist negotiations behind-the-scenes. Moreover, on 12 May, federal troops were deployed around the city after white supremacists orchestrated two bombing attacks.

While Birmingham was not the first racial crisis to arouse federal action and international condemnation, it nonetheless represents a potent spectacle in the Civil Rights Movement. Now-infamous photographs of police cruelty exposed the irony of America's title as 'leader of the free world'. Furthermore, Project C directly precipitated a wave of similar demonstrations and Kennedy's civil rights bill, which later became the important 1964 Civil Rights Act. This dissertation argues that the Birmingham campaign was also a significant turning-point for civil rights leaders, who realised they could take advantage of the Cold War; northern black journalists, who also started actively leveraging world affairs; northern white journalists, who focused less on foreign policy; and the federal government, who began fully committing to the fight against discrimination, realising how it detrimentally impacted America's image and social stability.

Argument and structure:

Overall, historians have *under*-emphasised the degree to which the Cold War shaped civil rights leaders' strategies in Birmingham (and completely ignored how it influenced reactions in the black media), while some scholars have *over*-emphasised how much northern white citizens, the mainstream media, and Kennedy prioritised foreign policy. Thus, the ideas behind the campaign and reactions to it did not align, for white citizens and authorities were less motivated by the Cold War than civil rights leaders assumed. To demonstrate this, the reader will first be guided through the SCLC's strategy, followed by the reactions in newspapers, and finally the federal response.

Chapter One argues that Project C deliberately encouraged international condemnation, with its strategists employing Cold War rhetoric to demonstrate America's hypocrisy. Similarly, Chapter Two

demonstrates how African-American newspapers and their readers linked Birmingham to world affairs, having been conditioned to see civil rights through the prism of the Cold War. Meanwhile, many in the Northern white press presented the campaign as a local issue, with some journalists and readers criticising the excessive focus on propaganda. Finally, Chapter Three contends that Kennedy sacrificed his short-term popularity to prevent long-term instability. While his behind-the-scenes actions were arguably motivated by embarrassment of the US's global image, the deployment of troops was ultimately more focused on ending the black riots the SCLC had discouraged.

Chapter One

Creating a Crisis: The Cold War in the Campaign Strategy

In Birmingham, the SCLC deliberately created a crisis to attract the attention of the world media, hoping to pressure northern white citizens and the Kennedy Administration to intervene and preserve their country's Cold War strength. Yet, historians have inadequately examined how the international context shaped campaign strategies or underappreciated Birmingham's importance in this respect. Cold War civil rights scholars (such as Dudziak and Borstelmann) ignore the Civil Rights Movement itself, while bottom-up studies (like Eskew's *But for Birmingham*) fail to explain the campaign's international dimensions.[3] Therefore, this chapter combines their approaches and assesses how the SCLC was profoundly affected by the Cold War. Overall, although it was not the first time African-Americans attempted to lever foreign affairs in aid of domestic civil rights, the campaign played a pivotal role in persuading SCLC leaders that it was an effective tactic.

While the Birmingham campaign represented a collaboration between the ACMHR and the SCLC, they had divergent aims. Having fought the city's segregation for seven years, the former needed a local victory. Meanwhile, King needed, in Shuttlesworth's words, to 'not only gain prestige but really shake the country', having just been defeated in Albany due to lack of volunteers and federal intervention.[4] Since Shuttlesworth allowed King's organisation to run Project C, its national aims became more important than the ACMHR's local goals.[5]

Before 1963, the Cold War only hindered the SCLC, distracting the federal government which viewed racial discrimination as a comparatively-insignificant issue. The focus on foreign policy had been particularly palpable in the early 1960s, which saw the U-2 Incident, Bay of Pigs, and culmination of tensions in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Just four days before the Birmingham campaign began, King lamented how civil rights had been 'displaced as the dominant political issue in domestic politics',

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[3] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Colour Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[4] Fred Shuttlesworth, interviewed by Callie Crossley, 7 November 1985, in https://americanarchive.org/catalog/ cpb-aacip_151-086348h395.

[5] Glenn T. Eskew, 'The Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Birmingham Struggle for Civil Rights, 1956-1963', in *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. by David J. Garrow (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989), p. 87.

revealing that foreign affairs were on his mind.[6] Additionally—despite repeatedly decrying communism as 'irreconcilable with Christianity'—King and his organisation faced constant suspicion during the Red Scare.[7] Throughout the Birmingham campaign, he was being both surveilled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and pressured by the Attorney General to oust socialist sympathiser Jack O'Dell from the SCLC.[8] According to Noer, King was therefore reluctant to discuss the Cold War, fearing criticism of the government's foreign policy could further damage his organisation.[9]

However, by spring 1963, civil rights activists could no longer tolerate how international politics handicapped their struggle. Activists planned to fight back against anti-communist authorities by proving the main threat to US security was southern segregation, not supposedly 'communist' African-Americans. Before Birmingham, SCLC leaders like Ralph Abernathy (King's 'right-hand man') had already voiced their frustration with 'Cold Warriors'. While protesting segregated interstate buses, a reporter asked Abernathy if he was afraid of embarrassing the President during his meetings with Khrushchev; he replied: 'man, we've been embarrassed all our lives'.[10] Grievances grew during the long 'Cuban' winter which highlighted the overwhelming salience of the Cold War and revealed to African- Americans that their government would risk nuclear holocaust in order to preserve freedom abroad but would allow domestic inequality.[11]

Furthermore, since the late-1950s black Americans had watched as nationalism swept through the continent of their enslaved ancestors like a forest fire. As over twenty African nations declared independence in three years, King juxtaposed their 'jetlike speed' and America's 'horse-buggy pace' in his famous response to religious leaders who criticised Project C (the 'Letter From Birmingham Jail').[12] When Kennedy attempted to court Africa's new leaders, it became increasingly clear African-Americans could transform their frustration with the Cold War into practical progress by making civil

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[6] Martin Luther King Jr., 'A Bold Design for a New South', *The Nation*, 30 March 1963, in https://www.the nation.com/article/archive/archive-bold-design-new-south/.

[7] Martin Luther King Jr., 'Can a Christian be a Communist?', Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, 30 September 1962 in https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/can-christian-be-communist-serm on-delivered-ebenezer-baptist-church.

[8] 'Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Current Analysis', Federal Bureau of Investigation, 12 March 1968, in https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/104-10125-10133.pdf, p. 5; Martin Luther King Jr., 'Letter to Jack O'Dell re. his Resignation due to Red-Baiting', 3 July 1963,, in https://www.crmvet.org/lets/630703_sclc_ odell-let.pdf, p. 2.

[9] Thomas J. Noer, 'Martin Luther King Jr. and the Cold War', *Peace and Change*, 22.2 (1997), p. 111.

[10] Ralph Abernathy, 1961, as quoted in Harris Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), p. 156.

[11] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why we Can't Wait* (St. Ives: Penguin Books, 2018) p. 14.

[12] Martin Luther King Jr., 'Letter From Birmingham Jail', 16 April 1963, in https://www.csuchico.edu/iege/_ assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf.

rights a foreign policy issue.[13] To best showcase how discrimination could damage the country's reputation, the SCLC decided to tackle 'the most segregated city in America'.

King believed the 'key to everything is federal commitment' and thus designed demonstrations in Birmingham to force the Kennedy Administration to change its tokenistic policy.[14] When the SCLC leader was arrested on 12 April, Wyatt Walker (his chief strategist) told King's wife Coretta, '"you ought to call the President"', hoping to force his hand.[15] While Kennedy did secure King's release, this did little to generate tangible progress on civil rights, proving that direct appeals to the White House were insufficient. Therefore, the SCLC also targeted Project C at Northern moderates to *indirectly* pressure the government. Walker realised they needed to create a 'crisis to bargain with', to *force* moderates and Kennedy to intervene.[16] Therefore, the SCLC orchestrated a situation that would threaten the country's democratic image abroad.

By creating a crisis on the streets of Birmingham, campaigners mobilised the support of the global media, which they used to their advantage in the Cold War context. Therefore, alongside moral arguments, civil rights leaders also employed instrumental arguments regarding foreign policy. In interviews, Abernathy and Bevel described how the SCLC intended to 'tell the world, we don't have freedom over here'.[17] Black leaders sought to remind the American public their country was being humiliated on the world stage. Interestingly, Coretta King's autobiography indicated Birmingham authorities were similarly conscious of the international attention, describing how firefighters refused to aim hoses at children because of the 'moral pressure of a watching world'.[18] Finally, recounting the campaign in 1964, King emphasised how people 'in gleaming capitals and mud-hut villages' were stunned, referencing the developed and developing worlds.[19] Given that maintaining the confidence of non-aligned nations in Asia and Africa was pivotal to the federal government's Cold War policy, the reference here is particularly striking. While Krenn asserts African-American leaders saw the Cold War and civil rights as equally important, in reality, King showed no sign of regret for providing the

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[13] P. Muehlenbeck, 'John F. Kennedy as Viewed by Africans', in *Globalising the US Presidency: Postcolonial Views of John F. Kennedy*, ed. by C. Schayegh (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. 34.

[14] Martin Luther King Jr., 'The Luminous Promise', *The Progressive Magazine*, December 1962, in https://progressive.org/magazine/luminous-promise/.

[15] Wyatt Walker, April 1963, as quoted in Coretta Scott King, *My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 2nd edn (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), p. 208.

[16] Wyatt Walker, 1962, as quoted in Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1990), p. 68.

[17] Ralph Abernathy and James Bevel, interviewed by Dale Minor, May 1963, as quoted in Dale Minor, 'Freedom Now!: Birmingham, Alabama, 1963 Transcript of Pacifica Radio Documentary', 14 May 1963, in https://www.crmvet.org/info/bham63.htm.

[18] C.S. King, *My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr.*, pp. 213-214.

[19] M.L. King, *Why we Can't Wait*, p. 8.

USSR with a propaganda victory.[20] As Dudziak argues, the movement was willing to use any (nonviolent) means necessary to increase pressure on the Administration and knew that embarrassing it abroad could prove effective.[21]

In addition to referencing foreign criticism, activists in Birmingham also used rhetoric directly taken from the Cold War. Early in the campaign, a number of signs were produced reading: 'Khrushchev Could Eat Here. Why Not American Negroes?' (Figure 1), highlighting the hypocrisy of white authorities who treated their own citizens worse than their supposed enemy.[22]

Figure 1: Sign reading 'Khrushchev Could Eat Here. Why Not American Negroes?', April 1963.[23]

Meanwhile, King's Cold War rhetoric became more explicit after his release from jail.[24] When Robert Kennedy claimed the federal government could not pay black protesters' $250,000 bond, King

[20] Michael Krenn, 'The Unwelcome Mat: African Diplomats in Washington, D.C., During the Kennedy Years', in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. by Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 164.
[21] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 178.
[22] 'Sign: "Khrushchev Could Eat Here. Why Not American Negroes?', April 1963, in https://www.crmvet.org/images/imgbham.htm.
[23] Ibid.
[24] M.L. King, 'Letter From Birmingham Jail', p. 5.

reminded him how $60 million had been raised to free prisoners during the Bay of Pigs.[25] Crucially, this tactic worked and, when troops were deployed, King told his congregation that the President intervened because he was 'battling for the minds and the hearts of men in Asia and Africa'.[26] The SCLC leader was acutely aware of his impact on the USA's image and believed this influenced federal decision-making.

African-American activists had used Cold War rhetoric before, but Birmingham was the first time they believed it to be successful. Furthermore, it fuelled a 'feedback loop' in which the successful outcome encouraged the use of similar tactics. Meriwether, who skilfully places African-Americans in the international context, argues that civil rights leaders became increasingly adept at using foreign policy rhetoric.[27] Birmingham marked a turning-point in which foreign affairs became a useful weapon in the arsenal of the Civil Rights Movement and was deployed in different contexts. For instance, during the August 1963 March on Washington, when King argued that 'the shape of the world no longer permits America the luxury of anaemic democracy'.[28] As socialist thinker Howard Zinn wrote in his 1964 book on race relations in the South, 'the Negro is learning [...] [that] by bringing the issue to world attention, he can manoeuvre the national self-interest into alignment with his own needs'.[29] But poignantly, by leveraging the Cold War, African-Americans were recognising their lives and rights alone were not important enough to prompt federal action.

In conclusion, the SCLC was profoundly affected by the international context. Believing that Kennedy and northern white citizens were motivated by foreign policy concerns, activists used the Cold War to their advantage, engaging with it implicitly (by emphasising the global attention they received) and explicitly (by highlighting how discrimination humiliated America). Moreover, Birmingham confirmed the pre-existing belief that international politics could help the black struggle.[30] The idea of leveraging the Cold War to advance civil rights was not born in Birmingham, but its careful use in the campaign marked a strategic shift for the SCLC and heralded a new era for their plight. Although the Civil Rights Movement was a fundamentally domestic struggle for equality within the USA, the global conflict had altered the fabric of American society and affected the movement. For

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[25] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement 1954-63* (London: MacMillan, 1988), p. 787.

[26] Martin Luther King Jr., May 1963, as quoted in Branch, p. 791.

[27] James Meriwether, '"Worth a lot of Negro Votes": Black Voters, Africa, and the 1960 Presidential Campaign', *Journal of American History*, 95.3 (2008), p. 749.

[28] Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, Illinois, as quoted in Nobuo Abika, 'Dr. King Outlines Dilemma of Negro', 23 August 1963, in https://cdm16044.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/B PLSB02/id/7890/rec/6.

[29] Howard Zinn, *The Southern Mystique* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002), p. 237.

[30] Noer, p. 112.

many years, the Cold War had been used as a weapon by segregationists, who delegitimized civil rights organisations through anti-communist allegations. However, Birmingham proved that African-Americans could also use the Cold War to their advantage. By creating a crisis that exposed racial discrimination to the world, the Civil Rights Movement claimed the legitimacy and centrality it had been systematically denied.

Chapter Two

Covering a Crisis: The Cold War in Northern Newspaper Reactions

Since Project C was targeted at northern citizens, analysing northern, liberal newspapers provides an important insight into how this audience perceived the events.[31] Specifically, an examination of how the press was shaped by the Cold War illustrates how pervasive the international context was and whether Birmingham's strategists were successful. African- American writers used foreign criticism to their advantage, like the SCLC, by encouraging federal intervention to repair the country's reputation. However, white papers made fewer references to the international response to Birmingham. Arguably, black newspapers were more influenced by the Cold War because they believed this was the whites' priority. In reality, polls reveal that concern for international problems was declining.

To examine how foreign relations shaped Birmingham's coverage in northern newspapers, certain case studies have been selected. The prestigious and relatively progressive *Boston Globe* and *New York Times* epitomize liberal journalism and consequently have been chosen to represent white papers. Meanwhile, as two of the largest African- American papers, *The Baltimore Afro-American* and *The Chicago Defender* are used to represent the black press.[32] Examining the extent to which newspapers' coverage of Birmingham was shaped by foreign affairs showcases whether journalists, like the SCLC leaders that sought their support, also used Cold War rhetoric and whether this affected how their readers perceived the campaign.

During and after the campaign, both white and black northern newspapers published numerous reports on international responses to Birmingham. In the week after Project C ended, the *Defender* published six articles on foreign criticism, quoting newspapers from Western Europe, the USSR, Europe, Mexico and Asia.[33] African-American journalists knew racial attacks provided the USA's

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[31] Rustin, 'The Meaning of Birmingham'.

[32] Although Baltimore was south of the Mason-Dixon Line (demarcating slave-holding and non-slave-holding states before 1863), it is far north of Alabama (which resides at the heart of the Deep South) and since roughly World War II it has not considered a part of Dixie (the South); Frederick Rasmussen, 'Are we Northern? Southern? Yes', *The Baltimore Sun*, 28 March 2010, in https://web.archive.org/web/20180511093848/ http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2010-03-28/news/bal-md.backstory28mar28_1_southern-region-mason-dixon-line-western-maryland.

[33] 'Foreign Press Sees US Prestige Hurt by Birmingham Race Fight', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 15 May 1963, p. 3, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493970500/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/ 242; 'Reds Claim Klan, Cops Cooperate in Alabama', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 16 May 1963, p. 3, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493962780/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/253; 'Cartoons Lampoon Birmingham Racists', *The Chicago Defender (National)*, 18 May 1963, p. 9, https://www.proquest .com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493104988/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/272; 'Asians Headline Dixie Violen- ce;

enemies with ammunition and, like white newspapers, emphasized how this affected the country's reputation in neutral nations. Specifically, they focused on Africa because they felt ethnically connected to the continent and were aware the President saw it as a 'Cold War battleground'. For instance, the *Afro-American*'s foreign correspondent travelled across North Africa, describing it as 'ablaze with stories of bitter race relations'.[34] The white press also published several articles on foreign criticism, which most journalists did not present as unjustified. However, *The Boston Globe*'s London correspondent (Robert Estabrook) defensively argued 'no country is immune from prejudice', especially the 'hypocritical' USSR, and while he condemned southern racism, he emphasized the inevitability of frictions wherever minorities exist.[35] This arguably constitutes a form of counter-propaganda as the American newspaper attempted to regain the moral high-ground.

The northern black press was not ignorant of how some white citizens prioritized America's image and strength. During the Birmingham campaign, the *Defender* quoted several white politicians who used Cold War rhetoric, including Wayne Morse, one of only a few senators to publicly denounce police brutality, who compared the threat of Birmingham to Cuba.[36] This highlights African-Americans' acute awareness that some of the limited support they were receiving in Washington was motivated by Cold War concern. Similarly, both the *Defender* and the *Afro-American* quoted rabbis who supported Project C and linked it to the Cold War. One described police violence as '"very damaging to the prestige of the United States"' while another compared Birmingham to East Berlin.[37]

Meanwhile, it is clear that Estabrook's article prioritizing foreign affairs was an exception. Most articles in the mainstream media did not mention the Cold War in relation to Birmingham, and some actively criticized the connection. On 5 May, at the height of the Children's Crusade, *The New York Times* highlighted how Birmingham was 'immeasurably costly' to US foreign relations but argued that

Call US Racial Issue "Cancer"', *The Chicago Defender (National)*, 11 May 1963, p. 2, in https://www.pro quest.com/hnpchicagodefender/doc view/493125803/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/203.

[34] Charles P. Howard, 'In North Africa: US Taking Terrific Beating Because of Racial Outbreaks', *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 1 June 1963, p. 1, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoreafricanamerican/docvi ew/532220673/4E0034E0D4474A43PQ/213.

[35] Robert Estabrook, 'Alabama Front Page News in Europe—With bad Impact', *The Boston Globe*, 7 May 1963, p. 17, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpnewyorkbostonglobe/docview/276064202/fulltextPDF/300E7FCF9960 4F12PQ/125.

[36] 'Senator Rips use of Dogs in Ala. as "Reprehensible"', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 7 May 1963, p.5, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493971648/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/166.

[37] Ernest Lorge, as quoted in Ted Coleman, 'Birmingham's use of Dogs, Hoses on Marchers Termed Inhuman', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 8 May 1963, p. 4, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/49 3966637/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/176; Richard Rubenstein, 'What They say: Rabbi Richard Rubenstein', *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 18 May 1963, p. 2, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoreafricanamerican/doc view/532243736/4E0034E0D4474A43PQ/142.

'what it does to us as Americans' was more significant.[38] This reveals that the paper was more concerned about domestic consequences than international ones. When *The New York Times* published eight cartoons about Birmingham, only one referred to the USA's global prestige while most others focused on praising juvenile protesters.[39] Evidently, the Cold War was important and did animate some northern white reports, but, overall, was not the primary concern of the mainstream media.

Surprisingly, northern African-American coverage referenced the United States' image more than white newspapers, with numerous black journalists employing Cold War rhetoric to rally readers and criticize Kennedy. In a powerful article for the *Defender*, Jackie Robinson described Birmingham as the 'Moment of Truth' for the President and juxtaposed Kennedy's condemnation of Castro with his ambivalence towards Alabama authorities.[40] The Cuban comparison accentuated the government's hypocrisy and capitalized on the Cold War anxiety surrounding Castro's visit to the USSR on 28 April. The *Afro-American* chastized white newspapers for caring more about 'Cuban oppressed under Castro' than 'Birmingham oppressed under 'Bull' Connor'.[41] Importantly, the same article described Connor as worse than Khrushchev or Hitler, highly questionable hyperbole intended to mobilize readers.[42] These ideas were emphasised when the *Defender* printed a photograph entitled 'This is America—1963' depicting a harrowing scene of three policemen arresting a nonviolent black woman, a pictorial antithesis to America's image as the 'leader of the free world' (Figure 2).[43] The policemen's stark white shirts are juxtaposed with the woman's trembling black skin, one with his knee on her throat, now a potent symbol of American racism and a reminder that these issues remain. R.H. King and Johnson both emphasize the significance of photographs, with the latter describing Project C as an 'image event' because they were instrumental in piercing the public conscience, especially in the Cold War context.[44]

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[38] 'Outrage in Alabama', *The New York Times*, 5 May 1963, p. 200, in https://www.nytimes.com/1963/05/05/archives/outrage-in-alabama.html.

[39] Flannery, 'Stars Fell on Alabama', *The Baltimore Evening Sun*, as reproduced in 'Domestic Views of the Strife in Birmingham', *The New York Times*, 12 May 1963, p. 3, in https://www.nytimes.com/1963/05/12/ archives/domestic-views-of-the-strife-in-birmingham.html.

[40] Robinson, 'Birmingham Poses Moment of Truth for JFK on Rights'; Robinson, 'Sixth Annual Convention of the SCLC', as quoted in Jenkins, p. 4.

[41] 'There's no Turning Back now', *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 18 May 1963, p. 4, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoreafricanamerican/docview/532125443/1DCD0E27B4A14740PQ/146.

