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Between Policy and Peril: How Italy Fails Its Regugees

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This project investigates whether Italian migration policies from the past 10 years perpetuate violence in refugee reception facilities. While there is no research looking at the relationship between migration policies and violence in reception facilities, previous researchers have examined the political tension within the European Union (EU) regarding migration policy, and the relationship between national sovereignty and supranational governance. The multidimensional nature of the social suffering theory is used to help explain the causes of suffering happening in the reception facilities in Italy. This research will collect primary data from two interviews, and the secondary data from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports, Asylum Information Database (AID) reports, and Italian laws decrees and migration policies. Furthermore, a thematic analysis of the interviews and articles will evaluate trends between migration policies and violence in refugee reception facilities. The results from this research found that Italian migration policies and the Italian government perpetuate violence and unnecessary suffering for asylum seekers in reception facilities. Constant policy revisions produce a systematic form of violence for asylum seekers, while the Italian government violates basic human rights by not providing basic services in both levels of reception facilities. Bringing to light the issues in the reception facilities and the challenges for asylum seekers helps bring awareness to what is happening in these facilities, while pushing for policy reform to improve the reception facilities' conditions to ensure future refugees do not have to endure the same violence and suffering.

Key Words: Italy, Migration Policies, Asylum Seekers

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Imagine being forced to flee your home due to war, persecution, or political collapse only to arrive in a place that promises safety but delivers fear and silent suffering. In Italy, reception facilities meant to house asylum seekers have become holding pens where vulnerability is met with neglect, and rights are reduced to rhetoric. Cramped rooms, inadequate healthcare, and scarce access to legal aid become part of everyday life. Trauma you hoped to escape is compounded by a new kind of violence: systemic neglect masked by legal bureaucracy. The new violence is not always loud, it seeps in quietly when systems designed to protect instead erode dignity. The buildings may wear the label of "reception," but in reality the buildings represent confinement and confusion, a limbo where survival eclipses stability. Behind the bureaucratic language of immigration policy are lives caught in cycles of institutional violence and abandonment. Italian laws, often revised with shifting political winds, fail to account for the human cost of their inconsistencies. Slowly, but in plain sight, asylum seekers become victims of the broken system.

The Dublin Act implemented in the EU member states significantly increased the number of refugees in Italy since many asylum seekers cross the Mediterranean Sea and enter Europe through Italy. For clarification, the Dublin Act requires all refugees to claim asylum in the European country of the refugees' point of entry. Mendola and Busetta (2018) note how since the implementation of the Dublin Act and the refugee crisis in 2015, Italy jumped from 84,000 to 130,000 asylum applications. Italy has threatened to withhold billions of Euros from the EU unless other member states help with the rapidly increasing amount of asylum seekers in Italy (Davis, 2020, p. 264). To grasp what is happening in Italy, it is crucial to understand how the implementation of the Dublin Act further intensifies the strain on Italy's resources and infrastructure. Research on the laws and policies in place in Italy can serve as references for future policy change.

Italy does not treat all refugees in reception facilities equally. Refugees in level 2 facilities, such as SAI (Sistema di accoglienza e integrazione), also referred to as SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati), receive more resources and better accommodations than refugees in level 1 facilities, such as CAS (Centri di Accoglienza straordinaria) reception facilities. Buccione and Zurla (2022) report CAS facilities only provide food and lodging. Asylum seekers in CAS facilities cannot work outside of the facility, thus requiring asylum seekers to find and fund any additional services that might be needed (Acocella & Turchi, 2020, p. 80). On the other hand, SAI facilities provide an abundance of services to help with social integration such as language classes, legal services, job assistance, medical and mental health support, vocational training, and school for children (Terlizzi, 2020, pp. 20-21). While the Italian government does not give refugees a voice when deciding the reception facility placement, vulnerable people such as women and children are more likely to be placed in a level two facility. Research

on the stark contrast in services and living conditions can reveal how the legal and policy framework in Italy leads to unequal treatment of refugees. Understanding these differences is key to evaluating how Italian laws and policies influence the outcomes for refugees in Italy's reception system.

This research examines the relationship between laws and policies in Italy and Italian reception facilities. The research focuses on how the relationship may perpetuate the mistreatment of refugees in Italian reception facilities. I collected and analyzed data from three structured interviews, various NGO and census reports, along with Italian laws and policies. The interviewees were one Italian social worker and two current refugees in Italy. Italian laws change so frequently with few people looking into or caring about how the changes impact reception facilities and refugees in Italy. This research aims to pinpoint specific disparities in the law and how it negatively impacts refugees so policy changes can occur.

The Italian migration policies and the Italian government perpetuate violence and unnecessary suffering for asylum seekers in reception facilities. Government policies produce a systemic form of violence for asylum seekers due to the constant revision of the policies. The government violates human rights by not providing basic services in both levels of reception facilities. The literature review explains the political tension within the EU in regards to immigration, the debate between scholars on national sovereignty and supranational governance, and the usage of the social suffering theory. The research design describes the interview process, how the secondary data was collected, and how the data was analyzed using thematic coding. The analysis section dives into the living conditions in reception facilities, asylum seekers integration into Italian society, and the legal, social, and political challenges for asylum seekers. Finally, the discussion section determines the theoretical implications and the global importance of the analysis findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

European Union Immigration

Scholars investigated the political tension within the European Union (EU) regarding migration policy. The tension stems from the lack of solidarity in migration governance as agreed upon by member states. Bryne et al. (2020) found the Dublin Regulation, which assigns responsibility for asylum seekers to the first country of entry, placed disproportionate pressure on frontline states like Greece and Italy. Instead of adopting collective solutions, many member states resisted efforts to relocate asylum seekers, undermining the principle of burden-sharing (Bryne et al., 2020, p. 875). Luedtke (2009) similarly found that national governments often use EU directives to justify restricting migrant rights rather than expanding protections. Eastern European countries like the Visegrád states (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) were reluctant to accept asylum quotas following the

2015 migration crisis (Favi, 2022). Although scholars already acknowledge the failures of other member states, research has not covered the direct impacts these failures have on frontline states. This study will look at how the failures of other member states to help alleviate the pressure of Italy receiving refugees impacts the laws Italy put in place and the conditions of the reception facilities.

Scholars examined the relationship between national sovereignty and supranational governance. EU institutions aim to standardize immigration policies, but national governments choose to prioritize domestic concerns. Luedtke (2009) investigated how EU institutions such as the European Commission and European Parliament advocate for liberal immigration policies, yet national leaders often push back by implementing restrictive measures. The Hague Programme and the Lisbon Treaty attempted to shift more control to EU institutions, yet member states retained significant discretion over legal migration (Luedtke, 2009, p. 3). Similarly, Byrne et al. (2020) noticed that this power struggle intensified during the 2015 refugee crisis, exposing weaknesses in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which led to the collapse of key EU legal commitments as some states ignored asylum regulations. The battle between national interest and European integration for migration governance will have a direct impact on the laws and policies put in place in Italy. Therefore, the current study will explore the impacts of the greater EU migration policies on Italian laws and the violence refugees face in Italy.

Social Suffering Theory

Social suffering has an interdisciplinary nature of exploration. Theorists use various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy to address how social structures contribute to suffering. Renault (2010) discovered how social suffering is a critical concept for understanding contemporary injustices, necessitating an interdisciplinary approach integrating social and psychological dimensions. Similarly, Victora (2011) found how the anthropological perspective argues that suffering is not just a biological or psychological phenomenon but a social process embedded in historical and political contexts. Scholars have not used the Social Suffering theory in relation to refugees or the refugee crisis. The following study will use the interdisciplinary nature of the theory to discover if social structures contribute to the suffering of asylum seekers in Italy.

Social suffering theorists view suffering as a multidimensional issue. The concept of suffering extends beyond individual distress, encompassing political, economic, and institutional factors, such as laws, contributing to collective suffering. Maconick et al. (2020) recognize the difficulty for people to separate the social and political contexts responsible for perpetuating suffering in the forms of poverty, trauma, and powerlessness. Victora (2011) states how Indigenous communities' suffering and health outcomes are a

direct result of policies failing to address the historical marginalization of Indigenous people, thus reinforcing structural inequalities. She noticed how the Indigenous communities face persistent barriers to healthcare access, cultural erasure, and systemic discrimination, all of which create a cycle of physical and emotional suffering that is not merely an individual affliction but a collective condition produced and sustained by socio-political forces (Victora, 2011, pp. 4-6). While scholars recognize a link between political institutional factors and suffering, little research has been done specifically looking at the link between migration policies and suffering. The use of the theory in this study will help to determine if a link between migration policies and suffering exists in Italy that affects asylum seekers.

European immigration laws in relation to the 2015 migration crisis and its impact on refugees is a salient topic. Even though an abundance of research is available on the matter, not much has been done specifically looking at Italian immigration laws and the effects the laws have on refugees. Therefore, the current project focuses on Italy since Italy is an entry point country on the Mediterranean Sea and was hit head on by the mass wave of refugees in 2015. Specifically, the following research will examine the link between Italian immigration laws and the violence refugees endure due to said laws. The research will also investigate if the Social Suffering theory provides an explanation for the link between Italian laws and the violence/suffering refugees face. By doing so, the results and conclusions from this research could aid the Italian government in recognizing the detrimental impacts specific laws have on refugees. Furthermore, since not much research is available on this topic, results could help local Italian nonprofit organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), fight for the basic human rights of refugees and help improve refugees' experiences in Italy by exposing the misfortunes happening in the reception facilities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For primary data, I conducted two separate interviews with two participants. The participants for the study consist of one Italian social worker and one refugee currently living in a reception facility in Italy. I reached out via email to roughly 50 academic professionals around the world who are doing or have done work with refugees in Italy. Out of the 50 people, one person shared the contact information of an Italian social worker, who then provided the contact of a refugee willing to participate in the study. The interviews consisted of 14 to 17 structured questions that I conducted over Zoom, accommodating the participants' language preferences in either English or Italian. Interviewing the social worker and refugee provided unique insights and perspectives of the reception facilities and interactions with the law through first-hand experiences. The social worker provided an "outsider" perspective while the refugee provided the "insider" perspective of the reception facility and asylum procedures.

To help further explain the relationship between Italian migration policies and the violence refugees face, the second data type for the project consists of Italian law decrees, Asylum Information Database reports, and The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) articles and reports. I located the data by searching the designated websites and narrowing down the documents to be between 2015 and 2025. After retrieving all of the data, I translated the law decrees from Italian to English. The reports from the Asylum Information Database, UNHCR, and Italian law decrees provided specific information regarding refugees in Italy. Collecting data from 2015 to 2025 helped to grasp the legal situation in Italy by looking at how the policies evolved over the years. Comparing the laws that were in place, the rights asylum seekers had, the information asylum seekers were told by government employees, and the information the Italian government promised refugees helped to determine the relationship between laws and violence within the reception system in Italy.

I employed a semi-structured interview methodology to gather qualitative data from the participants. I conducted the interviews via Zoom, lasting from 35 minutes to an hour. The process began by starting the recording of the session for transcription purposes and going over the consent form with each participant. I commenced the interviews with introductory questions tailored to the social worker or the refugees, such as "Tell me a little bit about yourself" or "What do you do for a living?" establishing rapport (see Appendix 1 & 2). Subsequent questions followed exploring participants' experiences with Italian reception facilities and migration laws along with their views on potential improvements to the situations, particularly regarding the reception facilities and communication from the government. The semi-structured approach allowed for more flexibility in responses since the participant got to interpret how to answer the question and in return also allowed for impromptu questions to be asked to the participants. Ultimately, this approach provided a deeper and more well-rounded understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives of Italian reception facilities and Italian laws.

I used thematic coding on both the interview transcripts and all of the secondary data to reveal correlations and trends in experiences in Italian reception facilities and migration policies. I read through all of the documents making general codes such as "refugee laws, migration laws, violence, reception facility, and government behavior." After generally coding the documents, I went through and broke down the codes into even more specific groups, such as "type of reception facility, laws pertaining to men, laws pertaining to women, violence from other refugees, and violence from facility workers." Once I coded all of the information, I put all of the data with the same code together in a separate document, repeating the process until all of the data was broken up into its designated groups. With the code trends that

I found, I was able to identify patterns between the interviews and secondary data.

ANALYSIS

Reception System and Living Conditions

The reception system for asylum seekers in Italy is fragmented, with significant inconsistencies in the quality and availability of services. Asylum seekers' access to housing, healthcare, and other integration programs can differ widely depending on the placement of each individual. The Italian reception system is devoid of mental health services to help the reception of vulnerable people (Asylum Information Database, 2024d). In contrast to level 2 reception centers, level 1 reception facilities, like CAS, provide asylum seekers with only basic assistance such as food, lodging, clothes, and basic legal aid, even though asylum seekers can spend up to three years in these centers (Terlizzi, 2020). Legislative Decree No.142 (2015) states the reception facilities "must guarantee the protection of physical and mental health, family unity, age-related needs, respect for privacy (including gender differences), and the provision of necessary measures for persons with special needs," yet services provided vary at every level 1 reception facility. The fragmentation and inconsistency in services show a failure to uphold legal obligations, effectively institutionalizing neglect within the reception system. The state perpetuates unnecessary suffering of vulnerable people by denying all asylum seekers equal and consistent access to services such as healthcare. The stark contrast between level 1 and level 2 facilities shows the normalization of an environment where violence and neglect are ignored.

Overcrowding in reception centers remains a persistent issue, leading to deteriorating living conditions and increased social tensions. Many centers operate beyond the intended capacity, forcing residents to share limited space and resources, leading to a strained environment. With the continuous arrivals of asylum seekers, reception facilities have become overcrowded, with their conditions deteriorating, compromising health, hygiene, and privacy (Asylum Information Database, 2024b). Overcrowding also promotes violence in reception facilities since not enough resources are available, thus causing tensions to rise (see Figure 1). The Italian government forcing facilities to operate beyond capacity without adequate reform creates conditions that breed tension, violence, and conflict among residents. The resulting deterioration of health, hygiene, and privacy not only violates basic human rights but also impacts the mental and physical health of those seeking refuge. The Italian government's inaction on such conditions actively contributes to a cycle of suffering and institutional violence within the reception system.

"There were 50 people but then they were 100 and so we didn't have time to work with all of them. And there were a lot of fights because of course they get really frustrated and there were a lot of nationalities inside. So there were, for example, boys coming from Tunisia or Morocco. They were fighting against Nigerian guys because also their rooms were also mixed. So it was a great mess and it was a problem."

Figure 1: Interviewee One - Overcrowding Causing Violence

The Italian government and reception facility management often neglect or ignore violence and internal conflicts within reception facilities, leaving residents without protection or resolution mechanisms. The neglect not only fosters a climate of fear and impunity but also undermines residents' trust in the Italian government and the reception facility authorities, effectively silencing victims and allowing abuse to go unchecked. Interviewee Two shows how systemic issues occur in many reception facilities, with institutional passivity promoting violence, thus eroding trust in the protection mechanisms provided. Although the Italian government promises protection in both CAS and SAI reception facilities, there are no formal personnel or forums to manage the interpersonal conflicts or ensure the residents' safety (see Figure 2). The government openly exposing asylum seekers to harm fosters a sense of abandonment and powerlessness (Asylum Information Database, 2024b). The Italian government perpetuates harm and exemplifies a broader pattern of institutional neglect by failing to address violence and internal conflicts in reception facilities. The absence of accountability sends a clear message that the safety and dignity of asylum seekers are secondary to bureaucratic convenience and institutional complacency. The Italian government not only fails in its duty of care but actively sustains a system inflicting physical and psychological suffering on vulnerable individuals already in precarious situations.

"It was just one or two weeks when we came here and we were shifted in the welcome center and there was a family who had the same number of children like us and their children's ages were also the same as my children's ages were. So they were obviously fighting for playing for toys and something. The other family was from Morocco or Tunisia. So the other dad of that family started to fighting with me physically the management of the center interrupted and stopped that fight… I talked with the management about how this man was physically threatening and hitting me and I want to make a complaint. She was not ready to do that… later the children fought again and that dad of the other family fought with me. Sometime after that the wife of that family beat my son again. I called the police but the person from management of the welcome center stopped him, and told the police that she would talk to the lady and make her understand. She put the problem under the carpet again."
"And the top of all that I told you that the behavior, their attitude and the resolution from any problem resolution mean that if there is any call, if there is any file between two person, between two families how to resolve it and one person is agreed and one person is doing all these things, they put them at the same path and they never try to resolve and never make a proper decision. They just put everything good and bad under the carpet. So this is a very, for example, if I agreed and I think I should properly address my problem, they never do. There is no forum, no persons to look after all these because they think they are like if you put some birds in a cage, you put them in a cage and you close the door. It is like that. I think it is very bad to do in this way."

Figure 2: Interviewee Two's Experience With Violence

The conditions in reception facilities do not meet basic humanitarian standards. Lack of adequate food, medical care, sanitation, and safe sleeping arrangements exposes residents to health risks, violating their fundamental human rights. Many asylum seekers describe reception centers as overcrowded and lacking privacy (see Figure 3). In some cases, asylum seekers report not having consistent access to essential services such as housing, electricity, food, clothing, or water, and several reported severe health and hygiene issues in the reception facilities (Asylum Information Database, 2024b). The substandard conditions in Italian reception facilities are a prime example of the failure to uphold basic humanitarian obligations. By allowing residents to go without consistent access to essential services like food and housing, the state exposes asylum seekers to preventable harm and suffering. The Italian government and reception facilities tolerating the degrading conditions and ignoring the international human rights standards reinforce a structure where asylum seekers are treated as less than human.

"First, where we were living in the center, it was another place where we were given a very small bedroom. Although we have four members of the family, husband, wife, and two children, the room was very small, but after then they put us and force us to shift in a room where that room was. On the sharing basis, we protested a lot in this regard because when my daughter was just eight or nine month old and she was taking the feed from her mother, we were seeing them. It is not advisable that in our culture and religion it is not considered good that one mother is feeding and living in a shared bedroom but very bad."

Figure 3: Interviewee Two's Reception Facility Account

The Italian reception system fails to ensure continuity in asylum seekers' accommodations. The failure to provide continuous housing during the asylum application process disrupts asylum seekers' access to essential services like healthcare and legal support, further destabilizing the already precarious lives of asylum seekers. The Italian government sometimes forces asylum seekers to leave reception centers without alternative housing options available (Asylum Information Database, 2024a). Limited spaces in level 2 centers lead to prolonged stays in inadequate level 1 facilities. (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). The Italian government's failure to ensure continuous, stable housing for asylum seekers reflects a disregard for the well-being of asylum seekers, since they are left in a more vulnerable state. The government's neglect leaves asylum seekers to navigate bureaucratic systems without a stable shelter or access to services like legal aid, showing a broader disregard for the dignity and safety of asylum seekers. A harmful and hostile environment results from failing to address the gaps in continuous accommodations.

Legal, Social, and Political Challenges

Legal assistance for asylum seekers is insufficient, making it difficult for asylum seekers to navigate the complex procedures. Asylum seekers have limited access to qualified legal support, leaving unqualified social workers to explain the legal procedures, leading to a higher number of unjust application rejections. Many asylum seekers do not fully understand their rights and the application process to obtain the correct documents and protection (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). A lack of trained legal operators are available in reception centers, especially level 1 CAS facilities (see Figure 4). The failure to provide adequate legal assistance to asylum seekers contributes to the marginalization and suffering of asylum seekers within the reception system. The systemic neglect not only obstructs asylum seekers' right to a fair asylum process but also reinforces a power imbalance, further disempowering already vulnerable people, since asylum seekers do not fully understand the legal process. Withholding the legal re-

sources necessary for asylum seekers to defend their rights denies justice and exposes asylum seekers to prolonged insecurity and harm.

> "And also I was telling you a legal operator would be necessary because I'm not a legal operator and I try to do my best, but I dunno exactly all the stuff about documents and how to do things, which kind of appointment, which documents. So I need someone that is really able to do this because documents are so important and right now we are not supposed to do this. So yeah, this is a big problem."

Figure 4: Interviewee One - Social Workers' Issue With Legal Assistance

Lengthy asylum procedures exacerbate the stress and uncertainty asylum seekers experience. Tedious procedures often leave individuals in prolonged limbo, unable to work or reunite with family, deepening the sense of instability. The asylum process can take up to two or three years for just the first decision (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). During the waiting period, many asylum seekers struggle with financial insecurity due to reasons such as needing to send money back home and emotional distress from living in uncertainty (Terlizzi, 2020). The tenuous asylum procedures, long wait times, and financial insecurity become sources of harm for asylum seekers due to the mental toll of the process. The prolonged limbo often means asylum seekers can not access basic rights like employment or family reunification, further stripping them of any sense of stability.

New governments habitually revise or overturn previous asylum rules and regulations, leaving asylum seekers unsure of their legal rights and future. Frequent policy shifts disrupt the continuity of the asylum process, making it difficult for individuals to navigate an already complex system. Each new government introduces changes to asylum laws, affecting protections and eligibility for asylum seekers (Zanfrini, n.d). Legal professionals struggle to keep up with evolving regulations, leaving asylum seekers with no understanding of their rights (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). Due to the lack of trained legal professionals available in reception facilities, asylum seekers do not fully understand the steps needed to obtain documents and protection (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). The constant revision of asylum policies in Italy exacerbates the vulnerability of asylum seekers, leaving individuals without clear guidance or support in navigating the system. The confusion amongst asylum seekers creates a hostile environment in reception facilities. The lack of consistency in policies, coupled with insufficient legal support, contributes to the sense of uncertainty asylum seekers endure during the application process.

Italy's asylum policies often prioritize administrative efficiency over humanitarian concerns. The emphasis on efficiency results in policies priori-

tizing cost-cutting and rapid case resolution over the well-being of individuals. Policy makers frequently design asylum procedures to manage numbers rather than address the complex human needs behind each asylum application. The Italian government has attempted to shut down reception facilities and relocate asylum seekers to other countries (Zanfrini, n.d). Financial considerations often determine the level of services the government provides in reception centers (Terlizzi, 2020). Humanitarian needs are routinely overshadowed by bureaucratic and financial priorities. By valuing administrative efficiency over individuals' well-being, the system neglects the complex traumas and realities that asylum seekers face, ultimately treating them as statistics rather than people in need of protection and support.

Complex legal procedures and limited access to work permits, education, or other social services prevent asylum seekers from fully participating in Italian society. This exclusion hinders asylum seekers' ability to become self-sufficient while also undermining asylum seekers' sense of belonging and purpose. Without legal residence permits, asylum seekers struggle to access stable employment and housing (Asylum Information Database, 2024e). The absence of mandatory language courses in level 1 facilities limits the asylum seekers' ability to integrate into Italian society since they are not able to properly communicate with locals (Asylum Information Database, 2024c). Systematically obstructing the social integration of asylum seekers by restricting access to work and social services ultimately creates prolonged instability. The lack of language courses and a secure legal status leaves asylum seekers in a constant state of uncertainty, making it nearly impossible to rebuild their lives.

Integration and Access to Opportunities

Without access to consistent language education, asylum seekers struggle to communicate, understand legal procedures, find work, or engage with local communities, delaying integration and reinforcing feelings of exclusion and marginalization. Due to the lack of structured language courses, asylum seekers struggle with social and cultural integration because of the language barriers. Without language skills, many residents struggle to navigate legal, medical, and employment processes (Asylum Information Database, 2024d). Many asylum seekers find engaging with the local communities to be difficult when they lack the resources to learn the language (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). Limited access to language education reinforces social isolation and dependency on NGOs and social workers for basic communication needs (Terlizzi, 2020). The absence of structured language courses isolates asylum seekers, preventing individuals from accessing essential services and building independent lives. The lack of such a fundamental tool for integration supports exclusion rather than promoting recovery and inclusion.

Access to the labor market is technically available, but remains practically challenging for asylum seekers due to bureaucratic reasons and social stigmas. Although the law permits asylum seekers to work, they regularly encounter delays in receiving the necessary permits and frequently face bias from employers, making employment more difficult to secure. Asylum seekers can work 60 days after applying for asylum, but bureaucratic delays often prevent timely employment (Asylum Information Database, 2024f). Many employers hesitate to hire asylum seekers due to the temporary nature of their legal status and frequent changes in immigration policies (Asylum Information Database, 2024e). The removal of mandatory Italian language courses and job orientation services further impedes asylum seekers' employment opportunities, leaving them trapped in informal or exploitative labor conditions (Asylum Information Database, 2024e). Asylum seekers are locked out of the economy due to bureaucratic delays, lack of support services, and social stigmas, making it nearly impossible to secure stable work. The failure to address these barriers and provide essential resources like language courses and job orientation programs prolongs the hardship and suffering of asylum seekers in reception facilities.

Long wait times and uncertainty lead to frustration and mental health challenges among asylum seekers. Asylum seekers often spend months or even years waiting for decisions on their cases, which makes individuals feel stuck in limbo without a clear future. Many asylum seekers express stress and anxiety due to the prolonged waiting period for asylum decisions and even to enter the offices to apply for asylum, thus leaving them in more precarious positions, having to camp out on the streets outside of the offices (Zanfrini, n.d)**.** The inability to work immediately puts additional pressure on asylum seekers, especially with families, since they have no income (see Figure 5). Extended waiting periods and prolonged uncertainty in Italy's asylum process have profound psychological impacts on asylum seekers and exacerbate the vulnerability of already marginalized individuals, often leaving asylum seekers feeling trapped and destabilized. The bureaucratic delays and lack of timely access to asylum procedures contribute to a climate where individuals are left without direction, resources, or dignity. The necessity for some to sleep on the streets while awaiting access to application offices reveals a system that fails to provide even the most basic conditions for stability.

Interviewee One: "And I also think that this long wait. They have to accept in order to know if they will be able to remain forever in Italy or not. This is also another big problem for them because they get impatient. Maybe they need money, they want to work, but they can't because of documents, but maybe their family is waiting for money in their own countries and so this becomes really stressful for them."

Figure 5: Interviewee One - Social Worker's Insight On Long Waiting Periods

Asylum seekers from war-torn countries or individuals considered more vulnerable, such as unaccompanied minors or victims of trafficking, are more likely to receive support services and protection. However, not all asylum seekers receive equal treatment within the reception system. Some groups, such as Eastern Europeans, receive faster processing and better support due to reasons such as nationality, gender, or age (Asylum Information Database, 2024d). Men without specific vulnerabilities often face longer wait times and fewer services in the level 1, CAS facilities (Interviewee One, personal communication, January 24th, 2025). The unequal treatment of asylum seekers based on nationality, gender, and perceived vulnerability creates hierarchies of worthiness within reception facilities. This selective approach reinforces discriminatory structures within the asylum system, where the Italian government offers some asylum seekers dignity and care while others are pushed into precarious and degrading conditions.

DISCUSSION

Social Suffering

The interdisciplinary nature of the Social Suffering theory highlight why social structures contribute to the unnecessary suffering of asylum seekers in Italian reception facilities. The theory helps to understand the experiences of refugees in Italy because it highlights how suffering is not only individual but also socially and institutionally produced. Scholars found viewing suffering through an interdisciplinary lens (using sociology, anthropology, and psychology) reveals the hidden structures that perpetuate harm. For instance, asylum seekers in Italy experience fragmented reception services, inconsistent healthcare, and a lack of mental health support, leading to institutionalized neglect. Renault (2010) highlights how understanding contemporary injustices requires integrating social and psychological perspectives, which is essential when analyzing refugee experiences. Systemic conditions inflict suffering on asylum seekers in the form of disruptions to key social networks, lack of control, and exclusionary environments, which damage asylum seekers' mental health (Bjertrup et al., 2018). The Social Suffering framework highlights how structural violence, rather than just personal trauma, drives the negative experiences of asylum seekers in Italy. The the-

ory moves the analysis from a purely medical view of suffering to a critique of political and social failures. The Social Suffering theory explicates how broader structures of exclusion and neglect are not accidental.

Social Suffering theory clarifies how ongoing institutional failures rather than isolated misfortunes are the root of suffering for asylum seekers in Italy. The Italian government's tolerance of overcrowded, violent, and degrading reception facilities, with inconsistent social services, reflects a broader pattern where bureaucratic convenience outweighs human dignity. Through daily inaction at the state level, conditions such as prolonged asylum wait times, lack of healthcare, inadequate legal services, and absence of language education systematically erode asylum seekers' mental and physical well-being. Scholars like Maconick et al. (2020) and Victora (2011) reinforce that structural factors, such as failed healthcare and lack of social services, lead asylum seekers to experience poverty and powerlessness, thus further contributing to the cycles of trauma. The Social Suffering theory captures how a cycle of harm invisible to systems focused only on efficiency rather than justice trap asylum seekers. The interdisciplinary strength of the theory allows for a comprehensive analysis of the refugee crisis by looking at the political, social, and psychological dimensions of the issue. By applying social suffering theory, the current study uncovers the deeper structural roots of suffering from policies and the Italian government while challenging dominant narratives that blame individual asylum seekers for the hardships experienced in reception facilities.

Humanitarian Refugee Policies

The reception system and living conditions for asylum seekers in Italy are relevant to the global non-academic community because the poor conditions reveal ongoing failures in humanitarian protections that demand international attention. Despite clear legal obligations to protect asylum seekers' mental and physical health, Italy's reception system remains fragmented and inconsistent, often exposing asylum seekers to substandard living conditions and neglect. Legislative Decree No. 142 (2015) outlines Italy's duties, but in practice, asylum seekers, particularly in level 1 CAS facilities, receive only basic assistance without any meaningful integration support. Reports from Mellersh (2024) highlight how such neglect has had deadly consequences, with protests erupting in Bari following the death of a resident due to alleged inadequate medical care. The Italian government's failure to ensure even minimal humane conditions shows how these cases reflect patterns of mistreatment rather than isolated incidents. Furthermore, the normalization of overcrowded, violent reception facility environments reinforces the institutionalization of suffering. This issue transcends Italy, warning the global community of how governments can turn human rights obligations into hollow promises without enforcement mechanisms and accountability. As migration increases globally due to war, persecution, and climate change,

ensuring reception systems respect human dignity is a priority now more than ever.

The systemic neglect of violence and internal conflict within Italian reception facilities reflects a devastating erosion of institutional trust and human rights protections that resonates globally. Facility management often refuses to acknowledge or address incidents of violence, leaving asylum seekers without protection and fostering a culture of fear. Interviewee One's account of frequent violent outbursts among residents corroborates recent protests at the Bari reception center, where neglect bred instability and deep resentment towards the Italian government (Mellersh, 2024). The conditions parallel findings in other European countries such as Greece, where researchers have shown how the stagnant asylum processes and the lack of safety aggravate feelings of meaninglessness, anxiety, and depression among asylum seekers (Bjertrup et al., 2018). When systems designed to offer sanctuary become places of renewed trauma, the damage extends beyond individual suffering, undermining the legitimacy of the asylum system. Globally, the normalization of neglect and violence in reception facilities threatens to crumble the already fragile framework of international refugee protection. Addressing institutional violence is thus essential, not only to restore dignity to asylum seekers but to reaffirm basic global human rights standards at a moment when they are increasingly under threat.

CONCLUSION

Asylum seekers are subjected to suffering and violence in reception facilities due to Italy's migration policies and governmental decisions. Violence and suffering is a recurring issue in reception facilities, often stemming from overcrowding, inadequate resources, and racial tensions. The daily stress of living in such conditions is compounded by complex legal procedures that make the asylum process difficult for asylum seekers to navigate or access protection. Without accessible language programs and the ability to communicate, asylum seekers are isolated and unable to advocate for their rights or pursue employment or education. These failures are not accidental but reflect Italy's asylum policies, often prioritizing bureaucratic efficiency and border control over humanitarian care. Italy is an example of the conditions of reception facilities around the world. No matter where asylum seekers came from or where asylum seekers end up, individuals should never be subjected to suffering and violence.

Appendix 1

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself
2. Where is your family from?
3. What do you do for a living?
4. What is the most rewarding aspect of your work as a social worker in reception facilities?
5. What kind of support is available for refugees at these facilities?
6. How are refugees assigned to different facilities?
7. What legal support is there for refugees (in terms of asylum applications and family reunification)?
8. Are there any programs or services in place to help refugees integrate into Italian society?
9. How are reception facilities typically funded?
10. Do you think Italian migration policies affect refugees in the camps and if so how?
11. What are some of the main challenges that you see refugees face in the facilities?
12. Are there any particular needs or gaps in services that are not currently being met?
13. What kind of support or protection, if any, is provided for women in the facilities?
14. What is the most important thing anyone should know about or understand about refugees or asylum seekers?

