

# **The Elphinstone Review**

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# **The Elphinstone Review | Volume 7: May 2021**

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Temitope Sarah Bodunrin

## **Editors**

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## Editorial

*Mariana Consoni Rubio and Temitope Sarah Bodunrin*

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We are proud to present you this 7<sup>th</sup> volume of The Elphinstone Review which continues to showcase the diversity of disciplines, knowledge, and research interests of the University of Aberdeen's undergraduate students. This volume comprises papers from various departments ranging from Anthropology, Politics and International Relations, Business Management, Philosophy and Sociology, Law, English, History, Modern Languages and Linguistics. All in their capacity to reinforce academic excellence, creates an accessible and interdisciplinary journal that encourages intellectual excitement, curiosity, and motivation among our readers. Each one of the twelve papers you will find in this volume contributes with a unique perspective to the journal. We are encouraged by the author's persistence in sharing their work in these challenging times with the COVID-19 pandemic.

It takes hard work to edit and review for an academic journal but the process itself is rewarding. The completion of these published papers would not have been possible without the dedication, assistance, and support of our team. We would like to express our gratitude to Christopher Knight, from the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture for his kind support and administrative assistance. We would also like to thank the Development Trust Student Experience for their financial support that made the printing of this journal possible. We thank everyone who has shown interest in being part of this publication. We are especially grateful for the work put in by our team of editors and authors, in bringing these published articles to their final and best form. Making this Volume 7 of The Elphinstone Review has been challenged by the lockdown restrictions, but we are grateful for digital communication which has helped us bridge the gap in collaborating.

To our readers, we hope you find yourself inspired by quality of the work carried out at the University of Aberdeen and enjoy reading through these papers as much as we have enjoyed editing and working with the authors to compile this volume.

### ***The Elphinstone Review***

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*The opinions expressed in the articles presented hereafter do not necessarily reflect the views of the institution, the editorial board, or the contributors. They should be viewed as exercises of academic criticism intended to spark intellectual debate.*

# The Anthropology of an Ice Cream: What it can tell us about Decolonisation.

Emilie Maja Kellmer<sup>1</sup>

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*In 2020, an ice cream manufacturer's decision to remove the term "eskimo" from the name of a popular ice cream sparked a public debate in Denmark, which was driven by nostalgia-infused ideas about tradition on the one hand and on the other was rooted in a fundamental question about the right to self-determination. By looking into issues of naming, representation, and identity within the context of the relationship between Denmark and Greenland, this paper examines how said name change and the subsequent debate are indicative of an ongoing process of decolonisation that has been slow in reaching the public sphere. Firstly, the history of the ice cream is outlined, leading into an assessment of the term "eskimo" and its representative connotations. Then, attention is drawn to the legal process of decolonisation and its significance for Greenlandic sovereignty. Finally, by shedding light on a recent Danish trajectory in public debates it is argued that changing the name of this ice cream is not merely a question about political correctness, but a matter of acknowledging how linguistic tools can help maintain the dominant power relations that have upheld colonial systems of social order.*

## Introduction

Summertime is ice cream time, and yet this connection got a whole new meaning to it when a Danish ice cream manufacturer announced in the summer of 2020 that they would be changing the name of one of their products, the Eskimo ice cream. The change has come amidst a rising scrutiny over product designations that are based on negative stereotyping and racial prejudice (see McEvoy, 2020). While this ice cream controversy is pertinent to Denmark, the issue is rooted in long and complicated relationships, since the main concern was that the term showed a lack of respect toward the formerly colonised Inuit people of Greenland. Due to the

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<sup>1</sup> Emilie Maja Kellmer studies Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen and will graduate in June 2021. She is predominantly interested in social inequalities, socio-legal relations, and environmental geopolitics, especially in regard to water insecurity and climate change adaptation.

derogatory connotation of the term eskimo, the manufacturer faced increasing pressures to change the name of their ice cream and despite being initially opposed to doing so, the ice cream was renamed O'Paya after the cocoa bean used to make the chocolate coating. The implementation was met with serious outrage because it was seen as an unnecessary change of traditions since it was “just an ice cream” (Tanno, 2020). Indeed, following this sentiment a stark contrast in the public debate that emerged was how a rivalling ice cream manufacturer refused to change the name of a similar product, the Giant Eskimo ice cream, because it is said to hold historical nostalgia for consumers.

This essay seeks to shed light on how the controversy surrounding the name of an ice cream can provide a lens through which we can understand issues of naming, representation, and identity within the context of self-determination. In doing so, I will also consider how these elements are tied to contemporary understandings of Danish colonial history as well as how continued structural racism form part of the lived experiences of Greenlandic Inuit.

## **1. What is in the name?**

This relatively small chocolate covered vanilla ice cream has a long history as it was patented almost a hundred years ago by Christian Kent Nelson, a Danish immigrant residing in Iowa where he owned a confectionary shop. Initially, it was sold under the name I-Scream Bars, but in order to franchise the product it was later trademarked under the name Eskimo Pie, which carried on until recently. Supposedly, the ice cream was inspired by a young boy who came into the shop wanting both an ice cream and a chocolate bar but who was indecisive because he only had money for one (The New York Times, 1922; Cramer, 2020). Thus, although the name of the ice cream suggests a reference to indigenous people of the Arctic north, it did not emerge within this context. This is important to understand, seeing that the notion “Eskimo ice cream” is also used in relation to the dessert akutaq, literally a “mixture” of berries, sugar, sea oil, shortening and fish or meat, that is made by several circumpolar Inuit communities. One of them is



the Yup'ik, to whom the term *akutaq* is a central metaphor in the oral narratives that communicate their worldview in which the relationship between humans and animals is central to the construction of value (Bissett, 2012; Fienup-Riordan, 1994). Nonetheless, the name Eskimo Pie along with images featuring a small, dark-haired child wearing mittens and a heavy parka with a fur-lined hood, who sometimes would be accompanied by a polar bear, were meant to evoke a feeling of the North and the people who live there. However, rather than being rooted in the reality of lived experiences, such marketing strategy trades heavily on historical stereotypes.

The word *eskimo* is central to a debate about the right to self-determination and representation as it has long been used to collectively refer to Arctic indigenous people, in this simplifying the cultural diversity found across the circumpolar North. One widespread belief is that the original meaning of *eskimo* can be interpreted as “eater of raw meat”, though there is some uncertainty to the etymology of the word (see Thalbitzer, 1950; Benveniste, 1953). Importantly, there are cases where words borrow on native Inuit languages with an identifiable overlap between the functions in the source language although they are subject to reinterpretation. An example of such is how an igloo is known as a snow hut, yet the word itself is derived from *illu*, which is the Greenlandic word for house (Sakel, 2011, p. 553). However, *eskimo* has come to have a pejorative meaning to Greenlandic Inuit because it was first applied within a colonising context, through which it came to carry linguistic agency on conceptions of social relations. Undeniably, the connotation to barbarism and violence has grounded racialised stereotypes about the supposedly primordial qualities of indigenous communities in Greenland, which by extension involve backward and primitive subsistence practices (Larsson and Westerstahl, 2015).

It is exactly due to the history of colonial imposition by non-indigenous people that the term has come to be considered derogatory – the Greenlandic Inuit themselves did not have a say in what they were called. Moreover, the urgency with which the use of the word *eskimo* is debated today in relation to the ice cream shows that colonial tensions continue into

the present. Here it is important to acknowledge that although Greenland officially identifies its people as Inuit, the term Eskimo is used by other circumpolar peoples with one example being the Yup'ik (Jelinčič, 2000: 275). This is in part due to phonological and lexical differences, as the Eskaleut language family comprises distinctive language groups of which Yupik is one and Inuit another (see Vakhtin and Golov, 1987; Jacobson, 2012; Dorais, 2010). Thus, on one hand the Yup'ik refer to themselves as Eskimos since the word Inuit is not found in the vocabulary of their language group and this is the appellation in their own language. More importantly, however, the Yup'ik refer to themselves as Eskimos because they have chosen to (Jelinčič, 2000, p. 275). There is of course a greater regional specificity in naming of the indigenous population of the Arctic North than mentioned here. But nonetheless, it serves to demonstrate how the principle of self-determination is grounded in identification.

## **2. Kalaallit Nunaat: a nation in the making**

Even though academia has played a significant role in debunking myths about the existences of indigenous people as well as their misinformed characterisations, misconceptions continue to persist and influence interactions on an individual as well as a structural level and are commonly reinforced in relationships fraught by colonial history. The Danish colonisation of Greenland was launched by the missionary efforts of Hans Egede and began in 1721. Following more than two centuries of colonial rule, Greenland – or Kalaallit Nunaat – gained greater sovereignty and right to indigenous self-determination by becoming an autonomous region within the Danish Realm through the Home Rule act of 1979 which was further enhanced with the 2009 Act on Self-Government (see Kuokkanen, 2017). However, the colonial legacy is not resolved in the least as the country is still dealing with the traumas of forced assimilation and religious indoctrination the people were forced to endure (Gad, 1973; Rud, 2017). Indeed, it is only recently that the Danish prime minister issued a formal apology on behalf of the government to the 22 children who were forcefully taken from their

families in Greenland in the 1950s and sent to Denmark for re-education that formed part of a supposed “modernisation” program (Jonassen, 2020).

Even now, Greenland continues to be devalued in its relationship with its former colonial ruler as the annual block grant it receives from Denmark is often misconceived as dependence and portrayed as “costing” the government money, when it is something all Danish regions get (Dyhrberg, et al., 2010). This is part of a paternalistic Danish self-image in which the era of colonisation is placed in the distant past and many Greenlandic successes are attributed to the benevolence of the Danish state, implying that Greenland will never be self-reliant enough to pursue independence. In reality, it is only a little over a hundred years ago that Denmark prided itself on being a colonial power as evident from the 1905 exhibition on the Danish Colonies, which took place in Tivoli (see Bak, 2020). This sentiment has somewhat prevailed and is reflected in how Denmark nowadays is trying to promote itself as an Arctic great power due to the geopolitical dispute over the Arctic and its resources. Crucially, this is done by proxy of Greenland and is grounded in the notion of wanting to protect the interest of the Danish Realm. This, however, hinges both on dimensions of sovereignty and the compatibility of Greenlandic and Danish national identity discourses, while also hinging on which future is imagined and whose interests are protected (Gad, 2014, p. 104). Understanding the uneven relationship between Denmark and Greenland is important, because the long history of colonisation is linked to present day negotiations of Greenlandic identity, which is what has been brought to the fore by the debate about the name change of an ice cream.

### **3. Decolonising Identity in the public discourse**

Addressing a colonial past serves as a reminder of uncomfortable historical trajectories and has the capacity to provoke strong emotional responses because they are riddled with sensitive and unsettling matters. In her book, Alia (2008) provides useful insight into the power relations embedded in the process of naming and how what can seem as a simple way of classifying people is a form of social control as well as a key component

of identity maintenance and transformation. Certainly, the example of the O'Paya ice cream demonstrates how the ways in which people fight to take, keep, or change names reflect a change in power relations that can indicate either subjugation or liberation. The debate over the name of this particular ice cream came in the wake of a series of other identity political debates that started unsettling the status quo and has thus been referred to as part of a *kränkelseskultur*, which has become synonymous with publicly critiqued and debated testimonies of any experience that is harmful to a person's sense of identity. While translated to "culture of offence" in English, it can be interpreted as a supposed hypersensitivity to discomfort over co-called "pseudo problems" – i.e. being easily offended (Høgh-Olesen, 2020; Erichsen, 2020). This, however, has resulted in a highly infantilising discourse that can be extremely destructive, because it can invalidate structural narratives of harm.

Indeed, rather than being a question about political correctness, the debate over the name of this ice cream concerns a process of decolonisation that should have happened a long time ago in Denmark. As demonstrated, the term *eskimo* has a racialised history and is extremely stigmatising within the context of the relationship between Greenland and Denmark. It is well documented that languages change, and language users are active participants in terms of this (Bybee, 2015), as evident from how dictionaries have words deleted, updated, and new ones added – so far, the Danish Dictionary has 757 updates in 2020 alone (Den Danske Ordbog, 2020). Thus, we must acknowledge that language is not static but reflects our experience of the world at a given point in time, making it even more important to decolonise the terminologies used to describe certain people to prevent them from continuing to be cast in the same light as when the term was first employed. In other words, reclaiming language is an important part of decolonisation.

The long and complicated relationship to Denmark is slowly changing as Greenland is emerging as a post-colonial nation with a new position in the world. Not only has the Self-Government act been part of this process, but another pivotal element has been the essentialist

conceptualisation of a Greenlandic identity (see Rud, 2017; Petersen, 2001; Graugaard, 2009). The insistence by some Danish ice cream consumers that the term eskimo is still appropriate to use when Greenlanders themselves have long preferred the term inuit comes to show that the relationship between the two is still characterised by Danish dominance and assumed superiority. Moreover, said discourse effectively reproduces colonial knowledge of Greenland being for Danish consumption, also known as “Eskimo Orientalism” (Fienup-Riordan, 1995). In this, the fabrication of a recurring “Other” can help reduce humans to essentialised images by means of which dominance and control can be established. However, this vis-à-vis is also what has provided a possibility of greater Greenlandic self-determination because it appeals to a doctrine of legitimacy out with the already established legal framework (Moore, 2003).

With most of the population in Greenland being of Inuit heritage rather than being descendants from colonial settlers, the Inuit identity has grown out of a traditional culture that is constituted in relation to a Danish Other (Gad, 2009). Importantly, the increasing awareness of the unequal power balance between Greenland and Denmark along with its structures of systemic racism and marginalisation is what has manifested itself in the debate about the name change of the ice cream. Decolonising linguistic tools such as the term eskimo form part of a continuous identity process in which Greenland is trying to define itself after centuries of being denied the ability to do so. In great, it is about respect and coming to see each other as equals, which can only be done if we acknowledge that indigenous peoples have their own names. This is a change long overdue, as evident from how the National Museum of Denmark only stripped the word eskimo from its exhibits in 2020, replacing it with the term Inuit or more specific regional names (Kyle, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the term eskimo has been used to reduce Danish knowledge about Greenland to stigmatising racial stereotypes, making it derogatory because it connects to racist structures that have not been fully

decolonised. Hence, within the context of the relationship between Denmark and Greenland its use for the name of an ice cream is filled with troublesome and trauma-filled narratives of unjust and unequal treatment. Even though a legal framework has been put in place to enable greater Greenlandic self-determination, decolonisation has been slow in other aspects and continues to uphold a form of social control and representative subjugation. Increasing awareness about this forms part of an identity process that seeks to advance the recognition of Kalaallit Nunaat and hinges on attention, caution and critical thinking with respect to the historical trajectory of Danish colonialism and its legacy.

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## **“Mak Vertew of Ane Neid”: Transgressing Boundaries in *The Testament of Cresseid* and *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum***

Graeme Sutherland<sup>1</sup>

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*While The testament of Cresseid by Robert Henryson (c.1435–c.1505) and Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum (1611) by Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645) initially appear to be different texts in terms of form and purpose, this paper demonstrates that a comparison of the poems offers insightful analyses into how they each transgressed the social and narrative boundaries of their times. It is observed that both texts employ separate strategies when asserting the speaker as an authority figure: Henryson broadens the possibility of what poets can be, opening the concept up to writers of the present; conversely, Lanyer utilises the medium to advocate for societal respect towards women. It is acknowledged that while the testament is ultimately a problematic text, a consideration of the historical context of the work opens the poem up to more nuanced readings. The depiction of Cresseid as an individual afflicted with leprosy, for example, allows for more agency than is typically found in medieval depictions of people with this disease, despite its brutal appearance in the text. This kind of reading is shown to uncover numerous similar elements that transgress societal barriers. Finally, the paper analyses how both works employ “humility over vanity” as a common theme. In the Testament, Cresseid is able to overcome her suffering through her humility, and thus wields a surprising level of agency. Contrastingly, Lanyer advocates for the virtuosity of women in her text by portraying humility as a noble trait that results in suffering, as it is expressed through beauty and consequently exploited by immoral men.*

Robert Henryson’s *The Testament of Cresseid* is an undeniably misogynistic and problematic work when viewed from a contemporary perspective. Its narrative culminates in a moral ending that focusses on the controlled sexuality of women, and the representation of individuals with leprosy is largely prejudicial and conforms to dangerous ableist ideas. This, however, is a simplistic reading. Indeed, one may argue that this text transgresses comparable boundaries to those of Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus*

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<sup>1</sup> Graeme Sutherland is a third year undergraduate English student at the University of Aberdeen. Until recently, he studied Biomedical Sciences, before redirecting his academic career. This is the first essay he wrote as an English student.

*Rex Judaeorum*, an empowering poem addressing women in the 1600s. While at first glance *The Testament of Cresseid* may certainly seem out of sync with Lanyer's work, when placed in its historical context, a host of small acts of literary rebellion present themselves. Written around a hundred years earlier, *The Testament* is presented with different boundaries to overcome, and at different levels of significance, but just as Henryson's poem is ultimately a product of its time, so is *Salve Deus*. By imagining the significance of Lanyer's work in the 1600s, a greater appreciation of the importance of this powerful poem can be gained through insight into how it responded to cultural issues such as patriarchy and oppression. These texts are comparable in often surprising ways with how they approach and break through similar and sometimes very different social and narrative conventions, and it is through allowing this comparison that a greater appreciation of these achievements may be developed.

Understanding how medieval and early modern texts transgressed boundaries has broad implications for literature in the present day, as this knowledge is important for understanding how discourse surrounding groups of people can be altered throughout history, and helps dissolve the idea that this form of resistance was absent in other historical eras. For example, Lanyer's act of resistance in *Salve Deus* relates to a much larger collection of similar thinkers, such as Christine de Pisan (1364–1430), who is credited by Kelly (1982) as having created a debate on women that became 'the vehicle through which most early feminist thinking evolved.' This raises interesting questions about how discourse is changed via art today, such as through the representation of minority groups in popular media. Similarly, through studying the work of Lanyer, one may achieve a better understanding of how literature has helped change public discourse throughout history, the reverberations of which can sometimes be felt in present-day society. Henryson, too, falls into this category, as while his text is overtly sexist, this allows one to analyse how an inherently problematic work may still prove important in the alteration of public discourse by transgressing significant social and narrative boundaries in the time period it was written in.

Among the most interesting ways that Henryson and Lanyer approach social and narrative conventions is through their effort to redefine authority. When Henryson wrote *The Testament of Cresseid*, “poets” were only established authority figures, such as Chaucer, who directly relates to Henryson’s poem. It was a common trope of medieval literature to translate the poetry of figures like Chaucer in one’s work, and indeed, in a sense, this is something that Henryson did; as Lucas (2010) argues, ‘Henryson himself was engaged in a kind of translation of Chaucer, adopting his subject (the doomed lovers Troilus and Criseyde), his stanza (rhyme royal), and his line (the pentameter Chaucer brought from the continent)’. It should be noted, however, that Henryson does not simply acquire Chaucer’s authority in his text, but uses it to establish an entirely new authority of his own. He does this by first praising Chaucer through the voice of the narrator: ‘Written be worthie Chaucer glorious’ (Henryson, 2010, p. 4). This serves to reinforce Chaucer’s importance in the literature of his time, which becomes particularly interesting, as Henryson then goes on to directly challenge his authority: ‘Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?’ (Henryson, 2010, p. 6) Henryson does this not to simply undermine Chaucer’s work, but to assert himself as an authority figure who is worthy both of appreciating Chaucer’s poem and standing alongside him, powerful enough to question the work itself. By doing this, Henryson certainly pushes the boundaries of his time that define what a poet can be, imagining a literary culture where the “poet” title can belong to a writer of the present. But Henryson also takes this idea further by addressing cultural questions about poetry that were prevalent in the 1500s: namely, “are poets liars?” In response to this question, one might be tempted to contradict the implied accusation, but by questioning Chaucer’s trustworthiness, he does just the opposite. By simultaneously praising Chaucer and calling him a liar, he breaks through the social boundary that the question presents: that poets must be truthful to be valued. This idea is also present in the previous stanza:

For worthie Chauceir in the samin buik,  
In gudelie termis and in joly veirs,  
Compylit hes his cairis, quha will luik,  
To brek my sleip ane uther quair I tuik,

In quhilk I fand the fatall destenie  
Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitlie (Henryson, 2010, p. 6).

Acrostically, this section of the poem reads “FICTIO”, a Latin precursory word for “fiction”. Thus, Henryson implies that Chaucer’s work lacks truth even before the narrator outwardly states it, as this implies that the words within the lines are devoid of true meaning. But by doing so in a way which unapologetically lies to the reader, he further reinforces his idea that the question “are poets liars?” is one that lacks importance. Henryson, therefore, not only asserts himself as an authority figure, but attempts to completely redefine what a poet and an authority figure are.

Lanyer, too, attempts to overcome traditional boundaries of authority with *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, but her means of achieving this are entirely different. Indeed, the very existence of Lanyer’s poetry collection breaks oppressive boundaries as it was the first significant volume of poetry to be published by an English woman. Much like Henryson, Lanyer also praises authority figures to establish a greater authority in her own right, but rather than undermine them to achieve this, she uses the power that praising these women gives her to further her own literary agenda. She can take this direct approach because her poetry does not simply refer to these women in the context of a narrative: she has an individual paratext for each of them, creating nine in total. This pursuit of authority is present in the form she uses, as Lanyer’s text is the first-ever example of a country-house poem (Coiro, 1993), and therefore asserts her creative and influential authorship. Lanyer, however, uses this authority in an entirely different manner than Henryson: Henryson’s central narrative drives forward the idea that one should abstain from infidelity, whereas Lanyer transgresses social boundaries by advocating for the respect and virtuosity of women. Lanyer then develops this further, as by utilising examples of many “virtuous” women and unholy men in the Bible, Lanyer asserts herself as a person capable of analysing the Bible with as great proficiency as men, while also highlighting the oppression of women as an injustice. She perhaps best demonstrates her criticism of men in the Bible when she mentions that the

officers who had been sent to arrest Christ had to ask for his name several times:

How blinde were they could not discern the Light!  
How dull! If not to understand the truth,  
How weake! If meekenesse overcame their might;  
How stony hearted, if not mov'd to ruth:  
How void of Pitie, and how full of Spight,' (Lanyer, 2000, lines 505-509).

The anaphor present in this example evidently conveys an intense hatred of the men in question through the repetitive, frustrated emphasis on their failures and ignoble traits. Additionally, when this is coupled with the effectively placed caesuras, extra emphasis is added on strong words such as “dull” and “weake”, thus further amplifying this negative portrayal. Later in the poem, Lanyer develops the idea of the “virtuous” women to complement her descriptions of “weake” men by criticising cultural conceptions of Eve as the cause of all human suffering. As Lanyer writes: ‘If he would eate it, who had powre to stay him? / Not Eve, whose fault was onely too much love’ (lines 800-801). Lanyer breaks through social and moral boundaries that were present in her society by empowering women through her defence of Eve, and develops this idea by shifting the blame on to men, namely, Adam: ‘But Surely *Adam* can not be excused, / Her fault though great, yet hee was most too blame’ (lines 777-8). This reaches a climax several stanzas later, where Lanyer goes as far as to refer to men as “equals” to women, thus breaking through the social barriers that patriarchal ideas placed in her society (line 830).

