Beyond Boundaries

MASTERING THE LIBERAL ARTS

Volume 2, Fall 2022

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Letter from The Editors

We are thrilled to present *Beyond Boundaries: Mastering the Liberal Arts Volume II*. This second volume showcases the continued capabilities of graduate students at the University of Texas San Antonio. As the world still grapples with constant turmoil and a continual pandemic, we are proud to have created a journal that allows the phenomenal work of graduate students from the College of Liberal Arts to be displayed.

We thank our continued supporters who helped bring together another successful volume of *Beyond Boundaries*. Special thanks to our faulty advisor, Professor Catherine Clinton, Dr. Yaeger, and Dean Martinez. To our contributors, we appreciate all the effort you have placed into these pieces and thank you for allowing us to publish your hard work.

We are excited to see a continued interest in *Beyond Boundaries* and hope we have created a lasting space for COLFA graduate students to share their achievements. We foresee *Beyond Boundaries* to continue to expand and reach a wider audience. To our readers, enjoy reading *Volume II* and thank you for your unwavering support.

Catarina Garza
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Yvonne Koolmatrie: Practicing Culture

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A deep-rooted tradition of weaving is present in nearly all cultures across the world. Utilitarian in origin, the weaving of various materials has been used for centuries to create functional objects meant to enhance the lives of their makers. Materials and ways of making differ across time and location, but the overall essence of the craft is shared between all. The act of weaving involves most of the senses: sight, sound, touch, and smell. The feel of the material as it is manipulated with the hand, smelling bursts of scent as it is gathered, shaped, tugged and pulled into place. The careful attention that goes into keeping each piece in line with the next. A repeated, almost hypnotic motion which becomes so innate that the maker no longer needs to look at their hands to continue with the stitching. They let their minds wander. When weaving is performed with others, stories are shared, and lives are lived in the midst of the action. The processes and traditions of weaving within the Ngarrindjeri culture is predominately female. I intend through my research to set a new frame around the art objects that have emerged from the indigenous women of Australia. These women, and Yvonne Koolmatrie in particular, have not only reinvigorated aspects of their cultural heritage, but are forging a new future for their art form that is owned and interpreted by the female.

The Ngarrindjeri Weavers

The act of sharing and storytelling are two of the dominating aspects of why the weaving tradition of the Ngarrindjeri people of South Eastern Australia is so vital to their way of life. The Ngarrindjeri are the indigenous people of the Murray River Region in South Eastern Australia; the name Ngarrindjeri translates to 'South East' in English. More specifically, this region of Australia encompasses lakes Alexandrina and Albert, the Coorong and the lower Murray River. The Ngarrindjeri use the resources given to them from the lands on which they live; sedge grasses, referred to as Bilbili, are the dominant material in their woven objects. Bilbili is gathered in small open-ended bundles, about a quarter of an inch in diameter. The bundles always remain open on one end, allowing the weaver to seamlessly join more and more bundles as the weaving progresses. These bundles are bound together by wrapping them with a single strand of either Bilbili or Kayi, a long river grass that is resilient enough to endure the wrapping and pulling of the coil technique. The natural material that they use is provided by the land and in turn the land plays a major role in the construction of their cultural identity; "in Ngarrindjeri hands, weaving has a special significance, for it is a tangible means by which living practitioners maintain their connection with an invisible, but ever-present, community of 'old people' – the ancestors."[1] By working with these fibers, each individual weaver creates their own personal

[1] John Kean, "The Beautiful Aroma of the Sedge," in *Riverland*, (Adelaide, South Australia: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2015), 133.

link to the land and thus a connection to their cultural heritage. Aboriginal artist Ellen Trevorrow explained these concepts during an interview she gave to Diane Bell in 2007. She explained that weaving was a community ritual where young and old come together to not only transform materials, but to also share time and conversation. It is a time, Trevorrow explains, that their stories are told.

> It is the Stories which sustain and structure the Ngarrindjeri social world; explain the mysterious; provide a secure haven in an otherwise hostile world; bring order to and confer significance on relationships amongst the living; hold hope for future generations; and open up communication with those who have passed on. Stories of cultural life recall the creation of the land, of the seas, rivers, lakes and lagoons. They tell of the differentiation of species and of languages. They spell out the proper uses of flora and fauna. These are stories of human frailty and triumph, of deception and duty, of rights, responsibilities, and obligations, of magical beings, creative heroes and destructive forces. Everything has a story, but not everyone knows every story. Nor does everyone have the right to hear every story, or having heard it, to repeat the words.[2]

The culture of the Aboriginal people is deep and complex, and has its nuances depending on the area of the country in which the people live. The representation of Aboriginal artwork in contemporary art circles is dominated by the work of male artists. In the case of the Ngarrindjeri weavers, however, it is the female who owns the skill, its traditional history and its future. Weaving utilitarian objects was a part of everyday life of the people of the Murray River Region. Objects such as fish traps, shrimp scoops and weapon baskets were all made from the bundled coil technique. But with the arrival of European colonizers, weaving traditions in this area began to change. Not only were weaving practices and cultural knowledge passed down from the elder aboriginal females to their daughters and nieces, but further female influence also started to contribute to the spread and evolution of weaving in and around Australia.

Mission History and Influence

The Murray River region was one of the first areas of Australia to be colonized with the earliest British settlers arriving in 1788 in the area of New South Wales which is located in the Southeastern part of the Earth's smallest continent.[3] Religious missions were established along the coast and one of these early independent and non-denominational Protestant missionary laborers was Janet Matthews. She worked to open three missions named Maloga, Metco and Manunka which were all located on the banks of Murray River. Manunka was established in 1901 where Matthews was the sole director.[4] It was here that Matthews began a craft practice as

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[2] Diane Bell, Kungun Ngarrindjeri Miminar Yunnan (Listen to the Ngarrindjeri Women Speaking) (Lancaster: Gazelle, 2008).

[3] "The Rise of the British Empire in Australia," UK government web archive, accessed October 10, 2020, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20220201192758/https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/empire/g1/cs4/background.htm.

[4] Hetti Perkins, "Circle of Light," in *Riverland*, (Adelaide, South Australia: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2015), 133.

a means of supporting the residents on the mission and the populations inhabiting surrounding areas. During this time the traditional, utilitarian forms of the Ngarrindjeri people began to be altered, conforming to more saleable objects that were based on European style vessels. The commercialization of weaving encouraged Indigenous women to create products that conformed to western designs and preferences that featured lids, flat bases, and filigreed details. Janet's daughter, Margaret 'Gretta' Matthews, carried on this practice at Manunka where she was employed as a missionary worker.[5] She had, like her mother, learned the coiling technique from Ngarrindjeri women. In 1922, she relocated to the Goulburn Islands which are located in the Arafura Sea off the coast of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia. With this move, she took the technique with her and introduced it to the Indigenous people who were living there. Matthews continued her mother's legacy in spreading the technique to even more areas of Australia and in that established an enterprise in which products were produced and sold to travelers. The proceeds of these sales were used to fund community initiatives.[6] Since then the technique has thrived in and around Arnhem Land and has spread even further around the country. This new fiber art played a significant role in the lives of indigenous women both before and after Matthews' and the missionary's influence. It was not long before more and more women would take up this skill and reinterpret it once again.

Aboriginal Fiber Art and the Female Relationship

Aboriginal fiber arts are intrinsically linked to values of community and the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. Unlike the western European view of exclusive ownership of artistic practice and the individual genius, the practices of these women weavers and the artwork that they create does not hold true to these constructed standards, not only in materials and forms, but also in social value and inclusiveness. The Indigenous Australian artists who create fiber sculpture view their practice as one of stewardship, not direct ownership. Weaving techniques have traditionally been passed on from female to female within specific regional communities. Mother to daughter, aunt to niece, these are the most common forms of the female mentor/apprentice relationship. In the past several decades, a resurgence of this practice has taken place within the indigenous populations throughout Australia. One of the founding ideals of artistic practice has been that of the master/apprentice relationship and the Indigenous weavers of Australia are bringing their version of this relationship into the forefront.

Yvonne Koolmatrie

Since cultural heritage is passed on from one generation to the next, primarily through the oral tradition, many indigenous people found themselves disconnected from their past. The ravages of time, colonialism, and urbanization had taken their toll. Yvonne Koolmatrie is one of those affected. She was born in 1944 in Wudinna, located in the Eyre Peninsula in South Central Australia, a city located west of the Murray River Region .[7] She later moved to the Meningie

[5] Perkins, "Circle of Light," 133.
[6] Christiane Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies: Innovation within Aboriginal Fibre Practice," Craft + Design Enquiry, no. 02 (2012), https://doi.org/10.22459/cde.02.2010.02.
[7] "Yvonne Koolmatrie," Australia Council for the Arts, May 15, 2019, https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/stories/yvonne-koolmatrie/.

and Coorong regions, eventually settling in the Riverland town of Berri.[8] In recalling her upbringing, Koolmatrie states that her father, Joseph Roberts was a Kokatha man, and her mother Margaret was a Ngarrindjeri/Ramindjeri woman from the Coorong.[9] It is in fact her mother's culture, she claims, that took hold of her and became an obsession. Growing up, Koolmatrie was separated from her mother's traditions and culture because of the gripping and long-lasting effects of colonialism and urbanization. It was not until tragedy struck her in her adult life that she found her way to weaving. Koolmatrie's career as a weaver began as a mode of healing after the tragic loss of her eldest son. It has since evolved to encompass not only her own healing, but the revitalization and healing of her people. In fact, weaving has reinforced community and brought women across Australia closer together.