Appendix 2

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. What was your Journey like to Italy and what brought you there?
3. What was your experience like in the reception facility?
4. How safe did you feel in the reception facility and what contributed to that feeling of safety or lack thereof?
5. Can you describe your experience when you first arrived at the reception facility and what was your initial impression?
6. How would you describe the living conditions in the reception facility?
7. Have there been any moments that you have felt unsafe or uncomfortable at the facility?
8. What kind of support did you receive at the facility?
9. Were you offered any help with job training or job searching?
10. What are some of the biggest challenges you face living in the reception facility?
11. Did you face any issues dealing with long waiting periods or overcrowding?
12. Did you ever feel discriminated against or treated unfairly because of your status as a refugee?
13. What do you think can be improved in the reception facilities to make life better/ easier for refugees?
14. What has the legal process of claiming asylum looked like for you?
15. Do you feel supported in your efforts to build a new life in Italy?
16. What advice would you give local authorities or communities to help make the refugee experience better?
17. Do you know anything about Italian migration policies?

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Scottish Gaelic Language Shift Reversal: Revitalization and Language Policy

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This project investigates how promotive policies in Scotland help to revitalize Scottish Gaelic. Previous research describes promotive policies and the effects of speakers' attitudes towards minority languages; this project connects the two in seeing how individual organizations enact promotive policies creatively. Previous research also offers a theoretical analysis lens with Language Shift Theory and specifically utilizes the reversal aspect of the theory. Document analysis was the main form of data collection for this process with ten language policies from ten different organizations across five social sectors. Thematic coding revealed patterns of language shift reversal, promotional tactics, and cultural care. The promotive policies in place stimulate parts of society to engage with Gaelic and revitalize the language. With language revival, the creative liberties towards the same goal for organizations reveal the desire of the collective. Research into how language policies reflect society's value of the communication facilitates a comprehensive plan of action into language and cultural revitalization.

Key words: language policy, revitalization

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The etymology of my first name initially sparked an interest in the Gaelic language. Growing up hearing about the whimsical magic of the Gaelic countries from the Irish side of my family encouraged an intrigue in how words transfer power through meaning. In translations, meanings can get lost through literal interpretations or the words simply not existing outside the native derivation. I didn't know the name "Erin" holds the definition of "Ireland" until further research into Gaelic culture—in this research the decline of the Gaelic languages was prevalent. Additionally, exposure to the 2014 *Outlander* series showcasing the Scottish Gaelic culture specifically instigated an interest redirection into how the dying language was coming back to life. This research delves into how attitudes, willpower, and desire stimulate a language's life cycle.

In the last decade, Scotland has taken direct action to revive Scottish Gaelic. The Scottish government, in working towards reviving the language, passed the 2005 Gaelic Language Act creating the Bòrd na Gàidhlig—an organization dedicated to the promotion of Scottish Gaelic. The Bòrd na Gàidhlig, or BnG, inhibits a modicum of power through analyzing, deciding, and creating goals for Scottish Gaelic and instructing participating public organizations on how to create plans to reach the desired outcomes, as the 2005 Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act decreed (The National Archives, 2023). Since the first iteration of BnG guidelines, the speakers of Scottish Gaelic have doubled in the last decade (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, n.d., p. 2). The BnG's guidelines set precedence for public organizations of differing societal roles to prepare individual plans—meaning the organizations have creative liberty in preparations of the language plans. Creative liberties suggest a level of care the organizations exhibit in the language plans and how much desire the collective has in revitalizing Scottish Gaelic.

Regarding collective desire, the popular television series *Outlander* showcases the historical usage of Scottish Gaelic in the series through the dialogue of the characters of Scottish descent in a modern medium. The crossover of both past and present in terms of the language utilization demonstrates how Scottish Gaelic has persisted to exist today. A community contributor on a web forum known as *The Herald* comments that with the popularity of the series, there is an increase in tourism in Scotland and promotion of a large fanbase ("Outlander is the reason," 2024)—meaning the Gaelic culture and language is gaining attention and public support. Within the series, the actors use Gaelic dialog to demonstrate passion, community, and familiarity; in season one episode five of Outlander, the head of a Scottish family uses Gaelic to rally support for the Jacobite rebellions, and the main protagonist notes the efficacy of communicating in the culture's language—the shift in people's emotions (Roberts & Woolfenden, 2020). Having a modern take, even through a historical fiction adaptation, emphasizes the *why* of reviving a minority language: popular interest drives the efforts of language policies.

Careful consideration of what is necessary to reestablish a supporting foundation for a language is found in the general populous' perception.

The question for this project was if participating organizations utilize the BnG guidelines uniquely to put in place creative language plan policies or generalized plans. As the BnG's efforts persist in revitalizing Scottish Gaelic, public organizations are expected to adhere to the guidelines set forth. In theory, organizations with unique plans are taking the revitalization efforts seriously and wish to actively engage in the established role. A generalized language plan policy will meet the requirements but will not exert much more effort to see the language spoken more widely. So, finding out if multiple participating organizations are actively creating plans unique to their role and leaning into the type of social contribution associated will explain the level of desire to see a language thrive. Furthermore, the expectation of supporting a language revival extends into the support of an entire culture.

Promotive policies in Scotland encourage language revitalization for Scottish Gaelic. Individual organizations enact promotive policies unique to their function, but work towards the same goal through creative means. The literature review explains the theoretical lens in which the data was filtered through. Specifically, Language Shift Theory, promotive policies, as well as the cultural connections to language revival. The research design lays out the data collection and thematic coding process to give details into what phrases are relevant. The analysis section goes in depth into how the policies demonstrate promotive policy characteristics that support language shift reversal and the noticeable cultural encouragement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research reveals a pattern of language and identity being closely linked to culture. In practicing traditions of a culture, language is an external connection for people as well as an internal processing tool. Gebel (2002), in looking at the history of Gaelic and Sorbian history, infers a connection of language and consciousness, constructing identity and individual reality, to be a linguistically sensitive process (pp. 25-26). Moreover, the author suggests language provides access to the generational knowledge of "codified socially relevant knowledge" as well as "discursively constructed distinct (mental) realities," but not guaranteeing reproduction (Gebel, 2002, p. 148). However, support of reproduction for cultural values and knowledge through linguistic access may be found in promotive language policies. Looking specifically at current Scottish Gaelic language policies as an example of promotive policies explains how language policies reflect community cultural values.

Existing research indicates language shift, meaning the process where speakers of one language shift to another, disrupts cultural continuity. Language shift challenges the maintenance of culture through generations as when societal value of the associated language decreases, there is a block in

access to the oral archives of cultural history. Losing a language is not only about the loss of numbers in speakers, but also the loss of valued social constructs of a culture (Fernando et al., 2010, p. 49). Research reaches even the microscopic level, as demonstrated by Burling (2007) discussing the genetic trends of ethnicity and languages shifts through migration—suggesting language and ethnicity, in some relation culture as well, is not permanent (p. 226). Additionally, McEwan-Fujita (2011) investigates the social decay language shift causes for the affected culture through the impact of disparaging discourse around the language (p. 49). Regarding the current research project, the inquiry into language policies' characteristics delves into how Scottish Gaelic promotes the idea of a community practicing cultural continuity through language revitalization. Furthermore, this project works to address how the connection of revitalization and cultural continuity are an equally desirable goal of promotive policies.

Past researchers note reversing language shift, also known as revitalization, is dependent on the attitudes of the speakers. A language loses speakers because of a lack of supporting resources (i.e., any economic or societal valuing), but a supporting framework and willing participants can revitalize a language. McEwan-Fujita (2010) describes the socialization of some Gaelic speakers and the impact on the willingness to engage with the language due to the perception attitudes (pp. 41-44). Additionally, Schiffman (1996) defines language policies to be a cultural construct. The assumptions, behaviors, thoughts around a language make up the linguistic culture affecting the speakers' attitudes and beliefs (Schiffman, 1996, pp. 5-22). Considering the influence of speaker attitudes on current language policies, the positive or negative perception of the language will affect the attitude on the reception of the language policies. Understanding if potentially unique language policy designs of Scottish Gaelic are a sign of community care fits into how policies reflect the speakers' attitudes on the language.

Previous research suggests Scotland utilizes promotive language policies for the revitalization of Scottish Gaelic. Promotive policies enact active supportive change for a language and the specificity of goals in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 is indicative of promotive efforts. Schiffman (1996) reviews the typologies of language policies and defines promotive typology as an overtly promoting type of policy that *encourages* the use of the minority language (pp. 28-29). McEwan-Fujita (2011) specifically acknowledges the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 as a demonstration of revitalization promotion (p. 57). As the act is a direct component of individual public organizations' language policies, the previous research connects to the current project through the analysis of the individual plans and how promotive the designs are. The current research adds to the past findings by offering an updated analysis of the policies.

As current research looks at the history of language shift, language and identity through culture, and reversing language shift, my research relates

to the topic by examining a reemerging language following a promotive language policy plan: Scottish Gaelic. Scottish Gaelic, having undergone a language shift with English, demonstrates the intensity of efforts necessary to reverse a shift and work towards revitalization; current research supports the idea that reversing a shift is a collaborative effort and Scottish Gaelic language policies are an example of what that means. Examining the current promotive policies of Scottish Gaelic to deduce if creative liberties produce unique plans communities are receptive of contributes another perspective of a minority language. Understanding Scotland's take on promotive policies extends current research's scope by applying pattern recognition in searching for the effective details found in the individual plans of the country to identify, or introduce, in other related regions. Focusing on a specific language, and the subsequent policies, is a tact already in use for researching language planning; however, connecting Gaelic into the scene broadens the range while narrowing the criteria. Therefore, examining Scottish Gaelic's current language policies for unique application of the general requirements helps answer the efficacy of promotive language policies as well as uncover supportive revitalization factors.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The theory in this project followed the logic of an initial language in an area shifting out of common usage by the, often, gradual process of a new language dominating. Encompassing the entirety of language shifting is known as Language Shift Theory, but another aspect of the theoretical framework was the main focal point for this research process. Specifically, this project utilized the language shift reversal, LSR, position of the theory—from Joshua A. Fishman's 1991 book *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*, LSR takes "thought, effort, and conviction," (p. 67). Taking into consideration what "thought, effort, and conviction" means establishes how language planning policies are supportive proof for revitalizing the goal language. Regarding Scottish Gaelic, the LSR position of the theory is currently active in Scotland and the current project aimed to establish how the policies follow the logic of the theory. The theory defines how much effort, passion, and desire it takes to revitalize a language, and the promotive language policies of Scottish organizations are embodying the definition.

One piece of data for this project is the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. The Scottish government passed the act in 2005 to take an active role in revitalizing Gaelic in Scotland. The act's direct purpose is to govern the Bòrd na Gàidhlig and grant the organization power to oversee the creation of language policies. The Bòrd na Gàidhlig, or BnG, is another piece of data as the organization has a responsibility to create guidelines for the language policies of individual public organizations every five years to help increase Gaelic language usage and exposure. The BnG promotes Gaelic usage through

specific goals that evolve with each iteration of guidelines. Within the next set of data for this project, individual public organizations' language policies from five sectors of society, is an example of each goal. Two language policy documents of the most recent iteration of BnG guideline requirements are included from organizations that contribute to society in different ways: Community, Culture, Economy, Education, and Public Authorities. Each sector individually interacts with Gaelic, having a defined set of terminology and meanings to work with—and so how each one plans to promote Gaelic within their roles is the main purpose of this project. To examine a modern example language shift reversal, or revitalization, through the implementation of promotive policies, each piece of data was necessary as one would not necessarily exist without the other—the act created the BnG and the BnG creates required guidelines for organizations to use in creating their unique language plan policies.

To collect the data, each piece started with a simple Google search with the words: "Scottish Gaelic revitalization" and "language policy." The first page of results displayed the name of the BnG, which prompted another Google search about the organization. From there, the results yielded a link to the official website of the organization. After clicking the link and finding the homepage, selecting the "About Us" tab led to a link to a page summarizing the purpose and provided another link directly to the official document. After saving the document to a file and navigating back to the "About Us" tab on the home page, another link specified "The National Gaelic Language Plan" and provided another purpose summary as well as a link to the most recent, 2023-2028, language plan of the BnG. Back to the homepage of the BnG website and this time to the tab "Gaelic Language Plans," where a link to "Approved Plans" provided 57 links to organization's official website homepages. To filter out which links to follow when gathering PDFs of language plans, I selected a few at random to see what common characteristics were shared and categorized them based on the social contribution/function. After deciding the five sectors, I narrowed my selection process of the links by following links with words specific to the sector I was searching for—see Table 1 for examples. On an organization's homepage, I would use the search function to find "Gaelic language plan" and navigated to the download the document. This process makes sense for this project as the flow of collection follows the order of authority and creation—the search for data gets narrower from the very beginning of the Scottish Gaelic revitalization process starting at the government level all the way to the level of individual organizations of a community.

Sector:	Community	Culture	Economy	Education	Public Authorities
Word Examples:	"sports" "library" "creative"	"national" "nature" "visit"	"enterprise" "assets"	"university" "skills"	"authority" "police" "Scottish"

Table 1

Analyzing the collected data started with simply reading the documents. First, I read the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the BnG's 2023 National Gaelic Plan each individually, then in tandem to see how the BnG followed the act's guidance. The next step was to read each language plan policy individually while copying and pasting text specific to the set goals to a separate word document to create source files. Each policy document had a variation of "Key Principals" or "Core Commitments" specifying the goals set by the organization from the BnG's requirements—the defined goals of this iteration, in summary, are as follows: Gaelic is equal to English, active offerings of Gaelic to staff and the public, and Gaelic is normalized. While identifying the goals, I also noted if the organization had a Gaelic version available in addition to the English translation in consideration of the first defined goal for Gaelic. To see how the goal requirements were unique to each organization, I looked at the process of implementation; each document had an "Implementation" section wherein the goal, plan of action, target date, and responsible party were identified. With the implementation sections, I compared each document of the same sector to each other to see the differences and similarities. This method is perfect for this research project as it considers the documents in relation to policies of the same sector, in relation to the overarching guidelines, and in relation to the language revitalization progress to garner how unique the application of the policies is to the same goal.

ANALYSIS

Language Shift Reversal

Language shift reversal (LSR), interchangeable with "revitalization" in the context of this research project, requires a mutual agreement for effortful continuation actions and planning. The pipeline of language planning policy development disperses the duties for LSR through the collective agreement of individual organizations to enact the planned supportive actions from The Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG). The BnG specifies Gaelic revitalization requires continued promotion, support, and growth at all levels of Gaelic education (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, n.d., p. 5). The Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) follows the guidance of the Scottish Government and the BnG in continual strategic initiatives to commit to revitalizing Gaelic long term (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, n.d., p. 3). Additionally, as an educational institu-

tion, the University of the Highlands and Islands recognizes the core academic purpose of revitalizing the language through commitment to making ongoing, significant contributions toward the goal of reviving Gaelic into a dynamic, living, and vibrant language (University of Highlands and Islands, n.d., p. 4). The recognition of the Gaelic language needing careful tending in a continuous manner by individual organizations' policies acknowledges the LSR requirement. Furthermore, individual pledges of continuation indicate a mutual agreement of continuous effort as well as imply a desire to cooperate within the pipeline of goal dictation.

Following the theme of LSR requirements, collaboration is a core initiative for organization in the efforts of revitalizing Scottish Gaelic. Collaboration within and between organizations is a priority in most organization's language policies. The National Gaelic Plan of the BnG states promoting Gaelic is a shared responsibility of a significant number of organizations to make important contributions in supporting Gaelic (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, n.d., p. 1). One of the organizations the BnG refers to, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL), works in a concerted effort with the government, the public, private and third sectors, and other community organizations to revitalize Gaelic into a living language (Caledonian Maritime, n.d., p. 4). Likewise, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) addresses the effective nature of collaboration and alignment with other enterprises and skills agencies in promoting the Gaelic language, education, and culture across Scotland (Skills Development Scotland, n.d., p. 7). Prioritizing collaboration agreements establishes a mutual aid assurance through accountability and cooperation. Collaboration instills a connective responsibility in promoting Gaelic by sharing an obligation of achieving the same goal.

People's desire to see the language revived curates a supportive framework of connection. Social structures support Gaelic usage in various contexts while Gaelic supports community connection as a shared communication goal. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) states the key economic sectors of Scotland, including tourism, hospitality, creative industries, food and drink, and retail businesses, support Gaelic—reviving the language and supporting usage across geographies, sectors, and occupations (Skills Development Scotland, n.d., p. 2). The BnG acknowledges the National Gaelic Language Plan is only successful through commitment, collaboration, investment, and action from each organization; the organizations support the Plan's success as much as the Plan supports Gaelic revival (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, n.d., p. 3). Therefore, having access to Gaelic in multiple contexts stimulates growth as the language reaches new levels of versatility. Additionally, the symbiotic relationship of the BnG and various social structures manifests revitalization while also facilitating communication and connection opportunities for people.

Promotion Tactics

Organizations promote the same goal of normalizing Gaelic with similar actions, like organization events incorporating Gaelic use. Social events are unique to the organization, and so the topics of discussion differ between contexts but allow Gaelic to thrive in multiple environments. For example, Creative Scotland works to provide a visible presence of Gaelic in all regional, national, and international events as well as continue to hold Gaelic specific events such as the Gaelic arts showcase (Creative Scotland, n.d., p. 61). Additionally, National Galleries Scotland prioritizes opportunities for Gaelic in the delivery of public exhibitions bilingually or solely in Gaelic (National Galleries Scotland, n.d., p. 11). But then, Police Scotland also follows a similar prioritization of Gaelic being the method of delivery in public exhibitions, especially for interacting with the target audience of young people (Police Scotland, n.d., p. 22). Exposure to the language in environments of different social sectors normalizes Gaelic. Contextual differences broaden Gaelic meanings for the speakers and thus eliminates the occurrences of Gaelic communication *only* in specific conditions

Similarly, social media and official websites are modern mediums for Gaelic content and provide individualistic space for displaying Gaelic. Like organizational events, social media and official websites are an exposure tool to the language through the same medium for different topics. Police Scotland has Gaelic available on the official site for content about Gaelic as well providing quotes, news releases, and campaign materials in Gaelic (Police Scotland, n.d., p. 21). Creative Scotland plans to establish a baseline of yearly social media posts in Gaelic and increase the number every year across all social media platforms (Creative Scotland, n.d., p. 65). The Scottish Government specifies promoting Gaelic content on Twitter with a Gaelic Twitter account and look to further increase Gaelic frequency on @scotgovedu as well (The Scottish Government, n.d., p. 34). Social media specifically is a modern tool to display Gaelic and organizations can customize the Gaelic content to their unique function while displaying the content in similar styles (i.e., captions, tweets, or infographics). So, across multiple social sectors, Gaelic content is available and provides information for various topics of different natures—promoting the language normalization.

Organizations have the opportunity to demonstrate Gaelic use specific to their function through bilingual signage, memorabilia, and other communication content. Specifically, they restructure official communication and promotional items to incorporate Gaelic in equal standing with English. NatureScot plans to renew Gaelic use on National Nature Reserve signs as well as utilize a bilingual logo for the organization (NatureScot, n.d., p. 11). Sportscotland takes advantage of institute uniforms and the National Centre to incorporate appropriate Gaelic words and phrases for public displays (Sport Scotland, n.d., p. 16). The National Galleries of Scotland implements Gaelic stories across the National gallery audio guide content (National Gal-

leries Scotland, n.d., p. 8). Incorporating Gaelic into a more permanent medium elevates the language into equal standing with English, indicating the revitalization efforts are serious and productive enough to compete with a dominant language. Furthermore, encouraging dual orthography promotes Gaelic outside of policy by creating a bilingual sociolinguistic reality.

Gaelic incorporation and bilingual signage display Gaelic consistently and publicly in the same manner as English, elevating Gaelic status to the same level as English. To provide Gaelic equal respect, the incorporation of Gaelic into corporate identity elevates the language in a professional display. The presence of Gaelic in CMAL's corporate identity produces opportunities for more visibility of Gaelic, increasing the status of the language (Caledonian Maritime, n.d., p. 9). A fully bilingual logo, as the SDS plans to exhibit, is a goal to raise Gaelic into equal standing with English and promote a new standard for the organization (Skills Development Scotland, n.d., p. 27). Corporate identities adapting to Gaelic incorporation demonstrates a public usage of the language and brings in more passive participants through exposure, integrating the language further into society. Furthermore, creating equal respect demonstrations through public signage promotes language usage.

Organizations implement the goal of having active offerings of Scottish Gaelic made available to staff and public. Creative Scotland advertises active offerings of Gaelic services, so Gaelic users are aware of the language specific services the employees offer to further encourage usage (Creative Scotland, n.d., p. 18). Police Scotland welcomes Gaelic communications by including a message when publishing in Gaelic to encourage Gaelic interactions (Police Scotland, n.d., p. 19). The Scottish Government aims to have Gaelic as accessible as English through active offers of Gaelic services and actively encourages using the language (The Scottish Government, n.d., p. 16). Active encouragement of the language, such as Gaelic services being available and organizations advertising it, follows promotive policy requirements. Promotive policies implementing and ensuring Gaelic services are available encourages the public to engage with the language and interact with Gaelic speaking staff.

The National Gaelic Language Plan encourages job recruitment tactics to advertise Gaelic as a desirable or essential skill for applicable jobs. In following promotive policy techniques, the active search for bilingual Gaelic speakers in the workforce encourages the use of Gaelic by valuing both the knowledge of the language and speaking proficiency. Sportscotland plans to advertise Gaelic as an essential and/or desirable skill for vacancies, specifically for roles in advertising at the national centers and other areas where 20% or more of the population speaks Gaelic (Sport Scotland, n.d., p. 24). National Galleries Scotland will continue the current practice of including Gaelic as a desirable skill in front-of-house job descriptions (National Galleries Scotland, n.d., p. 10). Having Gaelic in the workforce promotes the

language in professional settings and curates Gaelic as a self-sustaining attribute—further instilling a Gaelic identity. Integrating Gaelic into individual functional roles promotes a socially desired characteristic amongst speakers to then advertise as a skill set.

Funding Gaelic programs, services, and promotions follows different disbursement protocols for organizations but, overall, is a high priority. Organizations assign funds for Gaelic services and promotion, but each have differing methods. For example, the Scottish Government, a major resource for Gaelic revitalization, plans to continue supporting all Local Authorities wishing to deliver or expand Gaelic education, at all levels, through grant schemes (The Scottish Government, n.d., p. 21). NatureScot, when deciding how to allocate funds, will require applicants to describe the projects use and promotion of Gaelic for consideration (NatureScot, n.d., p. 10). Creative Scotland has goals of using existing funding to more successfully support Gaelic, providing new resources in developing new opportunities and to overall facilitate a change in how to think about Gaelic (Creative Scotland, n.d., p. 35). Promotional programs for Gaelic require funding. To get funding, society must value Gaelic in a large enough capacity to allocate money towards revitalization efforts.

Cultural Stimulation

Opportunities for both learning the Gaelic language and learning in the language fosters the relationship with the Gaelic culture. Complementary benefits materialize within the aforementioned relationship because as more overt language usage and acceptance occurs, the culture receives more active participants. The University of the Highlands and Islands will conduct short courses in Gaelic for tourism and heritage—strengthening the visibility of Gaelic and providing learning opportunities about the Gaelic culture (University of the Highlands and Islands, n.d., p. 14). NatureScot takes a more nuanced approach to learning opportunities by featuring Scotland's nature impact on Gaelic; in turn, the language provides linguistic structures and heritage to understand the natural world and celebrate the innate connection between nature and language (NatureScot, n.d., p. 3). Learning in Gaelic, or even about Gaelic, shifts a person's mind with new word meanings and conceptual processing tools. Introducing new vocabulary, definitions, and providing cultural connections, like understanding the land and country's history through Gaelic, deepens the internal connection a speaker associates between culture and language.

The Gaelic language shapes thoughts, ideas, and personal perceptions, influencing cultural aspects of society, such as identity and creativity. Language and culture both rely on community to flourish so the nuances of the relationship manifests in social aspects and people's identities. The Highlands and Islands Enterprise determines the simple statement of relating Gaelic to Scotland's culture and identity does not encapsulate the complex connection

of the language as a conveyance tool for both aspects enough (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, n.d., p. 3). The Gaelic language is an intrinsic part of Scotland's culture and creativity; the language shapes literature, music, art, film and TV, festivities, and not only in a hereditary way, but in way of future creations having a modern Gaelic influence (Creative Scotland, n.d., p. 9). With recent efforts, people's attitudes towards the language have noticeably shifted to regard the language with positive recognition of the importance of an individual's own cultural heritage, and the overall future of Gaelic (Sport Scotland, n.d., p. 9). Gaelic taking an active role in speaker's thought processes influences self-expression as speakers engage with Gaelic meanings, traditions, and perception. As Gaelic speakers normalize creative outlets and heritage celebration, communities are reestablished and society values all forms of Gaelic.

Respecting and elevating Gaelic to equal status with English helps to contribute a linguistic understanding of traditions and celebrations tied to the Gaelic culture. Mutual respect for the native language of Scotland reinforces the speakers' confidence in practicing Gaelic customs. For individual organizations, like Police Scotland, the plan's promotion of equal respect for the language translates to culture, heritage, and community as well (Police Scotland, n.d., p. 25). The Scottish Government published *A Culture Strategy for Scotland* to recognize the Gaelic language in celebrating the Gaelic culture and how acceptance provides opportunities for language skills development and expression—marketing the language to strengthen the appeal and raise confidence levels (The Scottish Government, n.d., p. 19). With equal respect, Gaelic speakers can confidently practice the language and further stimulate a community to practice cultural celebrations as well. Having space to practice cultural traditions encourages utilization of the language and allows a natural dialog flow between speakers.

Opportunities for both learning the Gaelic language and learning *in* the language creates space for individuals to learn about and interact with the Gaelic culture. Having an understanding of Gaelic to any degree broadens an individual's insight to the surrounding culture. The University of the Highlands and Islands will conduct short courses in Gaelic for tourism and heritage—strengthening the visibility of Gaelic and providing learning opportunities about the Gaelic culture (University of the Highlands and Islands, n.d., p. 14). NatureScot's approach to learning opportunities targets understanding the bond between Scotland's nature and the Gaelic language (NatureScot, n.d., p. 3). Teaching cultural topics in the native language stimulates growth in both the speaker's language acquisition and Gaelic culture awareness. Opportunities to understand the culture further comes from the same opportunities of learning the language.

DISCUSSION

This research supports the idea of language shaping personal and societal identities. Individuals curate a sense of self by moving through society and language through both internal and external interactions. Gebel (2002) identifies individual identity and reality construction as a linguistically sensitive process—a process requiring societal support as the language encompasses generational knowledge of linguistic meanings (pp. 25-26, 148). Within promotive policies from organizations specific to celebrating, appreciating, and displaying Gaelic culture, the language is credited with providing creative and definitive meaning to the work or service. For creative outlets and the individuals fueling the industry, Gaelic can influence the message or simply *be* the message behind the creation. Policies from these organizations indicate a respect for personal identity expression, but specifically to support those with a Gaelic connection.

The current research emphasizes the importance of linguistic diversity through minority language revitalization and cultural respect. As globalization occurs, dominant languages threaten linguistic diversity by instigating language shifts; however, revitalization efforts are indicative of a desire to preserve the native languages. Fernando et al. (2010) determined culturally valued social constructs are lost as a language loses speakers (p. 49). Current research finds Scottish Gaelic being elevated, figuratively and literally, into equal standing with English and an increase in confidently displaying or participating in Gaelic culture. English caused the decay of Scottish Gaelic, so with the recent elevation in status and societal value, cultural understanding increases as well. Having both languages supported within Scotland demonstrates linguistic diversity with cultural respect of Gaelic and any English adoptions.

Positive attitudes derive positive policies and positive policies facilitate positive attitudes. Research has indicated speakers' attitudes about the language contribute to the language either thriving or decaying and the individual language policies in the current research reflect positive attitudes to the language with creative implementation strategies. Like Fishman (1991) suggests, language shift reversal is a value issue where society's attitude about, and desire for, the language determines if policy is regarded with same importance as other social policies (p. 33). Since the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, subsequent policies and participation of public organizations reflect society's value of Gaelic by the creation of a supportive framework through language policy to ensure growth. LSR's symbiotic nature explains the nuanced relationship between people and language; because communities and culture are defined by sharing similar traits, language is often a connecting commonality. However, communities and cultures sharing the language must value that specific form of communication over others available—such as a potential encroaching language.

Furthermore, previous research connects language loss to also losing an associated culture, while current research finds promotive policies for

language revitalization also stimulates intrigue for cultural continuity. As policies reflect society's values, specifically about language here, cultural care influences the construction of the plans. Schiffman (1996) determines language policies are culturally constructed—reflecting the perception and value of the language. He also defines promotive policy typology as policies supporting the use of specific languages through administrative and legal guarantees, allocation of resources, and designation of usage domains; they may be explicit (naming languages and rights in law) or implicit by promoting languages without direct mention (Schiffman, 1996, pp. 5, 29). Scotland utilizes promotive language policies, so culturally centered organizations receive funding, staffing, and space, supporting the observance of cultural displays. Promotive policies demonstrate the level of value revitalization efforts receive from the associated society.

CONCLUSION

Promotive policies are indicative of a society with a desire to share responsibility in revitalizing, maintaining, and celebrating a language. Attitude towards a language causes the decay or flourishing of the language, having explicit positive encouragement increases the chances of language and culture survival. Promotive policies are a social structure created to actively encourage the language use, but require substantial community support which relies heavily on perception, attitude, and desire. In terms of modernity, Gaelic revitalization is the process of creating an equilibrium for English and Gaelic to coexist in Scotland.

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Beyond a Collective "Victimhood": Perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from the East Bank

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This project explores how proximity in identity to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects Jordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian perceptions of collective victimhood. The project therefore employs Collective Victimhood Theory (CVT), or the understanding of victimization's effects on a victimized group's collective relations, behaviors, and identity. The project critiques previous research on Collective Victimhood Theory and tendencies to extrapolate and assume victimhood identity beyond applicable populations. The project relies on six interviews of Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanian individuals living within Jordan's borders. Through thematic coding and analysis of interview transcripts, the project investigates interviewees' perceptions of the conflict and collective victimhood. This analysis demonstrated a tendency to determine proximity to Palestinian victimization situationally. However, that act of proximation did not manifest in a collective victimhood mentality but rather in understandings of specific collective grievances that people in Jordan experience. For this reason, this paper argues, a CVT framework seems to accurately describe dynamics related to a victimized group but not always the resultant social narratives, demanding an Appraisal Theory framework to avoid erroneously prescribing communal victimhood narratives to a novel population. As a global audience anxiously follows peace proceedings in the Gaza Strip, any day-after reckoning will have to contend with the broader ramifications to the past years and decades of violence in this conflict, not only in Israel-Palestine but across the region. These Jordanian perspectives therefore begin to reveal the proximate dynamics at play in grappling with protracted grievance throughout the Middle East.

Keywords: Collective Victimhood Theory; Jordan; Jordanian Identity; Palestinian Identity

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> The soothing or afflictive effect of the stories we tell is not in whether we select the right words but in our proximity to what the right words might be… the privilege of describing a thing vaguely, incompletely, dishonestly, is inseparable from the privilege of looking away. (Omar El Akkad, *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*, p. 68)

INTRODUCTION

I sat at a plastic dining table on a balcony overlooking the city of Amman, Jordan, in the summer of 2024 over a plate of reheated *mansaf* and sliced cucumbers. The sun was high overhead on an unseasonably moderate Saturday afternoon, and across me sat a friend describing her morning in a mix of Palestinian Amiyya, Modern Standard Arabic, and broken English to accommodate for my linguistic deficiencies. In her blended speech, I picked out fragments to piece together the morning's activities—*sūq* (market); *ṭabib* (doctor); *dawaʾ* (medicine)—soon realizing my friend had been diagnosed with anxiety in a medical checkup. This information was not a revelation; she frequently passed televisions with disapproving glares and quiet requests to turn off the daily deluge of news from across the border. Moreover, I knew my friend was Palestinian, having assembled a loose family history over a month of conversations, tracing migration from Jerusalem through the West Bank and into Jordan following wars in 1948 and 1967. What I did not comprehend were my friend's lasting ties to the territory. Asking if the anxiety came from her family's connection to Palestine, implying history, conflict, and escape, she answered with an unexpected presentism: "Yes, my sister is in Gaza City, and I fear for her every day."

