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This is the first edition of the Academic Journal of American University Delta Phi Epsilon Pi chapter. For those who are not aware, our organization is one dedicated to the professions and learning centered around the field of International Relations. In pursuant to the theme of learning and professionalism so cultivated by our organization, we have endeavored to bring you the collected and eclectic writing of members of our organization. These include topics ranging from the summary, observations, and analysis of game theory to the expansive works dedicated to the recurrent poverty conditions for the street children of Kinshasa. These works, as do our members, go beyond International Studies, and comb over such concepts as that of identity and its construction in the modern world, and other extra-international study. We hope that this will be first edition of many to come, showcasing the writing talents and insights of our members. We would also like to give special thanks to the following brothers who have contributed to this journal: Felipe Herrera, Jonathan Banasihan, Amir Dif, Stephen Young, and Shaurya Shetty. Without further ado, enjoy this selection of articles exclusively authored by the brothers of AU's Delta Phi Epsilon Foreign Service Fraternity!

I Serve

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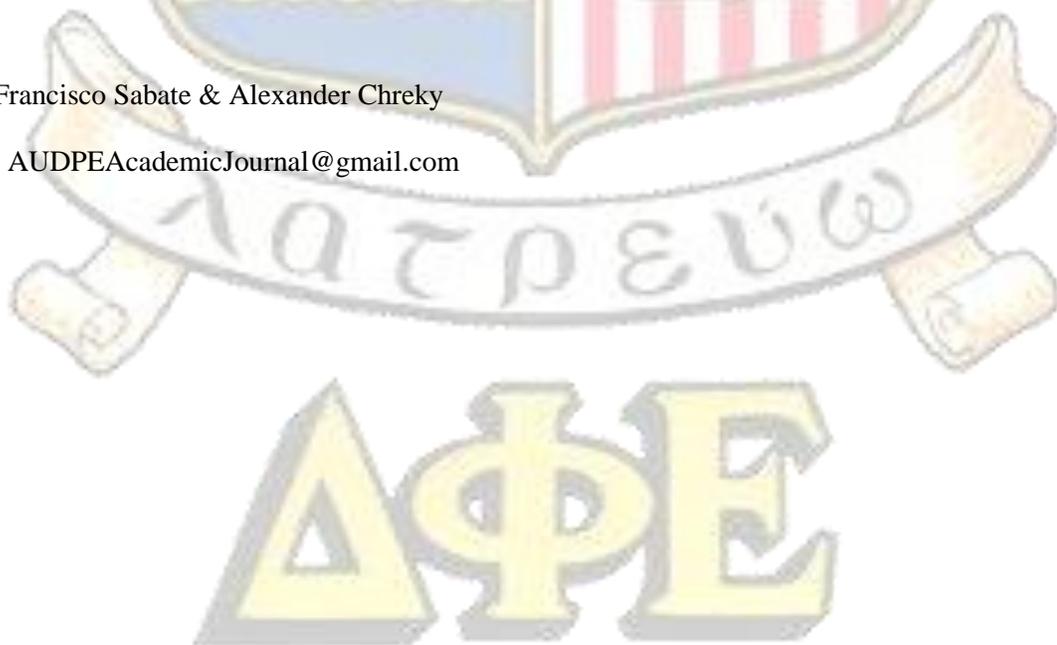


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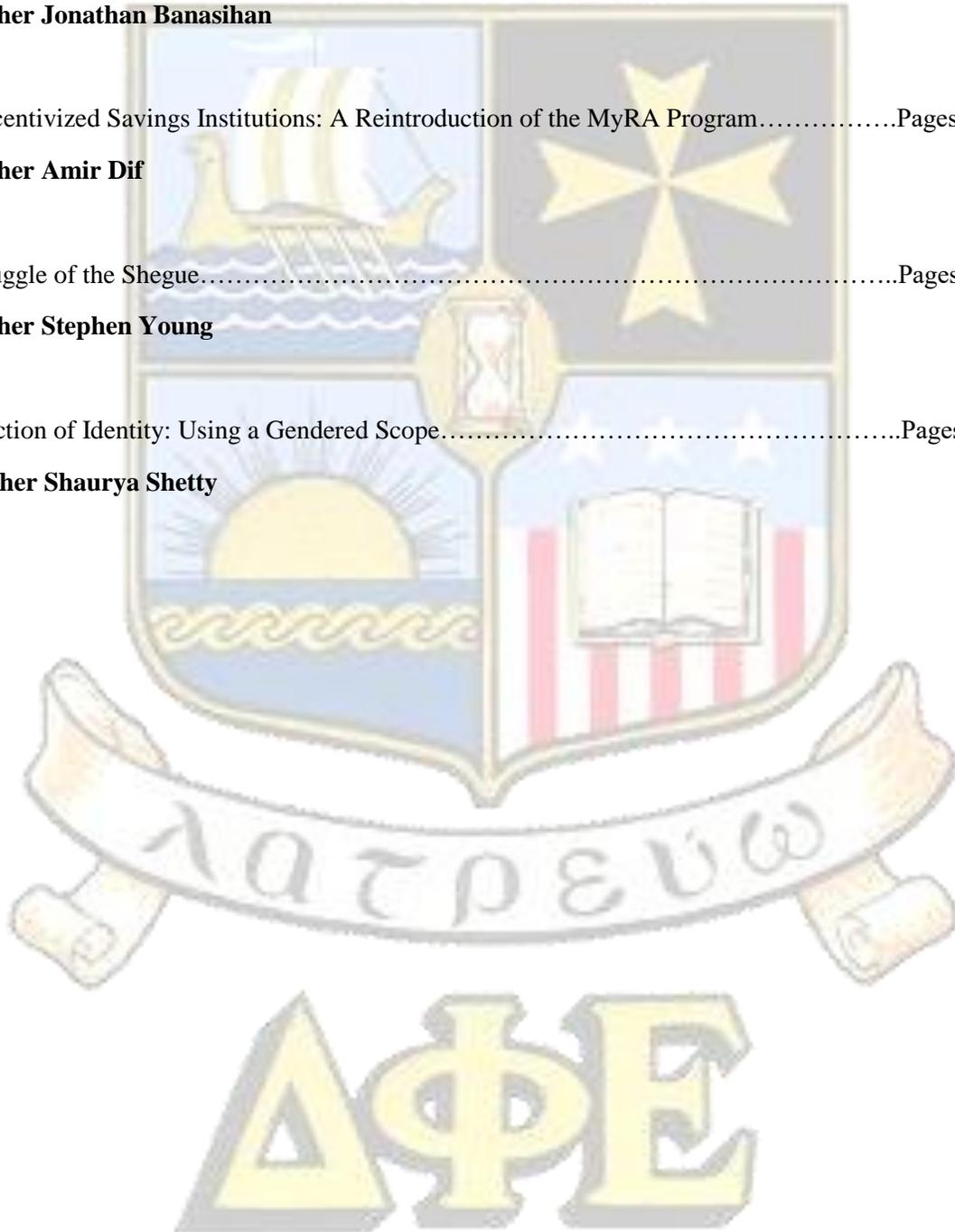
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A Game-Theoretic Model of Violence and Nonviolence in Civil Conflict

Nonviolent movements are historically more than twice as successful as their violent counterparts.¹ Of 323 resistance movements between 1900 and 2006 analyzed by Stephan and Chenoweth (2011), nonviolent movements were successful 53% of the time, whereas violent movements were successful only 26% of the time.² Given these statistics, why do insurgent groups choose to use violence to achieve their political aims? Stephan and Chenoweth posit that the relative success of nonviolent movements is due in large part to the fact that nonviolent resistance presents “fewer obstacles to moral and physical involvement and commitment,” and that nonviolent resistance is more likely to create meaningful “shifts in loyalty among [the state’s] supporters, including members of the military establishment,” and conclude that successful nonviolent resistance is more likely to create a “durable and internally peaceful [democracy], which [is] less likely to regress into civil war.”³

Beyond the micro-level factors analyzed by Stephan and Chenoweth regarding insurgent nonviolence, I propose a game-theoretic model of civil conflict which factors information problems, bargaining, and costly signaling to predict insurgent group behavior at the macro-level to answer the question: at what point in a strategic interaction would an insurgent group choose to turn to violent strategies? Building on the findings of Chenoweth and Stephan and based on Fearon’s rationalist explanations for war, these models improve upon the existing literature on insurgent group violence by demonstrating the strategic interaction, rooted in fundamentally rationalist logic, that results in rational decisions to use violence or nonviolence.

Existing Explanations

A primary school of thought concerning rebel use of violence versus nonviolence contends that insurgent violence is a mobilizational tool that encourages support. Kalyvas (1999) introduces rationality into the literature on large-scale violence against civilians, which he claims is “typically framed and

¹ Stephan, Maria J., and Erica Chenoweth. “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.” *International Security*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2008, pp. 7–44. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40207100.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

understood as irrational.” Ultimately, he concludes that we should not assume violence is irrational – there is a clear and strategic logic underlying a rebel group’s decision to use violence, which he argues is primarily to “maximize civilian support under a particular set of constraints.”

Wood (2010) argues that insurgents intentionally and strategically manipulate violence to this end, claiming that weak rebel groups especially use more violence than strong rebel groups because they do not have the resources to provide incentives for mobilization.⁴ Additionally, indiscriminate regime violence reduces the need for incentives to recruit support, thus reducing rebel reliance on violence as a mobilization tool, but only if the insurgents can credibly provide security. Therefore, stronger groups will use less violence against civilians as regime violence escalates while weaker insurgents escalate violence in response to indiscriminate regimes.⁵

Cohen (2013) advances the mobilizational literature by examining sexual violence as a mobilization tool that serves this purpose for recruitment, additionally arguing that the social aspect of wartime rape is a method employed to improve unit cohesion within insurgent groups.⁶ Contrary to Wood’s point that a rebel group that is stronger relative to the state will use less violence as a tool for mobilization and recruitment, Cohen argues the opposite regarding sexual violence – state weakness, relative to the insurgent group, is positively associated with increased wartime rape.⁷ However, the main issue with the literature in this school of thought is that it claims that the strategic decisions to use violence are influenced primarily by rebel capacity relative to the state, ignoring the relationship between a rebel group’s objective capacity and its subjective demands in relation to the state’s. While Kalyvas (1999) introduced the concept of rationality into these larger conversations on rebel use of violence, he stops short of advancing the role of bargaining theory in the calculations of rebel groups.

⁴ Wood, Reed M. “Rebel Capability and Strategic Violence against Civilians.” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 47, no. 5, 2010, pp. 601–614., doi:10.1177/0022343310376473.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Cohen, Dara K. (2013). Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009). *American Political Science Review*, 107(3), 461-477. doi:10.1017/S0003055413000221

⁷ *ibid.*

Another school of thought regarding rebel strategies of violence and nonviolence concerns rebel endowments prior to the full formation of an insurgency. This school of thought can be further delineated by literature focusing on the “resource curse” and research focusing on social-institutional theory to explain the effects of preexisting social networks on the outcomes of conflict. Billon (2014) argues that “resource sectors influence the likelihood and course of armed conflicts,” and specific resources make wars “more likely, nasty, and lengthy.”⁸ Combining this literature with Collier and Hoeffler’s (2003) notions of greed and grievance, whereby rebellion may be explained by “atypically severe grievances... [or] by atypical opportunities,”⁹ Dreher and Kreibaum (2016) conclude that the extraction of natural resources exerts externalities which lead to grievances, while simultaneously providing economic incentives through revenues from these resources.¹⁰ Notably, they claim that, “The consequent risk of both terrorism and rebellion depends on the group’s characteristics as well as the state’s reaction to its actions.”¹¹

Focusing rather on social-institutional theory, Staniland argues that the literature on the “resource curse” cannot adequately explain why insurgent groups with similar resource wealth result in such widely different outcomes. He proposes that “the social networks on which insurgent groups are built create different types of organizations with differing abilities to control resource flows.”¹² The limitations of this school of thought which focuses on rebel endowments, both economic and social, is in its inability to adequately provide a framework from which we can conceptualize the dynamic interaction between the state and a rebel group. Dreher and Kreibaum (2016) hint at this notion in their conclusion when they mention the extent of the effect of a group’s capacity coupled with the state’s reactions on the risk of terrorism and rebellion.

⁸ Billon, Philippe Le. *Wars of Plunder: Conflicts, Profits and the Politics of Resources*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

⁹ Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. “Greed and Grievance in Civil War.” *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 56, no. 4, 2004, pp. 563–595., doi:10.1093/oep/gpf064.

¹⁰ Dreher, Axel, and Merle Kreibaum. “Weapons of Choice.” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2016, pp. 539–553., doi:10.1177/0022343316634418.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Staniland, Paul. “Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources, and Rebellion in South Asia.” *International Security*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2012, pp. 142–177., doi:10.1162/isec_a_00091.

An emerging school of thought shifts the focus towards the effects of the strategies used by rebels on peace processes and negotiation. Pospieszna and DeRouen (2016) argue that rebels use “violence to demonstrate their ability to exact costs on the government thus forcing the latter to negotiate.”¹³ To this end, they briefly touch on rebel uses of violence conceptualized through bargaining theory as tools used to demonstrate rebel capacity and create credible commitments. However, this is only a surface-level analysis and Pospieszna and DeRouen shift their focus towards different conclusions not relating to bargaining theory.