When the Missions were formed, the traditional ways of Aboriginal life that had existed in and around the Murray River Region for centuries had begun to severely fade. So much so that Dorothy Kartinyeri, known affectionately as Auntie Dory, was thought to be one of the last people practicing the ancient coiled bundle weaving technique.[10] Koolmatrie said that she heard this cultural skill was dying out, so she decided to attend a two day workshop at the Meningie Area School in South Australia in 1982. Auntie Dory was there and in those two days, Koolmatrie, along with several women from the Ngarrindjeri community, including Ellen Trevorrow, learned the coiling technique and how to harvest and prepare suitable native plant fibers.[11] Koolmatrie explained in an interview that Dorothy Kartinyeri was the last traditional person that knew about all the weaving, about the material, where to find it, how and when to harvest it, how to prepare it and also about the basic stitch.[12] The technique is one that had evolved since the 1940s, and involves the binding up of a coiled bundle of rushes of the sedge plant with a 'button-hole' loop stitch.[13] Koolmatrie was there to learn her mother's culture. She wanted to reclaim the cultural heritage and rituals of her ancestors, not knowing at the time that she would play a major role in their reinterpretation and resurgence. Koolmatrie had the goal of keeping her mother's traditions alive, but also, with her own ingenuity and reinterpretations, has created a new frame in which to view aboriginal art and indeed created a new aboriginal art form. Within this supportive community, women are able to more fully own their identities, their histories, their materials and use them to fuel their aesthetic creations.

Koolmatrie's artistic career began after the workshop with Kartinyeri. Her early work concentrated on the historic and traditional forms that were made by the people of the Riverland region. She felt strongly that her indigenous culture needed to be continued, therefore she

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[8] Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Riverland* (Adelaide, South Australia: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2015).
[9] Koolmatrie, *Riverland*, 2015.
[10] "Yvonne Koolmatrie," Australia Council for the Arts, May 15, 2019, https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/stories/yvonne-koolmatrie/.
[11] Christiane Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies: Innovation within Aboriginal Fibre Practice," Craft + Design Enquiry, no. 02 (2012), https://doi.org/10.22459/cde.02.2010.02.
[12] Perkins, "Circle of Light," 134.
[13] "Yvonne Koolmatrie," Australia Council for the Arts, May 15, 2019, https://australiacouncil.gov.au/news/stories/yvonne-koolmatrie/.

researched these forms by viewing the historic fiber collections of the Ngarrindjeri people that are housed at the Sydney Art Museum as well as collections held by other institutions.[14] Some of the forms that Koolmatrie helped to re-establish were that of burial baskets, eel and yabby traps, shrimp scoops, egg spoons, work mats and handled baskets; most of which had not been constructed by the people of the region for almost a century.[15] (Fig. 1) These objects served a practical function in everyday life; tools to use in order to fulfill a physical need. Koolmatrie understands the importance of recreating such objects and is proud that a great number of her creations are now housed in museum collections, thus allowing future generations to view and consider them.

Apart from these historical reproductions, she has also explored forms that serve internal, more personal needs. She has produced several large dreaming mats in which she tells the history of her people while also employing some of the techniques acquired from the missionary days (Fig. 11). Because the southeast of Australia was one of the first areas to be colonized, Aboriginal culture suffered colonization's most severe and lasting effects. In an interview, Koolmatrie explained that once the missionaries came, "the more traditional objects were not needed," and instead the people of the region would create small, dainty items for the tourists to buy during their travels to missions and along trade routes.[16] The scalloped designs that appear in some of Koolmatrie's dreaming mats have their origins in missionary influence and the artist acknowledges this influence as part of her people's history. She is taking charge of her past cultural heritage and associating it with the events and histories that are closer to her own lived experiences.

Koolmatrie's work concentrates not only on keeping the weaving technique alive, but also to bring awareness of the plight of the Murray River and the disappearance of natural resources. One series that Koolmatrie created was inspired by the non-human inhabitants that rely on the Murray River as habitat. Many species of wildlife call the Murray River home, and over the years Koolmatrie has explored the forms of turtles, echidna and the Pondi, or Murray cod (Fig. 2 & 3). The Pondi, now an endangered species, served as a major food source for the people of the region as well as serving as an important ancestral figure.[17] In Aboriginal Stories, the Pondi is considered the creator of the rivers and creeks. Koolmatrie focuses on this form to raise awareness of the species in hopes of preserving its natural habitat so that it can one day thrive as it used to. Woven sculptures incorporate not only the traditional weaving techniques, but also bring to light current issues facing the indigenous people. The threat of losing the Pondi would be a devastating blow. Koolmatrie has said "we don't just want sculptures of the fish, we want to keep seeing the real thing."[18]

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[14] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.
[15] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.
[16] Art Gallery of South Australia, "Tarnanthi 2015 Focus Exhibition - Yvonne Koolmatrie," YouTube (YouTube, July 17, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKHg_HCmpug.
[17] Perkins, "Circle of Light,"139-40.
[18] Perkins, "Circle of Light,"139-40.

Further experimentation with her weaving began to happen after one of her research trips to The South Australian Museum. It was there that Koolmatrie saw *Model of Aeroplane (1930s)* by Jane Watson which was acquired by the institution in 1942. Watson's sculpture was constructed by using a wire frame with celluloid window inserts that support the main body of the plane. The rest of the sculpture was constructed with woven rushes; each component of the plane woven separately, and then stitched together. Seeing this work gave Koolmatrie the confidence and freedom to develop her own sculptural forms. This work by the 'Old People' sparked Koolmatrie's interest in exploring the creative potential of her craft.[19] It is here that a shift began in Koolmatrie's work where she allowed her own creative expression to inform her sculptures. She extended her work into new areas and in doing so strengthened her grip on her own history. She created a series of airplanes and hot air balloons as she was interested in the forms of aerial transportation (Figs. 4-6). Instead of using a wire substructure as Watson had done, Koolmatrie used a continuous coil for as much of the structure as possible, giving her forms strength without adding foreign materials. Koolmatrie also engages in a deep exploration of Ngarrindjeri lore represented through the River Bunyip, the Rainbow Serpent and Prupi the Child Stealer.[20] The artwork created because of these inspirations are quite different from the airplanes in that they show Koolmatrie taking full ownership of her cultural stories to represent them in this sculptural way. All of these works use the technique of traditional weaving, however, stray from functional forms. They let the artist consider more aspects of her culture other than the utilitarian and the anthropological. With these kinds of pieces, she lets her practice enter the realm of the psychological. However, whichever physical form her weaving takes, all her work is firmly grounded in the deep roots of Ngarrindjeri tradition. Indeed, creatively interpreting the act of weaving and what forms it could produce, Koolmatrie brings power to her people. The free play and exploration of conceptual possibilities outside of the normal social structure is when social change happens, and art becomes important.[21]

Exhibition of Aboriginal Fiber Sculpture, The Beginning of The Shift

Koolmatrie's work was first exhibited in 1987 and since then has been widely showcased over the past four decades around metropolitan and regional Australia. Exhibitions include: 'Two Countries, One Weave' (1991) an exhibition featuring artists from South Australia and Maningrida, 'Beyond The Pale' (2000 Adelaide Biennale), the 'Aboriginal Women's Exhibition' (Art Gallery of NSW), 'Tarnanthi' (2015 Art Gallery of SA), and 'Off Shore: Onsite' (Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre), which brought together Indigenous visual artists from around Australia and the world as part of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games' 'Festival of the Dreaming' in 2000.[22]

Koolmatrie's work has also reached international audiences via exhibition and purchases from international institutions and private collectors. Perhaps the most career defining

[19] Perkins, "Circle of Light," 135.
[20] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.
[21] Kathleen Ashley, "Art in Ritual Context: Introduction." Journal of Ritual Studies 6, no. 1 (1992): 2. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44398524.
[22] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.

international exhibition was *fluent*, the Australian contribution to the 1997 Venice Biennale, in Venice, Italy. The Biennale in Venice is easily considered one of the most prestigious art exhibitions in the world. Koolmatrie's pair of uncommonly long, cylindrical eel traps were chosen to be part of the Aboriginal art exhibition within the Biennale (Fig. 7). The show named *fluent*, was co-curated by Hetti Perkins. Perkins saw in the eel traps a dynamic reinterpretation of utilitarian forms. They would still be functional as eel traps, yes, but in Koolmatrie's able hands, they were manipulated in a way that emphasized their unique aesthetic qualities.