While Henryson certainly does not take this idea in such a radical direction, he does transgress more subtle social and narrative conventions in his text, even going so far as to target a similar cultural barrier with Eve. As Seamus Heaney argues, Henryson does not follow the standard ‘rhetoric of condemnation’ that was so frequently applied to women as the daughters of Eve. As he puts it: ‘Henryson eschews this pulpit-speak’ (Heaney, 2010, p. xii). This is supported with an extract from the narrator’s comments on

Cresseid, where he states that he may excuse her lustful actions, attributing her fate to a random lack of good fortune: ‘Thy womanheid, thy wisdom and fairness, / The quhilk fortoun hes put to sic distres’ (Henryson, 2010, p. 8). By refusing to adhere to this “rhetoric of condemnation” against women, Henryson, like Lanyer, transgresses a social and narrative boundary put in place by medieval patriarchy. The narrator’s continual appreciation of Cresseid disallows the simple interpretation that the text simply presents an example of divine retribution, thus allowing for a more complex reading of the poem. For example, the use of the word “fortoun”, (both here and in “Cresseid’s Lament”) to describe her fate, encourages the idea that Cresseid’s actions were not resulting from moral impurity, but instead a consequence of uncontrollable change. Consequently, moral and narrative boundaries are overcome in the narrative, as the fate of the main character is not decided simply by their immoral actions, despite the poem appearing to be in the format of a moral-based tale. Upon further analysis, the moral system of the poem is complicated further. While the portrayal of individuals suffering from leprosy in the text is ultimately problematic, Henryson overcomes societal prejudices regarding “lepers” in medieval literature by allowing Cresseid a surprisingly large amount of power. This is demonstrated upon the meeting that she has with Troilus, when neither he nor Cresseid recognises the other, yet she still has the power to look him in the face and provoke a strong emotional response. As Brewer (1999) argues, ‘[i]t is Cresseid’s ability to disturb Troilus’s settled regard [...] that challenges traditional notions of humanity, including gender, supposedly secured by the larger arc of this narrative’. This idea is developed further with the voice that Henryson gives Cresseid through her famous lament: as Wang (2012) points out, Cresseid’s lament breaks narrative conventions by diverging from more common ‘satirical or devotional modes of testamentary writing’. This divergence allows for a more effective and emotional testament, so that her position as a woman with leprosy is given a stronger voice. This is not as powerful a voice as Lanyer gives women through *Salve Deus*, but when considering the different historical context of the poem, this does not deplete its importance. Indeed, as Wang also contends, due to the

legal rights of people in Cresseid's position, the presence of a testament breaks a social confine in itself, thereby demonstrating the importance of historical context in understanding the poem's significance.

While Henryson's text may be more comparable to Lanyer's work when concerning how he writes about Cresseid, these comparisons prove even more interesting when regarding how both texts handle the central theme of humility over vanity. Brewer (1999) argues that if one does imagine that Cresseid is punished for vanity, then she ultimately still overcame her suffering once verbally expressing her humility before her death. Indeed, her humility and sudden death are not simply coincidental: her humility may be considered the key to her escape from suffering. Brewer (1999) states that this is an especially powerful reading, as one can imagine that if Cresseid's transgression from vanity to humility has resulted in her freedom from pain, then "all manner of catastrophe" can be overcome through the "jettisoning of materiality". The fact that this power was given to a woman in Henryson's poem is especially significant, as it allows for a combatant stance against some of the patriarchal forces in fourteenth century Scotland. Lanyer, however, manages to adopt an alternative position while still driving forward her literary agenda. She references Matilda, whose beauty was presented to be a clear sign of her inner virtue (Clarke, 2000). Yet, while Henryson demonstrates that this virtue can be used to escape catastrophe, Lanyer presents it as the cause of it: 'Beauty the cause that turn'd her Sweet to Sowre' (line 235). This is in reference to the horrendous sexual assault she endured because of 'Lustfull King *John*,' (line 237) but despite stating this, Lanyer is not discrediting the concept of virtue. Instead, she undermines the morality of men so as to make women appear more virtuous, arguing that the evil of men may overpower even the most noble individuals. Thus, Lanyer uses the same theme as Henryson and succeeds in transgressing similar patriarchal conventions, despite utilising an entirely opposite technique.

As these two texts were both produced around a hundred years apart, it is undeniable that the boundaries that they transgress are naturally going to differ in both their nature and cultural significance. However, once placed in their respective historical contexts, it is clear that this does not detract from

the importance of the intriguing ways in which they achieve this. The methods that Lanyer and Henryson employ in their efforts are insightful from a modern perspective and emphasise the value of further attempts to overcome restrictive conventions where relevant today. While in *The Testament*, Henryson ostensibly perpetuates the notion that one should ‘mak vertew of ane neid’ (Henryson, 2010, p. 36), the function of his text in transgressing social and narrative conventions presents the possibility of literary resistance. Lanyer too stands against the notion with *Salve Deus* through her own resistance, thus rejecting the idea of an oppressive societal “necessity” that one can do nothing about; her solution is not to find happiness in discomfort, but to actively change public discourse. In light of this, *The Testament of Cresseid* and *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* are indeed texts that encourage the creation of art that offers a more nuanced and liberating perspective on society.

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# Control and repression: a reflection on power and resistance in the Middle East and Europe based on Foucault's theory of power

Pavel Dostalík<sup>1</sup>

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*This article focuses on the complex interrelation between power and resistance in Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes and European democracies within the last decade, based on the work of Michel Foucault. In particular, the author employs Foucault's perspective on governmentality, resistance, and counter-conduct, as well as introducing the concepts of dissent, repression, limitation of the freedom of expression, and the use of coercive measures by governments to maintain the status quo in the face of protests. Subsequently, the article brings attention to relative similarities between autocracies (Egypt, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia) and democracies (Malta, Slovakia, Hungary, France). Both forms of government manifest a choice between accommodation and repression of dissent; the crucial difference is observed in legitimacy and the intensity of use of coercive measures when repression occurs. The relations between power and resistance, as well as between authority and protest, are evaluated in the context of the Arab Spring in a number of Middle Eastern autocracies. Moreover, the freedom of expression in several European democracies from 2010 onwards is also investigated in relation to this. The Foucauldian understanding of power-relations shows that resistance is, as a symptom of power, inevitable in its essence whenever any form of government exists. The article concludes that whilst similar power-resistance relations can be found in European democracies and Middle Eastern autocracies, the difference in outcomes of these relations occurs due to the possibility of changing of the authority via electoral political processes and relatively sustained freedom of press and expression in Europe.*

## Introduction

The rise of social movements and general mobilisation capacities of the public have led to an increase in dissent, protests, and their repression in

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<sup>1</sup> Pavel Dostalík is a fourth-year Politics and International Relations student at the University of Aberdeen. His research focuses on topics related to European Union politics, mainly institutional dynamics, and external relations. He has actively promoted an informed debate about European matters in his capacity of President of Young Europeans Aberdeen. Additionally, he has been the Digital Director of The International Viewpoint, a student-led publication platform.

societies globally since the events of the Arab Spring. The question of staying in power and repressing dissent has become a priority for Middle Eastern political leaders as the region witnessed an unprecedented wave of public unrest in the early 2010s. Almost a decade later, the results of this protest-chain remain mixed. However, they provide an insight into the relations of power and resistance within authoritarian regimes. This paper adopts the perspective introduced by Michel Foucault in his works on governmentality, resistance, and counter-conducts to evaluate these relations.

Firstly, using this perspective, the interrelation between authority and resistance is investigated within the events of the Arab Spring and their aftermath. Secondly, regime critique and its repression in Middle Eastern autocracies are introduced and put into the context of the Foucauldian understanding of power. Furthermore, building on Foucault's connection between knowledge and power, the role of the state as the sole producer, holder of knowledge and upholder of the status quo is examined from the perspective of freedom of press and expression. The situation in the Middle East is then compared with developments in European democracies.

## **1. Key concepts**

When addressing the question of maintaining control and repressing dissent, key terms need to be defined. Firstly, what makes a regime “*authoritarian*” is centralised political power and a significant absence of political freedoms (Cerutti, 2017). To put authoritarianism in perspective, an authoritarian regime does not exercise total control of its citizens, unlike totalitarianism. However, the regime does display certain abuses of power, such as control over the rule of law or free and fair elections, which results in the inhibition of bottom-up political processes, in contrast to democracies (Shorten, 2012).

Secondly, “*dissent*” is a general term for a difference of opinion, with the connotations of political opposition to authorities and their actions (Perlman, 2019). Aspects such as opposition presence in the public sphere, potentially directly in the political arena, distribution of materials critical of

authorities, protests, but also opposition presence online can be labelled as a form of dissent in some states.

Thirdly, “*repression*” is a crucial factor in maintaining control and power for autocratic regimes, and can be defined as ‘the actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization, within the territorial jurisdiction of the state’ (Davenport, 2007, p. 2) with the aim to inflict ‘a cost on the target as well as deterring specific activities and/or beliefs perceived to be challenging to government personnel, practices or institutions’ (Davenport, 2007, p. 2) or simply to ‘subdue someone’ (deMeritt, 2016, p. 1). Repression can take a violent or nonviolent form, and can be both ‘legal or illegal, widespread or targeted’ (Ritter, 2014, p. 145). This makes repression ‘a pervasive feature of politics’ (Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019, p. 1) which, as this paper presents, exists across regions.

In the context of authoritarian regimes, internal dissent has the potential to spread and lead to a change of the status quo, which is seen as highly undesirable by those in power. Dissent, embodied in various forms of opposition, can be addressed by the authorities in two ways: repression or accommodation. Repression disregards the opposition’s demands with the objective to eliminate their further distribution. Governments possess numerous ways of accommodating the opposition’s requests, be it procedural or substantive: the first referring to actions like administrative personnel reshuffle or a release of political prisoners, the latter referring to providing a platform in the political process to co-opt the opposition (deMeritt, 2016). This choice between repression and accommodation appears in both democracies and autocratic regimes (Pierskalla, 2009).

When comparing opposition in authoritarian regimes with opposition in democracies, the differences in maintaining power and control between the two systems are illustrated by contrasting features. As authoritarian regimes are defined by restricted political freedoms, the right to protest is often curbed, political plurality (inducing political parties and civil society groups) is limited, and political opposition is not legally recognised. The fundamental concept of the state is based on monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, giving all governments the right to use

violence including repression (deMeritt, 2016). It is legitimacy and intensity of the use of violence that makes a stark division between democracies and authoritarian regimes. A democracy allows for power to be publicly questioned without resorting to violent repression. The right to protest is upheld in a democracy; however, the cases of disproportionate action taken to quell a protest or government opposition occur in Europe as well and are put into context in the following paragraphs.

## **2. Foucauldian Theory of Power**

Power and resistance represent an inescapable aspect of any human society. Foucault's work on governmentality unveils the underlying principles of this aspect. His analysis of governmentality focuses on the questions of how to govern, to how to be governed, and how to govern oneself and others. These questions emerged in sixteenth century Europe where collapsing feudalism gradually led to the rise of administrative and colonial states, and where a religious conflict developed between the reformist and counter-reformist thinkers (Burchell and Foucault, 1991).

Governmentality, as analysed by Foucault, represents: 'first, the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculation and tactics that allow the exercise of [...] power' (Burchell and Foucault, 1991, p. 102); and second, the tendency enabling power of government to surpass other forms of power (ibid). Governmentality embodies 'the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits.' (ibid, p. 103).

The ability of government to redefine the scope of action is a crucial element of maintaining control; in modern-day Middle East autocracies, online platforms play a crucial role in this quest. Another aspect of control maintenance is enshrined in governmental approaches toward critique and dissent. When exploring and defining the term "critique", which drives the will of populations to exercise dissent, Foucault refers to the desire of populations 'not to be governed quite so much' or 'not being governed like

that and at that cost' (Foucault, 2007, p. 45). This should not be understood as a rejection of government in principle, rather as a rejection of the current form of it (Death, 2010, p. 240).

Even though Foucault's work does not directly address the issue of dissent and protest, it can be found that dissent and resistance are both possible and indeed inevitable in his texts, which focus on the relations between power and resistance in the context of government-citizen relations, state-citizen relations, and institution-citizen relations (Death, 2010). The inevitability of resistance is anchored in Foucault's claim that '[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault, 1985, p. 95).

Foucault addresses the processes which occur as a result of increasing critique and dissent by developing the term "counter-conduct" (Foucault and Senellart, 2007, p. 452). Foucault's original use of the term regarded the modalities and technologies of power which were initially developed by the Christian pastorate and gradually assimilated by the modern state (Golder, 2007). Foucault, however, attempted to analyse counter-conduct in the context of the modern system of governmentality by looking at the notion of rejection of *raison d'État*<sup>2</sup> and its fundamental elements, which have emerged together with the concept of governmentality and its deployment in European societies. The process of counter-conduct consists of, firstly, an affirmation of the possibility that the state is not final and indefinite, and that civil society can prevail over the state. This period marks when individuals recognise that the law of their basic needs and requirements can and must replace the rules of obedience brought by the system of governmentality. Secondly, this realization leads to the establishment of the essential and fundamental right of the population to break all the bonds of obedience and revolt, not in the juridical sense, however. Finally, the third part of counter-conduct is represented by civil

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<sup>2</sup> "Reason of state", using the primacy of the national interest as a justification of foreign policy; from French.

society's refusal of the idea that the state is the sole possessor of truth about the population and events occurring within the state's territory, an aspect where Foucault connects his thoughts on counter-conduct to truth and its relations to power. The nation as a whole is 'entitled to the truth of society, the truth of the state, of "raison d'État"' (Foucault and Senellart, 2007).

### **3. Applying the theory: power and protest in the Middle East and Europe**

Whilst there are similarities in the authority and resistance relations between Europe and the Middle East, due to pluralist societies and electoral political processes anchored in Europe, repression and control maintenance rarely reach the gravity of those in the Middle East. It needs to be acknowledged that neither Middle Eastern autocracies nor European democracies form a homogenous group; there are significant differences among individual states, and it is not within the possibilities of this paper to encapsulate them completely, instead it provides a multiple-cases-illustration of the introduced theoretical framework.

The Arab Spring and its aftermath represent a period when an outburst of active dissent led to numerous attempts by authoritarian governments to maintain control in the Middle East in late 2010 and 2011. A quick chain reaction of civil unrest, protests, and anti-governmental calls began in Tunisia in December 2010 and consequently spread to Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Syria and beyond. There has been extensive research into the causes of this unprecedented wave of dissent in the Arab countries, highlighting social and economic deprivation of the citizenry, especially of the young, dissatisfaction with government and new technological means of communication, which led to a rapid cascade of unrest with various levels of success in terms of democratisation (Hussain and Howard, 2013). The relatively swift outcomes of the series of protests in Tunisia and Egypt, where authoritarian rulers saw the end of their time in power, and in Libya, Yemen, and Syria, where positions of local authoritarians 'appeared to be in grave jeopardy' (Bellin, 2012, p. 127) further fuelled both the will of the civil society, and the authorities to reach

their respective goals: a more democratic state for the former and maintaining the grip on power for the latter.

These events offer an opportunity to illustrate the Foucauldian perspective on government and protest, on critique and counter-conduct. The concept of governmentality in the Middle Eastern autocracies showcases the power structure present in authoritarian regimes. The ability of these autocracies to maintain control is predetermined by structures designed to foster robust authoritarianism, which include ‘an exceptionally muscular coercive apparatus endowed with both the capacity and will to repress democratic initiatives originating from society’ (Bellin, 2012, p. 128). What enables this apparatus are three factors: the fiscal support from the authority, basing its dominant position on the coercive abilities of the state; the international support network due to the high importance of the Middle Eastern natural resources and their role in the global supply chain; the institutional structure of the coercive apparatus itself which operates in the form of several independent groups subscribing to the authority of the state in exchange for privileged positioning (Bellin, 2012).

Moreover, in authoritarian regimes the military often plays the role of the upholder of the status quo, illustrating the relations of power behind the reality of dissent, protest and the authorities’ response to them. How far is the coercive apparatus capable and, more importantly, willing to go? Here, the authorities estimate the cost of coercive repression against the publicly expressed dissent, and the cost of the scenario with limited or no repression. In many instances, e.g. in Burma in 1988 or China in 1989, large-scale coercive repression successfully brings any civil unrest to end (Steinert-Threlkeld, 2017).

As Foucault noted, the inception of counter-conduct lies at the moment when civil society recognises that the current distribution of power, their obedience to the dominant authority, is alterable (Foucault and Senellart, 2007). Once the cost of obeying become unbearable, the refusal to ‘be governed like that and at that cost’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 45) spreads and challenges the power relations in place, the status quo.



In order not to find themselves in this situation, some Middle Eastern autocracies like Saudi Arabia or Kuwait operate a model of which provides its citizenry with certain advantages in exchange for tolerance of the authoritarian rule, also known as a “rentier” state (Blaydes and Lo, 2011). This is not to say that a rentier state suppresses all critique and dissent, after all, Saudi Arabia exercised sustained coercive repression of collective action in 2013 (Steinert-Threlkeld, 2017). However, it reduces the possibility of spreading counter-conduct from within.

In the direct aftermath of the initial protest spark in Tunisia in late 2011 and early 2012, the authorities in Egypt, seeing the magnitude of the protests, decided to limit citizens’ access to the Internet which resulted in blocking access to social media such as Twitter or Facebook and shutting down 93 per cent of Internet addresses in Egypt (Stepanova, 2011). The state attempted to uphold the status quo and remain the sole possessor of the truth, however, due to the abundant and complex networks ensuring access to the Internet globally, it is not in the capacities of a single government to cut off countrywide access to the Internet completely. Sentiments of dissatisfaction were being further shared online within and among the Middle Eastern autocracies despite more government-imposed restrictions on access to the Internet. Today, the Internet and social media are available to citizens in some Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, although online surveillance is present, leading to punishment of direct regime criticism enabled by vaguely worded laws (Freedom House, 2020c). Ambiguously worded legislation allows the state to continuously redefine the state competences which represents the ‘general tactics of governmentality’ (Burchell and Foucault, 1991, p. 103). Furthermore, online platforms serve as another tool of authoritarian governments to manipulate the public opinion, silence any dissent appearing online (Benner, Mezzetti and Isacc, 2018) and thus further consolidating the truth produced and owned by the authorities.

#### **4. The State as the producer and upholder of knowledge**

Associated with the grip on truth and knowledge is the freedom of expression and press, which is assessed by rating the situation of journalism and media. In Egypt, the mainstream media have adopted increasingly pro-government rhetoric, and new cyber-laws further increased the risk of imprisonment for journalists reporting government critique online (Kirkpatrick and Thomas, 2014; Reporters Without Borders, 2020). The conditions for journalists in Saudi Arabia have been the subject of international criticism most notably following the death of Saudi dissident writer Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 (Specia, 2019).

However, limitation of the freedom of expression and media independence can be also found among European democracies. Controlling public narratives preserves the state as the holder of truth; such control can be weakened by journalists. In 2017, the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, an investigative journalist in Malta, sparked a wave of protests due to ‘alleged implication of some of Malta’s elite in the crime’, leading to Prime Minister Joseph Muscat’s resignation (O’Grady, 2019). Similarly, Slovakia saw its biggest wave of disapproval of government authorities after an investigative journalist, Jan Kuciak, and his fiancée had been murdered in 2018. Kuciak’s journalism focused on corruption among high-level public officials and the private sector; his murder led to a political crisis resulting in the resignation of the government (Germanova, 2018). More of a structural endangerment of the freedom of press has been taking place in Hungary and Poland. In Hungary, media diversity has been significantly reduced in a process of establishing pro-government media houses and the deterioration of conditions for independent journalism (Freedom House, 2020a). Comparably, the Polish government has been tightening its control over state broadcasters and removing dissenting journalists from the public media (Freedom House, 2020b). This is in contrast with the overall state of the European freedom to information and freedom of speech. Overall, the European civil environment allows cross-border information exchange, which with the relatively vigorous rights to publicly criticise authorities, is more likely to expose national civil societies to multiple sources of differing

narratives. This prevents a central authority-driven narrative from dominating the domestic discussion.

When dissent materialises into protests and actions, governments can either accommodate or repress it (deMeritt, 2016). Whilst the intensity of coercive repression in the Middle Eastern countries has often been the subject of international criticism, cases of intense use of coercive repression have occurred in European democracies as well. The French police apparatus has been criticised for being both ineffective when repressing violent and illegal protests, and brutal and repressive when handling public unrest (Skogan and Maillard, 2020).

Similarly, the ongoing tensions within Spain over Catalonia's attempts to gain independence have generated violent dispersal of protesters, resulting in approximately a thousand civilians injured during the popular referendum in 2017 (Balcells, Dorsey and Tellez, 2020). However, as European democracies operate within a pluralistic civil society and an electoral political process, the authorities over-time resort to co-opting some of the issues highlighted by public unrests, or risk losing access to dominant positions which are conditioned by popular support.

## **Conclusion**

The complex interrelation between power and resistance, or authority and protest developed by Foucault brings attention to the relative similarities between the autocracies of the Middle East and the democracies of Europe. Resistance, a symptom of power, is inevitable in its essence. The products of these continuously developing power–resistance relations take various shapes across political regimes; the Middle Eastern autocracies, with robust coercive apparatuses and evolving definitions of authority powers, tend to repress dissent with more forceful means. This concentrated power is inevitably challenged when the cost of obedience becomes unendurable for the citizenry, as occurred during the Arab Spring. To avoid this, authoritarian regimes attempt to sustain their monopoly on truth, justifying the status quo by limiting the freedom of press and curtailing civil liberties, at times under the model of a rentier state.

Similar power-resistance relations can be found in European democracies, however, due to the electoral political process and relatively sustained freedom of press and expression, the products of these relations do not reach the gravity found in the Middle East. Naturally, exceptions can be found both in Europe and the Middle East, as both of these regions consist of diverse societies.

Fundamentally, Foucault's understanding of power and resistance shows the universal struggle brought onto societies, no matter their political structure, which can improve our understanding of control maintenance and dissent repression across the globe. Foucault's defining contribution to the debate on power and resistance continues to challenge the conventional understanding of power relations in today's societies. Whilst societies of different cultures might seem to share very little in terms of governance and authority, Foucault helps to illuminate the commonalities inherent to any power structure, and thus, bring such realities closer to one another.

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# “It Fits like a Fist in the Eye!” – Language Learning as a Cultural Journey

Tiina Heikkinen<sup>1</sup>

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*Learning a new language comes with many perks, not least of which is being able to order an ice cream in your target language while travelling abroad. Language learning is in many ways a cultural journey as much as it is a mechanical learning process through repetition, trial and error. This article sheds light on the intertwined relationship between culture and language and examines the relationship between the two. The author asks whether it is possible to learn a language without learning the culture that comes with it, and approaches the question through linguistic relativity, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The author argues that language and culture are so profoundly intertwined that becoming fluent in one is not possible without cultural immersion in the world of the target language. On the other hand, culture is also very hard to dismiss after a certain point of learning, because it manifests itself in the language in various, deeply rooted ways. The author also explores constructed languages and argues, that they pose an exception to the rule due to their lack of natural speech communities and by extension, innate cultural dimension.*

## Introduction

‘How do you say “sir” in Finnish?’ My partner, a bilingual speaker of Greek and English, had taken upon himself an ambitious task of learning my native language. He had started his journey with a popular language learning application and was already familiar with some basics. He now wanted to know how to address my family in a polite manner. I gave him the translation that would probably come closest to the word “sir”, “*herra*”, but when he repeated the example sentence he had come up with, I could not help but get a little amused. Noticing this, he asked if he had said something wrong. “No”, I responded, “It is grammatically correct, but we don’t really

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<sup>1</sup> Tiina Heikkinen is a second-year Anthropology student at the University of Aberdeen. Besides her keen interest in languages, she also likes to explore global politics and social issues. Her main focus of interest lies in power structures, conflict resolution and sustainability through anthropological perspective.

address people in this way unless the situation is very formal. It just sounds very... odd". He seemed a bit baffled. After explaining to him that "*herra*" is something you would mainly find in a military environment or in official letters sent by the government, and that we do not really have a polite form of speaking that would fit the situation he was describing, he still insisted to use some form of title or grammatical structure that would convey politeness. "It just sounds so awkward", I told him. "It translates grammatically, but not culturally".

The relationship between culture and language has fascinated social scientists and philosophers throughout their fields. They have often found themselves in a-chicken-or-an-egg type of situation trying to find out which came first, or how they influence each other. In this essay I explain how culture is learned through the language learning process and show that in most cases the two are inseparable and interdependent in more ways than one. I also address some exceptions to this rule, as well as discuss the definition of "knowing" a language. I argue that learning the culture behind your target language is the key to fluency, and I illustrate this by taking examples of different languages throughout this essay.

## **1. The relationship between language and culture**

Language as a concept cannot exist by itself. It stays alive through interaction and recordings, and therefore has an innate connection to culture and thought. According to what has become known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language, thought and culture work as a flexible, mutually constitutive system where each element has an effect on the others. The early interpretation of the hypothesis was that language determines thought, but critics argue that this one-way relationship is too simplistic and deterministic (Ahearn 2012: 70). It is also worth noting that knowing a language requires more than just knowing how to put words in a right order mechanically. To learn a language is to learn and adapt meaning into what one is saying.