Further research contends that the degree to which an insurgent will use violence depends on the extent of its territorial control. Kalyvas (2006) claims that “the lower the level of an actor’s control... the more likely that [a group’s] violence, if any, will be indiscriminate.”¹⁴ Kalyvas goes on to claim that indiscriminate violence occurs in “specific situations for explicable reasons to achieve understandable goals.”¹⁵ This line of research, however, fails to consider that the opposite holds true statistically more often – rebel groups employ nonviolent strategies with much higher rates of success than violent strategies – and thus stops short of attempting to model the factors influencing rebel groups to turn away from nonviolence. Specifically, there is no consideration given to how state demands influence rebel decision-making.

Rationalist Theory

The fundamental logic behind rationalist explanations for the causes of war – and by extension, the strategic use of violence in my models – is that the expected utility outweighs the costs. Fearon defines a number of these explanations that influence the expected utility equation: private information and “incentives to misrepresent such information,” commitment problems, and issue indivisibility.¹⁶ Most importantly, however, he notes that these factors cause bargaining problems that lead to conflict. In a system

¹³ Pospieszna, Paulina, and Karl Derouen. “Civil War Mediation and Rebel Use of Violence Against Civilians.” *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 43, no. 3, Dec. 2016, pp. 500–522., doi:10.1177/0095327x16647538.

¹⁴ Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

¹⁵ Vickers, J., & Kalyvas, S. N. (2008). The logic of violence in civil war. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 41(2), 501-502. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0008423908080591

¹⁶ Fearon, James D. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1995, pp. 379–414. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2706903.

with complete and perfect information, wars would not break out because a bargain can be reached at the exact point of each actor's relative capability.

On a continuous action space model, this would be point w where w is the probable outcome of war, and the costs of war would be denoted as point c , with the difference in each actor's $w - c = EU$ formula (probable outcome minus costs of war equals expected utility) representing the bargaining space available. In this sense, we should understand that information problems and the incentive for actors to misrepresent their capabilities contribute to this fog of war and lead to a breakdown of bargaining when actors are unsure where the other actor lies on the continuous action space and thus make irreconcilable simultaneous demands that lead to violence. Where the research is lacking, however, but where this framework is potentially useful is in its ability to be translated to capture the interaction that produces nonviolent or violent insurgent behavior. In line with rationalist theory, I argue that the decision by an insurgent group to use violent strategies will depend largely on rebel capabilities relative to the state and the extent of state/rebel demands in a strategic interaction.

Methodology

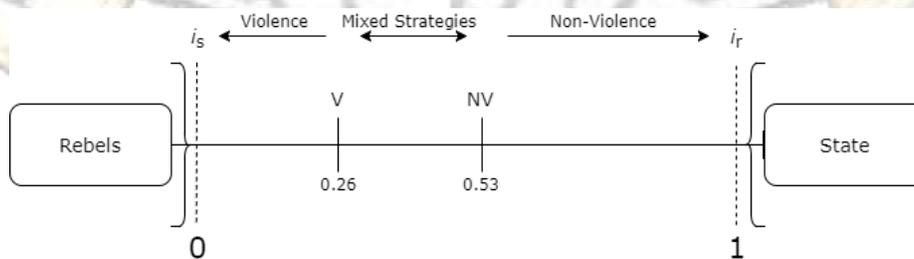
When designing the models, I found that a continuous action space model was able to capture how the extent of the simultaneous demands of the state and the rebel group and the relative costs of war influenced decision-making. Additionally, an extensive-form game allowed me to model individual conflicts on a case-by-case basis. To this end, and in order to test the validity of my models, I will apply them to the specific cases of: Catalonia, where violence has not yet broken out but the state has engaged in repression against the opposition; Syria, where insurgent groups used violent strategies against a repressive state; Egypt, where the state granted broad concessions to a nonviolent resistance movement; Venezuela, where an insurgent group has not necessarily formed yet but the state is engaged in mass repression. Taken together, both models complement each other such that they produce an effective means to model insurgent behavior and predict future insurgent behavior.

I developed a few predictions for what the models would be able to convey. On a continuous action space model, when $w - c \geq 0.53$, where w and c are decimals between 0 and 1, w is the probable outcome

of war, and c is the relative cost of war, I predict an insurgent group will use nonviolent strategies 100% of the time. The logic here is that if the probable outcome of war minus the likely costs of war (or the costs inflicted upon the insurgent group by the state's use of violent repression) is greater than 0.53 on the model, we should expect the insurgent group to maximize the utility of their strategies by employing nonviolence. When $w - c \leq 0.26$, I predict an insurgent group will use violent strategies 100% of the time. The logic here is that, following the equation, if the result is less than 0.26 on the model, we should expect the insurgent group to use violent strategies because they are below the threshold for nonviolence to be effective. Finally, when $0.53 \geq w - c \geq 0.26$, I predict an insurgent group will use nonviolent strategies with probability $[(w - c) \div 0.53]$ and violent strategies with probability $[(w - c) \div 0.26]$. The logic here is that the relative distance of the insurgent group's expected utility from the points of violent success (0.26) and nonviolent success (0.53) can determine the probability by which an insurgent group will use one strategy over the other.

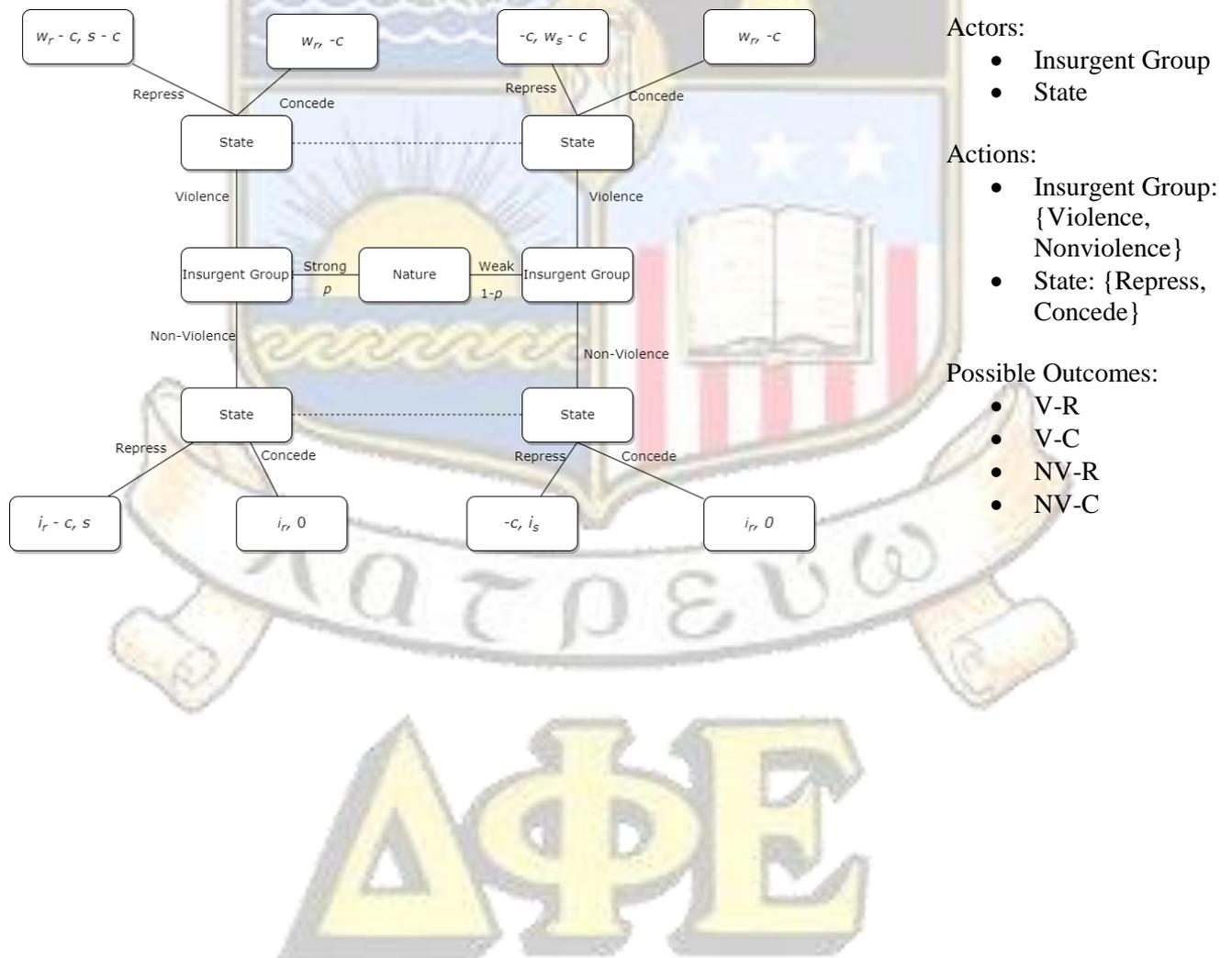
I modeled this interaction in various ways. First, an extensive-form game with incomplete information was used to highlight the effect of information problems on bargaining and how both actors will engage in signaling. Second, a continuous action space model will allow me to define how the probable outcome of a chosen strategy and the costs incurred influence the calculus of an insurgent group's chosen strategies. Finally, a simple 2x2 game allows me to demonstrate certain limitations of my preferred models and account for differences we may note in outcomes on a broader level.

As per my predictions based on the statistical findings of Chenoweth and Stephan, I model the continuous action space of insurgent strategies as follows:



The variables i_r and i_s represent the ideal points for each actor, which is 100% of the action space. Without factoring in the costs of violence or the outcome of violence, this model serves as a framework for understanding at which points we can predict violence will be used by the insurgent group ($EU \leq 0.26$, or expected utility is less than or equal to 0.26). Furthermore, studying actual rebel actions and the way events unfold, we can place rebels and states in a civil conflict at their respective points on this continuous action space and make claims regarding actual capabilities and demands. Additionally, the precise points where we place the rebels and the state will factor in when the state is making considerations regarding its beliefs of rebel capacity, which influence their decisions on whether to repress or concede.

These considerations can thus be captured on the extensive-form game with imperfect information, which is modeled as follows:



Variable N for Nature serves as the value determining the strength of the insurgent group, and p is the probability that the group is strong while $1 - p$ is the probability that the group is weak. The factor of imperfect information is captured by the dotted horizontal line at the second decision node where the state makes its first decision. At this point, the state still has imperfect information regarding the capabilities of the insurgent group and thus does not know where it is operating on the decision tree, but it must still decide based on its beliefs. Furthermore, the variables in the model are organized as follows:

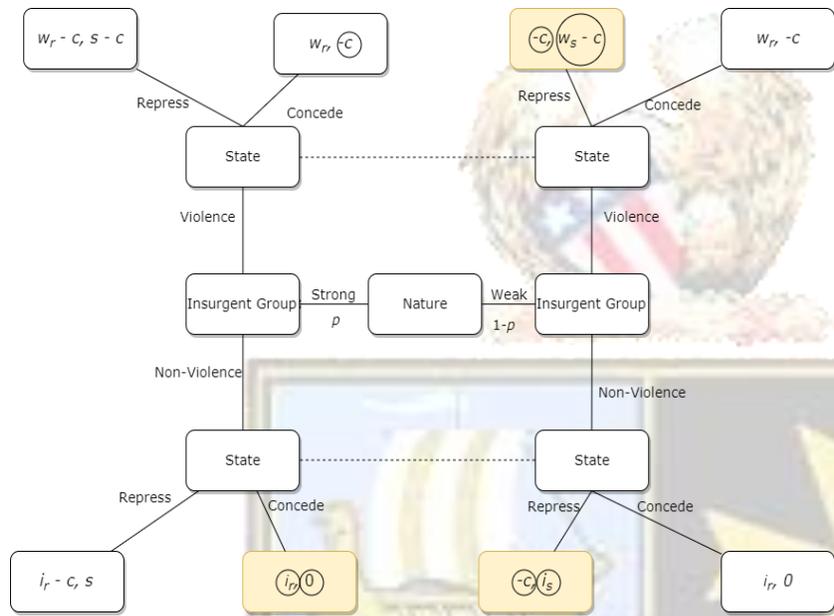
$$i_x \geq w_x \geq c \geq 0 \geq s$$

The logic behind these variables is that i_x is the ideal point for both actors and represents the entire action-space in question. The variable w_x represents the probable outcome of a successful war, i.e. the demands of the player are met after violence has occurred. The variable c represents the costs of the war, and as such cannot exceed the demands of a player nor the area of the value of the action-space, although it is possible for the state to concede and suffer from the violent strategies of the insurgent group, thus receiving a payoff of $-c$. At any rate, each of these variables is set as greater than *or equal to* the others in consecutive order because we can understand a situation wherein two players issue simultaneous demands for the entire action space (thus, $i_x = w_x$) and the costs of war create such destruction as to eliminate the utility of the action-space altogether ($i_x = w_x = c$). This would be an extreme case, and would likely involve nuclear war or the large-scale use of weapons of mass destruction, but is still a logical event and justifiable in terms of the model. Finally, regarding the variable s , we understand that there is a sort of “social cost” for a state that engages in violent repression against its citizens.