The three curators of *fluent* also included the work of an two additional well-known aboriginal artists, Emily Kam Ngwarray and Judy Watson. The work presented by Ngwarray and Watson were mainly large scale paintings, aside from Watson's *Bronze Stones*. These two artists, like Koolmatrie, were beginning to be recognized for their own unique styles within the broader framework of aboriginal art. The curator's decision to group woven, tactile pieces with these paintings helped to elevate Koolmatrie's sculptures in the minds of critics and casual art connoisseurs. The unique way in which the eel traps were displayed, spotlighted in a dark gallery, invited onlookers to come close, to have an immersive experience with them. Indeed, this innovative way to display art within the gallery setting was not only unique to *fluent*, but was a new concept within exhibition design in general. The two woven eel traps were suspended from the ceiling, allowing the viewer to walk all the way around to view them at any angle. Historically, artifacts that these eel traps give reference to would be placed under glass cases in an ethnographic museum. Instead, these objects were hung quite creatively in a large, shared space, giving viewers a chance to consider them more directly. It has been documented that many people, especially children, wanted to have their picture taken with these works. Additionally, the weather in Venice at the time was rainy and cool, thus activating the aroma of the sedge fibers in which the eel traps were created with. Viewers could not only see these objects in a new and more intimate way, but they could also smell them.[23] Thus, the experience activated multiple senses and the work became more than a specimen of a time gone by. It was an innovative display, unique for the time and contributed to the overall success of the exhibition.

In the exhibition catalogue, Hetti Perkins writes that Koolmatrie's eel traps have an inherent gracefulness and balance which markedly distinguishes them from other versions.[24] She also states that the eel traps are a result of Koolmatrie's intuitive process that allows the sculptural potential of the eel trap to be realized.[25] This framing distinguished Koolmatrie's *Eel traps* as art instead of strict historical reproductions. Marketing techniques as well as positive critical reviews lead to this acceptance of Indigenous Australian art being seen as contemporary practice rather than an ethnographic survey based on history and geographic location. Art critics, such as John McDonald of Australia and William Packer of Great Britain, identified connections with the art they saw in *fluent* with that of international modernism. McDonald observed that

[23] Sibyl Fisher, "Fluent in Venice: Curating Australian Aboriginal Art Beyond the 'Urban/Desert' Paradigm," Interventions 17, no. 6 (2015): pp. 802-813, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2014.999816.
[24] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.
[25] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.

"the Spiritual or political messages could be extracted at will, but the all-important first impression was a vision of bold Minimalist stripes, fields of shimmering color, and two floating sculptural forms that could have been designed by Russian constructivists as agitprop loudspeakers."[27] Indeed, at least five years before *fluent*, formalism and modernism in art history were beginning to be rejected. Formalism focused on the visual properties of an artwork with little reference to how the object might have been used in its original cultural setting.[26] A new school of thought was developing among art historians, which placed art in ritual context, thus allowing it to be considered within its original cultural contexts. Undeniably, McDonald shows evidence of this emerging shift with his description of the artwork presented as he noted that "the work is exotic in origins, but suggests many comforting family ties with International Modernism."[27] By art critics placing the work of Aboriginal Women artists in conversation with male European artists, they created a larger pathway for consideration and acceptance. This comparison to Modernism was important for the time, allowing the work to be more widely accepted in contemporary art circles, but I argue that this work should not be limited by the frame of western artistic standards. Indeed, this work is important in that it lies outside of that construct and should be considered for its unique female lead traditions, skills, and interpretations as well as its ritualistic value. But it must be emphasized that the inclusion in *fluent* is not only a highlight in Koolmatrie's national and international career as an Aboriginal fiber artist but also greatly contributed to the repositioning of Aboriginal fiber art within the international art domain as fine art.[28]

Continuing the Female Apprenticeship

Koolmatrie and Ellen Trevorrow have had great success in preserving their cultural heritage as well as adding their own interpretations allowing it to evolve it to new and broader contexts. They had both learned techniques and practices from their elders and in turn have also committed themselves to sharing that knowledge throughout Australia and beyond. They see themselves as stewards of their craft or cultural custodians. Their mission is to protect and enhance what is there, leaving it better for future generations. Their teaching gives license to the younger generations to affirm their own identities in their aesthetic pursuits.

Koolmatrie has worked as an arts educator presenting workshops focusing on passing on traditional Ngarrindjeri weaving techniques as well as cultural and spiritual knowledge for the Nalta Ruwe Aboriginal Corporation in Glossop, South Australia as well as conducting workshops in arts and community centers across Australia; including Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, where she has also advised on the planting of a 'Weaving Garden'.[29] She is also active in teaching her granddaughter how to weave. This in essence is the traditional way that weaving was passed down, from one female family member to another. Koolmatrie is considered a master

[26] Kathleen Ashley, "Art in Ritual Context." 1992.
[27] J McDonald, "The Dream Weavers," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum Arts, January 10, 1998, 14S.
[28] Tony Barrass, "Rapper, Weaver, Teacher," nit.com.au, May 26, 2016, https://www.nit.com.au/rapper-weaver-teacher-clean-oz-council-art-awards/nma.gov.au/painting-on-country.
[29] Olivia Bolton, "Yvonne Koolmatrie," Design and Art Australia Online, January 22, 2013, https://www.daao.org.au/bio/yvonne-koolmatrie/events/.

weaver and steward of her cultural heritage. In the capable hands of Koolmatrie and others, traditional weaving has not only survived, but it has flourished.

Koolmatrie's workshops have reached people all across Australia and have also attracted pupils from around the world.[30] The strength of interest from outside Aboriginal communities shows the intense interest for people to be reconnected to the work of their mothers. Although sedge grass coil weaving is unique to the people of the Murray River Region, the main idea and labor behind it is more universal. As a result of these workshops, women from around the world are seeing the true value of their mothers' work. There is the basic utilitarian purpose behind woven objects of the past, but in those same objects that have evolved from them, there lies the evidence of thoughtful design and creativity. These objects and the artists who create them have shown that the female is at the helm of this cultural resurgence.

Community and Sharing is at the Center

The strong philosophy of sharing that exists within the Indigenous Australian sisterhood of makers is inspiring. As mentioned previously, this attitude of sharing is different from the traditional view of artistic practice in which great artwork was deemed to be the result of a singular creative genius. Whereas some would report that specific forms have been copied, this attitude does not seem to live in the communities of indigenous fiber sculpture makers, quite the contrary. Yvonne Koolmatrie and other female Australian Aboriginal artists are challenging us to see that communal based practice creates new and exciting opportunities for innovative art forms as well as a more inclusive artistic community. Janet Watson's *Model of Aeroplane* that she created in the 1930s serves as the first object for this example, and as stated, served as inspiration for Koolmatrie throughout her own artistic practice. Watson came from a prominent Aboriginal family from the lower Murray region of South Australia and learned the specific techniques and style of weaving unique to her familial territory from her older female relatives.[31] She created *Model of Aeroplane* after seeing her brother depart from home in one, flying off to become a shearer.[32] She had used her knowledge and skill in weaving to create a unique aesthetic object, bringing together her Aboriginal past and her contemporary existence in the world of aeronautical transportation. This exploration brought her weaving practice out of purely utilitarian purpose and into the realm of artistic expression. And indeed, years later, Koolmatrie would see this work and be inspired to create her own versions. Koolmatrie had been practicing the technique for nearly a decade when she was commissioned by the Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute Inc. in 1991-2 to create *Mono-plane,* which was meant to be a reproduction of Watson's original (Fig. 4). The work was intended to celebrate the innovation of the Ngarrindjeri culture.[33] Soon after creating *Mono-plane,* Koolmatrie continued

[30] Janis Koolmatrie, *Kaltja Now: Indigenous Arts Australia, The Ngarrindjeri Weaver*. (Wakefield Press, 2000), 99-103.
[31] Ran He, "Janet Watson," Design and Art Australia Online, January 1, 1995, https://www.daao.org.au/bio/janet-watson/personal_details/.
[32] Ran He, "Janet Watson," 1995.
[33] Collectionsearch.nma.gov.au (National Museum of Australia), accessed August 30, 2022, http://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/object/53035.

to explore aerial transportation forms and over the years created several more aircraft sculptures as well as hot air balloons (Figs. 5-6). Continuing to re-explore these unique forms allows the artist to let her past to influence her present practice.