Such stories in Jordan are not unique, tracing all the way back to early frictions between Jewish immigrants and Palestinian locals in the Ottoman-controlled territory comprising modern-day Israel-Palestine. In this period, a cycle of mounting tensions and sporadic violence emerged, continuing into the British Mandate's administration of the region following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. These tensions largely began with the onset of Jewish immigration from Europe under the nationalist ideology of Zionism seeking to establish a Jewish state free from the rampant and increasingly violent antisemitism in emerging European nation-states (Mahler, 2011, pp. 17-19). Jewish immigrants, however, would often purchase land from Ottoman landlords and later British officials, leaving many Palestinians blindsided and increasingly hostile to immigration (Avneri, 2017, pp. 75-76; Pappe, 2022, p. 91). Violent riots ensued with rising intensity as Arabs protested the precipitous rise in Jewish immigration following the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which asserted "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Barakat, 2016, pp. 8-9; Balfour, 1917). Thus, the period saw the hardening of Jewish and Palestinian identities into opposing claims over ter-

ritory and settlement. As a result, antagonism sowed the seeds for continued intergroup hostility and ensuing grievances.

These hostilities resulted in war on numerous occasions, with the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1948 and 1967 proving especially devastating for Palestinians. In both instances, Palestinians and allied Arab countries fought Israel, suffering major defeats and prompting episodes of mass exodus and forcible removal of Palestinians from the territory. The War of 1948, occurring in tandem with the end of British Mandate control over the region, resulted in an independent Israeli state and the dislocation of between 700,000 to 800,000 Palestinians from Palestine's pre-1948 borders, leading many to refer to the event as the Nakba, or "Catastrophe" in Arabic (Warf et al., 2020, p. 384). Likewise, the Six-Day War of 1967 between several Arab states and Israel resulted in major territorial gains for Israel as well as the displacement of a further 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians from the territory in an event labeled the Naksa, or "setback" (Bowker, 2003, p. 81). As of 2022, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates the total number of Palestinians living outside Palestine's pre-1948 borders is around 7.2 million, with many of these individuals tracing heritage to refugees from the Nakba and Naksa ("Palestinian Central Bureau," 2022, p. 1). These momentous developments in land control and population displacement occupy a significant space in Palestinian narratives of the conflict. Indeed, the shorthand titles for these events highlight Palestinian traumas in a collective manner, invoking significant shared experiences between the Palestinians still residing within the pre-1948 borders and the numerous Palestinians who suffered removal or fled from war.

Naturally, the latter group did not leave these traumas at the border, causing complicated relationships between identity and national belonging in the process, and nowhere is this dynamic more apparent than in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Palestinian refugees carried, and continue to carry, identification with the events of 1948 and 1967 across time and geography, and Jordan, a significant recipient of these refugees, has struggled to reconcile the resultant challenges to national identity. Jordan's relationship with Palestinians appears straightforward at a cursory glance given shared borders, culture, and even a de facto state after Jordan's controversial annexation of the West Bank in 1950 (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 4).[1] Jordan even became the only Arab state to extend citizenship to Palestinian refugees in Jordanian-controlled territory after 1948, leading to the country's present-day demographics, where Palestinian-Jordanians constitute around half of the total population (Gandalfo, 2012, p. 23). Cultural affinity, shared history, and the lack of state expectations for a "return" to Palestine generally allow for warm relations between the kingdom's Palestinian and Jordanian citizens, but some "East" Jordanians grew hostile toward the non-native population,

[1] De facto Jordanian rule ended in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967 when Israeli forces gained control of the territory, and Jordan officially relinquished claims to the West Bank in 1988 (Kumaraswamy, 2019, pp. 5, 20).

as seen in the continued salience of Jordanian identity politics today (Culcasi, 2016, p. 9). These dynamics pose a distinctive case of Palestinian identity, wherein Palestinian-Jordanians maintain a national identity linking the group with Palestinians in Palestine yet, unlike other countries in the region, constitute a prominent and generally accepted place in Jordanian society. Here, the community retains a unique and proximate position in relation to both Jordanian and Palestinian national identities, where proximity represents the dynamic process of perceiving self- and group-belonging in a broader identity milieu.

Against this backdrop on October 7, 2023, Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, launched an attack on Israel in response to Arab-Israeli political normalization, Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and Hamas' flagging support in Gaza. The attack's immediate consequences proved devastating, resulting in approximately 1,200 Israeli deaths and the seizure of 251 hostages ("The Israel-Hamas War's," 2025). The response has likewise been devastating, with regional tensions flaring into strikes on eight countries and an Israeli bombardment campaign that has killed over 70,000 Gazans in what both the United Nations and the International Association of Genocide Scholars have labelled a genocide (Cook, 2025; "IAGS Resolution," 2025; "Legal analysis," 2025). The scale of these events has clearly been traumatic for people living in Israel and Gaza, reigniting the longstanding conflict and accompanying senses of victimization. At the same time, widespread outrage over, or even identification with, this victimization erupted outside Israel-Palestine in the form of vigils, boycotts, protests, and counter-protests.

This international reaction was on full display in Jordan, where support for Gazans was immediate and overwhelming. Jordanians from all walks of life quickly took to the streets and social media to protest Israel's reaction to the October 7 attack in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. In the early stages of the genocide, mass protests and daily demonstrations took place throughout the kingdom, continuing weekly thereafter (Vidal, 2023; Adler, 2024). Anti-Israeli/American boycotts also proved widespread in Jordan, with over 83 percent of Jordanians reporting participation ("Survey of Jordanians' Perceptions," 2024, p. 13). Even compared to other countries in the Middle East, this level of engagement was substantial, with protests and participation abating earlier and peaking lower in other Arab states (Hammond, 2024; El Kurd, 2024). In this way, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict retains a uniquely central place in Jordanian society. Less clear is the nature and exact cause of this solidarity.

These dynamics raise the question of how Jordanian proximate identity affects resident Jordanian and Palestinian identification with Palestinian collective trauma and victimhood. In yet another moment of regional strife, the aftermath of the October 7 attack reintroduces the question of relationships between people throughout the region, with residents of Jordan occupying a liminal space between national independence and affinity for Palestinians.

To explore these dynamics, I interviewed English-speaking Jordanians and Palestinians living in Jordan during a ceasefire in January 2025. I then thematically coded interview transcripts, searching for themes related to identity while highlighting variation between participants. Through the lens of Collective Victimhood Theory (CVT), which seeks to elucidate the dynamics between group suffering and individual experience of trauma, I then analyzed the coded data to test the theory's applicability. Interviewees understood Palestinian victimization through a lens of layered proximate identities, a phenomenon compatible with CVT, yet these understandings did not indicate a sense of victimhood. This paper therefore argues that CVT provides a framework for understanding certain social dynamics within a victimized group but not necessarily the social narratives undergirding those dynamics. For this reason, different theoretical approaches like an Appraisal Theory framework better accommodate variation in social dynamics and narratives when studying novel populations' reactions to collectively traumatic events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collective Victimhood Theory

Collective Victimhood Theory (CVT) posits an explanation for individual and subjective experiences of violence against a particular group, investigating various levels of social influence to make sense of these perceptions. Specifically, CVT often scrutinizes the structural causes, communal context, and individual narratives contributing to widespread understandings of conflict and victimhood. At the broadest level, these narratives typically fall along Bar-Tal et al.'s (2009) description of collective victimhood as a belief in collective and unjust harm against an unprotected group. Moreover, Vollhardt (2020) explains in *The Social Psychology of Collective Victimhood* that the structural level of collective victimhood consists of victimization events wherein one group experiences violence at the hands of another group, such as colonization, war, or genocide. While the various forms of collective victimization can affect individual perceptions of victimhood, cultural narratives, religious ideologies, and social values can also shape individual perceptions at the communal or familial level (Vollhardt, 2020). Applying CVT to Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan amid a traumatic period of intergroup violence in Israel-Palestine can help to explain how these individuals process the violence. Interviews of members from this population can likewise reveal communal victimhood dynamics, especially at the individual level, demonstrating which social narratives, traumas, and personal identities interviewees draw upon to express experiences of collective victimization and perceptions of collective victimhood.

Due to an emphasis on the relationship between individuals and groups, CVT also implies a link between individual claims to victimhood and group belonging. The theory often focuses simultaneously on themes of collective

victimhood identification and group identification to explore a potential causal relationship between the two identities. In Noor et al.'s (2017) review of trends in the collective victimhood literature, the authors found that "Ingroup identity strength predicts both higher endorsement of competitive victimhood and less positive attitudes toward adversary groups" (p. 126). Moreover, the content of this identity, such as ingroup chauvinism, can be predictive of hostility toward other groups. More constructively, individual identification with a broad regional identity can sometimes be predictive of an individual's willingness to forgive an outgroup from the same region, though this pattern has several exceptions (Noor et al., 2017, p. 126). A CVT lens therefore facilitates comparison of Palestinian and Jordanian group and regional identity. In a Jordanian context, the theory further helps distinguish between Jordanian and Palestinian preferences for and identification with collective victimhood, especially regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Prior collective victimhood scholarship has also begun to look at potential social effects of collective victimhood on outgroup perception but remains divided in viewing these effects as potentially constructive or generally destructive. In the constructive trend, several scholars have postulated benefits to collective victimhood, looking for possible ingroup cohesion or even the potential for peace, while other research forefronts predominantly negative effects of destructive, or competitive, victimhood. Exemplifying the former trend, some research has investigated victim groups for possible prosocial behavior (e.g., increased trust or solidarity) toward members of the collective victim ingroup as a consequence of victimization (Rotella et al., 2013; Nair & Vollhardt, 2019). Similarly, Vollhardt (2009) argued that, while competitive victimhood often deters conflict resolution, mutual recognition of suffering could serve as a steppingstone toward peace. However, other studies showcase a more pessimistic view of the phenomenon, demonstrating instances of collective victim group hostility toward members outside of the victim group (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992; De Guissmé & Licata, 2017). Jordanian and Palestinian perceptions of identified outgroups (e.g., Israelis, non-Jordanian Palestinians) likewise relates to collective victimhood's social implications. A case study investigating Palestinian and Jordanian attitudes toward outgroups can therefore clarify collective victimhood's effects on perceptions toward outgroups.

Adding complexity to notions of constructive or competitive victimhood, recent scholarship has begun to reject direct comparison between victim groups, challenging the comparative bias within the collective victimhood literature. Some scholars have argued that the tendency to search for similarities or sources of conflict in instances of collective victimhood lies in contrast with how victims perceive victimhood and intergroup relationships. For example, Twali (2019) challenges the comparative paradigm common in collective victimhood research, embracing a more fluid, temporal, and situational understanding of intergroup comparison not permanently fixed to

a victim-victim or victim-perpetrator dyad. However, recent studies have suggested a potential need to depart from the field's comparative tendencies altogether given individuals' frequent rejection of such comparison in favor of more dynamic understandings of both personal and group victimhood (Vollhardt et al., 2021; Vollhardt et al., 2023). A case study on Palestinian and Jordanian perceptions of a proximate victim group can likewise avoid the comparative tendencies in the collective victimhood literature. Instead of attempting to extrapolate findings on collective victimhood beyond a particular conflict, this project acknowledges the particularity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while maintaining the goal of extending the current literature beyond the directly conflicted populations.

CVT in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Indeed, studies of this conflict using CVT are numerous, as previous researchers have examined relationships between Israelis and Palestinians throughout the conflict's recent history, highlighting victim-perpetrator dyads. Through the lens of collective victimhood, social psychologists have studied these dyads in terms of grievance, investigating the effects on conflicted group relations. In Bar-Tal and Antebi's (1992) seminal work, the authors theorized a hostile Israeli "siege mentality" toward the world due to a long history of persecution (p. 633). Later work applied this theory to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a temporal level, layering Jewish Israeli siege mentality in terms of historical victimhood, general conflict victimhood, and conflict event victimhood (Schori-Eyal et al., 2014). Other research has centered on the individual level, studying how victim beliefs in the conflict could lead to either protracted fighting or peace (Vollhardt, 2009; Kljajić et al., 2025, pp. 28-29). This research project therefore focuses on Jordanian and Palestinian perspectives peripheral to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, investigating the relationship between proximal identity and perceptions of collective victimhood within Jordan's borders. Research on Israeli and Palestinian collective victimhood implicitly seeks to understand the relationship between the two groups but typically fails to adequately investigate implications of collective victimhood external to the directly conflicted area, so this project will begin to address the literature's current gap.

Past researchers have made preliminary attempts at such analysis, conducting research on potentially related communities. The occasional study, recognizing the international community's role in the conflict, seeks to capture feelings of Jewish and Arab diaspora communities through the lens of collective victimization. For example, multiple studies have centered on the effects of conflict narratives and collective victimhood on North American Jewish diaspora communities (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008; Ben Hagai et al., 2013; Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2019). Ben Hagai and Zurbriggen's (2019) study of the relationship between narratives, collective victimhood, and support for a two-state solution extended the studied population to both

Jewish and "Arab" Americans for comparison.[2] One study even investigated Palestinian refugee experiences of collective victimhood in Lebanon (van der Velde, 2013). This project will extend this trend to Palestinian and Jordanian populations in Jordan, applying the theoretical lens to new groups/subgroups outside Israel-Palestine. In this way, the research will explore a CVT framework's applicability to understudied populations associated with conflicted groups, challenging assumptions of collective victimhood identities among Arab or refugee communities.

Therefore, a study on Palestinian-Jordanian and Jordanian self-perception will continue with past research's focus on collective victimhood in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The project seeks to add to existing scholarship, providing a case study from the thoroughly investigated Israeli-Palestinian conflict while further exploring relationships between groups not directly involved in conflict. However, the project is unique in studying Jordanian populations. Though collective victimhood research has covered many facets of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most studies center around Jewish and/or Israeli perceptions with occasional inclusion of Arab and Palestinian voices, whereas Palestinians and Jordanians in Jordan, for whom a shared Palestinian and/or Arab identity is ostensibly salient, remain relatively absent from the literature. In addition to unique perspectives, this project is timely due to the tenuous ceasefire in Gaza. An implicit motivation undergirding collective victimhood literature goes beyond understanding the phenomenon itself and toward workable solutions to intergroup relations. With the unresolved conflict comes the possibility of heightened Palestinian grievance, which demands the greater engagement and understanding this project seeks to provide.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Interviews on identity and the ongoing conflict in Israel-Palestine from Palestinians, Jordanians, and Palestinian-Jordanians in Jordan serve as the primary data for this research project. Interview responses from members of these demographics are therefore the foundation for analysis of these individuals' relationships with Palestinian identity as well as perceptions of the conflict overall. To collect these perspectives, I recruited from personal and professional English-speaking contacts in Jordan for participation in semi-structured interviews, gathering six participants for the study (see Table 1). Here, it should be noted that conducting the project in English in prioritizing the language skills of the interviewer likely skewed results toward perspectives from Jordan's middle class. Nevertheless, the collection process resulted in varied perspectives derived from the population of study, capturing views from both men and women of different socioeconomic back-

[2] The "Arab sample" included Americans with Arab, Turkish, and Iranian heritage from Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Turkey, and Iran (Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2019, p. 183).

grounds with ages ranging from early twenties to mid-fifties. Still, such a sample should not be taken to be representative of perspectives in Jordan as a whole; rather, these views only begin to illuminate the contours of varied experiences within Jordanian society.

Name[3]	*National Self-Identification*[4]	*Identified Home City/Region*	*Age*
Ahmad	Palestinian / Jordanian	Amman (family from Nablus and Yaffa)	>40
Amal	Palestinian / Jordanian	Zarqa (family from Palestine)	<35
Mariam	Palestinian / Jordanian	Amman (family from Irbid and Palestine)	>40
Bilal	Jordanian	Wadi Musa	<35
Laila	Palestinian	Nablus	>40
Khadija	Palestinian / Jordanian	Jordan Valley	<35

Table 1: Interviewees

With the participants gathered, and after obtaining Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative certification and Institutional Review Board approval, I held the six single-hour Zoom interviews between January 25 and 29, 2025, during a ceasefire following 15 months of genocide in Gaza. The interview procedure contained three sections, including informed consent; demographic items; and questions exploring the interviewees' relationship to Palestinian identity and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict historically and in Gaza (see Appendix A). Both the demographic items and questions related to Palestinian identity aimed to establish participants' relationship to the Palestinian community, while questions on Israel and the conflict in Gaza then assessed interviewees' perceptions of the conflict and any potential identification with the victimization. Because prior research has seldom focused on perspectives of collective victimhood in Jordan, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed for data collection while mitigating interviewer bias.

I used thematic analysis to evaluate primary data from the interviews, beginning with transcription and initial coding to provide an organizational basis for later analysis identifying emergent themes within and across the interviewee responses. Like Twali's (2019) interviews exploring collective victimhood among the understudied community of South Sudanese refugees,

[3] To maintain both confidentiality and readability, the author has elected to replace each of the interviewees' names with relatively common names in Jordan belonging to the interviewees' respective genders.

[4] This list of "self-identification" is not necessarily a reflection of current or historical familial nationality in either Palestine or Jordan but a statement of how interviewees chose to self-identify through the course of their interview.

I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process for thematic analysis. I began by transcribing interviews using Otter.ai software before manual review and revision. As demonstrated in Table 2, I then organized the data based on the interview structure before further revising and defining thematic codes illustrative of Jordanian identity and collective victimhood. With raw data organized into broad thematic codes, I was able to revise for specificity and eliminate themes due to limited data or project relevance (see Table 2). The next phase, defining themes, involved analyzing the theme's significance to the research project, resulting in a detailed outline explaining the connection between the themes and the research question on identity and proximity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which I then used to write the Discussion section of this research paper. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process for this project therefore provided a replicable process for organizing and synthesizing primary interview data.

Initial Organization	*Broad Thematic Codes*	*Examples of Refined Codes*
Identity & Land	Identity in Jordan	Belonging; Division; Urban/Rural; Unity
	Land & Borders	Return; Sameness; Family; Connection
Relationship with the Conflict	Conflict Grievance	Pervasive; Solidarity; History; Borders
	Economic Impact	Boycott; Downturn; Scarcity
	Psychological Impact	Fear; Sadness; Well-Being; Suppression
	Resistance & Resolution	Youth; Education; Protest; Violence

Table 2: Relevant Thematic Codes

ANALYSIS

Proximity Influencing Conflict Identity

After a cursory analysis, some uniformity did exist among the interviewees, as each individual, irrespective of identity, remarked on the conflict's pervasiveness in Jordanian society, even before Hamas' October 7 attack. When describing early recollections related to the conflict, virtually every respondent reflected on the conflict's ubiquity in Jordanian life. For example, Ahmad explained, "For people living in Jordan, with a lot of them coming from the war in 1948, the Nakba, or 1967, [the issue in Palestine] is not a conflict; it's a being" (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Mariam reiterated this point, stating that the conflict "is not something that you remember… it's part of our culture, it's part of our daily life" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). All other interviewees reinforced Mariam's

point creating a sense of unavoidable encounter with the conflict at a young age (see Table 3). These descriptions reveal the conflict's indelible mark on Jordanian society. Through an intimate proximity, the violence's unending nearness forges a collective identification with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Name	*Reflection on the Question: "Do you have any particular memory when you first became aware of conflict with Israel?"*
Ahmad	"For people living in Jordan, with a lot of them coming from the war in 1948, the Nakba, or 1967, [the issue in Palestine] is not a conflict; it's a being."
Amal	"Actually, we were raised with this [idea] in schools: 'There's the Israeli occupation, and this is our land'… [There is] an Islamic theme here in Jordan, so we always talk about this stuff."
Mariam	"It's not something that you remember or you all of a sudden become aware of. It's daily. It's something you grow up knowing that it's there through the history of your family… It is not something that you remember… it's part of our culture; it's part of our daily life."
Bilal	"I think we're born with this… I think, since you're Jordanian and you live here in Jordan, you grew up with this idea, with the conflict and the issues in Palestine. You grow up with this news, with everything on social media, the people talking about it. There are a lot of Palestinians here as well, so that's why."
Laila	"Since we [my brothers and I] were born and we were abroad. It was normal that we have our lands in Palestine… We [were] familiar with, for example, the olive oil soup, the *kanāfa*, the sweet, the Turkish bath also."
Khadija	"I started to know about the conflict when I started in the first year actually at university, because it's like something you know, but you don't realize what is exactly happening. So, at the university, [it started] with some group of students talking about 'Palestine, Palestine, Palestine.' And then even in the classes, some professors [would mention] Palestine."

Table 3: Explanations of Conflict Pervasiveness

While widespread, this collective identification was not uniform. A difference in experience related to the conflict due to disparate demographics in geography arose among interviewees, with rural Jordanian communities seemingly less focused on Palestine than Jordanian cities with a large Palestinian presence. Where more Palestinian-heavy population centers (e.g., Amman or Zarqa) may foster collective consciousness of the conflict, such consciousness does not necessarily permeate into the more rural, predominantly Jordanian areas of the country. With family roots in a small town outside of Petra, a southern, mostly Jordanian part of the country, Bilal provided a diverging perspective on the conflict, saying, "If you live in Amman, you will hear more about [the conflict]; you will face a lot of people from Palestine… outside of Amman, you can find it there, but it's a bit rare" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Khadija, having grown up in the Jordan Valley, reiterated this point, explaining how awareness of Palestinians was present in the valley but far more pervasive at the University of Jordan in Amman, where Palestinians are greater in number (personal communication, January

29th, 2025). These perspectives challenge a universal conception of collective Jordanian conflict identity, but the effects of proximity on conflict consciousness are consistent. Where constant exposure to Palestinians and Palestinian narratives lead to a collective identification with the conflict, the inversion of this phenomenon also appears true among interviewees, where Palestinian remoteness leads to a weakened collective memory and lessened identification with the conflict, even in the Jordan Valley along the West Bank's border.

Aside from differences between areas with and without a large Palestinian presence, several interviewees noted a small faction in Jordanian society openly hostile toward Palestine and Palestinians due to national identity. Either through personal or political experience of such hostility, half of the interviewees mentioned lack of social consensus on Palestine within Jordanian society. Indeed, Amal reported direct experiences of racism and discrimination at the hands of "pure Jordanians" because of her Palestinian identity (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). Laila also raised the issue of some "Eastern Jordanians" belonging to a small but vocal faction overtly opposed to supporting Palestine and Palestinians in favor of a more self-serving Jordanian platform focused on the country's needs (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Bilal referenced this minority faction too, citing the group's increased profile in the wake of resource scarcity brought on by Jordanian humanitarian support for the besieged population in Gaza (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Through these descriptions, the conflict's proximity in the form of perceived foreign intrusion and resource scarcity on the part of certain "East Bank" Jordanians prompts a collective, albeit minority, identity based on grievance with Palestinians. When the conflict's proximity increases, such as an encounter with a Palestinian or heightened conflict tension, that proximity logically, if misguidedly, intensifies right-wing grievance and prompts mobilization.

Nevertheless, the interviewees' conflict consciousness manifested in assertions of solidarity or identification with Palestinians in Gaza. Interviewees' descriptions of personal or societal support for the Palestinians cast hostile Jordanians as a minority against an overwhelming camaraderie or even kinship. Bilal was most direct in this assertion, castigating Jordanians lacking support for Palestinians while stating, "Because I am Jordanian, I love Palestine; I love Palestinians… I'm really with them" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Ahmad described a society-wide sentiment similar to Bilal's feelings, explaining how the boycott movement "was extremely active in many places, but in Jordan, it was another level" (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Indeed, every interview contained mention of personal or Jordanian solidarity with Palestine and/or Palestinians, with Khadija explaining the impossibility of "seeing something like this happing" and "just stop[ping]" support for Palestinians (see Table 4). Converse to the purported occasional negative reaction from "East Bank" Jordanians toward conflict exposure, the interviewees' experience of the conflict's proximity, and especial-

ly the recent nearby Palestinian suffering, fostered an intense and collective cohesion in favor of Palestinians. In this way, the conflict's closeness once again acted as a determining factor in consolidating group identity, only this time in favor of mobilization toward supporting Palestinians.

Name	*Statement of Solidarity*
Ahmad	"this boycott movement, it was extremely active in many places, but in Jordan, it's another level."
Amal	"Every Friday, they pray for the people in Gaza, and I feel like we're still reminding ourselves that there are people suffering right there."
Mariam	"The conversations have shifted from, 'Oh, you're from the US? Welcome!'… to wanting to talk about politics, to talk about the genocide… about Palestine."
Bilal	"Because I am Jordanian, I love Palestine; I love Palestinians… I'm really with them."
Laila	[Speaking of a prominent Jordanian political view]: "They say, 'We have a big demographic population of original Palestinians, and we have to be inside the conflict and supporting the resolution… We are considered as one population from [the] same blood.'"
Khadija	"Seeing something like this happening, I don't think you can just stop and just see. Part of it is because most people in Jordan [are] actually Palestinian."

Table 4: Expression of Jordanian/Palestinian Solidarity

Conflict Identity Influencing Proximity

While the conflict's proximity to populations in Jordanian society demonstrated an acute ability to influence identification with the conflict, this process of identity formation often seemed dialogical, with interviewees invoking identities to make the conflict appear proximate to broad groups. Especially during discussions of violence, several interviewees explicitly drew on various national, ethnic, or religious identities to emphasize conflict ownership beyond the directly-besieged. As Table 5 shows, in discussing Palestinian identity in Jordan, Ahmad went so far as to equate an attack on Gaza to invading Amman itself before walking back the statement while reiterating a heightened sense of grievance among the Jordanian population when witnessing violence against Palestinians. Moreover, when considering Jordan's hypothetical military intervention with the violence, Bilal broadened this scope of solidarity with Palestinians to all Arabs. Concurring with this view, Khadija at times even extended concern over Palestine to include not only Arabs but all Muslims (see Table 5). This habit of extending group borders reveals the layered identities contributing to group solidarity and grievance, where Palestinians sit at the center of an ever-widening set of nearly concentric circles. Interviewees therefore tended to situate the self rel-

atively close to the conflict's Palestinian epicenter but "proximated" outer circles of identity in erasing intragroup divisions in favor of solidarity (see Figures 1 & 2).

Name	*Extending grievance to distant communities*
Ahmad	"If there is a war in Gaza now… it's personal for people [in Jordan]. They wait, not only to watch the news but to make sure their family members are okay... This is a being. It's literally like invading Amman. Okay, not the same level because it's not your own safety as a person, but it's your family."
Bilal	"This issue, it's ours as well. It's Arabs' because they [Palestinians] are our brothers."
Khadija	"As a Muslim first, you should not be seeing injustice and keep sitting and just watching… And especially if it was Palestine because it's a holy land for Muslims. And as Arabs in general [you should do the same] because we have this idea: 'We are Arab; we are united.'"

Table 5: Quotes "Proximating" Groups toward Palestinians

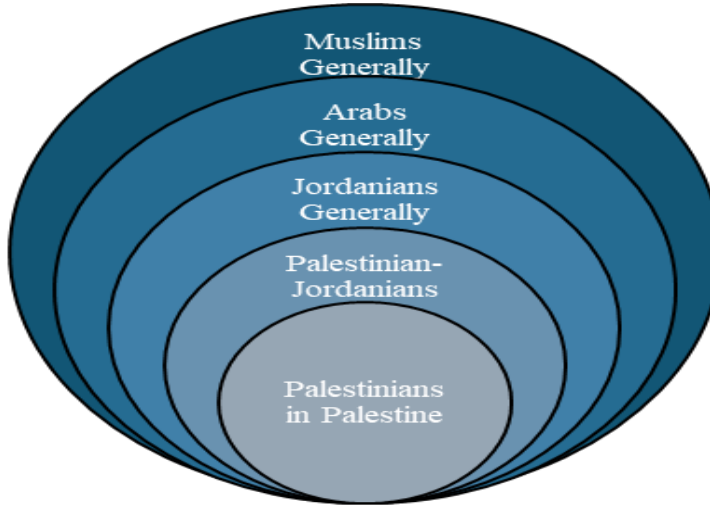


Figure 1: Hypothetical Stratified Identities

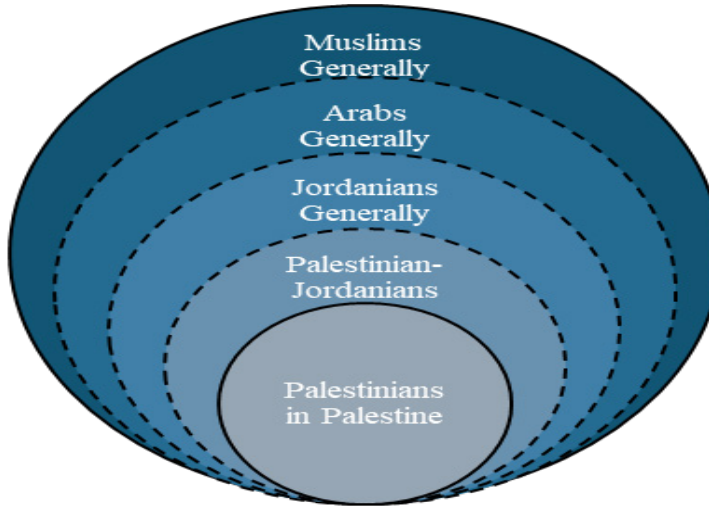


Figure 2: "Proximating" toward Palestinian Grievance

However, divisions within these appeals for broad unity are also clear through some interviewees' privileging of Jordan's proximity to the Palestinian issue over other Arab states. Multiple interviewees contrasted Jordan with states in the Arabian Peninsula, forming a cleavage in conflict identification within the Arab population. In speaking about Jordanian experience of the conflict as a unique sense of "being," Ahmad used Saudi Arabia and Yemen as foils, saying, "for them, it must be a cause," implying a political motive for support compared to the personal identification common in Jordan (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Khadija echoed this perspective, explaining that people in Arabian Gulf states, other than Kuwait, "don't even talk about Palestine" compared to countries with "Palestinian roots," including Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Herein lies another example of conflict identity proximation, though in these examples, interviewees distance other Arab groups from Palestinians to maintain a special relationship between the self and Palestine. In intragroup comparison void of direct threat to the Palestinian center, the interviewees instate borders to emphasize particularity in personal conflict proximity (see Figure 3). Thus, these interviewees negotiated relative intragroup proximity to the conflict situationally, preferring solidarity in instances of central Palestinian distress while favoring an approach of distancing other related identity groups when discussing grievance in Jordan.

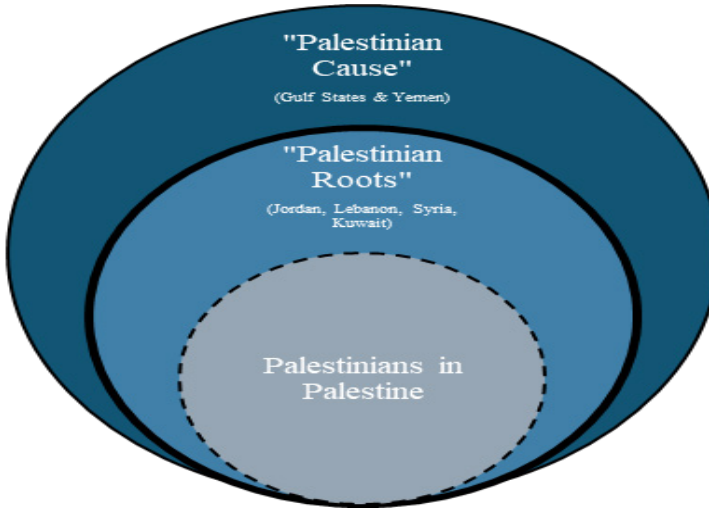


Figure 3: Distancing via Jordanian Grievance

Interviewees tended to implicitly construct a similar border between conflict experience in Jordan and Palestine as well. Despite general solidarity with Palestine and Palestinians, and the occasional inclination to place Jordanian experience close to Palestinian experience, interviewees drew a distinct border between Jordan and Palestine, signifying a tacit recognition of difference. In Table 6, for example, when discussing the somber mood in Jordan, Amal recounted feeling sad at the thought of suffering "right there" and guilt at the notion of joy "here" in Jordan. Similarly, Laila, who had lived in the West Bank prior to living in Jordan, explaining the temporary living situation of "here" in Jordan while expressing a longing to live in a specific home "there" in Palestine. In all, every interviewee used this construction, understandably defaulting to international borders to grapple with the proximity of "right there" yet the undeniable separation of "over there" (see Table 6). Even with the tendency to proximate personal suffering toward the Palestinian center of grievance, interviewees in Jordan recognized a firm separation between the two regions and by extension, the two conflict experiences (see Figure 4). This practice again demonstrates a stratified understanding of conflict grievance, forming an unspoken hierarchy between centralized and peripheral pain.