Findings and Analysis

Examining the extensive-form game, and solving for the Nash equilibrium through backwards induction, we find two main takeaways:





If $p \geq 0.74$

- Insurgent Group at start: NV
- State at (NV): C
- Payoffs associated are $(i_r, 0)$

If $p \leq 0.74$

- Insurgent Group at start: NV, V
- State at (NV): R
- Payoffs associated are $(-c, i_s)$ and $(-c, w_s - c)$

First, when an insurgent group is strong, the Nash equilibrium of the strategic interaction lies at (NV, C). Nonviolence when a rebel group is strong relative to the state incurs fewer costs than violence for the rebel group, and concessions by the state eliminate both the social costs of repression and the costs of engaging violent conflict against a stronger rebel group, so the logic here is intuitive. On the other hand, however, we see the insurgent group is indifferent between violence and nonviolence when it is weak, and the state is expected to be repressive.

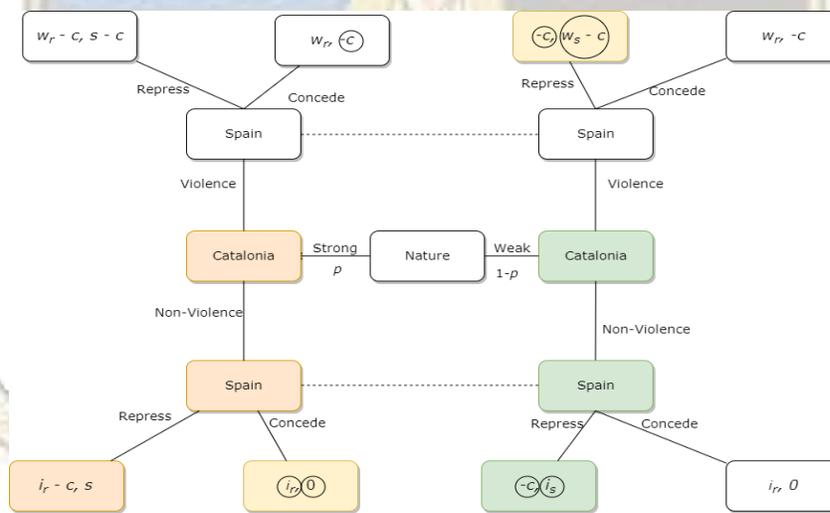
What accounts for outcomes beyond the Nash equilibrium of this model? We must factor in the discrepancy between the state's *beliefs* regarding rebel capacity and the rebel group's *actual* capacity. As the model indicates, while the insurgent group is sure regarding its capacity, the state is unsure of where, conceptually, it is making its decisions, i.e. whether it is operating on left side of the extensive-form game versus the right side of the model. What we might infer from the model therefore is the way an insurgent group uses this logic to their advantage through signaling. As it is understood that the Nash equilibrium where the rebel group is strong is at (NV, C) and the Nash equilibrium where the rebel group is weak is at (V, R) and (NV, R) because of the group's indifference to the outcome (as it remains the same regardless of the group's strategy), a rebel group may use nonviolence initially to attempt to signal its strength to the state. Since we expect to see rebel groups use violence only when $p \leq 0.26$, we assume the inverse also

holds true: nonviolent strategies signal that $p \geq 0.74$, and the state, acting with uncertainty at this point, must interpret this signal and decide whether it assumes the rebel group is strong or not, as this choice will impact the payoffs for the state. To this end, the model provides an interesting insight into the statistical findings of Chenoweth and Stephan, and perhaps serves as an intervening variable that explains why we see a higher prevalence of nonviolent resistance movements succeeding.

Case Studies

As a note, I have adapted the situations using the original model as a rubric for each conflict. The Nash equilibrium are still highlighted in yellow, decision paths that are not in line with the Nash equilibrium are highlighted in orange, and decision paths that lead to Nash equilibrium are highlighted in green.

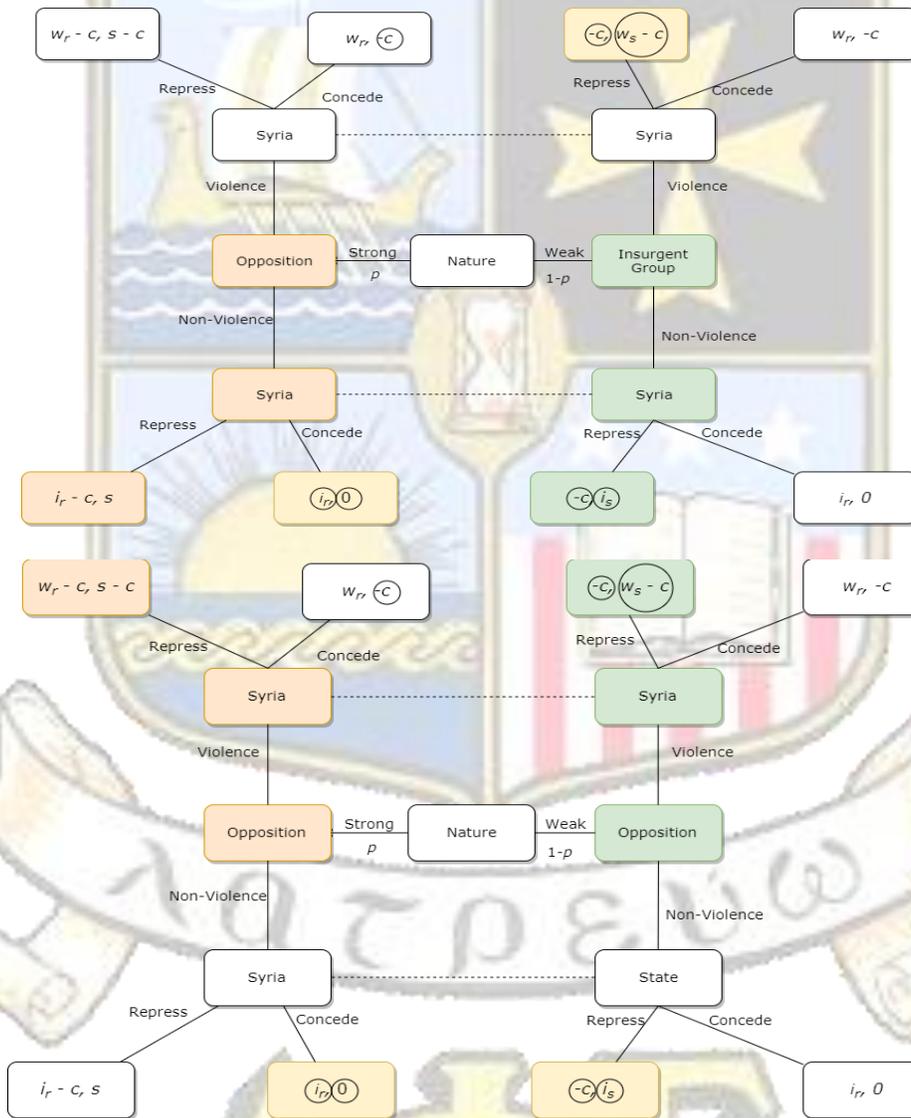
Catalonia, where violence has not yet broken out, but the state has engaged in repression against the opposition



Although there was a period when the Spanish government offered self-rule in exchange for concessions from the Catalanian president, Puigdemont's response was unclear. The Catalanian parliament declared independence, and the Spanish government initiated the implementation of article 155 of the Spanish constitution to establish direct rule, removed Puigdemont, ordered the dissolution of the Catalanian parliament, and scheduled new elections on December 21st, 2017. The state did not initially issue indivisible demands, but the Catalanian parliament did by fully declaring independence. Tying the outcomes of the extensive-form game to the continuous-action space model, we can assume that Catalonia

is categorically weaker than the Spanish government ($p \geq 0.74$). Further, without complete information on Catalonia's capacity, we can still assume that a weaker Catalonia relative to the Spanish government is more likely because the decision path of a weak Catalonia leads us to the Nash equilibrium. To this end, the model demonstrates that Catalonia's indifference to violent or nonviolent strategies when it is weaker and allows us to predict that there is a greater probability of violence breaking out.

Syria, where insurgent groups used violent strategies against a repressive state
 Game 1

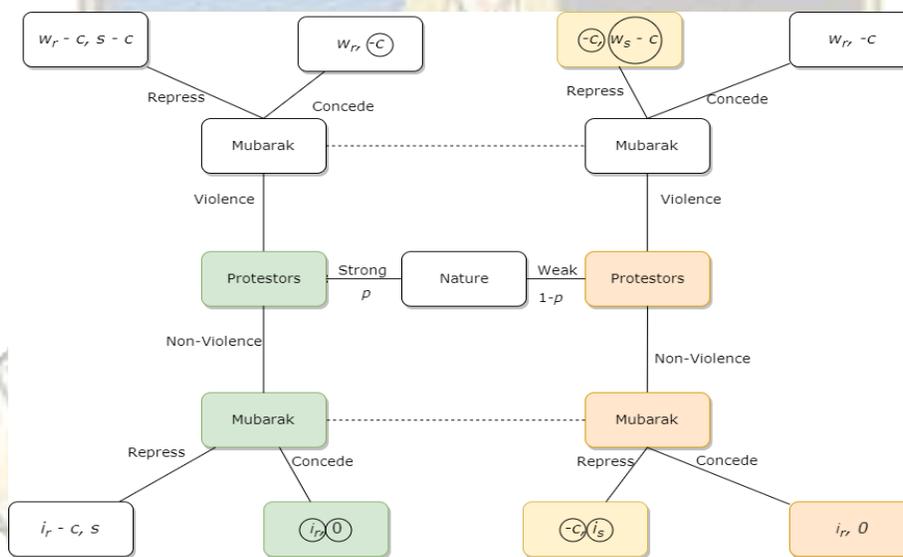


Game 2

The case of Syria is interesting because the Syrian opposition initially protested nonviolently, but they were met with brutal repression by the state. Bashar Al-Assad engaged in a very specific strategy profile, known as the grim trigger, whereby the Syrian opposition's choice to enter the game and resist the

state catalyzed a strategy of unrelenting repression. In all subsequent iterations of the model, Al-Assad has committed the state to violent repression against the opposition, and thus the opposition has used violent strategies in response to Al-Assad's grim trigger strategy profile. Al-Assad's demands were indivisible: full control of Syria. These demands shifted rebel strategies towards violence. However, since the rebels initially used nonviolent strategies, we must assume the probability that they are stronger than the state is $0.26 \leq 0.53$ and decreasing over time as violence is used to a much greater extent than nonviolence. This case clearly shows the logic behind the factor of indifference that the model captures. Since we assume the rebels are weaker than the state given the outcomes on the extended-form game, it is no surprise that they easily shifted between nonviolence and violence, as the payoffs were the same in either outcome. Thus, the game remains in Nash equilibrium for the duration of the, until the rebels lose to the state.

Egypt, where the state granted broad concessions to a nonviolent resistance movement



What separates the Egyptian case from the other two? Why did Mubarak concede totally and almost immediately? The discrepancy lies either in the totality of the protesters' demands and significantly lower demands issued by the state, or in a high probability of a strong opposition force. We assume that the likelihood that the opposition was strong relative to the state is $p \geq 0.74$. The fact that the same game played itself out under Morsi supports the conclusion that a high probability of a strong opposition force relative to the state had a greater effect in influencing the Egyptian case. This logic is effectively captured by the

model. The outcome of this interaction is (NV, C), which is the Nash equilibrium for a strong opposition force. We can assume from the model that the opposition's choice to use nonviolence successfully signaled to the state the capacity of the group.

Limitations, Intervening Variables, and Further Research

In the case of Venezuela, the models cannot adequately capture scenarios that do not have at least a cohesive resistance movement opposing the state. The Venezuelan opposition is best described as a loose network of coalitions that tap into popular support against the state but do not necessarily wield that support for their own ends. While there are near-daily protests and occasional mass mobilizations in the streets of Caracas, most of these protests are individualized and localized based on food scarcity and occur almost exclusively at food lines. Since there is no clearly defined insurgent group that can bear the costs of repression and violence and make calculations on this basis, the models cannot capture the interaction between Venezuela's protestors and Maduro's government. A separate model would be useful in this case to demonstrate how the state's influence in creating localized food shortages serves as entry-deterrence to deter insurgent groups from organizing a fully-fledged resistance.

A limitation of the extensive-form game I designed is that it represents a one-off game where each player makes one decision and thus only captures the interaction at this very broad level, effectively ignoring key differences across time and space within any civil conflict. However, we can conceptualize how the game plays itself out and repeats *ad infinitum*, with the N variable (Nature, which represents the endowments of the rebel group at the onset of the interaction) constantly changing as the insurgent group's capabilities change. However, even this variable N presents a challenge, as the model itself is not able to capture what influences it. Rather, as discussed in the literature review, there is a separate school of thought that seeks to explain the factors behind these rebel group endowments. My models, based on game theory and rationalist theory, are unable to explain this dynamic.