The cycle of sharing continues and has been expanding to more and more areas of Australia. Ivy Hopkins is a Ngaanyatjarra woman from Irrunytju (Wingellina) in Western Australia. Western Australian art is dominated by brightly colored acrylic paintings based on ancestral knowledge called dreaming. Hopkins though was inspired to take an alternate approach. In the late 90s and early 2000s Hopkins ran a satellite Tjanpi office in Irrunytju, supporting artists in the early days of Tjanpi Desert Weavers development. She is an expert weaver in the Tjanpi tradition as well as in hand dying raffia with bush dyes.[34] Hopkins created her aeronautical fiber sculpture, *Wingellina Mail Plane* in 2005 (Fig. 8). Hopkins' work diverts from Koolmatrie and Watson's material and coil technique to take advantage of the knowledge and materials that are specific to her people and geographic location. The sharing of ideas, the acceptance and nurturing of future artists is an enormous strength, each artist learning from elders and taking the knowledge that they learn and applying it to their own practice in a unique way.

The maternal tradition and cultural ownership continue through Treahna Hamm of the Yorta people of the Murray River region in Victoria located in southeastern Australia. Hamm first became reconnected with her cultural roots through her contact with the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative LTD in Sydney. After her time spent with the cooperative, she started incorporating Yorta stories into her work.[35] Hamm further explored her cultural heritage when she took part in a 2002 workshop facilitated by Yvonne Koolmatrie and local respected weavers "Aunty" Dot Peters and "Aunty" Pat Harrison.[36] As a result of the workshop, Hamm was inspired to create works in fiber that take the form of animals and other objects such as *Turtle* (Fig. 9), which was made in 2002 and *Yabby* (Fig 10) in 2006. This new inspiration gained from Koolmatrie and the others opened up the possibility of telling the histories of the Yorta people through these new fiber sculptures.[37] Through the female perspective and materials, these objects are free from the deep constraints that are set upon the practice of Aboriginal painting. Fiber sculpture allows its makers to freely express their cultural identities and interpret them in ever expanding ways.

Artistic Enterprise

Aboriginal women artists have taken ownership of their own histories, identities, and art forms in order to create a self-sustaining creative enterprise. Since the 1970s when government funding was provided for the establishment of art centers and cooperatives that serve to train artists and promote artistic and cultural exchange, Indigenous Art Centers such as the Tjanpi

[34] "Tjanpi Desert Weavers," Tjanpi Desert Weavers, 10AD, https://tjanpi.com.au/.
[35] Marina Tyquiengco, "Defying Empire: The Third National Indigenous Art Triennial: National Gallery of Australia, May 26 – September 10, 2017," Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture 6 (2017): pp. 113-119, https://doi.org/10.5195/contemp.2017.232.
[36] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.
[37] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.

Desert Weavers have thrived. Regular marketing outlets and feedback from the art market helped Aboriginal artists to "adapt their skills to make more marketable products."[38] Fiber exclusive exhibitions with accompanying exhibition catalogs also helped to establish this art in the wider art market. It is also important to note that the purchasing of fiber works by major institutions and private collectors has also played a significant role in the acceptance by the greater arts community of woven objects as fine art. This is important to acknowledge because it signals an important shift in the standards of fine art away from a strictly western perspective. This enabled a revolution to take place in the hearts and minds of Aboriginal women, that their histories, materials, techniques were indeed something to take notice of.

This shift in having Aboriginal woven objects presented in museums and galleries as fine art has as much to do with the creative efforts of the artists as it does with curators, art critics and art historians. Along with the important work of Hetti Perkins for the 1997 Venice Biennale, other curators were actively marketing woven sculptural forms as fine art. Badtjala artist Fiona Foley with traditional links to Fraser Island started to visit Maningrida in 1986 and helped the arts advisor Diane Moon to organize and exchange of fiber artists from Fraser Island and Maningrida with collaborative fiber workshops in Sydney.[39] Diane Moon also serves as art advisor to Lena Yarinkura. Because of their own efforts and the efforts of other art world professionals, the indigenous women of Australia are empowered to pass down their knowledge once again to the younger generations in order to preserve and expand on their cultural heritage. As seen in the physical example of the coiled bundle technique, the woven creations made by the Ngarrindjeri start at the center and from there spiral outwards, its influence touching more and more as it grows.

Conclusion

As evident by the developments in Aboriginal fiber arts over the past several decades, the women of Aboriginal Australia are owning their cultural heritage and interpreting it in unique ways. Still strong are their traditions of the female-to-female transfer of knowledge. These cultural custodians are also fiercely focused on creating art objects that not only reflect an important part of their past, but also directly affect their future. Yvonne Koolmatrie's work in particular fully illustrates these points. Over her career she has created an evolving body of work that speaks to not only to the importance of continuing cultural traditions, bringing awareness to social and political issues of today, but also has framed those discussions from the female perspective.

[38] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.
[39] Keller, "From Baskets to Bodies," 2012.

Images:

Figure 1. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Eel Trap*, 1992, bilbili, (sedge rushes, Lepidosperma canescens), 44.0 × 46.0 x 87.0 cm

Figure 2. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Echidna* 2010, sedge rushes (Lepidosperma canescens) and echidna quills, 25.0 x 50.0 x 11.0 cm

Figure 3. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Pondi* (Murray River Cod), 2009, Sedge grass, river rushes. 59 x 44 x 116cm.

Figure 4. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Mono-plane*, 1991-2, sedge rushes

Figure 5. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Bi-plane*, 1994, Sedge rushes, 50 x 113 x 135 cm

Figure 6. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Bi-plane*, 2006, Sedge rushes, 65 x 92 x 112 cm

Figure 7. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *Eel Trap*, Sedge Rushes, 1997

Item removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 8. Ivy Hopkins, *Wingellina Mail Plane*, 2005, native grasses, raffia, string, wool, wood, wire, plastic, 134 x 133.5 x 47 cm

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Figure 9. Treahna Hamm, *Turtle*, 2002, natural fiber, 44.5 x 38 x 6cm

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Figure 10. Treahna Hamm, *Yabby*, 2006, Grass and gumnuts, 76h x 70w cm, 84 cm diameter

Figure 11. Yvonne Koolmatrie, *River Dreaming*, 2007, woven fibre mat, 142.5 cm x H 101.5 cm x D 5.9 cm

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The Southwest Voter Research Institute's Latin America Project: A Vehicle for Latino Empowerment

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Introduction

William Velásquez died at forty-four. Even though he had a short life, he profoundly impacted American democracy and the advancement of Latino rights. As Bill Clinton said when he posthumously awarded Velásquez the presidential Medal of Freedom, "No person who has run for public office, wherever Hispanic Americans live, has failed to feel the hand of Willie Velásquez at work…Willie is now a name synonymous with democracy in America."[1] Throughout Velásquez's short career, he founded, co-founded, and led multiple Latino organizations to pursue his ultimate goals, the empowerment of his community, the advancement of working-class people, and the strengthening of American democracy. Velásquez spent his career pushing the message *Su Voto Es Su Voz,* your vote is your voice. That message became the official slogan of his most influential creation, the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP.)

Velásquez created SVREP to remove the barriers preventing Latinos from fully participating in the US democratic system and organized those Latinos through voter registration drives to become a powerful electorate. After witnessing a massive rise in Latino electoral participation and representation in government over the first decade of SVREP's existence, Velásquez felt it was time to expand his organization's aims. Despite Latino's gains in other areas, Velásquez thought that Latinos lacked a voice in shaping the US's foreign policy. In 1987, Velásquez created the Southwest Voter Research Institute's (SVRI) Latin America Project (LAP) to address Latinos lack of voice by mobilizing them on foreign policy issues. The LAP used the Reagan and Bush administration's support for the Contras in Nicaragua and the El Salvadoran military's fight against the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) as a focal point to galvanize Latinos in foreign policy. Velásquez's decision to form the LAP raises the question: why did a Latino organizer known for his voter registration drives engage in foreign policy debates? If Velásquez's goal was to empower the Latino community, how did the LAP serve this agenda?

Understanding the LAP without discussing Velásquez's life and vision is almost impossible. Velásquez spent his activist career empowering Latino and working-class people; the LAP was another tool for advancing that agenda. During Velásquez's time with Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), he centered his efforts on education reform for the Latino community. Velásquez moved on to empowering Latinos at the ballot box by forming SVREP. SVREP's massive success in registering Latino voters and the corresponding rise in

[1] Maria F. Durand, "Clinton presents medal to Velásquez's widow," *San Antonio Express,* September 30, 1995.

elected officials only made Velásquez hungrier for new opportunities. MAYO and SVREP built Latino power, but SVRI and the LAP enabled them to use that power. Velásquez never got to see the heights of success the LAP reached in the 1990s, but his vision for the organization continued to guide it under the leadership of his successors. This project argues that Velásquez's primary motivation for creating the LAP was his lifelong vision of Latino empowerment. Despite the Latino community's gains in political representation, they were still being left out of the shaping of foreign policy. Velásquez was confident that the Latino community opposed the U.S.'s policies in Central America and that he could use that issue to engage them in foreign policy.