The very basics of a language such as the writing system, some phonetics and basic vocabulary do not necessarily require or even enable in-



depth cultural learning about the target language. Learning how to read road signs or order ice cream in a new language is surely possible without this knowledge, but it raises another question of what it is to learn and *know* a language in the first place. The Council of Europe has established a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which organises language proficiency on a six-level scale from A1 to C2 (Council of Europe n.d.). This scale is then further grouped into three levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User. Learning a language on a level A2 means that the speaker can handle and understand short exchanges and is familiar with the highest frequency vocabulary in personal settings. In practice this could mean being able to say, for example, that you are hungry or that you are a student. It is highly unlikely that a goal-oriented language learner would be satisfied with staying on that level, but if this were the case, they would still be recognised as knowing the language on a level A2. Depending on the language, being able to communicate your immediate needs or tell people what you do for a living does not necessarily require any knowledge of the culture behind the language itself, and it can therefore be argued that it is indeed possible to learn a language to some extent without being familiar with the culture whatsoever. However, I argue, that one cannot get much further than that without running into culture at some point, even if not actively trying to.

Language teachers often vouch for learning the culture(s) of the country(/-ies) alongside the language that is spoken in it. Learning a particular language is not only about learning the writing system, grammar and syntax, but also learning the behaviour of a society and its cultural customs (Guessabi 2011). Deoksoon Kim notes:

Educating the “whole person,” when teaching language, requires engaging with the cultural ways of life within which that language lives. People use language to participate in and to create social, emotional, and ethical activities. Ignoring this and treating language as a decontextualized set of facts and techniques misses the opportunity to engage the whole student (2020: 520).

Learning a community's language therefore works as a pathway to its customs, ideals and values. A good example of how to get a glimpse on a culture through its language is by comparing sayings and idioms with both word-for-word translations and their meanings. The expression in English "it fits like a glove" translates in Finnish to "*sopii kuin nyrkki silmään*". It is not a word-for-word translation though, as this would directly translate to something fitting "like a fist in the eye". In this example, the direct translation of the Finnish expression illustrates the liking Finnish people take in crude, dark humour. This kind of analysis offers a glimpse into what is considered rude or taboo in a culture, as well as what is appreciated and celebrated.

This is also the case for concepts that do not exist or translate well into other languages: the Swedish and Norwegian word "*lagom*" directly translates into "just the right amount". Despite the word not having a direct equivalent in English, it is still possible to explain what the word means. Some concepts are a bit trickier though: the Finnish concept of "*sisu*", for instance, stands for "strength, perseverance in a task that for some may seem crazy to undertake, almost hopeless" (Smirnova 2018). In order to understand *sisu*, you have to understand the historical values and context of Finnish culture. *Sisu* as a concept conveys special meaning to Finns, expressing how perseverance and hard work is valued. If you have *sisu*, you have the "strength" to undergo immense mental and physical pressure without breaking or complaining – an attribute that is highly valued among Finns. Having a concept like "*lagom*" or "*sisu*" in one's language is therefore one of the clearest examples of culture in action within a language: a single word can convey more than is possible to express even with the most intricate translation into another language, and is always met by mutual understanding among the community of speakers, making the concept precious and unique.

Some cultural elements of languages are very hard, if not impossible, to dismiss when learning a language. Language is often very telling of cultural hierarchies that are usually revealed when learning how to address people according to their age, sex or status in the community. Korean language has an intricate system of speech levels and honorifics that are used

accordingly to the formality of the situation and the age and/or status of the person being addressed. Honorifics and speech levels do not only exist in language, however, because Korean culture is in itself very hierarchical as well. Even if the speakers are only a few years apart, they still acknowledge this age difference both culturally and in honorifics (90 Day Korean 2020). This does not always come without its culture shocks; for a student just learning the language, presumably with only having experience from Standard Average European Languages, some forms of honorifics might seem inappropriate or uncomfortable through the perspective of their native language and culture (Brown 2013). Therefore, in order to adopt a fluent way of using honorifics and speech levels, one must accept and execute the cultural system behind it.

Languages also convey the ways in which elements such as spatial categories, colours or time are perceived (Ahearn 2012). A study by Bylund and Athanasopoulos showed, that the way in which one perceives and measures time in one's language affects the way they estimate duration of time (2017). Same Whorfian effect was also observed in relation to spatial frames of reference, and whether the subjects used relative or absolute directions in their language (Ahearn 2012: 86). Interestingly, Bylund and Athanasopoulos noted, that bilingual speakers had an advantage over the time task, as they were able to adjust their perception of time to the language the instructions were given in. Therefore, if the perception of one of these elements is significantly different in the speaker's native language and second language, they must learn how to adopt a different way of perceiving it in order to become fluent.

Sometimes a culture behind a language can be seen through the intonation, tone and body language of the speaker. Setting aside languages that have a very intricate tonal system (such as Thai or Mandarin Chinese) and focusing on Standard Average European languages, meaning is often made just through paralinguistic communication alone (Guessabi 2011). Even though this is very often tied to the speaker's native culture and does not always translate to the second language of the speaker (Woolfson 1991), a lot can be learned about the culture just by observing the paralinguistic

signals of a speaker. For example, seeing elaborate hand gestures or colourful intonation is relatively rare in Finnish, and this in many ways corresponds with the Finnish culture of modesty and tranquillity.

These are examples of the different ways in which culture can peek through linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of a language. However, sometimes there are aspects of a language that can only be understood by studying the culture that comes with the language. Such is the case with some forms of humour or art. Pauli Kohelo is a Fennicized pseudonym referring to the Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho under which a Finnish poetry book titled *Ohessa tilinumeroni* was published in 2008. *Ohessa tilinumeroni* (my transl. “See the attachments for my account number”) is a satirical publication by a fictional, middle-aged Finnish lumberjack who mixes philosophy, realism, poetry and autobiography into his debut work. Drawing an example of the point above, below are two examples of an original poem as well as an approximate English translation:

*Lounaspassissa joka kymmenes  
lounas  
on ilmainen.  
Elämän passissa joka toinen moka  
toistuu.*

*In the lunch café punch card, you get  
every tenth lunch  
for free.  
In the punch card of life, every other  
misstep keeps repeating itself.*

*Kaadoit Virpin drinkin, et saa leimaa.  
Nostit Simon veneeseen, saat leiman.*

*You spilled Virpi’s drink, you don’t get  
a punch.*

*Näin kuljemme, näin leimaamme.  
Passit taskussa, elämän saatossa.*

*You picked up Simo into the boat, you  
get a punch.*

*Paitsi Pasilla, jonka passi on nyt  
täynnä ja edessä  
ilmainen Janssoninkiusaus.*

*We wander like we punch.  
Punch cards in our pockets, through  
life.  
Except for Pasi, he has collected all ten  
and is now enjoying  
his free plateful of Jansson’s casserole.*

*Sielun peili.  
Sinne katso.  
Keskity.  
Noin.  
Ei sinne!*

*The mirror to the soul.  
Take a look at it.  
Focus.  
Just like that.*

*Se on peilin viereen Maalarinteipillä  
kiinnitetty ravikuponki.*

*Not there!*

*That is a harness racing betting coupon  
attached to the side of the mirror.*

(Kohelo, 2008, pp. 29, 101).

At first glance, the translated versions of the poems do not necessarily make much sense without further knowledge of the Finnish culture. Just translating the poems to English does not do them justice, as the beauty and the humour lies in the absurd contrast of two worlds colliding; poetry and the realism of everyday life of an average, grumpy, middle-aged Finnish lumberjack. The poems convey the corner stones of Finnish culture, such as appreciation for the modesty in enjoying your meal at a workers' lunch café, the money-saving mentality with collecting punches to the punch card and betting on horses in harness races, whereas poetry as a genre is traditionally considered to be very far from the everyday life of a Finnish lumberjack.

Up until this point it has been clear that culture and language are profoundly intertwined in a way that makes it almost impossible for the language learner not to encounter it during their language learning process. This also explains why many bilingual or trilingual speakers often report feeling like a different person when switching from one language to another (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2012). But what if a language does not have a native culture that comes with it?

## **2. Constructed languages: an exception to the rule?**

The widest spoken constructed language, Esperanto, is estimated to have up to hundreds of thousands or even millions of second-language speakers worldwide. On top of that, Esperanto is estimated to have around 1,000 native-language speakers (Lindstedt, 2006). Despite having the essential characteristics of a functional language and a wide range of speakers, the culture around Esperanto predominantly revolves around the language itself, i.e. speaking the language in Esperanto meetings and translating movies and literature into the language. Therefore, it lacks the cultural depth and inter-generational heritage that natural languages do. The

social reproduction and transformation which ties the language to a certain era or a group of speakers – the very elements that convey the hidden meanings and values through which the culture manifests itself in practice – are absent.

This is also the case with other constructed languages, be they auxiliary or entirely fictional. *A Song of Ice and Fire*, a series of fantasy novels later adapted into an HBO series, *Game of Thrones*, features an outstanding variety of fully functional constructed languages, each one of them designed to fit the fictional culture behind each group of speakers. For example, Dothrakis, portrayed as the harsh, “untamed” warriors from Essos, do not have a word for “thank you”, (‘Winter Is Coming’ 2011) which adds an intricate level of storytelling about the values, history and heritage of the people. In theory, a language learner could both master the constructed language as well as familiarise oneself in the fictional culture behind it, but would more than likely run into complications sooner or later in terms of cultural learning. Given that the Dothraki language exists in a fictional universe with a limited amount of episodes (and is performed by actors, none of which speak the language as their native tongue), it lacks the reference to the particular social contexts in which it is used as well as social transformation (Ahearn 2012, p. 8).

In another example, linguist d’Armond Speers tried to raise his son as a native speaker of Klingon, a fictional language from the Star Trek universe (Hiskey, 2012). In the end the experiment only ended up lasting for three years, as the son started to express reluctance towards using the language and started responding in English instead. Speers’ experiment might have fallen short in the long run, but it speaks volumes about the relationship between language, thought and culture. First of all, it is highly unlikely that Speers, who had presumably become fluent in Klingon for the sake of curiosity and fun, would have been able to convey any intricate cultural messages through the fictional language with zero naturally occurring native speakers (he did, however, report singing the Klingon Imperial Anthem, *May the Empire Endure*, as a lullaby to his son). Secondly, it is probably safe to state that Klingon is objectively a highly inconvenient

language for modern day-to-day life, further discouraging a naturally occurring speech community to emerge around it (although, not impossible if you are willing to get creative: for instance, in his interview Speers notes that due to the limited vocabulary in the language he would ask his son in Klingon to “make it dark” when he wanted him to turn off the lights). While it is unlikely that the toddler became reluctant to speak the language due to his dissatisfaction with the lack of naturally occurring native culture in Klingon (and more likely that he simply found having the word “lamp” pretty convenient in everyday context), it is worth wondering whether he sensed the artificial nature of the second language he was spoken in by his father.

All of the previous examples serve an example on how constructed languages have to be artificially updated to keep up with our everyday vocabulary. They may also lack important concepts for the sake of artistic or experimental purposes, such as the word “thank you” in Dothraki. The lack of social transformation also leads to the language lacking a naturally occurring speech community, which further prevents a cultural dimension (such as paralinguistic meanings or embedded inter-generational values) from emerging. None of this, however, stands in the way of the learner learning the language within its set framework, or even making them fluent and able to function in the language; be that Esperanto, Dothraki, Klingon or any other auxiliary or fictional constructed language. Constructed languages do indeed therefore work as an exception to the rule about the interdependency between culture and language. Furthermore, as long as the language does not lack in the very basic, fundamental vocabulary and grammar, it can therefore be assumed that the same rules of function apply to both constructed and natural languages, and “that no matter what any speaker of it may desire to communicate ... the language is prepared to do his work” (Sapir 1949[1924], as cited in Ahearn 2012: 67).

## **Conclusion**

Dedicating your time to learning a new language is possibly one of the best investments you can make. Not only are you learning a new skill, but you are also taking a journey to a different world of culture, and by

extension a different way of thinking. Culture within language manifests itself in so many different ways and is an essential part of the language learning process. Cultural openness and understanding of linguistic relativity are essential tools for adopting new concepts, whether that is learning how to be strictly formal in a specific context (such as using the title “*herra*” in Finnish) or just plain funny. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, learning how to re-adjust your perception of spatial categories gives you the advantage of jumping between different ways of thinking, and sheds light on new expressions and ways of categorising things around you. All of this is possible because language and culture are profoundly interdependent. On one hand, in order to become fluent in the target language you must immerse yourself in the culture that comes with it, but on the other hand coming into contact with the culture is also inevitable after a certain point.

The variables to the relationship between culture and language lie in your desired skill level and target language of choice. If you think that learning the very basics of a language on the level A2 is sufficient for your needs, profound cultural immersion is not necessarily required (nor, in many cases, even possible). If the target language of your choice happens to be a constructed one like Esperanto or Klingon, it is completely possible to achieve a functional understanding of the language without learning the culture that comes with it, since constructed languages do not possess a native community of speakers or the cultural characteristics of natural languages, such as paralinguistic signals. The limitations in the vocabulary may even allow you to get creative in a way you would not have thought of before. And who knows, maybe one day one of the constructed languages gains so many native, inter-generational speakers that it turns into a natural one with a new culture to be learned and passed on.

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# Framing Sino-American relations using Thucydides' trap: Is War Inevitable?

Lazar Lazarov<sup>1</sup>

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*In 2015, professor Graham Allison wrote an evocative article that discusses Thucydides' Trap within Sino-American relations, and which stresses the danger of war between a rising and ruling power in world politics. His argument is predicated upon Thucydides' assumption that the rise of Athens, and the fear it generated among Spartans, inevitably led to the Peloponnesian War. By drawing from Thucydides' Trap and applying it to past and present world politics, Allison argues that a war between a rising China and a dominating, but relatively declining, US is extremely likely in the decades ahead. By critically addressing Allison's view, this paper maintains that although a conflict between China and the US seems unlikely to occur soon, their ongoing rivalry makes for an uncertain future. Contemporary Sino-American relations are represented in terms of Thucydides' Trap, and the likelihood of war is critically evaluated within the confines of the current international system. Likewise, by conducting a multidimensional analysis on a potential Sino-American military confrontation, as well as by viewing Thucydides' Trap in the context of present geopolitical realities, this paper concludes that Allison's historical analogy may not correspond to an emerging Sino-American military conflict. Ultimately, a war between the two greatest economic and military powers must be avoided at all costs through joint efforts, since it could trigger a catastrophic world war.*

## Introduction

In 2015, Graham Allison wrote an evocative article that discusses Sino-American relations in the context of *Thucydides' Trap* and highlights the danger of war between a rising power and a ruling power to world politics

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<sup>1</sup> Lazar Lazarov is a second year student in Politics and International Relations from Bulgaria. His academic interests lie in political analysis and ideologies, and IR theory, among other things, and apart from that, he has been a representative of the Aberdeen University Bulgarian Society for two years. Outside of university, he loves sports, the arts, and engaging with charities in his hometown. Lazar plans to pursue a postgraduate research degree and a career in political analysis, research, and academia.

(Allison, 2015). The concept originates from the Greek historian Thucydides' assertion that the rise of Athens, and the fear it evoked among Spartans, made the Peloponnesian War inevitable (Richards, 2014). Nowadays, with a rising China and relatively declining US, the question of whether or not both countries will begin a conflict identical to the Peloponnesian War has triggered a heated debate within international academia (Shengli, 2018). Correspondingly, by examining past and present dimensions of *Thucydides' Trap*, Allison (2015) argues that 'based on the current trajectory, a war between the United States and China in the decades ahead is not just possible, but much more likely than recognized at the moment'. Additionally, Allison (2017b) reaffirms and builds upon his initial argument through extensive research. He refers to China as the global riser, due to its rapid economic growth, and to the US as the greatest world economy, which may feel threatened by the ascending challenger. Therefore, although Allison believes that a Sino-American conflict is not necessarily inevitable, he depicts and examines conceivable scenarios of how the two superpowers might be pushed to war.

This essay will evaluate the possibility of a Sino-American war from a historical and theoretical point of view and explore how a conflict might play out in practice today. Moreover, it will argue that, given the present circumstances, The United States and China are destined not for war, but rather an uncertain future (Zhang et al., 2019). The first section of this paper will evaluate the concept of *Thucydides' Trap* and assesses the extent to which Allison is correct in utilising it to predict the likelihood of a Sino-American war. It will be maintained that constructing theoretical expectations using historical analogies may not always be the most prudent and adequate approach to analysing global politics. The second section will provide an overview of the current Sino-American relations and indicate that, although the two superpowers might be dragged into a conflict due to the consistent aggravation of the circumstances under which their global rivalry operates, they must still find new ways to foster and promote international prosperity.

## 1. Thucydides' trap

Firstly, the historical applications of *Thucydides' Trap* are made apparent by Allison, who writes that over the past 500 years, when 'a rising power has confronted a ruling power', 12 out of 16 cases have resulted in war (2015; 2017c). Examples include the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century wars between France, the UK and Russia: at the time, the first two countries were established powers, while Russia was a growing one. Another instance is found in the Second World War: the success of the German military and economy challenged the established powers, such as the UK, Russia, and France, which had been dominating since the First World War (Allison, 2017c). Thus, previous clashes resembling the narrative of the Peloponnesian War account for Allison's assumption that 'as soon as the rising power is challenged by the established power, events may lead to a war for hegemony' (Han et al., 2019, p. 106). Additionally, it is argued that a deep understanding of the causes of one of these cases, namely the First World War, would help the US and China prevent a great war (Rosencrance et al., 2014). Hence, the proper historical interpretation, and the right deductions derived from it, ought to provide essential guidance for identifying the reasons behind an eventual Sino-American war. However, the most recent cases that Allison (2015) examines — such as the one concerning the rising Soviet Union and the dominating US during the period of 1940-1980 — did not result in a direct military confrontation, which indicates that, despite competing for hegemony, a ruling and a growing power may not resort to violence and military aggression in order to resolve their disputes. Nevertheless, one could argue that when utilising *Thucydides' Trap*, Thucydides' multidimensional analysis of the causes of the Peloponnesian war tend to be ignored by scholars, which may result in the over-simplification and misinterpretation of the ancient historian's ideas. This implies that 'most of the existing discussion on this issue has taken only theory and reality into account without looking into the specific historical context from which the Peloponnesian War originated' (Shengli et al., 2018, p. 502).

Secondly, history is important in studying the past to predict the future, but we must be very careful when doing this. As Maier states, 'good

history does not yield simple lessons' (2014, p. 91). Historical analogies are undoubtedly vital, but, if applied improperly, they can 'confuse, distract, and ultimately misinform' (Lee, 2019, p. 81) those attempting to construct a more accurate approach to the current Sino-American rivalry. Often have analysts focused too much on the structural changes between China and the US, resulting in the neglect of the fact that *Thucydides' Trap* requires careful translation in order for it to be used to interpret modern political rivalries, such as the one between China and the US. Furthermore, Lee (2019) contends that in showing how structural forces lead to instability in Sino-American relations, *Thucydides' Trap* is influenced by misleading translations and thus inaccurately interpreted, which deprives it of support from the very case it was named after. Consequently, the Athenian-Spartan rivalry should not serve as an analogy for present Sino-American relations. Although China's rise to power increases the likelihood of conflict with the US, 'the causal mechanism is based on the history of the United States and China rather than the history of Athens and Sparta' (2019, p. 69). Correspondingly, Allison (2015) notes that when looking at history, we should be aware not only of the similarities between the cases subjected to Thucydides' concept, but also of the differences.

Thirdly, theorists and historians studying post-World War II International Relations have argued that when a rising power significantly challenges a dominating one during a power transition, war is the inevitable outcome, and Allison is a proponent of this realist tradition (Lee, 2016, p. 38). Moreover, Thucydides is regarded 'as the first genuine International Relations theorist and a writer of continuing, even timeless importance' (Welch, 2003, p. 301), partly due to his writings promoting the essence of political realism (Chan, 2019). Thus, *Thucydides' Trap* is widely considered useful when examining Sino-American relations, despite some of the aforementioned reservations (Zhang et al., 2019). That said, Zhang (2019) argues that this concept is inadequate for understanding Sino-American relations because, although it shares the theory of Power Transition's focus on the shifting balance of power, it differs in stressing the emotional implications of changes in the balance of power. Power transition theory was

introduced by Organski (1958) and aims to explain the true nature of war. It considers international politics as a hierarchy in which a dominating power has the greatest proportion of power resources, while a set of potential rival states aim to maintain the established international system and control the allocation of power resources. It concludes that war is most likely to result when a challenging state enters into an approximate parity with the dominant state and is dissatisfied with the current status-quo. Ultimately, this theory is useful in forecasting the conditions that predict both cooperation and conflict on the global, national, and subnational scales of analysis (Tammen, et al. 2017). Ergo, *Thucydides' Trap* highlights the irrational behaviour of states, while the Power Transition theory sees them as rational decision-makers (Zhang, 2019). The latter purports 'the risk of war or structural stress when the disparity between a rising and ruling power vanishes', while Allison assumes that China's 'hubris, ambition and confidence' and America's fear and insecurity will cause them both to fall into an emotional trap (Zhang, 2019, p.140).

Overall, framing Sino-American relations in Thucydidean terms does not predict an inevitable clash, but instead recognises that 'a business-as-usual approach could lead to conflict' (Allison, 2014, p. 78). Correspondingly, Chan (2019) argues that by focusing on interstate power shifts, traditional explanations of *Thucydides' Trap* condemn the role of human agency and fail to provide solutions to the prevention of war. As a result, the foundation of *Thucydides' Trap* is unsound, and "fosters" a 'danger of self-fulfilling prophecy', meaning that American and Chinese leaders are prone to believe in its validity (Chan, 2019, p. 22).

## **2. Towards uncertain future**

Furthermore, China's power has increased astonishingly since the end of the Cold War (Zhang, 2019), after which the country emerged as a potential disruptor of international stability, replacing the Soviet Union as the major source of Western insecurity (Mahmud, 2005). Allison (2017a) argues that a civilisational clash — due to tensions between Chinese and American values, traditions and philosophies — will strengthen the

fundamental structures which emerge whenever an established power faces the threat of displacement from a growing power. Correspondingly, Okuda (2016) stresses that English media often represents the US as a declining superpower and China as a rising threat that endangers world peace through prioritising its own economic development and military expansion. Moreover, one could argue that when a declining power is uncertain about a rising power's future behaviour, it could trigger a preventative war: this seems unavoidable under large power shifts, even when states share the same goals (Yoder, 2019). Nevertheless, preventative war should be initiated only when the decliner is confident in the riser's hostile intentions, and, although it should not occur due to the decliner's uncertainty about the riser's intentions, 'some degree of moderate competition short of war is likely unavoidable' (Yoder, 2019, p. 89).

That said, although China has gained relative power, it remains a regional factor incapable of challenging American, global dominance (Chan, 2019). Likewise, China's revisionist behaviour is by and large restricted due to its territorial disputes in the South China Sea, meanwhile their institutional and economic actions are either dubious or in support of the US-led liberal order (Yoder, 2019). However, scenarios of Sino-American confrontation encompassing the South China Sea and North China Sea (Han et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019), as well as the Indian Ocean (Goldstein, 2015), are noted. In this regard, Er (2016) argues that both powers might be dragged into war by their smaller allies in East Asia rather than by the power transition. In that vein, the Sino-American rivalry would purport geopolitical, economic, and cultural clashes that extend to all corners of the world (Goldstein, 2015). Likewise, the recent Sino-Russian strategic alignment could also contribute to a Sino-American war (Moore, 2017), which would certainly prompt other countries to choose a side (Bernstein et al., 1997). Therefore, 'war between two largest economies and two great powers with nuclear arsenals could evoke a third world war' (Er, 2016, p.36). Nevertheless, China and America must avoid *Thucydides' Trap* due to their economic interdependence and nuclear capacity (Er, 2016). After all, the Cold War taught us that 'war between nuclear superpowers is madness' (Allison, 2017a).