Further study of the rational decisions to choose violent or nonviolent strategies should develop an infinitely repeated game with a discount factor which would be able to model how the interaction develops over time (though not necessarily across space) especially as the trend seems to be that civil conflicts are

becoming more protracted. The discount factor in this model accounts for the relative changes in the payoff structure over time, as conflict becomes costlier and costlier to maintain, or as the insurgent group's power relative to the state itself changes. This model would be represented as $G(\infty, \delta)$, where G specifies the structure of each round (actors, actions, preferences), ∞ represents the time-limit of the game (infinite in this case, but any finite time period can be substituted), and δ represents the discount factor (how payoffs change over time).

Conclusions

Through my models, I calculated the subgame-perfect Nash equilibria and concluded the specific decisions we can expect insurgents and states to make. Rebel capabilities relative to the state and the extent of state/rebel demands in a strategic interaction provide key insights into the rational decisions to use violence or nonviolence in a civil conflict, and these insights are effectively captured in my models. It should be noted that these models are prescriptive and only model behavior that states and rebels should engage in. The utility of the models lies in their ability to provide rationalist explanations for the outcomes of each scenario. The validity of the model's predictive and prescriptive capabilities will be tested over time as situations develop and conflicts play themselves out, but so far, the intuition behind the current case studies and predictions is sound.

Additionally, these models are not static, and can be updated in real time as new information arises. Over the course of my research, as events have unfolded in Catalonia, several changes were made to the model to reflect new information. Overall, apart from Venezuela for previously stated reasons, the models were able to capture the interaction in each case I studied, and provided useful insights to better understand the reasons behind the actions rebels and states take. Having a better understanding of the dynamics at play and being able to make recommendations on strategy profiles to optimize outcomes can prove beneficial in mitigating the potential for violence or making effective predictions for future conflicts.

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Conflict Waters: The South China Sea

Freedom of navigation is a delicate subject to maneuver. While respecting common use of the seas is in the interests of all nations, so too is the ability to maintain and secure your sovereign interests in the area. Nowhere are these competing interests more visibly demonstrated in contemporary international affairs than in the South China Sea. Comprising over a million square miles of water, it is an important marginal sea that stretches from the Strait of Malacca to the Taiwan Strait. While numerous issues pervade, from fishing rights to resource exploration, all are rooted in the ability to navigate the waters with impunity. Every level of governing body has attempted to resolve the issue, while state actors such as China have pursued actions that have exacerbated the issue. With no clear answer, each action conducted only heightens the risk of conflict arising and increases the need for a diplomatic solution.

There are numerous rival claimants to portions of the sea, including China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Taiwan (Glaser 2012). The resolution of this dispute is essential to the economic and strategic interest to the United States. Trade on the South China sea is worth \$5.3 trillion dollars annually, with \$1.2 trillion of that trade between the United States and its regional partners (Glaser 2012). Despite the large and increasing value of trade in the South China Sea, the primary US interest lies in freedom of navigation and the ability to maintain its regional power in the area. The dispute over who-if anyone-controls the South China Sea has severe implications for United States foreign policy goals in the region.

The conflict is a result of numerous claims over the territorial waters of the South China Sea. Much of the recent developments have involved China and the Philippines, both signatories to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Glaser 2012). The Law of the Sea stringently regulates all issues regarding maritime affairs, creating clear delineations for various categories of territorial claims in waters surrounding a country and regulating conduct in and around those waters. China asserted a strong historical claim to nearly the entirety of the sea and several of its landmasses, demarcated as a 9-dash line around its alleged territory, but offered no concise explanation as to whether the line delineated complete sovereign control (Tsirbas 2016). It attempted to bolster several of its claims by creating a chain of artificial

islands, building on existing reef chains in the area in an attempt to dredge sovereignty by extending its territorial control (Manning and Przystup 2016). China further acted aggressively by seizing the Scarborough Shoal within 150 miles of the Philippines, in 2012 (Stashwick 2017).

The Philippines, which claims the Spratly Island chain and Scarborough Shoal, was the first to present its claim before the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2013. Accusing the Arbitration Court of lacking the standing to adjudicate the suit, China refused to participate through the entirety of the arbitration, saying the issue was a matter of sovereignty (Manning and Przystup 2016). In 2016, the PCA unanimously rejected the use of the 9-dash line as a historical claim to sovereignty and found much of China's claims counter to the conventions of the Law of the Sea, including the extension of its territorial waters using artificial islands (PCA 2016). However, the ruling did not settle the issue of sovereignty over the Sea or claims by both China and the Philippines for territorial possession of the many disputed island chains in the area, including the Spratly islands and the Scarborough Shoal.

While the decision rendered helps the Philippines in the perception of its territorial claim, it lacks enforcement and relies on China and the Philippines to act in accordance with the ruling. As a response to the arbitration, China has extensively militarized its artificial islands, placing several aircraft hangers, missile platforms, and harbors on several of its build ups (Watkins 2016). In addition, China has consistently used rhetoric that maintains that it is the sovereign ruler over the territorial waters and will meet what it perceives as any encroachment with the use of force if necessary (Panda 2017). The potential for armed conflict is a serious concern for navigation in the South China Sea.

Military forces in the region have historically created several issues and heightened the risk of conflict. The United States has one of the largest military presences in the region, and relies heavily on the agreed conventions on freedom of navigation to pursue its strategic objectives. Access to the South China Sea allows for expedient movement in the region, and lack of access would significantly impair the US Navy's ability to operate (Holmes 2014). While conducting these exercises is a right that the United States continues to assert under the Laws of the Sea, the United States has no physical presence in the region and

has not ratified the naval accords (Wyne 2016). These freedom of navigation exercises have had increased risks of conflict in the region and have severe potential hazards.

One of the worst incidents in the region occurred in 2001, near Hainan Island. While conducting a routine reconnaissance mission in the disputed airspace in the South China Sea, a US Navy EP-3 and a Chinese plane sent to intercept it collided, causing complete loss of the aircraft on the Navy side and the loss of aircraft and the life of the pilot on the Chinese side (Kan et al 2001). While all members of the American flight crew survived and managed to safely land on Hainan Island, they were immediately detained by the Chinese and held for over 11 days. Both sides blamed the other for the incident, and resolution only came after the return of both the remaining parts of the Navy aircraft as well as its flight crew and a vaguely worded statement that China perceived as an apology from the United States (Kan et al 2001). Despite this, the United States position remains that the overflight was a legal action and did not occur in an area that China exerts territorial control in. Since then, the US has continued to pursue overflight operations, most recently coming into another potential collision over waters around the Scarborough Shoal in February 2017 (Panda 2017). In 2009, the *USNS Impeccable*, a naval sonar ship, was conducting operations in a disputed portion of the sea and was harassed by Chinese boats and forced to leave to avoid collision (Glaser 2012). It returned with an armed escort ship. These and other incidents may have also contributed to the militarization of the artificial islands and highlight the dangers posed by a military presence in the region with no clear answer for the issue of sovereignty.

Recent developments have made any clear indication on the way forward for the future of the South China Sea. With the election of President Trump, the position of the US in several areas of foreign policy has become unclear at best, with various actors in his administration proposing contradictory courses of action. During his Senate confirmation hearings in January 2017, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson proposed a naval blockade in the South China Sea, preventing access to the artificial islands as a possible way to force a resolution on the issue and a radical departure from previous practices (Brunnstrom 2017). Later, another member of administration signaled clearly that this would not be the action that the United States pursues. During his March 2017 trip through the East Asia region, Secretary of Defense Mattis clarified

the United States' position, saying that "there is no need right now at this time for military maneuvers or something like that, that would solve something that's best solved by the diplomats" (Steward 2017). Backing away from the drastic military action as proposed by other members of the Trump administration shows keen interest in a resolution without the use of martial force.

The position of the Philippines has also undergone dramatic change with the election of President Duterte. Despite the favorable decision from the PCA, the Philippines initially moved towards positive relations with China, not committing to action on the arbitration decision as a way to help further this agenda. Perhaps as an indicator of growing bilateral agreement over this issue, the Chinese occupation of the Scarborough Shoals has somewhat eased, as Filipino fisherman have recently been allowed to fish in the area without being harassed by Chinese ships in the area (Stashwick 2017). However, President Duterte signaled an abrupt reversal on April 6, 2017, when he ordered the Philippine Navy to occupy the Spratly Island chain and proclaiming that he would plant the Philippine flag into one of the islands in the chain himself (Villamor 2017). He later retracted his personal commitment to prevent risking any further damages to the relationship with China. The sudden change of position can only serve to make matters worse. Should military action occur as a result, the United States is bound by the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines to render military aid, which could escalate to a regional war in a worst-case scenario.

The continued inability to assure freedom of movement in the South China Sea makes for a difficult situation to navigate. Despite rejection from international institutions, China has and continues to pursue a policy in the area that hampers the movement of others, and usurps the sovereignty of its regional neighbors through aggressive militarization. It would be in everyone's best interests to attempt to resolve the issue through diplomatic means, as the scope of armed conflict could lead disastrous regional conflict. The South China Sea issue is one whose resolution, regardless of outcome, will have severe ramifications for United States foreign policy.

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State Incentivized Savings Institutions: A Reintroduction of the MyRA Program

Introduction:

American households, on average, are underprepared for retirement¹⁷. The lower class of earners lacks the tools and incentives to save for their future. This leaves the United States government in a situation of either being forced to fund the retirement of its citizens itself, which it has demonstrated its inability or unwillingness to do or having to create wealth-building policy so that citizens may afford their retirements on their own. It is the place of the policy-maker to understand the forces which decide savings behavior, and to create appropriate policy to usher all households into stable retirements.

A beginning approach to explaining individual behavior¹⁸ is understanding the Life-Cycle Hypothesis¹⁹. Despite it not being an all-explaining theory (since no perfect information about future income or length of life can be obtained), it offers a compelling case to say that individuals plan their spending with the goal of maintaining a stable consumption pattern throughout their life. The purpose of retirement savings is to absorb the dramatic and permanent shock to income which occurs when an individual exits the labor-force. Proper resources will absorb these shocks to income allowing for stable consumption habits. As such, realistic savings and investment tools and methods for those in the labor-force are crucial to maintaining stable qualities of life for individuals and a stable flow of capital circulating throughout the economy.

Retirement savings are scarce for Americans not pertaining to the top 20% of income, and even worse for black and Latinx Americans not in that income bracket. White families have 6 times the retirement savings that black or Latinx families do, totally to roughly \$130,000 more on average. Under half of all American workers have access to employer-sponsored retirement savings accounts, with even fewer

¹⁷ McKernan, Signe-Mary, Caleb Quakenbush, Caroline Ratcliffe, Emma Kalish, and C. Eugene Steuerle. "Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America (Updated)." *Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America (Updated)*. October 04, 2017. <http://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>.

¹⁸ Bouyon, Sylvain. "Policy Options for European Household Saving." *Journal of Economic Integration* 31, no. 1 (March 2016): 134-65. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/pdf/43739239.pdf>.

¹⁹ MODIGLIANI, FRANCO. "THE LIFE CYCLE HYPOTHESIS OF SAVING, THE DEMAND FOR WEALTH AND THE SUPPLY OF CAPITAL." *Social Research* 33, no. 2 (1966): 160-217. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40969831>.

utilizing those resources. Participation in financial markets provides an even more disappointing glimpse into the reality of racial-financial inequality. 58% of white households report owning shares in publicly traded companies, with an average of roughly \$143,758 in value. 28% of black families do, with an average of roughly \$14,015 in value. Only 22% of Hispanic households report owning shares, with an average value of roughly \$14,162 in value²⁰. Most importantly, 81% of all shares in the United States are owned by the top 10% of earners²¹.

It is crucial to note that what is truly being observed in drastic savings inequality is the failure of private financial firms and markets to provide a useable tool low-income household can use to save for retirement. As such, it is the place of government to provide a public option that creates access to wealth-building financial assets for all, and ultimately seeks to smooth income over time²². Effective public policy seeks to take corrective action, and by providing institutional support and access to wealth, the myRA program can prove to be successful.

The myRA program, originally created by the Obama Administration, was made with the intent of “strengthening retirement security for all Americans, including by helping workers find ways to save for retirement²³.” The myRA accounts, now being phased-out by the current administration, were no-fee, no-minimum-investment introductions to institutional savings tools, and were meant for those without access to employer-based 401(k) programs. The structure of the program was as follows:

- Qualified workers under 50 could contribute up to \$5,500 annually
 - Workers over 50 could contribute up to \$6,500

²⁰ Hanna, Sherman D., Cong Wang, and Yoonkyung Yuh. "Racial/Ethnic Differences in High Return Investment Ownership: A Decomposition Analysis." *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning* 21, no. 2 (2010): 44-59,83-84. <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/847228116?accountid=8285>.

²¹ Kurtzleben, Danielle. "While Trump Touts Stock Market, Many Americans Are Left Out Of The Conversation." NPR. March 01, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/2017/03/01/517975766/while-trump-touts-stock-market-many-americans-left-out-of-the-conversation>.

²² Morduch, Jonathan. "Income Smoothing and Consumption Smoothing." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9, no. 3 (1995): 103-14. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/2138428>.

²³ "Presidential Memorandum -- Retirement Savings Security." National Archives and Records Administration. January 28, 2014. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/presidential-memorandum-retirement-savings-security>.

- Accounts would continue to grow until they reached \$15,000 in value and then would be transitioned into private Roth IRA accounts, which are only taxed at withdrawal.