Methodology

This research paper contributes to the expanding scholarship on the Latin American Solidarity movement by examining how Latinos linked their struggle for social justice and political rights to their counterparts in Central America. This work is based on research conducted at UTSA's Southwest Voter Registration Education Project 1974-1994 archives, a resource that holds SVREP, SVRI, and the LAP's records. This essay focuses on Velásquez's vision for Latino empowerment, his activist career, and the LAP's activities up to 1990. Additionally, a brief section before the conclusion discusses former SVREP president Antonio Gonzalez's writings about his perceptions of the LAP's organizing that stretches into 1994.

William Velásquez and MAYO

William Velásquez cofounded his first organization in 1967, when he and four associates, Jose Angel Gutierrez, Mario Compean, Ignacio Perez, and Juan Patlan (Los Cincos), started the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) as part of the Chicanx movement.[2] The Chicanx movement was a social/political movement that emerged in the 1960s; it was led by young Mexican-Americans that challenged the U.S.'s structural racism, embraced a Chicanx identity, promoted Mexican culture, and advocated for the general empowerment of the Chicanx community. Activists chose to identify as Chicanx rather than Mexican-American to emphasize pride in their identity and as a rejection of the calls to assimilate into U.S. culture at the expense of their traditions.[3] During his time with MAYO, Velásquez began to articulate his vision for Latino empowerment.

MAYO's main influences came from within the Latino community and signaled the first signs of Velásquez's concern for working-class people. MAYO was most directly inspired by the United Farm Workers (UFW) strikes led by Cesar Chavez.[4] Organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum influenced MAYO and created opportunities for the Latino community after WWII by organizing against segregation and discrimination at the ballot box, but Los Cincos were dissatisfied with their leadership.[5] Los

[2] Juan A. Sepulveda, *Life and Times of Willie Velásquez: Su Voto Es Su Voz*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2005), 38-39.
[3] Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-garde of the Chicano movement in Texas*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 45-48.
[4] Ibid., 81.
[5] Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*

Cincos saw previous organizations as indifferent to the plight of working-class Latinos and thought Chavez's mass mobilization of farmworkers against their Anglo employers was a more inspiring model.[6]

The Chicanx community's socio-economic situation in the 1960s led Los Cincos to make economic reform a major part of MAYO's agenda. While poverty in the Chicanx community declined in the 1960s, 24% of people with Spanish surnames still lived below the poverty line. The Chicanx middle-class was on the rise, but racial discrimination precluded them from rising to the level of Anglos.[7] MAYO categorically denied that it was a communist organization, but Marxism influenced its ideology, and it developed a quasi-anti-capitalist doctrine that sought to overturn the Anglo-dominated economic system that impoverished Latinos.[8] Velásquez demonstrated his commitment to including working-class Latinos in 1968 when he organized the third La Raza Unida conference. Velásquez mandated that all the moderators and coordinators for the conference come from the barrios.[9] Velásquez maintained his preference for the poor until his death and carried that principle with him when he started the LAP.

Los Cincos were particularly concerned with education reform; they believed that the racism of the Southwest created a school system that left Chicanxs unprepared to succeed in American society.[10] MAYO demanded that the US reform its education system by: ending de facto segregation, hiring more Chicanx educators, acknowledging that Mexican language and culture were equal to Anglo's, and increasing opportunities for Chicanx students in higher education.[11] MAYO coordinated 39 student walkouts and boycotts to fight for their demands, the most of any Chicanx group in the period.[12] Velásquez maintained his commitment to Latino education throughout his career; it was an essential element of his later projects.

Although Los Cincos shared enough values to form MAYO, Velásquez's divergent vision for Latino empowerment led to his departure from the organization. The other four members of Los Cincos singled out the Black Power movement and the Black Panthers as the most significant non-Chicanx influences on MAYO.[13] Velásquez's disagreements with his peers over tactics indicate that the Black Panthers were not the model for his vision. Velásquez thought that the more radical tactics employed by MAYO, like its confrontational rhetoric and militancy, were counterproductive. Velásquez argued they should focus on working with, rather than antagonizing, moderate Latinos to organize voter registration drives.[14] Velásquez also opposed Gutierrez and Compean's plan to form a Chicanx third party and proposed that it would be more effective to work with the Democrats.[15] All of Los Cincos wanted to empower the Latino

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[6] Ibid., 80-82.
[7] Ibid., 22-23.
[8] Ibid., 97-98.
[9] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Su Voz*, 66-67.
[10] Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 115.
[11] Ibid., 91-92, 115-118.
[12] Ibid., 117.
[13] Ibid., 83-84.
[14] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Voz*, 73-74.
[15] Armando Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party: A Chicano Challenge to the U.S. Two-Party Dictatorship*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 41-42.

community, but as the 1960s turned into the 1970s, they worked towards the same goal on different paths.

SVREP: Building Latino Power Through the Ballot Box

Velásquez resigned from MAYO in 1971 and moved forward with his plan to focus on voter registration drives in 1974 when he founded SVREP.[16] During Velásquez's time with MAYO, he fostered relationships with members of the African-American civil rights organization the Voter Education Project (VEP), whose voter registration model was the basis for SVREP.[17] Velásquez created SVREP as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, which precluded officially partisan organizing, and received guidance from VEP's leadership on the process.[18] Velásquez served as president of SVREP from its inception till his death, with a few small gaps, and his ideology defined the organization.[19]

SVREP's initial challenge was to engage the Latino community in electoral politics and remove the last institutional barriers that disenfranchised them. By 1974, many of the institutional obstacles that limited Latino electoral participation were eliminated through the efforts of the Latino Civil Rights and Chicanx movements. Still, electoral practices like at large election systems, racially driven gerrymandering, and restrictive voter registration procedures remained and limited Latino participation.[20] The other major problem that SVREP had to address was the abysmal electoral participation rates among Latinos.[21] A fully mobilized Latino electorate had the power to swing elections across the Southwest, and Velásquez wanted to mobilize them. Between 1974 and 1984, SVREP organized over 500 voter registration drives in seven states and litigated over 80 cases against discriminatory electoral systems.[22]

SVREP consciously kept a low public profile during its early years, but the success of its registration drives meant that by 1980 it could no longer remain invisible. Initially, SVREP accepted virtually all requests to aid voter registration drives, but by 1980 it became overwhelmed with more requests than it could respond to.[23] SVREP maintained relationships with Democratic officials throughout the 1970s, but their reputation as a premier organization for information on the Latino community had Republicans like Lee Atwater and Vice-President George Bush Sr. seeking their advice.[24] Keeping a low profile was no longer an option for SVREP, and the organization expanded the scope of its activities over the 1980s.

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[16]Articles of Incorporation: Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, Inc, May 5, 1974, MS 452., Box 1. Folder, Administrative: Articles of Incorporation 1974, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization,* 243-245.

[17] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Su Voz*, 117-121.

[18] Ibid., 121.

[19] Ibid., 259-260, Southwest Voter Research Institute, *Biennial Report,* MS 452., Box 200, Folder, Biennial Report 1988-1989, 1991 (1 of 2), Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 7-8.

[20] David Montejano, *Chicano Electoral Politics, 1964-1984: Gains and Promises*, Undated, MS 452., Box 235, Folder, Electoral Politics, 1964-1984: Gains and Promises: 1984, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 1.

[21] Montejano, *Chicano Electoral Politics*, 15.

[22] Ibid., 3-4.

[23] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Su Voz*, 215-216.

[24] Ibid., 289-291, 300-302,

Velásquez's anguish over the rise of the New Right and the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980 was another major motivation for expanding SVREP. Velásquez was deeply troubled by Reagan's victory and viewed him as a threat to the gains won by Latinos over the preceding decades. Velásquez had good reasons for concern; the 1980s saw the return of the English Only Movement, and SVREP finally began to receive the backlash from the Anglo press that they consciously tried to avoid.[25] Velásquez felt the Latino community agreed with his progressive views, and their inclusion in the democratic process would moderate the U.S.'s economic policies and uplift the working class.[26] The Reagan administration's plan to cut welfare, reduce government spending, and deregulate the economy was antithetical to Velásquez's vision for the United States.

While Velásquez viewed Reagan's victory as a disaster, it was also an opportunity. Liberal foundations poured funds into organizations whose efforts undermined Reagan's chances in 1984, and SVREP was a recipient of that funding.[27] SVREP spent its first ten years focusing on local elections, but Velásquez concluded that the organization needed to think bigger. SVREP never abandoned local initiatives, but Velásquez knew that Latinos could not solve problems like unemployment or immigration reform at the local level.[28] SVREP's voter registration campaign in the 1983-1984 election cycle dwarfed all its previous drives and signaled the organization's rising stature.

SVREP's efforts in the 1984 election demonstrate that while it was ostensibly a non-partisan organization, its leader's politics were left of center and that its efforts benefitted the Democratic party. SVREPs 1984 election registration drive is a clear example of how a non-partisan organization can target its campaigns to benefit a particular political party without violating its 501(c)(3) status. In 1983, SVREP started its first national voter registration drive after exporting its model to mid-west and northeastern Latinos.[29] While Velásquez exported SVREP's registration model to Latinos across the U.S., he consciously avoided organizing Florida's Cuban community because any efforts there would benefit the Reagan campaign.[30] While SVREP's organizing always remained officially non-partisan Velásquez's years of experience as an organizer taught him how to target its efforts towards partisan goals.