According to Allison (2015), avoiding military confrontation will not be achieved through political leaders concurring on potential disastrous outcomes, mutual economic prosperity, or their deeply embedded desire for peace. This point appears to be relevant both to the First World War and the possible Sino-American war. Contrarily, although the future of Sino-American relations is hard to predict, both countries can seek new ways to escape war (Zhang et al., 2019). Nowadays, we are witnessing governing systems, on both a local and international level, which are much more stable than those in the past. Both superpowers are facing an increasing pressure from the limitations of the world economy, and the development of a nuclear arsenal, in combination with a prudent democratic leadership, suggests that China and the US can progress towards a peaceful resolution of their disputes and escape *Thucydides' Trap*. (Richards, 2014). Correspondingly, corporatism offers the prospect of directing China and the US away from *Thucydides' Trap* and avoiding their constant desire to maximise their interests through military means (Jianfei, 2017). By contrast, one could argue that a short-term, mutually beneficial cooperation may provide grounds for conflict by disregarding long-term risk (Edelstein, 2018). Notwithstanding, *Thucydides' Trap* does not present a self-fulfilling prophecy, since both powers still share reciprocal interests in many areas (Zhang et al., 2019): this generates an opportunity for both superpowers to foster and promote a peaceful relationship (Saunders, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the US and China have ceased the long, economically-damaging trade war (Swanson et al., 2020) that was similar to *Thucydides' Trap* in terms of the competition for global economic dominance (Xing, 2018); this anticipates a peaceful future of bilateral relations. Besides, it seems that China benefits economically from trading with the US (Yong et al., 2017). Hence, *Thucydides' Trap* may not accurately provide prerequisites for a contemporary, major conflict between a reigning and rising power. To sum up, a Sino-American war is unlikely due to the international system's restrictions, the extent to which alliance networks

have evolved since antiquity, the economic interdependence among states, and the altered attitude towards war since the end of the Second World War (Shengli et al., 2019). Although current Sino-American relations have been aggravated to the extent that old paradigms of conflict resolutions have become obsolete, the competition between China and the US affects not only their societies and economies, but also global security and prosperity (Zhang et al., 2019). Nevertheless, although the 21st century is marked by the Sino-American rivalry, war seems extremely unlikely to occur soon. That said, the distant future remains uncertain regarding the likelihood of Sino-American military confrontation, and in a nuclear era where such a conflict would lead to a catastrophic world war, this must be avoided at all costs through joint efforts.

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# An Exploration of Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction in the Gig Economy

Chiara Riezzo<sup>1</sup>

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*In modern society, digital technologies, and digital platforms are changing the very nature of work and the relationships between employers and employees. These changes gave birth to the so-called “gig economy” which, in turn, is responsible for the digital transformation of labour. While the concept of gig economy has been on the rise since the financial crises in 2008-2009, the modern gig-economy is characterised by the use of online marketplaces for labour which facilitates the exchange of on-demand services and digital platforms acting as a point of contact between firms and individual workers. This paper provides an overview of the gig economy and investigates its impacts on employee motivation and job satisfaction. To do so, this paper presents and compares two opposite views on the gig economy: one which enthusiastically promotes the gig economy arguing that it represents the future of labour markets, and another which castigates gig platforms for their lack of regulation, accusing them of being responsible for the commodification of human labour. Considering both the advantages and disadvantages that the global workforce in the gig economy faces, this paper argues that, while it is yet not clear whether the benefits outnumber the drawbacks, gig workers should carefully consider the trade-off between an improved work-life balance and the precariousness and financial insecurity that inevitably come with it.*

## Introduction

Factors such as the growth of digital platforms, demand for flexible working hours, and opportunities offered by and on the Internet have contributed to the rapid expansion of the “gig economy”. The latter relies on digital apps and platforms which act as a matchmaking service between the global workforce and on-demand jobs (Graham et al., 2017). In so doing, gig apps and digital platforms contribute to digital work intermediation (Prassl,

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<sup>1</sup> Chiara Riezzo is a final year undergraduate in Business Management and Sociology. She is a writer and editor at The International Viewpoint (a student-led digital media platform) where she wrote about market and social trends, consumer behaviour and workplace culture. She is also passionate about topics of sustainability and social justice within the fashion industry.

2018), favouring what I call the “commodification” of human labour were the know-how of workers is traded online in ways that are no different from the exchange of any other commodity on the market. Interestingly, not only human work but also workers themselves become increasingly commodified, defined almost exclusively by the value produced through their gig work.

Considering both the opportunities and challenges of the gig economy, this paper aims to critically evaluate the key ways in which the uberisation of work (Zaman et al., 2020; Webster, 2020) is changing behaviour within organisations on two levels: the motivation of workers and their individual learning. Considering both the advantages and disadvantages of working across non-traditional settings and formats, I argue that although gig workers can benefit from increased freedom and flexibility, they should carefully consider the price of such benefits.

In the rest of this paper, I first introduce the gig economy and gig work, their key characteristics, and the academic debate around them. Secondly, drawing upon Herzberg’s (1968) Two Factor Theory (TFT) and the Job Characteristics Model (JCM), the impact of gig work on workers’ motivation is examined. Finally, Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is used to highlight the importance of learning by doing in the gig economy.

## **1. The Gig Economy**

The gig economy is also called a sharing, on-demand, platform, or online economy (Huws et al., 2019) and is ‘characterized by short-term engagements among employers, workers, and customers’ (Kalleberg and Dunn, 2016, p. 10). This ranges across different industries, from transportation, professional services to knowledge-intensive roles such as software developers and management consultants (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). An essential element of the gig economy is flexibility for both companies and workers. Flexible work arrangements enable organisations to adapt their workforce to the changes in the working environment (Dettmers et al., 2013) as well as workers to exert increased

control over their working hours, pace, and scheduling of work (Green, 2006; Anwar and Graham, 2020).

This type of flexibility originates from the “flexible firm” model first introduced by Atkinson (1984), who observed that firms were increasingly characterised by three kinds of flexibility: functional (the firm’s ability to replace workers quickly among tasks), numerical (the number of employees increases or decreases to meet customer demand) and financial (different wages paid to different workers depending on whether they are full-time or freelance). As a result, the labour force is organised into a two-tiered structure (French et al., 2015) where peripheral layers of contingent workers are clustered around a stable core group of full-time permanent employees who conduct the organisation’s key activities.

Most workers in the gig economy are peripheral workers performing a wide range of short-term “gigs” on-demand (Webster, 2016). Gig work, or “platform work” (Huws et al., 2019), is a form of self-employment that allows independent contractors to mediate and deliver services through a web-based platform (De Ruyter et al., 2019). This reliance on technology is what sets apart today’s gig work from that of the past thirty years (Mehta, 2020; Kalleberg and Dunn, 2016). In fact, it is not short-term employment that is new, but rather the fact that such employment – from the hiring process to carrying out the actual work – happens on web-based platforms and mobile apps. Another distinctive feature of the twenty-first-century gig work, again inevitably linked to the accessibility that only technology can guarantee, is low entry barriers for both companies and workers (De Ruyter et al., 2019). Moreover, technology-driven flexibility reduces the temporal and spatial constraints of work by enabling workers to perform tasks remotely from anywhere (Anwar and Graham, 2020). In this regard, it is topical to mention that the current Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for firms to shift their operations and their work on digital platforms which, in turn, led the majority of workers to work from home.

Today, common examples of gig work involve transportation (think of platforms like Uber or Lyft), food delivery services (such as Deliveroo), and home services (like Taskrabbit) (De Ruyter et al, 2019). However, also

traditional companies are increasing the flexibility of their workforce. In 2018, for the first time in Google's history, half of its workers were employed on a contingent basis and, by 2019, contractors outnumbered Google's full-time employees (Wakabayashi, 2019). However, they did not receive the same benefits (Bergen and Eidelson, 2018), had no paid vacation time and no access to internal job postings or training programmes (Wakabayashi, 2019). On closer inspection, the on-demand economy raises important concerns about labour exploitation, personal safety, and financial security (Prassl, 2018). The contradictory nature of gig work lies in providing workers with the freedom to sell their labour on digital platform and charge how much they like for their services, while simultaneously forcing them to subordinate such freedom to the demands of an increasingly competitive market.

On the one hand, digital platforms match the necessary skill sets with available jobs easily and quickly. They give hobbyists and part-timers the possibility to monetise their efforts (Howe, 2006) while simultaneously allowing employers to leverage the crowd of temporary workers to meet their constantly changing staffing needs (Prassl, 2018; Dettmers et al., 2013). Finally, because gig workers are self-employed, work is rebranded and marketed as entrepreneurship and thus associated with increased autonomy, freedom, and self-determination (Kalleberg and Dunn, 2016). However, the increased degree of freedom that makes gig work so attractive is questionable because the truth is that gig workers only enjoy limited freedom depending on market demands (Parkinson, 2017). An exemplary case is that of Deliveroo riders who 'have to be flexible around the times when the orders are there' (Parkinson, 2017) but cannot ensure that this happens at all times. Notably, precariousness is another key feature of gig work. For this reason, gig work is classified as a type of precarious work (Kalleberg, 2009). This is, 'employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky' (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2) for the worker. Because gig work comes with uncertainty and potential high financial instability, equating work with pay is a limited attempt in trying to understand what motivates gig workers (Kalleberg, 2009).



## 2. Gig work and employee motivation

Employee motivation is central to organisational performance (French et al, 2015). Motivation at the workplace refers to workers' willingness to reach organisational goals while satisfying individual needs (Robbins, 2005). Therefore, by improving workers' well-being, high-quality employee motivation contributes to the organisation's long-term success (Jabagi et al., 2019).

Gig workers seem to be motivated by benefits other than pay, such as those of freedom and autonomy, which are less likely to be found in traditional employment arrangements. Several studies confirm 'the importance of non-monetary factors' (Berger et al., 2018, p. 2) in shaping the motivation of workers in the gig economy. A survey conducted among UK Uber Eats drivers confirmed that 96% of them joined the Uber platform to gain greater autonomy, more flexible working hours, and improved work-life balance (Berger et al., 2018; ORB, 2018). Such empirical findings can be explained through the lenses of Herzberg's (1968) TFT of motivation, which I argue to be still relevant to today's gig workforce.

Herzberg's (1968) theory is an example of the Content Theory of motivation because it is concerned with the needs and motives, within individuals or their environment, that encourage a certain behaviour (French et al., 2015). Herzberg (1968) distinguished between two different sets of factors influencing workers' performance. The first, Satisfiers (or Motivator Factors), are related to what people do in their work and include a sense of achievement, recognition, and responsibility (French et al., 2015). The second, dissatisfies (or Hygiene Factors), are factors associated with a person's job setting such as company policies (Perkins and Arvinen-Muondo, 2013). To understand how Herzberg's (1968) TFT of motivation can help make sense of behaviour within organisations, it is crucial to keep in mind that improving Hygiene Factors can lower workers' dissatisfaction but will not make them satisfied with their job (French et al., 2015) nor more motivated to do their job. An interesting example of this Hygiene Factor is pay (Smith, 2014) and this is because people would usually – and wrongly – classify it within Motivator Factors. Herzberg (1968) found that low salary

dissatisfies workers, but higher pay will not motivate them. Gig workers confirm that salary falls within Herzberg's (1968) Hygiene Factors because, despite being a necessity for working, it is not motivational per se (Karlsson and Wranne, 2019). On the contrary, workers in the gig economy are motivated by such factors as flexibility and control over when to work and what tasks to work on (Rosenblat, 2016; Storey et al., 2018), which are not Motivator nor Hygiene Factors but rather are job characteristics.

Building upon Herzberg's (1968) work, Hackman and Oldham (1980) proposed the JCM, which assumes that 'the task itself is the key to employee motivation' (Sinding et al., 2018, p. 148). Hackman and Oldham (1980) identified the following five job dimensions or characteristics, which can be found in all jobs in varying degrees:

- *Skill variety*: the degree to which workers engage with different activities requiring them to use various abilities and talents.
- *Task identity*: whether the job requires workers to complete a whole project or only a part of it.
- *Task significance*: the degree to which the job affects others either within or outside the organisation.
- *Autonomy*: the extent to which workers experience freedom while completing the job.
- *Feedback*: the degree to which workers receive direction and assessment of their performance.

These five dimensions impact satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), fulfilment and pleasure derived from performing a job (Sinding et al., 2018). In an analysis of freelancers in the creative industries, Gandia (2012) found that work schedule flexibility, being your own boss, and variety of projects are primary motives for workers' transition towards on-demand work and increase in job satisfaction. Hence, both Autonomy and Skill Variety are the job dimensions affecting gig worker's job satisfaction the most. Moreover, engaging with tasks requiring different skills represent a way for workers to learn in an economy that hardly provides them with the same learning opportunities enjoyed by full-time employees.

Access to training and ongoing professional development is key to understanding not only employee motivation but also the dynamics that govern the gig economy ecosystem. The employment of gig workers allows organisations to cut costs, including the cost of training. As a consequence, although gig workers may not enjoy the benefits of career growth within the organisation, the possibility to access training opportunities within the company they work for can significantly impact their degree of job satisfaction.

### **3. Gig work and employee learning**

As discussed above, the changing nature of work is affecting employee motivation. Because the latter depends on access to training (Sinding et al., 2018; Kamur, 2009), individual learning<sup>2</sup> at the workplace is also rapidly changing. Nowadays, increasingly, all types of organisations agree workers are a resource worth investing in rather than a cost to be minimised (Pfeffer et al., 2005; Boxall and Purcell, 2011). Therefore, effective management of employees' learning, training<sup>3</sup>, and development<sup>4</sup> is a critical factor to the organisation's survival (French et al., 2015). In the gig economy, because most workers are experienced professionals deliberately choosing flexible work arrangements (Rosenblat, 2016; Storey et al., 2018), organisations tend not to offer learning opportunities. In fact, more than half of US contingent workers do not receive training from their temporary employers (Storey et al., 2018). The real question, however, is not whether gig workers need to be trained for the job but whether organisations can provide them with the necessary resources that would allow them not only to learn and develop but also to feel valued by their employer.

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<sup>2</sup> Learning at the workplace is 'the process by which people acquire the competencies and beliefs that affect their behaviour in organisations' (French et al, 2015, p. 83).

<sup>3</sup> Planned activities through which individuals can develop the necessary skills and knowledge to perform a job more competently (Malone, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> The process of preparing an individual to take on more responsibility and/or a higher role within the organization (Malone, 2003).

Some organisations recognise that offering learning opportunities help to attract and retain talent. Professional services firm Ernst and Young (EY) recently launched GigNow, an online talent marketplace that connects freelancers with opportunities at EY. The aim of the platform is to enable contingent workers to easily join a wide range of EY projects from any location (EY, 2019). Talents contracted through GigNow have access to EY's online learning resources, such as virtual courses that provide workers with credentials upon completion (EY, 2019). Finally, workers are encouraged to learn and improve by doing and from each other (EY, 2019).

This GigNow marketplace highlights two emerging organisational learning trends in the gig economy. The first is E-Learning, a type of learning delivered to employees through electronic technologies (French et al., 2015). By adopting technology-enabled forms of learning, organisations can meet gig workers' quest for flexibility so that they can learn at their own pace and when it best fits their working schedule (Oesch, 2018). The second trend is the acknowledgement that skilled contingent workers can be a training asset themselves in supporting other workers (Kwak, 2017). This is exemplified by the ride-sharing platform Lyft, which offers new drivers the opportunity to join a mentoring program that matches them with more experienced drivers who operate in the same area (Pymnts, 2015).

Learning by doing is increasingly important for workers to develop the skills necessary to succeed in the current technology-driven economy. This perspective for which 'the best way to learn things is by doing them' (French et al., 2015, p. 96) was first developed by Kolb's (1984) ELT framework. The ELT assumes that experience plays a central role in the learning process (Stenberg and Zhang, 2011). The latter includes four stages (Kolb, 1984);

- *Concrete Experience*: individuals experience a new situation that serves as the basis for observation.
- *Reflective Observation*: individuals reflect on that experience to find the meaning behind it.
- *Abstract Conceptualisation*: individuals develop theories and concepts, such as issues encountered, to make sense of the experience.

- *Active Experimentation*: individuals test those theories by putting into practice what they have learnt.

According to Kolb (1984), learning is the iterative process through which individuals adapt to the world. Although little research has been conducted on gig workers' individual learning thus far, the examples discussed above suggest that, in the gig economy, companies encourage learning in the form of active engagement with the job, either online on gig platforms (e.g. GigNow) or offline through mentoring (e.g. Lyft Mentoring Programme). Such proactive on-the-job learning also fits employees' goals of skill re-orientation so that they can be able to work in harmony with the digital technologies that make gig work possible in the first place.

In the gig economy, it is the job itself that provides a site for what Kolb (1984) referred to as learning through concrete experience and active experimentation. That is because contingent workers enjoy the luxury of choosing what projects to work on depending on the skills they have and those they would like to develop further. Online marketplaces such as Fiverr facilitate this process. Fiverr is an online marketplace for freelance services where freelancers worldwide sell their digital services to customers. As previously mentioned, the price charged for each service is established by the seller and may depend on factors such as delivery time, sellers' ratings, and sellers' level of experience and expertise.

## **Conclusion**

The gig economy is undeniably changing organisations and how individuals behave within them. Despite raising important concerns about workers' exploitation, gig work keeps growing, and its characteristics such as flexibility aids in increasingly attract and motivate its workers. Another factor motivating gig workers and improving their job satisfaction is the possibility to access learning and training opportunities.

Although gig work is commonly associated with repetitive low-skill tasks, most gig workers are highly skilled professionals, from software developers to management consultants and creative professionals

(McKinsey Global Institute, 2016), who are eager to keep learning and thus value the possibility to access on-the-job training.

The increase in the number of part-timers can lead to management's reluctance to training (Jaworski et al., 2018). However, companies such as EY attract gig talents by offering them access to online learning and a platform to interact with and learn from each other. In the gig economy, organisations increasingly encourage their contingent workers to learn by doing and by interacting with other gig workers.

To conclude, the role of technology in creating work and managing the labour-force digitally is disrupting traditional business models and creating new, more flexible ones. Consequently, companies are adapting their needs to those of a new generation of workers seeking increased work-life balance and who will accept the potential financial uncertainty that comes with it.

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# A Comparison of the Official Language Policy in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea

Tina Wolff<sup>1</sup>

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*Official Language Policy is one of the main political issues in contemporary society. Multilingualism is the norm in many countries, yet not all languages are officially recognized, which leads minority languages to play a more important role in informal settings. Implications of language policy can cause equality and human rights issues, e.g. discrimination of minority languages, and thereby lead to numerous conflicts. This paper investigates the role of language policy development in two sub-Saharan countries: Cameroon and New Guinea. Both countries have official language policies despite the presence of multiple native and non-native languages. The language policies are based on the historical context and the role that colonialism by Europeans played in the two African countries. The current language policy in Cameroon still influences the education policy, administrative order, and political power. The colonial history has also been influential for New Guinea's language policy and explains the origin of the linguistic division of the country. In opposition to Cameroon, New Guinea's administrative language policy has been influenced by the schooling system and the international language policies from the surrounding African countries. Apart from the educational setting, the political and economic benefits have had an even greater impact on the language policy in New Guinea. The findings of this analysis show that official language policies can lead to either positive or negative implications, depending on how exhaustive they are designed and what rights they represent to the entire population of a country. In both countries, economic and political benefits have been the main drive for official language policy.*

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<sup>1</sup> Tina Wolff is a 2nd year student in Modern Languages (French, Spanish, Arabic), Translation and Interpreting at the University of Aberdeen. Additionally, she is also enrolled in a Japanese bachelor's degree at Dalarna University in Sweden. She is predominantly interested in multilingualism and international relations with a focus on counter terrorism, human and drug trafficking. After graduating from the University of Aberdeen in 2023, she would like to pursue her master in Counter Terrorism and Translation and Interpreting. She is also involved with the planning of the yearly student-led conference of Undergraduate Linguistics Association for Britain (ULAB) and enjoys volunteering.

## **Introduction**

Languages have never been around as one single unit in a country and over the years this has become more apparent with the rise of multilingualism and its recognised importance. Therefore, many countries see themselves in a situation to address the issues that appear with unregulated multilingualism and have introduced official languages by using policies to regulate the rights of citizens. This essay investigates the official language policies in Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea by researching the current status of the languages spoken and officially recognized in each respective country. Each analysis explains the historical, educational, and socio-economic situation that led to its current policy and its consequences. Those policies are then compared to each other by weighing the positive and negative consequences. Lastly, the contrast identifies the different reasons that call for governed language policy.

### **1. Cameroon's historical background**

The first country of investigation is Cameroon, which is situated in the sub-Saharan region of the African continent and has a population of 24,348,000 [2019 estimated] (DeLancey and Benneh, 2020). It is officially called the République du Cameroun/ Republic of Cameroon which shows that the two officially recognized languages are French and English. Cameroon's colonial past plays an important role in the policy development of the two official languages and how they evolved over the past 100 years. The country was under German rule from 1884 until 1916, when it was taken over by the French and British forces. This has led to the introduction of English and French as languages, as well as the development of Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE), despite the presence of over 236 indigenous languages in the country (Dieu and Renaud, 1983). The League of Nations mandated the division of Cameroon between the French and the British forces at the time and eventually lead to the following three lingua franca zones: Fulfulde (native language) in the north, English in the west, and French in the east and rest of the country (Echu, 2004). In 1961, the French part of Cameroon

became independent and one month later British Cameroon integrated into that system for the reunification of West and East Cameroon Federation. It then switched to seven provinces in 1972 and eventually to the present 10 provinces in 1984 (Kouega, 2008).

### **1.1 Language policy in education and administration**

The education system has been bilateral since the colonial administration with both the French and the English part pushing towards two different Francophone and Anglophone systems. Under German rule, missionaries maintained the usage of native languages alongside German in school systems, which the British forces applied as well. This is called “the Policy of Indirect Rule” and meant that they ruled by using the local administration and authorities (Echu, 2004). Education was controlled by independent and religious organizations. When French and English became the official languages in 1961, a bilingual system was introduced, but the new education system led to a further divide of the nation.

The French introduced school systems that promoted French by pushing native languages in the background. One example is a special subvention introduced in 1917 that supported schools using French as main languages, banning the use of native languages. By 1920, most native language using schools were closed and in 1922 another 1,800 schools that taught in Bulu were closed by the French authorities. This so-called systematic linguistic persecution remained in place until French was the only language used in education settings in the francophone provinces of Cameroon (Stumpf, 1977). Indigenous languages as well as CPE are still being used for informal situations (churches, markets, railway stations) but this clearly shows that the colonial language policy prevented any indigenous language to emerge as national language of Cameroon.

The original idea of using French and English as official languages was introduced in order to prevent a potential conflict between tribal politics based on the high number of different languages and ethnicities present in Cameroon. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the 18th of January 1996 states:

‘The official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status. The State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages.’

Despite this article, there has never been a realistic implementation of the latter. This is explained by looking closer at the schooling and university system.

The policy introduced in 1961 pushed for official bilingual education and implemented French and English to be used at university level, which led to four out of six universities that teach in both languages (Kouega, 2008). Students can choose to take their assessments in the preferred language. According to a study by Tambi (1973) and Njeck (1992), the reality looks different: as well as students, professors can choose to teach in their preferred languages and given French’s prestigious status, most lectures are given in French. The studies found that 80 % of lectures are delivered in French and only 20 % in English at the University of Yaoundé, which presents problems for non-French speakers. Additionally, the French system requires English to be taken as compulsory subject whereas the Anglophone system does not do this with French. Besides this, the two subsystems have different evaluation systems. Overall, the Francophone system offers more opportunities, e.g., German and Spanish language teaching, which the Anglophone regions do not and are therefore disadvantaged. This leads to French being dominant in higher positions such as administration, diplomacy, education, media, and political policy. The language policy lacks the official planning and a coherent education system in all provinces, especially regarding the native languages.

## **1.2 The role of indigenous languages and movements on the rise**

Since its independence in 1972, there have been efforts to promote and maintain indigenous languages with the National Association of Cameroonian Languages Committees (NACALCO) and the establishment of a writing system for Cameroonian languages in 1979. However, there has been no official language policy to guarantee rights for minorities. According

to Sen Nag (2017) the number of speakers in 2005 was as follows: 57.6 % French, 25.2 % English, 46 % French only, 13.6 % English only, 11.6 % French and English, and 28.8 % neither French nor English. Despite almost 30 % of the population being native speakers of indigenous languages, French and English remain the official languages of Cameroon. The consequence of this is that elderly speakers of the native languages cannot participate in formal situations, discuss national problems and developments, or in some cases, cannot even read the constitution of their own country. Neither can they understand legal documents nor the judicial system.