[42] Ibid.

[43] 'This is America—1963', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 7 May 1963, p. 1, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493967689/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/162.

[44] Richard H. King, *Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 210; Davi Johnson, 'Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event', *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 10.1 (2007), p. 2.
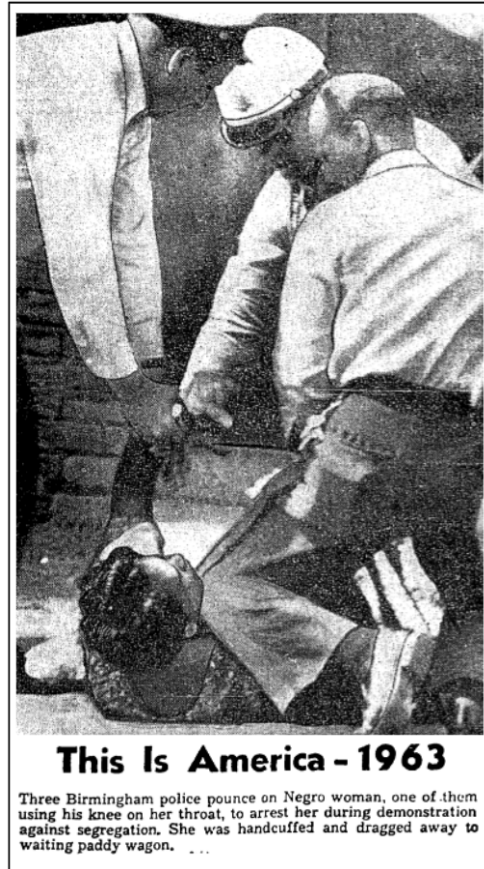
This Is America - 1963

Three Birmingham police pounce on Negro woman, one of them using his knee on her throat, to arrest her during demonstration against segregation. She was handcuffed and dragged away to waiting paddy wagon. ...

Figure 2: 'This is America –– 1963', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 7 May 1963.[45]

But while black newspapers were describing Birmingham in terms of foreign policy, two white readers of *The Boston Globe* were asserting that it was a domestic issue. On 13 May, a letter from reader Steven Hershenow argued the damage to American 'ideals of personal liberty' was more important than the degradation of its international reputation.[46] The same day, Robert Lawrence's letter criticized a *Boston Globe* reporter for over-emphasising Birmingham as a propaganda defeat, asserting that Americans must think more about racism's domestic effects.[47] 'If we continue to view the racial situation merely as a liability to the image of the United States abroad, we shall never have justice', he stated, suggesting a framework of justice centered on foreign policy would be incorrect.[48] Importantly, this starkly contrasts aforementioned articles describing global criticism and journalists like Estabrook

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[45] 'This is America—1963', *The Chicago Defender*, p. 1.

[46] Steven Hershenow, 'Image of US Being Degraded', *The Boston Globe*, 13 May 1963, p. 8, in https://www.proquest.com/hnpnewyorkbostonglobe/docview/275966955/300E7FCF99604F12PQ/166.

[47] Robert S. Lawrence, 'Honesty at Home, not Image Abroad', *The Boston Globe*, 13 May 1963, p. 8, https://www.proquest.com/hnpnewyorkbostonglobe/docview/275967044/300E7FCF99604F12PQ/167.

[48] Ibid.

who used Cold War rhetoric. As Schlesinger (Kennedy's 'court historian') stated, Birmingham 'jerked [citizens] into guilt and responsibility', including students who went from encouraging disarmament to championing civil rights, suggesting moral issues outweighed perceived foreign policy problems.[49] According to the black leader Bayard Rustin, this sympathy was influenced by television coverage, which mobilized previously ambivalent northern white citizens.[50]

Arguably, the contrast between how African-American and mainstream newspapers engaged with the Cold War reflects the difference in how black and white citizens were affected. As Chapter One described, foreign affairs had distracted successive presidents and hindered the Civil Rights Movement. On 13 May, the *Defender* published an emotional letter from reader Russell Meek, aimed at white authorities, that ridiculed how they 'say that communism is our worst enemy'.[51] This exemplifies the frustration of African-Americans, who felt the government was ignorant to their struggle and was focused on an enemy abroad when a more threatening one ruled tyrannically over the South. Arguably, because the Cold War had affected racial issues for so long, it was difficult for black citizens to see civil rights outside of the global conflict. Yet, white citizens could easily separate the campaign from the international context and present it as a local or moral issue because they were unaffected by prejudice and the Cold War did not impact their rights. Consequently, although white and black newspapers (on average) considered foreign policy a secondary consideration in Birmingham, its influence was more apparent in the latter.

However, according to opinion polls, these four newspapers did not accurately represent average Americans, who were far less sympathetic. In March, three days before the campaign, 63 percent named the Cold War as the country's biggest problem while racial issues were ranked sixth.[52] By September, the situation had dramatically shifted, with only 25 percent answering 'international problems' while 52 percent cited racial issues.[53] This suggests reports about foreign criticism in the northern media did not reflect all citizens, because Cold War anxiety was declining. Importantly, many saw *reform* as the problem, with 36 percent in June believing Kennedy was pushing desegregation too fast (double those who answered 'not fast enough').[54] This was despite 78 percent of Americans

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[49] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), p. 816.
[50] Bayard Rustin, *Strategies for Freedom: The Changing Patterns of Black Protest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 45.
[51] Russell Meek, 'Letter to Editor: Man and Beast', *The Chicago Defender (Daily)*, 13 May 1963, p. 12, https://www.proquest.com/hnpchicagodefender/docview/493971070/D2CD0B41E5DA49EEPQ/222.
[52] 'April 3: Most Important Problem', in George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971: Volume Three: 1959-1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 1811.
[53] 'October 2: Most Important Problem', in Gallup, p. 1842.
[54] 'June 16: Integration', in Gallup, p. 1818.

believing discrimination harmed the country's image abroad, emphasising how upholding segregation was deemed more important than the US's reputation.[55] Therefore when Johnson argues that Cold War embarrassment transformed the public psyche, he does not consider the country as a whole.[56] While African-American leaders and newspapers attempted to use foreign affairs to garner support, many white citizens were more focused on the negative, domestic implications of reform.

In conclusion, comparing Birmingham's coverage between the Northern white and black press reveals a fascinating contradiction: in an attempt to appeal to what they thought was motivating white moderates and the Kennedy Administration, African-American newspapers referenced the Cold War more prominently than their mainstream counterparts. The white media was aware of foreign criticism—and some journalists did prioritize America's image—but most articles localized Birmingham and most readers reacted sympathetically, meaning King's theories were not necessarily correct. Meanwhile, reports in the *Defender* and *Afro-American* were clearly shaped by the Cold War, repeatedly referring to Birmingham's global implications. For nearly twenty years, African-American rights had been neglected by white citizens who (unaffected by discrimination) focused on their conflict with the USSR. In other words, while black citizens saw the Cold War and civil rights as intertwined, white citizens perceived the two issues as separate.

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[55] Harris Poll, in *The Washington Post*, 26 August 1963, as quoted in Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 187.
[56] Johnson, p. 20.

Chapter Three

Conciliating, Then Combatting, a Crisis: The Cold War in the Federal Response

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Since the eighteenth-century, the United States' racial hierarchy had affected its engagement with global affairs and, as the African-American struggle for equality became linked to the Cold War in the 1960s, John F. Kennedy's presidency was no exception.[57] As a result of his shocking assassination, his foreign policy and civil rights records were mythologized, especially by his official biographer, Arthur Schlesinger.[58] More recently however, revisionist historians have proven more critical, with Bryant arguing Kennedy avoided pursuing domestic equality from 1961-62 simply because it was more convenient.[59] Yet, Birmingham was a 'moment of truth' for the President, marking a turning-point at which his priorities began to subtly shift.[60] While his administration's initial inaction was shaped by a fear of political backlash, he eventually sacrificed his popularity to solve the crisis and prevent long-term problems. However, Cold War civil rights historians such as Dudziak have over-emphasised the importance of geopolitics in the deployment of troops, which was focused on stemming black revolt.[61]

Before assessing Kennedy's motivations, it is first crucial to explain how and when his government responded to Birmingham. When sit-ins began on 3 April, Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall urged King not to proceed, showcasing how the Administration hoped to avoid disruptive demonstrations.[62] Until 'Double D-Day', the only support it showed was during King's imprisonment, when the Kennedy brothers phoned his wife. The government's first official statement about Project C was made exactly one month after it began, with Robert Kennedy commenting on the Children's Crusade.[63] Later, he raised bond money for imprisoned children, while Marshall assisted negotiations and the President lobbied Birmingham business-owners.[64] When a compromise was struck on 8 May, Kennedy finally spoke publicly but emphasised his inability to intervene with force.[65]

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[57] Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 48.
[58] Schlesinger.
[59] Nick Bryant, *The Bystander: John F. Kennedy and the Struggle for Black Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), p. 12.
[60] Robinson, 'Birmingham Poses Moment of Truth for JFK on Rights'.
[61] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 169.
[62] Branch, p. 711.
[63] Robert F. Kennedy, 'Statement by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy', 3 May 1963, in https://catalog.archives.gov/id/179029624.
[64] Branch, p. 788.
[65] John F. Kennedy, 'Newsclip of the President Expressing Satisfaction With the Resolution of Racial Conflicts in Birmingham', Washington, D.C., 8 May 1963, in https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-watsons-go-to-birming ham-1963-by-christopher-paul-curtis/sources/1064.

However, following the 11 May bombings and violent reaction of black citizens, he stationed 3,000 riot-control troops around Birmingham. It is crucial to determine what motivated Kennedy's response to the crisis (both his action and inaction), i.e., why his administration's approach changed after 'D-Day' and again on 12 May, as well as how all this was shaped by the Cold War.

Firstly, one must evaluate whether the President was actually as 'deeply concerned' as Coretta King felt during their phone call.[66] While Bryant and other Kennedy scholars praise him for contacting her, 'new' political historians like Branch argue he was simply *returning* Coretta's calls and acting under pressure from activists.[67] In a meeting on 4 May, Kennedy revealed he was sickened by photographs of police violence, but did not mobilize federal troops for another week.[68] Thus, when Johnson links these images to the President's intervention, he greatly over-emphasises their true impact.[69] Moreover, Kennedy admitted in the meeting 'we have done not enough', implying he could have done more than he publicly claimed.[70] Citing the Constitution's Supremacy Clause, Colaiaco argues the President could have intervened, so while the Administration claimed it wanted to act but could not, the opposite was true.[71] Crucially, civil rights leaders recognized his insincerity, with Abernathy's autobiography asserting that Kennedy acted 'not because he wanted to, but because he had to'.[72]

Therefore, the federal government used sympathetic language to conceal its true, realist motivations in Birmingham. Raised in a privileged family away from discrimination, the Kennedys saw civil rights as a political issue, condemning injustice in the 1960 election simply to capitalize on African-American voters.[73] In Birmingham, Robert Kennedy's 3 May statement asserted a 'dead child is a price that none of us can afford to pay'.[74] It would have been unacceptable for the White House to say it was more anxious about politics than African-American lives; therefore, the Attorney General instead used his 'concern' for young protesters to place pressure on campaign leaders. Moreover, while the first draft of the President's 12 May address (written by his brother and press secretary) was sympathetic, John Kennedy was worried about alienating white citizens and thus removed moral

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[66] C.S. King *My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr.*, p. 210.
[67] Bryant, p. 385; Branch, p. 735.
[68] John F. Kennedy, 'Meetings: Tape 85, Americans for Democratic Action', White House, Washington, D.C., 4 May 1963, in https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/secret-white-house-tapes/meetings-tape-85-americans-dem ocratic-action-4-may-1963.
[69] Johnson, p. 19.
[70] J.F. Kennedy, 'Meetings: Tape 85, Americans for Democratic Action'.
[71] James A. Colaiaco, 'Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Paradox of Nonviolent Direct Action', *Phylon*, 47.1 (1986), p. 26.
[72] Ralph Abernathy, *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), p. 236.
[73] Meriwether, p. 749.
[74] R.F. Kennedy, 'Statement by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy'.

language and blamed violence on 'extremists on either side'.[75] As Wofford, the President's adviser on civil rights, recounted, the Kennedys perceived prejudice as a political, not moral, problem.[76]

Primarily, the federal government's reluctance to intervene in Birmingham was due to the tremendous influence wielded by southern politicians. Southerners also dominated legislative committees and could stymie reform, so the President feared pursuing civil rights would scupper his foreign policy and tax legislation.[77] Meanwhile, when Birmingham erupted, northern politicians condemned Kennedy's inaction, making demonstrations, as Pillsbury describes, a 'lose-lose proposition' because he either had to sacrifice support from liberals or conservatives.[78] Also, Schlesinger described how the 'constitutional impotence of the national government' frustrated the Department of Justice, suggesting it was restricted by states' rights in the federalist system.[79] Marshall expressed this himself when writing to the Ugandan Prime Minister (who had decried racism in Birmingham), describing how federalism 'made the country ineffective [...] in dealing with racial discrimination'.[80] Evidently, the Assistant Attorney General cared about US-Africa relations and wanted to vindicate the government, but could not overstep the constitutional rights of states. Thus, federalism limited both the civil rights objectives and Cold War aims of the Kennedy Administration.

When the Administration finally intervened during the Children's Crusade, it worked almost exclusively behind-the-scenes because the President hoped, according to Skrentny, to resolve the situation *and* to retain southern support ('have his cake and eat it too').[81] In *A Thousand Days*, Schlesinger explained that the Attorney General always preferred conciliation to the courts, to give 'full respect to the federal system'.[82] This suggests his decision to send Marshall to Birmingham on 6 May was directly influenced by local authorities' constitutional power. Furthermore, the fact the President ordered his press officers to keep his involvement in negotiations a secret shows he wanted

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[75] Robert Kennedy, Pierre Salinger and Nicholas Katzenbach, 'Radio and Television Remarks Following Renewal of Racial Strife in Birmingham (Draft)', 12 May 1963, pp. 1-3, in https://catalog.archives .gov/id/193802; Bryant, p. 394; John F. Kennedy. 'Radio and Television Remarks Following Renewal of Racial Strife in Birmingham', Washington, D.C., 12 May 1963, in https://catalog.archives.gov/id/193802, p. 1.
[76] Wofford, p. 125.
[77] Peter J. Ling, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 75; F. Lawson, 'Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View From the Nation', in *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, ed. by Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p. 20.
[78] Samuel H. Pillsbury, 'Creating Freedom: Birmingham, 1963: Legal Sermon in Celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, January 15, 1999', *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*, 33.2 (2000), p. 758.
[79] Schlesinger, p. 814.
[80] Burke Marshall, 'Draft Reply to Prime Minister Obote of Uganda', 1963, p. 1-2, in https://www.jfklibrary. org/asset-viewer/archives/BMPP/008/BMPP-008-019, p. 2.
[81] John David Skrentny, 'The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968', *Theory and Society*, 27.2 (1998), p. 264.
[82] Schlesinger, p. 797.

to avoid antagonizing southern politicians whom he relied upon to pass his progressive legislation. Overall, Branch's expert evaluation of Birmingham describes how the Kennedys were 'adopting a 'new policy' of private manoeuvre behind a public stance of sympathetic neutrality'.[83]

Additionally, the federal government was concerned about the electorate's response, especially given the President's razor-thin victory in 1960. In summer 1963, Gallup polls revealed voters were generally opposed to racial reform: 60 percent disagreed with civil rights demonstrations and 57 percent believed segregation should apply in some businesses.[84] Consequently, Kennedy was hiding his conciliatory efforts from the public as well as southern politicians. His fears were realized when he took a stronger stance on civil rights post-Birmingham and his approval rating fell. Since segregation was a valence issue, intervening in Alabama contributed to his popularity in the South plummeting from 60 percent in March to 33 percent in June (Figure 3).[85]
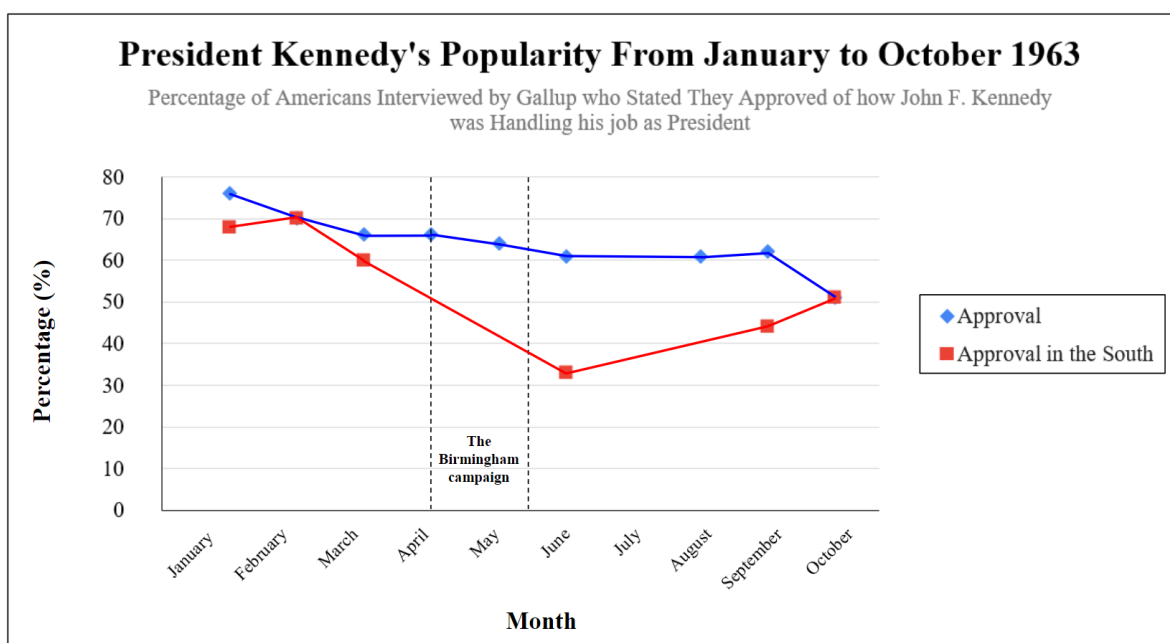
Figure 3: Graph showing President Kennedy's popularity from January to October 1963.[86]

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[83] Branch, p. 788.

[84] 'July 17: Racial Demonstrations', in Gallup, p. 1828; 'September 4: Integration', in Gallup, p. 1837.

[85] 'March 27: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1810; 'July 7: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1827.

[86] Where data points are missing, the information cannot be accessed. The graph was constructed using data from the following polls: 'January 20: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1800; 'March 1: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1807; 'March 27: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1810; 'April 24: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1812; 'May 19: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1815; 'July 7: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1827; 'August 25: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1835; 'September 8:

The President would have realized that public appetite for civil rights was lacking, and thus he deliberately avoided intervening during Project C's first month. Therefore, when he took action in May it implies there was something he deemed more important than his popularity. According to Bryant, the fact that Kennedy's intervention in civil rights 'jeopardised his chances of re-election' suggests his focus was on other concerns which would make victory in 1964 impossible anyway.[87] Thus, it is critical to determine what these concerns were and what changed in May to force Kennedy to embrace action.

One could argue that the President's sudden shift in tactics was influenced by the Cold War and, specifically, international criticism levelled against the US during the Children's Crusade. As a Cold Warrior, foreign policy had completely overshadowed his duty to black citizens from 1961-62. In his inaugural address, Kennedy pledged to help 'people in the huts and villages of half the globe' but did not mention African-Americans, foreshadowing what Schlesinger called his 'terrible ambivalence about civil rights' until 1963.[88] Reflecting on events over twenty years later, Marshall explained how civil rights were delegated to Robert Kennedy so the President could focus on foreign policy.[89] From 1961-62, he only took forceful action twice and was motivated by foreign policy each time. According to Wofford, the protection of Freedom Riders in Montgomery aimed to prevent embarrassment during talks with Khrushchev in Vienna.[90] Similarly, after Kennedy federalized the national guard to allow James Meredith to enter the University of Mississippi, he reminded students that 'the eyes of the Nation and all the world are upon you', showcasing how America's reputation abroad was paramount.[91] Therefore, a strong precedent already existed for the Cold War influencing the government's civil rights actions.

In his memoir, Secretary of State Dean Rusk highlighted how racial prejudice created 'tremendous problems' for US-Africa relations which concerned Kennedy, who saw the non- aligned world as a Cold War battleground.[92] Prior to his presidency, as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, the

President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1838; 'September 20: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1840; 'November 10: President Kennedy's Popularity', in Gallup, p. 1850.

[87] Bryant, p. 11.

[88] John F. Kennedy, 'Inaugural Address', Washington D.C., 20 January 1961, in https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn /about-jfk/historic-speeches/inaugural-address; Schlesinger, p. 793.

[89] Burke Marshall, interviewed by Judith Vecchione, 4 November 1985, in https://americanarchive.org/catalog /cpb-aacip_151-0g3gx45d8p.

[90] Wofford, p. 156.

[91] John F. Kennedy, 'On James Meredith and the University of Mississippi', 30 September 1962, Washington, D.C., in https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkuniversityofmississippi.htm.

[92] Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It: A Secretary of State's Memoirs* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1991), p. 514; Frank Costigliola, 'US Foreign Policy from Kennedy to Johnson', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 2: Crises and Détente*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 122.

young senator articulated his concern in a 1960 Stanford University speech, arguing America should change *with* the developing continent.[93] Interestingly, Meriwether presents Kennedy's discussion of Africa during the election as vital to his victory, repudiating the traditional focus on his phone call to Coretta King.[94] By referring to the non-white, non-aligned world hundreds of times, the Democratic candidate simultaneously appealed to white Cold Warriors and demonstrated his sympathy for black voters.[95] Africa was particularly central to the President's foreign policy after the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the Cold War lull facilitated his focus on cultivating ties with new, neutral nations. Moreover, Algeria had become openly pro-socialism immediately prior to the Birmingham campaign, and, on 1 May, the Organisation of African Unity met in Ethiopia. Consequently, Kennedy was hyper-aware of their response to the civil rights crisis, which, if negative, could become a Cold War threat.