SVREP's national registration drive failed to stop the re-election of Reagan, but it was a success in many other regards. SVREP hoped to register 680,000 Latino voters but only achieved 430,000.[31] The Ad Hoc Funders' Committee's 1983-1984 Interface report recognized SVREP as the country's most significant voter registration organization.[32] While SVREP massively undershot its projections, it gained experience exporting its registration model to the national Latino community, experience that it later used in the LAP.

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[25] Ibid., 224-226.
[26] Ibid., 156.
[27] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Su Voz*, 284-287.
[28] Ibid., 299-300.
[29] Ibid., 265, 308-310.
[30] Ibid., 293.
[31] Ibid., 332.
[32] Ibid., 335-336.

For its first ten years, SVREP's organizing efforts centered on building the power of the Latino community; with its strength now established, it expanded its efforts to hold politicians accountable to that power. Velásquez was concerned that even though the Latino electorate was increasing in size, they were still being taken for granted by their representatives. Velásquez was also frustrated by Latino politicians who got into office on the back of their community's support, who, once elected, continued to represent the interests of the Anglo politicians they just replaced. SVREP wanted to empower the Latino community and promote the progressive politicians that represented their interests.[33] Velásquez concluded that SVREP needed a dedicated research wing to quantify the Latino perspective on policies so they could use that information to lobby politicians.[34] To achieve that end, Velásquez founded SVRI in 1985. SVRI conducted polls and surveys of Latino policy preferences and used the results to lobby their representatives to legislate according to their demands.[35] The 1983-1984 registration drive and the formation of SVRI demonstrate Velásquez's lack of complacency; he was always searching for the next opportunity to empower Latinos.

The Central American Solidarity Movement and the Institutionalization of Latino Power

While Velásquez focused on expanding SVREP in the early 1980s, he also became interested in the U.S.'s role in the wars engulfing Central America. In El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) was fighting a guerilla campaign against the U.S.'s allies in the military.[36] In Nicaragua, the Central Intelligence Agencies (CIA) backed Contras forces who carried out a terrorist campaign against the reformist Sandinista government.[37] Velásquez believed that the U.S.'s foreign policy in Central America undermined the moral authority of the nation and sought to mobilize Southwestern Latinos to develop a more humane alternative.[38]

The State Department's policies towards Nicaragua and El Salvador over the 20th century are defined by consistent support, through military and economic aid, for authoritarian rulers that protected the U.S.'s strategic and financial interests in the region. While the US was backing the Contras in the 1980s its support for right-wing forces in Nicaragua went back much further. The US occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933 and created the *Guardia Nacional* to promote internal stability, with Anastasio Somoza García as its head. The U.S. intended the Guardia Nacional to be an apolitical police force without anticipating that Somoza would seize power for himself,

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[33] Antonio Gonzalez, "Willie Velasquez and the Contras," Tales of Central America, no. 1, May 9, 2018, 3-6. Retrieved https://wcvi.org/files/TalesfromCentralAmerica-Vignette1-2018.pdf.
[34] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Su Voz*, 350-351, 357.
[35] Ibid., 357.
[36] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), 253-254.
[37] Ibid., 241, 281-282.
[38] Southwest Voter Research Institute, Views of Latino Leaders: A Roundtable Discussion on U.S. Policy in Nicaragua and the Central American Peace Plan, February 1988, MS 452., Box 200, Folder, Peace in Central America, 1988, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 17.

turning Nicaragua into his own personal fiefdom with the backing of his own personal army.[39] El Salvador was ruled by "the fourteen families" and their collaborators in the military for a century by the 1980s but became dependent on U.S. aid later than Somoza.[40] During the Kennedy administration, El Salvador was the largest recipient of Alliance for Progress funds of any Central American Nation.[41] The Kennedy administration created the Alliance for Progress to improve the lives of the impoverished masses of Central America through economic reforms with the hope of creating long-term stability and a country free of Communists.[42] Predictably, the military elite complex used the program's funds to advance their financial interests, further exacerbating the conditions that engendered poverty.[43] While policymakers were often uncomfortable with the despotism of their Central American allies, the State Department supported the Somoza and El Salvadoran regimes to protect the U.S.'s interests.[44]

The biases of Anglo policymakers towards Latinos influenced the creation of policies that supported authoritarian regimes and repeatedly resulted in unforeseen consequences. The Eisenhower and Truman administrations conducted assessments to determine why Central American countries constantly suffered from instability; they concluded that economic inequality and an alliance between elites and military officials led to horrible conditions for large swaths of the population that inevitably resulted in revolution.[45] After each report, policymakers determined that the only path forward was to continue supporting authoritarian leaders like Somoza to protect the U.S. interests in the region.[46] U.S. policymakers justified their support for dictators by arguing that Latino people were culturally inferior to Anglos and incapable of managing their affairs under a democratic government.[47] U.S. officials thought they could manage and improve conditions in Central America through their support for military strongmen, but they repeatedly misjudged their allies, as Somoza's seizure of power and the El Salvadoran's pilfering of the Alliance for Progress funds clearly demonstrated.[48]

Velásquez saw an opportunity to correct the folly of U.S. policymaking in Central America by supporting the FSLN and FMLN. The FSLN and FMLN both started as broad coalition guerrilla movements that sought to overthrow the dictatorial regimes in their respective countries. Although both organizations included groups from across the political spectrum, they also included Marxist-Leninists, making them prime targets for Cold Warriors in the State

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[39] Ibid., 67-71, Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: a History of U.S. Policy Towards Latin America*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 267-270.

[40] LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 71-72.

The Fourteen Families is the name that El Salvadorans use for the nation's elite, which included significantly more than fourteen families.

[41] Ibid., 173.

[42] Ibid., 150-151.

[43] Ibid., 175-178.

[44] Ibid., 105-107, 111-112, 266-267, Schoultz, *Beneath the US*, 344-345, 354.

[45] LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 100, 105, 108-110.

[46] Ibid., 112, Schoultz, *Beneath the United States* 346, 354.

[47] Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 267, 352-354.

[48] LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 175-176.

Department.[49] The Sandinistas took over Nicaragua in 1979, and the U.S. responded by reforming the remnants of the disbanded Guardia Nacional into the Contra army to overthrow the new regime.[50] The Contras used brutal tactics against the reformist Sandinista regime, raping women, executing prisoners, attacking civilians, and killing tens of thousands of Nicaraguans before they surrendered in 1990.[51] The Carter and Reagan administrations did not want a repeat of what happened in Nicaragua in El Salvador, therefore military and economic aid poured into the country, even after the army was implicated in the assassination of Archbishop Romero.[52] Velásquez later said that the U.S.'s policy of arming Central American militaries to butcher civilians was representative of U.S. values.[53]

In the early 1980s, Velásquez began to engage in the Central American Solidarity Movement (CASM). The CASM was characterized by the mass mobilization of hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens in support of Central Americans in response to the U.S.'s brutal foreign policy in the region. Activists hounded their representatives, signed pledges to oppose any invasion of Central America, and sheltered refugees in their churches to show their solidarity with the people of nations like El Salvador and Nicaragua.[54] Velásquez entered the CASM by joining the boards of the Central American Peace Campaign (CAPC) and Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America (PACCA) in 1984.[55] Velásquez enlisted Antonio Gonzalez, a former SVREP member, and its future president, to pressure Texas politicians to oppose any further aid to the Nicaraguan guerillas.[56] Velásquez thought that the only way to stop the cycle of bad policymaking in Central America was to end the Anglo monopoly on foreign policy. Still, his scattered efforts to help the Sandinistas were not going to achieve that goal. To insert the Latino voice into foreign policy, they had to become organized. In the summer of 1987, Velásquez formed the Latin America Project.[57]

While Velásquez participated in the Central American solidarity movement throughout the 1980s, his visits to Chile and Central America in 1986 motivated him to start SVRI's LAP. In 1986, Velásquez was invited by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a non-profit NGO that promoted international democracy, on a delegation to Chile. In Chile, Velásquez met with opposition leaders to share his expertise on voter registration drives.[58] A month later, the famous Quaker Vietnam veteran and peace activist Dr. Charlie Clements asked Gonzalez to put him in

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[49] Ibid., 165-166, 253-254.
[50] Ibid., 241, 281-282, 300-301.
[51] Joanne Omang, "Inquiry Finds Atrocities by Nicaraguan 'Contras'," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1985, Ibid, 307.
[52] LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 246-252.
[53] Gonzalez, Willie and the Contras, 5.
[54] Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement*, (University of Chicago Press, 1996), xvi.
[55] Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America, *Central America Briefing Book: Claims and Counter Claims*, Undated, MS 452., Box 204, Folder, Central America, 1984, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, University of Texas-San Antonio Special Collections.
[56] Gonzalez, *Willie and the Contras*, 6.
[57] William C. Velasquez Institute, "Intermestic Initiatives," *William C. Velasquez Institute*, Undated, Retrieved https://wcvi.org/intermestic_initiatives.html.
[58] Sepulveda, *Su Voto Es Su Voz*, 376-378.