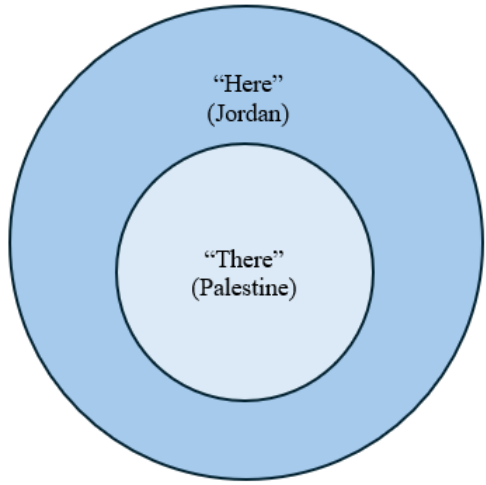


Figure 4: Default Grievance Identity

Name	*Jordan as "here" (italics added)*	*Palestine as "there" (italics added)*
Ahmad	"During the Arab Spring, there was this huge moment of… 'this should not happen *here*.'"	"He [my father] has a lot of relatives over *there* [in Palestine]."
Amal	"if I attend a party *here*, I'm not going to post about this."	"I feel like we're still reminding ourselves that there are people suffering right *there*."
Mariam	"Family names *here* say a lot about where people are from… because of how tribal the society is in Jordan."	"In the beginning, it was very hard… [my] organization was trying to understand what was going on *there*."
Bilal	"Since you're Jordanian and you live *here* in Jordan, you grew up with… the issues in Palestine."	"The scenes that you see of everything happening *there*, you can't forget it."
Laila	"Even my parents are living *here* [in Jordan]."	"but… we feel like Jordan is not our destination, and I still have my home *there* [in Palestine]."
Khadija	"The only thing I heard about [Palestinians] when I was growing up was, 'Palestinians are white people that came *here* with a lot of money.'"	"One of my relatives actually had a farm on the border, so if you want to go *there* [the West Bank], you have to do a lot of things."

Table 6: Distancing between Jordan and Palestine

The bifurcation was likewise inherent in discussions of "return," further acknowledging a fundamental separation between communities in Jordan and Palestine. This rhetoric reifies the border between "here" and "there" through a framework of prevented movement or facilitated displacement, adding a layer of grievance simultaneously connecting and separating people in Palestine and Jordan. For instance, Ahmad referenced "going back" to Palestine despite never having been, using the nomenclature of return to reveal the liminal—though not contradictory—space between displacement and belonging for the Palestinian-Jordanian interviewee (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Having lived in Palestine, Laila's notion of return was more concrete, citing continued ownership of a home in Ramallah as both reminder of separation and resolve for return (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). While one reading allows for "return" to represent a capitulation to an underlying and intrinsic difference in identity, conceptions of future return are also inherently transgressive for Palestinians in the diaspora, expressing desire and intention to break through the conflict identity's hard central border (see Figure 5). On the one hand, this final border is a metaphor for the harsh realities of Israeli violence and occupation, but transgression also signifies both rejection of physical separation and a desire for diffusing a shared experience of harm.

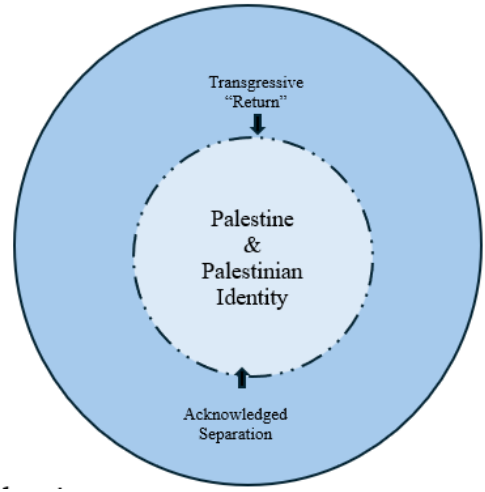


Figure 5: "Return" Grievance Identity

However, when confronting implicit acknowledgments of separation, several interviewees rejected the notion in favor of more universalistic interpretations. Like references to "going back" or "return," some interviewees recognized borders between Jordan and Palestine yet rebuffed their validity through direct challenges to prevailing social narratives. In the Jordan Val-

ley, Khadija explained, people do not easily accept the idea of "here" versus "there," describing even parts of the occupied West Bank as "Jordan" in a rejection of both international borders and illegal annexation (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Similarly, Bilal obfuscated the differences between Palestine and Jordan in a challenge to national and historical narratives, referencing an undefined and distant past where "all this area was one, not just Jordan [or] Palestine" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). When asked, "Where are you from?" by Jordanian peers, Amal also rejected distinct national categorization, saying Jordan and Palestine "are both my country; they are the same to me" (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). In this way, interviewees made a clear and conscious effort to overcome distance between Jordanians and Palestinians. When speaking with intention, these interviewees chose a close and even homogenizing identification with Palestinians and the conflict, despite implicit prior acknowledgments of separation (see Figure 6).

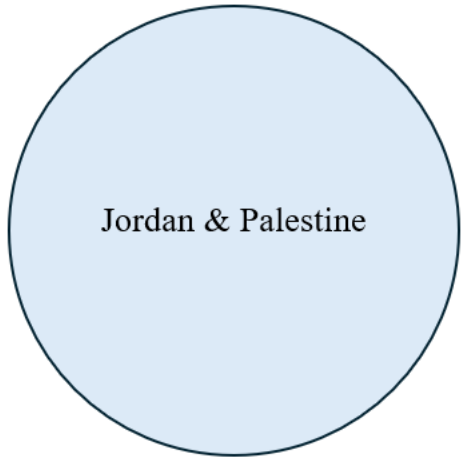


Figure 6: Rejected Narrative Identity

Collective Grievance

The conflict's geographic closeness and even presence in Jordanian society produced elements resembling a collective victimhood mentality, such as unique historical, psychological, and economic grievances in Jordan. But multiple interviewees directly opposed to a mentality of victimhood. While reasons for a self-perception of victimhood were present throughout these conversations, the interviewees typically avoided such framing or rejected the notion outright and unprompted. For example, Ahmad described frustration with prevailing coverage of regional conflict casting people, particularly youth, as either victims or perpetrators, never as peacemakers or part

of the solution (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Amal was far more direct in castigating this perception, explaining how she hates "when people here treat themselves as victims" because, she said, "I'm not a victim" (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). In contrast, other interviewees did not reject victimhood outright but also rarely discussed Israelis concretely, preferring to define experience in terms of grievance rather than in terms of victimizers. Though CVT argues that victimhood rejection is an exception to the rule, the loaded and somewhat helpless term of "victim" did not match the interviewees' self-perception. Instead, a concrete, multifaceted sense of "collective grievance" persisted over configurations of "victimhood." Understanding the cohort on its own terms, therefore, better evaluates shared grievance while avoiding any usurpation of agency.

This grievance phenomenon typically appeared in three specific and thematically overlapping grievances—psychological, economic, and historical—with the conflict's psychological ramifications featuring frequently among interviewees. Despite not physically experiencing the violence in the Gaza Strip or Palestine generally, most interviewees noted the conflict's intense psychological damage in Jordan specifically. For example, four of the six interviewees described widespread fears over Jordanian economic uncertainty and "fears on the level of transfer" (Laila, personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Likewise, four of the respondents mentioned sadness or depression as commonplace in Jordan during the genocide's first 15 months, with Khadija saying "I think they were depressed, all of us actually, seeing all that" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Of the eight accounts of collective fear and depression, only two were based on political or economic fears, with most interviewees linking collective psychological distress directly with Israeli violence against Palestinians. Therefore, conceptions of collective psychological trauma in Jordan tended toward an empathetic grievance revolving around Palestinian experience. This framework maps relatively easily onto traditional theorizations of collective victimhood, observing populations without direct exposure to violence still expressing secondary trauma by dint of shared group membership.

Beyond psychological grievance, a theme of collective economic strain emerged. Interviewees noted a worsening relationship between individuals and Jordan's economy, with widespread stress throughout the country following October 7. Several noted macroeconomic trends due to the war, such as Ahmad's remark that "The stress you see everywhere, even in business: the real estate industry immediately gets touched with anything happening in Palestine, specifically the war in Gaza" (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Others cited consumer behavior to explain economic downturn, with Mariam noting, "People are not happy, so they're not going out to have fun" while accounting for empty restaurants, malls, and cafes (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Bilal, however, provided the most personal account of the war's economic toll, explaining how tourist scarcity

forced his language-exchange company to close in an environment rivaled only by the COVID-19 pandemic (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). This evidence raises the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's true borders, introducing a geographically layered component to collective grievance. Whereas psychological harms stem from witnessing proximate violence, economic harms are more personal and potentially unique to Israel-Palestine's neighbors.

The third and final theme of grievance arose from the lasting and historical injustice of displacement, specifically land access. While interviewees alluded to numerous moments in the conflict's history as sources of grievance, this theme was most clear in the physical presentism over loss of land. Amal discussed both awe and jealousy toward friends' visits to Palestine, explaining a personal longing to visit her grandfather's home (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). But she explained this connection beyond familial terms and into the physical, saying "I can feel it's my land… it can touch me." For Laila, identification with a physical land was even more apparent while explaining her family's habit of "keeping in our minds that we have a right in the land, we have our homes there, we have our families" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). This historical trauma links past and present, but loss of land further represents the nexus between psychological and economic grievance in Jordan (see Figure 7). This past instance of separation connects Palestinian grievance in both Jordan and Palestine, making physical harm in Palestine psychologically painful in Jordan while Palestinian-Jordanians continue to accrue geographically-specific economic trauma.

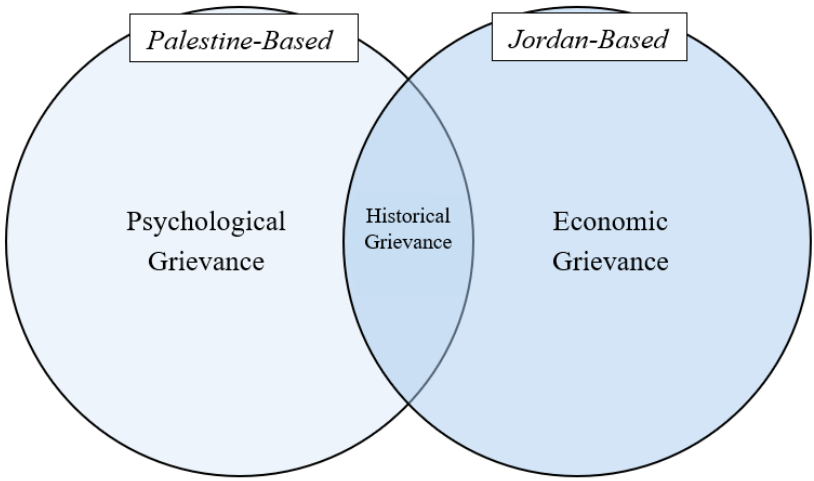


Figure 7: Geographic Basis for Grievance

Collective Resistance

Like conflict grievance in Jordan, three modes of resistance emerged, with the first—violence—rooted in psychological reasoning. Using justifications of psychological or even physical pain experienced in Jordan because of the genocide, some interviewees explained or even justified violent retribution. Laila, while disavowing this form of resistance, explained its reasoning, saying, "We have to expect that there will be a group [that] will have armed resistance… and anyone wanting to defend his land, his home, and his dignity would expect to find this kind of resistance" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). In a similar vein, both Bilal and Khadija mentioned jihad, an Arabic word generally meaning "struggle," or in these instances "holy war," as a reaction potentially in line with Islamic teaching given the need to defend Muslims anywhere but especially in Palestine.[5] Khadija further elaborated on the particular psychological nature of violent resistance as well, adding that most do not believe jihad will end Israeli violence; rather, the mindset is, "I have to do as is human, which is to at least make them scared" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Considering Khadija's quote in particular, this tendency for retributive action seeks to reciprocate harms against the broader Palestinian group. Beyond the desire to cause violence like in Gaza, some people in Jordan also seek to reproduce the psychological fear Israel's genocide has created in Jordan.

However, condoning violence was by no means definitive of the interviewees, who were split over violence as a tolerable form of resistance. Moreover, most interviewees maintained a stalwart commitment to peaceful resistance or avoided endorsing violence, rejecting cycles of harm. Amal neglected to mention violence in recounting Jordanian resistance, which aligned with Ahmad's assertion that "violent expressions for extreme ideology" fall outside the mainstream (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Ahmad's perspective resulted in work advocating for and pursuing peaceful solutions despite Israeli violence, and Laila professed the same commitment after recounting relatives' torture and murder at the hands of the Israel Defense Forces (Ahmad, personal communication, January 25th, 2025; Laila, personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Mariam showed similar commitment through a pre-war peacebuilding program at an Israeli university, and her emphasis on education's role in a peaceful solution persisted (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). This trend demonstrated a rejection of reciprocal treatment against Israelis, indicating that not all interviewees interpreted the conflict in terms of justified harm-to-harm exchange. Rather, peaceful means of resistance to the conflict show capacity to imagine conflict experience beyond the binary of receiving and distributing harms.

[5] The region is home to a long history of prophets in the Abrahamic tradition, including Islam, and Muslims generally consider Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) to be the third holiest site in Islam.

Commitment to peace did not represent resignation to the status quo, however, as several interviewees, whether against violence or not, advocated economic resistance to Israeli actions. In solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza especially, interviewees described widespread, grassroots boycotts of Jordanian and American products. Specifically, Amal explained the boycott's motive as support for "our brothers and Palestinians to make it easier for them" (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). Ahmad said the movement was so effective in Jordan, it forced some entities out of business entirely (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). So intuitive and ubiquitous was such resistance, even Khadija's three-year-old brother once scolded a supermarket employee after seeing a boycotted brand on the chain's shelves (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). However, while solidarity may have been the motivating factor behind the boycott, the economic effects mirrored harms Jordanians suffered. The boycott's intuitive appeal reflects a personal grasp of economic pain, seeking mirrored consequences on Israeli and American businesses.

Like economic resistance, emphasis on education—especially youth education—was common among interviewees. This theme pervaded discussions of the conflict's future, whether related to the work of conflict narrative perpetuation or unconscious recognition of such labor's fruits. Older interviewees in their 40s or 50s, such as Ahmad and Laila, described working professionally on such projects, viewing the next generation of youth in Jordan and Palestine as key to breaking cycles of violence and perceptions of helplessness. In contrast, Khadija, in her twenties, illustrated these efforts' effects, having learned about the conflict extensively at university and passing this knowledge to younger family members while espousing education as a critical component to resistance. Amal, also in her twenties, reflected on this method's success, noticing generational improvement in youth attitudes and outlooks on the conflict. While subtler, resistance through education reciprocally addresses historical grievance. Instead of casting Palestinians exclusively as victims of land dispossession and apartheid, the task of narrative dissemination is a subversive and future-oriented mode of understanding the past. In this way, interviewees asserted personal agency in determining a future, where such agency in historical grievance is often absent.

DISCUSSION

Interviewee Perceptions & CVT Utility

CVT's conception of group experiences of collective violence, regardless of personal exposure, readily explains interviewee experiences of collective violence against Palestinians. Indeed, this framework generally explains interviewee sentiments about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict considering the interviewees' typically indirect experience of Israeli violence. Vollhardt (2020) best outlines this phenomenon, demonstrating how prev-

alent social narratives, values, and ideologies can produce or reinforce intense identification with collective victimization, regardless of personal experience. Given the interviewee's universal identification with Palestinian victimization based at least in part on notions of ethnic and/or religious solidarity, such social factors seem to fit this component of Vollhardt's explanation of collective victimhood formation. Moreover, such narratives not only linked a history of shared grievance and suffering through ethnic cleansing between communities in Jordan and Palestine but also caused interviewees to identify psychological grievances due to the ongoing occupation in the West Bank and bombing campaign in the Gaza Strip. Thus, the theory likely applies to at least some segment of the Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanian populations, though the relationship between proximal identity and collective victimization may differ among broader categorical groups, like "Palestinians" or "Arabs." For example, the nature of Syrian, Egyptian, or Kuwaiti identification with Palestinian victimization may not match the Jordanian case, given distinct social narratives.

CVT's focus on victimization narratives and group belonging also clarifies solidarity with Palestinians among interviewees. In contexts where Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians frequently emphasize solidarity with Palestinians experiencing suffering, the relationship between victimization and group belonging arises. For example, Noor et al. (2017) noted this relationship between victimhood and group identity, focusing on how increased ingroup chauvinism correlates with increased hostility toward outgroups, whereas other authors have noted prosocial behavior, like solidarity, in the context of collective victimization (Rotella et al., 2013; Nair & Vollhardt, 2019). Along these lines, interviewees in this study occasionally condemned the perceived absence of Arab or Muslim solidarity among "East Bank" Jordanian nationalists in the face of Palestinian suffering. Similarly, some interviewees also seemed to construct a hierarchy based on proximal identity to the Palestinian conflict, with Jordanian society generally occupying a prestigious tier close to Palestinian victimization due in part to a general solidarity. Thus, this study's interviewees reflected ingroup dynamics similar to Noor et al.'s (2017) observations on intergroup relations, demonstrating how ingroup chauvinism related to ingroup victimization also correlates with hostility to non-compliant members of the ingroup. In this way, CVT clarifies these ingroup dynamics, though these dynamics are not necessarily generalizable, requiring further study of ingroup variation in identification with collective victimization.

Just as ingroup social dynamics vary in relation to victimization, conflict victimization itself also varies depending on chronological factors. Approaching the confounding aspects of victimization over the term of a protracted conflict requires a multifaceted conception of victimization over time. Schori-Eyal et al. (2014) advocate for this "layered" approach, understanding historical victimhood, general conflict victimhood, and conflict

event victimhood as three distinct, though interrelated, phenomena present in different scenarios within the Israeli-Arab conflict throughout time. Interviewees similarly identified numerous components of Palestinian victimization in different timeframes, referencing historical victimization often beginning with the Nakba and lasting through continued occupation and potentially into the future with another proposed displacement event. Simultaneously, interviewees referenced a contemporary genocide in Gaza and that violence's negative effects on the Jordanian economy, bifurcating historical and ongoing violence in interviewee conceptions of victimization. Though not perfectly reflective of Schori-Eyal et al.'s (2014) theoretical framing of collective victimhood, this study nevertheless demonstrates a similar distinction between types of victimization on the temporal level. At the same time, the confounding victimization of economic harm in Jordan complicates the idea of collective reconciliation with communal victimization, with the situationally interwoven phenomena organized on a chronological basis to distinguish between unique attributes of each instance of violence.

Beyond a Collective Victimhood Theory

The need for a more context-specific understanding of temporal harms matches prevailing critiques against comparing instances of collective victimhood, which advocate for particularized studies of each conflict, or even conflicted population, to ensure CVT's theoretical applicability. In this vein, recent CVT literature has begun to demand conflict specificity in theoretical findings, such as the specificities of Jordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian perceptions of collective victimization. Relying on consistent input from research subjects, multiple studies in the past five years aimed at understanding perceptions of victimhood comparisons have begun to outright reject tendencies toward comparing victimhood across conflicts (Vollhardt et al., 2021; Vollhardt et al., 2023). Twali's (2019) study of South Sudanese identity transformation came to similar conclusions, warning against intergroup victimhood comparison. Though the present study accepted this premise within the literature and did not attempt to compare victimhood between groups, interviewee tendencies to stratify intragroup relationships to collective victimization indicate a similar theoretical logic, rebuffing any singular conceptions of intragroup victimhood. The present findings therefore demand more variation in studying any particular group's victimhood because subgroups potentially diverge from a blanket diagnosis of "victimhood." In the current scenario, for example, a supposed Arab collective victimhood in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would require specific investigation not only of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip but of Palestinians in various diasporic communities, non-Palestinian Arabs in the Middle East, and other such variations in identity.

A similar problem arises with CVT's capability of diagnosing collective victimhood in isolation. The current theoretical framework, while able to

identify certain conflict and victimization attitudes, remains blind to alternative collective population feelings toward collective victimization. For example, survey-based work has at times defined collective victimhood broadly based on Bar-Tal et al.'s (2009) three-featured conception of collective victimhood—belief in (1) collective and (2) unjust harm against (3) an unprotected group—leaving discretion for projects to extend "victimhood" to hitherto unstudied populations (Ben Hagai et al., 2013; Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2019). However, interviewees in this study exhibited belief in all three of these victimhood "features" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict yet sometimes rejected the label of victimhood while instead consistently asserting both agency and collective grievance. In this instance, Appraisal Theory, or observation of the "process by which individuals act to *give meaning* to, and *to alter*, their lived relation to the world," better accounts for group-level ability to assess instances of collective victimization and adopt a grief-based, fear-based, or victimhood-based narrative response depending on the situation (Leach, 2020, p. 193). Studies seeking to understand novel populations or unstudied subgroups within a population should therefore attempt to undertake survey work when possible, using Appraisal Theory to assess narratives for collective victimhood or other collective social responses. In this way, researchers can work toward mitigating personal bias in favor of observing CVT while concurrently avoiding application of CVT to a population not adhering to a sense of collective victimhood.

Indeed, an Appraisal Theory approach to researching collective violence allows for much greater latitude in allowing research subjects to explain personal or communal narratives. The theory itself aims to provide this space through an existentialist understanding of event experience and subsequent narrative creation. Roseman and Smith (2001) speak directly to this point in *Appraisal Processes in Emotion: Theories, Methods, Research*, stating that in the theory's simplest form, "its essence is the claim that emotions are elicited by evaluations *(appraisals)* of events and situations," placing the theory's "essence" in the perspective of the evaluator (p. 3). More recently, Ellsworth (2013) has even advocated studying emotions and appraisals as a process, enabling research subjects to express situational developments in ascribing meaning to an event (p. 130). Moreover, the theory explicitly accounts for differences among individuals and cultures, understanding such factors as part of the process through which people derive meaning from events (Moors et al., 2013, p. 121; Ellsworth, 1994). This theory is more versatile and therefore preferable to CVT in capturing the nuance of human experience after collective victimization. Arguably at times too flexible a theoretical framework for understanding collective victimization, Appraisal Theory nevertheless allows latitude for understanding social narratives on their own terms, necessarily exploring the particularities of a given society, or even the human individuals within that society, before offering any throughline of collective experience.

CONCLUSION

The Palestinian-Jordanian and Jordanian interviewees for this project did not portray self-perceptions of a collective victimhood but rather rational reactions to instances of collective victimization against Palestinians. Feelings such as sadness or fear were common in interviews, but these feelings did not constitute a narrative of victimization, instead demonstrating a close relationship with Palestinian suffering in Palestine while falling short of Collective Victimhood Theory's conception of group self-understanding. The interviewees often understood themselves as uniquely close to Palestinians in terms of history and shared suffering but also invoked Palestinian suffering to extend group solidarity to broader categories of Arabs and Muslims. This closeness and solidarity resulted in identification with Palestinians on a historical level, with the concomitant psychological grievances manifesting in collective depression or fear. However, interviewees also developed particularized Jordanian grievances related to the negative and harmful economic impact the war has had on the Jordanian economy. Nevertheless, the current study demonstrates the historical and emotional depths of suffering this conflict continues to wreak over three quarters of a century after the British Mandate's dissolution. Moreover, such suffering is not limited to individuals in Israel-Palestine bearing the brunt of the conflict's physical violence but emanates outward to proximate communities in ever-widening circles of frustration, fear, and grief.

The sample size for this project was limiting for an undertaking of this theoretical scope. Measuring Jordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Jordan with only six participants at times hindered the pursuit of understanding relationships to a collective sense of victimhood. For example, a broader sample size may have revealed voices contrary to the ones in this project, either expressing a sense of victimhood due to the conflict or even a sense of Jordanian victimization at the hands of Palestinian refugees. Interviewees mentioned these perspectives' existence in Jordanian society, though the interviewees also tended to reject the perspectives, so this project failed to capture such sentiments or other potential variations. A different choice of interview language, location, and/or conductor could have all increased interview participation. Conducting interviews in Arabic, especially the local dialect, would have made the interview available for broader swaths of Jordanian society, while conducting the interviews in Jordan would have made the procedure more accessible in terms of scheduling. Likewise, selecting an interviewer without an identity from a potential perceived community carrying out the victimization (i.e., a non-American) may have also encouraged more interviewees to participate and speak freely throughout the interview process.

Future work in this same vein could seek to uncover attitudes from communities with "Palestinian roots," such as Lebanon, Egypt, or Kuwait, using

an Appraisal Theory approach. By extending the research, the project could build on the current study in understanding how communities proximate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict process instances or histories of collective victimization against Palestinians. Like the current study, this future project would rely on an interview-based research method, using a theoretical background of Appraisal Theory as well as the data collected in this project to inform questions designed to elicit conflict perceptions. Ideally, such interviews would occur in Arabic and potentially in-person, and analysis would follow a comparative framework to better understand how related communities interpret violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through this comparative framework, such a project could reveal potential ramifications of broad group attitudes on society and politics in communities hosting large portions of the Palestinian diaspora. The work would therefore seek to understand similar dynamics within the conflict, investigating how the protracted victimization draws the conflict's impacts beyond physical borders.

APPENDIX A

1. *What do you do for work?*
2. *Where do you live in Jordan?*
3. *Tell me about growing up in Jordan.*
4. *Have you traveled or lived outside of Jordan? Where to? Do you go there often?*
5. *Tell me about where your family is from.*
6. *Do you remember first hearing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?*
7. *Since then, were there any news stories you heard that you remember especially well? Why do you think it stuck out?*
8. *How do you feel about reporting over the conflict in general? How do you typically get news about the conflict?*
9. *Has Jordan been involved in the conflict at all? Do you see any scenario where Jordan would enter the conflict? How do you think Jordanians would have felt had Jordan entered the conflict?*
10. *Describe how Jordanians are impacted by or involved with the conflict. Do you or anyone you know fit those characteristics?*

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Digitizing Dinner: Representation of Four Peruvian Fine-dining Restaurants on Instagram

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This project examines four fine dining restaurants in Lima, Peru—Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita—in connection to the manifestos the restaurants have on their websites to determine if the representation of the restaurants matches the goals, purposes, and inspirations on the websites. Peruvian cuisine has achieved international recognition, thanks to the Peruvian gastronomic boom of the 1980s, and now several Peruvian fine dining restaurants rank on several lists of the world's best restaurants. Previous scholarship suggests a debate exists between two concepts surrounding Indigenous foods—foods common in Peruvian cuisine—of cultural control, meaning the Indigenous group can control the demand for cultural foods, and the opposing side which states chefs must invent and reinvent culturally significant foods to keep the attention of tourists. Neocolonialism and postcolonialism in global society have influenced the rise of elite structures, such as fine dining restaurants, in previously colonized countries, continuing the pattern of Western influence in other parts of the world. Instagram posts and website snippets from each of the four restaurants were thematically and semiotically analyzed. Further, the prevalent themes of the posts revealed which posts to select for deeper analysis and comparison to the website pages. This research concludes fine dining restaurants in Lima, Peru emphasize more contemporary aspects of fine dining and mostly ignore the traditions and founders of Peruvian cuisine—misaligning with the messages of the manifestos. Determining if the chefs of Lima's haute dining scene are helping Indigenous communities by highlighting Indigenous people on Instagram or if the restaurants are simply reaping the benefits of the Indigenous people's kindness could improve Indigenous representation in Peruvian cuisine.

Keywords: Peruvian gastronomy, cultural appropriation, post-colonialism

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At the very center of the human experience are our most basic needs: food, water, and shelter. In our world today, the commodification of our most basic needs has led to tiered levels of fulfilment of these needs based off many elements such as socioeconomic class, gender, race, nationality, and language. Food is not only a basic need, but also a cultural product, a livelihood, and a form of connection. Fine dining is a relatively new invention—having started in the wake of the French Revolution. Since then, fine dining has been a signifier of wealth, prestige, and culture and has expanded to include many more cuisines and locations in the world. Fine dining is an art form in a way, but there seems to be a homogeneity to fine dining as well. When fine dining expands to other regions of the world, specifically areas with Indigenous groups, the Indigenous foodways and ingredients are taken and adjusted in the fine dining kitchens. The question we should all be asking ourselves is, "How do these adjustments to Indigenous foods in fine dining restaurants impact the identity and perception of the Indigenous communities the foodways came from?"

In the 1980s and the 1990s, Peruvian cuisine gained a lot of popularity in the global market. This interest in Peruvian cuisine skyrocketed several Peruvian chefs to international fame—beginning the Peruvian gastronomic boom. The Peruvian gastronomic boom occurred in tandem with the Peruvian Civil War and came about as an attempt to draw tourists to Peru to help the economy (Matta, 2014). The wealthier families were able to send their children to receive formal culinary education in Europe, which the chefs later incorporated into their restaurants, effectively Europeanizing Peruvian fine dining at its inception (Del Pozo Arana & Zúñiga, 2022). Understanding the Peruvian gastronomic boom sets into motion the recognition of the contributing factors to the initial boom and the factors driving the continuation of the movement today. The perceived culinary advancement of Peru in global dining spaces by celebrity chefs and their followers may be connected to the globalization of Peruvian cuisine, depending on how Peruvian fine dining chefs choose to represent their restaurants on Instagram.

Indigenous Peruvian ingredients are at the center of current Peruvian cuisine and Peru's fine dining restaurants. Indigenous knowledge and experimentation with food spread to mainstream Peruvian society, incorporating Indigenous Peruvian techniques and ingredients into the mainstream food culture of Peru. The Incas, ancestors of the Quechua people of the Peruvian Andes, handed down 50 varieties of corn, 2,500 varieties of potatoes, and other crops such as quinoa, as well as the knowledge of how to cultivate the crops to the Quechua community, mostly through word of mouth (Huambachano, 2019, p. 101). Peruvian society nationalized certain Indigenous foods, specifically quinoa, and erased the Indigenous altiplano context of quinoa's significance in the Indigenous Andean society (McDonell, 2024, p. 88). While research on up-and-coming cuisines is plenty, researchers can

omit, intentionally or unintentionally, the Indigenous communities inspiring the culinary creations of these celebrity chefs. Recontextualizing indigeneity as an integral part in the creation and prosperity of the Peruvian gastronomic boom and sequential rise in fine dining restaurants in Peru through Instagram could help raise awareness to one of the reasons for the success of the gastronomic boom.

This paper investigates how Peruvian fine dining restaurants portray themselves on Instagram. Looking at data such as the photos, videos, and captions of the posts, among other factors, will help encapsulate a more holistic view of the ideas the companies most often perpetuate while promoting the restaurants online. The key data for this study are Instagram posts from four different Peruvian fine dining restaurants—Central, Panchita, Huaca Pucllana, and Matya—and the manifestos from the websites of the four restaurants (see Appendix 1). A neocolonialist framework can assist in explaining the new-age fine dining atmosphere and determine the true motivations behind these restaurants. Indigenous foods and people, both intertwined in Peruvian cuisine, deserve to have fine dining restaurants depicting the foods and people accurately and respectfully. These restaurants should portray Indigeneity in such a way to prevent the commodification of Indigenous products without giving credit to Indigenous Peoples.

Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita do not follow the manifestos set out on the websites in comparison with posts on the restaurants' Instagram pages. The four restaurants, while being well-intentioned in the origins of the restaurants, do not follow through on the themes of Peru's history, people, and culture laid out on the websites. The literature review dives into a scholarly debate about Cultural Control Theory, Indigenous foodways in other countries, and the portrayal of Latin American fine dining in media. The research design section includes the process of collection, by screenshotting and screen-recording posts, and the process of analysis, by thematically coding post captions and semiotically analyzing the images and videos of the posts to show the entire research process. In the analysis section, I used the semiotic and thematic analysis of the selected posts from all four restaurants to argue the lack of connection between the website manifestos of the four restaurants and the Instagram posts on the restaurant Instagram pages. The discussion section includes a description of Cultural Control Theory, Neocolonialism, and Postcolonialism in the context of this paper, as well as some recent newspaper articles proving the relevance of this topic in current media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Control of Culture and Capital

A debate amongst scholars exists about the connection between culinary tourism and neocolonial adjustments to Indigenous dishes. Some scholars

argue chefs can choose which parts of the cuisine to share in order to can control, to a certain extent, the desire for these cultural dishes. On the other hand, some scholars argue chefs are forced to change, adapt, and create Indigenous foods to draw and sustain attention from culinary tourists. Researchers studying the evolution of five recipes originating in Oaxaca, Mexico discussed the possibility of Cultural Control—a theory positing the existence of, in this case, a cultural food under the control of the Indigenous group and under the control of an outside group (Reyes-Santiago et al., 2024). Allen (2017) disagrees with this idea, and in the researcher's study of the Māori people and food noted the power the Māori people possess when deciding to share very little of the Māori cultural foods while continuing to offer cultural experiences to tourists. Fine dining restaurants draw many culinary tourists from across the globe. Given the popularity of Peruvian cuisine, this research will contribute another perspective to this debate.

Researchers observed the control of different types of capital changing the representation of Indigenous culinary spaces. Social, gastronomic, cultural, economic, and human capital are some of the types of capital existing in Indigenous culinary spaces. Some scholars argue powerful people and organizations such as the governments of nations, wealthy individuals, and privileged people have wielded these different capitals and have used social structures, cultural dynamics, economic disparities, and other human beings to change culinary spaces to benefit the people and organizations already in power. In a study about multiculturalism, food sovereignty, and gastronomic capital, the authors argue Indigenous people should have the ability to control the Indigenous community's gastronomic capital, meaning Indigenous groups should dictate where, when, and how the food of the Indigenous groups will be served as well as determining how, why, and when certain Indigenous dishes change and evolve (Grey & Newman, 2018). In an article by Freitas et al. (2020), about Brazil's professional restaurants, the authors examined a discrepancy between how the owners of the restaurants valued high-tech appliances versus the human capital. The restaurant owners exploited the employees of the restaurant due to the tradition of paying little to nothing for labor—a tradition dating back to colonial times in Brazil (Freitas et al., 2020). The interchange and flow of gastronomic and social capital on social media is a branch of capitals not thoroughly explored in Latin America. The investigation highlights the treatment of Indigenous representatives in a different part of the world than the previous studies.

Latin American Fine Dining in Media

Scholars studying fine dining in the Global South noticed the fine dining restaurants in the Global South typically draw much less attention from restaurant critics and culinary tourists than fine dining restaurants in the Global North. This fact assists in explaining the importance of accurately showing Latin American fine dining restaurants in media. In a study about

Netflix's television series *Chef's Table,* the authors examine the themes of male superiority in fine dining spaces in Latin America. The authors argue the filming and editing of *Chef's Table* is presenting the viewers an idealized version of Latin American fine dining and cuisine (Santos & Mansey, 2022). This research will connect with the aspects of Latin American cuisine in media the authors list in the previous study. This research will dive into a different form of media, social media, and ascertain if the representation of Latin American cuisine stays consistent across different types of media, or if Peruvian fine dining restaurant Instagram posts have completely different representative themes.

Given the existing research on subsistence in Latin America, and other previously colonized regions of the world, there is space for further discussion and research on one of the largest contributors to Latin American gastronomy, Peru. Previous authors have discussed neocolonialism in food in Latin America and the effects this process has had on Indigenous communities and voices. In my research, I will use semiotic analysis and qualitative methodological approaches to analyze Instagram posts and website manifestos of four fine dining restaurants in Lima, Peru to discover how well or poorly Peru's top chefs represent Indigenous foodways on the Instagram pages. The studies discussed earlier focus mainly on in-field work and lack a more objective and uninvolved approach. My contribution to the field of neocolonial foodways in Peru will assist in drawing attention to how culinary artisans represent Indigenous people and how to improve the representation of Indigenous culture in culinary art. Hopefully, these contributions will continue the discussion on the ideal type of Indigenous representation for both parties involved: the chefs and the Indigenous people the chefs learned the cooking techniques from.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The data in this study were Instagram posts and the manifestos from the websites of four fine dining restaurants in Peru. I collected the manifestos from the official restaurant websites, and I collected the posts from @centralrest, @maytalima, @panchitasazoncriolla, and @restauranthuacapucllana on Instagram.com. These data allow the cross-checking of the claims of the restaurants about the inspirations, goals, and messages from the blurbs on the restaurant websites to the actual representation of the restaurants on Instagram. The Instagram posts show the subjects the restaurants choose to exhibit to market themselves. To see how Peruvian fine dining restaurants represent Peruvian cuisine and Peruvian fine dining restaurants on Instagram, I needed to collect Instagram posts to see the main focuses of each individual restaurant and potentially discover patterns across all the restaurants. Collecting the manifesto from each site deepened the comparison and acted as a baseline for the themes of the Instagram posts.

I collected the data from the four accounts listed above on Instagram and the websites linked to each Instagram page. I screenshotted or screen recorded each Instagram post starting on January 14, 2025, and going back up to a year depending on how many slides were in the posts. To begin, I searched "fine dining restaurants in Peru" and chose four restaurants advertising connection to the land, history, and/or the culture of Peru located in Lima, Peru. After selecting the four restaurants most closely following the themes above, I screenshotted the manifestos on each restaurant website, found under the *Sobre Nosotros, Mayta, Nuestra propuesta,* and *Huaca Pucllana* tabs on each site. Clicking on the link to Instagram on each website, I began screenshotting and screen recording each post and ended with 111 posts from Huaca Pucllana, 83 from Mayta, 89 from Panchita, and 71 from Central. The best way to save Instagram posts is to screen record or screenshot the posts because using the bookmark feature to save posts on an Instagram account allows the account manager to archive posts, making the posts disappear from the saved file. Additionally, websites are also subject to change, so screenshots provide a certain amount of security to ensure the analysis process goes smoothly with consistent and unchanging data.

To analyze the posts, I used semiotic analysis on the photos and videos and thematic coding on the captions of the posts. Conditions such as lighting, angles, focus, and color made up the elements of the semiotic analysis. For the thematic coding, some main codes I found in analysis were nationalism, education, food, and culture. From the large groups of screenshots, I coded the main subject of each post based on the first photo or frame of video of each post. From my categories, such as food, events, drink, décor, and people, I calculated the percentage of posts about each topic. I selected five to eight posts of different themes following the previously calculated percentage and analyzed the posts more deeply by self-translating the captions from Spanish to English, thematically coding the captions, and performing semiotic analysis on the images and videos. This project focuses on many qualitative aspects, but to create a selection process with the most sense and prevent bias, choosing the images based on theme was the fairest way to accomplish this goal. The posts of some restaurants have many more slides and longer captions, as many as fifteen slides in one post and several paragraph captions. To make the amount of data collected for each restaurant more equal, the number of posts collected from each restaurant had to differ.

ANALYSIS

Pride for Peru and a desire to share the essence of Peruvian culture with the customers is the purpose of the restaurants according to the restaurant websites, despite some varied themes in each of the website snippets. The four restaurants proudly outline Peru and the country's cuisine in the descriptions of the restaurants. Central reaches to increase the connectivity that the restaurant claims is lacking from Peruvian society through the discov-

ery and rediscovery of Peruvian ingredients, cultures, traditions, and history (Central Restaurant, n.d.). Mayta explains on the website the origins of the name of the restaurant—meaning "noble land" in Aymara—and how the restaurant was born as an ode to the land of Peru (Mayta, n.d.). Panchita's website manifesto promoted feelings of home and grandmothers' cooking in the context of traditional Limean recipes, while Huaca Pucllana also highlighted Peruvian flavors and traditional cooking methods on the website (Panchita: Restaurante de Comida Criolla y Tradición Limeña, n.d.; Restaurante Huaca Pucllana, n.d.). This may be true for other aspects of the restaurants, but on Instagram the restaurants barely post anything about the groups of people these recipes came from. While the four restaurants may have other social media sites or organizations staying true to the claims on the website pages, the Instagram posts do not seem to follow the goals on those websites.

Deficit of Humans in Instagram Posts

Across the board, the four restaurants lack human representation on the restaurant Instagram pages. The restaurants feature very few people in the posts, and most of the restaurants feature the same people. Central posted a picture of the restaurant team, but did not include any posts of the Indigenous people supporting the restaurant with ingredients and cooking methods (Central, 2023). For the most part, the Instagram posts show the representation of humans on the Instagram pages through hands holding a food item (see Figure 1). Half of the restaurants did not have a high enough percentage of posts with people as the subject to qualify to have the posts of people analyzed (see Figure 2). The separation between humanity and food is prevalent in the Instagram posts and proves the humanitarian aspect of the cuisine is missing from the Instagram pages. With such a large Indigenous population, most traditional Peruvian dishes draw inspiration from, at the very least, Indigenous Peruvian foods, but there is little to no presence of the people responsible for creating the recipes and teaching the cooking methods the chefs use and rework in the restaurant kitchens.

Figure 1

Restaurant	# of slides with just hands	# of photo slides	#of video slides	Total # of slides
Central	10	14	22	36
Huaca Pucllana	2	8	0	8
Mayta	4	24	2	26
Panchita	7	8	9	17
Total	23	54	33	87

Figure 2

Restaurant	Accomplishment	Food	People	Drink	Questions	Décor	Posts collected
Central	5	54	9	0	0	0	71
Huaca Pucllana	0	60	5	17	0	25	111
Mayta	4	66	5	2	0	3	83
Panchita	1	60	5	6	7	0	89
Total	10	240	24	25	7	28	354

In the sample, seeing a whole person is very rare, but if a whole person is in one of the posts, the person is typically an employee, an owner, or a customer. The chefs of some of the restaurants are present on the Instagram pages, making the representation of the restaurant on Instagram about the food and the celebrity chefs. Panchita shows in video posts the chefs, waitstaff, and customers in the restaurant (Panchita, 2024a; Panchita, 2024b). Central made a post in appreciation of the entire team at the restaurant (Central, 2023). Mayta has a post of Jaime Pesaque, the restaurant owner, holding an Amazonian eel in an industrial kitchen (Mayta, 2024a). While Central is showing appreciation for the restaurant staff, there is still little appreciation for the origin of the food in the sample of the posts. The other restaurants confirm, through the posts, the depiction of people on the Instagram pages is to show the prestige of the restaurant by showing the classically trained chefs and the mannerly waitstaff.

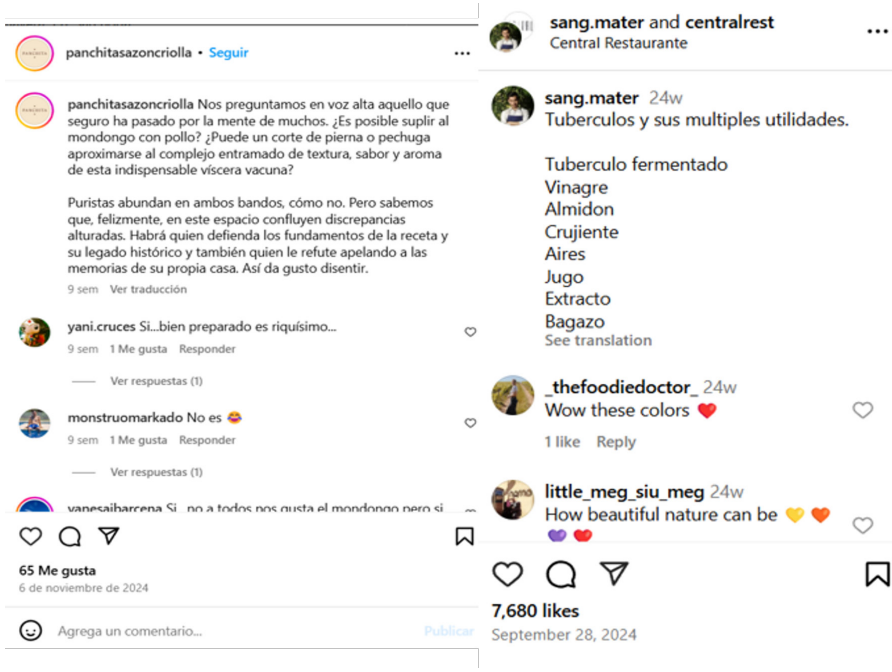
Only two restaurants spoke about people in their captions; Central and Mayta posted about the restaurant's employees. The other two restaurants had no mention of people in the captions of the posts. Central congratulated and praised the team for the employees' hard work on Employee Appreciation Day (Central, 2023). Mayta, in a reflection on the past year of business, promised to continue exploring the Peruvian territory and gastronomic history in the following year as a team (Mayta, 2024g). Half of the restaurants talk about people directly involved in the restaurants and not the impact other people may have had on the businesses in the captions. The other half of the restaurants have no mention of people in the captions of the posts in the sample, completely erasing the purpose and focal point of these restaurants according to the website snippets.

Instances of Contemporary Instagram Features

The captions of the posts range from complex histories of dishes to simple lists of ingredients. The four restaurants have different styles of captioning the Instagram posts; each caption uniquely suited to the accompanying image or video. Huaca Pucllana captioned in Spanish an image of a dessert as follows: "Lemon and white chocolate cheesecake, coconut crust, and berry sorbet. We wait for you Monday to Sunday, reservations until 10:00pm…" (Huaca Pucllana, 2024c). Appearing in Figure 3, Central's captions varied in length and detail, but the posts about food were typically short as well.

Panchita's captions were long and descriptive, providing additional details and context to the images (see Figure 3). The captions of the posts do not provide much additional information about the goals of the posts and typically serve as descriptors of the images, losing human significance through the mostly straightforward captions. Words are a powerful tool to share thoughts, opinions, and hopes, and yet the restaurants do not seem to carry over the messages from the websites into the captions of the posts.

Figure 3: (Panchita, 2024d; Central, 2024c)



The use of emoticons [emojis] among the four restaurants was strangely rare, considering how much importance the restaurants place on contemporary marketing tactics. Emojis were not prevalent, but the symbols that did appear may be aiming to advertise to a younger crowd. Seen in Figure 4, Huaca Pucllana used the brown heart emoji on a post on January 9, 2025 along a picture of the terrace of the restaurant. Central posted a roulette including many photos and videos of uncooked ingredients and finished dishes on December 22, 2024, with a caption including a piñata emoji (see Figure 4). The use of emojis in the sampled posts, while rare, is uncharacteristic in relation to the manifestos on the restaurant websites. The presence of emojis suggests an attempt to modernize the Instagram post captions, but since so few emojis appear in the posts, the restaurants are, in a way, following the statements from the restaurant websites.

Figure 4: (Huaca Pucllana, 2025)

Restaurant	Caption	Translated Caption
Central	Breve descanso	Brief break
Huaca Pucllana	Nuestra terraza con vista a la huaca Los esperamos de lunes a domingo, reservas hasta las 10:00pm al 445 4042 #huacapucllanarestaurant #huacapucllana #huaca #eatingwithaview #view Restaurant Huaca Pucllana S.A.C. 20500732891	Our terrace with a view of the huaca We wait for you Monday to Sunday, reservations until 10:00pm at 445 4042 #huacapucllanarestaurant #huacapucllana #huaca #eatingwithaview #view Restaurant Huaca Pucllana S.A.C. 20500732891

The restaurant Instagram pages tagged other Instagram accounts in captions on posts and on the images to show similar organizations and accounts related to the restaurants. The restaurants often tag other Instagram accounts in the posts to show other people or organizations involved in the subject of the posts. Central tagged the account @virgiliocentral on the first slide of one of the posts from the sample (Central, 2024d). Panchita tagged Gaston Acurio on the first slide of the post the restaurant made about Aji de Gallina (Panchita, 2025). Mayta tagged their own account in several posts (Mayta, 2024b; Mayta, 2024c; Mayta, 2024e; Mayta, 2024f). The emphasis on the celebrity chefs in the tagged posts suggest the chefs draw the most attention from Instagram users to the restaurant Instagram pages. Since the celebrity chefs have such a strong following on social media and in real life, the restaurants likely post with the chefs' accounts to draw more people to the restaurants.

Peruvian fine dining restaurants use hashtags to further specify the topic of the post. The hashtags the restaurants use show the people the restaurants are trying to reach depending on the language the hashtags are in, the themes of the hashtags, and the frequency certain hashtags appear. As seen in Appendix 2, Huaca Pucllana mainly uses English hashtags in the Instagram posts. Panchita, on the other hand, only uses hashtags in Spanish. Central only has one example of hashtags in the sample, but Central also used hashtags in Spanish (see Appendix 2). The use of hashtags shows a drive to become more well-versed in contemporary restaurant practices and advertising. The languages of the captions suggest some restaurants may be advertising the restaurant to locals while other restaurants may be advertising to tourists, which emphasizes a shift in the type of customer the restaurants are aiming for.

Photographic Representation on Instagram

Among the food posts, prepared dishes dominate the other types of food posts. While many of the posts are of the raw, uncooked ingredients culminating in a fully prepared dish eventually, the restaurants post the prepared dishes more often. Huaca Pucllana only posted fully prepared dishes, all on a worn wooden table with different plates and bowls, among the food posts in the sample (see Figure 5). Mayta also posted several posts of fully prepared dishes in the sample, including many colorful dishes against a dark stone background (see Figure 6). Panchita more commonly posts the process of the creation of the dishes than the finished dish, as in many video posts Panchita films the chefs in the kitchen preparing the dishes (see Figure 7). While the posting of prepared dishes on a fine dining restaurant Instagram page is consistent with the types of posts a person may expect to see, these posts do not necessarily connect fully with the message the fine dining establishments put on their websites. All of the restaurants emphasized community, Peru's land, and the history connected to Peru in the manifestos, and yet the restaurants have many dishes and little evidence in the samples to show the presence of those themes in the posts.

Figure 5: (Huaca Pucllana, 2024b)



Figure 6: (Mayta, 2024g)



Figure 7: (Panchita, 2024a)



While ingredients are not the most common display of a representation of food, the ingredients are still a large part of the Instagram posts. Three out of four of the restaurants included posts of the unassembled and uncooked ingredients in the samples. As seen in Figure 8, Central is the only restaurant out of the four which posts more images and videos of ingredients than prepared dishes. Panchita also shows many ingredients during the videos of preparing a dish (see Figure 8). Mayta only has one post featuring unprepared food: a video of a fish native to the Peruvian Amazon (see Figure 9). The presence of ingredients on the Instagram pages may impart a sense of origin of the dishes—a connection to the Indigenous people who cultivated, collected, and cooked with these ingredients long before the emergence of fine dining restaurants—and while not entirely inexact, there still needs to be more representation of the actual people on the Instagram pages. These posts are the initial steps in including Indigenous people in the Peruvian fine dining narrative, as the restaurants aimed to do according to the websites, but we have not reached the end goal yet.

Figure 8

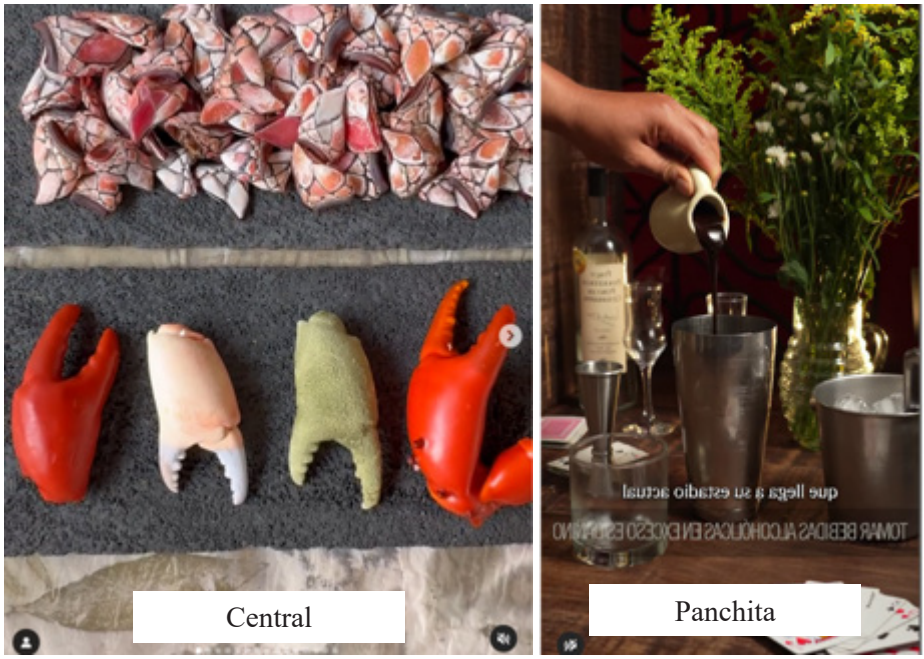


Figure 9



The restaurants employ similar colors on the Instagram pages to convey a message of neutrality and connection to the Earth. When examining the color scheme of the posts, the majority of the posts for all of the restaurants used natural colors such as green, brown, and gray, among others. Although Huaca Pucllana has pops of color in the sample, the most common colors in several posts were brown, beige, white, black, and green (Huaca Pucllana, 2024a; Huaca Pucllana, 2024b). Central has the most colorful posts and the greatest variety of colors, but the majority of posts in the sample are earth tones (Central, 2024a; Central, 2024b). Panchita used many more warm tones in the images and videos on Panchita's Instagram page to give off a sense of comfort and familiarity (Panchita, 2024c; Panchita, 2025). Apart from Panchita, the restaurants promote nature and the agrarian elements of life in Peru through the color schemes the restaurants use, alluding to the emphasis on Peru's environment in the website manifestos. However, meeting the themes of the manifestos through this covert path of aesthetic color scheme is only one concern of many the restaurants have fulfilled in regards to living up to the claims on the websites.

At times, the videos on the Instagram pages can share more information about the way the restaurants aim to represent themselves. The background sounds and music of the videos portray the priority the restaurants put on the sounds of Lima, the sounds of nature, or culturally significant instrumental music for Peruvians. In Central's posts including videos, a mix of urban sounds, such as the sounds of vehicles driving and honking, and nature sounds, like wind rustling through trees and birds chirping are present (Central, 2024c; Central, 2024d). Panchita opted for instrumental music in some of the video posts in the sample (Panchita, 2024c; Panchita, 2024e). The audios of the videos of Central's posts point to embracing Peru in all of its facets, but the audios of the video posts of Panchita emphasize the culture of Peru by playing music. Central continues to highlight the contemporary aspects of Peru in the posts, but Panchita embraces tradition, meaning the two restaurants depict the missions from the websites separately, with one restaurant focusing on a holistic view of Peru, and the other embracing traditional Peruvian culture in the audios of the video posts.

Besides food, the restaurants had some other notable categories, some unique to only one restaurant, out of the posts of each restaurant. Huaca Pucllana and Panchita had posts in drinks and décor, and Panchita was the only restaurant to have question posts. Huaca Pucllana had 17 drink posts and 25 décor posts out of the 111 posts in the sample, and Panchita harbored merely 6 drink posts out of the 89 in the sample (see Figure 2). Panchita highlighted drinks and hypothetical or opinion-based questions about Peruvian food as the two largest categories besides food on the Panchita Instagram page (see Figure 10). While the category of cocktails strays far from the proclamations and themes of the website manifestos in Huaca Pucllana's posts, Panchita embraced the more traditional, Spanish-inspired pisco sour—a culturally significant drink in Peru in several of the drink posts. Likewise, Huaca Pucllana's emphasis on the interior of the restaurant and the terrace overlooking the Pre-Colombian constructed *huaca* is a major attraction for tourists and locals alike. Yet, the modern décor and emphasis on stone in the images fights to modernize this religious and cultural center, finished in approximately 200 C.E., while also novelizing the perceived primitivity of the Lima culture of the Pre-Colombian era. Therefore the imagery embraces the topics of the website excerpt, while also performing Indigeneity at the same time. In contrast, the hypothetical questions Panchita posed on Instagram opened up the floor for people of all walks of life to learn about and discuss Peruvian cuisine as a community, supporting the elements of community and acceptance of the website manifesto.

Figure 10

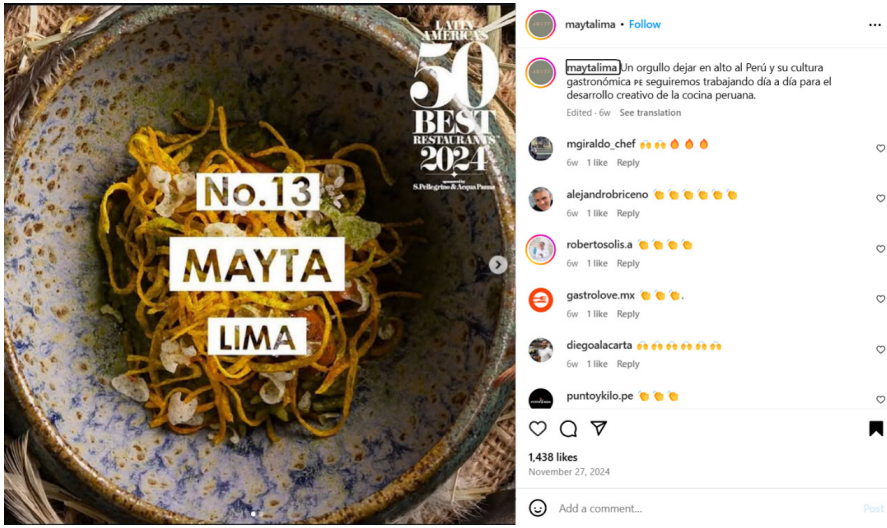


Other notable categories of posts from the four restaurants were the categories "people" and "accomplishment." Central and Mayta both have people and accomplishment as the second and third most prominent categories. Central posted a picture of their team and an image of the restaurant securing a spot as one of the best restaurants in the world (see Figure 11). Mayta posted a picture of the head chef holding a fish and an award the restaurant received because of Mayta's culinary achievements (see Figures 9 and 12). As touched on previously, just because one of these accounts posts a person does not mean the restaurants have measured up to the claims on the restaurant websites. The extra categories mainly focus on the prestige of the restaurants themselves instead of the impact the restaurants might have outside of the fine dining realm—ignoring the Indigenous context of much of typical Peruvian cooking.

Figure 11



Figure 12: (Mayta, 2024d)



DISCUSSION

Theoretical Frameworks Surrounding Peruvian Fine Dining

Scholars debate the idea of Cultural Control Theory in fine dining and Indigenous foodways, and this research defends the idea of Cultural Control Theory after seeing how the four restaurants post new or reinvented cultural dishes more often than anything else. Scholars disagree about the possibility of a culture being able to control the demand for certain goods, such as cultural dishes, versus having to constantly invent and reinvent cultural products to keep up with the demand from tourists, but this research finds on Instagram the studied restaurants commodify Indigenous Peruvian cultural foods. Cultural Control Theory connects with other relevant discussions such as cultural homogenization and cultural property debates to defend the stance of researchers on the Cultural Control side (Overgaag & Nass, 2018). Correspondingly, the analysis of the data of this study suggests a certain favoritism for showing new-age, contemporary dishes and celebrity chefs on the restaurant Instagram pages. This paper delves into the nuances of media in conjunction with Peruvian fine dining, effectively determining an elitist structure, which solely caters to upper-class patrons and ignores the messages of the restaurant websites in support of Peru as a nation, people, and culture. This study is a bare-bones application of the theory and does not necessarily center around Cultural Control Theory, but the theory, as far as I am aware, has not been applied to social media posts in previous research and thus creates a fresh outlook of the debate in relation to social media.

Neocolonialism strives to show how the networks of control of previously colonized nations by countries in the Global North persist in the modern day, despite those societies being removed from colonization by a couple hundred years. In Peru, fine dining has exploded in popularity, but not without the encouragement of certain groups such as the Peruvian government, western countries, and the upper Peruvian class. Fine dining originated in Europe to begin with, meaning European ideals and cooking methods permeate the system of haute cuisine itself—forcing many fine dining restaurants outside of the West to conform to uncustomary practices and expectations to be able to compete with the best restaurants. This struggle neocolonializes some cuisines, including Peruvian cuisine. Latin American cuisine, including Mexican cuisine, has been subjected to major neocolonial shifts to act in accordance with United States and European palates through chain restaurants such as Taco Bell and Chipotle (Martinez-Cruz, 2019). Similar neocolonial shifts are present in the Instagram posts from the four fine dining restaurants due to the increase in English-use in the captions and hashtags, the focus on the achievement of the restaurants, and the emphasis on the finished, contemporary-style dishes. Neocolonialism at the beginning of this project appeared to be the perfect theory to aid in the analysis of the data, but, upon further reflection, I think Postcolonialism would fit this proj-

ect more accurately. Neocolonialism still fits the narrative of this paper, but the impact of colonialism in present day seems to be more accurate than the purposeful control of Peru by Western powers.

Postcolonialism draws connections between the history of colonization in Peru and the adoption of Western foodways because of the structural violence present in Peruvian society from colonization. Countless subaltern groups have adapted cultural foods to a European palate and vision in the pursuit of haute cuisine. According to Wilson (2020), one of the issues with identifying postcolonialism in the cultural foods of previously colonized groups is the struggle between researchers—typically educated, privileged people from the Global North—looking for and categorizing these groups as victims of postcolonial adoption of foodways and victimizing groups that may not identify with the victimhood the researchers assigned to them, while the same groups accept and embrace postcolonial shifts in the foodways of the group. Embracing this tension, postcolonial and Indigenous peoples have distinct and unique reasons for adopting Western foodways because of the structural violence present in previously colonized societies (Wilson, 2020). The way the four restaurants, Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita, placed most of the emphasis on prepared dishes in Instagram posts corresponds to typical media representation of western fine dining restaurants, alluding to a possible postcolonial adoption of media representation for these specific restaurants. Postcolonialism fills in some of the gaps left when looking at Peruvian fine dining restaurants on Instagram through only a neocolonial lens, and the two theories work together and reinforce each other to show structural violence in different aspects of everyday Peruvian life. Neocolonialism shows the targeted attacks against subaltern groups, while postcolonialism suggests the issue goes deeper than current events and may, at times, be a purposeful shift in food culture.

Current Events in the Peruvian Fine Dining Sphere

Globally, Peruvian fine dining restaurants have been achieving high-ranking positions on the lists of the best restaurants. Many Peruvian fine dining restaurants, including some of the restaurants in this paper, gained international recognition because of the rise in Peruvian cuisine's popularity in the global food market. Peruvian fine dining is often the topic of news articles, including a *CE Noticias Financieras English* article discussing Peru's most well-renowned restaurants and alternatives for tourists unable to snag a reservation at one of these celebrity-chef-owned restaurants ("Lima, the city," 2025). In a similar manner, another *CE Noticias Financieras English* article outlined the continuous climb of the number of restaurants in Miraflores, a more affluent part of Lima ("Restaurants in Miraflores," 2025). The follower counts of the Instagram pages of Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita (396k, 63.5k, 110k, 147k as of the 9th of June 2025), and the interaction from followers the posts receive in the form of likes and com-

ments, unite the idea of the popularity of Peruvian cuisine with the reality of the popularity of Peruvian fine dining. Social media is not only a tool for advertising and sharing ideas; our current society has completely intertwined social media and everyday life, meaning the implications of follower counts and Instagram posts reflects the real-life interest in and representation of Peruvian fine dining restaurants. Even after around 40 years of the beginning of the Peruvian gastronomic boom, interest in Peruvian cuisine continues to grow.