This has sparked a national debate and multiple conflicts across the country. In 2016, protests occurred from English-speakers in education and professional settings after the government assigned French-speaking judges and teachers in the English-speaking regions (O'Grady, 2019). These were answered by military intervention. It all escalated in 2018 when 'civilians [were] caught in the crossfire' (O'Grady, 2019), leading to the ideal of creating an English-speaking state called Ambazonia. Ambazonia used to be a self-declared state that was abolished by French-speaking Cameroon between 1972 and 1984 and has become more popular since 2017 by a movement called Southern Cameroons National Council, which currently rules the region (Keke, 2020). The current president Biya refuses to respond to national and international mediators, and therefore the outcome of the conflict cannot be foreseen at this point of time (Linden, 2020).

## **2. Equatorial Guinea's historical background**

The second country of investigation is Equatorial Guinea, which is located at the west coast of Africa, neighbouring Cameroon and Gabon. It has a population of approximately 1.4 million and its official languages are Spanish (since 1884), French (since 1988), and Portuguese (since 2010), making its official name República de Guinea Ecuatorial (Spanish), République de Guinée équatoriale (French) and República da Guiné Equatorial (Portuguese) (Yakpo, 2016). Due to its ethnic diversity, the languages Fang and Picho and several other native languages are used but as national languages (Pélessier and Harrison-Church, 2020). The language

situation in Equatorial Guinea dates to its colonial history by European forces as the country was under Portuguese (1474 - 1778), partially British (1827 - 1843) and Spanish rule (1843 - 1968) (Chiyé Kessé, 2014). The French, due to their claimed territories in West and Central Africa, unsuccessfully attempted to claim the area as well in 1860 (Liniger-Goumaz, 1979). Its vast colonial historic background was shared by three nations who took advantage of the land by slavery. Many difficulties, e.g. diseases brought by Europeans, led to labour shortages and explain the struggles of the colonialist nations to settle down, and eventually resulted in Spain taking over control. The Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939 highly impacted the then called Spanish Guinea due to its economic and commercial benefit for the Spanish government (Wharton, 2006). After the civil war, the Spanish wanted to keep the region as a province until the United Nations ordered Spain to grant Equatorial Guinea its independence between 1965 and 1966 (Wharton, 2006).

## **2.1 Language policy in education and administration**

The administrative situation in Spanish Guinea was long unclear until financially backed settlement efforts rose in the 20th century. The ‘Curador Colonial and the Patronato de Indígenas [came into existence] and chaperone[d] the natives since 1905’ (Liniger-Goumaz, 1979). They additionally helped to run schools. In 1907, the country, comprising the island of Fernando Poo and the mainland Rio Muni, was divided into 10 administrative regions to establish the “Guardia Colonial”, a policing task force to control law and order (Wharton, 2006). After the country's independence, the ‘Consejo de Ministros (Cabinet of Ministers), Asamblea de la República (House of Representatives) and Consejo de la República (Senate)’ were set up and the country had to redefine education (Liniger-Goumaz, 1979). Since 1839 until 1973, various schools were opened and closed by Baptists, Jesuits, the French, the British, and the Spanish administration. Yet there was no universal school system until 1943, when the ‘Guinean School system was organized for the first time with an education status providing [various stages]’ (Liniger-Goumaz). Elementary



education was held in Spanish, secondary education was regulated and examined by exterior bodies coming from Madrid. Up until 1969, Spanish teachers were present in the country. After the independence, ‘with the help of UNESCO and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) a sort of Educational Institute [called Centro de Desarrollo de la Educación, CDE] was set up [...] to train primary, secondary, and vocational teachers’ (Liniger-Goumaz, 1979). These efforts did not last long due to conflicts within the country and the program was ultimately ended in 1977. Up until today, there is only one university present in the country, the Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial, offering courses in Spanish, French, and Portuguese (Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial).

### **2.1.1 The role of French**

The usage of French in secondary and higher education roots back to its economic influence in Cameroon, Tchad, Congo, and Gabon as well as an area in Equatorial Guinea which briefly used to be under French control (Thompson and Adloff, 1960). Therefore, the French involvement comes to no surprise. Since 1968, France has been sending four ambassadors and educational staff to the country (Liniger-Goumaz, 1979). Furthermore, France is one of the only former colonial countries that remains in strong diplomatic relations with Equatorial Guinea, given its business and economic ties, e.g., the oil and forestation industry (Liniger-Goumaz, 1979). In 1988, the French language was made official and became mandatory as a school subject (Kiprop, 2018). Even though only 10 % speak the language, it is an important language to communicate with the bordering countries and ‘immigrants [from] Cameroon, Gabon, and other West African countries’ (Kiprop, 2018).

### **2.1.2 The role of Portuguese**

The presence of the Portuguese language in Equatorial Guinea, an official language since 2010, is also based on its colonial history. The Portuguese were the first to explore some West African islands and

territories, including the area of Equatorial Guinea in the 15th century. They were involved in slave trades, and settlement attempts until Spain gained control over the country in the 1700s (Chilcote, 1967). The country adopted Portuguese as an official language in order to gain membership in the Community of the Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP - Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa) – a Lusophone network of countries that enables trade partnerships. Equatorial Guinea became a member in 2014 (Kiprop, 2018). Therefore, the language is now available as an elective subject in schools and has a community of approximately 6,000 speakers. It has become more important for the country since 2014, as the membership of the CPLP enables Equatorial Guinea to trade with other Portuguese-speaking countries (Leviski, 2014).

## **2.2 Political situation**

The political situation since 1967 has been outlined by two presidents who have been involved in political corruption, power abuse and continue to fail the provision of proper public services. Due to its economic status in the Francophone and Lusophone world, Equatorial Guinea`s socio-economic and political situation is somewhat stable. The education system has ‘the seventh highest proportion of children not registered in primary schools in the world according to UNICEF’ (World Report 2019; Rights Trends in Equatorial Guinea, 2019). Furthermore, there is currently only one university present in the country. However, this is not a result of any language policy, it is rather a consequence of the political leadership of Equatorial Guinea.

## **3. Comparison**

Both Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea have a long history of colonial rule through European powers and, thus, the language policy is heavily based and focused on what was left of the education systems after the countries regained their respective independence. Cameroon adopted French and English as official languages and Equatorial Guinea adopted

Spanish, French, and Portuguese as such. Both language policies have French as a common official language and make both countries part of the Francophone world, and the International Organisation of La Francophonie, enabling the citizens to take advantage of economic, educational, and professional benefits (francophonie.org.). Moreover, Equatorial Guinea is part of the Hispanophone and Lusophone community, whereas Cameroon is part of the Anglophone community. The education systems of both languages have been established by either missionaries, administrations or independent organisations depending on the controlling power. This means that in most cities, multiple schools have been opened and closed, thereby changing the languages taught and adapted ever since independence was established and systems were revised. Both countries offer education in all official languages to some degree either as mandatory or elective school subjects. But the situation in Cameroon is more difficult due to the linguistic conflict and political situation, whereas Equatorial Guinea has the problem of lower rates of registered pupils rather than linguistic discrimination.

The consequences and drives that led to the adoption of official languages also differ in both countries. In Cameroon, the French and English languages were chosen because the administrative background and history founded the current situation and continued to be used after its independence. Both colonial leaders introduced different systems that led to today's division. In Equatorial Guinea, the Spanish language's origin comes from the historic background. The adoption of French and Portuguese is mainly due to their economic benefit for the country and are driven by memberships in international organisations that establish Equatorial Guinea's presence and importance on the international market.

The language policy in Cameroon led to a series of conflicts involving language discrimination with French dominating English in formal contexts and made the country unstable. The language policy in Equatorial Guinea, however, is yielded at the economic benefit and stability by making multilingual services widely available. This enables the economy to be as international as possible; with government instructions and websites available in all three official languages. Furthermore, the education system

offers opportunities in primary, secondary, and higher education, nurturing the multilingual environment further.

## **Conclusion**

This comparison of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea leads to the understanding that language policies involving multiple languages depend on the government involvement and are mainly based on the historic past of each country. What sets the tone for a language policy is based upon the leading political parties and their attitude towards the importance of multilingualism. It is hardly possible for a population to bring change in language policies without the support of a political party. The education system sets the standard for language policy as it is one of the most important ways to introduce or discriminate languages. The decision whether a minor population can be educated in their own native tongue can lead to political disputes or reunification. The government's response decides the consequences thereof. These can either lead to a positive or negative linguistic impact of a country's political and economic stability. One of the most beneficial arguments depicted by the language policy of Equatorial Guinea is the economic benefit a multilingual language policy brings. It opens up their international market further. On the one hand, there is the possibility of occurrence of human rights issues or the deepening of international relations. If minority languages continue to be ignored, it can lead to unrests and make the country unstable. On the other hand, the respect that is paid towards minorities through language policies can nurture understanding and establish a peaceful community within a country.

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# Why have Perceptions of Indian Muslims as “other” led to Hindu Nationalist Violence against Muslims?

Robbie Kirk<sup>1</sup>

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*This article critically examines the inter-relations between Hindu nationalists and the Muslim population in contemporary Indian society. The text attempts to shed a light on the ways in which Muslims are portrayed as “other” in Indian society, and the consequences which arise from this. A number of portrayals are analysed throughout the text. Muslim men are portrayed as inherently dangerous and a permanent threat to Hindu women. Hindus are portrayed as innately “non-Indian” due to their consumption of cattle. Finally, Muslims are portrayed as possessing inherent socio-political advantages unavailable to Hindus. All of these notions are propagated by Hindu nationalists to agitate the wider Hindu population across India. These portrayals have resulted in widespread anti-Muslim sentiment and have facilitated the growth in violence against Muslims across the subcontinent.*

## Introduction

Divisions between Muslims and Hindus have existed for centuries in India, following the Arab Conquests that began in the late 7th century (Anjum, 2007, p. 217). While tensions continued, most Hindus and Muslims lived in relative peace prior to British rule, where Indian nationalism, and the question as to what constitutes “India” came to fruition (Pardesi and Oetken, 2008, p. 24). Hindu-Muslim tensions were exacerbated by British colonialists, particularly by their partition of the Indian subcontinent into majority-Hindu India and majority-Muslim Pakistan in 1947 (Ahmed, 2002, p. 9). Post-partition India took a secular form and attempted to legislatively ensure its constitution provided equal treatment for all religious groups. Over the past Century however, Hindu nationalist movements have continually

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<sup>1</sup> Robbie Kirk is a third year Politics and International Relations student at the University of Aberdeen. He is an editor at the International Viewpoint, a student-led publication, as well as a policy officer for the European think tank, 89 Connect. His main area of focus lies in Asian politics, with a particular focus on Indian and Chinese politics.

worked to create the perception of Indian Muslims as fundamentally non-Indian and “other”. Hindu nationalists portray a Hindu “golden age” which lies prior to the pouring of Christian and Islamic influences into India. Hindu nationalists seek to recreate this perceived “golden age” in modern India. It is important to distinguish between Hindu nationalists-those who believe in the notion of *Hindutva*- and the general Hindu population who practice Hinduism without intolerance. *Hindutva* is the idea that India should be an exclusively Hindu nation, with no room for religious differentiation (Banerjee, 1991, pp. 97-98). Hindu nationalists have created a number of harmful portrayals of Muslims, which in turn have worked to solidify perceptions of Muslims. Muslim men are portrayed as predators who prey on Hindu women, looking to convert them to Islam. Hindu nationalists see this as a threat to the demographic balance of India and thus the dominance of Hinduism. The consumption of cattle by Muslims is perceived as inherently non-Indian and Muslims are subsequently seen as a community who pay no respect to the motherly figure of Hinduism, and therefore in the eyes of Hindu nationalists, the Indian nation. Finally, the perceived privilege many Hindus believe Muslims have in the political and social world has led to envious retaliation. Examination of these factors can determine causal links between the ways in which Indian Muslims are perceived by Hindu nationalists as “other” and the violence inflicted upon them by said Hindu nationalists.

## 1. Theory

There are a number of theories which can be directly applied to Hindu-Muslim relations in India. The first is ethnonationalism. Ethnonationalism -otherwise known as “ethnic nationalism”- is the notion coined by Ernest Gellner that nations are defined by a shared heritage, faith and ethnic ancestry (Muller, 2008, p. 20). Despite technically being a religion, Hinduism is still seen as a distinct ethnic-religious group. Hindus share a common ancestry, the “golden age” of Hinduism before pre-Islamic and Christian influence. This idea of India’s past is applied to India as a whole, which is therefore given a firmly Hindu identity. Anyone not adhering



to Hinduism is ultimately seen as non-Indian. This meets with a key element of ethnonationalism-exclusivity. Those from other groups cannot join exclusive ethnic entities as they are not considered to belong to the same historical lineage. Ethnurgy is defined as the politicisation of ethnic identity (Hanf, 1995, p. 43). The Hindu ethnic-religious group has been politicised to determine what is “Indian” and what is “other”. Hindus have been encouraged to stay within their own group and often fiercely oppose those from other groups. Despite India being home to over 2,000 ethnicities, Hinduism has been centred as the dominant ethnoreligious group. Hinduism has been politicised to such an extent that the majority ruling party, the BJP, now rule on adamantly pro-Hindu policies and campaign promises, often promising to curb Muslim influence in India.

## **2. Love-Jihad**

A fear among Hindu communities is the notion of sexually predatory Muslim men. This notion is expressed through the concept of “Love Jihad”, which paints the image of Muslim men ‘waging Jihad in India through so-called love marriages’ (Rao, 2011, p. 425). This idea dates back to the 1920’s when Hindu nationalists used fearmongering tales of Hindu abduction by Muslims (Tyagi and Sen, 2020, p. 114). These young men, sometimes called “love Romeos” (Rao, 2011, p. 425) are perceived to live decadent lives of luxury and possess uncontrollable sexual desires (Gupta, 2009, p. 14). Furthermore, the promotion of negative stereotypes portraying Muslim men as aggressive has successfully worked to paint them as ‘other’ (Gupta, 2009, p. 14) and highlights a “lack of character” (Gupta, 2009, p. 14). This perception allows for the inflicting of violence against Muslims by convincing Hindus that Muslims are something non-Indian and therefore an inherent threat to what they define as “Indian”. Juxtaposed to this are Hindu women who are seen as pure, innocent persons who must be protected by any means (Gupta, 2009, p. 14). Young Hindu girls are taught in educational camps about the concept of “Love Jihad” at ages as young as eight (Tyagi and Sen, 2020, p. 108). This highlights that perceptions of Muslims are solidified at an extremely young age among Hindu women. This works as an

early provision for the allowance of violence against Muslims, as Hindu women are unlikely to defend the rights of Muslims post-*Hindutva* education when their perceptions have been distorted to view Muslims as a permanent threat to their womanhood. Furthermore, Hindu women may feel motivated to defend themselves from this perceived threat by aiding Hindu nationalist movements and their infliction of violence. One reason for this fear is the idea that India's dominantly Hindu demographics are under threat from the emergence of a growing Muslim population (Rao, 2011, p. 426). Despite census information providing an alternative narrative, the Hindu right-the-right-wing ideologies within the Hindu faith- have worked tirelessly to promote the notion that Muslims are overtaking Hindus in India (Rao, 2011, p. 427). This helps solidify the "other" portrayal of Indian Muslims as "they" are said to be outnumbering "us" (Rao, 2011, p. 427). Prominent RSS-a far-right Hindu paramilitary group (Subramanian, 2020)-leaders have even noted that, with the influx of Muslims from Bangladesh this combination 'portended doom for India' (Rao, 2011, p. 427). Hindu nationalists inflict violence upon Indian Muslims in order to curtail the propagated myth that Hinduism's domination over India will cease to exist if the sexual exploits of Muslims are left unchecked. It is this perceived emergence of prospective Muslim influence that compels many Hindus to defend and protect the nation-state they view as inherently Hindu. The prospect of a growing Muslim population frightens many Hindus who believe it will impact their everyday lives, their ability to practice Hinduism and the direction of India. Therefore, this fear of losing normality is what drives many Hindus to counteract what they see as an otherwise inevitable destruction of their livelihoods.

Despite consent from Hindu women when interacting with Muslim men, this consent is null and void in the eyes of the Hindu patriarchy, who see any interaction as sexual assault. It is the same patriarchy who view Hindu women as a representation of the purity of the greater Hindu community, and that any interference would 'besmirch an entire community as impure and polluted once "their" women are raped' (Rao, 2011, p. 428). This suggests that violence is inflicted upon Indian Muslim men in order to

protect the honour and purity of the greater Hindu community. Furthermore, there is the notion that Hindu men are intimidated by Muslims attempting to form relationships with Hindu women in a sort of “penis envy and anxiety about emasculation” (Rao, 2011, p. 428). This anxiety propels Hindu men into violence as they believe it can only be overcome by collective violence against the Muslim community to prevent further Hindu-Muslim relations occurring (Rao, 2011, p. 428). Hindu men are compelled to defend their position as patriarch of their family, community or temple, and therefore they inflict violence upon Muslims in order to prevent their prospective deposition as male leaders of the wider community. Furthermore, as weddings in India are considered a bond between two families, the notion of a Hindu and Muslim family connecting through a marriage is intolerable to many Hindu nationalists who would rather inflict violence upon Muslim communities in order to prevent any such disturbances occurring.

## **2. Cow protectionism**

Hindu nationalists have been forming the cow protection movement- which works to prohibit the consumption and trading of cattle- since the late 19th Century (Tirmizi, 1979, p. 575). Despite several other religions openly consuming cattle-Sikhs, Christians- it is Muslims who are singled out and who bear the brunt of the movement’s demonisation (Adcock, 2018, p. 350). Many academics have suggested that cattle consumption existed in early India and did not originate from Christian or Islamic practices (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018, p. 163). However, this does not fit in with the anti-Islamic narrative that has taken root in modern India. Graphic imagery was utilised to depict Muslims as inherently violent towards cattle, for example a poster from 1890 depicted a ‘Muslim butcher with a long knife and villainous expression, eying the cow with murderous intent.’ (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018, p. 159). This imagery worked to create a common enemy among Hindu nationalists, Muslims (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018, p. 160). The cow was used as a symbol for the Hindu nation, therefore the consumption of cows was viewed as an attack on the greater Hindu community (O’Toole, 2003). A prominent Conservative Hindu, Prabhudatt Brahmachari, even proclaimed

that there is no more despicable crime than the murder of a cow (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018, p. 161). This sentiment highlights that the inflicting of violence against those who attack cattle is seen as entirely justified in order to protect the wider Hindu community. Muslims are seen by Hindu nationalists as disrespectful to the Indian nation and therefore their intolerance must be curtailed.

There is another motivation for the violent acts carried out against Muslims who consume cattle, the stoking of fear among Hindu communities. Using Muslims as a scapegoat, the BJP have featured cow protection as a key part of their political campaigns (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018, p. 157). They have even passed legislation protecting cattle from slaughter in the Bombay Animal Preservation Act of 1994 which completely prohibited the slaughter of cows (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018, p. 167). By forming the idea that cow protection is a fundamental right among Hindus, Hindu nationalists have succeeded in penetrating the Hindu psyche and instilling the belief that those who oppose this, most prominently Muslims, are opposed to the Indian nation. Anti-Muslim perceptions are solidified by the passing of legislation, as Indian Muslims are now seen as lawbreakers, thus entrenching them further in their categorisation as “other”. The passing of legislation legitimises violence against cattle-consuming Muslims as they are now seen as genuine criminals. Consumption of cattle has become a sort of ‘litmus test of acquiescence in cow protection as a measure of national loyalty’ (Garg, 2016) which has worked to create the belief that India belongs only to non-cattle consuming Hindus. The stoking of fear among Hindus, along with the scapegoating of Muslims has been politically successful for the BJP and has allowed Hindu nationalists to further their plans for a *Hindutva* nation. The perception of cattle-consuming Indian Muslims as “other” has worked to widen the Hindu-Muslim divide. In turn, this has resulted in Hindu-Muslim violence by positioning Indian Muslims in opposition to the overall notion of what constitutes “India” and therefore portraying them as an external threat.

### 3. Perceived Muslim privilege

As a significant voting bloc, Muslim sentiments are said to have been catered to-exclusive benefits have allegedly been given to Indian Muslims in exchange for political support-, allowing the Congress Party to dominate Indian politics for decades. This perceived special treatment has been utilised by Hindu nationalist politicians, with Prime Minister Modi himself exclaiming that Muslims have been given special treatment for too long (Jaffrelot, 2015, p. 160). A particularly contested area in this debate is whether Muslims in India should be allowed to practice Islamic shar'ia law. Article 44 of the Indian constitution emphasises that 'The state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India.' (New Delhi, 2015, p. 23). Over the past few decades, Muslim communities have grown in opposition to this and have attempted to have this overturned (Misra, 2000, p. 7). Muslims instead sought after a legally binding personal law, a notion which many Hindus saw as fundamentally unjust and dangerous to India's principles (Misra, 2000, p. 7). The idea of Muslims seeking their own personal law works to anger many Hindu nationalists, who view any groups not adhering to India's uniform civil code as inherently "other", legally separate from mainstream Indian society. Although the protection of minority rights is Article 29 of India's constitution (New Delhi, 2015, p. 14) many Hindus are opposed to the freedom of legal systems for minorities, most prominently the practice of Sharia Law by Indian Muslims. A study into Hindu-Muslim relations discovered that many Hindus were frustrated with Islamic public worship, with one respondent exclaiming "These Muslims get away with everything" (Wagner and Sen, 2005, 2.9) and another noting "Muslims have scant regard for the law of the land, they do what they want" (Wagner and Sen, 2005, 2.9). These responses clearly highlight the anti-Islamic sentiments common among Hindus, with another respondent expressing their envy of perceived Muslim privilege, feeling as though Hindus are left out from this special treatment 'we [Hindus] are left high and dry ... who cares for us?' (Wagner and Sen, 2005, 2.9).

This highlights that some Hindus perceive Muslims as having more advantages and “special treatment” than they receive. This in turn works to incite anger and subsequently violence among Hindus against Indian Muslims. Furthermore, the idea of collective Hindu suffering in opposition to Muslim privilege cements the idea of the Muslim “other” who do not share in the collective pain felt by the wider Hindu community. Despite the socio-economic inequalities experienced by Muslims in India, the perception of Muslim privilege excludes them from Indian class collectivism, positioning them in opposition to Indian Hindus despite their shared socio-economic concerns. This incites feelings of jealousy among Hindus who seek retribution against the system, a system which they believe unfairly advantages Muslims.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that perceptions of Indian Muslims as “other” have a significant impact on Hindu nationalist violence. Different theories can be applied to this, most prominently ethnonationalism and ethnurgency. These two theories highlight the way in which the Hindu ethnoreligious group is exclusive and politicised to position all other groups as “other”. The propagated “Love-Jihad” myth has formed anti-Muslim perceptions among both Hindu men and women. As a result of *Hindutva*-themed education, Hindu women feel threatened by Muslim men and are thus more likely to aid, or at the very least comply, with Hindu nationalist violence against Muslims. Hindu men feel threatened by the perceived attack against the wider Indian community-as Hindu women are often associated with-and by the threat of losing hold of their dominant patriarchal position in Indian society to incoming Muslim men. Furthermore, Hindu nationalists fear a shift in India’s Hindu-Muslim demographics and therefore wish to curb the spread of Muslim influence by preventing these shifts.

Hindu nationalists perceive Muslim consumption of cattle as inherently non-Indian, and often as a direct challenge to the position of Hindu dominance in the subcontinent. This in turn compels Hindu nationalists to crush any opposition to Hindu dominance by inflicting violence upon

Muslims across India. The passing of anti-cattle consumption legislation further entrenches these perceptions, and positions as Muslims who consume cattle not only as “non-Indian” but as lawbreakers who deserve punishment for their actions.

Finally, the perceived privilege Muslims possess in India has evoked a feeling of enraged envy among many Hindu nationalists. The practice of Sharia law by Indian Muslims, and the consequent disregard for India’s uniform civil code, is once again perceived as a threat to the Hindu-Muslim balance in India. Hindu nationalists wish to prevent any Muslim influence in India including the practice of Muslim law. Many Hindu nationalists feel that Muslims have been given special treatment for too long and are prepared to get what they see as justified revenge against Muslims for this.

These three factors clearly highlight the ways in which perceptions of Indian Muslims do in fact play a role in the inflicted violence. Indian Muslims are perceived as ultimately “other” by Hindu nationalists in a number of significant areas and are therefore seen as a permanent threat to the position of Hinduism in India.