contact with Latino leaders for an upcoming delegation to Central America. Gonzalez recommended Velásquez and convinced him to join Clement's delegation.[59] Velásquez saw firsthand how the U.S.'s policies devastated Central America, and this encouraged him to continue his involvement in the CASM and officially bring SVRI into the fold.[60]

Entering foreign policy debates was unusual for Latino politicians, and Velásquez was keenly aware that he was engaging in controversial territory. While MAYO engaged in Vietnam protests, they never committed to the issue because of the relatively high levels of support or indifference within the Chicanx community.[61] Latino organizations were historically reticent to enter foreign policy debates in the heated climate of the Cold War, where any critique of the US inevitably resulted in red-baiting.[62] SVREP's Executive Director Richard Martinez opposed the idea of creating a LAP, arguing they should continue to focus their resources on voter registration.[63] Velásquez knew that the Latino community was primarily concerned with local issues when he started the LAP but thought that they "need to understand that with the growth of power there is also the growth of responsibilities. And one big part of the responsibilities is that as we grow in power, we simply must get involved with foreign policy questions."[64]

SVRI articulated a multifaceted strategy to use the LAP to expand the Latino community's power in the foreign policy sphere. The LAP engaged in four main activities: fact-finding and consulting delegations, polling and surveys, seminars and briefings, and publicizing its findings.[65] All four activities pushed forward the goal of empowering the Latino community in foreign policy debates and are discussed separately in the following section.

Assessing the Community: Polling Latino Foreign Policy Preferences

Polling was an essential plank of the LAP's efforts; the organization wanted to keep politicians accountable to the Latino community's wishes, and they had to quantify those preferences. SVRI's pre-LAP polling showed that Latinos opposed the Reagan-Bush administration's policies in Central America.[66] Once the LAP was formed, they began to employ the polling infrastructure SVREP, and SVRI developed to create statistics on the Latino community's views on the U.S.'s foreign policy. Each poll that SVRI conducted returned the same result; most Southwestern Latinos opposed the U.S.'s foreign policy in Central America.[67]

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[59] Ibid., 376-378.

[60] Bruce Davidson, "Hispanic Delegation Opposes Contra Aid," *San Antonio Express*, February 3, 1988, 11, Sepulveda, Su Voto Es Su Voz, 376-380.

[61] Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 83-84, 176.

[62] Gordon K. Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 23-25.

[63] William C. Velasquez Institute, *Intermestic Initiatives*.

[64] Southwest Voter Research Institute, *Views of Latino Leaders*, 17.

[65] Antonio Gonzalez, Progress Report on Latin America Project (LAP), November 9, 1990, MS 452., Box 8. Folder, WCVI Administrative Board Meetings, November 1990 (1 of 4.) Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 1.

[66] Robert R. Brischeto, Latino Views on Central America: Some Samples From the National Polls, November 15, 1985, MS 452., Box 200, Folder, Latino Views on Central America, 1985, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 1.

[67] Southwest Voter Research Institute, "Southwest Voter Research Notes Vol 11, No. 9," September/December 1989, "Southwest Research Notes, Vol 11 No. 8," September/December, 1988, MS 452., Box 197, Folders SVRI

SVRI's polling confirmed one of the LAP's other assumptions going into 1987; regardless of the Latino community's position on foreign policy issues, it was not a high priority. The polls indicated that issues related to Central America were a low priority for Latino voters behind issues like homelessness, hunger, and the federal budget.[68] But Latino voters' disinterest in foreign policy issues was one of the reasons for the formation of the LAP, and further engaging them with the topic was another element of the project.

A New Generation: Educating the Community and Institutionalizing the Latino Voice

Velásquez and the LAP thought that Latino's disinterest in foreign policy and its representative's lack of experience in the matter was a serious hurdle to advancing the project's agenda. Its publications and seminars were vital instruments for solving the Latino disinterest and its representative's lack of experience. Gonzalez said that the seminars "would train our delegates to share their findings with their constituents or members in their home cities, states, or districts. We wanted them to become testimonial-giving Raza evangelists spreading the 'anti-intervention gospel' via Latin America Project seminars, of which there were to be many."[69] Between 1987 and 1991, the LAP held over a dozen conferences across the Southwest, where they invited leading and aspiring Latinos to learn about foreign policy and its effect on their community.[70] The seminars discussed a range of topics, including the implications of Nicaragua's 1990 election, the consequences of the US's policy on Mexico and Central America, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the causes of the influx of refugees from Mexico and Central America, and the condition of free elections in El Salvador.[71] One of the purposes of the training seminars was to share the findings of the LAP's delegations to Latin America.

The Suffering of War: Central American Fact-Finding Delegations

Inspired by his previous fact-finding missions to Latin America, Velásquez made Latino delegations to Central America a significant organizational activity for the LAP. The 1988 mission to Central America was the last to include Velásquez before his untimely death, but the LAP sent further delegations in 1989, 1990, and 1991.[72] The delegations were primarily concerned with accessing the U.S.'s role in Central America, the state of human rights, and establishing relationships with the leaders of different countries.[73] The LAP's delegates met members on both sides of the political spectrum to get their perspectives on the wars tearing apart the region. Eddie Cavazos, a Texas State Representative, was pleased to find that even

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Newsletter, 1986 1-3, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, University of Texas-San Antonio Special Collections.

[68] Southwest Voter Research Institute, "Southwest Voter Research Notes, Vol. II, No. 9", August 1988, MS 452., Box 197, Folder SVRI Newsletter, 1986 1-3, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 2.

[69] Antonio Gonzalez, "The FMLN Comes Knocking, Building the Latino Vote in 1990 in El Salvador," *Tales of Central America*, no. 4, May 25, 2018. https://wcvi.org/files/TalesfromCentralAmerica-Vignette4-2018.pdf.

[70] Gonzalez, *Progress Report on Latin America Project*, 1-2.

[71] Ibid., 1-2.

[72] William C. Velasquez Institute, *Intermestic Initiatives*.

[73] Southwest Voter Research Institute, Draft of Memorandum to Funders, October 26, 1987, MS 452., Box, 207, Folder, Latin America Project: 1987, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 2.

Alfonso Robelo, a member of the Contra's directorate of the Nicaraguan resistance, appreciated that Latinos were reaching out to him even though he hoped that "maybe the next group will be on my side."[74] As the prospects for peace in Central America brightened at the close of the 1980s, the LAP also took on the role of election monitoring.

The LAP conducted its first international election monitoring mission during Nicaragua's 1990 election at the request of the Sandinista party. The LAP initially applied to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to monitor Nicaragua's 1990 elections. Unfortunately, the Organization of American States (OAS) announced that it would not allow U.S. citizens to participate through the IFES.[75] Fortunately for the LAP, they had amassed several contacts in the Latin American Solidarity movement, including Roberto Vargas. Vargas was a Nicaraguan refugee who spent his early life in the U.S. before returning to his home country to work with the FSLN. After seizing power, the Sandinistas sent Vargas back to the U.S. to use his connections with the Latin American solidarity movement to lobby on their behalf.[76] Velásquez met Vargas in 1986 while he was touring Texas with other CASM activists.[77] In 1989, Gonzalez told Vargas that the LAP wanted to observe the 1990s election but needed a request from the Sandinista government, which they promptly received.[78]

The LAP's first election monitoring mission was a tame yet disappointing experience for most delegates. Gonzalez led the delegation and was dissatisfied, although not surprised, that the Sandinistas lost to the Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO) coalition.[79] The delegates were universally pleased that the Sandinistas agreed to accept the results of a fairly conducted election.[80] The representatives voiced their concern that U.S. officials would see the policy of funding the Contras as a successful example of how to deal with other nations who defied their hegemony in the future.[81] Conversely, the delegates pointed out that the concerted efforts of Latin American countries and the Central America peace plan led the Sandinistas to hold the 1990 elections.[82] LAP delegates learned a great deal from their missions to Latin America, and they brought that information back to their constituents.