Peruvian fine dining restaurants are not only notable in the fine dining sphere, but the restaurants have also gained popularity among the citizens of Peru and Latin America. The pride Peruvians feel for their cuisine is palpable in the tourist reactions to their experiences at fine dining restaurants in Peru and in the reactions to the restaurants and chefs by the Peruvians themselves. In a news article about the best restaurants several food critics wished to visit again, MIL, one of Central founder Virgilio Martinez's restaurants, was the very first restaurant on the list ("The one restaurant," 2024). Other newspapers found more interactive ways to include the public in the fine dining sphere; one such newspaper invited people to vote on the best restaurants for many different categories of foods ("Somos Awards: you," 2023). The enduring investment of the public in Peruvian fine dining ensures the restaurants, particularly the restaurants of celebrity chefs, will keep Peruvian fine dining restaurants in the global discourse. While Peruvian cuisine is relatively new to the global market, the inception of the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom in the 1980s and the evolution of Peruvian fine dining points to Peruvian fine dining having some staying power.

CONCLUSION

By no means are the four researched restaurants here evil in nature despite the lack of Indigenous representation on the Instagram pages. The long history of marginalizing these groups, started by colonizers in the 15th century, still has an impact on this post-colonial world, making the representation of these restaurants on Instagram integral for understanding the possible impact the commodification of Indigenous foods can have on Peruvian society. Some fine dining restaurants are able to separate from the Western World but often do not. In this case, all the chefs of these restaurants have been classically trained in fine dining in France, Italy, Spain, and other parts of Europe. The chefs use these techniques in the cooking of Peruvian foods, modernizing, changing, and evolving Peruvian cuisine to include aspects of other cuisines. The transformation of foodstuffs into an art form for only the most financially well-off people to enjoy should be called into question. Are these restaurants promoting Peruvian cuisine as a representation of the people, places, and culture of Peru, or are the restaurants adjusting Peruvian cuisine to fit the needs and desires of the Western elite? The answer to this question can only arise from further investigation.

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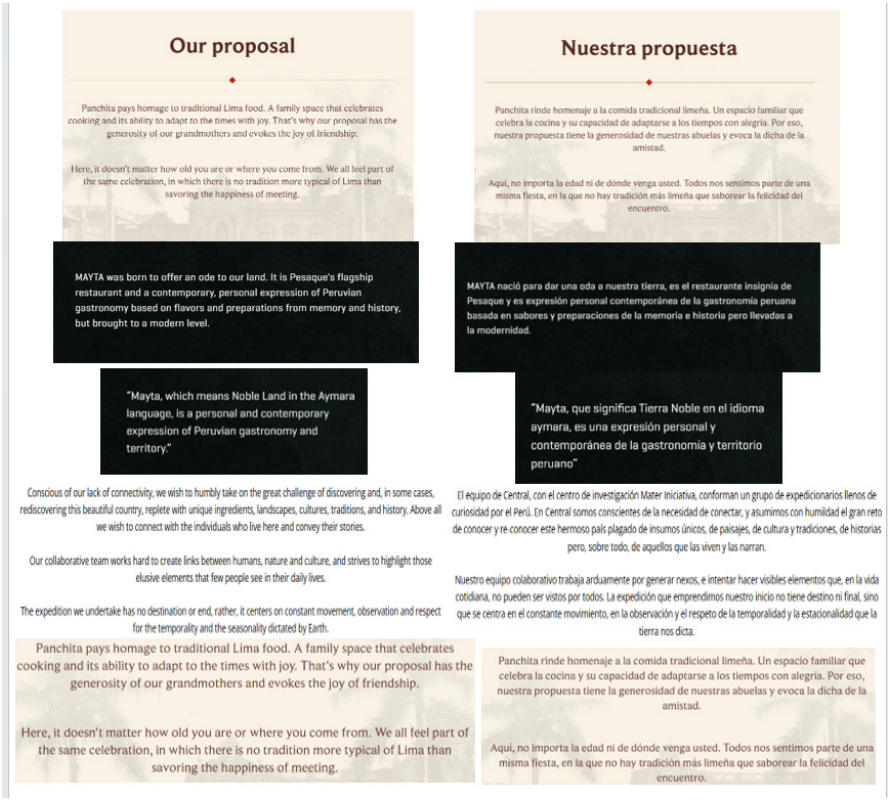
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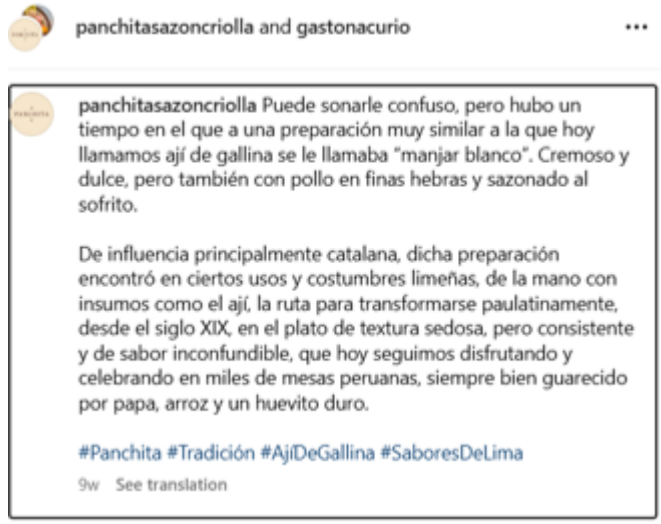
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Appendix 1: (Mayta, n.d.; Central Restaurant, n.d.)



Appendix 2: (Panchita, 2025; Huaca Pucllana, 2024a; Central, 2024b)



Just Kicking It: Football and Nationalism in Spain during Francisco Franco's Regime

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This project explores the role football played during Francisco Franco's pursuit to unify Spain's regional nationalisms into one Spanish nationalism. Previous research defined Franco's Spanish nationalism tools, and this project applies those tools to football while examining the success of using nationalistic techniques to unite Spanish nationalism. Cultural Identity Theory helps inform this research by explaining the differences in cultural identity throughout the regions in Spain. The research process included using three newspaper sources from three regions in Spain (Castilla, Cataluña, and the Basque Country) and exploring the archives of each newspaper to download individual newspaper articles. For the analysis, this project applied Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques from previous literature to the newspaper articles to thematically organize and code the articles, identifying trends in football and Spanish nationalism. The analysis revealed Franco downplayed regional identity and culture in Spain in favor of a Spain with a collective national culture. Franco eliminated opposition to his regime by forcing Spanish ideas and values onto football, overpowering regional autonomy. Examining football's role during Franco's regime helps disclose how leaders around the world are using the relationship between football, other entities that are not inherently political, and nationalism as a tool to achieve political goals.

Keywords: Spain, nationalism, soccer, Franco, Identity

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On September 18, 2023, my preconceived notions about cultural pride were met with Catalan signage inside the Barcelona airport. I knew many people in Barcelona, Spain spoke Catalan, but until arriving there, I did not realize the significance Catalan identity held for the people living in Barcelona. I had to look no further than FC Barcelona, the local football team to see the collective pride the fans and team had for Cataluña, for, as I walked to an FC Barcelona game, I became completely surrounded by blue and garnet, chants of ¡Barça!, and the buzz of excitement. The supporters of FC Barcelona celebrated the Catalan flag and the Catalan language, chanting in Catalan throughout the match. There was a particular Catalan phrase displayed across the crowd that caught my attention: *Més que un Club* (more than a club). At this point, I realized FC Barcelona was not only a football team in Cataluña; FC Barcelona was also a symbol of Catalan identity and the history of Catalan culture.

Politically, Spain is one nation; culturally, Spain has a variety of traditions, languages, and flags. Spain consists of seventeen autonomous communities with distinct regional and national identities and symbols. Spain is a "nación de naciones" (nation of nations) due to the coexistence of multiple nationalities and regions (plurinationality) within the country of Spain (Juliá, 2019). While some autonomous communities had political and cultural legitimacy prior to 1978, the 1978 Spanish constitution officially gave the "right to autonomy of nationalities and regions," allowing all the autonomous communities to establish their own governments (Dankowski, 2019). In the Statutes of Autonomy, eight of the autonomous communities (Andalusia, Aragon, the Valencian Community, Galicia, the Balearic Islands, Cataluña, the Basque Country, and the Canary Islands) define themselves as either historical nationalities or nationalities, meaning the communities have a cultural nationality beyond the political Spanish nationality (Munárriz, 2019). The geographic, political, and national makeup fueled tensions over the true look of Spanish nationalism, leading to violent and psychological struggles between Spanish and regional nationalism. The differences in identity within Spain sparked internal divisions over national identity.

As the autonomous communities formed identities separate from a national Spanish identity, Spain began to splinter internally. When the number of supporters for regional identities increased, the number of dissenters also increased, creating a cultural battle between the supporters wanting to maintain regional autonomy and dissenters pushing for a national Spain. This cultural and political battle progressed into a violent conflict, namely the Spanish Civil War. As Payne (1964) explains, in 1936, two military generals, Emilio Mola and Francisco Franco, felt the sitting democratic government was not serving Spain's interests, so the two generals launched a campaign to overthrow Spain's government, starting the Spanish Civil War (Payne, 1964). The Spanish Civil War, at its roots, was the conflict between

supporters of the Republic (the government at the time) and the Nationalists (the group trying to overthrow the government) (Payne, 1964). During the Civil War, Francisco Franco emerged as the Nationalist leader, and when the Republic officially surrendered to the Nationalists in 1939, Francisco Franco became Spain's next leader (Holguin, 2015). The legacies of the Civil War led to divisions between the people and regions in support and in opposition to Franco's rule. The separation within Spain did not support Franco's idea of Spain; therefore, Franco had to formulate tools to unify Spain as one singular nation.

During his Regime, Franco emphasized a unified version of Spain. In Franco's eyes, the splintered nationalisms in Spain made the government weak, so he put the Spanish nation before individualism and regionalism. Franco's vision included eliminating separate regional identities, especially in the regions associated with the previous Spanish government. Beginning during the Spanish Civil War and continuing into his dictatorship, Franco targeted the Spanish regions in favor of the previous Spanish Republic and representative of regional autonomy, like Cataluña and the Basque Country, to expel "chaos" and keep "anti-Spain" forces from gaining legitimacy (U.S. Library of Congress, n.d.). Franco's Spain infused Catholicism and fascist ideology into the Spanish people's everyday activities, e.g., through education and propaganda posters (Pinto, 2004). To claim further control over the individual regions, Franco outlawed the crests and flags signifying regional identity and made Spanish the only official language (Muro & Quiroga, 2005). As Franco looked to create one Spanish identity, the different cultural sectors e.g., education, art, and sports became vessels Franco could use to achieve his goal. Meanwhile, the regions used these same sectors to resist Franco's Spain and collective Spanish nationalism.

Football clubs in Spain were examples of vehicles that expressed regional identity and nationalism. The tensions between Cataluña and the Basque Country and Franco's regime existed in club football,[1] and the rivalry between FC Barcelona (Cataluña) and Real Madrid (Castilla) best represents this conflict. The hostility between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid escalated during the Civil War, where Barcelona was a Republican stronghold in Cataluña until Franco's forces occupied and "liberated" Barcelona, and Madrid was the capital of Spain and Franco's forces ("What is the origin," 2023). As a result, FC Barcelona portrayed Republican and regional interests whereas Real Madrid represented Franco's government and Nationalist forces ("What is the origin," 2023). Throughout Franco's dictatorship, FC Barcelona was committed to Catalan culture and became a symbol of resistance, and Real Madrid represented Franco's Spanish interests and values ("Real Madrid vs Barcelona," 2024). The rivalry between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid allowed a physical manifestation of the conflict between Franco supporters and resisters that fell short of the open warfare of the Civil War. Football's

[1] For the duration of this paper, football will refer to the American sport of soccer.

representation of the political conflict in Spain gave Franco the ability to use football as a political tool during his regime.

This project aims to identify football's role during Franco's pursuit of a collective Spanish nationalism. Part of Franco's goal as a dictator was to unify Spain under one nationalism instead of many regional nationalisms. Since football was a popular national pastime with cultural significance beyond sports, it was one of the cultural sectors Franco used to eliminate other nationalisms and create a singular Spanish nationalism. The data for this project includes archived newspaper articles during the years of Franco's dictatorship from three different news sources – *ABC* (Madrid), *El Mundo Deportivo* (Barcelona), and *El Correo* (Bilbao). Using Franco's Spanish nationalism tools and the newspaper articles, this project assesses football's nationalistic role during Franco's regime. Football is often a way for people to express identity and enthusiasm, and politicians have taken advantage of the passion football elicits for decades. By understanding football as a vehicle of both regional and national identity, this research unveils football's application as a weapon and a tool for politicians.

Therefore, this paper argues Franco used football to repress regional cultures and identities during his pursuit of a unified Spanish nationalism. Football was a way for the regions to showcase autonomy, so Franco's goal as the Spanish dictator was to eliminate autonomy and individuality in Spain by applying Spanish nationalism techniques to football. The literature review discusses research questioning the success of harnessing football for political power as well as investigates the trends in Franco's Spanish nationalism. The research design section introduces the three newspaper sources to explore the regional perspectives of Spanish nationalism during football and establishes Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques as thematic codes. For the analysis section of the paper, I apply three Spanish nationalism codes and other functional codes to explore the trends of Spanish nationalism across Spanish football. Finally, the discussion compares this case study, looking at Franco's use of football for political goals, to the cases of political leaders from the previous literature and theorizes Spain's cultural divisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Football and Politics

Scholars looking to explain football's implementation as a political tool investigated how football relates to nationalism. Scholars posit that football unites the people supporting a nation, club, or region. Thus, governments enter a cycle of putting time and resources into increasing football nationalism to increase governmental approval and accelerate nation building. Bowman (2015) argues national football constructs a regional and national identity, giving the government a tool to bring people together. Mason (1995) tests this theory by analyzing how Argentina incorporated football tournaments at the centenary festivities in 1910 and 1916 to increase collective national

pride. Kossakowski and Besta (2018) adds a club-level perspective to see how club football can be equally instrumental at promoting a shared local and national identity. While the researchers generally agree football can promote unity, the literature has yet to explore whether football nationalism can repress individual identity formation. This project fills the gap in existing research through examining individual communities and club football teams in Spain.

When exploring football's use as a political tool, many scholars emphasize that governments can fail to harness football for politics. Despite political leaders' intentions, scholars question whether football truly increases popular political support and stops political dissent. For instance, Herzog (2014) analyzed how the National Socialist regime believed football would provide a distraction from Adolf Hitler's dictatorship in Germany. Nonetheless, current developments in the literature are using European football associations' display of the Ukrainian flag to argue European football is bringing attention to political conflict rather than acting as a distraction (Kristianto et al., 2024). Furthermore, Alabarces (2023) analyzed "the myth of the smokescreen," supporting the idea that football is not a political distraction or a successful political tool. To comment on the debate, this project questions the extent to which leaders can successfully employ football for political goals. By incorporating how Franco's dictatorship in Spain intended to use football to increase Spanish nationalism, and assessing whether those methods succeeded, this case study evaluates the correlation between football and political goals in Spain.

Research on fascist governments in Europe explores how government ideologies change how governments employ football and sporting bodies as propaganda. For fascist governments, scholars analyze how leaders often employ football to bolster existing fascist ideology and ideations. Cronin (2023) studied the cases of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Spanish Francoism. The three cases explored how Germany, Italy, and Spain all looked to propagandize football through different methods: Germany hosted the Olympics, Italy used international sporting success, and Spain tried to control major football teams. Despite the fascist governments' attempts to harness football's political power, the investigation concluded a populations' willingness to participate in sporting activities and boycotts on fascist states' sporting teams limited the governments' success (Cronin, 2023). This project builds on the Spanish case study by researching Franco's impact on three major football teams in Spain. Furthermore, this project's Spanish case study expands on the idea of Franco controlling football teams to see how Franco managed Spanish football and if this command furthered his end goal.

Spanish Nationalism

Previous research on nationalism in Spain investigated why Franco needed, or believed he needed, to create a new idea of Spanish nationalism.

The researchers argue regional disunity in Spain splintered Spanish nationalism, giving Franco justification to form a new collective nationalism. Payne (1991) posits Spain's history as a colonial power, failure to create institutions, slow economic and social development, and lack of military ambitions limited Spanish nationalism. As a result, regional micronationalism, or cultural nationalism, grew in Cataluña and the Basque provinces before Spanish nationalism (Payne, 1991). Nevertheless, Ruiz (2009) argues this disunity in Spain's nationalism forced Franco to repress regional cultures to achieve a unified Spanish nationalism. While the previous research explores the reasoning behind why Franco tried to unify Spain, it fails to explore the cultural and political vehicles Franco used in pursuit of this goal. This project identifies and evaluates football as a vessel of culture for Franco to manipulate to achieve a Spanish nationalism reflective of a nation rather than regions.

Research on Franco's Spanish nationalism discusses the methods Franco utilized to create this unified Spanish nationalism. The Spanish nationalism research investigating Franco's methods generally concluded Franco forced the people in Spain to conform to Spanish values, regardless of regional identity. Hernández Burgos (2019) analyzed Franco's attempts to "*reespañolizar hasta el último rincón de la Patria*" (re-Spanishize the Fatherland to the last corner) (p. 695). For example, Franco's regime used rhetoric promoting *Hispanidad* (Spanishness) while framing leftists and people against Franco's government as "anti-Spain" (Payne, 1964, p. 419; Hernández Burgos, 2019). Meanwhile, Balcells and Villamil (2020) contend Franco's government implemented collective targeting, or targeting a specific group of people based on their physical or cultural attributes, to eliminate viewpoints Franco considered "anti-Spain." This project adds to the idea of Franco using anti-Spain framing and collective targeting as nationalistic techniques by identifying these specific techniques during football events. By applying Franco's Spanish nationalism tools to football, this project determines if Franco's Spanish nationalism tools and ideas translated beyond politics into cultural sectors.

Researchers further analyzed how Franco's Spanish nationalism repressed regional identities and cultures. While some of the Spanish nationalism techniques put promoting Spain at the forefront, other Spanish nationalism techniques combined furthering Spanish identity with eliminating individualism. Balcells and Villamil (2020) analyzed how Franco policed languages by banning minority languages and pushing Spanish as the only language in the nation. Hernández Burgos (2019) adds to the conversation by examining how Franco's regime created new symbols to reflect Spain and Spanish nationalism while prohibiting regional symbols. This project adds to the analysis of using nationalistic tools to repress identity by examining how Franco's language policies manifested into the world of football. Understanding these trends helps ascertain the success of Franco using political means to interfere with inherently cultural vessels.

Similar to past research, this project explores how politics and football interacted during Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain. Previous research defined Franco's Spanish nationalism and illustrated the general use of football as a tool for politics in Latin America and Europe. However, existing research has failed to assess how individual, regional, and national identities tie into football's political application. This research project analyzes Franco's definition of the Spanish state, Spanish nationalism, and the role of football. This case study examines the relationship between football, nationalism, and regional identity in Spain, aiming to apply Franco's tools of Spanish nationalism to football and analyze football's role in promoting a national Spanish identity. Analyzing football's role in Franco's Spain will provide a tool to measure how political leaders politicize football. Therefore, researchers can recognize and analyze instances where football and nationalism are employed as a political distraction.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For this project, I relied on secondary raw data in the form of Spanish newspaper articles to assess football's role in Francisco Franco's Spain. The Spanish newspaper articles came from three regional newspapers: *El Mundo Deportivo* (Barcelona, Cataluña), *ABC* (Madrid, Castilla), and *El Correo* (Bilbao, Basque Country). The newspaper articles provided daily sports news on key football events in Spain during the years 1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953 (see Table 1). One of the pros of using regional newspapers was gaining three viewpoints on football from three autonomous communities (Cataluña, Castilla, and the Basque Country) with their own football teams and cultural identities, allowing a comparison between the regions. However, some cons of using newspapers were the Spanish government's censorship of the press, meaning the data could present biases toward Franco's government, and a more secondary analysis looking at the responses of the regions and not specifics regarding Franco's policies or statements. Since the media sources were from daily newspapers, I looked at how Franco's regime incorporated football to achieve the goal of a singular Spanish identity throughout the individual years and across the four years. Moreover, the newspapers from Barcelona, Madrid, and Bilbao mitigated reporting bias by measuring football's part in nationalism from multiple regional perspectives.

1938 - Name Change: Fútbol Club Barcelona (FC Barcelona) became Club de Fútbol Barcelona (CF Barcelona).
1941 - Name Change: Athletic Club de Bilbao became Atlético Bilbao; Franco established an administrative body (Delegación Nacional de Deportes) to oversee and make policies for Spanish sports teams at all levels.
1943 - El Clásico: Real Madrid beat CF Barcelona 11-1.
1953 - Player Transfer: Real Madrid and Barcelona fought for Alfredo di Stefano, an Argentinian player.

Table 1: Key Years and the Corresponding Football Events

I used the digital archives (hemerotecas) from *El Mundo Deportivo*, *ABC*, and *El Correo* to collect the newspaper articles. The archives are a separate part of the newspapers' websites that incorporate historical newspaper articles. The archives offered a way to search and download Spanish newspaper articles in pdf form from the newspapers' websites. To collect the newspaper articles, I first typed "hemeroteca" along with the corresponding newspaper (i.e. *El Mundo Deportivo*, *ABC*, and *El Correo*) into the Google search bar. Next, one newspaper at a time, starting with *El Mundo Deportivo*, I used the hemerotecas' advanced search bar to type in the same general key words ("Fútbol" and "Deportes"), and I set the timeframe to between January 1 and December 31 for 1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953. These key words generated hundreds of articles, so to limit the data, I conducted a second key word search using the football events as guides (see Table 2), and I limited 1943's data collection time frame to between June 1 and June 31 since the El Clásico match between Real Madrid and Barcelona took place mid-June. Two rounds of key word searches during the collection process ensured I did not miss outlier data about football and nationalism. At the same time, this collection method guaranteed the data would discuss the specific football events.

1938 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Club de Fútbol"
1941 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Delegación Nacional de Deportes"
1943 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Real Madrid" and "Barcelona"
1953 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Alfredo di Stefano"

Table 2: Key Word Search Terms

To finish collecting the data from the newspaper archives, I filtered and discarded articles from the key word search that did not relate to football. I limited the collection to a maximum of twelve articles per news source per

year. To determine the specific articles to download, I first skimmed the titles of the articles from the newspaper sources, starting with *El Mundo Deportivo*, for football news relating to the key events for the years 1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953. I kept the articles if the titles mentioned the key football events, focused on Madrid, Barcelona, and/or Bilbao, and were legible, for the key word search generated many results with faded ink that reported on youth football teams or other sports with similar team names. After discarding newspaper articles without relation to the Spanish football events or regions, I downloaded the remaining the articles, ranging from six to twelve per newspaper source, as pdfs, and I organized the articles into folders, keeping the articles separated by newspaper publication and year. Cleaning up the search results before the analysis section streamlined my ability to organize the data for analysis. Furthermore, this discarding method confirmed the remaining articles included information pertaining to football during Franco's regime for analysis.

Using the newspaper articles, I analyzed the divide between Franco's idea of a unified Spain and the identity of autonomous cultures during the four football events. To measure football's role in Franco's regime, I explored the newspaper articles for Spanish nationalistic themes as well as other common themes, including identity, regional pride, and ideology. The first analysis step was to combine the newspapers from the different publications and sort them by date (1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953). Next, I applied Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques from Hernández Burgos (2021), Payne (1964), and Balcells and Villamil (2020) as the first round of codes for the Spanish newspaper articles (see Table 3), starting with the 1938 articles. Finally, I conducted a secondary round of coding, also in Spanish, with Table 3 identifying the additional thematic codes that measured football's role in Francoist Spain. Analyzing the football events chronologically uncovered thematic developments in both Franco's idea of Spanish nationalism and the autonomous communities' sense of identity. Additionally, keeping the newspapers in Spanish allowed me to analyze word choice and tone in addition to nationalistic themes. Therefore, the codes revealed how Franco's use of football evolved during his pursuit of a collective Spanish nationalism.

Spanish Nationalism Codes	Supplemental Codes
Language Policing - During Franco's regime, Franco pushed for Spanish to be the only official language despite many regions having their own official language(s). As a result, autonomous communities had to change everyday language and organizations' names to fit the Spanish version.	**Government Intervention –** This was the main code for the Alfredo di Stefano transfer, signifying governmental policies or actions and the results of these policies.
"Anti-Spain" Framing - Part of Franco's push for a unified Spain included labeling the Spanish people in support of individual cultures as "anti-Spain."	**Regional Pride –** This code came from the newspapers mentioning regional celebrations, languages, or activities.
Collective Targeting - Similar to "anti-Spain" framing, collective targeting includes repressing the cultures not aligned with Franco's politics through propaganda or force.	**Team Pride –** This was the code when there were expressions of team mottos, colors, or a biased newspaper reporting tone favoring one team.

Table 3: Thematic Codes: Definitions and Explanation

ANALYSIS

Language Policing

Franco's language policies progressed as his power as a dictator grew. During the Spanish Civil War, Franco did not hold total power over the Spanish government, so his initial policies did not target all autonomous regions. Language policies expanded to all of Spain after 1939 as Franco stepped into the role of a fascist dictator. Starting in 1938, Franco's team implemented the Press Law of 1938 to censor freedom of expression, including expressions of regional nationalism, such as crests, flags, and languages (Gunther et al., 2000). Additionally, Franco's forces occupied Cataluña in 1938 to squash the pro-Republic resistance, so the Press Law coupled with Franco's forces in Cataluña led to FC Barcelona's[2] official name change in 1938 (Burns, 1998). From 1941 until the end of the dictatorship in 1975, Franco decreed Spanish as the official language of Spain and prohibited regional languages and dialects across Spain (Claesson, 2022). As a result of these policies, football organizations had to change their names to fit Franco's idea of one singular Spanish language and identity. Football organizations could no longer represent regional autonomy using regional languages or symbols.

Given that Franco's military occupied Cataluña in 1938, he mainly focused on policing the language of governmental and football organizations

[2] This paper will use FC Barcelona's official Catalan name unless explicitly stating the name change.

in Cataluña. The Catalan fight against Franco's Nationalist forces in the Civil War led to Franco implementing policies that policed language to limit how the Catalans could display resistance. The Catalan government's original Catalan name was the Generalitat de Cataluña, but in *ABC* and *El Mundo Deportivo*, the government's name became the Generalidad de Cataluña to reflect the Castilian-Spanish version of the name. Furthermore, even before Franco occupied Cataluña, *El Mundo Deportivo, ABC,* and *El Correo* all failed to call Barcelona's football team by the formal Catalan name, Fútbol Club (FC) Barcelona. While Catalan culture and language previously endured violence from the Nationalist forces during the Civil War, the language policing signified a loss for Catalan resistance and a win for Franco's Spanish ideals. This initial 1938 policing forced the Catalan people to change how they expressed regional identity since language and football were parts of Catalan culture.

Though Franco directed much of the 1938 language policing toward Catalan identity, Spanish organizations were also victims of Franco's language policing. Franco did not discriminate language policing by region, for as Franco was coming to power, he was also making sure Spanish institutions reflected Francoist Spain. Spain's national football tournament was the *Copa del Presidente de la República* (the President of the Second Republic's Cup) before 1938; however, once Franco came into power in Spain, the tournament's official name became the *Copa del Generalisimo* (the General's Cup) to reflect Franco's military rank ("Dos versiones sobre la posibilidad," 1938). If the newspapers were referencing any previous national tournament games, the newspapers would only refer to the tournament as *La Copa* (the Cup) to avoid using a name that did not reflect Franco's government. Even though Franco's language policies went beyond regional football, the name change to reflecting Franco's regime demanded teams representing regional pride accept Franco as Spain's central figure. All teams playing for the national title, even the teams against Franco's government, would have to compete to represent Franco and Franco's Spanish nationalism rather than regional nationalism. Therefore, policing the Spanish national tournament's name still demanded the regions conform to Franco's idea of Spain.

In 1941, Franco's language policing of football teams shifted to become more overt since Franco prohibited all non-Spanish languages. Until 1941, regional football teams could use their regional dialect for club names. However, during and after 1941, football teams changed the club names to comply with Franco's decree promoting the Spanish language as Spain's only language. For example, Athletic Bilbao,[3] the Basque version of the name, exclusively became Atlético de Bilbao or Atlético Bilbao in *El Mundo Deportivo*, *ABC*, and *El Correo*. *El Correo* relayed a direct statement from

[3] For the duration of this paper, I will use Athletic Bilbao's Basque name unless discussing the language change.

Athletic Club Bilbao detailing how the name would change to comply with national orders:

> In compliance with the Spanish Football Federation's orders, [and] in agreement with the provisions of the National Sports Council, the Board of Directors of the Athletic Club has agreed to replace this name [Athletic] with Atlético, effective February 1, 1941. ("Athletic Club," 1941)

The more straightforward language policing toward Athletic Bilbao in 1941 reflected Franco's increasing persistence to promote Spanish identity. Through Athletic Bilbao's name change, Franco managed the Basque Country's pride and resistance to the Spanish government. By overseeing football as an instrument of regional pride, Franco could ensure football in the Basque Country reflected the Spanish language and Spanish nationalism.

Even with the language policies prohibiting languages other than Spanish and censoring the press, the newspapers resisted FC Barcelona's name change. The newspapers did not conform to the 1938 official language change when discussing Barcelona's football team. *El Mundo Deportivo* and *El Correo* wrote the Barcelona football team's name as "El Barcelona" or *los azulgrana* (referring to Barcelona's team colors of red and blue) through 1941. *Los azulgrana* represents the pride behind Barcelona's team, translating to Barça (the Catalan abbreviation of FC Barcelona) and Fútbol Club Barcelona (Barcelona's Catalan name) ("Los azulgrana obtuvieron," 1941). Even though Barcelona's team resisted a name change, the newspapers still failed to accept the Catalan version of the name. As a result, FC Barcelona had a limited ability to be a vehicle of regional pride and were less likely to be a strong symbol of Catalan nationalism.

Nevertheless, by the year 1943, Franco's emphasis on the Spanish version of names and language policing reached all football teams in Spain. FC Barcelona could no longer resist Franco's policies requiring Castilian-Spanish names. In 1943, *El Mundo Deportivo* and *El Correo* used "C. de F. Barcelona" and "Club de Fútbol Barcelona" when referencing Barcelona's football team. In *ABC*, Barcelona's football team was officially Barcelona C.F. in all articles, and all the football teams in Spain had a Castilian-Spanish prefix or suffix: C.F. (Club de Fútbol), Deportivo(a), or Atlético ("El Barcelona y El Atlético," 1943). Table 4 provides a summary of the language policies and FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao's name changes. FC Barcelona was the final team to switch to the Castilian-Spanish name, so from 1943 and beyond, Franco's Spanish nationalism ideals controlled the language of Spanish football. This control eliminated regional football clubs' ability to use language as a symbol of regional nationalism, lessening their overall impact as cultural symbols. Once Franco established control over football in Spain using language, he could start implementing more Spanish nationalism techniques to further oppress regional culture.

Original Name	Spanish Name	Year of Official Name Change	Reason for Official Name Change	Year Newspapers Reflected Name Change
Fútbol Club (FC) Barcelona	Club de Fútbol (CF) Barcelona	1938	Press Law of 1938; Spanish Nationalist forces occupied Cataluña.	1943
Athletic Bilbao	Atlético Bilbao or Atlético de Bilbao	1941	Franco prohibited regional languages in football club names.	1941

Table 4: Summary of Language Policing

Anti-Spain Framing

As Franco rose to power, he used red symbolism in football to separate Spanish identity from regional identity. Applying red symbolism to football teams and players became a way to distinguish the people for and against Francoist Spain. Since most of the red symbolism was in the autonomous regions, Franco often targeted the autonomy of those regions. The people opposed to Franco's regime were *rojoseparatistas* (red separatists), referring to the separatist movements in many of the autonomous regions, and the newspapers described these *rojoseparatistas* as engaged in politics, including the use of football propaganda, against the "New Spain" ("El deporte antes y después," 1938). Furthermore, since Franco considered football in the autonomous regions to be *rojo* (red), he believed a new Spanish football to complement the "New Spain" would add order and "construct a new passion for a national identity in Spain" ("El deporte antes y después," 1938). For example, after Franco's "liberation" of Bilbao, a red city, Bilbao's football would reflect the "the One, Great, and Free Spain" ("Un gran partido en San Mamés," 1938; "El deporte antes y después," 1938). In this 1938 period, Franco was formulating how to achieve a singular national identity, so using words like "liberation" and framing the football teams as *rojo* was a way to reject the autonomous identities in Spain. The contrasting negative and positive connotations of the words *rojo* and liberation reflected Franco's physical, symbolic, and cultural dominance over the autonomous regions, indicating Franco's "New Spain" held superiority even at its inception in 1938.