Local authorities were less interested in international relations. By using dogs and fire hoses against children on 3 May, 'Bull' Connor humiliated the US and created a foreign policy issue, forcing a federal response. When the President finally spoke publicly on 8 May, he explicitly referred to foreign affairs, describing the spectacle as 'seriously damaging the reputation of both Birmingham and the country'.[96] The Cold War was a moral battle for world opinion, so maintaining a positive image of America abroad was vital.[97] Therefore, although acting behind-the-scenes to avoid Southern backlash did mean the world could not see Kennedy's conciliatory efforts, it also meant the situation would be resolved quicker and Birmingham would cease to be the focus of the international media.

Cold War civil rights historians emphasize that Kennedy's intervention was a response to negative international media coverage, citing government reports about world editorials.[98] On 14 May, a federal memorandum outlined foreign criticism, starting with African newspapers which suggested they were the Administration's biggest concern.[99] Later, a USIA memorandum provided a more positive perspective, explaining how reports had become 'more balanced', except in Ghana and Nigeria, neutral

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[93] John F. Kennedy, 'Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at Student Convocation', Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, 12 February 1960, in https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/stanford-university-19600212.
[94] Meriwether, p. 740.
[95] Ibid., p. 739.
[96] J.F. Kennedy, 'Newsclip of the President Expressing Satisfaction With the Resolution of Racial Conflicts in Birmingham'.
[97] Nicholas J. Cill, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 190.
[98] See: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 169; Carl M. Brauer, *John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 240; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Colour Line*, p. 162.
[99] 'Reaction to Racial Tension in Birmingham, Alabama', 14 May 1963, pp. 1-7, in https://catalog.archives.gov /id/193802.

nations Kennedy was anxious about.[100] Finally, a Bureau of Intelligence and Research report on 14 June described Soviet broadcasts to Africa as 'particularly sensational', demonstrating the federal government was aware of how their enemies attempted to ruin America's relations with non-aligned states.[101] However, scholars who cite such reports fail to acknowledge they were all published *after* Project C concluded and therefore their studies over-emphasize the importance of international relations. Although reports of foreign criticism confirmed that Kennedy had made the right choice, they did not influence his decision-making in the moment—especially not on 12 May when domestic considerations were paramount.

In addition to threatening America's position in the Cold War, the federal government feared that Birmingham could unleash a wave of black extremism, which would upset the country's internal stability.[102] This concern was foreshadowed in the 4 May meeting when Kennedy described the dangerous divide between nonviolent assimilationists and militant separatists in the African-American leadership.[103] His fears became a reality on 12 May when 2,500 black rioters gathered, stabbed a white taxi driver, and burned six stores to protest the bombings. Interestingly, McWhorter explains that the public was not worried about black revolt, since there was no television footage of the violence and white audiences were not ready to accept African-Americans as the aggressive force.[104] For the federal government however, the riots turned Birmingham from a foreign policy issue into a national crisis, causing Kennedy to abandon conciliation and instead combat the situation with force. Thus, while Dudziak attributes presidential intervention to global criticism of white violence, Cotman highlights how federal troops were only deployed after the black 'rebellion'.[105] One could argue the Administration feared domestic chaos would damage US prestige abroad, but this was not mentioned during the 12 May White House meeting, suggesting it was a secondary concern.[106] The tape recording of the discussions provides invaluable insight into their decision-making process and, crucially,

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[100] Donald M. Wilson, 'Memorandum for the President: Summary of Foreign Reactions to Racial Tension in Birmingham, Alabama', United States Information Agency, 17 May 1963, in https://catalog.archives.gov/id/121 66058, p. 1.

[101] Thomas L. Hughes, 'Soviet Media Coverage of Current US Racial Crisis', Department of State: Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 14 June 1963, in https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF/295/JF KNSF-295-016, p. 1.

[102] Mary L. Dudziak, 'Birmingham, Addis Ababa and the Image of America: International Influence on US Civil Rights Politics in the Kennedy Administration', in *Window on Freedom*, ed. by Plummer, p. 195.

[103] J.F. Kennedy, 'Meetings: Tape 85, Americans for Democratic Action'.

[104] Dianne McWhorter, *Carry me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), p. 437.

[105] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 169; John Walton Cotman, *Birmingham, JFK and the Civil Rights Act of 1963: Implications for Elite Theory* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 65.

[106] John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Burke Marshall and Robert S. McNamara, 'Meetings: Tape 86. Cuba/ Civil Rights', White House, Washington, D.C., 12 May 1963, in https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/secret- white-house-tapes/meetings-tape-86-cubacivil-rights-12-may-1963.

explains why the Administration sacrificed its support in the South. According to the Attorney General, failing to intervene 'could trigger off a good deal of [black] violence around the country' and impair the President's chances of re-election in the long-term.[107] Intervention would, and did, damage his popularity in the South (see Figure 3), but Kennedy knew it could recover. However, if he allowed the nation to descend into chaos, his approval would suffer in the long-term, so he therefore resolved to 'prevent the Negroes from rioting'.[108] In his expert analysis of the government's foreign policy, Borstelmann concludes that the Civil Rights Movement made Kennedy realize preserving order domestically was more important than Cold War aims in Africa.[109] In Montgomery and Mississippi, troops had been mobilized to protect US strength abroad, so the fact this was a secondary consideration in Birmingham suggests the President's priorities were changing, arguably facilitated by the post-Cuban Missile Crisis Cold War lull.

Nevertheless, mere hours after the 12 May meeting in which foreign affairs were not discussed, Kennedy delivered his televised statement which finished by encouraging citizens to consider 'the welfare of our country'.[110] The following week, he emphasized how the world had watched Birmingham 'with alarm and dismay', crafting a narrative in which international relations were central to his intervention.[111] Arguably, like he had done during the 1960 election, he was using the Cold War as a rhetorical device to avoid alienating half the US public. Revealing he mobilized soldiers around Birmingham to prevent black violence would undermine his intervention, sparking anger among African-Americans and criticism from moderates and the foreign media. Equally, using moral justifications would destroy his remaining support among white southerners. Therefore, he employed Cold War language, convincing King that he had intervened to win 'the hearts of men in Asia and Africa' (as quoted in Chapter One) and encouraging black journalists and their readers to continually reference global politics (as described in Chapter Two).[112] However, after Governor Wallace physically prevented black students entering the University of Alabama on 11 June, Kennedy finally committed to meaningful reform in his famous 'Report to the American People on Civil Rights'.[113] Although he

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[107] R.F. Kennedy, 'Meetings: Tape 86. Cuba/Civil Rights'.

[108] J.F. Kennedy, 'Meetings: Tape 86. Cuba/Civil Rights'.

[109] Thomas Borstelmann, '"Hedging our Bets and Buying Time": John Kennedy and Racial Revolutions in the American South and Southern Africa', *Diplomatic History*, 24.3 (2000), p. 463.

[110] J.F. Kennedy, 'Radio and Television Remarks Following Renewal of Racial Strife in Birmingham', p. 2.

[111] John F. Kennedy, 'Remarks in Nashville at the 90th Anniversary Convocation of Vanderbilt University', Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, 18 May 1963, in https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resou rces/john-f-kennedy-speeches/vanderbilt-university-19630518.

[112] M.L. King, May 1963, as quoted in Branch, p. 791.

[113] J.F. Kennedy, 'Report to the American People on Civil Rights'.

still referenced US hypocrisy abroad—describing how 'when Americans are sent to Vietnam or West Berlin, we do not ask for whites only'—he primarily presented discrimination as a 'moral crisis'.[114] Thus, Birmingham was a critical turning-point behind-the-scenes, shifting Kennedy's focus from the Cold War to domestic stability. However, his public rhetoric only changed after 'the Stand in the Schoolhouse Door' on 11 June.

In conclusion, the Kennedy Administration's initial lack of response was shaped by a fear of political backlash; however, when Birmingham became a Cold War threat, the President was forced to intervene and acted with force when black riots endangered the stability of American society. These realist concerns were concealed behind the thin veil of moral language, with sympathetic speeches, statements and phone calls. Project C had therefore been partially successful, sparking global outrage that threatened to tarnish America's prestige, yet it was ultimately the riots (which the SCLC discouraged) that led to troop deployment. Without the fear of widespread black revolt, it is unclear whether foreign policy concerns alone would have been enough to prompt such forceful intervention and turn Kennedy's policy from conciliation to combat. Nevertheless, the campaign was the harbinger of a new civil rights approach within the federal government. In this sense, Birmingham was indeed a 'moment of truth' for the President, forcing him to more proactively defend equality and, later, introduce the civil rights bill. However, the campaign's true significance was not made apparent to the public until 11 June, when Kennedy finally embraced the moral language he had long avoided and sacrificed the support of southerners. Crucially, his reluctance to abandon his Cold War rhetoric led SCLC leaders and African-American journalists to continue their new tactic of leveraging foreign affairs, unaware that they were behind the curve as the federal focus shifted from the international to national.

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[114] Ibid.

Conclusion

Drawing from a plethora of primary sources, adopting a variety of perspectives, and building upon the strong foundation laid by historians including Borstelmann, Meriwether and Johnson, this dissertation has aimed to highlight the multifaceted relationship between civil rights and the Cold War using the Birmingham case study.[115] Granted, spatial constraints prevent a complete analysis of all actors and groups involved, some of which could be the subject of future studies which would help illuminate more about the demonstrations. However, the methodology and structure could be applied to different cases: for instance, the ways in which the Cold War shaped the Freedom Rides or the March on Washington could provide interesting topics for research.

By combining Cold War civil rights with Great Man and 'new' political history, this dissertation has investigated the degree to which foreign policy shaped the Birmingham campaign's strategists, the reactions of the northern white/African-American press, and the federal intervention. Chapter One claimed Birmingham was a turning-point for the SCLC, which utilized Cold War rhetoric hoping to convince the Administration to intervene. However, Chapter Two argued that while African-American newspapers used similar language to King, many white journalists and readers criticized the focus on international implications and presented the campaign as a local issue. Likewise, although Kennedy was concerned by foreign criticism and used Cold War rhetoric, Chapter Three argued he ultimately prioitized domestic considerations. Importantly, the President's focus on maintaining his popularity and, later, stemming black revolt symbolized how his priorities were shifting away from the Cold War. Therefore, Project C's leaders had created the foreign policy crisis they intended, reflected by the language of the northern press and White House. However, the fact it was the 12 May riots, not the Children's Crusade, that triggered forceful federal intervention arguably puts into question the effectiveness of nonviolence. The strategy of King and his associates captured Kennedy's attention and laid the pressure of the watching world on his shoulders, but it was insufficient alone to achieve what they intended and was therefore less successful than what the vast majority of civil rights historians claim. Furthermore, the fact that white newspapers separated the Cold War from civil rights, while black commentators linked them, highlights how profoundly the global context had impacted their lives and rights. This arguably reflects how white citizens have a level of entitlement and

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[115] Borstelmann, "'Hedging Our Bets and Buying Time'"; Meriwether; Johnson.

discretion to pick and choose what they focus on, while African-Americans (without this luxury) are forced to use any and all resources at their disposal just to be listened to. Not only were they willing to use the Cold War, they *had to*.

In general, Birmingham showcases the tragic reality of the Civil Rights Movement, in which activists and black newspapers were pushed to present the brutality of segregation as a foreign policy issue in an attempt to get the attention of white authorities. Furthermore, despite moral outrage among some white citizens and journalists, the response of the federal government to such campaigns was based on political considerations.

While US race relations have dramatically improved since 1963, recent events such as George Floyd's murder have demonstrated that equality is not yet a reality. Additionally, the existence of movements such as *#blacklivesmatter* reveals African-Americans still need to argue for their supposedly 'self-evident' rights to a federal government still focused on foreign policy over thirty years after the Cold War ended.

For two years, the Kennedy Administration had neglected civil rights. For nearly twenty years the Cold War had distracted the nation and left black citizens caught in the crossfire. For over three-hundred years African-Americans had been systematically brutalized. However, in 1963, Birmingham represented a rare 'moment of truth' in which, under the merciless glare of global attention, prejudices that had long lurked in the shadows were exposed as the white media and government were forced to respond. Consequently, a new era of the Civil Rights Movement began.

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Black Intellectuality: Challenging Conventions of Belonging in STEM

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I.   Motive, Critical Lens, Mapping, & Thesis

STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), starting with the way that children are taught, are mired in convention and their histories, which presents uncomfortable tension in the future of each of these fields: how can we open up STEM fields to new voices and questions while maintaining academic rigor and qualifications?[1] What happens when new data come to light that does not fit into what we already know? More specifically, how do we as scholars and professionals balance the conventions of the past with the change that the future requires? And most relevantly for this paper, how do we apply this balance between convention and curiosity to the systems of inequality in STEM?

This paper will use the lens of respectability—not in the economic sense but in the sense of othering versus belonging—in order to interrogate why and how Black scholars have been systemically excluded, especially in STEM.[2] Robert Wuthnow's *American Misfits* discusses the idea of social 'othering'. Specifically, he explains that people establish their own respectability by literally defining someone else as 'other' (someone outside the social order because they cannot or will not adjust) in order to make themselves seem better—that is, more willing and capable to adhere to the ideals of what is respectable—in comparison.[3] The white standard of intellectuality enforces this paradigm in STEM fields, where Black scholars (and scholars of color, scholars with socioeconomic disadvantage,

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[1] To preface, this essay will be rather informal in style and tone: my intent is to show that research and intellectuality are valid regardless of how they look on the surface, even if their appearance is unconventional. This was a learning process for me, and the casual descriptions of my research process and my use of the first-person "we" are meant to indicate my eagerness for us all to continue learning as an intellectual community.

[2] A couple of texts that I encountered during my research inspired some of the frameworking of this paper, where respectability is viewed as a spectrum of "othering" versus "belonging".

Robert Wuthnow. "Othering: CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES." In *American Misfits and the Making of Middle-Class Respectability*, (Princeton University Press, 2017), 258–66. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1vwmhfj.12
Darin Weinberg, *Of Others Inside: Insanity, Addiction And Belonging in America* (Temple University Press, 2005). http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bszm2

[3] Wuthnow, "Othering."

etc.) are defined as the less capable 'other' against which the white mainstream of intellectuality can define itself. This construction of respectability and the 'other' is a major apparatus of marginalization.

This study will explore intellectual communities beyond the white gaze, where Black intellectuals could engage in scholarship through Black newspapers. When Black scholarship was unsupported elsewhere, a separate, encouraging intellectual community was a necessity. By looking through Black newspapers, we will see that the issue of who is allowed to belong to the intellectual community is not a matter of a lack of scholarship or even a paucity of scholars, but rather a result of systemic othering wherein Black intellectuals were not allowed to exist under and participate in white systems of intellectuality. Aside from interrogating media sources, this exploration will include my own observations of STEM classrooms as a child and now as a college student, with an emphasis on the STEM pipeline and the belief gap, both of which are widely-observed phenomena in STEM education in the United States.

This essay argues that in investigating the STEM pipeline and methods of improving structural support for Black intellectuality, a historical inquiry must also be brought to the forefront. Looking to the past and to the present, evidence of Black intellectuality challenges the archetypes of whose participation in intellectual circles is traditionally allowed, encouraged, and validated. More importantly, it demonstrates avenues for how to incorporate more diversity of thought and of people into intellectual fields in the future.

II.   Curiosity in STEM & Potential Impacts of Challenging Convention

STEM is rooted in convention, especially in mathematics. Upon discovering a universal truth, why change anything about it? As much as scientists are taught to question everything, much of what students are taught, especially at younger ages, is taken directly from textbooks and is expected to be learned by rote. Curious questioning is an example of how accepted scientific understanding changes over time. Scientists are trained to adjust their worldviews and create new theories when presented with evidence that contradicts accepted understanding. And yet, looking at the demographics of who is allowed to participate in scientific circles, we largely sit on our hands and accept the status quo. I challenge us to turn this critical eye on our own fields of study to interrogate and make a change in the paradigms of who belongs in science.

Funding the research of Black scientists, even and especially when it caters to underrepresented populations, is one way to increase the impact of Black scientists. The white gaze on intellectuality creates and maintains social bounds surrounding what is considered intellectual and

who is allowed to partake in these pursuits.[4] Importantly, diversity of people also brings with it a diversity of thought. A study that was done on NIH (National Institutes of Health) grant awards found that topic choice for research funding applications among African-American and Black applicants "accounts for over 20% of the funding gap after controlling for multiple variables, including the applicant's prior achievements."[5] In the *Results* section of this article, the authors point out: "These results demonstrate the existence of topic preference, meaning that different topics are accorded different levels of acceptance and/or enthusiasm, which may reflect shared, broadly-held views on the relative scientific value of different areas of research."[6] In other words, the topics that Black applicants want to study are not deemed intellectually respectable to the same extent as other topics. The study then looks at what these specific topics are. Keywords for common topics among Black applicants are: "socioeconomic, health care, disparity, lifestyle, psychological, adolescent, and risk," while keywords for topics without Black applicants are: "osteoarthritis, cartilage, prion, corneal, skin, iron, and neuron."[7] Research that is geared toward "the community and population level, as opposed to more fundamental and mechanistic investigations," bears lower award rates.[8] This is research that could potentially investigate and mediate structural inequities. Here, the issue is what is considered worthy of being studied: whose ideas belong in intellectual circles? Challenging the paradigm of what sort of knowledge is valuable could therefore impact whose research is awarded funding, and vice versa. Thus, an implication of this study is that incorporating scholars of different backgrounds has the potential to lead to new and different ideas of scholarship.

Another issue concerns who, exactly, is considered worthy of executing the studying—in other words, who is viewed as 'professor material.' Only ~6% of "full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2018" were Black.[9] This disproportionate allocation of faculty

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[4] The white gaze is described extensively especially with regards to literature and narrative. It encapsulates the idea of the white default perspective. The white gaze impacts not only social bounds but legal bounds as well, e.g., literacy laws in the antebellum South, which centered whiteness as a requisite for education, and Blackness as the 'other' who could not be educated. (see footnote 57)

[5] T.A. Hoppe et al., "Topic choice contributes to the lower rate of NIH awards to African-American/black scientists," Science Advances, Vol. 5, No. 10, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aaw7238

[6] Hoppe et al., "Topic choice contributes to the lower rate of NIH awards."

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Fast Facts," 2020. From *U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics*, "Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty," https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61 . ; Note that when blocked by race, full professors are either equally male and female, or more male than female. However, women vastly outnumber men in undergraduate education. This may indicate that women leave the STEM pipeline at greater rates than men after undergrad, or that STEM students are disproportionately male, or some combination of both. Further research could potentially look into historical trends in such demographic data.
Jessica Bryant, "Women Continue to Outnumber Men in College Completion," *Best Colleges*, November 19, 2021.

positions is itself an indication of inequality based on how Black intellectuality is viewed. Moreover, this inequality also shows us the discrepancies that result at the terminal position in academia (i.e., such imbalance is likely a compounding of racial achievement gaps at several earlier stages). Furthermore, this racial gap in the intellectual community translates into who is seen by society as intellectual as it propagates (for example) into who is in mentorship positions for students of color, which will be discussed later in section IX. We can see the myriad of potential implications here, one of which is of particular relevance here: if students and professionals in STEM change our perceptions of which subjects (and whose intellectual interests) are valid, we could open up funding to Black professionals (professors, researchers), who would then be in positions to mentor Black students, who are then better prepared for their own academic ventures, and so on.

III.   Black Newspapers: Black Intellectuality as a Challenge to Convention

We can compare this goal for the future of Black intellectual activity to the past, when the simple act of participating in education and intellectual communities was a form of resistance for Black people. Black literacy was a longstanding form of resistance, from enslaved people "stealing" their education to the Black newspapers of Reconstruction being used as textbook materials.[10] We will focus on the *Amsterdam New York Star-News,* in which page 6 of the February 14, 1942 issue (see Fig. 1) has several pieces of note.[11] They will be discussed in conjunction in terms of the importance of safe spaces for Black intellectualism in comparison with the white gaze that has filtered Blackness into mainstream media. The principal finding here is that if Black intellectuality is not respected or allowed outside of certain groups, then these groups need to exist in order for Black people to participate in science and other forms of intellectuality.

To treat each of these pieces in depth, and individually, would take more time and space than the scope of this paper allows; instead, the pieces will be treated in brief overview, keeping in mind what their existence in the *Star-News* can tell us about spaces for Black intellectuality. One piece of interest on this page is headlined: "On Riot Issue." This letter to the editor from one of the *Star-News*'s readers explains: "That word Dixie infuriates me every time I see it in any colored papers. We live in worse than Dixie right here in N.Y.C….Instead of going all the way south to find disgraceful treatment

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https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/2021/11/19/women-complete-college-more-than-men/

[10] "Interview: Hilary Green," interview by Kidada Williams, *Seizing Freedom*, April 2021, podcast audio via seizingfreedom.vpm.org, 10:54 and 13:39. https://seizingfreedom.vpm.org/interview-hilary-green/

[11] *Amsterdam   New   York   Star-News   (1941-1943),*   14   Feb.   1942,   page   6.   Retrieved   from https://www.proquest.com/bsc/docview/226122205/pageviewPDF/D4F130297D034CDFPQ/1?accountid=9703.

of the Blacks, why don't you try to clean up your own yard."[12] This type of open discussion—a published account of a respectful debate over the issue of intellectual perspective—totally cracks open the idea that only a few exceptional Black people were 'worthy' of participating in intellectual discourse. The reality is that Black intellectuals have been everywhere—even in righteous newspaper readers engaging in polite debate—for a long time. This correspondent to the editor was also a woman: Mrs. Helen Lloyd. However, most history classes perpetuate the idea that no one like her could have existed.[13] We need only get past the white ideal of the traditional intellectual in order to see Mrs. Lloyd's letter for what it is: a valid contribution to an intellectual community.