While well intentioned, the program failed quickly. Actionable changes to the program, however, could revive it and bring great benefit to all stakeholders.

Through my research, I seek to demonstrate first, the importance of savings to the overall health of the macroeconomy. Second, I will explain evidence for the limited ability of households to absorb shocks to income and why this requires robust savings to maintain consumption patterns and habits. Third, I seek to justify changes in the original MyRA program which will focus on building wealth, decreasing inequality, and opening access to financial markets to more participants.

Section 1: Long-Run Justification

Using the Solow model as a means of justifying increased savings with respect to the macroeconomy is appropriate when considering that it was revolutionary in introducing accumulated capital into a long-run growth model.²⁴ Thinking of accumulated capital as the amount of capital available to each worker clarifies the role of increased savings for each worker. The capital stock, K , increases because of increased saving and investment. As K rises, so does the economy's ability to fully employ the entirety of its resources – or in Solow's words, reach the steady-state. An increase in the savings rate has both short and long-term effects that are worth considering. In the short-term, an increased savings rate increases the growth rate. In the long-term, higher savings increases the capital/labor ratio, which drives the steady-state higher.

Naturally, there are counter arguments to the macroeconomic benefit of saving. The Paradox of Thrift is a principle argument against high savings. It states that an ex ante desire to save may not necessarily increase the ex post level of savings²⁵. Working from an assumption that all consumption equals income,

²⁴ Jones, Charles Irving. *Macroeconomics*. 4th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. Page 110

²⁵ Black, John, Nigar Hashimzade, and Gareth Myles. "paradox of thrift." In *A Dictionary of Economics*. : Oxford University Press, 2012.

this is reasonable. If too many individuals in an economy are saving instead of spending, then output will fall. This fall in output creates a fall in income, which creates a fall in consumption, and perpetually depresses an economy. Alternatively, savings can be a method of smoothing consumption over time, offering more long-term benefit than high present-day spending.

Section 2: Absorbing Shocks to Income, Inequality

Retirement savings add to an individual's ability to consume in a smooth pattern over time. The Life-Cycle-Hypothesis states that individuals choose to keep consumption as a constant fraction of their permanent income. Attanasio and Pistaferri²⁶ offer that savings are a tool to absorb shocks to income, such as retirement, and are accumulated for this exact purpose. Retirement is a unique shock to income due to its long-lasting nature, and therefore requires a different approach than emergency saving. A response to retirement, savings, needs to begin early and needs to be a comprehensive project between an individual and their savings institution which focuses on consistent and attractive returns on investment. However, when this response is lacking, or is not available to a lower class, inequality in consumption and in savings arises.

Attanasio and Pistaferri demonstrate consumption inequality as being closely tied to income inequality. While the magnitude of consumption inequality is disputed by researchers (Meyer, Sullivan 2017)²⁷, it is agreed that the poor have not seen a rise in their ability to purchase goods and services due to weak incomes. If we understand savings as a transfer of income to the future, then the weak savings strategies that have been made available to the lower class in America will lead to weak consumption and an overall reduction in quality of life in retirement.

Attanasio and Pistaferri posit that permanent shocks to income (such as retirement) are highly likely to be reflected in consumption trends. Large disparities in income will be reflected in consumption

<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780199696321.001.0001/acref-9780199696321-e-2268>.

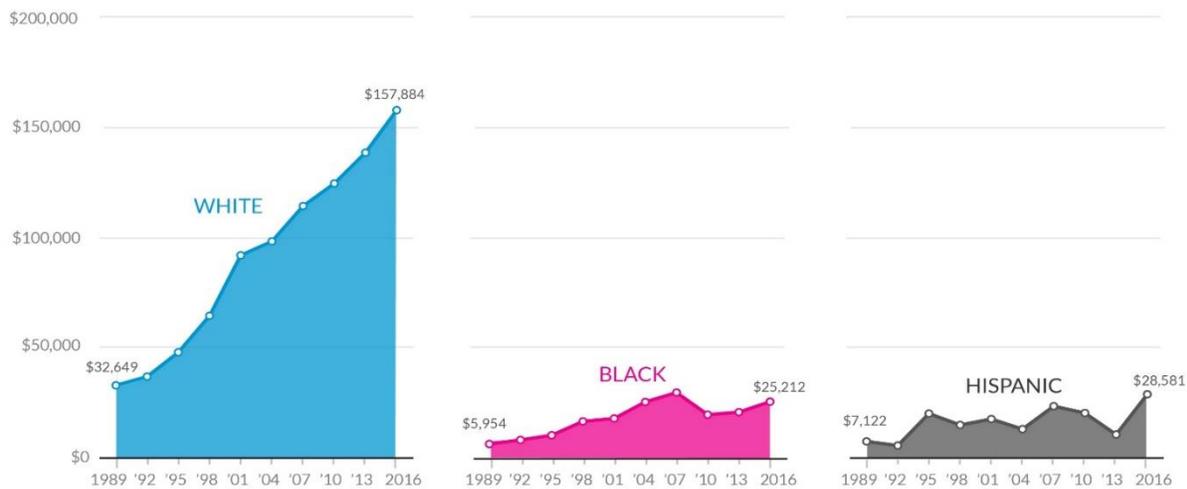
²⁶ Attanasio, Orazio P., and Luigi Pistaferri. "Consumption Inequality." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30, no. 2 (2016): 3-28. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/43783705>.

²⁷ Meyer, Bruce D., and James X. Sullivan. "Consumption and Income Inequality and the Great Recession." *The American Economic Review* 103, no. 3 (2013): 178-83. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/23469725>.

disparities, but will be amplified in times of financial distress, where income is shocked. In these circumstances a high-income individual will be better at absorbing this shock than a low-income-individual due to their likely more robust savings. Effective policy shields low income individuals from these shocks to income by incentivizing high-return, low liquidity savings.

Essentially, if evidence shows that income disparities are closely tied to consumption disparities, then it would follow that retirement savings can minimize decreases in consumption, which may have

Average Family Liquid Retirement Savings, 1989–2016



Source: Urban Institute calculations from Survey of Consumer Finances 1989–2016.

Notes: 2016 dollars. Liquid retirement savings include dollars in accounts such as 401(k), 403(b), and IRAs. Median liquid retirement savings for black and Hispanic families were zero from 1989 to 2013. Median liquid retirement savings for whites were zero through the mid-1990s, about \$1,500 in 1998, and \$10,000 in 2016.

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effects on inequality. As poor households show that their savings are less able to handle shocks to income to maintain stable consumption, then a savings plans will allow for better shock absorption, and will smooth consumption in the long term.

Inequality in retirement savings is amplified when accounting for race and gender. A study by the Urban Institute²⁸ reveals that black and Hispanic families have seen a very minor rise in their savings since 1989, and that their access to savings tools pales against their white counterparts. Asset building over time for white families is much more commonplace. Data reveals that in their 60's, a white family is likely to have at least seven times the wealth of a black family.

²⁸ McKernan, Signe-Mary, Caleb Quakenbush, Caroline Ratcliffe, Emma Kalish, and C. Eugene Steuerle. "Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America (Updated)." Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America (Updated). October 04, 2017. <http://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>.

The severity of this inequality demonstrates the necessity for federal policy which incentivizes wealth building for those in the middle and lower classes, and not just the upper class of earners. The study by the Urban Institute shows that of the \$400 billion spent by the federal government on several asset-developing policies such as state-and-local property tax deductions, mortgage-interest tax deductions, and employer-sponsored retirement plans, 2/3rds of these subsidies went directly towards the top 20% of tax payers. Specifically, in employer-sponsored retirement plan subsidies, the top 20% received \$122.1 billion in direct subsidies, while the bottom 40% received only \$8.2 billion. This is economically unsustainable, and as has been shown, will have adverse effects on consumption and spending in the future.

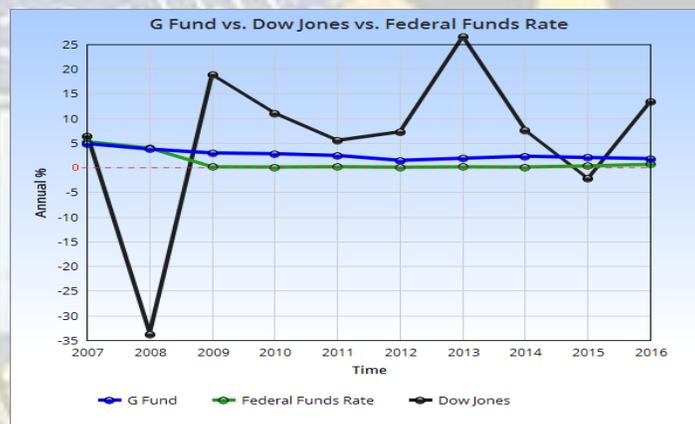
Section 3: Public Investment Authority, Proposed Changes

In Atkinson's *Inequality*²⁹, he discusses the proposition of creating a Public Investment Authority by first remarking that savers in the lower percentiles of income rely primarily on the financial services sector, and not property, to make investments. Atkinson identifies a "wedge" between the returns households can expect and the fees levied by financial institutions for their services. This wedge becomes proportionally larger as the initial value of an investment decreases, which complicates the reality of investing in financial markets for the lower class. Put simply, those in the lower class pay much more to invest.

Atkinson's seventh proposal states "A public investment authority should be created, operating a sovereign wealth fund with the aim of building up the net worth of the state by holding investments in companies and in property." I would, however, offer a modification to this proposal for the purposes of this policy. Rather than building the net worth of the state, the purpose of the fund should be to build the net worth of the individuals who choose to participate within it. It shall be modeled in a way that ensures individual accounts be invested collectively by a professional fund manager. This is better suited to the needs and traditions of the American economy and those who have suffered from the inequality within it, and would require less investment from the federal government to be operational.

²⁹ ATKINSON, ANTHONY B. *INEQUALITY: what can be done?* S.I.: HARVARD UNIV PRESS, 2017.

MyRA invested into the Government Securities Investment Fund(G-Fund). This fund is available as a retirement security to federal employees, service members, and their families, and buys treasury securities ensured by the US government. The fund's annual returns, since 2008, have not yielded more than 4.5%. In 2007, the fund yielded 4.87%, and in 2016, only 1.82%. In 2016, the Dow Jones by comparison grew by 13.42%³⁰. Compounded over 10 years, the fund yielded only 2.63%. This is unappealing, and offers little to no advantage to the average investor seeking to secure their retirement. The chart below³¹ compares the G Fund's annual returns, the annual returns of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, and the Federal Funds Rate, which the G fund's returns are closely matched to.



To make myRA worthwhile for participants with scarce resources, it is critical that the fund be actively managed and seek high returns. This can be achieved through following provisions stipulated in the Santiago principles³²; a code of conduct created by the International Working Group of Sovereign Wealth Funds. These stipulations certainly can be applied to any government managed investment authority, and not only sovereign wealth funds. Stipulation 19 of the code states "Investment decisions

³⁰ 1Stock1. Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) Yearly Returns. http://www.1stock1.com/1stock1_139.htm.

³¹ "Effective Federal Funds Rate." FRED. December 01, 2017. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FEDFUNDS>. 1Stock1. Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) Yearly Returns. http://www.1stock1.com/1stock1_139.htm. "Annual Returns." TSP: Annual Returns.

<https://www.tsp.gov/InvestmentFunds/FundPerformance/annualReturns.html>.

³² "Santiago Principles." Santiago Principles | International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds. October 2008. <http://www.ifswf.org/santiago-principles-landing/santiago-principles>.

should aim to maximize risk adjusted financial returns” which should be the shared purpose of the myRA fund.

With regards to the failure of the initial program, the lack of returns was the most significant economic factor, but rather significant noneconomic factors influenced the program as well. Some, such as a lack of political capital and willingness on the part of the Obama administration to properly advertise the program are beyond the scope of this paper. However, the program lacked several key economic components that prevented it from succeeding. Principally was the education of the participant. Education of participants with regards to their portfolios and savings habits, while seemingly noneconomic, is in fact deeply economic. Individuals must be highly aware of three key aspects of their portfolios: the nature of their income, the liquidity of the portfolios, and realistic returns they can expect.

Individuals must be wary not to confuse increases in nominal income with increases in real income. This will likely lead households to increase consumption at the expense of savings³³. Some claim that money illusion, as this phenomenon is called, is a lack of consumer rationality, but it is more productive to consider it a lack of proper education (Shafir, Diamond, Tversky)³⁴. Empirical literature shows evidence for the money illusion hypothesis having statistically significant effects on the housing bubble in 2008 (Brunnermeier, Julliard)³⁵. The literature shows that the inability to distinguish between nominal values and real values allowed for an environment in which reductions in inflation resulted in substantial increases in housing prices, due to a falsely perceived change in real prices. Such research shows the broad reach the money illusion can have on consumer behavior. This underscores why it is imperative that the myRA program be built in such a way that it is resilient to the money illusion. It should not enable participants to suddenly, and falsely react to changes in inflation, increasing consumption and decreasing savings. Participants must be made consistently aware of the economic climate which they are investing in, and they

³³ Bouyon, Sylvain. "Policy Options for European Household Saving." *Journal of Economic Integration* 31, no. 1 (March 2016): 134-65. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/pdf/43739239.pdf>.