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# The Bilingual Brain and Bilingual Aphasia: An Overview

Matilde Nanni<sup>1</sup>

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*Neurolinguistic research has a strong focus on bilingualism: the ability to speak more than one language or dialect (L1, L2, etc.). Bilingualism poses many questions such as whether the different languages are processed and stored in the same areas of the brain, or whether they have completely different activation patterns. This paper accounts for scholars' theories on bilingual status achievement through different acquisition patterns, and for studies on brain area activation based on factors such as language mixing (LM), language switching (LS), age of acquisition and level of proficiency. Understanding the bilingual brain is deemed extremely important because of the insight it could provide, in the clinical setting, for finding treatments for bilingual patients with aphasia. Bilingual aphasia is discussed with regards to its clinical aspects: assessment, phases, and recovery patterns, and it is acknowledged for its value in understanding language representation in the brain. Research conducted in an attempt to explain recovery patterns in bilingual aphasia suggests that the processing of L1 and L2 is executed by the same neural structures. Moreover, it also provides an answer as to why other studies have observed neural differences in the processing of L1 and an L2 which had not been mastered at a high-level. The difference can be explained considering that greater cognitive resources are needed to compensate in the case of a low-proficient L2. Therefore, the language areas remain unvaried in L1 and L2 processing, but cognitive areas are additionally activated for the L2.*

## Introduction

This paper is set to provide a brief account of neurolinguistic research on the bilingual brain<sup>2</sup>. This field of research examines which

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<sup>1</sup> Matilde Nanni is a Language and Linguistics student graduating in June 2021 from the University of Aberdeen. She is currently writing her dissertation on how language ambiguity is created and resolved by speakers and by machines. Her two main areas of interest are syntax and language learning, which she will combine with her other passion, AI, by continuing her studies pursuing a master's degree in the field of Computational Linguistics.

<sup>2</sup>By *bilingual brain*, it is generally used to describe when the brain of a speaker can use two or more languages or dialects (Fabbro, 2001). As this paper will soon discuss, a clear definition is still under debate.

speakers are defined as bilinguals and how recovery patterns in bilingual speakers with aphasia can shed light on the processing and storing of two, or more, languages in the brain.<sup>3</sup> Neurolinguists' increasing interest in investigating the bilingual brain, on its own as well as in comparison to the monolingual brain, is motivated by the high percentage of bilinguals there are in the world. In fact, it is estimated that at least half of the world's population is bilingual, which means that approximately one in two people is a speaker of at least an L1 (first language) and an L2 (second language) if not more (L3, L4 etc.) (Grosjean, 1989). Research on the bilingual brain aims to understand how two or more languages are stored in the brain and used by the speaker to find whether there are major differences between those who process more than one language and those who process just one (Price et al., 1999; Wartenburger et al., 2003; Ansaldo et al., 2008). In this regard, the study of aphasia in bilingual patients is a valuable resource. Through the observation of the different recovery patterns of the languages spoken by the patient, it is possible to make inferences on the way languages interact in the bilingual brain (Abutalebi et al., 2009). Moreover, a better understanding of the bilingual brain is fundamental to the development of specific treatments to facilitate the recovery of the languages in patients with aphasia.

This paper comprises of three sections: the first section is concerned with discussing bilingualism and the difficulty of agreeing on a clear definition for what it encompasses. It takes into consideration the various processes of language acquisition and learning, which lead people to become bilinguals, and how the different types of bilinguals are categorised. The second section looks into the neuroscientific aspect of bilingualism by accounting for some neurolinguistic studies on brain area activation in bilingual speakers. In the third section, the paper's focus shifts onto aphasia. It provides a definition for the language impairment and an overview of the recovery patterns, the methods of assessment, and the phases patients go

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<sup>3</sup>*Aphasia* is a language impairment, caused by brain damage in specific regions, which affects the person's ability to produce or comprehend speech and the ability to read or write (McNeil & Pratt, 2001).

through. Finally, the paper will conclude with a summarised account of the paper's findings.

## **1. Bilingualism and bilinguals**

The bilingual brain, as a topic of investigation, has raised a lot of interest over the years, especially considering the large number of bilinguals among speakers in the world. Contrary to what the monolingual tradition may think, bilingualism is often the norm rather than the exception. Nevertheless, bilingualism as a topic is a very debatable issue, due to the difficulty to pinpoint an exact definition for it. In fact, linguists have not yet agreed on the criteria to define what a language is and what a dialect is. This creates confusion in defining who is categorised as a bilingual, since it theoretically includes, for example, a speaker of a so called “language” and a “dialect”, as well as a speaker of three “languages”. As such, the “bi” in “bilingualism” does not necessarily mean “two”, as in “speaker of two languages”, and some scholars argue there is no difference between a bilingual and a multilingual<sup>4</sup> (Cenoz, 2013). At a neurolinguistic level, Fabbro (2001, p. 201) argues that ‘the question [of] whether the structural distance between two languages or two dialects or between a language and a dialect may affect their respective cerebral representation is still under debate’.

The second problem is that there are many ways people become bilinguals and experience bilingualism, thus two people can be defined as bilinguals even though they have very different linguistic skills in the two or more languages, and dialects, they know. For instance, a bilingual could be someone equally proficient in two languages, or someone highly proficient in one language, somewhat proficient in a dialect and with a basic understanding of another language. Nonetheless, a good starting point is to abandon the idea that bilinguals are two monolinguals in one brain, which is to say that for a person to be bilingual they need to speak at least two languages as two monolinguals would (Grosjon, 1989 in Fabbro, 2001).

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<sup>4</sup> Multi meaning “more than one” or “more than two”, depending on the context.

Rather, Fabbro (2001, p. 201) points out that the idea that perfect knowledge of each language, known by the person, is required to fall into the category of a “bilingual speaker” is a misconception deriving from a language culture that is monolingual. Therefore, it is difficult to establish at which point a person becomes a bilingual, seeing as bilingualism, as a speaker status, is reached in many different ways.

One way to describe bilingualism is that adopted by Ansaldo et al. (2008), which provides a summary of the possible types of bilinguals based on the age of acquisition. According to the age of acquisition, they identify two separate groups of bilinguals: simultaneous or native bilinguals, and successive or late bilinguals. The former group, simultaneous or native bilinguals, is made of those speakers who acquire their L1 and L2 simultaneously and at the earliest stage of life, during infancy. The latter group, successive or late bilinguals, acquires the L1 and L2 successively, the L1 at an earlier stage and the L2 at a later stage. Another criterion for defining bilingualism, which is attributed to Weinreich (1953), is ‘the way words in the different languages relate to underlying concepts’ (Ansaldo et al., 2008, p. 540). An important difference which could influence the way two or more languages are processed in the brain is whether words, in the spoken languages, are associated to the same underlying concepts or if each language is independent from the others. This definition sees three groups of bilinguals: compound, coordinate, and subordinate bilinguals (Ansaldo et al., 2008). Coordinate bilinguals acquire L1 and L2 in two different contexts (e.g., home and school), and it is assumed that they ‘have two semantic systems and two codes’ (Ansaldo et al., 2008, p. 540). Compound bilinguals acquire both L1 and L2 in the same context, and it is supposed that they have only one semantic system but two codes. Finally, subordinate bilinguals acquire the second language ‘by reference to the L1 or dominant language’ (Ansaldo et al., 2008, p. 540).

Providing an account for the different ways of bilingual classification serves the purpose of pointing out that different acquisition patterns suggest different ways in which the two or more languages are stored and processed in the bilingual brain. Ansaldo et al. (2008) highlights the age

of acquisition and the level of proficiency as the two factors which cause different cognitive strategies to be employed by bilingual speakers. With regards to cognitive strategies and cognitive processes, it is worth mentioning two very important phenomena, which need to be taken into consideration as characteristic traits of bilingual speakers: language mixing and language switching. In the next section, these two topics will be touched upon as a starting point to go into a more detailed discussion of the brain areas that are activated in the case of bilingual speakers.

## **2. Brain activation in bilingual speakers**

As has already been discussed, Grosjeon (1989, p. 3) has pointed out that the linguistic competence of a bilingual speaker differs from that of a monolingual in his renowned claim: ‘the bilingual is not two monolinguals in one person’. Further proof to support his claim can be found in the extensive use of language mixing and language switching by bilinguals. Language mixing (LM) is understood as ‘the importation of linguistic units from different languages within a sentence’ according to Fabbro (2001, p. 212). For instance, a case of LM would be to import a noun from the L2 while keeping the rest of the sentence in the L1. Language switching (LS) is the ability to alternate between languages, so that the speaker switches back and forth from one language to the other (Ansaldo et al., 2008). The fact that most bilinguals constantly use these linguistics strategies goes to show how thin the line is between the two (or more) languages in the mind of a bilingual. Because they present the co-occurrence of two languages, LM and LS have played a fundamental role in studying brain area activation. A study from Price et al. (1999) investigated LS using a reading task and a translation task. The authors found increased activity in the left inferior frontal region (BA 44, Broca's area) and bilateral supramarginal gyri (BA 40), which are regions associated with mapping orthography to phonology (Price et al., 1999, p. 2225). They concluded that LS modulates word processing at a phonological stage, seeing as the demand on orthographic to phonological

mapping is higher as speakers alternate between L1 and L2, which require ‘different mappings’ (Price et al., 1999, p. 2225).<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, there are other studies that focus on the age of acquisition and the level of proficiency to measure the impact of these two factors on brain area activation. In order to test the influence of the age of acquisition, Wartenburger et al. (2003) used a grammatical judgment task and a semantic judgment task. Their findings show that, with regards to the grammatical judgment task, activations in the inferior frontal gyrus (BA44/6) are more extended in late bilinguals than early bilinguals. Conversely, they did not observe any difference in activation patterns with the semantic judgment task, which brought them to argue that ‘morphosyntactic processing is more sensitive to late L2 acquisition than semantic processing’ (Wartenburger et al., 2003, p. 161). In other words, the processing of word formation and word combination in sentences, morphosyntax, is more affected in late L2 acquisition than the semantic processing, which is the process of hearing a word and encoding its meaning. Wartenburger et al. (2003, p. 165) concluded that the age of acquisition appears to be affecting ‘the neuronal processing mechanisms of grammaticality judgements’ more than the level of proficiency, which means that there is a ‘less efficient representation if the language is learned late’.

When it comes to language proficiency, Ansaldo et al. (2008) reports that, from the use of other studies, there are increased right-hemisphere activations, in frontal areas in particular, with low-proficiency bilinguals, while there is overlap with L1 and L2 in the left hemisphere with highly proficient bilinguals. A study from Abutalebi and Green (2007) reports that when the L2 has not been mastered at a high level, L2 related activations are greater in regions traditionally involved in L1 processing as well. Furthermore, they also observed the activation of those regions involved the ‘cognitive control system’ in the brain, such as the prefrontal cortex (BA 9, 46, 47), the anterior cingulate cortex, and the inferior parietal cortex. Their

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<sup>5</sup> Orthographic to phonological mapping is the process of mapping how words are written to how they sound.

findings are in line with the two-level hypothesis (Petrides, 1998 in Ansaldo et al., 2008), which distinguishes between controlled language retrieval processes, requiring considerable effort and more time, and automatic language retrieval processes, requiring minimal effort and less time. In the case of L2, the retrieval process will be controlled, due to the lack of proficiency, and thus require the activation of the cognitive control areas. Abutalebi and Green (2007) explain these stronger activations as a consequence of monitoring processes associated with information-filtering and response-inhibition in the environment. The shift from controlled to automatic processes can be observed in a study from Indefrey (2006) based on haemodynamic monitoring.<sup>6</sup> Indefrey observes that the changes in the brain associated with learning a new language are visible after six months of exposure to the L2 and they concern the same regions (Broca's area, left medial temporal gyrus) that can be found in native language sentence-level processing.

A more recent fMRI study from 2019 by Xiujun et al. investigates different brain activation patterns for phonological and semantic processing by comparing Chinese-Japanese bilinguals to Japanese monolinguals. What they found is that there is no significant difference in brain area activation between the Chinese semantic and phonological judgment tasks for Chinese-Japanese bilingual speakers, and the Japanese semantic and phonological judgment tasks for the Japanese speakers. In the case of the Chinese-Japanese bilinguals, by subtracting the differences between the brain regions, they found the activated areas to be 'the right frontal lobes (BA8/9), the left fusiform gyrus (BA37) and the right temporal lobe (BA22/38)' (Xiujun et al., 2019, p. 1321). On the contrary, for the Japanese speaking subjects they found presupposed differences for the two tasks between the two brain regions, which include the left superior temporal gyrus (BA40) and the left temporal lobe (BA22). Thus, it was concluded that both the Chinese-Japanese bilingual subjects and the Japanese monolingual subjects activate 'a neural network consisting of multiple brain regions [...] consistent with

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<sup>6</sup> The study of how blood flows through the cardiovascular system (Indefrey, 2006).



the areas that are activated for a second foreign language such as English and Chinese or Japanese and Chinese’ (Xiujun et al., 2019, p. 1325).

These studies on bilingualism provide great insight into the correlation between bilingualism and various aspects of language processing. Firstly, the alternation between an L1 and an L2, language switching, was seen to play a role in the way words are processed at the phonological stage (Price et al., 1999). Secondly, the age of acquisition was observed to have an impact on word and sentence formation rather than on meaning encoding (Wartenburger et al., 2003). A low level of proficiency of the L2 showed the activation of cognitive control brain areas in addition to the traditional regions involved in L1 processing (Abutalebi & Green, 2007). Finally, the last study from Xiujun et al. (2019) found no major differences between bilinguals and monolinguals when it comes to phonological and semantic processing. Hence, there seem to be many factors which affect some aspects of language processing more than others, but the L1 and L2 are processed in the same language regions of the brain. Following this brief overview of some studies on brain area activation in bilingual speakers, the focus of the paper will now shift onto the clinical issue that is aphasia and, in particular, aphasia in bilingual patients.

### **3. Bilingual aphasia**

Aphasia is defined as ‘a disorder of language [or language impairment] caused by brain damage [usually resulting from a stroke]’ (McNeil & Pratt, 2001, p. 901). The most severe types of aphasia are Broca’s aphasia and Wernicke’s aphasia. The former, also known as expressive aphasia, involves partial loss of the ability to produce language, although comprehension usually remains intact (Damasio, 1992). The latter, also known as receptive aphasia, involves difficulty in understanding written and spoken language, while the speaker’s speech is not compromised (Damasio, 1992). Abutalebi et al. (2009, p. 141) highlights how bilingual aphasia is becoming a ‘clinical issue of primary importance’ in modern society. The incidence of bilingual aphasia is growing

exponentially as society becomes more bilingual. Paradis estimates that in 2001, on the basis of census data, the number of cases of bilingual aphasia would amount to over 45,000 per annum in the United States (Abutalebi et al., 2009). Such high figures point to the fact that research is needed to understand the recovery patterns of bilingual patients in order to develop an effective treatment. Although recovery patterns vary a lot, Paradis (1998) has made a list of the seven most frequently encountered ones. They are:

1. *Differential recovery* (either the L1 or the L2 is recovered better than the other)
2. *Selective recovery of a given language* (one language remains impaired and the other is recovered)
3. *Parallel recovery of both languages* (both languages improve to the same extent and at the same time)
4. *Successive recovery* (the complete recovery of one language precedes the recovery of the other)
5. *Alternating recovery* (the language that was first recovered is lost once again when the other language is recovered)
6. *Alternating antagonistic recovery* (on the one day the patient is able to speak one language, whereas on the next day can only speak in the other)
7. *Pathological mixing of the two languages/blended recovery* (the elements of the two languages are involuntarily mixed during language production).

Fabbro (1999) made a comparative study regarding these recovery patterns, from which emerged that 40% of patients had parallel language recovery and of the remaining 60%, 32% reportedly had a better recovery in L1 than L2, while the other 28% had a better recovery in L2 than L1. Fabbro's study was repeated by Paradis in 2001, who found that 61% of the patients recovered the two languages in parallel. Differential recovery (18%), blended recovery (9%), selective recovery (7%) and successive recovery (5%) were much less frequent (Paradis, 2001).

So, to assess bilingual aphasia, Paradis and associates developed the Bilingual Aphasia Test (BAT) (Fabbro, 2001). The test comprises of three main parts:

- **A** to evaluate the patient's multilingual history (50 items)
- **B** to assess systematically the language disorders in each language known by the subject (472 items in each known language)
- **C** to assess the translation abilities and the detection of interference in each language pair (58 items each)

Moreover, Fabbro (2001) points out the three different phases that need to be taken into account when it comes to the clinical assessment of both monolingual and bilingual aphasic patients. The three phases are:

- (1) **Acute phase**, which generally lasts 4 weeks after onset
- (2) **Lesion phase**, which lasts for several weeks and perhaps even up to 4–5 months post onset
- (3) **Late phase**, beginning a few months after onset and continuing for the rest of the patient's life

Research on bilingual aphasia has made a lot of progress, but it is still ongoing with regards to finding the best way to treat patients. Whilst the study of bilingual aphasia has proven to be fundamental in giving insight into language representation in brain areas, nevertheless, it has led to two different schools of thought, namely the localizationist and the dynamic approach. According to the more traditional localizationist view, the phenomenon for which only one language is lost would be an indicator for different brain area representations, or even different hemispheres, of the bilingual's languages. This theory, as proposed by some scholars, explains different recovery patterns seeing as a 'focal lesion within a language-specific area may alter only that specific language leaving the other language intact'. Contrariwise, the dynamic view attributes the selective loss of a language to 'increased inhibition', which is a rise in the activation threshold for the language in question (Abutalebi et al., 2009, p. 144). According to the dynamic view, less proficient bilinguals need greater cognitive resources when it comes to having to process a weaker L2, so they must inhibit L1 during L2 production. Therefore, Abutalebi et al. (2009) argue that different

recovery patterns are the consequence of temporary inhibition and that parallel recovery would then happen in the case that both languages are inhibited to the same degree. More research is required to fully support the latter theory against the former one. However, Abutalebi et al. (2009) believe it is safe to conclude that the processing of L1 and L2 is executed by the same neural structures. Moreover, they justify the occurrence of neural differences from the L1 in cases when the L2 has not been mastered at a high-proficiency level (Abutalebi et al., 2009, p. 144). They argue that such differences can be observed within the left prefrontal cortex and other areas related to cognitive control because, according to a dynamic view, less proficient bilinguals require ‘greater cognitive resources when processing a weaker L2’ (Abutalebi et al., 2009, p. 145).

## **Conclusion**

It was in this paper’s intentions to provide an overview, and by doing so, barely scratch the tip of the iceberg of the topic that is the bilingual brain and bilingual aphasia in neurolinguistic research. The number of bilingual speakers in the world exceeds monolinguals and bilingual aphasia is a matter of uttermost importance, for which the optimal treatment is difficult to pinpoint. In the course of this paper, various issues were touched upon, starting from an attempt to provide a definition of bilingualism and of the different types of bilinguals based either on the age of acquisition or on the context of acquisition. Next, the paper focused on the topic of brain activation at the bilingual level by drawing on a few studies, taking into account the phenomena of language switching and language mixing. Finally, the last point of analysis was aphasia, a phenomenon of language impairment, which was presented with a particular focus on bilingual patients and their language recovery patterns. In conclusion to this discussion, further research on bilingual aphasia is needed as it is essential in order to uncover more information on the brain area activation of bilingual speakers, as well as to find treatments for aphasic patients so to enable the recovery of all the languages they have acquired in life.

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# The Anatomy of a British Satire

Daniel Petersen<sup>1</sup>

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*Satire is a form of comedy which aims specifically to criticize a person or party and does so through the use of various techniques including, but not limited to: caricature, exaggeration, distortion. Satire also has a place of honour in British cultural tradition, from Shakespeare's Hamlet to Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado. It is therefore no surprise that it should still inhabit our comedies, both classic and modern, and particularly sitcoms. There are many fine examples of these: Father Ted, Blackadder, and Dad's Army to name just a few, but in my opinion, the finest of all is Yes Minister. Yes Minister earns this status because it is not just a sitcom, and not just a satire, but also a documentary. It shows us how our governments really work, using testimony from insiders. This essay sets out to examine how it achieves all of these things, utilising Gilbert Highet's Anatomy of Satire as a yardstick. Highet described satire as 'topical; it claims to be realistic (although it is usually distorted or exaggerated); it is shocking... and (although often in a grotesque and painful manner) it is funny.' (Highet, 1972, p.5) The first part of the essay will address these criteria through an examination of the overall content and context of Yes Minister, while the second will do the same by examining the two main protagonists of the show, Jim Hacker and Sir Humphrey Appleby, and the dialogue between them in the show's first season.*

## Introduction

Satire, as defined by the great English lexicographer Samuel Johnson, is 'a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured.' (Johnson, 1785, p.562). This is a vague definition, but it captures the basic aim of satire: the criticism of a specific target through the use of caricature, mockery, and irony. Modern satire comes in innumerable forms, but its features have remained broadly consistent throughout its lifetime and are described in *Anatomy of Satire*: '[Satire] is topical; it claims to be realistic (although it is

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Petersen is a first-year student in History and Politics, with a particular interest in the rise of Fascism in the 20th Century. He is a keen writer, having written for the Sport section of The Gaudie, with particular focus on association football.

usually distorted or exaggerated); it is shocking... and (although often in a grotesque and painful manner) it is funny.’ (Highet, 1972, p.5)

Satire is a genre which I first encountered in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, and then through my discovery of *Yes Minister* and its sequel *Yes Prime Minister*. What struck me the most when viewing these texts for the first time was how clear they were in what they were satirising, and also how close to reality they remained in doing so. Thus, I decided to examine the ways in which this was accomplished, and settled upon the research question: ‘To what extent does *Yes Minister* conform to the framework of a satire, as laid out by Gilbert Highet’s *Anatomy of Satire*?’

*Yes Minister* was a British television programme produced by the BBC from 1980-84 written by Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn. The show plots the rivalry between Jim Hacker, portrayed by Paul Eddington, and Sir Humphrey Appleby, portrayed by Nigel Hawthorne, of the fictional Department of Administrative Affairs. The title of the series derives from the last words spoken at the end of most episodes, in response to a question from Hacker: “Yes, Minister”.

Both shows won numerous awards, while Hawthorne received four British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards for Best Light Entertainment Performance, nominated alongside Eddington. (BAFTA, n.d). Moreover, it is now seen not only as a satire but as a documentary into interactions between the British Civil Service and the British Government and is quoted in several textbooks on British politics. (*Yes Minister Files*, n.d).

The aim of this essay is therefore to determine what makes *Yes Minister* a satire, using Highet’s description as a framework for comparison, and what Hacker and Sir Humphrey represent within the satire. This shall be done by analysing extracts from five episodes of season one of *Yes Minister*: “Open Government”, “The Official Visit”, “Big Brother”, “The Writing on the Wall”, and “The Right to Know” - as it is in these early episodes that the writers must establish that they are writing a satire, and thus the satire must be most obvious. This shall focus upon the rhetoric of the characters’



dialogue and roles which they play. Further material, such as retrospectives of the series, will be used to provide context or to corroborate claims. To make the analysis more coherent, the order of Highet's description has not been followed.

## 1. Anatomy

The first criterion is whether or not the series is funny, for two reasons. First, a comedy's basic requirement is that it should be funny, and second because it is easy to identify. Indeed, according to the writers, *Yes Minister's* humorous tone was crucial: 'If there's no [laughter from the] audience, [politicians] can just say 'Well, this is just some smart people being clever at the expense of our great democratic system' and put pressure on the BBC [to end the show].' (Yes Minister 3 – Best Sitcom, 2010). Indeed, it was so important that overt jokes were added. The first episode of the series features humorous moments, such as these witticisms at the expense of Hacker's colleagues:

**Hacker:** Bill's got Europe.

**Annie:** Lucky Europe! I didn't know Bill could speak French.

**Hacker:** He can hardly speak English.

(Open Government, 25 Feb. 1980)

These interpersonal jabs are familiar to a British audience, as they fit with the British culture of self-deprecation and ribbing, and they will be familiar to those who dislike their co-workers. The show thus introduces the audience to Hacker in a way that is familiar and humorous, easing them into the character while having fun at the expense of politicians, as the second dialogue shows. This is followed up by a more conventional riff on ministerial chairs:

**Hacker:** I'd like a new chair. I hate swivel chairs.

**Bernard Woolley:** It used to be said there were two kinds of chairs to go with two kinds of Minister: one sort folds up instantly; the other sort goes round and round in circles.