A different part of the mainstream historical narrative is contradicted in another letter to the editor, this one headlined: "Africa Should Be Future Race Home."[14] This reader comments that since segregation is not improving, Black people should be pushing not for desegregation, but for a better lot in life under a segregated system; namely, he voices support for a separate Black division in the Army, and he suggests that the Allies make a promise that territory in Africa would be set aside for Black people who want to go live there.[15] Despite the teaching that all Black people were working together for their collective improvement (which, depending on the connotation, often recalls the myths of Jewish conspiracies and immigrant takeovers), this reader obviously had strong views that conflicted with those of the author and editor who are addressed. This piece challenges the idea of the monolith of Blackness and the Black experience, and it shows how the existence of this intellectual space allowed for people's differing opinions to be expressed openly. There is also the matter of the medium of discourse: this was an established system that centered around the *Star-News* as an established Black newspaper—a safe space for Black intellectuals—and the written letters to the editor from readers who wished to articulate their own opinions.

Not only does this page of the *Star-News* show engagement in an intellectual community, it also demonstrates engagement in the civic community and the artistic community. The article: "New Tammany Leader?" explains how Harlem and its Black community are impacted by both local democratic leadership and broader leadership in Tammany Hall, a political organization that operated much of New York politics, especially in New York City. The author argues for the desegregation of

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[12] Ibid.
[13] "United States Era 8," 2023. From UCLA History Public History Initiative, https://phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/united-states-history-content-standards/united-states-era-8/; Note specifically the minimal requirements to understand minority life in the United States, and only then as it relates to whiteness and majority culture.
[14] *New York Star-News,* 14 Feb. 1942, page 6.
[15] Ibid.

voters as well as racial equality in voting: "Tammany must change its tactics and its policy toward Harlem…[and] must believe in the full equality of colored voters."[16] This argument centers Black communities and their right to vote, and it extends beyond just who has a seat at the table and into how communities are directly impacted by their presence or absence. And political commentary doesn't just stop with the civic; on the left-hand side of this page is "New Tammany Leader?," while on the right-hand side is the Poet's Corner.

The featured poem in the Poet's Corner is "A Bigot's Prayer in Sikeston, Mo.," by Rube De Bard (see Fig. 2), in which the first three quatrains focus on the religious hypocrisy of bigots asking for God's help while judging and attacking those around them for… judging and attacking those around them.[17] The second part of the poem is "God's Answer." In these stanzas, God reprimands the bigots for their hypocrisy and their cruelty. One stanza reads: "My word serves as a lamp, you say, / But my eye pierces through you, / No word of mine led you that day / in Sikeston town, Missouri."[18] Using the words of God, De Bard produces a biting response to the actions and rhetoric of these bigots, steeped in the same religion that they profess to hold dear. Artistically, De Bard uses rhythm and rhyme to create an engaging piece, as well as including several allusions that would have been well understood by his audience. Some references are Biblical, like the quote above that references Psalms: "thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."[19] De Bard's use of Bible verses is ironic: he argues thusly that the Bible is used by these bigots to justify their cruelty, but their actions are in fact a "mockery" of Christianity.[20] Other references included current events such as the atrocities of World War II, which were compared to the violence in Sikeston: "Now Mussolini and the Japs / Also the wicked Fuehrer, / Would hesitate to do, perhaps, / What you did in Missouri."[21] From these excerpts, De Bard is obviously a talented writer and an astute observer, and his sophisticated poem combines a close reading of the Bible with searing social criticism. Indeed, as much as his poem is a piece of art in itself, his political and social commentary becomes even more important when looking at the poem's context.

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ps 119:105 KJV.
[20] *New York Star-News,* 14 Feb. 1942, page 6.
[21] Ibid.

IV.   Hiding Black History: the Lack of Black Presence in the Press

Googling "sikeston mo" yields nothing obvious that would be the object of reference for this poem. Once more with the example of Sikeston, we run into the issue of Black history being hidden. It is *right there*, but one has to be extra conscientious in order to find it: looking up instead "sikeston mo race massacre" brings up the lynching of Cleo Wright and other racial violence that occurred in Sikeston, Missouri on January 25, 1942, three weeks before the publishing of this paper. [22] An article by Domenic J. Capeci, Jr. from *The Journal of American History* from 1986 explains how this lynching was actually a turning point in civil rights activism. He describes how "embarrassed white patriots" compared the lynching of Wright in Sikeston to violence in Nazi Germany, much like De Bard did in another stanza of his poem.[23] If I hadn't started out from the Poet's Corner, I never would have learned about Wright's murder and the impact it had on Sikeston.[24] Indeed, in predominantly white spaces, Black people, their communities, their stories, and their intellectuality are made to be invisible. The importance of spaces where Black communities can thrive is inextricable from the way that Black history has been systemically obscured.

Beyond Black history, what other facets of the Black experience are made to be invisible? In other words, by what means have Black people been othered because they are not considered respectable? One method of othering has been the application of the white gaze onto Black intellectuality and intellectuality as a whole (i.e., who is allowed to be a scholar and what is considered scholarly). In the *New York Times* archive from February 14, 1942 (the same day as the page from the *Amsterdam New York Star-News* that gave numerous examples of Black engagement in the intellectual, artistic, civic, and socio-political communities), there is almost no evidence of Black intellectuality in the entire paper.[25] The *New York Times*'s tagline is famously: "All the News That's Fit to Print"; so what does it say that almost no news about Black people was printed on this day?

Searching (using 'Ctrl + F') through the article titles for "Black" returns nothing, as do searches for "NAACP," "colored," "DuBois," "Harlem," and "race." "Slur" is included in an article title about

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[22] Capeci, Dominic J. "The Lynching of Cleo Wright: Federal Protection of Constitutional Rights during World War II." *The Journal of American History* 72, no. 4 (1986): 859–87. https://doi.org/10.2307/1908894

[23] Capeci, "The Lynching of Cleo Wright," 868; *New York Star-News,* 14 Feb. 1942, page 6.

[24] "History of Sikeston." *Sikeston, Missouri,* https://www.sikeston.org/history_of_sikeston.php ;
"City of Sikeston, Missouri: Equal Employment Opportunity Plan." PDF, *Sikeston, Missouri.* https://www.sikeston.org/departments/administrative_services/docs/2006EEOPRev.pdf
One could expect that this ugly side of Sikeston's history wouldn't be on the front page of their website, but there is really no reference to the Black community of Sikeston at all, despite the fact that "racial minorities comprise 25% of Sikeston's population," according to a 2006 "City of Sikeston, Missouri Equal Employment Opportunity Plan"

[25] "Site Map: 1942 > February > 14: Articles." *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/sitemap/1942/02/14/.

a Canadian politician defaming the United States Navy, and "Africa" is included with reference to World War II deployments.[26] "Negro" is part of the title of "SCHOOL HEADS DENY BIAS AGAINST NEGRO; Assert Teachers in City's 4 Colleges Are Appointed With No Discrimination."[27] The article recounts how Dr. Powell, a Councilman and pastor, "had raised a question as to why there were no Negroes among the 2,232 faculty members of City College, Hunter College, Brooklyn College, and Queens College. He produced no specific instances of discrimination at the hearing."[28] The four heads of the colleges responded, and they "declared no discrimination was practised."[29] As evidence, "Dr. Klapper said Queen's College [where he was president] was entirely free from racial discrimination, adding that there was a Negro chemistry instructor on the faculty and a brilliant young Negro graduate student on the administrative staff."[30]

From the view of the present, this response seems patently absurd, along the lines of "I'm not racist! I have Black friends."[31] But when we put this piece in its own historical context, the idea that a Black scholar could belong in a New York City college speaks to the structural differences between this environment and the antebellum South. Without literacy laws that made communities of Black scholarship illegal (specifically prohibiting not education but nighttime gatherings, where enslaved people would have been educated) in the mid-twentieth century, a couple of phenomena work in concert to support the development of Black intellectualism.[32] First, where opportunities existed to participate in scholarship, Black intellectuals seized these chances to make the most of the spaces they were allowed to occupy. Additionally, where Black intellectuals were largely denied access to white-run systems of education and academia (as evidenced by the *New York Times)* there was simultaneously a rise of different opportunities and spaces where Black scholarship was encouraged, like the community we see in this Black newspaper.*[33]* Importantly, the newfound community made the most

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[26] "Site Map." *The New York Times.*
[27] "SCHOOL HEADS DENY BIAS AGAINST NEGRO: ASSERT TEACHERS IN CITY'S 4 COLLEGES ARE APPOINTED WITH NO DISCRIMINATION." (1942, Feb 14). *New York Times (1923-)* Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/school-heads-deny-bias-against-negro/docview/106193196/se-2?accountid=9703.
[28] "SCHOOL HEADS DENY BIAS AGAINST NEGRO," *New York Times.*
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Tyler Parry, "A Brief History of the 'Black Friend,'" (July 30, 2018), *Black Perspectives, African American Intellectual History Society,* web. https://www.aaihs.org/a-brief-history-of-the-black-friend/
[32] Antonio Bly, "Slave Literacy and Education in Virginia," (April 26, 2021), *Encyclopedia Virginia,* web. https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slave-literacy-and-education-in-virginia/
[33] Reconstruction to the mid-twentieth century was also the time of the rise of HBCUs, which would be an interesting and likely fruitful area for future research.

of this opportunity by participating in intellectuality in a way that was essentially invisible to the white gaze: through articles and reader submissions to newspapers like the *Star-News*.

Now we can compare this article as the only obvious reference to the existence of Black people at all, in the entire *Times*, to the single page of the *Star-News* that was filled with interactions and engagements by Black scholars. Black intellectuality was thriving at this specific time—page 6 of the February 14, 1942 *Star-News* having provided clear evidence of it—but the *Times* shows no record of it. This discrepancy reveals the importance of spaces dedicated to Black intellectuality: if nothing like the *Star-News* had existed, how would these intellectuals have shared their opinions, their scholarship, and their art? Moreover, how much easier would it have been to obscure the reality of a thriving Black intellectual community without such a written record? And lastly, having compared this record with the *Times* and its exclusion of Black intellectualism, how can this comparison be applied to the issue of the respectability of Black scholarship, specifically in STEM?

V.   Weaponizing STEM: Insanity as a Social Issue of Respectability

Given our exploration of the Black intellectual community through the *Star-News*, we can now focus on STEM more specifically. Our first example will be a case study of sorts, in which we discuss mental illness and its effects on social belonging. Specifically, we will track how certain areas in science were developed for the purpose of marginalizing certain groups of people, namely disabled people and Black people, in these examples.[34]

In the third chapter ("An Incurable Lunatic") of his book *American Misfits and the Making of Middle-Class Respectability,* Robert Wuthnow focuses insanity as a social issue.[35] He unpacks how "the insane became an 'other' against which respectability was defined."[36] He then explains how being of sound mind was considered a prerequisite for being fit to manage property.[37] Thus, being propertied was an assurance (of sorts) of respectability, and conversely, being declared insane meant losing one's social credibility.

Furthermore, insanity is often associated with a specific group of people: Jonathan M. Metzl's *The Protest Psychosis* argues that schizophrenia was overdiagnosed in Black men as a way to undermine

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[34] Note the importance of intersectionality here, which is implied but not explicitly discussed in this section.
[35] Robert Wuthow, "An Incurable Lunatic: PENSION POLITICS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR RESPECTABILITY." Chapter 3 in *American Misfits and the Making of Middle-Class Respectability*, (Princeton University Press, 2017), 70-100. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1vwmhfj.7.
[36] Wuthnow, "An Incurable Lunatic," 72.
[37] Ibid., 79.

civil rights movements.[38] Metzl explains that diagnoses of African American men were changed from personality disorders to schizophrenia "not because of changes in their clinical presentations, but because of changes in the connections between their clinical presentations and larger, national conversations about race, violence, and insanity."[39] Metzl delineates how this change in diagnoses results directly from updated diagnosing criteria in the *DSM-II* (the second edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), which "functioned as an *implicitly* racist text because it mirrored the social context of its origins in ways that enabled users to knowingly or unknowingly pathologize protest as mental illness."[40] Thus, this aspect of psychological science was developed in a way that weaponized the stigma of mental illness in order to discredit protestors.

These two texts can be taken together to understand that the science behind psychology and the treatment of psychological illnesses was inherently tied to the social context in which this science was developed. People who were marginalized in society, e.g., Black men protesting for civil rights, were marginalized by the science used to treat their symptoms (real or perceived). And vice versa: the science that was created around insanity and the treatment thereof became a way to stigmatize and discredit people suffering from mental illness. Thus, the development of this science and this pattern of diagnosis was for the (not necessarily explicit) purpose of discrediting Black thinkers. Here, the weaponization of the stigma of mental illness was put toward the development of a science that further marginalized both Black people and people with mental illness. Whether deciding who is insane or who is allowed to be a scholar, this 'definition' of who belongs and who is the 'other' is "a matter of collective authoritative characterization."[41] It is a choice and a strategy employed for the purposes of marginalization.

VI.   Othering, Validation, and the STEM Pipeline

When STEM has been used repeatedly to discredit and delegitimize marginalized people, how can minoritized people be taken more seriously as students and scholars in STEM? A lot of the answers lie in attempting to stop the leakage from the STEM pipeline. The 'STEM pipeline' is the sequence of levels of education and involvement in STEM fields. The 'leakage' of this pipeline refers to people leaving STEM fields at each of these levels. This can include issues like younger children

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[38] Jonathan M. Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis : How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed November 27, 2021.
[39] Metzl, *Protest Psychosis,* 94.
[40] Ibid., 98.
[41] Wuthnow, "Othering," 261.

not having access to STEM facilities, high-school students being unable to pay for AP exams, and college students switching out of STEM majors. This term is sometimes also applied to students who stop their educations before graduate school, and instead remain in STEM with only an undergraduate degree, as well as to professionals who are unable to find work due to their race/class/gender, etc.[42] The STEM pipeline historically generally favors white, male, able-bodied and able-minded, rich students, in ways that intersect.[43]

Historical inequalities are also replicated in STEM education, specifically in the leakage of the STEM pipeline. Often, this disparity correlates with racial identity: among undergraduate students, 40% of Black students leave STEM majors, compared to 29% of white students.[44] Furthermore, among undergraduate STEM majors, 26% of Black students drop out of college, compared to 13% of white students.[45] The STEM pipeline is also associated with 'weed-out' classes—the culture in STEM is that harder classes given at the beginning of undergraduate study will 'weed out' the people who are 'unable' to do well in STEM fields. One of the issues here is that Black students are often less prepared than white students when entering college, due to structural inequities in K-12 education (the first step in the STEM pipeline). Another issue is that Black students tend to be especially isolated in STEM as undergraduates.[46] This results in classes like general chemistry, organic chemistry, intro calculus, and intro bio courses functioning as segregators by race, when they are potentially only intended to separate students by interest and ability.

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[42] William Schieffelin Claytor, a Black topologist, was unable to find work as a professor following his post-doctoral studies (late 1930s-early 1940s). Edray Herber Goins, a Professor of Mathematics at Pomona College, attributes this to "a towering figure in topology…who was well-known for saying he did not want Blacks in the field, he did not want Jews in the field, he did not want women in the field. And there's a general feeling that Moore [the towering figure] really tried hard to make sure that Claytor did not get his papers published." *The National Association of Mathematicians (NAM)* 's annual *Claytor-Woodard* Lecture is named in part in his honor.
Crowell, Rachel, "Modern Mathematics Confronts Its White, Patriarchal Past," 12 Aug., 2021. *Scientific American,* https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/modern-mathematics-confronts-its-white-patriarchal-past/.;
Houston, Johnny L., "William W. Shieffelin Claytor," (*Mathematical Association of America,* reprinted with permission from *National Association of Mathematicians,* 1994). www.maa.org/programs-and-communities/outreach-initiatives/summa/summa-archival-record/william-claytor.
[43] Stephen Benard, and Shelley J. Correll. "Normative Discrimination and the Motherhood Penalty." Gender & Society 24, no. 5 (October 2010), 616–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243210383142 ;
Joan Williams, Katherine Phillips, and Erika Hall, "Double Jeopardy? Gender Bias Against Women of Color in Science" (ResearchGate, 2014). https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.1763.8723
[44] Melissa Suran, "News Feature: Keeping Black students in STEM," (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America,* June 8, 2021). https://www.pnas.org/content/118/23/e2108401118.
[45] Suran, "Keeping Black students in STEM." PNAS.
[46] Ibid.

VII.   Othering and the STEM Pipeline, Part II: the Belief Gap

One reason that the effect of weed-out classes is so pronounced is because of what we will refer to as the "belief gap." Studies have shown that professors with a fixed mindset (the view that student ability is already determined, as opposed to a growth mindset, where student ability can change) have larger racial achievement gaps in their students.[47] This shows that professors' outlook on ability impacts their students' achievement levels. We will explore the "belief gap" in the sense that professors see their students of color as less capable than their white students. This phenomenon is a consequence of the internalized racism of instructors and mentors. If instructors believe (either implicitly or explicitly) that students of color are incapable of learning the material or achieving other forms of success, then these students will not have the same resources to succeed as their white peers. The essence of the belief gap is the space between othering and belonging: if Black students are not viewed as worthy and capable members of an intellectual community, then this othering results in underachievement for Black students.

The belief gap starts young: even among those with the same test scores, Black elementary school students are disproportionately less likely to be placed into gifted programs than their white peers.[48] Interestingly, this study found that when controlling for test scores, the discrepancy between white and Hispanic placement into gifted programs and the discrepancy between white and Asian placement into gifted programs are statistically insignificant.[49] What this tells us is that these students are being assigned to gifted programs at comparable rates based on their relative test scores. With the discrepancy between white and Black students, however, test scores do not account for all of this gap.[50] Factors that *do* affect this gap are the race of the teacher who places the student (the probability that a Black student is assigned to a gifted program increases if the teacher making this assignment is Black) and the racial composition of the school (a Black student's assignment probability increases in schools with higher Black and Hispanic populations, and decreases in schools with higher Asian populations).[51] What we see here is the belief gap of the teachers: white teachers have a lower belief in Black students than they do in white students (and Hispanic and Asian students), and white teachers

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[47] Elizabeth A. Canning et al., "STEM faculty who believe ability is fixed have larger racial achievement gaps and inspire less student motivation in their classes," *Science Advances,* Vol. 5, No. 2, Feb. 15, 2019. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6377274/

[48] Jason A. Grissom and Christopher Redding. "Discretion and Disproportionality: Explaining the Underrepresentation of High-Achieving Students of Color in Gifted Programs," (AERA Open, January 2016). https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858415622175

[49] Grissom and Redding, "Explaining the Underrepresentation of High-Achieving Students of Color in Gifted Programs."

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

have a lower belief than Black teachers in Black students' abilities. Once more, we can connect this issue to one of othering and belonging: those students who are disproportionately passed over for gifted programs are those who are not seen as being scholarly or intellectual, despite their test scores being evidence that they are. If Black students are not allowed to belong to an intellectual community like their white, Hispanic, and Asian peers are—based *only* on the beliefs of their instructors—they are left at a disadvantage during early childhood.

Furthermore, this issue is also relevant to the idea of conventions and the challenging thereof. The 'traditions' at play here are threefold: (1) actively supporting the success of non-white students is still relatively unusual in many fields, including STEM, (2) the implication in my own paragraph above that such standardized tests are the best way to identify children for gifted programs, and (3) if someone is good at, e.g., math, they are always good at math and always have been, as well as the inverse, that if someone is not good at math, they never have been and never will be. These false premises set up a foundation for our understanding of standardized testing that is untrue: that students who are good at math will do well on these tests, and students who are not good at math will do poorly. Using such a premise to select students for gifted programs has many problems. Firstly, this ignores the many factors that impact testing, including student physical and mental health.[52] And secondly, given the racial gaps in achievement in STEM, and the effect of family education levels on student success, a vicious cycle can result. If students start out at a disadvantage, their standardized test scores may be lower, disqualifying them from gifted programs, and perpetuating that initial disadvantage in higher levels of education. Conversely, if students start out with an advantage, their standardized test scores may be better, helping them enter gifted programs, and leading to better education outcomes later in their academic careers. Overall, we can see that the convention (especially in the hard sciences) of using standardized testing as a complete indicator of not just present but future success can lead to a replication of racial inequities in education.[53]

Another way that the belief gap perpetuates inequalities is that established structures of mentorship lack a culturally-responsive element.[54] For example, a Black student from a poor

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[52] M. Naveh-Benjamin, W. J. McKeachie, Y.-g. Lin, & D. P. Holinger, "Test anxiety: Deficits in information processing," *Journal of Educational Psychology, 73*(6), 1981, 816–824. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.73.6.816

[53] Beyond the scope of this paper is the actual solution to issues of standardized testing. As will be mentioned in the conclusion, this area requires much more expertise in the field of education than I can provide. I simply wish to point out some of the issues that we face in the context of who is made to 'belong' to intellectualism in early childhood.