³⁴ Shafir, Eldar, Peter Diamond, and Amos Tversky. "Money Illusion." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112, no. 2 (1997): 341-74. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/2951239>.

³⁵ Brunnermeier, Markus K., and Christian Julliard. "Money Illusion and Housing Frenzies." *The Review of Financial Studies* 21, no. 1 (2008): 135-80. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/40056815>.

must be given the tools to understand the economic natures of their incomes, of their savings, and of their savings habits. This becomes a discussion on the illiquid nature of the program.

Bouyon defines three distinct categories of liquidity accounts can fall into. These are overnight deposits, deposits with an agreed maturity date, and deposits which are redeemable upon client request. The accounts which would best fit a redesigned myRA program have an agree maturity *value* rather than date, and are redeemable upon the request of the client. This idea retains the original intent of the program which was to clear the hurdle of high-entry costs into formal investing for low income households, by transitioning accounts with \$15,000 in value to private investing firms. It also does not demand that the participant hold their funds in myRA until maturity, which can be difficult for households in lower classes of income. Due to the nature of the assets, it would not cause an undue burden on the fund to liquidate assets on the occasion that a participant will need them, given proper notice. Low-liquidity savings allow for returns which are relatively attractive compared to US treasury bonds and allow for flexibility for both the investor and the institution.

With regards to returns, information about the kind of returns that can be expected is necessary. To understand realistic returns, one can look to current actively managed sovereign wealth funds. The Government Pension Fund of Norway, the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, has averaged returns (after management and costs) of 4.1% annually from 1998 to 2017³⁶. Returns from the myRA fund should be reasonably expected to be comparable, except perhaps in exceptional economic circumstances such as booms or recessions. The actual returns come second to the education of the participant regarding these matters. The lower the level of financial education, the less likely participants are to understand the value of low-liquidity, high-potential-return investments.

Conclusion:

Wealth inequality, compared to income inequality, is staggering. It is largely systemic and multi-generational. Aiding the lower and middle classes in accumulating wealth-building assets will work to

³⁶ "Returns." *Returns*, Norges Bank Investment, www.nbim.no/en/the-fund/return-on-the-fund/.

lessen the magnitude of wealth inequality. This will benefit the economy in the long-term by allowing for smooth patterns of consumption among a larger base of people. Furthermore, savings allows households to absorb shocks to their income in retirement. In creating policy that directly opens the financial markets to more people, the government will allow for stable, consistently high qualities of life for its citizens. The failure of the private market to provide for an option warrants a policy response from the government to provide a public option that clears the high barrier of entry to formal investment for the low and middle classes.



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The Struggle of the Shegue

Abstract

This research paper looks at the role of homegrown children assistance organizations in alleviating the suffering and improving the lives of street children in Kinshasa. In particular, this research focuses on the historical interplay between post-colonial development, conflict, and authoritarian regimes, specifically in the city of Kinshasa. Factors that have contributed to woes ranging from inadequate infrastructure in its urban areas, poverty, and overcrowding. Children have seen the worst of it as some are abused and left out on the street through a combination of economic, health-related, cultural, and political factors. Various NGO's have stepped in to assist these children; however, the problem is still prevalent. The goal of this research paper is to understand what is being done to help these children, to paint a picture of what can be accomplished.

Research Question:

What role does homegrown children assistance play in improving the lives of street children in Kinshasa?

Introduction

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, poverty has continued to soar despite the economic growth from mining booms in the commodity-dependent nation. Much of the DRC's citizens have not seen the fruits of this growth, most especially these street children who are helpless in droves. Kinshasa, with its large and growing urban population, has crammed millions of people into small spaces with trash piled in alleyways. As people continue flee to the capital as armed groups continue to plague much of the countryside, this problem continues to get worse and the street children are the most vulnerable. Thousands and thousands of children, often orphans or runaways who have endured and continue to endure years of abuse, violence and neglect live in the DRC's capital. These children live in extreme poverty and in horrible conditions. In the streets, children are beaten and discarded by both adults and other children alike. Despite economic growth in the nation, children continue to suffer at larger rates as families who are unable to provide

education, food, and the like and in some cases, resort to abuse, force children out to fend for themselves. On these streets, children are often assaulted, and for many girls, sexually assaulted by others in the poverty-stricken and underdeveloped regions of the city.

These children are pushed into the street because of several factors. One of which is domestic violence as many children are vulnerable to severe abuse at home. This becomes a worse problem considering the commonality of abuse in families in the region as well as the relative leniency of the law with regards to domestic violence; this also applies to abuse in churches, etc. Others include the lack money for many families to pay for education, thus giving them the alternative of street-dwelling. Accusations of sorcery also dehumanize children to the point of pushing them to the streets as well. HIV/AIDS also play a large role in deteriorating the lives of children, along with general exploitation once they are on their own.

As the numbers of “shegue” (a term for street children in the capital city) continue to rise despite contestation by human rights organizations abroad, it is important to understand the impact homegrown children’s rights activism could have on the plight of these children. Understanding the important role of UNICEF, and other international organizations dedicated to the protection of children, as well as the NGO’s that take part in this mission, I believe that it is enlightening to look into the activism from with the nation to see how local actors can help deal with this problem, as well as how the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can help as well.

Scope and Background

Understanding the background of the economic, cultural and political landscape that has forced droves of children in to the streets requires hearkening back to colonial history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Through this initial history, we see the creation of the Congo Free State after the Berlin Conference in 1885. The state existed essentially as King Leopold II of Belgium’s private fiefdom; as a colony, it was merely a region for extraction of goods with a limited “urban impress” as opposed to the construction of large white settlements. During this regime, development projects mostly stemmed from infrastructural

projects, such as constructing a railway from the coast, to the capital which was then called Leopoldville. Despite these large undertakings into building up the infrastructure of this area, almost all had the aim of easing the extraction of assets and resources from the colony.

Subsequently, millions of natives were subjugated to the highly profitable rubber trade at the time. This span of years (between 1885-1908) saw the large-scale use of forced labor, mass murder, torture, and mutilation, among others, to the native Congolese peoples. The Congo Free State, under Leopold II had contributed to the deaths of approximately 10 million Congolese; to put this into perspective, it is estimated that in 1900, Africa as a continent had around 90 to 133 million people. Leopold II, through the pursuit of personal wealth in the age of colonialism, killed about 10% of the entire African population. Once Leopold's atrocities were publicized, the international community pressured the Belgian Parliament to annex the Congo as a national colony, shifting legislative authority from the king to the government. Despite this, the priority still dwelled on the extraction of resources of the colonial subject, now named the Belgian Congo.

After two World Wars and a host of internal political turmoil and nationalist movement amidst the colonial administration, the region gained its independence as the Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa). Almost immediately after gaining independence, a political crisis unfolded as various parties sought control of the Republic. Through a series of internal conflict, and Cold War proxy-wars, around 100 thousand were killed. The result of this crisis was a coup d'état by Joseph Mobutu, who consolidated power with the support of the United States in 1965. Mobutu took full control, creating a single party state and renames the country Zaire and renames himself Mobuto Sese Seko. During this era, Leopoldville and other cities within the nation were Africanized into their current names such as Kinshasa and others. Still reeling from conflict outside of urban areas, Kinshasa grew from those migrating from the country side in search of wealth.

Mobutu provided very little social services to his people. His regime is characterized as a "kleptocracy" as Mobutu, his family, as well as his associates consistently embezzled government funds through trade in copper, cobalt, diamonds and coffee over the course of his reign. Mobutu nationalized the

mining industry transfers foreign-country management to a local elite, most of whom were his friends and relatives. Mobutu often stymied development projects so as to pocket the wealth from these operations; foreign aid sent to fulfill these development projects were also pocketed by Mobutu. As an example, in 1989, Zaire defaulted on loans from Belgium, resulting in a cancellation of development programs and increased deterioration of the economy. Coupled with human rights violations and political repression, Mobutu's reign considerably weakened the nation's economy.

Once the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War, Zaire ceased being a valuable ally to the United States; this lack of support culminated into deeper political and economic instability, as opposing parties called for representation and reform. This instability culminated into the 1996 to 1997 First Congo War as Rwandan and Ugandan backed rebels helped replaced Mobutu with Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Kinshasa is later taken by anti-Mobutu forces led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila in May of 1996. Kabila named himself the new president and reverted the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Despite being able to do away with Mobutu's reign, this conflict severely reduced government revenue and increased debt. This new Congolese state suffered from the same ailments that plagued Mobutu's post-Cold War regime; the government continued to be weak and heavily corrupt. Kabila maintained an extent of authoritarian leadership similar to Mobutu and started a campaign to centralize the state, further alienating groups outside of the urbanity, mostly towards the east, and perpetuated conflict.

It had only been a year since Laurent-Désiré Kabila took office when, in 1998 the prolonged conflict with minority forces and rising tensions with Rwandan and Ugandan backed groups began the Second Congo War. The conflict, what many call "the Great African War", lasted from 1998 to 2003 and directly involved nine African nations along with a plethora of armed groups and was the bloodiest conflict in Africa. The war and its immediate effects resulted in over 5.4 million casualties, and over 5.2 million children left without an education over that period of time along with millions displaced.

During January 16, 2001 President Laurent-Désiré Kabila is assassinated. His son, Joseph Kabila, succeeds him as president of the DRC; his administration and the various armed groups signed the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement resulted in the installation of a transitional government and new elections within three years. A new election was then undertaken in October 2006, seeing Joseph Kabila sworn in as President along with a new, voter-approved constitution. Amidst violent-unrest and political attacks, Kabila was re-elected, as many critics viewed the election as one that lacked credibility as the opposition viewed it as illegitimate. Before the planned 2016 elections occurred, the nation's parliament passed a law calling for a national census to be undertaken before the election; this effectively lengthens Kabila's term to well over his original term limits. This had caused the eruption of mass protests and strife within Kinshasa. With dozens killed in the ensuing violence, and along with the looming threat of civil war, Kabila's administration cooperated with the opposition group to scrap the alteration of the constitution and have Kabila leave office before the end of 2017, as opposition leader, Étienne Tshisekedi acting as oversight. Presently, Kabila is incredibly unpopular, due to many calling him corrupt and ignorant to the needs of the millions of poor Congolese. Another contributor to his infamy is the perpetuation of violence in both the urban areas of the nation as well as the countryside, as armed rebel groups and movements in eastern regions vie for power and kill hundreds.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a whole, the events that transpired which shaped its current economic and political climate have severely worsened the quality of life for its citizens and forced many into poverty; both of which under a politically unstable regime in a nation with poor infrastructure. The DRC is consistently ranks in the lowest 10 nations in Gross Domestic Product per capita as well as Human Development Index. These aspects combined to cultivate the street children phenomenon within highly urbanized areas, most especially in Kinshasa. Though in many cases, this background is not directly attributed to the rise of street children, it very much cause much of the factors that contribute to the problem.

Demographics and Overcrowding:

The city of Kinshasa is the third largest urban area in Africa after Cairo and Lagos and is the 27th most populated city in the world, with about 11.6 million residents presently. With 77.27 million being the population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the capital consists of approximately 15 percent of the nation's populace. Over 42 percent of the nation's population live in urban areas. The population has increased steadily over the decades, as can be seen from the trendline of Figure 1. According to a U.N. report, the city's average annual growth rate of its population is at 3.2 percent, with its average urban population growth rate to be at around 4 percent between 2010 and 2015. With a growth rate of that extent, especially in urban areas, that the lack of social provisions by the government would have these new urban dwellers knee-deep in poverty as high unemployment and underemployment within the region of sub-Saharan Africa is one of a host of challenges spurred by rapid urbanization.

The percentage of the national population living below the poverty line is currently at a staggering 63 percent, although it has decreased since the Second Congo War. Despite this, poverty reduction has remained stagnant since Mobutu Sese Seko's reign in the 1980's and 1990's. Through the expansion of poverty through overcrowding and population growth within the urban areas, children are being sent out to the streets at higher and higher numbers, and, in turn, causing street children to suffer their own overcrowding, as many homeless youths are forced to sleep on the streets. In 2006, the number of Street Children was approximately 11,800 and in less than a decade during 2015, the number almost tripled to approximately 30,000. Out of these thousands of shegue, the number of girls between that decade rose from 26 percent to 44 percent respectively. The rate of growth of Kinshasa (as well as the nation as a whole) directly contributes to the growth in numbers of street children. Within the time (2006 – 2015) that the city's population has grown by 60 percent, the number of street children has grown by 40 percent.

Abuse and Lack of Support

Many children are vulnerable to severe abuse at home. This becomes a worse problem considering the commonality of abuse in families in the region as well as the relative leniency of the law with regards to domestic violence as officials and authorities rarely interfere with abuse accusations, as the word of

children are not seen as a priority. Because of this, children are forced to leave for their own well-being. Familial abuse plainly stems from the parents' inability to support their child, to the extent that the child becomes a strain to the family; with superstition in tow, families blame their children for their bad luck. Much of this abuse also stems from remarriages wherein new family members belittle children that are not theirs; stepmothers and stepfathers may end up abusing the child of their spouse, having them do considerably more work than other children as well as beating and whipping them. In cases when the biological parent is not in the picture, the stepparent may drive the child out onto the street if the child has not already tried to escape the torment.