As the Spanish government framed the people against Franco's government as anti-Spain, Cataluña and the Basque Country's abilities to make football decisions without considering the Spanish government's opposition to regional autonomy decreased. The football clubs could no longer function independently of the Spanish government. The Director of Athletic Bilbao had to make sure *El Correo*'s readers knew the Basque government's deploy-

ment of an anti-Franco team was accidental and not for propaganda or politics ("El Athletic, en la época roja," 1938). With Franco's emphasis on regions against Spain, *El Mundo Deportivo* suggested the Catalan Football League began struggling to advance and continue the Catalan football tournament in 1938, and the tournament never appeared in the newspapers after 1938 ("Sólo hubo ayer Europa-Español," 1938). Since Bilbao and Cataluña could not continue football operations without government interference, the autonomous regions had little autonomy or individuality under Franco. Franco's control over Bilbao and Cataluña meant the autonomous regions had to write, act, and speak with Franco's government and Spanish values in mind. While autonomous regions and cultures did not disappear, this loss of autonomy signifies a more unified Spain.

As Franco's dictatorship progressed, he took a more direct approach to framing FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as anti-Spain. Since the cities of Barcelona and Bilbao were against Franco's Spanish government, Franco did not shy away from using the newspapers to blatantly frame FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as villains. Even with historical success in the national tournament, to become favorites for the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo, FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao had to "overcome everyone and everything," referring to Franco and the Spanish government's attempts to limit team and regional pride ("Barcelona y Atlético de Bilbao," 1943). Part of this challenge for FC Barcelona came from Franco framing Barcelona's football team as "the enemy" and "the rival" ("Pasado y futuro de las semifinales," 1943). Additionally, after Madrid defeated Barcelona to move on to the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo finals, an article in *ABC* suggested Barcelona's citizens were violent towards Spain ("El Aplastante Triunfo," 1943). By framing FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as Spain's enemies, Franco shifted support away from the autonomous regions, reducing the spread of symbols and expressions of regional identity. By limiting the expansion of FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as cultural symbols, people in other regions across Spain would be less inclined to support the Barcelona and Bilbao football teams and more likely to support a team representing Spanish values.

Even with anti-Spain framing and Franco's prohibition of regional languages and symbols, he was unable to outlaw celebrations promoting regional pride. After winning the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo, Athletic Bilbao held rallies and parades to celebrate the victory. Athletic's win was a source of pride for Bilbao and the Basque Country, and the people of Bilbao also expressed Spanish national pride since they considered the win to be a service to Spain and Franco ("Apoteósico recibimiento al Atlético," 1943). Franco even came to Bilbao to celebrate with Athletic Bilbao, and there were screams of "Long live Atlético," "Long Live Bilbao," "Franco, Franco, Franco," and "Long Live Spain" ("Apoteósico recibimiento al Atlético," 1943). Even though the win was a source of pride for Athletic Bilbao's football team and the Basque Country, Bilbao could not commemorate the win without

also honoring Franco's Spain. Bilbao's celebration of regional and team culture was in addition to honoring Spanish culture, so even in a regional football celebration, Franco's government was able to promote Spain.

Collective Targeting

While the Spanish government often looked to collectively target the football teams in the autonomous regions, referring to Franco's campaign to repress regional cultures using propaganda and/or physical or psychological force, the newspapers did not show evidence of Franco's collective targeting during the Spanish Civil War in 1938. Rather, Franco focused externally on football and did not express any sentiments towards regional autonomy. The articles from *ABC* in 1938 that reported on sports focused on general festivals and celebrations. The only sports *ABC* reported on were international football events, such as sports in the Soviet Union ("Acontecimientos deportivos en la Union Sovietica," 1938). Additionally, *ABC*'s only mention of Cataluña in 1938 came from an article where Cataluña expressed love and support to Madrid during the war ("Madrileños, Cataluña os ama," 1938). Even though Madrid, the capital of Spain and home of the Spanish government, was not reporting on football or expressly targeting the autonomous regions, as symbols of regional resistance, Franco's policies were still pressuring the football teams to conform to Spanish values. Madrid was often a battleground during the Spanish Civil War, so *ABC*'s lack of reporting was likely due to the Spanish Civil War preoccupying Franco's Nationalist forces and the citizens in Madrid rather than an absence of collective targeting.

When Franco created the Spanish National Sports Delegation in 1941, the organization served to centralize Spanish football and, by extension, start a collective targeting campaign. As part of the campaign, Franco's government ensured football teams reflected Spain as a nation. *ABC*'s newspaper reporting indicated that the multiplicity of Spain's sports damaged society, so the National Sports Delegation would eliminate interference from the organizations or football clubs against Franco's policies ("Propositos, orientacion, y finalidad," 1941). During this time, Barcelona's football team started to have economic shortcomings and poor performances that did not measure up to the "prestigious colors" Barcelona represented ("Un brillante primer tiempo," 1941). In Bilbao, all members on the board of directors for Athletic Bilbao's football club stepped down from running the club ("La Directiva del Atlético," 1941). In Franco's quest to unite the regions under Spanish nationalism, Franco had to make sure the institutions representing regional pride could not fully function. Since Franco created the National Sports Delegation to consolidate sports policies, FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao could not pursue sporting decisions without the Spanish government's knowledge or guidance. These football policies pressured regional autonomy, leading to FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao's inability to maintain the same football success as in the past.

As Franco worked to repress football operations in the autonomous communities, football also became a way to celebrate Franco's government. Namely, Spanish football was a way to support and indirectly serve Franco's government. *ABC* agreed with Franco's implementation of the National Sports Delegation and believed there should not be doubts about the good faith of the organization because it was serving *la Patra* (the Fatherland) ("Propositos, Orientacion, y Finalidad," 1941). Additionally, the symbols of Franco's regime became a part of Spanish football, with Figure 1 illustrating a team initiating a fascist salute before a game ("Comentando el juego," 1941). As the newspapers began emphasizing Spanish football as a reflection of Franco's government, football became a propaganda machine. With this idea of using football as a manner to serve and symbolize Francoist Spain, football transformed into a uniform entity without expressions of creativity or individuality.

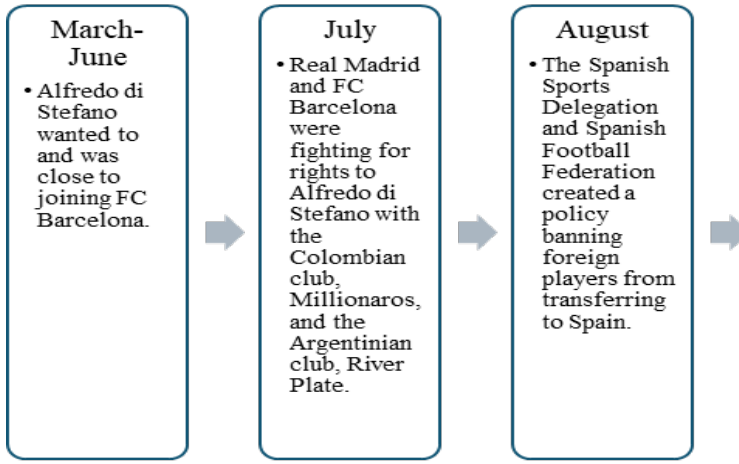


Figure 1

Repressing the autonomous communities also came from Franco's emphasis on Spanish superiority during the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo semifinal between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid. With Spanish superiority, FC Barcelona's team pride decreased, reducing the team's ability to respond to Franco's targeting. After the first leg of the Copa del Generalisimo semifinals, a spokesperson for Barcelona spoke on how the Spanish government censored the teams, saying "Let them shout all they want, neither they nor we will be able to do bad things because whoever even tries will be shot down with a lead hand" ("Madrid y Barcelona presentarán," 1943). During the match, Barcelona's football team came onto the field subdued and were playing with caution, and they eventually "collapsed" and "let" Real Ma-

drid score eleven goals ("El Madrid derroto al Barcelona," 1943). After the second leg of the Copa del Generalisimo, *El Mundo Deportivo* reported on how the Madrid players played with "supremacy" and "hostility," demoralizing Barcelona's team ("Atlético de Bilbao y Real Madrid," 1943). The battle and fighting language indicating Real Madrid's supremacy suggested the game between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona was akin to war, so when Real Madrid humiliated FC Barcelona, the win was not only for Real Madrid but also for Spain. In the moment of Real Madrid's win, Spain and Spanish culture had defeated Cataluña and Catalan identity; therefore, Franco's idea of Spanish domination over the autonomous regions came to fruition.

Alfredo di Stefano's Transfer

As one of the most skilled and expensive players in the world in 1953, Alfredo di Stefano's transfer to Spain presented a battle between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona and the two Latin American teams with rights to di Stefano. While trying to secure Alfredo di Stefano's transfer, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona used different, but official, channels, leading to a stand-off between the two clubs. Real Madrid hoped to secure the transfer of di Stefano from the Colombian club he was playing for at the time (Millionaros); however, due to FIFA's provisions with the Colombian football organization, di Stefano belonged to his home club (River Plate) in Argentina ("La situación de di Stefano," 1953). FC Barcelona secured di Stefano's transfer from River Plate to Barcelona, but the Millionaros team had already released him to Real Madrid ("La situación de di Stefano," 1953). While FC Barcelona and Real Madrid had been football rivals, the two organizations were now fighting organizationally, tactically, and economically to secure a player transfer. Even though both FC Barcelona and Real Madrid's organizations had to function according to Franco's sporting policies, this transfer tested Franco's ability to use government intervention as a way to regulate football in Cataluña and encourage Spanish football in Madrid.

As the transfer saga began, Franco used government channels to guarantee di Stefano would not play in Barcelona. The National Sports Delegation and Spanish Football Federation implemented policies on foreign player transfers, making it nearly impossible for FC Barcelona to complete the transfer. FC Barcelona and their board of directors were having trouble securing Alfredo di Stefano's transfer in July of 1953, allowing Real Madrid to intervene and pursue di Stefano ("di Stefano, Samitier," 1953). When di Stefano was in Barcelona and FC Barcelona was close to securing the transfer, the Spanish National Sports Delegation stepped in and suspended the hiring of foreign football players, ensuring FC Barcelona would not be able to sign Alfredo di Stefano legally ("La 'Hoja del Lunes,'" 1953; "di Stefano no puede jugar," 1953). Even though di Stefano wanted to play in Barcelona and Barcelona made the deal before the Spanish Football Federation and National Sports Delegation ruled against signing foreign players, FC Barcelona had

to transfer di Stefano's rights as a player to a different club ("Mas sobre di Stefano," 1953; "El 'Caso' di Stefano," 1953). The timing of this government intervention suggested FC Barcelona posed a threat to Franco and the Spanish sporting organizations. It was only as FC Barcelona was about to secure di Stefano's transfer when the Spanish Sports Delegation and the Spanish Football Federation established a policy prohibiting foreign players. Successfully securing Alfredo di Stefano's transfer would have given FC Barcelona a new weapon to elicit team pride, so the government intervention was a way to preserve Spain's power over football in Barcelona.

Franco's sporting policies during Alfredo di Stefano's transfer made sure di Stefano and any future international players would not play for anti-Spain teams. While the policies prohibited foreign player transfers, they also created workarounds to allow foreign players to transfer to teams representing Franco's Spanish values. In the National Sports Delegation's decision on foreign players, the resolution mentioned creating a formula to bring players that support Spanish teams ("La 'Hoja del Lunes,'" 1953). The Delegation would decide whether the players coming to Spain had values aligned with Francoist Spain before authorizing any transfer ("La 'Hoja del Lunes,'" 1953). As Real Madrid was pursuing di Stefano, *ABC* referred to Real Madrid as *el club español de fútbol* (the Spanish football club), indicating a transfer to Barcelona would be against Spain ("Segun un noticia de Bogota," 1953). At this point of government intervention, Franco was no longer trying to hide his disdain for the autonomous regions. Anti-Spain versus pro-Spain ideology framed the policy discussions among the Spanish sporting organizations; thus, Franco's football policies via the Spanish sporting organizations were emphasizing Franco's Spanish values as correct and legitimate to promote a Spanish nationalism void of regional differentiation.

In the end, FC Barcelona's inability to secure Alfredo di Stefano's transfer came from within the organization. Mixed opinions on the di Stefano transfer fractured trust within FC Barcelona's organization, so the personnel for FC Barcelona could not come to an agreement on di Stefano's transfer. During the transfer, the National Sports Delegation granted an exception to FC Barcelona and Real Madrid to continue negotiations for di Stefano ("El porqué de la dimisión," 1953; "di Stefano firmara hoy," 1953). FC Barcelona came to an agreement with Real Madrid to share di Stefano, with him playing the first and third seasons in Madrid and the second and fourth seasons in Barcelona ("di Stefano firmara hoy," 1953). However, as seen in Figure 2, dissent in Barcelona forced the club's director to resign, giving Madrid sole rights to di Stefano ("di Stefano, siempre con el Madrid," 1953). Even though FC Barcelona's failure to secure di Stefano came from the directors, Franco's government intervention made sure FC Barcelona would not gain any power as a symbol of regional identity from the di Stefano transfer. Even during the agreement, Real Madrid and the Spanish government would not allow FC Barcelona to get sole rights to di Stefano because that would have given FC

Barcelona an advantage over Real Madrid, and this advantage to FC Barcelona would have supplied the Catalans a new wave of team pride and regional identity, diminishing Franco's Spanish superiority.

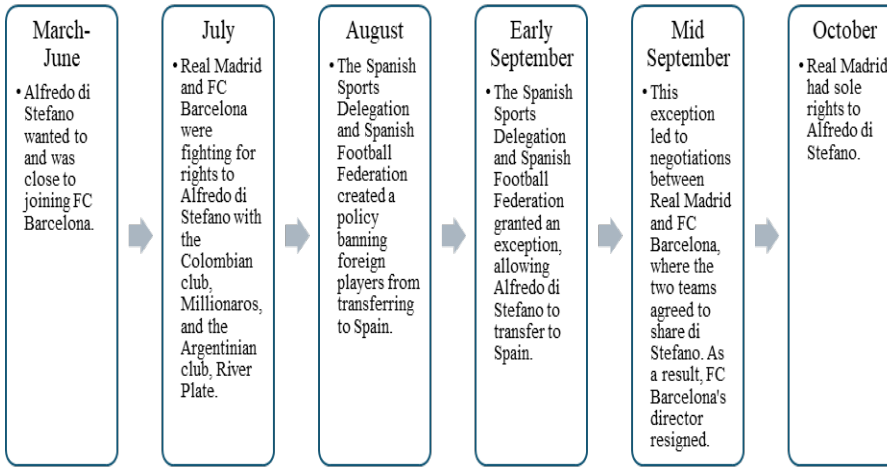


Figure 2: Full Timeline Detailing Alfredo di Stefano's 1953 Transfer

DISCUSSION

Football and Spanish Nationalism

Spain's plurinationality meant football was not always an indicator of national pride, as many of the previous researchers suggested. Looking at the club and local football teams in Spain extended nationalistic ideas to club football teams representing regional pride. Mason (1995) looked at how football promotes and increases collective national pride during national football events. My research's evaluation of FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao led to the discovery of regional football teams being vehicles of regional nationalism, aligning more with Bowman (2015) and Kossakowski and Besta's (2018) idea of football also promoting local and regional identities. Teams like FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao were symbols of regional pride, so Franco used the club football teams to eliminate the autonomy of the Spanish regions in favor of a nation-centered identity. While national pride was often the focus of previous research, a perspective of regional nationalism in Spain helped uncover divisions in national identity. These divisions increased the difficulty for Franco to pursue a collective nationalism, so when nationalism and regional cultures were not mutually exclusive, repressing autonomy through football became the primary manner to promote a national identity.

While researchers like Cronin (2023) believed football was an unsuccessful political tool, this research was more aligned with the idea of using

football as a steppingstone for political success. To add to the debate on success, my research found Franco's policies targeting football were somewhat successful for him to unify Spanish nationalism. Franco applied language changes and anti-Spain frames to FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao, diminishing the clubs' abilities to act independently of the Spanish government. Furthermore, during the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo, the fanbases for FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao conformed to Franco's policies while also celebrating their teams throughout the tournament. Meanwhile, Cronin (2023) believed the Spanish population was not invested enough for football to be a successful political tool. Since Franco's application of Spanish nationalism techniques to the football teams and supporters in Spain rejects Cronin's (2023) view of Franco's regime as an unsuccessful example, research debating the success of using football for political purposes should reevaluate the meaning of success to include a more immediate and larger scale timeframe. While Franco was able to successfully apply the Spanish nationalism techniques and successfully repress autonomous culture through football, he did not fully eliminate regional culture, indicating short-term but not long-term success.

Even though Franco was able to successfully implement policies related to Spanish nationalism, this research did not support the idea of football as a political distraction. Political leaders often tried to divert attention away from governmental decisions and human rights abuses, but Franco used football to impose government ideals and values. Alabarces (2023) found Latin American political leaders' use of football often revolved around the goal of distracting citizens from human rights abuses or controversial government actions, such as in the case of Argentina hosting the World Cup during the Dirty War. Franco's policies and actions, however, contradict Alabarces (2023) and Herzog (2014) because Franco applied anti-Spain framing to push pro-Spain ideologies. Instead of using football as a distraction, Franco put himself and the Spanish government as the central figures of Spanish football by renaming the national tournament to reflect his military title and using the National Sports Delegation and Spanish Football Federation to negotiate the Alfredo di Stefano transfer. Using football and sporting events for political purposes does not have to solely revolve around societal blindness to government abuses as the previous research suggested. In many ways, Franco's use of football as part of his main political goal of unifying Spain brought more attention to the Spanish government rather than less.

Cultural Identity Theory

Viewing Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques through the lens of Cultural Identity Theory (CIT) explains why Franco believed he could influence Spanish identity and culture. Due to Spain's autonomous communities, Spain consisted of many different cultural identities for Franco to manage. Under Hall's (2021) explanation of CIT, individuals' actions come from the

surrounding language and traditions, and this research shows football as a manner to express regional language and culture. Cultural identity evolves as societal, situational, and historical contexts change (Hall, 2021). As a result, Franco could apply language policing to change FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao's names to formulate a pro-Spain cultural identity. CIT's idea of ever-changing cultural identities means every leader and every historical occurrence affects cultural identity creation. However, even when culture is malleable, historical roots can lead to a persisting cultural identity, with the enduring expression of regional nationalism through football during Franco's regime as an example. Even though Franco was slightly successful at implementing policies to try and change cultural identity, this research rejects a permanent change in cultural identity.

Along with regional and cultural differences within Spain, CIT understands cultural sectors, like football, as vehicles of identity. Through the application of regional traditions, symbols, and languages, football developed cultural identities within Spain. Football as an expression of regional pride explains Franco's need to impose Spanish nationalist policies onto the sport. When applying CIT to football, the organic builders of culture manifested into a physical expression of cultural pride, for FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao all originally showcased the regional language, flag, and symbols through their crests and spoken chants. However, cultural identities differ depending on time, so football changed to align with the fascist regime, allowing Franco to control how Spain's cultural identities evolved (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao showed some resistance to language policies and anti-Spain framing even with Franco's policies pushing a Spanish cultural identity. Even though symbols of identity changed, they never truly disappeared because CIT's organic builders of identity like language and traditions indicate Franco was not able to issue a top-down policy forever erasing regional cultural identity. Franco could change his idea of a perfect Spanish culture, but CIT understands all cultural identities to coexist. Therefore, Franco could only temporarily change football's physical manifestation of culture.

CONCLUSION

The various nationalisms in Spain led Franco to use football as a repressive tool to suppress regional identities and achieve a unified national identity in Spain. Spain's autonomous regions held cultural and political power separate from Spain's national government, and football was a manner for the regions to express cultural identity. Franco's goal, therefore, was to eliminate opposition within the regions, so he applied nationalistic tools to football teams in the autonomous regions to eliminate regional expressions of identity and to emphasize a "New Spain." For example, Franco policed the language of both FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao to eliminate regional languages and promote the Spanish language. Furthermore, Franco accused FC

Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao of being against Spain as a way to shift support for regional teams to support for the nation. Franco also used government intervention to directly influence the functions of FC Barcelona to favor a Spanish team supportive of the Spanish government, like Real Madrid. Taking Franco's manipulation of club football teams in Spain as an example, governments can and often will use cultural sectors to disguise repression as unity. Football, while not inherently political, often represents historical rivalries between nations and clubs, making it a unique political tool to improve public opinion and bring supporters together against a common adversary.

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Taking the Russia out of the Soviet: Nation Building through Federal Language Laws in Post-Soviet Latvia

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This project asks how Latvian language laws have changed since Latvia gained independence in 1991. Previous research examined how and where language appears, if and how countries follow language laws, and how speakers of language feel about speakers of other languages; this research expands to the types of language laws countries pass, in what sectors, and touches on the motivations behind passing and increasing the number of language laws. This research relies on Cultural Constructivism Theory to define how the government of Latvia intentionally constructs national identity and regulates how residents of the country may use language (language being inherently tied to culture). This project looks at publicly available, state-translated laws from the website likumi.lv to find legal efforts to regulate language use between the years of 1991 and 2024. The laws span various socio-political sectors: "Administrative Procedure; Administrative Offense Proceedings; Civil Law"; "Education, Science, Sport"; "Constitutional Law; State Language, State Symbols"; "Media, Advertising"; "Citizenship, Migration"; "Religion, Church"; and, "Transportation, Communication." This project finds laws from the sector "Education, Science, Sport" most commonly influence language use, specifically between the years 2018 and 2022. When discussing the implications of expanding language landscape research into the motivation of nation building, countries should consider how language use can shape culture and construct the idea of a national identity, reflecting growing trends of nationalism across the globe.

Keywords: Post-Soviet, nation building, language policy

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All the cars on the road couldn't muddy the layers and layers of snow covering the highway, but the pathways through the local park had been cleared so residents could walk downtown and school children could play. As my host mother and I neared the park's official entrance, she pointed at a bulletin board covered with fliers for local plays, concerts, markets, and fairs. "All of those posters are in Latvian," she explained, "if you try to hang a poster with Russian on it, the police will come and tear it down." I took it with a grain of salt. We walked on to the local university, where I would be taking classes, but not with local students—my program was for foreigners. Local classes must be taught in Latvian, and I didn't speak the language.

The Latvian people are proud of the perseverance of the Latvian language, culture, and history. They have retained their traditions despite a long history of foreign imperial occupation. Modern Latvian law is built on these old traditions. Kalnins's (2015) book describes the period in Latvia after the First World War when both Germany and Russia ceded Latvia to independent (and modern) borders in 1920 after the fall of their respective empires. During this interwar period, "art, music, architecture, literature and the sciences" boomed, sparking celebrations of indigenous culture in the newly unoccupied Latvian state. The state established individual ownership of land, a liberal economy, liberal democracy, ethnic citizenship rights, and even the constitution the country would return to after regaining independence with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Kalnins, 2015, p. 162). The development of the nation during the interwar period became the basis for the modern Latvian state. Latvia's taste of independence during the interwar period established the borders, system of government, economy, and cultural pride that returned to shape Latvian legislation in the modern day.

Citizenship and language policies changed again when the Soviet Union annexed Latvia in 1939. No longer independent, Latvia was subject to Soviet law, which attempted to impose supremacy of Russian language, culture, and nationality. During the Soviet period, nationality, ethnicity, and residency were independent facets of identity; Soviet passports marked individual nationality independent of ethnicity while conferring general Soviet citizenship, and in the capital of Latvia, residency depended on nationality (Loader, 2017). Not only residency, but Babich (Бабич) et al. (2019) describes how "a migratory influx of Russian-speaking populations from other parts of the Soviet Union...greatly increased the portion of Russian-speaking residents in [Latvia]," shifting the language landscape of the region. Under Soviet occupation, while Soviet authorities permitted the use of Latvian in everyday life, Russian became the language of education, science, civil administration, business, and international communication (Бабич et al., 2019, p. 236). Soviet language laws structured how contemporary Latvian language laws could bolster official language use. While interwar independence built up pride in indigenous culture, the period of Soviet occupation structured how laws

could regulate language and culture in the future. Modern Latvian language laws permit the use of foreign languages in everyday speech but require official language use in most public spheres, just as Soviet law outlined Russian language use.

Latvia regained independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The state reimplemented many interwar policies, including reinstituting Latvian as the official language. Latvian, still the language of everyday communication, also became the language of education, science, civil administration, business, and international communication, just as Russian had been during the Soviet period. Kalnins (2015) describes a "hastened… modernisation and Westernisation" of Latvia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Latvia modeled voting rights, citizenship reform, and government restructuring on a basis of assimilating Latvians into Europe and the Western world; Latvia joined the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Eurozone, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and adopted English as the language of international communication (Kalnins, 2015, p. 225). For non-Latvians, many former Soviet, Russian-speaking residents not only feel left out of Latvian society but have become legally stateless due to the Latvian language requirements to gain and retain residency status, citizenship, and to find employment, (Бабич et al., 2019; Venkov, 2018). Latvia took a sudden turn towards Europe in the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union, distancing itself culturally and politically from Soviet power and Russian dominance. Language laws, naturally, have changed to reflect this shift in political dynamics.

This research aims to determine how Latvian language laws have changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Latvia rebuilds as an independent nation, language use is a core component in reshaping national culture and identity. The question is then in the wording, penalties, requirements, and limitations in the federal language laws the Latvian government (*Saeima*) uses to intentionally shape the new, national culture. The answer to this question relies on Cultural Constructivism Theory (CCT), the idea people actively perform, not passively inherit, culture, where changes in language reflect culture and cultural shifts. Utilizing a top-down framework, this analysis treats shifts in language landscape as the government's intentional decision to influence language use. To determine these intentional shifts in performance of culture, federal language laws dictating the norms and regulations for language use describe how Latvian residents are to practice culture. Previous research largely examines how governments carry out language policy—research does not cover the various policies that may exist in the first place, nor why governments may implement such laws. Understanding how and why governments shape national identity through language use help political scientists navigate the changing geopolitical landscape and rising levels of nationalism. This may provide political scientists

with a clearer picture of nation building and an understanding of how to navigate nation building policies.

This paper argues that Latvian language laws have become increasingly more controlling over time. As international events threaten the small nation, the Latvian legislature, the *Saeima,* has focused on shaping a national Latvian identity independent of Soviet Russian. Laws create more opportunities for Latvian language use while limiting opportunities for non-Latvian foreign languages. The following literature review describes language policy compliance, language landscapes, and attitudinal surveys. The research methods section has a detailed description of the analysis of national laws of the following categories: Transportation, Communication; Media, Advertising; Education, Science, Sport; Citizenship, Migration; Administrative Processes and Civil Law; State Symbols; and, Religious Organizations. Then, the analysis section explores how language is written into culture and history, official vs nonofficial language use, and trends in categories of new laws over time, focusing on spikes of new laws in 2013, 2018, and 2022. Finally, I discuss how this research expands literature beyond existing policies, policy compliance, and language landscapes into the field of wider policies governing language use. The discussion also examines how national elections and international events may threaten Latvia, causing the need to use language laws to strengthen culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Landscapes – Bottom-Up and Top-Down

Previous research has utilized the "language landscape" model to analyze the influence of politics on language use and vice versa. A "language landscape" is the model of analyzing the presence of language on the ground, such as on street signs or storefronts, sometimes in comparison to official language policies. The phenomenon of institutional politics on everyday language use is known as "top-down language change." Researchers in Pristina, Kosovo, investigated if the amount of Albanian on private signage compared to the amount of Serbian on public, governmental signs (Demaj & Vandenbroucke, 2016). Similarly, Manchurina and Sansonova (2022), in Yakutsk, in the Sakha Republic of Russia, compared the percentage of the Sakha language present on official signage to the amount of Sakha missing from official signage. The researchers also compared the amount of Sakha to the amount of Russian on official signs (Manchurina & Samsonova, 2022). While previous literature investigated the representation of language on the ground, current literature lacks data of institutional language landscaping outside of public signage. Little work exists on how governments choose to represent a language. My research on language use in Latvia seeks to expand beyond signage to find areas where the Latvian government seeks to control language use.

While traditional language landscape analysis relies on street-visible signage, researchers have also utilized digital media to investigate the use of common languages. The effect of everyday language on institutional policies is known as "bottom-up language change." In the digital age, common parlance has a large presence on social media, news websites, and online shops, so bottom-up language change can appear on the internet. In Sliashynskaya's (2018) article, the researcher analyzed the homepages of two national news websites, focusing on the representation of Belarus's two national languages: Russian and Belarusian. She analyzed the placement of headings, the use of different fonts, and lexical translation variations between the Belarussian and Russian versions of the same article. Not only could she compare when and where each language appeared but also the biased sociopolitical contexts the variations between languages appeared in (Sliashynskaya, 2018). My research into Latvian language laws uses similar contextual analysis on how language landscapes vary between different sociopolitical contexts. Most current literature only focuses on the concrete time and place of written language, so considering bottom-up and top-down shifts in language landscapes expands the current understanding of language politics.

While bottom-up analysis looks at how everyday language use affects institutional language, researchers have used top-down analysis to consider how institutional policies impact the everyday language landscape. Most top-down research analyzes the success or failure of implementing official signage in the national language(s). Both top-down and bottom-up language change can occur simultaneously in one language landscape, but their effects are not equal. Golubeva (2011) considers how top-down and bottom-up change can co-occur in education. In the case of Russian mode-of-instruction schools in Latvia and Estonia, the titular state still requires teachers to adhere to state curricula, regardless of the language of instruction. Russian teachers, however, often feel the curricula to be biased, modify the lessons or express dissent directly to students, impacting the linguistic, historical, and cultural education of the next generation of students (Golubeva, 2011). This article on Latvian language policies includes the increasing number of education language policies (the state now requires Latvian mode of instruction at all levels of education). My study, similar to Golubeva's, considers that language change can occur both bottom-up and top-down. Both bottom-up and top-down language change are necessary to change the language landscape as a whole.

Previous researchers theorized a language can take sociocultural predominance because of national language policies. The top-down implementation of language policies in a multilingual society is often neither equitable nor representative of the "bottom" language landscape. In regions where a non-national language is most common in the everyday language landscape, governmental institutions often underrepresent this language in national legislation. In Russia, official languages, in addition to Russian, vary by re-

gion, meaning the Yakut languages of Sakha should be predominant in the Sakha Republic, but lack of representation on official signage decreases the prestigiousness of the Yakut languages (Manchurina & Samsonova, 2022, p. 137). Similarly, Demaj and Vandenbroucke (2016) concluded legal protections for minority languages can artificially inflate the dominance and prestige of the minority languages over more common languages. Sliashynskaya (2018) concluded that even when official policy favoring one language does not exist, such as in Belarus, the lack of policy upholds the status quo left over from the Soviet era when Russian was predominant and neglected the native Belarussian language. This study expands the scope of existing research by analyzing language legislature, not just policy effect, in Latvia. While previous literature has examined particular language landscapes, research is lacking in the specific methods in top-down language change efforts. My research focuses on the policies creating the uneven language environments.

Nation Building

Previous researchers questioned the extent language use defines the sense of belonging to a nation. The researchers questioned whether speaking a national language would increase a person's sense of belonging to the nation. They also questioned whether one person can belong to more than one nation, such as to both Ukraine and Russia, or if use of a certain language can detract from national belonging. In Ukraine, Zeller (2022) asked speakers of Ukrainian and Russian to compare the histories and cultures of Ukraine and Russian and describe their statehood and independence. In Latvia, Birka (2016) asked Russian speakers to describe any presumptions of Latvian speakers and their sense of belonging to Latvia and/or Russia. In Belarus, Sliashynskaya (2018) analyzed translation bias in news articles to uncover the political connotations Belarusian and Russian carry towards government, history, and folk culture. This study on Latvian language politics also questions the role speaking Latvian plays towards a citizen's sense of national belonging in Latvia. As the Latvian national government continues to regulate language use in the public sphere, this research questions how the language laws impact ideas of national identity.