[54] For information on the theory of culturally-responsive teaching, refer to Gloria Ladson-Billings's book, *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Asking A Different Question,* or her article analyzing how it has been put into practice:
Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a. the Remix." *Harvard Educational Review* 84, no. 1 (Spring, 2014): 74-84,135. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/culturally-relevant-pedagogy-2-0-k

household will often be mentored by white, middle-class professionals in their desired fields due to the lack of professionals from backgrounds like theirs.[55] Underrepresented students are not given the "same level of care" as their white counterparts when discussing graduate school applications, and these students often "find information more helpful when their mentor is of the same race/ethnicity."[56] I argue that this is because of the belief gap on the part of the mentors/teachers/instructors: if Black students are not viewed as legitimate participants in an intellectual community, they are not supported to the same extent as their white peers.

VIII.   Intervention Programs to Increase Minority Involvement in STEM

In response to this phenomenon, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County was started in 1988 to provide financial assistance, mentoring, advising, and research experience to Black male students.[57] Women were first admitted in 1990, and in 1995 the program was "opened to people of all backgrounds committed to increasing the representation of minorities in science and engineering".[58] One study compares the Meyerhoff Scholars Program to other programs that have successfully followed its lead, and each of these programs significantly increases both retention and average GPA relative to "demographically, academically, and interest-matched institutional non-cohort control groups" (groups of students with similar characteristics at the same institutions as these programs but who are not involved in these programs – see Fig. 3).[59] That is, retention of students and their average GPAs were both much better for participants in these programs than for those who were not involved with these programs. Indeed, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program is recognized as a model program for improving student outcomes in STEM for underrepresented minorities. Other programs following its structure have likewise met with similar

-remix/docview/1511014412/se-2?accountid=9703
[55] Suran, "Keeping Black students in STEM." PNAS
[56] Ibid.
[57] "Meyerhoff Scholars Program: History." *University of Maryland, Baltimore County.*
https://meyerhoff.umbc.edu/about/history/
[58] "Meyerhoff Scholars Program: History."
[59] Mariano R. Sto. Domingo et al., "Replicating Meyerhoff for inclusive excellence in STEM," *Science,* 26 Apr. 2019. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aar5540
A related note to consider is that this paper and the sources I reference have limited the scope of measures of achievement to focus on grades and degrees, but in attempting to remove the white gaze from STEM, we don't want to only use the perspective of white-centric and white-defined achievement. (Also thank you to Tamia Fulton for applying the phrasing "removing the white gaze" to this topic). A topic for further research would be to interrogate what data or other metrics of evaluation we can use that show the racial gaps in STEM without replicating the inequalities of the inaccessibility of higher education.

successes.[60] Its focus on tutoring, mentoring, and community demonstrates the tangible benefits of addressing the belief gap among minority students, addressing both their own belief in themselves and the support they receive from networks that validate their intellectuality. We can also connect this program to the first half of this paper: when Black intellectuality is only respected in certain groups, then these groups become vital to the expression of this intellectuality. The Meyerhoff Scholars Program created a space for Black intellectuality where Black and other minority scholars are meant to belong, while also providing a foundation for future attempts to mitigate the effects of leakage from the STEM pipeline.

The success of the Meyerhoff Program also emphasizes the importance of supporting (financially and with a culture shift) students who are underrepresented in the sciences. Students who are vulnerable to the caprices of the STEM pipeline also include disabled students (students with mental or physical illnesses). Programs like the BRYT program (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition, a bridge program "for teens returning from prolonged absences") in many Massachusetts public schools are aimed at re-integrating students into school who have missed time due to these disabilities.[61] Such programs have the potential to make a huge impact in STEM education since a huge part of staying in the STEM pipeline is dependent upon being 'good' at STEM.

Because subjects in STEM—math especially—build off of themselves so much, it can be hard for students to catch up once they fall behind. How are you going to teach multiplication and division to a student who doesn't yet understand addition and subtraction? How can a student fully exercise algebra without the foundational arithmetic? This structure is intrinsic to STEM (again, especially math), so our focus needs to be on how to support students within this framework by fostering understanding at early levels so that children can continue further through the pipeline.

On top of this content structure, there is a culture in STEM (again, especially in math), that you're either a 'STEM person' or not. How often have you heard someone say, 'oh, I'm just not a math person' to deflect a math problem?[62] The culture in math is that once a student runs into a problem that they cannot solve, they are labeled as 'not a math person.' Why is someone who says: 'I

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[60] Domingo et al., "Replicating Meyerhoff."

[61] Thank you to Darcy Howell for sharing her project topic with me during an in-class discussion. "Welcome to BRYT: Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition." *The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health,* https://www.brooklinecenter.org/services/school-based-support/bryt-program/.
The BRYT Program is especially for students with mental illnesses, but I saw it used in my high school for students with physical disabilities as well.

[62] This comes from my personal experience as a 'math person,' but also see the book *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences*.

can't do math' met with laughter and agreement, but someone who says: 'I can't read' is met with shame and stigma? Part of this difference is that it is normalized for a large part of the population to not be able to do math. And part of *that* is the STEM pipeline: once people stop finding math intuitive, they drop out of that path in the pipeline, and the pipeline is created in such a way that it is essentially impossible to re-enter once you leave. A potential solution to so many students leaving is a combination of (1) creating more programs like the Meyerhoff Scholars Program that focus on the varying needs of different students and (2) changing our social perceptions of STEM and of continuing through the pipeline after either making mistakes or falling behind.[63]

IX.   The Meritocratic Myth

Being a student in STEM means being well-versed in the meritocratic myth, either explicitly or subconsciously: success comes from a special combination of talent and work ethic that carries people through their struggles to achieve great things.[64] Students are taught from a young age that science is done by exceptional individuals (Galileo, Newton, Einstein).[65] But this idea that everyone starts on a level playing field (so that achievements are dependent entirely on ability) ignores the actual effects of institutional inequalities and internalized racism. The meritocratic myth also extends beyond STEM into other fields, much more than the idea of the pipeline does. This myth perpetuates two important, incorrect implications. One is that in a society with Black people achieving less than white people, this achievement gap is due only to an ability gap, rather than to the effects of institutional inequalities. The second implication of the meritocratic myth, also referred to as the exceptionalism narrative, is that if any Black person is high achieving, any other Black person should be able to be high-achieving under the same system.

An example of the exceptionalism narrative within the meritocratic myth is Dr. Eleanor Jones, one of the first Black women to earn a PhD in mathematics. She is one of many extraordinary

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[63] "Our Mission." *Post-Prison Education Program,* https://postprisonedu.org/ourmission.
Formerly incarcerated people were not even mentioned in most of the sources that I read on STEM education, but the school-to-prison pipeline for Black and Brown people means that the education of this group is an important racial issue in education. Validating the intellectuality of these groups is another potential way of bridging the belief gap and remedying leakage from the STEM pipeline. This is another issue for further research. The Post-Prison Education program's mission statement reads in part: "The Post-Prison Education Program aims to dramatically reduce recidivism by harnessing the power of education."
[64] Michael Kinsley, "The Myth of Meritocracy," (The Washington Post, January 18, 1990). https://www.washington post.com/archive/opinions/1990/01/18/the-myth-of-meritocracy/ff68b614-f5bd-44e3-9c66-f1f0957a3a49/
[65] Olesko, Kathryn M. "Myth 25. That Science Has Been Largely a Solitary Enterprise" In *Newton's Apple and Other Myths about Science* edited by Ronald L. Numbers and Kostas Kampourakis, 202-209. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674089167-027.

educators whose video interviews have been created and archived by the HistoryMakers database.[66] When confronted with institutional racial (and gender) inequalities, her ability to persevere and succeed is taken as evidence that 'if she can do it, anyone can,' when in reality a major factor in her success was that she was so extraordinarily talented, on top of being persistent and hard-working.[67] Compare Jones's "luck" to what Black protestors faced as described in *The Protest Psychosis*: Black men who were active in Civil Rights movements were 'othered' by a diagnosis of a mental illness, to the point of a systemic attempt to silence Black activists. Jones was fortunate to live and work in a circumstance where she had even the chance at an education and a job in academia, even though she had to work extra hard to achieve it.[68] Her life exemplifies a middle ground in terms of improving structural support for Black intellectuality, similar to the example of Black faculty at New York colleges in the *Star-News*. While at the time of her studies, education for Black people was legal, it was not encouraged or supported (socially or structurally) like it was for white people.

X. Conclusions and Further Questions

The STEM pipeline, the belief gap, and the meritocratic myth work together to uphold the conventions of belonging in STEM fields, i.e., who is allowed and validated as an intellectual. We have focused on conventions in STEM, specifically by posing questions of how to change or update these practices so that we can amplify marginalized voices rather than replicating the marginalization of the past and present. Many of these questions require a more in-depth, participatory knowledge of STEM fields than I can provide, and relevant factors will likely differ from subject to subject. My hope is that this paper and others like it encourage those of us in STEM fields to engage critically not just with our course content but how we teach it and how we use it to interact with the world beyond our classrooms.

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[66] Eleanor Jones (The HistoryMakers A2012.024), interviewed by Larry Crowe, February 7, 2012, The HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Session 1, tape 6, story 2, Eleanor Jones shares her hopes and concerns for the African American community. https://da-thehistorymakers-org.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/story/20735

[67] Jones's talent was evident in high school and in higher education: she won competitive scholarships from Pepsi Cola and Howard University, and earned a bachelor's, a master's, and a doctorate degree.

[68] Tim Wigmore, "Why Athletes' Birthdays Affect Who Goes Pro—And Who Becomes A Star," FiveThirtyEight, Feb. 22, 2021. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-athletes-birthdays-affect-who-goes-pro-and-who-becomes -a-star/#:~:text=A%20study%20found%20that%2058,in%20the%20last%20six%20months

An interesting phenomenon with similar results is the "Birthday Effect" in sports, wherein birth month is a predictor of success. Exceptionalism in sports is analogous to the pipeline and exceptionalism in STEM: the people with advantages early on are more likely to succeed, and those who persevere through disadvantage are more likely to be higher achieving, assuming they make it through (the "underdog effect"). This is more easily seen in sports, where there are measurable objectives of success that are well-documented.

The goal of this paper is to look past statistics into social phenomena to understand systemic inequalities in STEM. We explored specific issues including low grant award rates for topics that Black applicants want to study and how to challenge conventions while maintaining academic rigor. STEM has historically been weaponized against marginalized people in a way that both replicates such marginalization and maintains social patterns of belonging. An example of this is over-diagnosing schizophrenia among Black men to discredit civil rights protesters, due to the association of soundness of mind with respectability (and insanity with the lack of it). This parallel creation of respectability and intellectuality necessitates the existence of safe spaces for Black intellectuality to thrive, such as the *Amsterdam New York Star-News*, since we have seen that publications like the *New York Times* do not historically see Black intellectuality as "fit to print." Here, we discussed general trends of Black intellectuality, focusing on the need for safe spaces such as Black newspapers where intellectuals could engage in a scholarly community.

The perception of Black intellectual thought has a concrete impact on STEM outcomes for Black people, where inequalities manifest in the STEM pipeline. The leakage of the STEM pipeline through elementary-school assignment to gifted programs, the weed-out culture of intro classes in undergraduate study, and the belief gap all propagate these patterns of marginalization. The belief gap reflects the idea of othering versus belonging because in order to see themselves as legitimate intellectuals, Black students need to believe that they belong in this community of scholars. The belief gap extends to teachers and mentors as well: Black students are less likely to be placed into gifted programs than their white peers, even with comparable test scores, and Black students do not receive the same mentorship support as their white peers. Part of this is that there are disproportionately few Black professors to serve as these mentors. Programs such as the Meyerhoff Scholars Program have attempted to intervene by creating support and mentoring networks for underrepresented students.

Avenues for future research would likely include additional insights from participants in different areas of STEM, as well as looking into educational theories and current debates in STEM education. The overarching theme is that we need a combination of historical perspective, sociological phenomena, insight into STEM fields, and an eagerness to overturn convention in order to interrogate and remedy systemic inequalities in STEM. Looking critically at the factors affecting the past and present of STEM allows us to begin to remove the white gaze from the perception of respectability and belonging, and thus from what constitutes legitimate intellectuality. If this (un)learning is implemented on a large scale, it has the potential to allow STEM fields to start to become safe spaces where Black scholars and their scholarship can be encouraged, validated, and celebrated.

XI. Figures

Figure 1: The page 6 spread of the
New York Star-News, 14 Feb. 1942

Poet's .. CORNER

A Bigot's Prayer in Sikeston, Mo.

"God, save our nation," Bigots
    Howl,
Frown on the Foe's invasion;
The Godless brutes uncouth and
    foul
    Attacks our righteous nation.

"They quite ignore your statutes,
    Lord,
    And persecute their neighbors,
But we respect your holy word
    and now invoke your favors.

Your word, a lamp unto our feet,
    Shines brighter as we journey;
In You, Dear Lord, we're made
    complete,
    For all thy paths are sunny."

God's Answer

"A Christian land? What mockery!
    No boast could be untruer:
Think you your acts I failed to see
    In Sikeston town, Missouri?

My word says, treat your fellow-
    man
    Just as you would be treated;
Would you desire a fire brand
    To your bare flesh be meted?

My word serves as a lamp, you
    say,
    But my eye pierces through yet,
No word of mine led you that day
    in Sikeston town, Missouri.

The mote that's in your brother's
    eye
    By you is quickly noted:
The beam in yours, though moun-
    tain high
    Is some what sugar coated.

Now Mussolini and the Japs
    Also the wicked Fuehrer,
Would hesitate to do, perhaps,
    What you did in Missouri.

Although you serve me with the
    lips
    Your heart's a perfect stranger;
Your brother's blood before me
    drips
    And I'll be his Avenger!

Alas! You're neither hot nor cold,
    So from my mouth I'll spew you;
Your cowardly deed my ears your
    soul
    Your vile deed in Missouri."
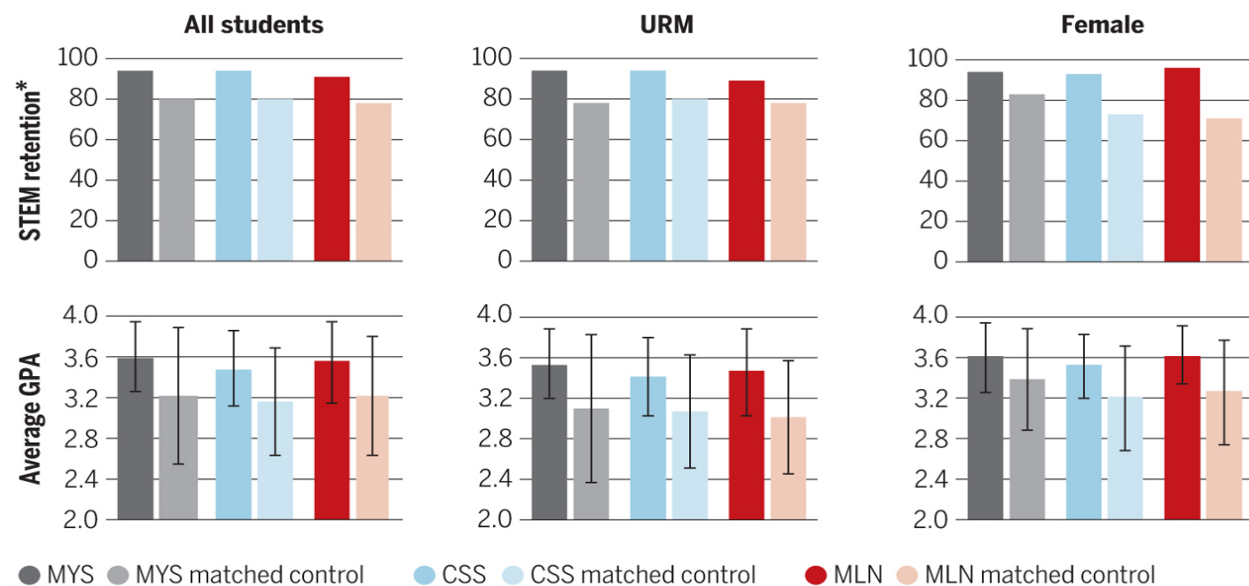   RUBE DE BARD

Figure 2: Poet's Corner
Image Source: *New York Star-News,* 14 Feb. 1942, page 6.

Programs' impacts on student outcomes

Average STEM retention rates and average GPAs (± standard deviation) of MLN and CSS cohorts 1 to 4 and MYS cohorts 23 to 26, compared with demographically, academically, and interest-matched institutional noncohort control groups. Outcomes are shown for all students, underrepresented minorities (URMs), and females.

● MYS ● MYS matched control ● CSS ● CSS matched control ● MLN ● MLN matched control

*Retention is defined as the number of STEM-retained students divided by the initial size of the program cohort or nonprogram control group.

Programs' impacts on student outcomes

Average STEM retention rates and average GPAs (± standard deviation) of MLN and CSS cohorts 1 to 4 and MYS cohorts 23 to 26, compared with demographically, academically, and interest-matched institutional noncohort control groups. Outcomes are shown for all students, underrepresented minorities (URMs), and females

Figure 3

Abbreviations:
MYS: Meyerhoff Scholars Program (at University of Maryland, Baltimore County)
CSS: Chancellors Science Scholars Program (at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; follows MYS model)
MLN: Millenium Scholars Program (at Pennsylvania State University at University Park; follows MYS model)

Image Source: Mariano R. Sto. Domingo et al., "Replicating Meyerhoff for inclusive excellence in STEM," 26 Apr., 2019. *Science,* https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aar5540.

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Writing Against the Decentralization Thesis:

Towards a New Approach to the Study of the

Ottoman Long Eighteenth Century

By Julian Polanski, Simon Fraser University

Introduction

      Scholarship on the Ottoman Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century—the period from the introduction of the *malikane* life-time tax farming system in the 1690s to the abolition of the Janissaries in 1826—has long emphasized the debilitating decentralization and weakness of the Ottoman state vis-à-vis its peripheries. This idea—hereafter termed the decentralization thesis—has remained prevalent to the present day. Sukru Hanioglu is perhaps the most forceful proponent of the decentralization thesis, arguing,[t]he most salient characteristic of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century was its decentralization. In fact, the Ottoman state can only be considered an empire in the loose sense in which the term is used to refer to such medieval states as the Chinese under the late T'ang dynasty.[1] Despite the Ottoman state's vast territorial claims, Hanioglu asserts, it was barely capable of exercising any power over even Anatolia or Rumelia.[2] Similarly, Sevkut Pamut argues that the Ottoman state's economic strength was greatly reduced by the decentralized *malikane* system.[3] Abd al-Karim Rafeq also supports the decentralization thesis, describing an Ottoman state with no control over Syria and the Kurds, Bedouins, and notables therein.[4] Rafeq ultimately assumes that the Ottoman state *necessarily* loses power when it decentralizes power, framing local Syrian actors and the Ottoman state as inherently opposed to the others' interests.[5]

      The scholarship propounding the decentralization thesis rests on two paradigms: the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the center-periphery model. The centralization-

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[1] Sukru Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). 6.

[2] Hanioglu, *History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (2008). 6.

[3] Pamuk Sevket, "Fiscal Centralisation and the Rise of the Modern State in the Ottoman Empire," *The Medieval History Journal* 17, no. 1 (2014): 10.

[4] Abd al-Karim Rafeq, "Changes in the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. R. Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 68.

[5] Rafeq, "Changes in the Ottoman Central Administration (1977), 62-63.

decentralization dichotomy here refers to the assumption that there is a binary between the centralization of power and the decentralization of power; it also often assumes a zero-sum power contestation between center and periphery. The center-periphery model of imperial governance is best articulated by Karen Barkey, who explains how "Empires...ruled by maintaining a pattern structurally resembling a hub-and-spoke network pattern, where each spoke was attached to the center but was less directly related to the others".[6] In the Ottoman context, the Ottoman state in Istanbul was the hub or center while areas outside the center, from Syria to Algeria, made up the peripheries (connected to the center by spokes).[7]

Other scholarship, however, has questioned the decentralization thesis and the paradigms that underlie it. This paper will analyze three such approaches, with special attention to their evolving attitudes towards the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the center-periphery model. Chapter 1 will introduce the resilient devolution approach, chart its scholarly development, and elucidate its benefits. Chapter 2 will introduce the circuitous governance approach, examine relevant scholarship, and critically analyze the resilient devolution approach through this lens. Chapter 3 will introduce the network approach, critique the two above approaches, and comparatively analyze Tolga Emer and Alan Mikhail's versions of the network approach. The conclusion will reflect on the analysis and suggest a revised scholarly approach.

This paper aims to highlight the limits of the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the center-periphery model. It contends that the network approach constitutes the best explanatory framework for the complexities of the Long Eighteenth Century. Finally, building on the work of Esmer and Mikhail, it argues that it is most productive to understand the Ottoman Empire as a complex series of overlapping, mobile networks in which agents collaborate with each other and act as both centers and peripheries. This approach captures the agency of the widest cast of actors, especially non-state actors.

Chapter 1: Resilient Devolution

What I term 'the resilient devolution approach' was developed primarily by Ariel Salzmann, Dina Khoury, and Choon Hwee Koh. It argues that the devolution of Ottoman state functions acted, in many ways, to bind the center to the periphery in a mutually beneficial fashion. Each scholar,

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[6] Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: the Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 10

[7] Hanioglu, *History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (2008). 10.

however, articulates their version of the approach differently and builds on the scholarship that precedes them. Ali Balci, for instance, recently argued that, paradoxically, the Ottoman Empire's supposed decentralization is what ensured Algiers continuous loyalty to Istanbul.[8] Salzmann, however, was arguably the first to advance it. She contends that the decentralization and privatization of Ottoman state power through the *malikane* life-time tax farm system created "diffused but interrelated loci of state power".[9] Put differently, the *malikane* system produced an "extensive fiscal network that sustained old-order power, knitting center and periphery together".[10] Under the *malikane* system, which lasted from 1695 into the 1840s, tax farms were auctioned off to private owners in exchange for a consistent stream of tax revenues until death.[11] She convincingly demonstrates that the Ottoman center maintained power and benefited from this system.