Children, normally, would be sent to extended family members if their parents cannot, or will not care for them, however, now it is seen as an unwanted additional burden as they have their own children to care for. As families are unable to feed and house their children, let alone have them attend school, many send their children away to work or beg and in some cases, parents leave their children behind to find work elsewhere. Many families are unable to pay for schooling and related costs; thus, children are either sent out to work or leave on their own accord for work or amusement. In these cases, they are drawn into child labor, drug using, crime, or even political exploitation.

HIV and AIDS

During the early 2000's, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS called UNAIDS estimated that over 1.3 million Congolese people were living with the disease. With cases being registered as early as 1983, Life expectancy in the DRC dropped 9% in the 1990's as a result. Congolese children are orphaned by the epidemic, which has a prevalence rate of 4.2 percent in the DRC; much lower than surrounding nations. Orphaned children may be taken in by extended family if they can be properly cared for, however in most cases, these children are much less likely to attend school and are more likely to work to support their families or themselves. These children are also vulnerable to having their inheritance stolen by relatives of their deceased parents. For children who are HIV positive, it is much worse as despite the implementation and modest success of the ABC strategy (abstinence, be faithful, use a condom) as a

response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, misinformation about the disease continues to prevail. The disease is closely associated with witchcraft accusations (itself, a contributing factor to street children) as pastors and localized religious organizations propagate the message that children can utilize sorcery to spread the virus among relatives and family members. Some are even more inclined to believe that their child is possessed than believe that their child is HIV positive.

The ABC strategy, in this case, has not been able to permeate this misinformation regarding the connection between sorcery and the disease, and has not been able to help vulnerable child victims, many of which are made to believe that they are the reason for the deaths of their family. The impact of the disease has been enormous and has strained the fabric of communities and families. Children infected and affected by AIDS continue to face stigma and discrimination inside and outside their homes.

Exploitation

Children who are initially forced out suffer from abuse from police and military officers who are normally responsible for security. Street children are abused and extorted by military police officers, as many interviewed children recall their personal items, clothing, and any money they have being forcibly taken from them, as the children are powerless. In Kinshasa, street children are frequently harassed by police officers at night; the harassment normally involves beatings. During the day time, street children are singled out in public areas and are arrested and beaten if police officials feel as though they are causing a commotion. Police officers abuse children by forcing them to perform hard labor while detained in often unsanitary conditions; they are also abused by the adults they are detained with. Arbitrary arrests and roundups are also common, as it seems that there does not have to be a reason to arrest street children; city police had arrested over 430 “vagrants” including more than 70 street children in November of 2005. Children of both sexes are also subjected to rape by police and military officers.

With regards to political exploitation, many children are recruited to political protests during elections and end up beaten and arrested. These children are lured by political opportunists, with promises

of food and money, to participate in demonstrations and rallies which end in violence. As instability remains rampant, political centers, such as within Kinshasa, are subjected to ‘urbicidal’ attempts, where in opportunists have children participate in chaos. In 2006, over 700 homeless young people have been rounded up in the city by the police after throwing stones during a protest on the destruction of a television station owned by a presidential contender at the time. Street children are intentionally recruited to grow demonstrations; as opposition parties and police forces have clashed with them; children are severely beaten and even killed. Both the mainstream PPRD (People’s Party for Reconstruction and Democracy) party as well as the UPDS (Union for Democracy and Social Progress) opposition party have taken part in recruiting children for rallies and demonstrations.

Efforts Undertaken to Address the Problem

The inability of the DRC's government to care for its population is particularly acute in children in the region. To alleviate this pain and suffering, non-governmental organizations have taken up the mantle in assisting street children. Locally-based organizations have been set up and are funded and maintained by donors. These organizations vary in structure but provide housing, food, clothing and education for street children across the DRC, and most especially Kinshasa. The organizations also provide vocational training and even support the reunification of families. With these organizations stepping in, thousands of Shegue have been saved.

For my research I have specifically delved into the efforts done by three specific organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; REEJER (Network of Educators of Street Children and Youth), Street Children of Kinshasa Ndako Ya Biso (Our House), and CAMME (Support Center for Marginalized and Exploited Minors); REEJER and Ndako Ya Biso being based in Kinshasa, while CAMME is based in Goma.

Street Children of Kinshasa Ndako Ya Biso

Ndako Ya Bisso, is a registered charity created and supported by the Catholic Chemin Neuf Community. Based in the suburban Makala municipality in southern Kinshasa, the organization is an NGO in the city with the official agreement with the government. The organization is comprised of multiple houses, one for boys, one for young girls, and one for older girls who have worked as sex workers in the past.

Social workers of Ndako Ya Bisso actively find and seek to establish contact and gain the consent of street children so as to bring them to their centers. Social workers then speak with and understand the feelings and stories of the children; the organization's goal is to build trusting relationships with children, regardless of their condition. Children are given showers, their clothes washed, and are given food every day. The organization also provides medical and psychological care. The children are also given an hour of reading and writing lessons to potentially have them return to education.

Ndako Ya Bisso's social workers also actively make contact and work with the children's families in order to judge whether or not reconciliation is possible. If reconciliation can be achieved, the organization acts as a support base to keep families together, as they place children in schools near the homes of their family until they finish their education; As school fees are approximately £76.00 for a school year, education and schooling are maintained by donors. Children are also placed in vocational training programs to learn skills including carpentry, mechanics, and sewing, the latter of which is mostly for girls. The organization provides small loans to families as well as down payments for families looking for new housing. Even after all this, the organization continues to work as mediators between the child and the family so as to mitigate any new problems.

REEJER (Network of Educators of Street Children and Youth)

REEJER was created in 1998 by a joint effort by the Work of Reclassification and Protection of Street Children as well as AUTEUIL International. The organization, based in Kinshasa, is a coalition of

over 164 structures, an advocacy platform, as well as a watchdog organization centered around the goal of supporting street children in Kinshasa.

The network unites several national and international NGO's in the alleviation of the phenomenon of street children to advocate for the rights of street children as well as the reintegration of street children into their families. With support from its partners which include UNICEF, REEJER organizes campaigns for the care of street children; in the 2010's, the organization has launched advocacy campaigns to urge the government as well as the Congolese National Police to protect street children.

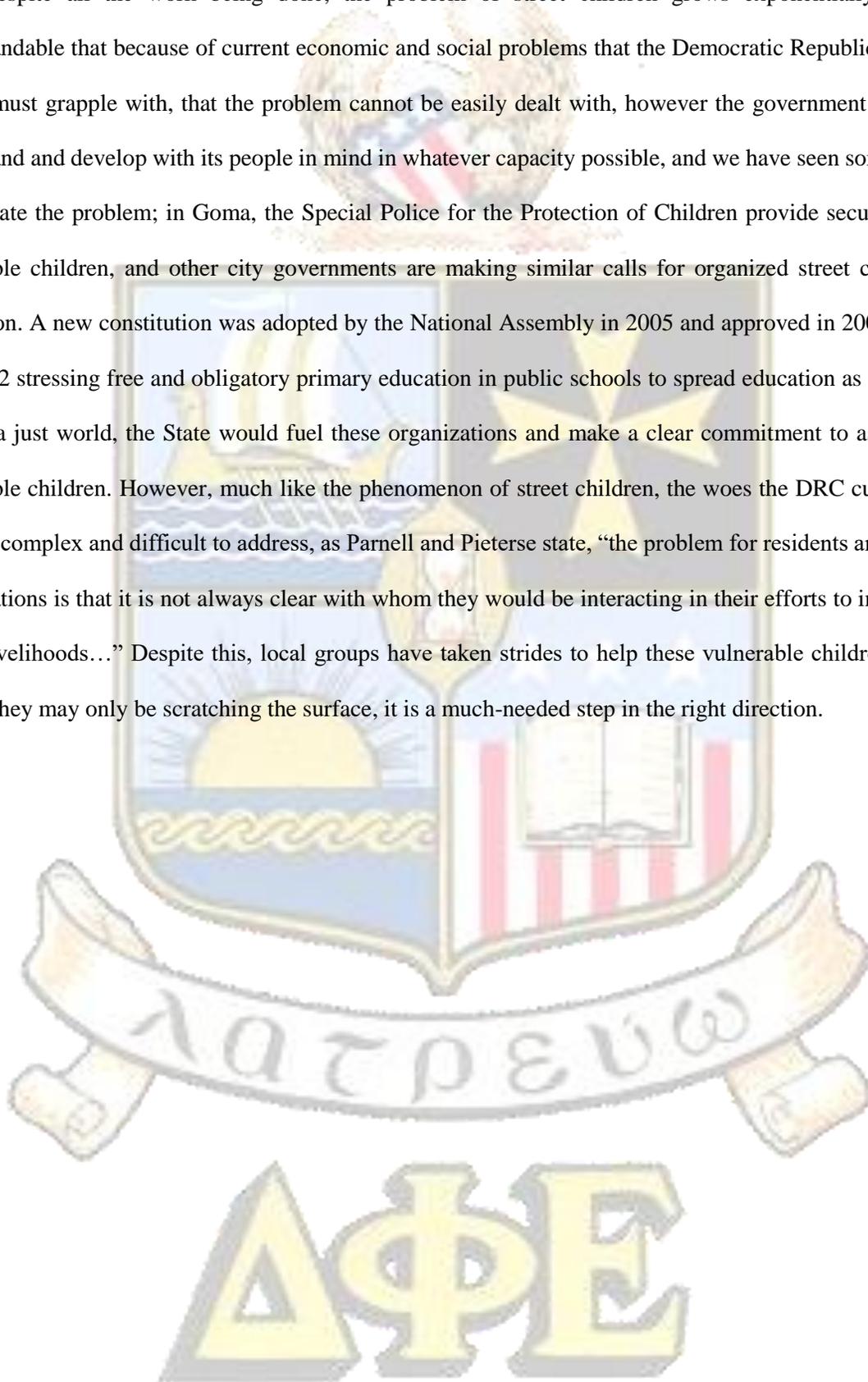
The network understands the context and background which have led to the phenomenon of street children; it acknowledges the socio-economic problems as well as the contributing factors to the problem that I have previously elaborated upon. REEJER acts as a powerful tool in the advocacy and protection of the rights of children in the eyes of the state.

CAMME (Support Center of Marginalized and Exploited Minors)

CAMME is an Congolese non-profit street child assistance organization created by Christine Lunanga in 2007. The organization, based in Goma, provides amenities similar to Ndako ya Bisso. It is a registered Congolese NGO providing shelter and security for over 450 children in Goma. The organization utilizes educational and supportive programs for children which include arts and culture, literacy, nutrition, sports and recreation, as well as nutrition and hygiene. The organization operates similarly to Ndako ya Bisso where in it provides counselling, reintegration with families, and vocational training and education. CAMME outlines its key tenets as advocacy for the rights of street children, innovation to support the children, education and training, self-sufficiency, protection, and reintegration. Though not based in Kinshasa, this organization boasts a structure and agenda that is key to the understanding how local groups can create a space for street children. It brings together advocacy and assistance in a way that is highly beneficial in the lives of shegoue.

Implications

Despite all the work being done, the problem of street children grows exponentially. It is understandable that because of current economic and social problems that the Democratic Republic of the Congo must grapple with, that the problem cannot be easily dealt with, however the government should understand and develop with its people in mind in whatever capacity possible, and we have seen some acts to alleviate the problem; in Goma, the Special Police for the Protection of Children provide security for vulnerable children, and other city governments are making similar calls for organized street children protection. A new constitution was adopted by the National Assembly in 2005 and approved in 2006 with article 42 stressing free and obligatory primary education in public schools to spread education as well. If it were a just world, the State would fuel these organizations and make a clear commitment to assisting vulnerable children. However, much like the phenomenon of street children, the woes the DRC currently face are complex and difficult to address, as Parnell and Pieterse state, “the problem for residents and their organisations is that it is not always clear with whom they would be interacting in their efforts to improve urban livelihoods...” Despite this, local groups have taken strides to help these vulnerable children, and even if they may only be scratching the surface, it is a much-needed step in the right direction.



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Construction of Identity: Using a Gendered Scope

Abstract

The focus of this paper will be to analyze the different patterns by which men and women formulate their identities, and to determine whether poverty affects any of those patterns. While this topic has been studied by various fields individually, I will be using an interdisciplinary case study methodology that encompasses research from psychology, sociology, economics, and gender studies.

Literature Review

The concept of self and identity has been contemplated over the course of sentient human history. However, they have not been studied in a scientific setting until relatively recently. Scholars have found a plethora of factors that influence development of identity, however, there is a lack of research that draws from multiple fields to create a more comprehensive understanding of gender, poverty, and identity. This case study analysis is an interdisciplinary examination of patterns established by a variety of scholars from the fields of psychology, sociology, economics, and gender studies to achieve a more holistic method of research than previously used. I determined this methodology to be the best approach, as it provides multiple perspectives and insights that are crucial to understanding this topic. To make sense of this topic, it is imperative to have background knowledge of identity development and stress management, through the data provided by each of the various fields I will be analyzing.