(Open Government, 25 Feb. 1980)

The show also utilises situational irony: first, Hacker chastises his wife for “overreact[ing] to everything” before promptly starting violently as the phone rings, then as he proclaims that there are ‘Far too many people just sitting behind desks,’ (Open Government, 1980) while sitting behind his own desk. These comedic moments were vital, as they lightened the tone so as to make the content humorous, while these cases also act as an insight into the view of Hacker’s colleagues, a very British insult, or indeed as subtle attacks on the indecisiveness, sloth, or two-facedness of cabinet ministers.

Another prominent feature of the show was its use of wordplay for humour and informality, such as when a visiting head of state makes an embarrassing speech calling on Scotland and Ireland to ‘cast off the imperialist yoke’ and seek independence, leading to the following exchange between Hacker and Humphrey:

**Sir Humphrey:** Well, I don't like to say I told you so, but I told you so!

**Hacker:** We'll have egg all over our faces.

**Sir Humphrey:** Not egg, Minister, just imperialist yolk.  
(The Official Visit, 3 Mar. 1980)

The combination of the well-known phrase “egg on face” – meaning that one has been profoundly embarrassed – and the play on the rhyming of “yoke” and “yolk” make an innocent – in the sense that it is only targeting Hacker himself – yet clever quip. Further conducive to the humour of both quips is their accessibility, as the bases of both wordplays are well-known phrases, ensuring that the audience understands that a joke is being made, even if they are unaware of its depth.

Such instances of informal humour lighten the tone of the show and make its status as a comedy obvious by having the studio audience laughing in earshot of the camera to prove that the show was funny. As such, it fulfils the first criterion of satire: it is at its core a funny program, even when considered independently of its subject matter.

The next aspect is how realistic Yes Minister claims to be. One notable quirk of the series gives an insight into how penetrating it is: despite

the show being a satire of the British political system, not a single scene is set in the House of Commons, where Hacker, an MP, would reasonably be expected to spend a portion of his time. This is because: ‘Government does not take place in the House of Commons;... Government happens in private... Then the public, and the House, are shown what the government wishes them to see.’ (Lynn, J in *Yes Minister* Files, n.d). As such, *Yes Minister* features scenes mostly in Hacker’s office or in Whitehall.

A less diligent satire could easily have included the House of Commons for the simple reason of accessibility; it is the most ostentatious symbol of government and democracy in Britain, just as Buckingham Palace, as *de jure* residence of the Royal Family, is the symbol of the British monarchy despite not being the preferred royal seat. In order to provide a clearer picture of government, an obscure but accurate setting is used instead of well-known architecture.

The House could also have been included purely for the sake of entertainment, as the show implicitly acknowledges:

**Campaigner:** Men are animals too, you know.

**Hacker:** I know that – I’ve just come from the House of Commons.

(The Right to Know, 31 Mar. 1980)

By describing the House in this way, the show dehumanises MPs, and in so doing calls to mind ancient forms of entertainment like gladiatorial combat, which appeal to a primal instinct within the audience. Another interaction between Hacker and Sir Humphrey enhances this prospect:

**Hacker:** Humphrey, do you see it as part of your job to help ministers make fools of themselves?

**Sir Humphrey:** I’ve never met one that needed any help.

(The Right to Know, 31 Mar. 1980)

The idea of politicians making a fool of themselves publicly is an entertaining one and fits with the penchant that the British public has for mockery, but this would mean painting an incorrect picture of government. By keeping the show away from the House of Commons, *Yes Minister*

sacrifices a gold mine of comedic opportunity in order to reflect the cynical reality of government as closely as possible. As such, its claim to realism is convincing, and is important to its intended role as the arch-satire of British politics.

In terms of the other epithets in Hight's framework, it would be more accurate to state that *Yes Minister* is shocking *because* it is realistic. Amidst the laughs there are sharp barbs at the established order both then and now. Consider a discussion on British involvement in the European Economic Community (EEC):

**Hacker:** ...why are we pushing for an increase in the membership?

**Sir Humphrey:** Well, for the same reason. It's just like the United Nations, in fact; the more members it has, the more arguments it can stir up, the more futile and impotent it becomes.

**Hacker:** What appalling cynicism.

**Sir Humphrey:** Yes... We call it diplomacy, Minister.  
(*The Writing on the Wall*, 24 Mar. 1980)

The dryness of the response is telling. This is not a whimsical throwaway line, but a portrayal of both the EEC and the United Nations as ineffective organisations without appetite for action. These criticisms are just as prevalent at the time of writing this essay as they were in the 1970s, when the series was written, with the European Union lampooned for “institutional uselessness” (Daley, 2016) and similar charges of inadequacy.

The subject of topicality is actually one which the writers treat with disdain, as Jonathan Lynn claimed that episodes were written months in advance of filming, (in *Yes Minister Files*, n.d), so they were not actually responding to events the way audiences might expect given the precision of the show's writing. Indeed, Lynn declared that ‘topicality is an illusion.’ (in *Yes Minister Files*, n.d). As such, the show has no right to be as realistic as it is, and this also provides shock value in a way which is almost unique.

A satire of modern politicians cannot be shocking if it is only realistic or topical, because the portrayal must be such a distortion of reality that the audience reacts to the incongruity between the moral character of the

caricature and the moral compass which one imagines oneself carrying in such a situation. This dissonance between reality and television is humorous, but not shocking in the sense that one would believe in its feasibility. In *Yes Minister*, the opposite is accomplished; reality and “fiction” – exhibited by Sir Humphrey – are one and the same. This shock follows topicality and realism, allowing *Yes Minister* to fulfil another criterion of satire as laid out by Highet.

Therefore, in terms of humour, realism, informality, topicality and shock value, *Yes Minister* follows Highet’s formula. It is through a further analysis of its characters that this conclusion can be expanded upon, and where other parts of Highet’s description become relevant.

## **2. Character analysis**

*Yes Minister* is dominated by the duo of Jim Hacker and Sir Humphrey, and it is mostly through their interactions that the show satirises British politics. They are the embodiments of the targets and techniques of the satire, so an examination of their behaviour and rhetoric can reveal these techniques.

The satire’s targets might seem straightforward to identify at first. Hacker is a Cabinet Minister and an MP, so can be said to parody the executive branch of the British government, the MPs, whereas Sir Humphrey, as a civil servant and Permanent Secretary, mimics the administrative branch, the Civil Service. When stereotypes of politicians are considered, this interpretation is supported throughout the series, where Hacker explicitly parodies the modern politicians.

### **2.1 Hacker**

The series’ first scene introduces Hacker and demonstrates many facets of his character. He sits by the phone, waiting for a call from the Prime Minister to tell him what his position will be in the new government, and he says to his wife:

**Hacker:** Darling, sometimes I don't understand you; he's my political advisor, I depend on him more than anyone.  
(Open Government, 25 Feb. 1980)

The fact that he relies more upon a political advisor than his own wife shows how much Hacker cares about his career, and that he says it to her face so bluntly shows that he thinks very little about how others might feel regarding his attitude toward career progression. In this way Hacker conforms to the stereotype that politicians are career-obsessed to the point of sociopathy. It also shows a lack of respect for those whom he cannot use for his own ends: he does not gain political capital from having a wife, but a competent political advisor is an advantage to his career, and so is more valuable. Again, this willingness to see people as means to an end is an attitude which politicians are often accused of having.

Hacker also shows a complete lack of decisiveness when faced with a difficult choice, such as the following farce:

**Hacker:** Frank, I think I'd better go to Swansea.

**Bernard:** Is that a decision, minister?

**Hacker:** Yes, that's final.

**Frank:** The PM expects you to go to Newcastle.

**Hacker:** The PM? I think I'd better go to Newcastle, Bernard.  
(Big Brother, 17 Mar. 1980)

Hacker's about-face fits the stereotype that politicians are indecisive, but even more telling is how quickly he changes his mind when the Prime Minister's name is invoked, which has the power to end his career. As such he feels compelled to place the interests of his party career above those of government, while reneging on a decision which he said was final, following the stereotype that politicians put their own interests before that of government, and that they are generally indecisive on important matters.

Another characteristic Hacker possesses is an aversion to the truth when it fails to suit his purposes, shown by the following dialogue:

**Hacker:** ...you want me to tell Parliament that it's their fault that the Civil Service is too big?

**Sir Humphrey:** But it's the truth.

**Hacker:** I don't want the truth! I want something I can tell Parliament!

(The Writing on the Wall, 24 Mar. 1980)

This again exhibits Hacker's tendency to put himself before others, and also shows that he is unabashed by the prospect of lying to Parliament to help himself, reinforcing the claim that Parliament is 'what the government wishes [us] to see.' (Lynn, J in Yes Minister Files). This is especially striking given Hacker's earlier repeated commitments to what he terms "Open Government", which was a manifesto promise. This shows that Hacker obstructs due process and breaks his own party's promises, exhibiting the moral flimsiness which politicians and governments, are held in opprobrium for.

Hacker also displays a tendency to measure success by how popular his policies are rather than how effective they are:

**Hacker:** The all-party Select Committee On Administrative Affairs, which I founded, is a case in point – it's a great success.

**Sir Humphrey:** Oh, indeed. What has it achieved?

**Hacker:** Nothing yet, but the party's very pleased with it.

**Sir Humphrey:** Why?

**Hacker:** Ten column inches in last Monday's *Daily Mail*, for a start.

(The Writing on the Wall, 24 Mar. 1980)

Here, Hacker measures success in two ways. First by how happy his party is with his policy, which relates to his job security and career prospects, and secondly, by how much positive press he gets. This keeps with the stereotype that politicians are self-interested and willing to bend rules in order to keep their jobs. More pertinent to parliamentary stereotypes, however, is Hacker's enthusiastic endorsement of an initiative which has achieved nothing: a willingness to tolerate mediocrity, so long as it does not appear publicly often ascribed to modern politicians. He, like politicians generally, trumpets his own achievements regardless of their performance.

Throughout the series, Hacker shows himself to be a bombastic, press-obsessed narcissist, which are all qualities associated with politicians. He is, in essence, a grotesque amalgamation of lesser sins: the MP everybody thinks they have. It might therefore seem curious that he is also a figure of sympathy among the show's audience, and not only due to Eddington's performance. Hacker may be the politician we all think we have, but Sir Humphrey is the politician we all fear, for in Hacker we see many characteristics which are undesirable but ultimately harmless, whereas in Sir Humphrey can be seen many qualities, both in his position and character, which would be truly frightening in a member of government.

## 2.2 Sir Humphrey

Before analysing Sir Humphrey's behaviour in the series, it is worth examining the respective positions within government held by the two lead characters, as this forms the basis of the warning in Sir Humphrey's character. Hacker is an MP, an elected official answerable to Parliament. Sir Humphrey, on the other hand, is a civil servant not elected but appointed. (UK Government, 2011). Essentially, Hacker's job is to "dictate" policy, and Sir Humphrey's job is to implement it. It is a system with 'the engine of a lawnmower and the brakes of Rolls-Royce.' (Lynn, J in Yes Minister Files).

In this context, Sir Humphrey's introductory exchange with Hacker is indicative to the audience that they are seeing a master mandarin at work:

**Sir Humphrey:** You came up with all the questions I hoped nobody would ask.

**Hacker:** Well, opposition's about asking awkward questions.

**Sir Humphrey:** And government is about not answering them.

**Hacker:** Well, you answered all mine anyway.

**Sir Humphrey:** I'm glad you thought so, Minister.

(Open Government, 25 Feb. 1980)

Again, the introduction of the character is a summary of that character. Where Hacker shows himself to be bumbling and self-absorbed, Sir Humphrey shows himself to be capable of smoothly evading questions.



Indeed, this exchange is a microcosm of the show as a whole: Hacker asks a question, and Sir Humphrey tricks him into thinking it has been answered.

Inevitably, this dynamic results in several occasions where Hacker wants something done, and Sir Humphrey quietly moves to stop him:

**Sir Humphrey:** So it would be rather an embarrassment to the PM, wouldn't it, if a hypothetical Minister were to rock the Anglo-American boat?

**Sir Arnold:** A grave embarrassment.

**Sir Humphrey:** How grave?

**Sir Arnold:** Man overboard, I should think.

**Sir Humphrey:** Enough to cut short a promising new Ministerial career?

(Open Government, 25 Feb. 1980)

Here, Sir Humphrey shows a duplicity distinct from that shown by Hacker, who shows himself quite willing to say one thing and do another. Sir Humphrey takes this to a Machiavellian extreme, as he contemplates the possibility of ending his career, while pretending to cooperate. Where Hacker is unreliable, Sir Humphrey exhibits a clear capacity for backstabbing, an absolute ruthlessness which is notably absent in Hacker, and an absence of moral sympathy which would be worrying if it were publicly observable in a politician.

One aspect of Sir Humphrey's character which is often seen in public, however, is his capacity for gargantuan circumlocutions. This can be seen even as he introduces himself:

**Hacker:** Who else is in this department?

**Sir Humphrey:** Well briefly, sir, I am the Permanent Undersecretary of State, known as the Permanent Secretary. Woolley here is your Principal Private Secretary. I too have a Principal Private Secretary and he is the Principal Private Secretary to the Permanent Secretary. Directly responsible to me are ten Deputy Secretaries, 87 Under Secretaries and 219 Assistant Secretaries. Directly responsible to the Principal Private Secretaries are plain Private Secretaries, and the Prime Minister will be appointing two Parliamentary Undersecretaries and you will be appointing your own Parliamentary Private Secretary.

(Open Government, 25 Feb. 1980)

This long-winded and confusing explanation of the structure of the Civil Service is a blueprint for other diatribes throughout the show. Not only is it quite funny, as he describes it as “briefly” describing his function, but it also shows Sir Humphrey’s aptitude for avoiding scrutiny, and the complexity of the Civil Service machine beneath the surface of government. These speeches are his tactic when avoiding difficult questions:

**Hacker:** When you give your evidence to the Think Tank, are you going to support my view that the Civil Service is over-manned and feather-bedded, or not? Yes or no? Straight answer.

**Sir Humphrey:** Well Minister, if you ask me for a straight answer, then I shall say that, as far as we can see, looking at it by and large, taking one thing with another in terms of the average of departments, then in the final analysis it is probably true to say, that at the end of the day, in general terms, you would probably find that, not to put too fine a point on it, there probably wasn’t very much in it one way or the other. As far as one can see, at this stage.

(The Writing on the Wall, 24 Mar. 1980)

Aside from the verbal irony of the contrast between Sir Humphrey’s promises of straightforward answers followed by barrages of drivel, which contribute to the overall comedy, these passages contributed greatly to the show’s popularity in the real world, acting as *Yes Minister*’s party piece, as Stephen Fry commented: ‘we love the idea of the coherence and articulacy of Sir Humphrey ... it’s one of the things you look forward to in an episode of *Yes Minister*.’ (in *Best Sitcom 2*, 2010). They helped the show become a ubiquitous part of British culture, enhancing it as an educational tool as well as a satire by making it more popular and accessible.

Furthermore, these diatribes were imperative to the show’s educational method. Listening to Sir Humphrey teaches the public to decipher politician-speak; as Lynn stated, ‘most training films [are] boring because they [show] you how to do things right... the way to make them entertaining was to show people doing things wrong.’ (in *Yes Minister Files*,

n.d). In other words, Sir Humphrey is both an education and a warning, showing everybody what a politician must never be: slimy, Machiavellian, and capable of fantastic verbal bombardments which allow him to avoid serious scrutiny. Just as Hacker is an exaggerated compendium of real but relatively harmless excesses, Sir Humphrey is a more grotesque bogeyman of government. Hacker and Sir Humphrey are two sides of the same coin: the one side showing everybody the worst of today's politicians, and the other showing the worst-case scenario for politicians everywhere. As such, it can be said that it is through Sir Humphrey and Hacker that *Yes Minister* fulfils the criteria in Highet's framework: they are realistic yet distorted and grotesque.

## Conclusion

Together with the show itself, Hacker and Sir Humphrey form the most spectacular parody of government, one that is timeless yet topical, both shocking and informative, critical but informal, and – fortunately for the audience – quite hilarious. Yet *Yes Minister*'s significance is greater than simply being the latest in a long line of fine British sitcoms, for it teaches its audience to think about politics by seeing what should never happen while noting that it does. *Yes Minister* may not be a poem per Johnson's definition of satire, but its effectiveness in censuring the folly of government through the use of Highet's techniques, completed by Jim Hacker and Sir Humphrey Appleby as two wonderful caricatures, fits it perfectly in the mould of a satire, and a classic one at that.

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# Clarifying Human Rights Obligations in Relation to Climate Change: Taking the World's Biggest Problem to the World's Highest Court

Jule Schnakenberg<sup>1</sup>

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*In 2019 PISFCC (Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change) launched a campaign seeking for an Advisory Opinion (AO) on climate change and human rights from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The human rights of people living in communities on the frontline of the climate crisis are being violated today. Attempts have been made by numerous Human Rights Bodies, Civil Society organizations and legal scholars to clarify state obligations with regards to climate change. This essay considers the legal basis for the ICJ AO, as well as its opportunities and challenges. Although this initiative is politically and legally ambitious, it can offer a unique and historic chance to deal with some of the greatest human rights violations caused by the climate crisis.*

A human rights perspective on climate change not only provides a stark warning of what is at stake - it also gives us a beacon of hope that we can solve this problem together. (John H. Knox, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, cited in UNEP, 2015)

## Introduction

The Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC) is a youth-led organization promoting climate change education and climate justice (Yeo, 2019). In 2019 they launched a campaign seeking for an Advisory Opinion (AO) on climate change and human rights from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Pursuant to Article 96 of the United Nations Charter, the General Assembly (UNGA) “may request the

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<sup>1</sup> Jule Schnakenberg is a LLB Law with English student at the University of Aberdeen. She has been engaged with climate justice groups and environmental groups from the age of 11. Her interests have since developed from doing environmental education with children to using international law to further progress on climate justice and intergenerational equity. The current paper was originally written for a course on International Human Rights Law.

International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on any legal question” (Charter of the United Nations, 1945, chapter XIV). The Government of Vanuatu is interested in pursuing the PISFCC-campaign and will address the UNGA with a resolution to be put to the ICJ (Stephens, 2019). This essay explores the PISFCC’s thesis: an AO by the ICJ can play a major role in clarifying state obligations to ensure human rights enjoyment in a changing climate. This essay considers the legal basis for the ICJ AO, as well as its opportunities and challenges. Although this initiative is politically and legally ambitious, it can offer a unique and historic chance to deal with some of the greatest human rights violations caused by the climate crisis.

## **1. Past initiative by Palau**

Palau had made an attempt to request an Advisory Opinion through the UNGA in 2011 (UN News, 2011). The question Palau proposed focused on state obligations to prevent transboundary harm that would be caused by state’s greenhouse gas emissions. PISFCC and Vanuatu are approaching the campaign for an Advisory Opinion from a human rights angle. It is well established that climate change infringes upon effective enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, PISFCC’s approach allows the ICJ to adopt a strong normative lens, that moves away from mandatory emission reduction targets<sup>2</sup> towards an approach which places human rights in the centre of international climate change conversations, including those on adaptation and loss and damage.

## **2. Climate Change and Human Rights**

The connection between climate change and human rights is omnipresent: the former has been shown to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and human rights challenges such as poverty, well-being, wealth

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<sup>2</sup> Mandatory emission reductions are a highly charged political issue and have been unsuccessful under the Kyoto Protocol. The Paris Agreement therefore in turn seeks to facilitate the process of state’s increasing their voluntary nationally determined contributions regularly.

inequality, gender relations, and many others (OHCHR, 2009), and to affect vulnerable groups most acutely (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2017). Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Program, remarks:

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to human rights of our generation, posing a serious risk to the fundamental rights to life, health, food and an adequate standard of living of individuals and communities across the world. ... While the United Nations and national governments acknowledge that climate change and the responses to it can impact on human rights<sup>3</sup>, there is less agreement on the corresponding obligations of governments and private actors to address this problem (UNEP & Sabin Centre, 2015, p. 8).

A wide spectrum of rights involved, a time lag between the actions taken and the consequences of climate change experienced in some parts of the world, as well as unwillingness to take responsibility for historic emissions have led to the reluctance in adopting a bold human rights-focused approach to climate change. An authoritative clarification of the “depth of state obligations” is needed.

### **3. The legal basis for the ICJ’s advisory opinion on Human Rights and Climate**

Article 38 of the ICJ Statute outlines the sources of international law that the judges consider when drafting an Advisory Opinion. They are: treaty law, customary international law, general principles of international law, past decisions, and academic writings (Statute of the International Court of Justice, 1946).

#### **3.1 *Treaty obligations***

The Yale report identified several sources of obligations arising from international treaties such as the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, the

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in the Male Declaration (2007) and Cancun Agreement (2010).

UNCLOS and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. An example for obligations arising from a Human Rights treaty: “Convention on the Rights of the Child refers to the environment plainly: (...) [it] requires States to pursue the full realization of the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution.” (UNHRC, 2011). Other examples are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR): “States have an obligation to enact legal and institutional frameworks to protect human rights against the effects [of climate change]. This is because (...) the ICCPR and ICESCR both include obligations to protect human rights from harms caused by third parties” (UNEP & Sabin Centre, 2015).

The Preamble of the Paris Agreement provides that: “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights”.<sup>4</sup> The joint report by CIEL (2017, p. 5) finds that: “All states that negotiated the [Paris] Agreement are already parties to more than one core human rights treaty and bear international legal obligations to respect, fulfil, and protect the rights of people.” Therefore, human rights protection in mitigation and adaptation under the Paris Agreement should (in theory already) be double-secured by other treaties. The judges at the ICJ will look to the Paris Agreement, as well as other treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICCPR, the ICESCR, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in their process of drafting an Advisory Opinion. It is very likely that the judges will find the link between human rights and climate change in several of the treaties mentioned above. Human rights advocacy groups, such as CIEL (Centre for International Environmental Law) and The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have made significant efforts to interpret a variety

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<sup>4</sup> Paris Agreement (12 December 2015) adopted at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris.



of those treaty provisions and fill them with obligations. They find in a report (CIEL & GIESCR, 2019, p. 6) that:

The most well-known of the HRTBs, the Human Rights Committee, has not yet addressed climate change through its State reporting procedure. However, in November 2018, the Committee adopted its new General Comment No. 36 on the right to life (Article 6, ICCPR), which acknowledges the connection between the right to life and the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. (...) [The Committee] reminded States that, in addition to their voluntary commitments made under the international climate change agreements, all States have human rights obligations, that should guide them in the design and implementation of measures to address climate change.

It would be hardly imaginable that the ICJ judges would be able to ignore those authoritative interpretations and either refuse to answer the question posed to it, or deliver an unhelpful opinion by avoiding to answer the key question. The judges would then have to intentionally disregard years of academic debate orally and in writing on the topic of state obligations with regards to climate change.

### **3.2 Customary law**

Deppermann (2013, p. 315) writes: “Even though the nations involved have significantly hedged their commitment to human rights through treaties, enough human rights norms have reached customary status to provide the ICJ with plenty of applicable law to draw upon in an advisory opinion.” The obligations arising from the Paris Agreement are growing to become part of customary international law. For example, UNEP (2019) puts it as follows:

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has begun recommending that States stop some oil and gas developments (...) because those plans ran ‘counter to the State party’s commitments under the Paris Agreement and would have a negative impact on global warming and on the enjoyment of economic and social rights by the world’s population’.

Establishing State Practice, one requirement for the establishment of an international customary rule, remains a challenge. Consistency, generality and duration: those three elements of state practice are not predominant in climate policy internationally. Very few states seem to honour their commitments under the Paris Agreement, which raises concerns about the wider acceptance of those obligations as part of customary law. Henriksen (2019, p. 29) writes:

All state acts may be taken into consideration; both physical and verbal acts, like diplomatic statements, press releases, official manuals and statements in international organizations. (...) Resolutions and declaration by international organizations constitute the sum of individual acts by the participating states and may therefore also be relevant.

Most international organizations composed of the UN member states and national governments have issued statements on human rights and climate change (OHCHR, 2020). This can be used by the ICJ to deduce a state practice of recognizing the intersection between climate change and Human Rights. If the ICJ does draw this inference and recognizes the establishment of certain principles in customary law, the Advisory Opinion is more likely to be delivered in a way that is more favourable to extensive state obligations on Human Rights and climate change.