Salzmann notes that certificates issued regarding *malikane* ownership consistently showed that Istanbul-based actors, including palace figures, Ottoman officials and the ulama, held the greatest number of highly remunerative tax farms.[12] She credits this to the auctioning process in the imperial center being specifically tailored to "fiscal insiders".[13] Indeed, to buy a *malikane* one needed access to Istanbul-based banking credit, political connections and information that only Ottoman officials would have.[14] Prospective *malikane* holders needed strong ties to the Ottoman center; they could not be rogue, adversarial figures.

She further explains that wealthy Istanbul-based absentee landlords often had retinues in the provinces through which to buy *malikane* at provincial auctions, partially explaining the prevalence of provincial *malikane* holders.[15] Sazlmann also demonstrates, crucially, that provincial *malikane* holders who were not retinues depended on and were increasingly bound to the Ottoman state. For a provincial actor to buy a tax farm he too needed access to Istanbul-based credit and references from Istanbul-based patrons.[16] Thus, Salzmann asserts that if provincial gentry and notables wanted to

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[8] Ali Balci, "Algeria in Declining Ottoman Hierarchy: Why Algiers Remained Loyal to the Falling Patron," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2020, 2.

[9] Ariel Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993): 394-395

[10] Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited" (1993): 394–395

[11] Ibid. 401.

[12] Ibid. 402

[13] Ibid. 402

[14] Ibid. 403.

[15] Ibid. 403.

[16] Ibid. 405

invest in *malikane* it was necessary to ally with *and obey* the Ottoman state.[17] As such, she concludes "life-term revenue contracting was rarely a net-devolution of state power".[18]

Salzmann's work is significant because it shows that the incorporation of provincial actors into Ottoman state structure and networks did not reduce the power of the Ottoman state and, in fact, acted as a check on the power of said provincial actors. Equally important, by demonstrating that Istanbul-based actors and their retinues dominated the *malikane* system, Salzmann reveals that Ottoman state power was merely diffused and not reduced; in large part, powerful Ottoman and palace officials retained their power. These two points seriously weaken the decentralization thesis by highlighting that Ottoman "decentralization" was *not* debilitating and did not come at the expense of Ottoman state power.

Nevertheless, Salzmann's article is limited by its reliance on the centralization-decentralization dichotomy. Indeed, it describes the *malikane* system as a regime of "privatiz[ed] fiscal policies and [a] decentraliz[ing] apparatus".[19] The same quote reveals that Salzmann conceptualized the *malikane* system as "privatized", which distorts the significant administrative and legal control the Ottoman state had over *malikane* and other outsourced functions. The article, additionally, stops short of claiming that the *malikane* system strengthened Ottoman authority, instead stating it "rationalize[d] [Ottoman authority] in a politically effective manner".[20] Other scholars in this chapter will move the scholarship beyond these constraints.

Dina Khoury attempts to build on Salzmann's important work. Her primary argument is that despite Ottoman decentralization, wide sections of Mosuli society became increasingly tied to the Ottoman state; that is, they became "Ottomanized".[21] She demonstrates this convincingly. Like Salzmann, Khoury shows that the *malikane* system forged an alliance between the Ottoman state and landed Mosuli elites. The Ottoman state had sufficient power in that relationship; thus it was able to, for instance, leverage the Jalili household—the most prominent *malikane* holding family—to act in defense of the Ottoman Empire by defending against Nadir Shah's invasions in the 1730s and 1740s.[22] Khoury also charts with great detail and clarity the emergence of a Mosuli discourse about what it

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[17] Ibid. 409.
[18] Ibid. 409.
[19] Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited" (1993): 394.
[20] Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited" (1993): 409.
[21] Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire. Mosul, 1540-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). 3.
[22] Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society* (1997). 91.

means to be Ottoman, with different groups each articulating their own unique ideals.[23] This highlights the increasing importance of Ottoman-ness in the dynamics of Mosuli society. Perhaps most importantly, Khoury demonstrates that a broad group of gentry and merchants were engaged with the Ottoman state. Therefore, beginning in the 1820s, members of this economic block were able to force end Jalili household rule and "impose a compromise on the state".[24]

Khoury's work marks an important step forward in the scholarship as it explicitly problematizes the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and instead hinges its analysis on what is effectively a state-society distinction between "receding administrative control of the state" and the "Ottomanization of Mosuli society".[25] This allows Khoury considerable flexibility to illustrate that even when Ottoman *state* control over Mosul was compromised and "privatization" was in full force in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, Mosuli *society* was highly engaged in Ottoman political discourse.[26] The weakness of this distinction, however, is that it takes for granted the fact that outsourcing functions of the state weaken state control: indeed, the "Ottomanization of society" is intended as a hedge against the loss of Ottoman state control). Salzmann, earlier, contended that "life-term revenue contracting was rarely a net-devolution of state power".[27] In this sense, Khoury's scholarship marks a step backwards from Salzmann's advances as it seemingly concedes a net-devolution of state power. Additionally, like Salzmann, Khoury refers to the *malikane* system as one of "privatization," which, again, implicitly frames the devolution of Ottoman state functions as a loss of power.

Choon Hwee Koh's work builds significantly on both Salzmann and Khoury, providing the most effective iteration of the resilient devolution approach. She transcends the centralization-decentralization dichotomy, upheld (but complicated) by Salzmann, without conceding, as Khoury does, that the devolution of state functions weakens Ottoman state power. Koh convincingly demonstrates that during the Long Eighteenth century the Ottoman Postal Administration experienced "increased flows of information from the provinces to the imperial capital" and "increased its monitoring capacity using contracting".[28] The position of postmaster was contracted-out to profit-seeking local actors. Koh notes that reforms beginning in the 1690s required that

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[23] Ibid. 159.
[24] Ibid. 211-212.
[25] Ibid. 3.
[26] Ibid. 166.
[27] Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited" (1993): 405.
[28] Choon Hwee Koh, "The Ottoman Postmaster: Contractors, Communication and Early Modern State Formation.," *Past & Present* 251, no. 1 (2021): 114.

postmasters keep a detailed accounting of imperial orders handed to them by couriers, subsequently submitting these records to fiscal scribes in the center who would monitor for false payments and to ensure costs remained consistent.[29] This meant that by contracting-out the position of postmaster, the Ottoman state was able to better supervise and monitor its postal system.[30] Devolution strengthened Ottoman state control; a centralized Ottoman bureaucracy, without the aid of contracted postmasters, could likely never have achieved this level of control over such a vast territory.

Koh's scholarship rectifies many of the shortcomings of Salzmann and Khoury's works. She destabilizes the centralization-decentralization dichotomy by noting that it frames center-periphery relations as a zero-sum game (even if that is not what Salzmann and others intended).[31] Additionally, Koh shows that, against Khoury's view, Ottoman state control was strengthened throughout the Empire, with respect to its postal system. Furthermore, she rejects the application of the label "privatization" to the outsourcing of state functions, demonstrating that such functions, including the post system and *malikane*, largely remained under "the domain and jurisdiction of the state".[32] Instead of privatization and decentralization, Koh utilizes the term "contracting" to describe the outsourcing of state functions. This new language allows her to clearly express what Salzmann and Khoury could not: that devolution *can* strengthen state power. She applies this innovative language to the *malikane* system.[33] By writing life-term tax farming as a form of contracting, Koh is able to express the mutually empowering nature of devolution, reframing the Long Eighteenth Century as one of state-strengthening contracting as opposed to debilitating decentralization.

On balance, the resilient devolution approach complicates the decentralization thesis considerably. First, the approach transcends the centralization-decentralization dichotomy, evincing that devolution can strengthen the central state. This challenges the understanding espoused by decentralization-thesis scholars, which views devolution as inherently weakening and disempowering. Second, the approach confers agency to a wider cast of actors. It regards Ottoman state officials acting technically as private citizens to, for example, buy *malikane* as, nonetheless, loyal agents of the center. Similarly, it conceptualizes provincial retinues as an integral part of the Ottoman center. This enables us to see the *malikane* system as a diffusion of Ottoman state control rather than mere privatization

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[29] Koh, "The Ottoman Postmaster" (2021): 127.
[30] Ibid. 135.
[31] Ibid. 140.
[32] Ibid. 145.
[33] Ibid. 121.

out of the Ottoman state's purview.[34] Nevertheless, this framework makes two core assumptions that will be problematized in the following chapters: first, it gives little consideration to how provincial actors influenced and even integrated into the Ottoman state; second, it relies on the reductive center-periphery model.

Chapter 2: Circuitous Governance

Having discussed the resilient devolution approach, the second chapter will now analyze what I term 'the circuitous governance approach.' This body of scholarship looks at how the Ottoman state maintained control in the provinces *and* how provincial actors sought to influence the Ottoman state. It has not, however, been developed in as linear a fashion as flexible devolution scholarship; thus this chapter will examine this approach less chronologically and more conceptually.

One of the most important scholars advancing this approach is Tsameret Levy-Daphny. She convincingly demonstrates that an "Ottomanization-Localization" phenomenon wherein elite Ottoman officials became integrated into the provincial elite "while at the same time notable provincial families became integrated into the urban Ottoman elite" occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Diyarbakir (a provincial city).[35] In other words, the Empire worked like a circuit: the Ottoman center and the provinces each produced elites that would wield power and influence over the other.

Levy-Daphny takes Mustafa Aga, an eighteenth century *voyvoda* in Diyarbakir, and his family as a case study. She notes that Aga was "first Ottomanized...through his attachment to his uncle's [Istanbul-based] household" and then "reinserted into the provinces" (or, if you will, localized) as a *voyvoda.*[36] Other family members were Ottomanized and remained in Istanbul. The *voyvoda* was primarily responsible for supervising the sale and operations of *malikane* tax farms and, later, near all fiscal affairs. However, the *voyvoda* enriched themselves through selling and overseeing *malikane* tax farms. Having family in both Istanbul and Diyarbakir (or the provinces generally) was greatly beneficial: the Istanbul-based family could purchase or invest in *malikane,* while the locally based family could administer and oversee it.[37] This is precisely what Aga's family did. Clearly, *voyvoda* and similar

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[34] Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited" (1993): 394-395.
[35] Tsameret Levy-Daphny, "To Be a Voyvoda in Diyarbakır: Socio-Political Change in an 18th-Century Ottoman Province," in *Society, Law, and Culture in the Middle East: Modernities in the Making*, ed. Dror Ze'evi (Warsaw: De Gruyter Open, 2014), 45.
[36] TsaLevy-Daphny, "To Be a Voyvoda in Diyarbakır (2014), 56.
[37] Ibid. 56.

provincially based actors were not isolated from the Ottoman center but rather deeply interconnected with it.

Furthermore, Levy-Daphny demonstrates that *voyvoda* acted politically as agents of both the Ottoman state and the provinces. They acted on behalf of the Ottoman state over the provinces as a check and balance against the *vali*, an even more powerful position that often created hegemonic households.[38] They also provided loans and credit to the Ottoman treasury.[39] Conversely, they acted as provincial actors influencing the Ottoman center by leveraging the state to outsource more and more fiscal functions to *voyvoda*.[40]

Within that connection, Michael Nizri highlights the dual role of the *kapi kethudasi* in representing the interests of provincial governors in Istanbul and acting on behalf of the central government to maintain contact with the provinces.[41] *Kapi kethudasi* were functionaries of provincial governors; their job was to create connections with elite Ottoman officials to obtain information and additional sources of income, such as living allowances or new districts to govern, for their governors.[42] They influenced Istanbul as provincial actors. Nizri shows that they also became integrated into the Ottoman state. *Kapi kethudasi* collected money for the Ottoman treasury and, in one instance, convinced a governor to capture a rebel on the Ottoman state's behalf in exchange for money.[43] More broadly, *kapi kethudasi* became economic and administrative bureaucrats responsible for the Ottoman state's fiscal relationships with its provinces.[44] They acted as Ottoman officials to control and monitor the provinces. In brief, *kapi kethudasi,* like *voyvoda,* served a dual role.

Christine Philliou's scholarship attempts to do something similar. She studies the rise of the Phanariots, a group of Hellenized Christian elites. This group, in the Long Eighteenth Century, came to hold several important positions within the Ottoman Empire. The dragoman of the court "was the liaison between European envoys and the Sultan and his inner circle" while the dragoman of the fleet administered several Aegean Islands and was "responsible for naval operations that included shipbuilding and warfare".[45] The *voyvodas* of Moldavia and Wallachia, by contrast, were effectively semi-

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[38] Ibid. 56-57
[39] Ibid. 56.
[40] Ibid. 46.
[41] Michael Nizri, "Rethinking Center-Periphery Communication in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59 (2016): 481.
[42] Nizri, "Rethinking Center-Periphery Communication" (2016): 481, 488.
[43] Ibid. 484.
[44] Ibid. 474.
[45] Christine Philliou, "Communities on the Verge: Unraveling the Phanariot Ascendancy in Ottoman Governance," *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 51, no. 1 (2008): 156.

independent provincial rulers.[46] The Phanariots held all these positions. They were integral to the state for diplomacy, administration, the protection of the Aegean coast and much more. Philliou goes so far as to say, "in addition to damaging [Sultan Selim III's] state they had become his state".[47] Yet they were also clearly outside the state as they were Christians based mostly in the Balkans.

Taken together, this scholarship complicates the resilient devolution approach in several ways. Firstly, it gives agency to provincial actors involved in the Ottoman state; that is, those who sought to influence the center on behalf of the provinces. Resilient devolution scholarship is focused on demonstrating Ottoman state strength in the provinces and, as a result, largely writes out provincial strength and provincial actors in Istanbul. Indeed, the *voyvoda, kapi kethudasi* and Phanariots were indispensable in administering and influencing the Ottoman state. Resilient devolution scholars miss a crucial opportunity to support their arguments against the decentralization thesis. The fact that the provinces were deeply interconnected with the Ottoman state through these actors demonstrates that the Empire was not *simply* decentralized or weak.[48] Secondly, it complicates (but does not transcend) the center-periphery model that Salzmann, Khoury and Koh take for granted by showing that certain actors were at once agents of the Ottoman center and agents of the provinces. For families with *voyvodas* in their ranks this was the case even more as *voyvodas* had not only political responsibilities in both spheres, but family connections and interests too. All this blurs the distinction between central and peripheral actors. Thirdly, Levy-Daphny's illustration of the circuitous nature of Ottoman *voyvoda* appointments further blurs that distinction. Was Aga, the *voyvoda* from Diyarbakir, an actor of the center or the periphery? The answer is both. These works thus complicate the resilient devolution approach and strongly undermine the decentralization thesis.

Despite the complexities these works bring out, they fail to fully transcend the center-periphery model. They all focus on the Ottoman state as the sole locus through which to extract or gain power (as a provincial actor). None of them discuss power networks outside of the Ottoman state. The next chapter will discuss scholarship that transcends the center-periphery model *and* problematize aspects of the circuitous governance and resilient devolution approaches.

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[46] Philliou, "Communities on the Verge" (2008): 156.
[47] Ibid. 181.
[48] Koh states that decentralization is often used when scholars really mean "weakening". Koh, "The Ottoman Postmaster" (2021): 115.

Chapter 3: The Networks Approach

Having explored the resilient devolution and circuitous governance approaches, this paper will now examine 'the networks approach.' The networks approach, broadly speaking, refers to scholarship that rejects the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the center-periphery model by instead examining the Ottoman Empire as a series of networks. There are two major iterations of the approach: those of Tolga Esmer and Alan Mikhail. This chapter will introduce Esmer's iteration and illustrate how it complicates the preceding scholarship and introduce Mikhail's and illustrate the same. Subsequently, it will compare the benefits and drawbacks of each iteration of the approach.

Esmer utilizes a case study of the notorious bandit Kara Feyzi to articulate his iteration of the approach. He describes the Ottoman state (or, as he refers to it, the Porte) as "one network among others in a wider Ottoman political spectrum at the turn of the nineteenth century".[49] Esmer thus rejects the center-periphery model, claiming the Ottoman state was not the center. The other network he discusses, for the most part, is Feyzi's mobile bandit network in Rumelia. First, it is crucial to understand what he means by network. Although he never explicitly defines the term, it seems that for Esmer, networks must have shared interests and values. Indeed, he writes "The Kara Feyzi saga demonstrates how alternative social and economic networks were built upon conflicting interpretations and implementations of local custom, loyalty, order, justice and acceptable behaviour".[50] That, however, is not all networks are to Esmer; for if it were, networks would merely be ideologies. In his writing, networks consist of webs of people and information dispersed throughout a given area; for instance, he emphasizes the importance of Feyzi's network's capacity to maintain discipline among locals by gaining intelligence from state and local officials.[51] Esmer effectively demonstrates that Feyzi's group of bandits should be considered a network. He notes that it featured expansive surveillance capacities, a network of informants, large-scale recruitment, and tight discipline.[52] Clearly, it was capable of shaping society and maintaining control in a way comparable, if not equivalent, to that of a state. Esmer also shows that Feyzi's network did have its own goals, aims and political vision, thus meeting his own definition.

Secondly, central to Esmer's approach is the assertion that one ought to, think of the Ottoman state as a dynamic, constantly moving constellation of power foci involving a variety of agencies: at

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[49] Tolga Esmer, "Economies of Violence, Banditry, and Governance in the Ottoman Empire around 1800," *Past and Present* 224, no. 1 (2014): 169-170.
[50] Esmer, "Economies of Violence" (2014): 170.
[51] Ibid. 180.
[52] Ibid. 180-181.

times the Sultan and at times others moved into a more central position, but relationships were almost always triangular rather than of a two-way character.[53]

In his view, the Ottoman Empire consisted of multitudinous networks whose power fluctuated throughout the period. Furthermore, it consisted of *triangular* relationships in that different agents often collaborated to undermine other agents. Based on his definition of networks, he convincingly demonstrates this view. He cites the fact that Ottoman officials wanted to be governor of Rumeli because "the bandit problem guaranteed years of resources, promotion and opportunities to distinguish oneself".[54] Feyzi's network thus formed a symbiotic relationship with provincial governors to empower and enrich themselves at the expense of the Porte and Sultan Selim III's wishes, a different group of Ottoman agents.

Thirdly, Esmer argues that Feyzi's network further problematizes the center-periphery model due to its "transregional" and "socially heterogeneous" nature.[55] Indeed, as alluded to, Feyzi's network consisted of local people and Ottoman officials. It was not a movement of the periphery against the center but a network with members in the Ottoman state and members who were practicing bandits. Members were mobile, moving across regions and jurisdictions. Ottoman officials provided intelligence and even acted as bandits themselves.[56]

Esmer's approach considerably complicates the scholarship we have examined up to this point. To begin, it transcends the center-periphery model by reconceptualizing the Ottoman Empire as a set of collaborative networks and agents whose power is constantly in flux. This provides us with a more complex, layered view of how non-state actors shape society. Whereas the aforementioned scholarship focuses on central and provincial actors to the exclusion of, for example, mobile bandit networks, this approach allows us to see the impact of nearly any cohesive, interest-based group. In short, this framework grants agency to a far greater cast of actors. Moreover, by ceasing to view the Ottoman state as the monolithic center, Esmer is able to show us that agents in the Ottoman state, whether it be provincial governors or the Sultan, often acted against each other's interests. This goes further than the circuitous governance approach, which merely reveals that individuals could be actors of both the province(s) and the Ottoman state. Additionally, in utilizing this approach one does not overlook any insights gleaned by the first two approaches. It is capable of, for example, highlighting the fact that the *malikane* system diffused power while keeping it in the hands of Ottoman state agents.

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[53] Ibid. 188.
[54] Ibid. 185.
[55] Ibid. 173.
[56] Ibid. 186.

Finally, Esmer is able to reverse narratives regarding decentralization by highlighting Feyzi's continued involvement and even allyship with Ottoman state agents. The fact that Feyzi's network maintained power did not mean the Empire was weak; rather, it meant that the Empire depended on cooperation with transregional, mobile actors.

Mikhail's network approach is quite different from that of Tolga Esmer. For him, a network is a system that extends throughout all or part of the Ottoman Empire. Given that he is an environmental historian of Egypt, he focuses on irrigation networks, food networks and timber networks throughout the Empire from an Egyptian perspective. He envisions the Ottoman Empire as consisting of a number of "overlapping hinterlands in which one region's source of natural goods was another's consumer of them".[57] He continues, "the image should be one in which overlapping circles of interests, advantages, desires, and needs came together to form a series of connections and networks meant to achieve the optimal balance of all these forces".[58] Put differently, the Empire depended on its various regions to sustain itself; often, these networks did not emanate from the Imperial core or even pass through it. He convincingly demonstrates that the Empire's "peripheral" regions were also its lifeblood. Mikhail reveals that Egypt's irrigation system, which watered crops later distributed out of Egypt, depended not only on Ottoman bureaucracy to oversee it but also on local Egyptian peasants to inform the Ottoman bureaucracy regarding the condition of irrigation infrastructure.[59] Egyptian peasants were integral to maintaining one of the Empire's largest irrigation systems. Northern Anatolians who brought wood over the sea were similarly essential to the operation of the Empire.

Another important aspect of Mikhail's approach is his assertion that a region can be at once a center *and* a periphery. He notes that Egypt in the eighteenth century acted as a center for food production since it provided exported food to the Hijaz which was commercially sold throughout the Empire from Istanbul.[60] In that connection, Egypt was also a periphery *within* the Empire's timber network; it could barely produce any itself and depended on a network that carried wood over from the Black Sea and through Anatolia.[61]

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[57] Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire and Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). 146.
[58] Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire and Ottoman Egypt* (2013). 146-147.
[59] Ibid. 65.
[60] Ibid. 25.
[61] Ibid. 141.