Psychology and Cognitive Development

The field of psychology studies the human mind and its function, thus scholars within the field have the most comprehensive research on human cognition. Current understanding of human cognitive evolution is based on Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. He establishes four major stages of studies have established the adolescent years are during the time children conduct the most introspection and diverge from their parents. He explained there are four stages of cognitive development, the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stage. Between the time of birth to the age of two, children go through the sensorimotor stage. During this time, "the use of motor activity without the use of symbols. Knowledge is limited in this stage, because it is based on physical interactions and

experiences”. Between the age of two to and seven, children enter the preoperational stage. At this stage children “engage in make believe and can understand and express relationships between the past and the future”. From the ages of seven to eleven, children enter the concrete operational stage, where they develop the “use of logical and systematic manipulation of symbols, which are related to concrete objects. Thinking becomes less egocentric with increased awareness of external events and involves concrete references”. The final stage of development is known as the formal operational stage, from the period of adolescence through adulthood. During this stage adolescents begin to use abstract concepts, such as cause and effect, in a concrete manner in everyday life. Research has demonstrated that the development of self-image and identity occurs during the formal operation stage and adolescence. This is a result of children implementing abstract concepts and intertwining it with the development of their own beliefs. It is during this age range individuals are most likely to engage in risky behavior than any other time in their life. This is a result of the lack thinking through their actions or failing to examine the possible consequences of their actions.

Additionally, research has demonstrated that, “adolescents are especially motivated to seek out new and exciting experiences, and this sensation seeking regularly exposes them to risk”. Having this attraction towards risky behavior does not necessarily mean that an adolescent child will act in a violent or illegal manner. There are several factors that can affect the cognitive development of an adolescent child, most significantly, parenting styles.

Parenting Styles and Development

Diana Baumrind is a leading psychologist, who has contributed significant knowledge to the understanding of parental styles. Baumrind explains there are three forms of parenting styles, authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. The permissive guardian acts in an “nonpunitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner towards the child’s impulses, desires, and actions...makes few demands for household responsibility and orderly behavior...presents [themselves] as a resource for him to use as he wishes, not as an ideal for him to emulate”. Guardians that utilize the permissive style of parenting are nurturing and warm, allows for expression, does not expect compliance, and is marked by a very hands-off approach. The authoritarian guardian, “attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in

accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority". This form of parenting does not tend to be nurturing, makes many maturing demands, and is marked by large amounts of control of their child's life. Baumrind explains that the authoritative parent, "attempts to direct the child's activities but in a rational, issue-oriented manner. The parent encourages verbal give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind her policy and solicits his objections when he refuses to conform". Authoritative guardians employ a balance between the authoritarian and permissive styles. These guardians are nurturing and warm, exerts high control, explains rationale behind decisions they make, permits their child to express themselves, and is marked by an approach of rationality. Due to the balance of warmth, control, and reasoning, Baumrind views the authoritative style as the ideal form of parenting.

By matching and organizing characteristics with various parenting methods Baumrind could study how the traits for each parental style effected the cognitive development of their child. She found that children who came from an authoritarian household, tend to be anxious, react poorly to frustration, excel in school, and are unlikely to engage in antisocial behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse. Children from a permissive household tend to exhibit traits of poor emotional regulation, rebelliousness, low persistence to difficult tasks, and engage in antisocial behaviors. Whereas, children from an authoritative home are marked by a happy disposition, self-confidence, well developed emotional regulation, advanced social skills, and are more open minded on gender-typed traits. Additionally, these children achieve better grades in school and tend to score higher on the SAT and other standardized tests. The significance of this study is apparent when considering Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Adolescent children entering the stage of formal operations, rely on their interaction with the environment as a primary source of development during this stage. Thus, it is the guardian, who plays the largest and direct role in guiding and influencing the environment of their dependent. By tying Piaget's theory with Baumrind's study, it is safe to draw a connection between the development of self-image and identity to the context of one's environment during their time of adolescence.

Poverty and Cognitive Development

The results of Piaget's and Baumrind's studies demonstrate the significance of the environment's role in an adolescents' cognitive development. Thus, to understand the difference between the methods by which males and females develop their identity within the context of poverty, it is imperative to examine how poverty generally effects child cognitive development. The subject of poverty and cognitive development has been the subject of in-depth research within the field of psychology. Psychoanalyst Erik Erikson contributed to the knowledge of self-image and identity, through the creation of his influential framework detailing the 'eight ages of man'. Erikson claims that the eight stages of man are infancy, early childhood, preschool, school age, adolescence, young adult, middle adult, and maturity. Erikson theorizes that all human beings, "endure a series of crises as they go through the life cycle. At each stage, there is a critical confrontation between the self and the individual has achieved thus far". Erikson's theory is rooted in the notion that human development is forged through consist inner conflicts. He highlights the adolescent stage, between the ages of twelve to eighteen, are the point in time humans begin to question who they are and start envisioning their future. They also begin to restructure their identity based on their social interactions with their peers.

Erikson referred to the internal crisis experienced at the adolescent stage as the "identity versus role confusion". At this stage in life adolescents try out different roles and push for new perspectives. The new roles adolescents choose to explore tend to mark a clear distinction between themselves and their guardians. Erikson claims that the adolescent stage is crucial for "integrating changes in one's body, one's intellectual capacities, and one's role in a way that leads to a stable sense of ego identity". The notion of a stable ego identity as defined by Erikson is a state where an individual feels comfortable with their self and feel at home in their body. When an adolescent does not have a stable ego identity they are impeded in their ability to explore different roles, which results in identity confusion. If adolescent children continue to develop with identity confusion, it can lead to the emergence of a 'negative identity'. Which Erikson defines as adopting undesirable "roles in society, such as the identity of a delinquent". Erikson's research is especially relevant when considering the significant barriers individuals entrenched in poverty face. When children are placed in an environment where they face significant barriers to grow and explore, such as poverty, they

are more likely to develop a 'negative identity'. In the United States, twelve to fourteen million children have lived in households below the poverty line. Poverty creates barriers in the form of shortages in necessities, such as food, clothing, and shelter. As dependent members of a family, children are forced to endure the circumstances they are born into until they become young adults.

The first disadvantage children in poverty face, is their physical health. Beginning at pregnancy children of impoverished mothers face a higher risk of their mother smoking while they are in the womb. In fact, "poor mothers of children from birth to 15 years-old today were much more likely to smoke when pregnant than nonpoor mothers (24 vs. 15 percent)". Additionally, many families that live below the poverty line own older homes with lead-based paint. Lead paint is an extreme health hazard for children as they begin to explore their environments. Children in poverty are twice as likely as nonpoor children to have levels of lead in their blood. Once they are born, impoverished children in the United States face food insecurity, a three-city study "of low-income adolescents found that maternal stress in combination with adolescent food insecurity significantly increased an adolescent's probability of being overweight or obese".

Children in poverty also face barriers in access and quality to education. One comprehensive review that examined the relationship between parental income and school attainment, "concluded that poverty limited school achievement but that the effect of income on the number of school years completed was small". Impoverished children also face discrepancies in funding for their public schools, compared to their more affluent peers. Ultimately, the presence of multiple barriers deeply effects adolescent children's ability to develop a stable sense of ego identity. The result of ego instability amongst the socioeconomically disadvantaged is reflected in the prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems in adolescent children. The emotional issues take on "two dimensions: externalizing behaviors including aggression, fighting, and acting out, and internalizing behaviors such as anxiety; social withdrawal, and depression". Both dimensions are clear indicators that the barriers of poverty have a lasting impact on the self-image and identity that impoverished children developed.

Gender and Behavior

After the establishing a basic understanding of cognitive development and the many barriers established by abject poverty, it is now time to examine the role gender plays in the development of children. Scholars in the field of gender studies have typically used Bale's method of analysis to examine differences in group interactions between men and women. Bale's theoretical framework establishes twelve categories of observation in social interactions. The goal of his analysis is to examine the nature of interaction within groups, not the content of the interaction. Bale breaks down the interactions based on four aspects of social interaction, positive reactions, attempted answers, questions, and negative reactions. The interaction process analysis is scored on "interactions based on 'units' of interaction or communication, these scores are applied to a predetermined set of categories, and an analysis made based on the score of each category. These units are typically made up from one simple sentence expressing one idea". One study using this method of analysis found that, "women generally exhibit a greater amount of agreement and other positive social behaviors—such as relieving group tension and showing group solidarity—whereas men engage in a greater amount of disagreements and task behaviors—such as giving opinions, suggestions and directions". The author found that one reason for the difference in interactions is based on status. She found that "this is reflected in the tendency of men and masculine traits to be more favorably evaluated than are women and feminine traits...high status group members, such as men, are assumed to be more competent, receive more opportunities to make task contributions to the group discussion, and receive more opportunities to make task contributions...". This is an incredibly important revelation, because it establishes a power dynamic in group interactions built on gender based factors. The results of the study also demonstrate an implicit standard, where it is socially acceptable for men to compete against other high-status men, however it is socially unacceptable for women to compete against men in high status. Thus, it is a reasonable suggestion that "gender differences would be larger in a mixed-sex than in same-sex interactions when gender acts as a diffused status characteristic". Through the creation of power dynamics in social interactions it can be suggested that, such interactions, especially at the adolescent stage of life, effects an individual's development of identity and self-image.

Critical Reflection

Armed with the necessary background knowledge of the various factors that influence cognitive development and identity development, the ability to successfully analyze identity formulation amongst men and women is possible. There is no doubt that societal norms and pressures cause individuals to internalize certain norms that may not be consistent with their identity. This incongruity can cause significant damage to one's identity and self-image, leading to a 'turbulent adolescence'. For example, a male child that has interests in activities that society deems as 'feminine', is actively discouraged by authority figures, in addition to society. This is especially relevant when considering that research has already established the significance of parental figures and social dynamics as guiding aspects of identity development. Additionally, this is significant because when individuals internalize traits that are not congruent with their actual personality, these traits take on a self-fulfilling prophecy. A study conducted by the American Psychological Association found that previous studies underestimated the power and "effect of our own negative prophecies, but also the power of others' false beliefs in promoting negative outcomes". This bolsters the research of many developmental psychologists who maintain the importance of the environment on cognitive development.

The implied gender norms in our society affects our ability to recovery and deal with traumatic events. For example, in Western society it is unacceptable for men to show and express emotions, as it is deemed 'feminine' or 'unmanly'. This inability to express emotions because of societal norms causes major issues in coping for men. For men suffering through addiction they reached a point where, "they realized it was not okay to express certain feelings or behaviors, especially if those feelings or behaviors especially if those feelings showed weakness, vulnerability, or sensitivity. Crying, above all, was strictly discouraged". This repression of emotions forces men to seek outlets in the form of substance abuse and other negative strategies. It is often seen as a more 'manly' to cope using drugs, alcohol, or violence than it is to cry, or to seek out help through therapy, talking, and other more productive methodologies often viewed as more 'feminine'. These slight nudges that are constantly reinforced through an individual's life, directly inform the creation and structure of identity. As a result, these norms allow women to use coping techniques that are discouraged to men. One report released by the American Psychological Association found that,

“Women are more likely than men to report using a multitude of strategies including reading, spending time with family or friends, praying, going to religious services, shopping, visiting a spa, and seeing a mental health professional”. Furthermore, the report found that women prioritize stress management as a crucial aspect of life at a higher rate than men. However, twenty-five percent of women feel as though they are not doing enough to manage their stress. While the statistics provided by the APA are revealing, they do not shed light on the reason this pattern exists between men and women. However, through understanding the significant role that social norms and environment play on identity development, as established earlier, it is evident that gender norms are a major factor for this pattern. Men tend to prioritize stress management to a lesser extent than women, due to society’s push for men to remain stoic and unemotional when confronted with difficult situations. Whereas, women prioritize and utilize stress management methods at a higher rate than men, due to society’s acceptance for women to seek alternative methods for coping. These observable patterns are the result of a significant impact levied on adolescents as they form their identity. In addition to the impact of societal norms, the importance of environment cannot be understated, most notably for individuals in poverty.

Research in the field of psychology has highlighted, the environment in which an individual is raised greatly influences their identity development. As I established earlier, growing up in an impoverished environment has debilitating effects on identity development. However, even though women prioritize stress management and employ a multitude of coping strategies, when placed within an impoverished environment, the results are contrary to the expectation. An analysis conducted by the CDC between the years 2009 and 2013 found, “that, at all ages, women experienced more serious psychological stress than men, and younger age groups tended to show more stress than older cohorts”. At first glance, this may seem contradictory to the notion of women prioritizing stress at a higher rate than men. However, as the APA report highlighted, women exhibited a tendency to “see a larger gap in their performance than men do”. Due to women prioritizing stress management, this perceived performance gap only serves to increase levels of stress. However, the most significant finding in the CDC’s report is derived from comparing stress levels between affluent and impoverished individuals. The report found, “A total of 8.7 percent of people

below the federal poverty line...experienced serious psychological distress, while only 1.2 percent of people at or above 400 percent of the poverty line suffered the same". This finding demonstrates the powerful influence that an impoverished environment has on individuals.

Conclusion

While society's norms may influence the method by which you develop key aspects of your identity, the environment an individual is raised in ultimately dictates the likelihood of developing healthy methods for coping with stress. The interdisciplinary case study analysis proved to be an extremely useful research methodology. The method allowed me to establish evidence of differences between men and women, in terms of identity formulation. Which provided me with the capacity to postulate reasons for these patterns' appearance within our society.



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