### **3.3 Judicial decisions**

Under Art 38(1)(d) of the ICJ statute judicial decisions may be relevant if they come from institutions such as: “ITLOS [International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea], (...) relevant specialized regional international courts, [and] national courts (...) of last instance, such as supreme and constitutional courts” (Henriksen, 2019, p. 31). In 2017 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found in their Advisory Opinion ‘*The Environment and Human Rights*’: “the American Convention on Human Rights gives rise to an autonomous right to a healthy environment

and to state duties that are both preventive and extraterritorial in nature” (Campbell-Durufle & Atapattu, 2018, p. 321). This has been a groundbreaking decision for several reasons: the court established that: (1) “climate change may affect the obligation of states to respect the right to a healthy environment, which the (...) Court defined as an enforceable right”; (2) “the court made it clear that climate change could affect a whole range of procedural and substantive rights”; (3) “the court stated that the impact of environmental degradation on economic, social, and cultural rights is justiciable in and of itself” (Campbell-Durufle & Atapattu, 2018). Such findings support the PISFCC campaign for an AO on Climate Change and Human Rights, as it provides the ICJ with authoritative writings and opinions by some of the world’s most distinguished judicial bodies.

Since 2011, strategic litigation has contributed to the development of a body of case law, in which human rights have been a deciding factor. For example, the Urgenda-case in front of the Dutch Supreme Court (*Urgenda Foundation v The State of the Netherlands*, 2015) and *Ashgar Leghari v Federation of Pakistan* (2015). UNHRC (2011) reported: “The European Court of Human Rights has also contributed to elucidating the human rights and environmental relationship, particularly in cases involving environmental pollution. (...) The Court has also established that the State has positive duties to protect individuals from environmental risks. These judicial decisions seem to suggest that “there are pathways opening in international law towards overcoming previous jurisprudential roadblocks” (Campbell-Durufle & Atapattu, 2018, p. 8). Therefore, it can be assumed that the ICJ will take this authoritative guidance from domestic supreme courts into account, and be influenced by those court’s inclination towards recognizing human rights as actionable claims.

Existing treaty obligations established principles in customary international law and human-rights friendly judicial decisions collectively paint the picture of the likelihood that the ICJ will have enough authoritative legal evidence to deliver an ambitious Advisory Opinion. The ICJ accepting jurisdiction for this Advisory Opinion can be a strong signal in itself: it would be the first time that the world’s highest court reaffirms that: “The harms

caused by greenhouse gas emissions (...) can be considered relevant to the maintenance of international peace and security” (Kysar, 2013, p. 11). This is a core element of the United Nations founding principles (UN Charter, 1945), hence of importance to all UN member states.

#### **4. The ICJ and Human Rights**

The ICJ has greatly contributed to the development of international human rights law and “in doing so continues to provide solutions to mounting international problems” (Bedi, 2007, abstract). Gandhi (2011, p. 555) finds that: “Ever since its establishment, the Court has played a significant part in the evolution and protection of human rights. (...) It will no doubt continue to be engaged actively and successfully in the international protection of human rights.”. Bedi supports this view that: “The jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice generally demonstrates that no rule of international law can be interpreted and applied without regard to (...) the basic principles of human rights.” (Bedi, 2007, abstract). Both scholars agree that the ICJ has in the past and will continue to be involved in legal issues concerning human rights, and is unlikely to dare disregard this important legal principle as it would set a dangerous precedent in the name of a UN court. Therefore, the ICJ is well suited to consider the Advisory Opinion initiated by the state of Vanuatu and PISFCC, as it grapples with the urgent questions of human rights law in the climate change context.

##### **4.1 Clarifying State obligations**

Deppermann (2013, p. 313) writes: There are (...) two ways in which aspects of soft law, like an ICJ advisory opinion, can crystallize into hard law... the ICJ could convert soft law assumptions about human rights obligations into clearer legal norms that have the capacity to influence future legal decisions. Secondly, an ICJ advisory opinion could lose its status as soft law and become hard law if another agency or government gives it the force of hard law by adopting it, or if the nations involved voluntarily choose to accept the provisions of the advisory opinion.

Using the tripartite division of state obligations to ensure citizens enjoyment of their rights<sup>5</sup>, three types of obligations arise: respect, protect, and fulfil (UNEP and Sabin Centre, 2015). The court might use these three categories to formulate state obligations in their Advisory Opinion, using guidance provided by, e.g., the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment (2019). OHCHR (2018, para 9) notes that:

Complying with human rights in the context of climate change is a duty of both State and non-State actors. This requires **respecting** human rights, by **refraining** from the adoption of measures that could worsen climate change; **protecting** human rights, by effectively **regulating** private actors to ensure that their actions do not worsen climate change; and **fulfilling** human rights, by the adoption of policies.

## 4.2 Clarified obligations can help advance domestic litigation

While some might be worried that an unhelpful opinion could create a negative precedent for domestic courts, it is more likely that domestic courts will look to the ICJ Advisory Opinion to find evidence for customary duties under international law with regards to climate change when deciding climate change cases brought to them. As reported by the New York Times: “Attorney Matt Pawa (...) said an opinion could act as a “building block” for establishing legal principles. (...) Pawa noted that the [US] Supreme Court not infrequently will look to principles of international law in resolving domestic law cases” (Hurley, 2011). Nolkaemper (2014, p. 538) writes that national courts can look to ICJ judgements “to support conclusions drawn on the basis of legislation, or to fill gaps in national law”.

## 4.3 Strong signal

Besides the concrete legal outputs, the reach of the ICJ AO go beyond practicalities, but can rather contribute to a change in mindset, generate attention for the issue of climate justice and propel citizens,

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<sup>5</sup> First raised in academic writing by Henry Shue (1980).

companies and organizations to respond to the authoritative findings. Sands (2015, p. 11) finds that: “The ICJ can (...) contribute to a change of consciousness, and these developments can in turn catalyse new and needed actions. A clear statement by a body such as the ICJ (...) may itself contribute to a change in attitudes and behaviour.” A prominent example is “the announcement made by the Japanese company Rakuten, posted on its website the day after the ICJ gave its judgment that Japan’s “scientific whaling” was unlawful, a judgment that was directed only to Japan and had nothing to say about retail sales. The announcement said: ‘In accordance with the March 31, 2014 ruling by the International Court of Justice, Rakuten Ichiba today asked merchants to cancel sales of whale meat products on the Rakuten Ichiba marketplace’ (Sands, 2015, p. 11). The decision was published only a day after ICJ reached their judgement.

## **5. Challenges**

There are of course challenges to obtaining clarifications on human rights from the ICJ in relation to climate change, several are listed here. The legitimacy objection and the competence objection can be raised here as to whether the ICJ judges are qualified enough to issue an advisory opinion involving complex climate science issues, mitigation strategies and adaptation plans. Furthermore, there is a risk for potential bias by the judges, arising from, e.g., their country of origin’s standpoint in climate debates. The question of who the right-holders and duty-bearers are “is particularly relevant where environmental degradation results from the activities of private actors, such as legal entities and transnational corporations” (Kysar, 2013, p. 56). Moreover, economic, social and cultural rights only have limited enforceability, which might pose a challenge when trying to enforce the ICJ’s findings in front of national courts (Campbell-Durufle & Atapattu, 2018, p. 323). Resource constraints affect states’ ability to respect, protect and fulfil their obligations.

However, progressive realization is an inaccurate response to the seriousness of the challenges faced and a narrow time-window for global action. Another challenge is the involvement of the ICJ in the on-going

climate change negotiations within the UNFCCC: there is a question of whether the Advisory Opinion would overlap with or infringe upon that territory, and hence undermine the negotiations. Bodansky (2017, p. 708) finds it rather unlikely that any state party would be moved to significant actions “given their entrenched positions.” He advises the ICJ to not look at the “hot-button” issues, as it ‘would inject the Court into extremely political debates, likely damaging the Court’s reputation and exacerbating extensions among states in the negotiations’ (p. 708). The phrasing of the actual question will hence be of great importance to ensure, that the Advisory Opinion is viewed as a matter of international law and not contemporary politics.

## **Conclusion**

Assuming the UNGA votes in favour of the Vanuatu resolution, the ICJ will consider different sources of law and pick up the puzzle pieces coming from domestic supreme courts, international organization, overwhelming scientific evidence, and academic scholarship to formulate their answer. So far, international law is seeing a quilt of patch-work protections, rather than blanket protection, carefully woven out of clarified substantial legal obligations by states. PISFCC can push the international legal system to grow with its challenges. The advisory opinion would not automatically ramp up ambitions towards the UNFCCC’s 1.5 Degrees objective set out in the Paris climate Agreement; international negotiations will always remain essential. “It would not be a panacea. But it deserves consideration as part of a portfolio of approaches to the climate change problem” (Bodansky, 2017, p. 692) Other pathways of seeking progress on much needed international climate action through the international legal system ought to be pursued as well.

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# The Perpetuation of Social Inequality in an Educational Context

Tereza Trojanová<sup>1</sup>

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*Social inequality is a persistent issue in contemporary societies despite the efforts to eliminate it. This paper argues that inequality is reproduced over generations and that education plays an important role in this process. It introduces ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Karen Jones, who have addressed the issue in their writings, and merges their perspectives into a concise account of how social inequality is reproduced in an educational context. This account sheds light on the complexity of the issue and the fact that social inequality influences our lives on every level. This paper further argues that a family's social standing influences the outcome of their children's education; upper-class children are equipped with material and non-material resources which allow them to pursue high-quality education, where they are favoured over children without such resources. Privileged children are also likely to build solid intellectual self-trust, contrary to disadvantaged children. The inequality is in this way transmitted over generations. It is suggested that while accessible education has been seen as a solution to the reproduction of social inequality, without addressing the issue of how education itself reproduces inequalities, the problem cannot be solved.*

## Introduction

Despite the widespread notion about the meritocratic nature of most Western societies, many social and personal circumstances in those societies are shaped by systems of dominance and subordination. Systems of social inequality facilitate societal advancement for particular groups of people, whereas these processes are oppositely complicated or even made impossible for those facing systemic discrimination. These processes can be explored at almost any level of individual and social life because they permeate all these levels. They concern the power structures of the state and politics as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Tereza Trojanová a third-year Philosophy and Sociology student from the Czech Republic, interested in how sociological and philosophical perspectives inform an understanding of our every-day lives. Recently, she has been focusing on gender and racial inequality. In her free time, she enjoys lively discussions on current issues with her family and friends, as well as reading Harry Potter for the fifth time.

institutions like education and employment, as they reach all the way “down” to shape individuals’ definitions of their own identities.

In this essay, I will explore how systems of social inequality reproduce themselves in an educational context, while considering Pierre Bourdieu’s account of the reproduction of social inequality and Karen Jones’s account of intellectual self-trust. Bourdieu believes that a social class provides its members with various resources that allow the transmission of social standing and the reproduction of inequality through generations (Inglis & Thorpe, 2019). Jones (2012, p.246) claims that the generation of intellectual self-trust is porous to social power and can be influenced by negative stereotypes or group privilege. I will further discuss how the two approaches complement each other and how, when joined together, they offer a deeper understanding of the role of social bias and privilege in perpetuating inequality in education. This results in mis-aligned intellectual self-trust, which further feeds into the unequal process. Finally, I will address the insufficiency of Bourdieu’s and Jones’s combined theory, revealing the need for correction if the theory is to be used for comprehending the reproduction of inequality.

## **1. Bourdieu’s account of social reproduction**

First, I will introduce Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction, which suggests that the transmission of economic, social, and cultural resources over generations keeps upper classes in their privileged positions and lower classes disadvantaged (Dillon, 2019, pp.433-434). One of the key concepts in his theory is habitus, which refers to specific ways of thinking and acting integral to social classes. Bourdieu considers social class to be central in determining people’s lives and therefore differentiates habitus between upper and lower-class behaviours. Habitus, for Bourdieu, is a way of transcending the divide between social structure and individual agency, as it is an interplay between the two (Inglis & Thorpe, 2019, p.229). Success and failure in life, then, are determined by the amount of different kinds of capital, another concept established in Bourdieu's theory. He distinguishes three types of capital: economic, social, and cultural capital, which represent

different kinds of power (Dillon, 2019, p.429). While economic capital is the most straightforward one, referring to financial resources, cultural capital is no less important. It constitutes a sum of everyday cultural habits, formal education, and cultural competence, which determines how easily an individual can adapt to and act in different social settings. Cultural capital includes the notion of “taste” – what people wear, what they eat or what kind of art they prefer – which is distinct for each social class (Dillon, 2019, p.430). Social capital refers to individuals’ social networks, which enable them to access opportunities that might extend their stock of capital (Dillon, 2019, p.431). Upper classes possess high levels of all three kinds of capital, while lower classes possess low levels of capital. One kind of capital can be exchanged for another; for example, economic capital can be used to achieve educational success, resulting in higher levels of cultural capital.

Upper classes use their capital to sustain (reproduce and pass onto their children) their position and to keep lower classes in their powerless position, a behaviour regarded as a largely unconscious process. This all is powered by symbolic violence, or the demonstration of upper-class superiority through the value of taste – for example, preferences in eating, speaking, and clothing. Habitus influences the position an individual can occupy within a certain field, so in education, where cultural capital is usually most valued, upper-class children will generally be viewed more positively, as they are likely to have more cultural capital than individuals from lower classes, in addition to their economic and social advantages. Bourdieu talks about children's internalisation of these inequalities, which leads to upper-class children's positive identification of themselves and conversely, the negative self-identification of lower-class children, who blame themselves for their low achievement levels and social positions (Bone, 2020).

## **2. Jones's account of intellectual self-trust**

Now I will turn to Jones's account of intellectual self-trust. In *The Politics of Intellectual Self-trust*, Jones suggests that the best definition of intellectual self-trust derives from a mixed affective/cognitive account; in

other words, intellectual self-trust in a domain is an attitude of optimism about one's cognitive competence within that domain (Jones, 2012, p. 242). "Domain" here signifies that a person can have a positive attitude towards their cognitive competence in some areas but not in others, and while it can be said that a person is generally self-trusting, such claims presuppose a contextually relevant set of domains in which a person trusts themselves (e.g. mathematics, biology or critical thinking). Therefore, assessments of self-trust should always be domain-specific (Jones, 2012, p. 239). Self-trust is reflexive, meaning that the subject can consciously perceive their level of self-trust and can act on it. Jones introduces four dispositions that are characteristic of someone with intellectual self-trust: feelings of confidence about one's ability in the domain, willing reliance on the deliverances of one's methods within the domain, assertion that what one thinks is the true deliverance of their trusted methods, and the fact that self-trust tends to put brakes on self-reflection (Jones, 2012, pp. 243-244). This indicates that high levels of self-trust are likely to accumulate over time, as these people view their achievements in a better light than people with low levels of self-trust. Self-trust is appropriate if one's feelings of confidence match one's domain-based competence and self-trust is misaligned when one's feelings of confidence are at a lower or higher level than one's domain-based competence. The concern of this essay is the mis-aligned self-trust in educational settings.

Inappropriate self-trust occurs due to how self-trust is generated; it is produced interactively through internalising other people's reactions to the results of our cognitive abilities, while other people's reactions to us – and our reactions to them – are often influenced by unconscious stereotypes and prejudices. Jones writes:

Social relations of dominance and subordination affect our intellectual self-trust because they affect both the way others respond to us as inquirers and shape our own understandings of our cognitive abilities. Unjust social environments tend to give rise to miscalibrated self-trust (Jones, 2012, p. 245).

In the educational setting, teachers may generally treat white or rich children as more skilful and promising than children of colour or poor children, leading to higher levels of intellectual self-trust in privileged children than those who have systematic disadvantages.

In this sense, the level of a child's or student's intellectual self-trust will always, to a certain extent, reflect their position in society, which is prone to engender more or less explicit manifestations of inequality. However, it is not the aim of this essay to show exactly the extent to which intellectual self-trust reflects inequality embedded in a society; rather it intends to show that this reflection of unequal processes also occurs in educational settings, contrary to the assumption that children and students are treated solely according to their abilities and that their academic success is determined solely by their abilities.

### **3. The joining of Bourdieu's and Jones's accounts**

In this section, I will review how the two views work together and how they can help to build understanding of the issue in the context of education. The consideration present in both arguments is that the workings of society are influenced by class privilege, negative stereotypes, and identity-based discrimination. Its consequences are reflected in the circumstances of individual lives, including individual identification and views about one's abilities, which tend to reproduce themselves. I will now look more closely at this process in educational contexts.

Jones proposes that intellectual self-trust is a positive attitude to our cognitive abilities (Jones, 2012, pp. 242-243). As self-trust is created interactively, in an educational setting it is mainly established through positive feedback and the affirmation of our results and opinions by authorities (teachers) and peers (classmates). Bourdieu claims that in an academic setting, students with higher levels of cultural capital are likely to be perceived as more credible than students with lower levels of cultural capital, because upper-class culture is valued over low-class culture in society, which is inherent in education as well (Dillon, 2019, pp. 437-438). Bourdieu further emphasises the importance of family in determining the



level of one's cultural capital; only children who grew up in families with cultural capital, which exposed them to everyday cultural experiences and habits, can possess the cultural disposition required by schools (Dillon, 2019, p. 434). Bourdieu writes:

The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me (...) as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success (...) to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

High levels of cultural capital, often related to upper-class membership, are manifested in sophisticated manners of speech, expensive and fashionable clothing, but also in the way a person moves their body. Upper-class students with high levels of cultural capital are regarded as "talented" and are encouraged more often by teachers than their classmates from lower-class backgrounds, who do not speak with such sophisticated language and look "poorer" in the way they dress. Students from lower-class backgrounds may even be discouraged by teachers, who unconsciously underestimate lower-class students' abilities.

According to Bourdieu, this process is internalised by students and translated into their perceptions of themselves. This internalisation is parallel to Jones's proposal of intellectual self-trust; students internalise the way teachers and peers respond to them, which results in different levels of intellectual self-trust for students, based not on their real abilities but on unconscious society-wide biases that are acted on by teachers and classmates. Alongside establishing levels of intellectual self-trust, students come to see this process and its outcome as "natural". They think it is the natural state of society because they are influenced by society-wide values and opinions that privilege upper-classes, which they understand as a common-sense way of seeing the world. This applies to both lower-class students and to upper-class students, who come to see their levels of intellectual self-trust as appropriate, even when it is either too low or too high, respectively.

It is important to note here that in this context, neither teachers nor students are fully aware that everything they do is expressive of the habitus they have been socialised into, according to Bourdieu (Inglis & Thorpe, 2019, p.232). Therefore, teachers do not realise that the way they respond to different groups of students might be unfair and prejudiced, since they are unaware of the internalised inequalities of the society they live in. They do not realise how their society systematically values upper-class culture over lower-class culture and see it as a natural state. This remark does not lessen the importance of individual responsibility but aims to show that this issue reaches far beyond “mean” individuals and concerns all members of a society.

#### **4. The reproduction of intellectual self-trust and social inequality**

While students from lower-class backgrounds come to see themselves negatively as a result of a lack of recognition from teachers and peers, upper-class students become more and more confident as they are continually encouraged and reassured about their abilities. According to Jones (2012, p.244), one characteristic of individuals with high levels of intellectual self-trust is an unconscious unwillingness to question their own abilities; consequently, when they fail in a cognitive task, they attribute it to external factors. This process functions oppositely for individuals with low levels of intellectual self-trust, as they are not reassured as often and may therefore question their abilities more. Thus, when they fail, they are more likely to attribute it to their own cognitive failure, leading to even lower levels of self-trust. When students have either too much or too little intellectual self-trust, they are more likely to interpret situations accordingly, forcing them to overestimate or underestimate their abilities.

I have demonstrated how some individuals who come into the educational system are already in a better position than others. The educational system then reinforces the advantages or disadvantages of different groups of students. It perpetuates the inequalities in how students perceive themselves, their abilities, and their options. Bourdieu argues that education is the institution in society that reproduces inequalities both

objectively and subjectively, through positioning individuals in the social hierarchy and by inculcating them with ways of perceiving the social world (Bourdieu in Dillon, 2019, p.434). Students who are privileged develop, throughout the years, high levels of intellectual self-trust and are more likely to be academically successful than students with continuously reaffirmed low levels of intellectual self-trust. Disadvantaged students may not have enough intellectual self-trust to apply to universities and may be discouraged from doing so by their social group. People with valued university degrees will have better paid jobs and will most likely develop even higher levels of intellectual self-trust than people without a university degree and a lower income. When people in socially advantaged groups have children, they will be able to provide them with “appropriate” resources (economic and cultural capital) that will help them build solid intellectual self-trust and achieve educational goals. The privilege is transferred from generation to generation, reproducing inequalities in self-identification and educational outcomes.

The issue of the reproduction of social inequality in educational contexts is particularly important because the expansion of education after World War II was seen as a way to secure individual upward mobility and social progress (Dillon, 2019, p.435). However, nowadays, it is clear that a possible solution to this issue cannot lie in promoting access to education on its own, because inequality is not expressed and transmitted solely by economic capital; it is cultural capital that is transmitted in education. Therefore, accessible education would need to go hand in hand with the promotion of cultural competencies that are required in educational settings and often associated with upper-class backgrounds (Dillon, 2019, p.437). The acquisition of these cultural competencies might enable students from lower-class backgrounds to build higher levels of intellectual self-trust in school, which makes achieving higher educational goals in the future more probable and may ultimately lead to reducing the transmission of inequality.

## **5. Evaluation: the lack of intersectionality**

It is time to reflect on the theory I have presented. The combination of Bourdieu’s sociological account, focused on social structure and systems

of reproduction, and Jones's more philosophical account, focused on how intellectual self-trust is established at an individual level, is a helpful framework that reveals the processes of social reproduction and sheds light on its complexity. It focuses predominantly on social class as a determining factor of one's habitus and capital, which corresponds to how Bourdieu views the social world. However, it does not adequately emphasise certain important aspects of the reproduction of inequalities; there are more existing systems of dominance and subordination than social class hierarchy. Though Bourdieu recognises this, he considers social class to be most important. However, when considering persisting gender inequalities, systemic racism, xenophobia, homophobia (and others) that are at play in shaping people's lives, the theory I have presented may seem too simplistic. It does not sufficiently illuminate how these issues permeate social class and how they relate to each other; in other words, the theory does not manage to describe the inherent intersectionality of reproduction of social inequality in education. It recognises class-based identity but does not mention the other identities and roles that people occupy and pursue, some of which are more important in given contexts. Focusing predominantly on social class could, for example, omit the experiences of a black upper-class girl, who is viewed more negatively than her white upper-class classmate.

This being said, the theory of social reproduction, with a focus on intellectual self-trust in educational settings, is an insightful and helpful one. It brings into focus the way in which the outcomes of educational systems are influenced by many factors *besides* the actual abilities of children and students. These factors are a part of society-wide conditioning, which is in many cases unequal and reflected in all of its parts, including educational contexts. Though there are many additional factors to consider, this paper has outlined this particular theory with the intent of prompting further discussion on the topic.

## **Conclusion**

The combination of Jones's account of intellectual self-trust and Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction provides an insightful framework

for comprehending how social inequality permeates educational contexts, shapes individual achievements, and reproduces itself over time. It explains the unconscious internalisation of society-wide values and opinions, which privileges certain groups of people over others. Both teachers and students internalise these values and treat other people accordingly, which leads to further consolidation of inequality, when students come to see themselves as responsible for their failures or achievements, though these could be shaped by unconscious, prejudiced behaviour on their teacher's part. Current educational systems perpetuate social inequality, which can be observed on a macro-level as well as on a micro-level. Intellectual self-trust of individual students is shaped by larger social processes of inequality, often leading them to create inaccurate judgements of themselves. While Bourdieu's theory offers an understanding of the reproduction of social inequality, Jones's account of intellectual self-trust recognises how the reproduction works at an individual level, bringing attention to the concrete example of how human faculties are shaped by unequal environments. As demonstrated, both theories expand on each other and generate new perspectives.

As I argue in this essay, it is also important to recognise the intersectionality of social reproduction in education (social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.) in order to be able to describe it, spot it, and begin working towards a more equal educational environment. This could be achieved if disadvantaged groups were given the opportunity to acquire cultural dispositions that are required in schools. In this light, the combination of Bourdieu's and Jones's theories could be viewed as a small step forward in the fight for more equal educational opportunities and in the social world.

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