Like Esmer, Mikhail successfully transcends the center-periphery dichotomy by conceptualizing the Empire as a series of interconnected networks. This highlights the power and leverage various regions have *beyond* power granted by the Ottoman state. Additionally, it complicates the circuitous governance scholarship that focuses exclusively on interactions between the provinces and the Ottoman state. Indeed, the Empire also depended on local people and mobile workers. Secondly, Mikhail illustrates how regions can be both centers and peripheries. This allows one to assess the centrality of the state on several levels and reveals that Istanbul is, in fact, a periphery in the Ottoman food network.[62]

Having introduced and analyzed Esmer and Mikhail this paper will now compare the benefits and drawbacks of each of their networks approach. To start, Esmer's approach is specifically concerned with organized political networks actively contesting power. Mikhail's, while focused on the environment, is more broadly wrought to include networks of production and transportation that sustain the environment. These two definitions are not mutually exclusive, and each allows us to access nuanced understandings of Ottoman dynamics. Esmer enables us to see how the Empire was *governed* and Mikhail illustrates how it was *operated* and *organized* more generally.

Mikhail and Esmer also approach transcending the center-periphery model. Esmer does so by describing relationships in the Ottoman Empire as triangular and with an ever-changing center. Mikhail, by contrast, describes relationships in the Ottoman Empire along fluid center-periphery lines that vary by region and depend on which network is being discussed. Mikhail's approach is far more capable of bringing out the period's complexities in this respect. Indeed, in describing Egypt as a food center and timber periphery he captures Egypt's relationship to power and the Ottoman Empire on multiple levels. He shows precisely how Egypt was strong and central, and precisely how it was dependent and peripheral. Esmer's approach is much more reductive. He labels networks and agents as either central or not central—there is little in-between.[63] Esmer describes his subjects on only one level, leaving no room for the prospect that they may be central in one respect and peripheral in another.

Finally, Esmer and Mikhail treat the Ottoman state and its various regions differently. Esmer's network approach rejects the category of a unified Ottoman state (or any unified structure or institution) and instead looks for networks within different structures. Mikhail, in contrast, seems to take for granted the unified nature of the Ottoman state or whatever region he is discussing. He refers

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[62] Ibid. 183.
[63] Esmer, "Economies of Violence" (2014): 188.

continuously to an undifferentiated Ottoman state.[64] Esmer's approach, in this context, is significantly better at bringing out complexity. He demonstrates that viewing the Ottoman state as a broad apparatus with different agents and networks acting within it can bring to light opposing forces within the Ottoman state structure. For instance, as noted above, while some Ottoman officials opposed Feyzi, others backed and benefited from him.[65] Mikhail may have failed to capture several similar nuances given that he did not employ this aspect of Esmer's approach.

Conclusion

This paper began by introducing the decentralization thesis: the historiographical view that the Ottoman Empire was debilitatingly weak in the Long Eighteenth Century. It also introduced two paradigms on which it depends: the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the center-periphery model. It then analyzed three broad scholarly approaches: resilient devolution, circuitous governance, and the networks approach.

The resilient devolution approach demonstrated that the outsourcing of state functions did not, in fact, reduce Ottoman State power. *Malikane* life-term tax farming, often seen as causing a reduction in state power, was shown to have bound the provinces to the center and diffused power to Istanbul-based state officials. Koh took this a step further and showed that contracting out the postal service actually strengthened the state. Nevertheless, this scholarship still relied on the center-periphery model and a neat distinction between central and provincial actors.

The circuitous governance approach complicated the resilient devolution scholarship by highlighting the ways in which the line between central and provincial actors were blurred. Phanariots, *voyvoda,* and *kapi kethudasi* all acted in dual capacities as central and provincial actors. Despite this, it did not upend the center-periphery model and assumed that power is ultimately brokered between the Ottoman state and the provinces.

The networks approach complicated the circuitous governance scholarship on several levels. Most importantly, it transcended the center-periphery model, showing that power does not always come from the center. Esmer demonstrated that bandits had important political networks that contested the state's authority while Mikhail revealed that the Ottoman Empire was dependent on several networks — such as food and wood — running through its regions. The paper thus evinced

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[64] Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire and Ottoman Egypt* (2013). 141.
[65] Esmer, "Economies of Violence" (2014): 185.

that the networks approach most effectively brings out the complexities of the Long Eighteenth Century.

The final chapter also compared Esmer and Mikhail's different network approaches. It argued that Esmer's focus on political networks and Mikhail's focus on environmental networks were not irreconcilable. Secondly, it argued that Mikhail's use of center and periphery to describe one region or entity on multiple levels allowed for far more nuance than Esmer's approach of terming networks either central or not central. Finally, it argued that Esmer's way of looking at the Ottoman state as a series of networks and actors within a broader apparatus—in contrast to Mikhail's assumption of the Ottoman state as a uniform entity—most effectively captured the multiple layers of complexity at play.

Thus, this paper argues for a hybrid combination of Tolga Esmer and Alan Mikhail's approaches. It suggests utilizing Mikhail's fluid center-periphery labeling system rather than Esmer's triangular approach. Mikhail's approach allows scholars to express the centrality or strength of a given political network on multiple levels. It is not limited to labeling a network as either central or not central. Hence, it is capable of capturing the nuances of, for instance, Egypt's role in the Ottoman Empire. Further, it suggests applying Esmer's conception of the Ottoman state as a series of mobile networks in contrast to Mikhail's formulation of the Ottoman state as a united structure. This allows scholars to capture conflictual dynamics within the Ottoman state and grants greater agency to state and non-state actors who subvert or challenge the state. Ultimately, this paper argues for conceiving of the Ottoman Empire as a series of overlapping, mobile networks in which agents collaborate with each other and act as both centers and peripheries. This approach undermines the centralization-decentralization dichotomy and the center-periphery model by demonstrating that power does not solely emanate from a unified state; instead, it is the product of alliances and networks which include bandits, local irrigators and low-level Ottoman officials.

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'Woe to the Coolie': Conceptualising Relationality, Class Conflict, and Regimes of Control in Colonial Sumatra's Plantation Belt

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INTRODUCTION

In 1902, Dutch lawyer Johannes van den Brand sketched the conditions imposed on the migrant plantation labourers in the East Coast of Sumatra:

> Woe to the coolie who, succumbing to the overwhelming burden of the labour imposed upon him, sinks the mattock; woe to the labourer who, exhausted from the lack of food, no longer has the strength to guide his steps to the field of his sweat; woe to the slave who appears not on tongues in the early morning because he mourns the death of his child.[1]

This colourful quote comes from the relatively more prosaic brochure entitled *The Millions from Deli* (Dutch: *De Millioenen uit Deli*). The document attacked the oppressive system of indentured labour in the plantation belt of the East Coast of Sumatra (*cultuurgebied*). Van den Brand's publication—though not the first of its kind—caused a stir in metropolitan Dutch society, leading to the establishment of a government commission to investigate conditions on plantations by the prosecuting attorney J. L. T. Rhemrev in 1903.[2]

Van den Brand brought attention to the abuses of the Sumatran plantation belt in mainstream Dutch society; he claimed the European planters—or, as he describes them, the "brokers in human flesh" (*makelaar*[s] . . . *in menschenvleesch*)[3]—treated the plantation labourers no better than slaves. Colonial authorities and the central Dutch government, he continued, had thus far acted with indifference to these "depart[ures] from the order of Christian society."[4] Accounts from a variety of

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[1] Johannes van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli* (Amsterdam: Höveker and Wormser, 1902), 56. All quotes in this paper are my own translations.

[2] Jan Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

[3] Van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli*, 8. Van den Brand says that he took this terminology from an article in *De Java Bode* ("The Java Herald") from April 9, 1902. I was unable to find this article.

[4] Van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli*, 12.

sources similarly attested to both the exploitative conditions of Sumatra's plantation belt as well as government inaction. In 1860, Dutch writer Eduard Douwes Dekker published *Max Havelaar* under the pen name "Multatuli" as an attack on the oppressive plantation regime of Java (*cultuurstelsel*). His criticisms helped influence the agricultural reform in the Dutch East Indies, and also helped shape later attacks on Sumatra's plantation belt.[5] Communist revolutionary Tan Malaka negatively recalled the "capitalist-imperialist" conditions during his tenure as a teacher on a plantation in the Deli region in 1920.[6] The aforementioned investigation by Rhemrev yielded a government report in 1904. The Dutch government took precautions to restrict access to the report and its contents due to its scandalous findings and was relegated to the archives, out of reach from the public and researchers.[7] The findings—commonly known as the "Rhemrev Report"—corroborated Van den Brand's general assessment of the abysmal working conditions of the Sumatran plantations.[8]

This paper traces the development of the world of plantations on the East Coast of Sumatra during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This essay uses the term "Sumatran plantation society" to describe the distinctive interplay of relationships, power, and economy in the Sumatran *cultuurgebied*. Much of the past historical analyses take descriptive approaches toward the topic, but often do not attempt to establish a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, this essay attempts to situate the plantation system within the broader structures of contemporaneous colonial-capitalism to better decipher the underlying nature of the system and its position within broader regional histories of colonialism and revolution. By imagining the basic relational landscape upon which diverging needs and goals come into conflict, this study analyses power dynamics, expressions of domination, and systems of control in the society of the Sumatran *cultuurgebied* as evidenced through contemporaneous documents and accounts. This conceptual analysis relies on a Marxist analytical framework drawing on historical materialism, base-superstructure theory, contemporary critical political economy, and conceptualisations of relationality. This essay thus argues that the Sumatran plantation was fundamentally a space predicated on the capitalist mode of

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[5] Cornelius Fasseur, "Purse or Principle: Dutch Colonial Policy in the 1860s and the Decline of the Cultivation System," *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 1 (1991): 44-45; see also Multatuli, *Max Havelaar: of de Koffiveilingen der Nederlandsche Handelsmaatschappy* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868).

[6] Rudolf Mrázek, "Tan Malaka: A Political Personality's Structure of Experience," *Indonesia*, no. 14 (1972): 9; Syaifudin, *Tan Malaka: Merajut Orang dan Pendidikan Indonesia yang Sosialistis* (Yogyakarta: Arruzz Media, 2012), 59, 184.

[7] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 9.

[8] J. T. L. Rhemrev, "Rapport van de resultaten van het mij bij Gouvernements Besluit van 24 Mei 1903 No. 19 opgedragen onderzoek," in *Koelies, planters en koloniale politiek*, ed. Jan Breman, (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

production, uneven power dynamics between labourers and planters, and the concomitant systems of control designed specifically to dominate the body and mind of the plantation labourer.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PLANTATION SOCIETY: FACTORS OF PRODUCTION

It is first necessary to construct an understanding of the roots of Sumatran plantations, i.e., the conditions responsible for the emergence of plantations in nineteenth-century Sumatra. To address this question, this paper employs a historical-materialist approach in which it is assumed that said conditions were objective and systemic—rather than based on specific actions or ideals—in nature. In particular, these "factors of production" are understood to be essentially economic in nature, and therefore the analysis examines the politico-economic circumstances in the region at the time of the emergence of Sumatran plantation culture.[9]

To canvas this analysis, it is necessary to outline the broad historical context of mid-nineteenth-century Sumatra. Prior to the 1800s, the European colonial project had generally treated the island as peripheral in contrast with plantations programs in the population-dense Java and the lucrative spice-producing islands of the Moluccas where centralised state plantations were predominant.[10] Certain shifts in the political atmosphere of post-Napoleonic Europe such as the growth of European imperialism, state centralisation, the rapid expansion of colonial regimes, and an increasingly interconnected global economy precipitated changes to Dutch colonial policy towards traditionally-peripheral regions of the East Indies such as Sumatra.[11] During the early nineteenth century, the Dutch Empire experienced the dissolution of the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC), changes to European spheres of influence in the East Indies,[12] the secession of Belgium in 1839, industrialisation, and constitutional liberalisation reforms.

The first European plantations arose in the 1860s along the northeast coast of the island in the Deli region, around modern-day Medan. In particular, the Deli tobacco plantations of Dutch businessman Jacobus Nienhuys are generally believed to have been the first with a significant and lasting presence in the region, and later incorporated as the *Deli Maatschappij* ("Deli Company") in

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[9] While this section explains why plantations arose in Sumatra when they did, it does not discuss why capital chose to migrate to Sumatra as opposed to elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies. In truth, plantations did arise elsewhere. However, this essay takes a particular interest in Sumatran plantation society due to scope limitations.

[10] W. F. Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltd., 1964), 61-63

[11] For further explanation on this topic, see Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition*, 63.

[12] In particular, the Anglo-Dutch Treaties of 1814 and 1824 resulted in the solidification of Dutch control over Sumatra.

1869.[13] Nienhuys and other earlier planters brought with them the capital resources necessary to secure land from local Malay *raja* (chieftains) in the form of concessions.[14] Other plantations arose later on including investors and planters from a broad swathe of European nationalities.[15] Nevertheless, Nienhuys's Deli Maatschappij grew to be by far the largest producer of tobacco and other plantation goods in the region.[16] Ultimately, a large-scale industrial "plantation belt" developed in the region employing tens of thousands of labourers, the majority of whom were non-native contract labourers known as "coolies."[17] European-dominated plantations lasted until the disruptions in Dutch colonial control with the advent of the Second World War and the subsequent Indonesian independence revolution.[18] Today, plantations still compose a large part of Sumatra's economy.

There are many different economic schools on the material conditions that influence the emergence of an industry in a given context. This essay accepts the framework put forth in the classical political economy whereby industry emerges from three key "factors of production": (i) the availability of capital; (ii) the availability of labour; and (iii) access to land.[19] These three conditions may be subject to institutional mechanisms that may impact the emergence or continuity of a given industry. While somewhat of an oversimplification of the complex processes of political economy that determine industrial development, this framework serves as a useful heuristic for assessing historical processes as they relate to conceptual (Marxist) analysis as employed later in this paper. This essay thus employs this tripartite division of necessary material conditions to explain the causes of the emergence of plantations in Sumatra.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, Dutch control over Sumatra was at best heavily decentralised and at worst non-existent. Instead, the island was governed by highly-autonomous rulers of varying degrees of geopolitical significance.[20] Consequently, it would have been prohibitively

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[13] Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 15.

[14] Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, 16-17.

[15] Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, 20.

[16] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 178-179. Deli Maatschappij still exists today.

[17] Today, "coolie" is considered a derogatory term by some. However, this term has very specific relevance to the subject matter and therefore will be used without prejudice to modern connotations.

[18] Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, 94-95.

[19] See Adam Smith, "Of the Component Part of the Price of Commodities," *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3300/3300-h/3300-h.htm#chap08; Karl Marx, "The Labour-Process and the Process of Producing Surplus-Value: The Labour-Process or the Production of Use-Values," *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward (Aveling. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1. Similar notions also exist in various Neoclassical schools.

[20] William Marsden, *History of Sumatra: Containing an Account of the Government, Laws, Customs, And Manners of the Native Inhabitants, with a Description of the Natural Productions, and a Relation of the Ancient Political State of That Island*, 3rd ed. (London: J. McCreery, 1811). The most centralised states were regions such as the Sultanate of Aceh in which a single ruler exerted

difficult for private individuals to establish a secure entrepreneurial presence in Sumatra; there were few institutions or mechanisms in place to protect European businessmen.[21] As will be discussed, these conditions shifted over the course of the nineteenth century. The government participated little in the politics and economy of the plantations for the duration of the existence of Dutch colonial rule over the region. The reason why it was private investors, rather than the colonial government, that spearheaded the plantation industry seems to have its roots in the government's "hands-off" approach to Sumatran resource extraction and development. The drastic failures of their command economy agricultural projects in Java (*cultuurstelsel*) seems to have encouraged pre-existing liberalising trends in the Dutch Empire. This shift is most clearly visible in the passing of the agrarian reforms of the 1870s which put an end to the centralised agricultural programmes of the Dutch East Indies. Thus, in line with the classical liberal economic thought that predominated in the Netherlands, it was believed that the actions of private planters in Sumatra would ultimately result in overall benefit to the Empire as a whole.[22] To this end, the Dutch government appears to have avoided direct involvement in Sumatran economics.

Though private businessmen were willing to invest in colonial ventures, most were reluctant to set roots in Sumatra without some degree of assurance that their assets would not be protected from seizure or other potential risks.[23] During the period of liberalisation and colonial expansion in Sumatra, the colonial government reached agreements with local rulers to secure land grants in regions such as Deli for private planters. Though nominally still leaving the presence of European business contingent on the consent of local rulers, these grants provided the entrepreneurial security and mechanisms for obtaining land necessary for the emergence of European industry on the island. This policy simplified the process of land expropriation while allowing foreigners to circumvent the appearance of outright land theft.[24]

In reality, the creation of plantations necessitated a degree of dispossession and displacement of Indigenous populations.[25] At first, European planters even attempted to mobilise these native populations as labour forces for their plantations. Although the Indigenous peoples did help clear land

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control over a relatively large geographical region. Conversely, the Batak regions of inland Sumatra were never unified to the same extent and were often ruled at the level of the *kampong* (village).

[21] Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition*, 62-63.

[22] Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition*, 62; Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, 15.

[23] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 17.

[24] Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in North Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3.

[25] Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 3-4.

for the plantations during the earlier "pioneer" period of the Sumatran *cultuurgebied*, long-term efforts to enlist local populations in the plantation labour force largely failed.[26]

There were several issues with the mobilisation of Indigenous labour. For one, the East Coast of Sumatra was relatively sparsely populated compared to Java. It was therefore difficult to locate enough willing labourers for the demands of the plantations.[27] Secondly, as Wertheim notes, Sumatra was "too prosperous" for planters to meet much success with the enlistment of local labour.[28] In other words, the local Malay and Batak populations were, by and large, content with their current lifestyles; there was no impetus for them to abandon their traditional livelihoods in favour of the capitalist Dutch mode of production. Furthermore, unlike Java, the Dutch did not really rely on force and violence to enforce their mode of production in the region; the methods of land-grabbing as discussed earlier tended to be relatively non-intrusive to Indigenous populations. Planters were therefore required to turn elsewhere to meet their labour requirements.

If the local populations were unwilling to participate in plantation economies, there was an abundance of foreign labour able to be mobilised for work in Sumatra. In particular, plantations began to recruit from British Malaya and, later, from South China, Java, and other regions of South and Southeast Asia. A growing number of coolies came from impoverished rural villages in Java by the mature period of Sumatran plantation society (roughly 1880s onwards), often to meet debt obligations.[29] It appears that the sudden availability of Javanese labour in the late nineteenth century was directly precipitated by the Dutch agrarian laws of the 1870s; in line with the trends in economic liberalisation—in large part spurred by the failings of the defunct Javanese plantation regime—the government of the Netherlands enacted a series of drastic reforms that made the Javanese labour market more accessible to private employers elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies.[30] Javanese workers also tended to accept lower wage rates than their Chinese or Indian counterparts which eventually led to increases in the rates of Javanese labour used on the Sumatran plantations.[31]

Thus, the coolies' filling of the plantation labour vacuum rendered them a core and inextricable element of Sumatran plantation society. With the labour demand of plantations met, the final key factor of production needed for the emergence of the plantation as an industry had fallen into place.

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[26] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 20-22; Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, 25.

[27] Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition*, 68.

[28] Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition*, 68.

[29] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 60-61.

[30] Penta Peturun, "Pencabutan Agrarische Wet 1870 dan Lahirnya Uupa no. 5 Tahun 1960 Sebagai Cermin Kedaulatan Bangsa," *Muhammadiyah Law Review* 3, no. 2 (2019): 69-79.

[31] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 54-55.

Thereafter, plantations continued to develop and mature until they came to constitute a vital element of the economy of the Dutch East Indies. A unique system of relationality and power began to emerge in the plantations, creating a new economy and mode of production on the East Coast of Sumatra.

PLANTATION LIFE

Conditions for labourers on plantations were, by any metric, inhumane. Van den Brand described the plight of the coolies as "slavery," even if slavery had been abolished and coolies ostensibly held legal rights.[32] Breman estimates roughly a quarter of all coolies died prior to the termination of their contracts.[33] The coolies who did survive were not much more fortunate; the plantation imposed constant physical, mental, and sexual abuses on coolie labourers. Overall, the regime of the plantation was one of control; every element of the coolies' bodies and minds were subject to the power of the plantation in attempts to dehumanise and subjugate the labourers. This section sketches an image of life on the plantations for coolie labourers as well as the ways in which planters abused their positions of power to dominate and control the workforce.