Researchers have also applied the idea of "top-down" language change to "top-down" cultural (sociopolitical) change. As institutional policies can change language use, they can also change cultural norms and social conventions. Birka (2016) studied the impact of top-down pro-Latvian language policies on non-Latvian minorities in Latvia through a longitudinal, attitudinal study of Russian-speaking and Latvian speaking youth. Over the course of six years, the researcher tracked changes of feelings of belonging of Russian-speaking diaspora to the larger Latvian culture. She considered how exclusive policies were often linked to feelings of exclusion, but support from foreign Russian media aided stronger community relationships within the Russian-speaking diaspora (Birka, 2016). My research on Latvian lan-

guage policies also utilizes the overlap of language and culture to categorize the legal elements of Latvian nation building because language and culture are closely interrelated. Therefore, this paper on Latvian language policy assumes changing national language policy reflects changing ideas of national identity.

Existing research on language change accounts for both top-down change and sociopolitical shifts. As such, my research on Latvian language laws fits the standard of top-down (institutional implementation) language change. This project also relies on the assumption that, because language change and cultural change are so closely related, change in language guarantees change in the culture and vice versa. Existing literature on language landscapes relies on bottom-up research and is lacking in top-down research; so, this paper focuses on top-down research. Current research on top-down language change is limited to the rate of success of policy implementation or the representation of the actual language landscape in institutional policies; this research analyzes the motivation behind implementing top-down language change. Other researchers have yet to look at the reasons politicians implement top-down language changes aiming to shift, not reflect, the existing language landscape; this paper intends to discuss how global political dynamics shape the language landscape of a decolonizing country. This paper on Latvian language laws aims to connect national identity and the implementation of new language policies. As language is a tool of power, utilizing language to rebuild national identity may help other nations effectively mitigate foreign power within national borders.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Cultural Constructivism Theory

The argumentation of this paper relies on Cultural Constructivism Theory (CCT) to shape nation building arguments. People do not inherit the practices of culture as much as they choose to perform the practices day-to-day and over time, and since culture is a practice, people can change culture over time, whether subconsciously or intentionally. A state can be the agent in constructing culture and cultural practices, especially through language use. Language is "a necessary touchstone" in defining the boundaries of a culture or nation, relying on "imposing homogeneity on the populations" under the top-down "sway of authorities possessed by the nationalist ideology" (Gellner, 1983, pp. 43-45). Language then becomes an identifying marker of the insider versus the outsider belonging to a nation (Hobsbawm, 1992). Language standardization has long served to "[advance]...political demands" by disseminating religious texts, political propaganda, and creating a literate class of people across Europe and the Middle East (Anderson, 1991, p. 75). CCT establishes a theoretical framework to explain how the state of Latvia can intentionally influence use of official versus foreign languages to shape

the national and cultural identity of Latvian residents. The language laws in this paper are the efforts of the government to shape language and therefore the intentional construction of national identity through culture.

Language assimilation is the constantly occurring process of people trying to blend in with the larger culture by adjusting their way of speaking. People try to assimilate into the mainstream culture by mimicking the more prestigious dialect over the variety of lower status. In a nation state, the language of the governing body is often the "prestige dialect." According to Frey (2013), social networks and economic change are the strongest factors for language shift. Strong social networks with more overlapping relationships lead to greater linguistic integration (assimilation); people with more relationships in a community speak more like other members of the community. Economic status, like higher social class, the prestigiousness of a job, the separation of a job from the speech community, and the presence of colonial powers all encourage language to shift from the standard dialect to a more prestigious variation (Frey, 2013). By measuring the linguistic changes in Latvian legislation, I was able to measure the top-down shift in social and national identity of Latvia according to national language laws. Analyzing Latvian language laws shows the sectors where Latvian lawmakers think attempts at constructing national culture may be more effective.

Methods

The data for this project consists of federal laws mentioning the use of language the Latvian government (Saeima) passed from the year 1991 through 2024 in both public and private legal sectors: "Administrative Procedure," "Administrative Offense Proceedings," "Civil Law," "Education, Science, Sport," "Constitutional Law," "State Language, State Symbols," "Media, Advertising," "Citizenship, Migration," "Religion, Church," and "Transportation, Communication." These laws can limit a foreign language to be used less than an official language or prohibit the use entirely. The laws more frequently require the use of the Latvian language in public and private settings and often require use of the official language in addition to the use of a foreign language. By controlling these cultural spheres, the *Saeima* writes into law the spheres where nation-building occurs. The data also provides the years the *Saeima* passed legislation on language use. This data is perfect for the project because the restrictions and requirements of the laws are the methods the *Saeima* uses to implement top-down language change, and, according to CCT, language constructs cultural identity, applicable in post-Soviet nation building. The restrictions and requirements of the laws show where and how the *Saeima* believes residents of Latvia should use language and practice culture. The years the *Saeima* passed the laws reveal when cultural adjustment, and therefore national building, was a political priority.

To collect data, I utilized a keyword search through public information from the website likumi.lv, a Latvian website with national laws available

in English and Latvian. When official translations were not available, I used Microsoft and Google translation services, cross-referencing the two to double-check accuracy. First, I used the site's given groupings, such as "Media, Advertising," to find relevant laws, like the "Electronic Communications Law" ("Tiesību aktu tēmas," 2025). Then, I copied and pasted the relevant articles and the dates the *Saeima* passed the laws (and any amendments) into a Microsoft Excel sheet with pages according to the groupings of laws on the website. Finally, I searched for the keywords "state," "language," "Latvian," "English," and "translate," among others, to find the articles addressing language use within the larger bills. As I compared federal legal standards to language and culture shift, a limited keyword approach ensured I found laws using freely available and legally accurate information. Additionally, the dates of implementation track the rate of shifting language and culture.

My analysis process compares the content of laws within the categories of laws as on the website likumi.lv. The site's relevant groupings, such as "Media, Advertising" and "Education, Science, Sport," provides the first round of themes to compare the content of laws already in groupings with others similar content ("Tiesību aktu tēmas," 2025). To analyze this data, I used the site's groups of laws to group the articles, section headings, and dates. I highlighted code words to compare how laws restrict and/or require language use in each given grouping; I compared the similarities across different groups to see the most common trends. I then graphed the dates each law was passed into a frequency bar graph to visualize the years cultural shift was more prominent. This method shows the similarities of how the *Saeima* implements top-down language change in various cultural spheres. The graph of the dates of the implementations of laws shows the years with higher numbers of laws passed, showing when top-down language change was more frequent.

Similarly, I compared the content of laws cross-categorically to find non-category specific trends. The analysis attempts to find out what sectors restrict versus require proficiency in Latvian. I also compared written versus spoken language restrictions and requirements to learn if written or spoken language is more commonly required or restricted. To analyze the data, I again transferred the laws, article numbers, section headings, and dates of the implementations of laws to an excel sheet. I used different colors to highlight code words between different methods of language restrictions and requirements across all of the categories to visualize where control of language use is more common. Analyzing general, cross-category trends reveal non-category specific changes in top-down language change across Latvia. This step does not limit the analysis to comparing laws within a single sphere like media or education.

ANALYSIS

Using Language to Strengthen National Identity

The legal foundation of Latvian society relies on the Latvian language as a cornerstone for politics, culture, and identity. The language is integral for having, building, and strengthening the modern Latvian identity. The preamble of Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (1922) describes the persistence and interconnectedness of Latvia's history, land, language, and cultures despite the occupying Nazi and Soviet regimes of the twentieth century. Because of the history of foreign occupation, the Constitution states, "loyalty to Latvia, the Latvian language as the only official language, freedom, equality, solidarity, justice, honesty, work ethic and family are the foundations of a cohesive society." The Constitution also states every citizen has the right to hold state office, and every state official must swear "to be loyal to Latvia, to strengthen its sovereignty and the Latvian language as the only official language" and will conduct government business in the Latvian language ("Latvijas Republikas Satversme," 1922). The Latvian Parliament (*Saeima*) strengthens the Latvian language by requiring use of the official language in all public spheres and limiting the role foreign languages may have. By attaching language to history and culture, strengthening the role language plays, the *Saeima* can reinforce national identity as inherently Latvian.

Latvian legislation prioritizes the use of official languages over foreign languages. In government proceedings, education, broadcasting, and other various public spheres, legislation requires the use of the Latvian language. The laws do not restrict the use of the official language nor require the use of any foreign language. While the Official Language Law (1999) requires translation from a foreign into an official language, except in cases of business with a foreign state, at no point does any law require translation from the official to a foreign language. Subtitles, stamps, packaging, and text information with both official and foreign languages must not present the official language "in its form or contents, [to] be smaller or narrower than the text in the foreign language" ("Valsts Valodas Likums," 1999). Throughout all project data, only one law requires proficiency in two foreign languages: the Director of the Inspectorate, a state administrator for personal data processing ("Fizisko personu datu," 2018). By integrating the official language into all spheres of public use, the *Saeima* requires Latvian language use for full participation in Latvian society; language and culture are inseparable. Then, Latvian would be the only language necessary to participate in Latvian society.

Even though it requires official language use, Latvian legislation does not prohibit nor criminalize the use of a foreign language. While the *Saeima* prioritizes use of the official language, there are no limits to the use of other languages. Even though legislation requires use of the official language,

foreign language use is entirely optional. The Official Language Law (1999) defines a foreign language as "any other language used in the Republic of Latvia, except the Liv language," and classifies Latgalian, a language to some in the region of Latgale, as a dialect of the official Latvian language. A person in professional and governmental positions may conduct business in a foreign language but must be able to conduct business in the official language as well ("Valsts Valodas Likums," 1999). Administrative penalties for improper language use target foreign languages without concurrent use of or translation into the official language ("Administratīvo sodu likums," 2020). The requirement to use the official language trumps any right to use a foreign language. The extra time and effort to translate foreign language text and speech discourages the use of non-official languages. Naturally, this penalty encourages workers to operate in the official language regardless of any ability to otherwise.

Latvian legislation requires people to speak the official language at work. By establishing Latvian as the working language, foreign languages stand in contrast as socio-politically less professional in business. State employees, public safety and health workers, and people working in the field of law must "be fluent in and use the official language" when fulfilling professional duties ("Valsts Valodas Likums," 1999). Specific positions like Forensic Expert and Director at the Academy of Justice require Latvian proficiency to qualify for the job ("Tieslietu akadēmijas likums," 2024; "Tiesu ekspertu likums," 2016). In the case a person not being proficient in Latvian, the law expects them to provide a translator at any event or meeting, except in civil proceedings, when the court will invite an interpreter on behalf of any summoned person ("Administratīvās atbildības likums," 2018). This legislation makes economic success dependent on Latvian proficiency. The necessity of the Latvian language for the individual reinforces the Latvian language as predominant in society.

Latvian legislation also regulates the official names of people, places, events, and things to reinforce a Latvian-centric identity. Just like language, names can likewise be Latvian or foreign. Similarly, names reflect Latvian identity, history, and culture. The committee Cabinet Regulations has executive authority over the "creation and use" of names of places, institutions, companies, events, streets, parks, public and government buildings, and schools ("Likums 'Par reglamentētajām,'" 2001; "Valsts valodas likums," 1999). The committee monitors the transliteration and translation of foreign personal names and surnames for foreign individuals working, attaining citizenship, or undergoing adoption; courts may change the names and surnames of adoptees if the name does not match the nationality of the adopters or if the judge declares the name of the adoptee hard to pronounce ("Valsts valodas likums," 1999; "Civillikums," 1937). Providing professional certification from a foreign institution or proof of family lineage with the foreign surname permits the use of foreign names under the Cabinet Regulations

of Official Language Law ("Valsts valodas likums," 1999; "Civillikums," 1937). Legislation regarding names does not ensure Latvian language use but Latvian identity for people, places, events, and institutions. The legislation pushes foreign things out of the Latvian space by dubbing everything as Latvian. The people, places, events, and institutions then receive a Latvian identity in accordance the culture surrounding the name.

International Language in Favor of the United Nations

When focusing on written language, Latvian legislation mandates the interpretation of text between English, the European language of international communication, and Latvian. Official laws often include translations in both English and Latvian. In professional, working spheres, Latvia supports written translation into a foreign language primarily in legal matters but does not provide similar exceptions for spoken Latvian. Twenty-eight of the laws in this project's data include provisions for the translation of laws or official reports into English from Latvian. However, not every law has an official translation into English, and many official translations, when available, expired in 2024, such as the Civil Law ("Civillikums," 1937). Most remaining laws on written translation focus on the translation of foreign language documents into Latvian, such as various Postal Conventions ("Likums 'Par Pasaules,'" 2022). Latvia displays favor towards the United Nations (UN) by adopting English as the language of international communication. The legislation recasts Latvia as on-par with the rest of Europe and the US as part of the democratic world by linking the official language with English.

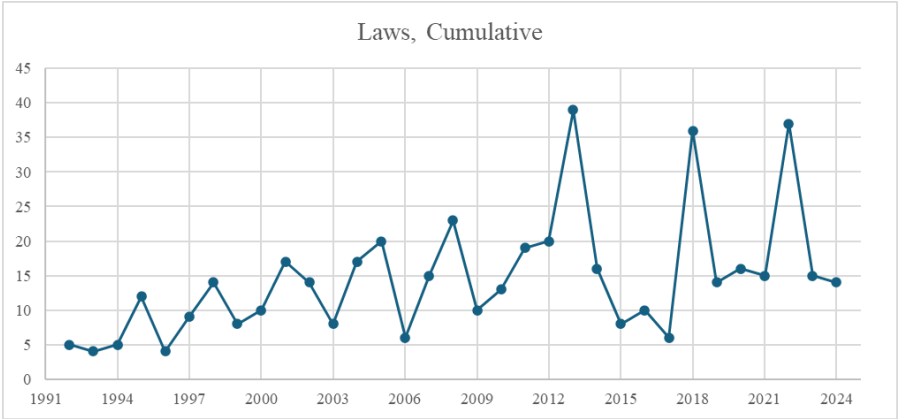
Legislation for international cooperation favors UN languages over post-Soviet languages. The *Saeima* acknowledges Arabic, Chinese, Russian, English, Spanish, and French. Legislation allows for UN language use and translation without penalty in cooperative international business. The UN languages are all "equally authentic" across aviation laws and conventions ("Par Protokolu par grozījumiem," 2025). In sports, for example, in the International Convention against Doping in Sport, while English is the main language of the convention, texts and appendices in all six UN languages are available and equal in content ("Likums 'Par Starptautisko,'" 2006). The international postal service publishes all documents in French, English, Arabic, and Spanish, and publishes "basic documents" in Chinese, German, Portuguese, and Russian ("Likums 'Par 2016,'" 2018; "Likums 'Par Pasaules,'" 2022). By aligning with UN allies, Latvia creates a national identity as a part of the "free" world. By giving the UN languages similar privileges to the official language, the legislation shows where priorities lie—away from the post-Soviet, pro-Russian legacy. Latvia favors UN languages and implements European democratic cultural values through international cooperative language measures.

German, because of long standing connection to Baltic history and culture, also holds exceptions in Latvian law, despite not having UN language

status. Latvian legislation grants many exceptions for the use of the German language in the same way the law has exceptions for UN languages. Postal service laws have extra provisions for German and Portuguese to appear in publications without extra charge or penalty ("Likums 'Par Pasaules,'" 2022). Similarly, under the Immigration Law, some visa and residence applications may appear in German without translation ("Imigrācijas likums," 2002). Additionally, in the railroad industry only, while Chinese and Russian are the working languages, workers may use English and German in international railroad communications ("Par Dzelzceļu sadarbības," 2004). The German language has exceptions similar to UN language exceptions within Latvian legislation thanks to shared history and culture, and therefore, identity, in Latvian law. The relationship between Germany and Latvia means that, by granting German language exceptions, language legislation has a pro-Latvian priority.

Timeline of New Laws and Amendments

The *Saeima* tends to pass new laws and/or amendments in multiple, shorter periods of time instead of steadily over a longer period of time. Political interest in language regulation is not regular but likely more frequent during times of both national and global conflict. Clusters of language regulations may signify time periods when identity regulation and promotion became more important, such as during national elections. Graph 1 shows the *Saeima* steadily passed new laws in all categories from the time of independence until approximately 2010. The *Saeima* then passed thirty-nine laws/amendments regarding language use in 2013, thirty-six in 2018, and thirty-seven in 2022 (see Graph 1). The spikes in the quantity of new laws align with Latvian national elections of new *Saeima* in 2014, 2018, and 2022 ("Saeima of the Republic," n.d.). Although people perform identity day-to-day, there are clusters of time when circumstances reinforce the political desire for a strong national identity. The *Saeima* may pass new legislation in preparation for, or in response to, major international events, policies, or national elections.



Graph 1: Frequency of new laws/amendments by year.

The very first spike of new laws between 2013 and 2015 is not reflective of a shift in language. Although the largest spike in language laws in Graph 1, the *Saeima* did not amend the content of language laws. Instead, language shift supported a shift in economics in favor of adopting the euro. Despite the graph showing thirty-nine new laws/amendments in 2013, twenty-four of the amendments come from preparation to adopt the euro as the national currency in 2014. Specifically, the twenty-four amendments to the Administrative Violations Law (1984) convert the fine for disrespect towards or improper use of the national language from the lat to the euro. The language regulations did not change in 2013—only the currency of the fines for committing the offenses changed ("Latvijas Administratīvo pārkāpumu," 1984). By adopting the euro, Latvia attached European monetary value to the use of the official language. The technical change to the language laws reflects a political shift from post-Soviet towards more Western economics. Even though the content of the laws does not change, the economic shift reinforces the penalty for violating preexisting language laws.

New laws/amendments actually regarding language use between 2013 and 2015 quantify official versus foreign language use in "Media, Advertising." These laws ensure foreign languages do not broadcast for more time than the official language. On-air television broadcasting and daytime music broadcasting must be in the Latvian language no less than forty percent of the total broadcast time ("Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likums," 2010; "Radio un televīzijas likums," 1995). The Electronic Media Act also says all radio stations must choose to register as official language or foreign language stations if broadcasting fifty percent of the time or less in the official language. Programs must be in one language, with either a voice-over or subtitles in the official language, and all advertisements must be in the of-

ficial language ("Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likums," 2010). Legislation on official language use quantifies not just production but reception. By making the Latvian language a component of entertainment, the laws treat the Latvian identity as a service or a luxury. The Latvian language is then more prestigious than non-official languages.

The *Saeima* passed many new laws/amendments between 2017 and 2019, moving to strengthen the role of the official language in civil "Administrative Procedure." The new laws/amendments define situations when people have to use the official language—both opportunity and obligation. In favor of ethnic and linguistic diversity and efficiency, the modern World Conventions restructured post office hiring procedures in accordance with EU standards ("Likums 'Par 2016,'" 2018). Additionally, in favor of foreign language rights, around 2018, all parties in Latvian court proceedings gained the right to an interpreter free of charge ("Administratīvās atbildības likums," 2018). However, the *Saeima* amended the Administrative Procedure Law to allow judges to halt proceedings for cassation cases with documents noncompliant with the Official Language Law ("Administratīvā procesa likums," 2001). From 2017 to 2019, the *Saeima* pushed to solidify existing cultural and linguistic norms as law, protecting Latvian culture against larger or more powerful nations that may threaten the state or identity. The legislation allows the state to actively persecute cultural violators.

The *Saeima* passed many new laws/amendments between 2018 and 2019, reinforcing the role of national languages in education. National minority languages and dialects, Livonian and Latgalian respectively, have the same protections and rights as the official language. Education laws continue to regulate foreign languages, however. The *Saeima* amended the Education Law (1998) to give schools the right to teach the languages of national minorities, such as Livonian or Latgalian. This same law, along with the General Education Law and International School Law, recognized accreditation and qualifications from international universities and law academies teaching in a non-Latvian language ("Starptautisko skolu likums," 2020; "Izglītības likums," 1998; "Vispārējās izglītības likums," 1999). The Education Law also initiated state language exams in general and vocational education institutes to keep a record of student proficiency in official and foreign languages ("Izglītības likums," 1998). Schools teach that national minority identities are also a part of the larger Latvian identity. While foreign language identities may have exceptions and therefore be technically permissible, minority identities are legally acceptable. The laws imply a minority identity is more acceptable than a foreign identity.

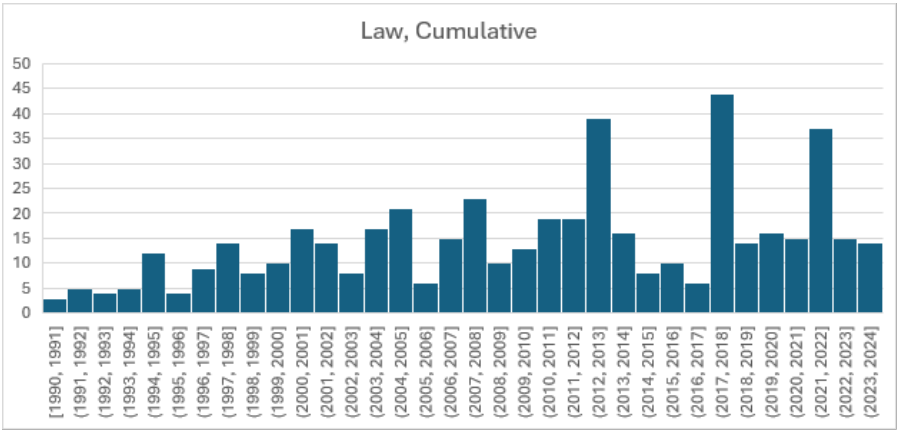
Another influx of "Education, Science, Sport" laws/amendments passed in 2022 and 2023. The laws not only enforce the use of the official language but instruct educators to build student pride in the language and state. The laws show the *Saeima* wants students to feel proud of the Latvian language. In 2022, amendments to the Education Law (1998) and General Education

Law (1999) established the certification of official language skills as a key goal of education at all levels from preschool to doctoral and modes from general to vocational. Under the Education Law (1998), beginning in 2023, teachers and head administrators under suspicion of not being proficient in or using the official language began to face suspension until able to pass a language proficiency test; failing the test results in termination. The law now states the importance of education is to instill "the moral, aesthetic, intellectual...values enshrined in and protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, in particular such values as...the Latvian language, and the State of Latvia" ("Izglītības likums," 1998). From 2022 to 2023, the *Saeima* once again felt the need to strengthen the Latvian language and culture by writing cultural values into law. The laws utilize education to build up the official language and national identity. The laws stipulate educational institutes must teach students how to be Latvian, thus strengthening national identity.

While "Education, Science, Sport" laws aim to shape the character of people growing up in Latvia, "Citizenship, Migration" laws aim to shape the character of people new to or foreign in Latvia. Between the two categories, Latvian legislation targets the identity of every person living in Latvia, both native and non-native. Several 2023 amendments to the Immigration Law (2002) made proficiency in Latvian a requirement for Russian nationals to maintain permanent resident status. The amendments state, "the examination of the proficiency in the official language passed in the naturalisation process" may serve as a state language exam; however, the Citizenship Law prohibits dual citizenship through naturalization ("Imigrācijas likums," 2002; "Pilsonības likums," 1994). These amendments are the only amendments in this project to apply to one specific group of people, Russian nationals—a group ineligible to gain Latvian citizenship while possessing Russian citizenship ("Pilsonības likums," 1994). Even Russian nationals with no connection to the Russian government or foreign activity must comply with ideals of language and identity to maintain Latvian residency; remaining Russian is anti-Latvian. When identity is so reliant on nationality and vice versa, laws can then dictate not just what identity is, but what identity is not.

Laws/amendments in the "Education, Science, Sport" category passed in years most similar to the accumulative trend of all categories of laws. Changes in education laws may indicate change in other categories of laws, such as in "Media, Advertising." Graph 2 shows a general upward trend in the frequency of new laws by year, with nine new laws/amendments in 2018 and sixteen in 2022. The "Education, Science, Sport" laws account for approximately one quarter of new language laws/amendments in 2018, nearly half of all new laws/amendments in 2022, and about one fifth of all language laws total. However, most of the new laws/amendments specifically target education and science, and only one law, the International Convention against Doping in Sport (2006), regulates language use in sports. The *Saeima* teaches residents and citizens the official language and culture by building standards

of language and culture in "Education, Science, Sport" laws. Once a person has learned how to properly use language, the laws of other categories (for example: "Media, Advertising") enforce those standards.



Graph 2. Frequency of new Education, Science, Sport laws/amendments by year.

DISCUSSION

Expanding Research on Top-Down Change in National Identity

This research on Latvian language laws expands language research beyond physical signage, policy compliance, and attitudinal surveys. While previous research lacks work on the laws governing language in the first place, this paper explores various ways laws govern language use. Legal categories, such as "Transportation, Communication," "Media, Advertising," "Education, Science, Sport," show non-physical, socio-cultural, and political contexts of language governance. The laws regulate language not just on public signage (Manchurina & Samsonova, 2022; Pupavac, 2006) but businesses, institutions, events, and even people ("Likums 'Par reglamentētajām,'" 2001; "Valsts valodas likums," 1999). Analyzing language laws expands research beyond signage or written language; for example, Sliashynskaya (2018) and Maksimovtsova (2020) could expand from analyzing print news articles to differences in the languages of broadcast media. By expanding theory into the various laws governing language use, language research could extend into broadcast media, educational curricula, or citizenship requirements. As countries respond to changing global political dynamics, understanding the cultural shifts behind language laws can predict new legislation. With expanded language law research, researchers may yet understand how and why a state implements language laws—not just how well the writing of a language law is enforced.

Trends in the implementation of new laws, especially in the category "Education, Science, Sport," show evidence for top-down, constructed language change in Latvia. The *Saeima*, the "top" of the Latvian state, uses education as a mode of influence to consciously shape the language use of residents. Top-down language change refers to a smaller authority pushing language change onto a larger population. Cultural Constructivism Theory establishes the conscious performance of cultural characteristics—people learn, not inherit, cultural traits; the *Saeima* passes laws in an attempt to influence how the population of Latvia speaks (Laitin, 1998; Platt, 2024). Because the *Saeima* enforces the teaching of students in compliance with language laws, language laws in education explicitly teach students how to act in line with the national, cultural ideals. Top-down language change means the *Saeima* controls not just the state but broader Latvian language use. Language laws in education happen to be a very concrete example of how a state consciously constructs language and culture.

Latvian language laws support top-down Cultural Constructivism Theory. The *Saeima* governs language use to actively reshape the national identity. The *Saeima* reinforces cultural identity values by implementing new laws reinforcing official language use in specific cultural spheres. For example, by dictating in "Administrative Procedure" that state administrators must carry out all work and conversation in the official language, the *Saeima* implements Latvian at the "top" of the state, reflecting top-down language change in Frey (2013) and Gellner (1983). Changes in "Education, Science, Sport" laws reflect how language shift "[advances]…political demands" onto the resident population, transmitting the state's "moral, aesthetic, [and] intellectual" values of Latvian-ness (Anderson, 1991; "Izglītības likums," 1998). Finally, changes to "Citizenship, Migration" laws reflect the population belonging to the system of language, culture, and identity—a top-down rejection of resident Russian diaspora in 2022. By intentionally shaping language shift, the *Saeima* exclusively defines who can be Latvian and belong to the Latvian state. The *Saeima*, as head of the state, defines national ideals for the resident population to follow, supporting top-down Cultural Constructivism theory.

Implications of Timeline of New Laws and Amendments

The *Saeima* should sponsor official Russian language news and entertainment. Instead of limiting resources to the official language, providing resources in foreign languages could increase pro-Latvian support among non-Latvian speaking populations. While new laws and amendments in 2013 prepared Latvia to join the Eurozone in 2014, the *Saeima* passed more laws in "Media, Advertising" severely limiting foreign language use in all broadcast programs. Birka (2016) considered how exclusive policies led to feelings of exclusion whereas linguistic inclusion led to feelings of inclusion for Russian-speaking diaspora. Without broader European media available in the Russian language, Russian-speaking populations must turn towards

the Russian state for news. If Latvian news, entertainment, and services were also available in Russian, then the *Saeima* could foster pro-Latvian support among members of the Russian diaspora.

The *Saeima* should continue to expand and protect minority and foreign language rights in Latvia. State laws capitalize on uneven language landscapes to further nation building efforts, but Latvia could see increased international cooperation with continued acceptance of other languages. After the pro-Russia Harmony Party's majority in the 2018 election, new laws and amendments protected the right to use a national minority language (Liv or Latgalian) in education and expanded recognition of educational credentials from foreign language institutions (IPU Parline, 2018). Language laws often do not reflect a population's linguistic demographics, so residents speaking a non-majority language are often not represented in the linguistic landscape (Dumaj & Vandenbroucke, 2016; Manchurina & Samsonova, 2022; Pupavac, 2006; Sliashynskaya, 2018). Expanding national minority and foreign language rights, especially in education, would more accurately represent the languages of different populations living in Latvia. Improving representation of residents would also improve Latvia's pro-democratic, pro-European appearance in line with previously established political goals.

Governments should avoid implementing laws and amendments in retaliation against other political parties or in response to the actions of other nations. Political retaliation against a larger, abstract entity (for example: a political party or foreign state) fosters discrimination against resident minority populations. The 2022 spike in new "Education, Science, Sport" and "Citizenship, Migration" laws increasing requirements of official language use coincides with Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine; in defense against the Russian state, the *Saeima* passed new laws and amendments pushing Russian speakers out of the country. Following the research of Birka (2016) and Zeller (2022), these new laws and amendments would increase the "skeptical" feelings linguistic minority feel towards an unaccepting host country. However, their research found speakers of one language are not hostile, unlike a foreign state might be, to a setting where another language is more common (Birka, 2016, p. 219; Zeller 2022, p. 307). If the *Saeima* did not hold accountable or punish the diaspora of one country for the actions of the home country's state, Latvia could see increased national unity. By not isolating and condemning Russian diaspora, the diaspora would not turn to the Russian state for support. Instead, condemnation for the actions of the Russian state should fall on the Russian state.

CONCLUSION

National language laws build a Latvia for Latvians. The *Saeima* encourages the official Latvian language and culture above foreign languages and cultures. In a nation where the law holds being Latvian at the center of so-

ciopolitical ideals, a resident's identity and status of belonging must then also center around being Latvian, thus complying with the national identity of Latvian-ness. The interwar period established the economic and political foundation for pro-Latvian ideals, the Soviet period outlined the structure of national language laws, and the collapse of the Soviet Union pushed Latvia to look west towards Europe—away from Russia—to establish an identity as an independent nation. Pro-Latvian language laws westernize Latvian education, entertainment, citizenship, and administrative proceedings, all sectors that define the everyday life and upbringing of Latvian residents. Language laws are an effective tool for regulating cultural ideals and therefore national identity. Language use then becomes a powerful tool for decolonizing and reconstructing a national culture and identity, especially in a post-Soviet space, as this case study of Latvia demonstrates.

The Saeima has attempted to strengthen Latvian culture and identity by implementing an increasing number of controlling language laws over the years since 1991. During the times of national elections and major international events, the *Saeima* has passed more language laws in clusters. Because the law explicitly ties language to culture and history, new language laws strengthen the Latvian state and culture in the face of these foreign events. The Constitution and State Language Law echo the connection between language and culture, calling the Latvian language integral to the pride and functioning of the state. While foreign language use is never criminalized, requirements to use the official language limit foreign language use; laws in the "Citizenship, Migration" category limit the ability of a foreign people (Russian nationals) to live in Latvia. Laws are passed in clusters, specifically 2014, 2018, and 2022, in the face of national elections and international events. Increasing language laws and requiring pride in both the official language and the state-sanctioned national identity allows a state to implement more, stronger laws governing language and culture. As the US has just adopted English as an official language, we should be careful about socially and legally limiting education, job opportunities, news, legal proceedings, and residency, under the guise of a "united" national identity. Language laws, as shown in the case of Latvia, while strengthening a small and previously suppressed language, become suppressive when in favor of the dominant language. Language laws are the agent in socially limiting language in education, media, and populations at large.

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