The most tangible forms of control and domination in the plantation were those exacted over the coolies' bodies. The working conditions of the plantations were physically strenuous. Colonial law limited the labourers' work day to ten hours, but they often worked several hours longer than this in practice either before and after the work day and over prescribed lunch breaks.[34] Although coolies were legally entitled to "holidays," including a biweekly *hari besar* (lit., "big day") on which they were to be paid, they were often obligated to work these days without pay.[35] In part, coolies' extended work days and holiday work were also likely motivated by their low pay rates which required them to work on "time off" to make enough to survive. Unsurprisingly, physical exhaustion was among the most prominent complications suffered by coolies.[36]

Abuse often took the form of overt physical and sexual violence. Dutch law granted planters the right to enforce contractual obligations through the policy of *poenale sanctie* (penal sanction), but only monetary fines and imprisonment were permitted.[37] As one might expect, planters tended not to follow these legal restrictions on their power within the plantation. Foremen and other plantation

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[32] Van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli.*
[33] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 59.
[34] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 96-98.
[35] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 123-124.
[36] J. A. I. Tschudnowsky, *Contributions à la géographie médicale de l'archipel malais* (Paris, 1899).
[37] "Algemeene Politie Strafreglement voor Inlanders in Nederlandsch-Indië," *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië over het Jaar 1872*, no. 111 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1873); "De Koelie Ordonnantie van 1880."

authorities carried with them batons with which they would beat coolies if they were suspected of such "breaches of contract" as "desertion . . . continued refusal to work, extreme laziness, [or] conscientious objection."[38] Disobedient workers could be subjected to floggings or other systematic tortures.[39] The types of punishments that appeared most often in the public press, however, tended to be the more spectacular accounts. One such report noted by Van den Brand was as follows:

> I saw a Javanese woman, estimated to be fifteen or sixteen years of age, fastened under the house to a stake in the position of Christ on the cross. To make this possible, a crossbar was nailed onto the post to which her arms were tied. The sun partially shone on her completely naked body, but this couldn't explain the moans and wails of the woman (in Holland they would still have called her a girl) to me. The houseboy filled me in: she had favoured the disinterested love of one of her tribe over Mr. X's rijkdaalder love,[40] and so the *toean* [*tuan*, Malay for "lord"] had had her tied up like this. To prevent her from passing out from the cruel punishment, he had had her female part [vulva] rubbed with crushed chilli pepper . . . I hear that the girl suffered in that condition from six in the morning until six at night.[41]

This account highlights not only the cruelty of physical punishments but also illustrates how coolie women experienced sexual abuse at the hands of planters. It was not uncommon for these types of punishments to result in death. In cases where imprisonment was deemed sufficient punishment, coolies could expect a miserable sentence. In a *Java Bode* article cited by Van den Brand, a hospital cubicle was used as a prison for coolies too ill to work where eleven people—one of which had died during their stay—were forced to share a space of only "a few square meters" without access to food, water, sanitation, nor waste disposal.[42]

Although imprisonment was a resented punishment for labourers, typical living conditions were generally very poor. Plantations systematically restricted access to necessities to cut costs and perpetuate systems of control. For one, food was imported and sold by the plantation to coolies at marked-up rates, often at rates higher than coolies' daily income.[43] Water was typically polluted and stagnant, and living accommodations (Javanese housing was referred to as *pondok*) were cramped,

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[38] Van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli*, 6; Article 9-10, "De Koelie Ordonnantie van 1880," *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië over het Jaar 1880*, no. 133 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1881); Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 164-170.

[39] Nienhuys was eventually criminally convicted for his responsibility for the deaths of seven coolies whom he had had flogged.

[40] The original Dutch is ambiguous. The phrase in the text is "de rijksdaalderliefde van den heer X." Mr. X appears to be a pseudonym given to the plantation owner. A rijksdaaler was a coin equivalent to roughly two and a half Dutch guilders, making it the largest denomination coin at the time of the article's writing. Consequently, it seems the narrator is saying that the woman had favoured a presumably poor tribesman over a rich and propertied white man—implied to be an irrational choice—leading to his punishment of the woman.

[41] Van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli*, 29-30.

[42] Van den Brand, *De Millioenen uit Deli*, 32-33. I was unable to locate the original article.

[43] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 116-117.

filthy, and often consisted of makeshift shacks that hardly kept out rain and wind.[44] Healthcare—intended to be provided at no cost—was seldom, if ever, accessible.[45] This was of particular concern due to the high rates of disease, infection, malnutrition, and exhaustion. Such was the uselessness of plantation medical systems that coolies often avoided going to the doctor because so few left the hospitals after being admitted, as illustrated by the cubicle prison cited by Van den Brand.[46]

Coolie mobility was highly moderated. To leave the plantation, a coolie needed to obtain a written permit from their employer.[47] Officials were often reluctant to grant exit out of fears of coolie desertion.[48] In any case, coolies seldom had enough free time to warrant a trip elsewhere, and often had no reason to leave; they could not afford anything in the markets and, because they were imported from elsewhere, generally did not have any relations off-plantation.

Some of the measures of control were institutional rather than physical in nature. For instance, in the case of a fleeing coolie, planters enlisted plantation authorities, external police forces, and even inland Batak groups to return any coolies they had come across. Realistically, coolies had nowhere to which they could flee that would offer asylum, and could expect some form of punishment if caught. Intelligence networks were formed within plantations by incentivising foremen to report potentially desertion-prone coolies before they even had a chance to escape.[49] Dutch law even sanctioned third-party individuals found to have been sheltering a runaway coolie.[50]

A powerful mechanism of institutional control was the system of debt bondage. Coolies were typically paid in the form of wage advances through which they could purchase seeds from the plantation on credit. They would later sell the produce back to the plantation after harvest, ideally at a profit. The precise structure of this payment system, however, conferred systemic disadvantages to the coolies. Firstly, it meant that coolies were often in a state of indebtedness to the plantation. Planters leveraged this debt to legally hold coolies past the prescribed three-year maximum of their contract; labourers were expected to dispense with their contract until they had completed all duties, and thus plantations were almost always able to justify holding coolies as indentured servants *in perpetuum*.[51] This practice continued despite legal provisions that coolies had to be released after three years regardless

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[44] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 113-116.
[45] Tschudnowsky, *Contributions à la géographie médicale de l'archipel malais*.
[46] Tschudnowsky, *Contributions à la géographie médicale de l'archipel malais*; Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 113, 117-123.
[47] Article 4, "De Koelie Ordonnantie van 1880."
[48] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 124.
[49] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 155-156.
[50] Article 4, "De Koelie Ordonnantie van 1880."
[51] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 111-113.

of any outstanding debts.[52] Secondly, because the plantation held a monopoly over the plantation economy, they were able to exhort any price they desired from coolies for necessities such as food or shelter. These transactions often occurred on credit, ossifying coolies' debt to the plantation. The system of purchasing seed before selling crops also placed the burden of risk associated with farming on the coolie—poor crops resulted in less profit for labourers, but not necessarily any loss of investment for the planters.

Plantations employed particular methods of control that involved subjugating the psyche of the coolie and inculcating notions of subservience, inherent inferiority, and the hopelessness of escape. Doing so allowed the plantation to dominate coolies at the level of the coolies themselves. Such control mechanisms ranged from psychological manipulation and fear-mongering to the erosion of personal identity. For instance, planters treated rebellion and desertion as irrational behaviours in what might be termed drapetomania.[53] The aforementioned physical and sexual abuses helped instill an atmosphere of fear within the plantation. Such was the ability of the plantation to crush the coolie psyche that coolies often displayed an indifference to death.[54] Rates of suicide on the plantations are unclear due to probable underreporting in official records, but it is likely that suicide was not uncommon.[55]

As in many late colonial societies, racial discourse and racialization figured very prominently in the basic structure and quotidian interactions on the Sumatran plantation. The goal was to naturalise notions of racial hierarchy within the very fabric of the plantation. Cognitively, normalising the notion of coolies' intellectual and cultural inferiority helped justify the dehumanisation and objectification of coolies. As Cedric Robinson discusses in his seminal work *Black Capitalism*, racial stratification works to maintain capitalist hierarchies and perpetuate the marginalisation of the working class.[56] Different racial categories tended to be segregated; Javanese and Chinese coolies were forbidden from entering into each other's habitations, and both were barred from the white living quarters.[57] As an exception to this rule, planters often coerced typically (though not exclusively) Javanese coolie women— described as "contract sluts"—into sexual acts. Breman identifies ties between racialized beliefs of the

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[52] Deli Planters' Committee, *The Deli Coolie Question* (Deli: 1882), 3.
[53] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 154-155.
[54] Henri van Kol, *Uit onze koloniën: Uitvoerig reisverhaal* (Leiden, 1903), 101.
[55] In general, plantations did not accurately report death rates.
[56] Cedric J. Robinson, "Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development," *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 9-28; see also Eric E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York, NY: Russell and Russell, 1961).
[57] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 113-116.

"beautiful and docile" Javanese concubine and the sexual abuses of these women.[58] Among the coolies themselves, a racially stratified hierarchy existed. For instance, Chinese coolies were seen as more industrious and therefore tended to receive better pay than Javanese workers.[59] These racial hierarchies encouraged animosity between labourers themselves to take attention away from white planters who were inevitably at the top of the hierarchy; only white Europeans were allowed to apply for and receive land grants.[60]

Plantations made subliminal efforts to even break down coolies' epistemic bases, namely religious and cultural practice. Most Javanese coolies, for instance, were Sunni Muslim, but plantations did not make any accommodations for Muslim practices, such as *salat* or religious holidays. Interestingly, planters made no attempt to assimilate coolies—plantations seldom had churches, coolies did not in practice receive Sundays or most religious holidays off. Rather, it seems planters were more concerned with enforcing a strict labour regime than they were with assimilation. Nevertheless, these methods of breaking down religious and cultural ties helped planters dehumanise, denigrate, and destroy personal identities of coolies necessary to a regime of absolute epistemic subjugation.[61] Normative modes of control do not only act to reproduce the power of the dominant class, but, as Foucault argues, are in fact necessary to the creation of a society of discipline.[62] As Albert Memmi described, "it is not enough that the colonised [person] objectively be a slave, it is necessary that they accept themselves as such."[63]

Ultimately, the most potent form of control was the collusion between planter interests and the Dutch state; in what seems to be a pattern in Sumatran plantation society, colonial authorities consistently demonstrated indifference to the conditions of the Sumatran coolies and often collaborated with planters' interests to the detriment of the labourers. In breach of employment contracts, the European planters very seldom faced legal repercussions even in cases where conditions on the plantation resulted in the death of labourers. In contrast, the underlying belief that coolies needed to be "kept in line" provided the legal basis for the power granted to planters in colonial

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[58] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 95-96, 193. See also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978); Stuart Hall, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 165-166.

[59] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 54, 107-108.

[60] Upik Wira Marlin Djalins, *Subjects, Lawmaking and Land Rights: Agrarian Regime and State Formation in Late-Colonial Netherlands East Indies* (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2012), 82-83; Fasseur, "Purse or Principle," 38-40; Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 3.

[61] See Orlando Patterson, "The Internal Relations of Slavery," *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 35-76.

[62] See Michel Foucault, "Les corps dociles," *Surveillir et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975), 159-199.

[63] Albert Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du Portrait du colonisateur* (Montréal, QC: Les Éditions l,Étincelle, 1972), 89.

ordinances.[64] Particularly in the early years, planters were empowered by the state to act according to their own idiosyncratic rules; as Pelzer describes it, the planters served as "their own lawyers, policemen, public prosecutors, judges, and diplomats."[65] In other words, the Dutch state often failed to enforce a breach of contract or colonial law against planters, yet would at times actively legislate to empower planters with more legal rights over plantation operations.[66]

DECONSTRUCTING THE NATURE OF THE COOLIE-PLANTER RELATIONSHIP

This difference in the attitude of the state government and its arms—judicial and legislative—solidified the dominance of the planters. In conjunction with a great diversity of other mechanisms at their disposal, planters were able to exert near-absolute control over the bodies, minds, and spirits of coolies. Rule of law on the plantation was thus autocratic and largely arbitrary. In later years, the reputation of the plantations for their cruelty seemed to precede them; when children in rural Java failed to return home when expected, mothers feared they had been abducted by coolie brokers (people who recruited coolie labourers on behalf of the plantations) to labour under the yoke of the plantation.[67] Prospective coolies thus well understood what awaited them in Sumatra.

Given the apparently deplorable situation of the coolies, it is not obvious why they would come in the first place. Notwithstanding the fact that planters' and their subordinates' actions were often illegal by contract and colonial law, the contracts themselves were generally not voluntary in the true sense of the word. Entering into a contract was often a last resort, and those who chose to sign themselves off to the plantations had often already resigned themselves to their fate.[68] Debt was among the principal reasons in Java to commit oneself to a life on the plantation. The dilemma of prospective coolies can thus be best understood in critical political economy terms; coolies held independent agency only insofar as structural restraints would permit.[69] In this sense, while coolies did "choose" to

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[64] Jacob T. Cremer, *Een Woord uit Deli tot de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal: Art. 2 No. 27 van het Politie-Reglement voor Inlanders, met het oog op Werkovereen-Komsten met Vreemde Oosterlingen* (Amsterdam, 1876).

[65] Karl J. Pelzer, *Planter and Peasant: Colonial Policy and the Agrarian Struggle in East Sumatra 1863-1947* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 89.

[66] Planter lobbyists like Jacob Theodoor Cremer—Nienhuys' successor as head administrator of the Deli Maatschappij—or one Mr. Lefèbre played a large role in influencing Dutch parliament in favour of planter interests. See Cremer, *Een Woord uit Deli*, 11-12.

[67] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 132.

[68] Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast*, 148.

[69] Neo-Gramscian theory first reconciled this debate between the primacy of structure or agency in historical analysis. Susan Sell's usage of the term "structured agency" in her analysis of contemporary global political economy best captures this dialectical understanding of the relationship between structure and agency. Susan Sell, "Big Business, the WTO, and Development: Uruguay and Beyond," in *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*, 3rd ed., eds. Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R. D. Underhill (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2006), 183-184.

enter into contracts with coolie brokers, their range of choices was severely limited by circumstance; faced with poverty—in large part resultant from Dutch agrarian policy[70]—coming to Sumatra was often their only viable option. It is therefore misleading to describe coolies' decision as "free."

It seems that coolies' interests in coming to the Sumatran *cultuurgebied* were to improve their quality of life and, in some cases, be free of their debt obligations. Conversely, planters clearly wanted to extract as much profit as possible from their enterprises, which was often achieved by shaving costs from the bottom line. Naturally, these two goals conflicted; coolies could not expect a decent quality of life if planters insistently pushed down wages and the accessibility of amenities. Planters' legal rights to *poenale sanctie* in conjunction with the general indifference of state actors to come to coolies' aid created a relationship between the two groups fundamentally predicated on a drastically uneven power gradient.[71] This power was exacerbated by the monopoly held over plantation resources; planters were simultaneously their coolies' employers, landlords, medical providers, grocers, legal system, and border agents. Upon this power gradient, planters' interests in maximising their profits quite clearly prevailed over coolies' desires for acceptable working conditions.

CONCEPTUALISING THE PLANTATION: RELATIONALITY, STRUCTURAL MARXISM, AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

This essay conceptualises the plantation through a Marxist lens in which the physical and social space of the plantation is seen to reflect Marxist notions of power and relationality. At the core of this analysis is understanding the nature of the capitalist mode of production as it relates to the plantation, the basic relationality that defines the plantation, and the pervading systemic power dynamics therein. To best construct an analytical basis of the plantation for the purposes of this analysis, the plantation must be abstracted as a nonphysical space. This paper thus looks beyond the purely physical nature of the plantation. Instead, the plantation is conceptualised as a space that is, at its core, constructed by the relationships between the various actors therein. From these understandings, Sumatran plantation society is argued to reflect the fundamental class conflict described by Marxist analysis as well as the corollary systems of power, relationality, and control.

It is important to understand how the capitalist mode of production is present in the context of Sumatran plantation society. A "mode of production" refers to the basic nature or structure of a

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[70] Peturun, "Pencabutan Agrarische Wet 1870," 69-79.
[71] See Susan Strange, *States and Markets: An Introduction to International Political Economy* (New York, NY: Basil Blackwell Press, 1988), 23-32; see also "Algemeene Politie Strafreglement voor Inlanders in Nederlandsch-Indië;" articles 9-11, "De Koelie Ordonnantie van 1880."

society, which is supposed to be centred around the relationship of different strata of society to the means of production and productive power. Under the capitalist mode of production, society is divided into the proletariat, who provide labour (productive power) but have no control over the means of production, and the bourgeoisie, who dominate the means of production. The control over the means of production places power in the hands of the bourgeoisie; they are able to construct the predominating structures of society to suit their interests. This constitutes what Susan Strange describes as "structural power" in her seminal work on global political economy.[72] Additionally, in the case of Sumatra's plantations, the inherent hierarchies of the employer-employee relationship creates a direct, "relational power" between the two groups.[73] This system allows the bourgeois class to extract profit from the surplus labour of production at the expense of the proletariat. Thus, the bourgeoisie attempts to maximise profits—exerting a downward pressure on wages and hiking prices—while the proletariat seeks to better their own personal conditions by attaining better labour conditions and wages. These two goals are antithetical and irreconcilable, thereby producing an inherent conflict between these two classes under the capitalist mode of production.

This economic conflict thus becomes a question of power; the bourgeoisie, seeking to maintain their position of control over the means of production, wants to enforce the *status quo* with respect to the prevailing mode of production. On the other hand, the proletariat, understanding the current system will always be detrimental to their interests, seeks a radical break from the capitalist mode of production. Thus, the class conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is fundamentally a conflict between the conservation and (radical) replacement of the extant mode of production and its related systems of control.

If the plantation is thus accepted as basically a network of relationships, then the basic system of relationships is that between the planters and labourers, i.e., the providers of capital (planters) and the providers of labour (coolies). In Marxist terms, these categories are conventionally termed the "bourgeoisie" and the "proletariat."[74] This bifurcation sets the basis for a Marxist analysis of plantation relationality. Recalling the prognosis of class conflict under a capitalist mode of production, there are

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[72] Strange, *States and Markets*, 23-32.
[73] Strange, *States and Markets*, 23-25.
[74] In practice, these categories are seldom homogeneous nor clear-cut; in the Sumatran plantation, for instance, coolie foremen existed in a milieu between bourgeois and proletarian. Nevertheless, if these categories are defined by their relationship to the means and forces of production, there are only two possible categories. In this case, coolie foremen still belong to the proletariat because they do not control the means of production and ultimately only provide their labour the plantation; they ultimately stand to benefit from the liberation of the labour force and the disintegration of the *status quo* mode of production.

two possible outcomes of the conflict: bourgeois control or proletarian revolution. In the case of Sumatran plantation society, the former seems to have prevailed.[75]

In Marxist analysis, all forms of control in any given mode of production are subsumed under the concept of superstructure. In essence, all societies are constituted of a base—the mode of production, i.e., the economic nature of the society—and the superstructure. The superstructure describes all elements of society that arise as a product of the essential mode of production that exist to reinforce and reproduce the base. The superstructure includes such aspects as institutions (e.g., judicial systems, media), epistemologies (religion, ideology), or other normative structures. In short, it includes all elements of a society secondary to or arising from the mode of production, which is seen as the principle. The purpose of the superstructure is thus to exact control to attempt to "resolve" the inherent conflict of a mode of production. The superstructure is thus vital to the maintenance of a mode of production; without it, there would be no mechanism to keep non-dominant classes subservient.

In Sumatra's plantation society, the base and superstructure are relatively clear. As discussed earlier, a capitalist mode of production (the plantation) arose principally out of the three factors of production (capital, land, and labour) *ex nihilo*, that is, where no apparent precedent of a capitalist mode of production existed before.[76] This represents the "base" of plantation society. The conditions of plantation society illustrate how the superstructure manifested; the various means through which planters attempted to control coolies represent the system of control that naturally arises to reinforce the base, i.e., the mode of production of the plantation. The modes of control can be delineated as follows: (i) physical controls (measures to physically prevent or discourage behaviours antithetical to the capitalist mode of production); (ii) institutional controls (mechanisms that indirectly restrict coolie agency); and (iii) normative controls (methods of controlling dissent at the level of the coolies themselves).[77] Mechanisms of control and reinforcing were thus present in every aspect of Sumatran plantation society, all of which aimed at reproducing and reinforcing the position of absolute authority

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[75] The history of worker movements and revolution in Sumatra, though a valuable avenue of investigation, constitutes its own complex history and merits research and analysis entirely devoted to it. Consequently, this essay does not discuss the relationship between plantation society and labour agitation in Sumatra.

[76] Development theorist Andre Gunder Frank has an interesting discussion on the role of latifundia in the creation of global capitalist hierarchies in his discourse on dependency theory. Under this framework, the capitalist mode of production that emerges in colonial plantations is seen as a means of peripheralizing and therefore dominating colonial economies. However, a dialogue with this school of thought is beyond the scope of this paper. See Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review* 18, no. 4 (1966): 17-31.

[77] In proper Marxist discourse, "normative controls" can be understood as the concept of hegemony. Refer to Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 1st ed., ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1972).

of the planter, representative of the bourgeois class. These systems of control (the superstructure) all ultimately arose from and sought to reinforce the essential mode of production (the base) and interests of the bourgeois planter class to the detriment of the coolies.

CONCLUSION

Nineteenth-century Sumatran plantation society thus constitutes an interesting case study to analyse regimes of control when intersecting with political economy and class in a colonial setting. This paper has attempted to demonstrate the complex interplay of relationality, power, modes of production, and class conflict within the particular setting of Sumatra. This analysis may help better understand and decipher the politics and economics of colonial Indonesia and, more broadly, the mature colonialism of the late nineteenth century.

Sumatran plantation society is a complex phenomenon with persisting consequences for contemporary regional politics and development.[78] This paper was only able to address a limited scope of the possible avenues of inquiry into the topic among its incredibly rich history, and should not be taken to be a comprehensive historical review of Sumatran plantations. Rather, the intention of this research is to present a novel interpretation of the topic to help situate the phenomenon within broader historical knowledge. This paper thus endeavours to contribute to the scholarship on a topic that has been given relatively little attention since the 1980s. Further investigation that builds upon this analysis into the relationship between the class relations within plantations and later political movements—particularly labour agitation in Sumatra—would help contextualise this subject within the broader history. Deepening the knowledge of the histories of labour oppression can help to provide insight into trends of class and labour conflicts in modern-day Sumatra and beyond.

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[78] See Peturun, "Pencabutan Agrarische Wet 1870," 69-79.

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