The LAP sent delegations to Latin America to gain new insights into the region that delegates shared with other Latinos through seminars and publications. The LAP produced

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[74] Southwest Voter Research Institute, *Views of Latino Leaders*, 17-18.
[75] "Letter From Richard W. Soudriette to Juan A. Sepulveda," November 16, 1989, MS 452., Box 43, Folder, Nicaragua Observer Team, 1989, Southwest Voter Research Education Project, 1974-1994.
[76] Antonio Gonzalez, "A La Carga Con Daniel, Observing Nicaragua's 1990 Election," *Tales of Central America*, no. 3, May 18, 2018, 1-3. https://wcvi.org/files/TalesfromCentralAmerica-Vignette3-2018.pdf.
[77] William C. Velasquez Institute, *Intermestic Initiatives*.
[78]Gonzalez, *Observing Nicaragua's 1990 Election*, 1-5, Letter From Carlos Tunnermann to William C. Velásquez, October 26, 1987, MS 452., Box 207, Folder, Latin America Project: 1987, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994.
[79]Gonzalez, *Observing Nicaragua's 1990 Election*, 7-8.
[80] Southwest Voter Research Institute, Roundtable Discussion: SVRI Delegation to Observe the February 25, 1990 Election, Undated, MS 452., Box 206, Folder Latin America Information, 1989-1993, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 1-2.
[81] Ibid., 7-10.
[82] Ibid., 8-9.

handbooks, articles, and talking points, distributing the materials through SVREP and SVRI.[83] The majority of the material for the publications consisted of summaries of the LAP delegations round table discussions, which are discussed in the following section.

Latino Leaders Speak: Understanding the Motivations of the LAP

The LAP's post-mission round table discussions allowed delegates to collectively discuss the implications of U.S. foreign policy on the international Latino community. The meetings give insights into the delegate's, most importantly Gonzalez and Velásquez, views on the folly of U.S. foreign policy, the importance of including Latino voices in the State Department, and the interconnectedness of the international Latino.

The roundtables gave insights into the delegate's argument that Latino's shared culture was a strength and a rationale for their representation in foreign policy. Michael Hernandez, a Latino businessman from California, argued that "the white Cadillac of our top diplomat [in Nicaragua]… represents the gulf between the United States and the Nicaraguan people" but that the cultural affinities between Latinos ranging from a shared language to a love of baseball can bridge the divide.[84] A summary of the delegates' findings argued that:

> Latinos in the United States have been and continue to be victims of economic injustice and violations of their human and civil rights. Such problems are also common among Latin America's poor people…For these reasons, participants in the roundtable clearly believed that Hispanics in the United States should be particularly interested in democracy, human rights, and promoting social justice in Central America.[85]

The delegates argued that it was not just culture that connected Latinos but a shared experience of exploitation and injustice that linked their struggles across national boundaries. The Latino community's experience in the U.S. is largely a story of overcoming Anglo's denial of their fundamental rights, and the delegates encouraged their community to continue that struggle in Latin America. Gonzalez later explained that solidarity essentially ran in Latino-American blood since they "continue to carry the 'political gene' of solidarity with the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean and of resistance to racist or interventionistic U.S. policies whether at home or abroad."[86] The delegates did not limit their justification for including Latinos in foreign policy to a shared culture and struggle; they argued that Latino-Americans needed to assert themselves to protect their interests at home.

The roundtable discussions are insightful for understanding how the LAP's delegates connected the ramifications of the U.S.'s foreign policy to their Latino constituents. Abelardo Valdez, associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas-San Antonio, argued that the Reagan administration's policies in Latin America caused the large influx of refugees into the U.S. and caused the return of the English Only Movement. The English Only Movement threatened to undermine all the Latino community's gains regarding respect for their culture and

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[83] SVRI, *Biennial Report 1988-1989,* 17-18.
[84] SVRI, *Roundtable Discussion: 1990,* 12.
[85] Ibid., 11.
[86] Antonio Gonzalez, " 'Can You Come to DC, right now?' Tales from Central America," Tales of Central America, no. 6, June 26, 2018, 6. Retrieved https://wcvi.org/files/TalesfromCentralAmerica-Vignette6-2018.pdf.

to promote bilingual education.[87] Alicia Torres, who served as a member of the Cuban American Committee, expressed her concern that the U.S.'s policies could lead to a war in Central America, and Latino Americans would serve on the frontlines of that conflict due to their Spanish-speaking skills.[88] Torres also expressed her concern that the U.S.'s policies in Central America caused the entrance of refugees to the Southwest, and they were competing with Latinos for employment and causing social problems.[89] These discussions demonstrate that while the LAP was deeply concerned with the plight of Central Americans, they were equally worried about how the U.S.'s foreign policy affected Latino-Americans.

The LAP wanted to promote accountable Latino leaders, and the delegate's assessments highlighted issues that were a priority for their constituency. SVRI polling consistently showed that majorities of Latino voters were heavily opposed to the English Only Movement, any wars in Central America, and that unemployment was one of the Latino community's greatest concerns.[90] By connecting the foreign and parochial, the delegates demonstrated to Latino-Americans that their local concerns were inseparable from the U.S.'s foreign policy. Their struggle was inexorably linked to that of the international Latino. Torres expected opposition and allegations of bias when Latinos gave their input on foreign policy, but maintained they must assert themselves. She argued there was too much at stake, that Latinos disproportionately suffered the consequences of the U.S.'s foreign policy, and that "Latinos have a natural right to policy input on such matter."[91] The LAP delegates made it clear that their constituency could no longer be ignored in foreign policy.

Delegates articulated a Latino vision for foreign policy in Nicaragua, which diverged drastically from tradition. Several delegates asserted that the U.S. should deliver aid to Nicaragua but on the condition that the UNO government be held to the same human and civil rights standards applied to the Sandinistas.[92] Rejecting half a century of the U.S.'s foreign policy, Valdez said that the U.S. should respect the choices of Nicaraguans and stop pushing its economic and democratic models on the nation.[93] In Valdez's vision, If the people of Nicaragua wanted a socialist economy and a different form of government than the U.S. it was their right, and his country would no longer use force to stop them. Fidel, who participated in the roundtable discussion but did not have his last name given, agreed with Valdez, "the gringo idea of democracy may not be appropriate here."[94] Hernandez wanted Latinos to play a positive role in Latin America as neutral parties and to "avoid serving as power broker[s] for the domination of

[87] SVRI, *Views of Latino Leaders*, 10-11.
[88] SVRI, *Roundtable Discussion: 1990,* 11-12.
[89] Ibid., 12.
[90] SVRI, *Southwest Voter Research Notes, Vol 1., No. 3, Southwest Voter Research Notes, Vol. II, No. 8, Southwest Voter Research Notes, Vol. II, No. 9.*
[91] SVRI, *Views of Latino Leaders*, 12.
[92] SVRI, *Roundtable Discussion: 1990,* 15-16.
[93] Ibid., 13.
[94] Ibid., 16.

Nicaragua."[95] The LAP's delegates were essentially calling for a revolutionary change in the U.S.'s foreign policy.

Latino Leaders Speak: Understanding the Motivations of the LAP

Velásquez's statements in the 1988 roundtable discussion reveal that political ideology was a central factor in forming the LAP. Velásquez geared his life's work towards benefitting working-class Latinos and sympathized with leftists in Central America who shared the same vision. Velásquez came away from the delegations with the firm belief that the Sandinistas were the only organization in Nicaragua worth supporting.[96] Velásquez jumped to their defense when Mario Obledo, former president of LULAC, criticized the Sandinista's heavy-handed tactics against opposition parties and its Marxist-Leninist policies.[97] Velásquez responded that the Sandinistas might be communists, but they were communists who baptized their children and allowed a free market. Velásquez praised the reforms of the Sandinistas and that their form of government was "communist, Latino style."[98] While Velásquez sang high praises for the Sandinistas he was not afraid to express his contempt for the Contras. One of the roundtable's topics was the delegate's perceptions of the Nicaraguan opposition. Velásquez's met with several Contra representatives and said, "Never has any one of them ever mentioned what their vision was for the working people."[99] Velásquez's meetings with Robelo reinforced his belief that cutting the rebel's aid was a top priority as "[Robelo] admits if there is no more contra aid, they vanish."[100]

Velásquez accused UNO's leadership of being just as disinterested in the working class as the Contras. Velásquez sympathized with the Sandinistas because of their pro-working class agenda; his meetings with UNO representatives left the impression that their only agenda was regaining power.[101] While UNO members spoke of restoring the rights they had lost under the Sandinistas, Velásquez thought what they truly wanted was a return to the exploitation of the Somoza regime.[102] Velásquez's statements demonstrate that ideological sympathies with the Sandinistas were a primary motivation for creating the LAP. Gonzalez's series of articles from 2018 shows that Willie was not the only one who held those sympathetic feelings toward leftist Central Americans.

Gonzalez's accounts demonstrate that he was deeply sympathetic to the FMLN and antagonistic towards their opposition. Gonzalez recounted that the 1990 delegation to El Salvador secretly met with the FMLN in Mexico City. Gonzalez described how "these gruff comandantes turned out to be just like us and we really connected with them talking family,

[95] Ibid., 17
[96] Southwest Voter Research Institute, *Views of Latino Leaders*, 12-14.
[97] Southwest Voter Research Institute, *Views of Latino Leaders,* 6.
[98] Ibid., 8-9.
[99] Ibid., 12.
[100] Ibid., 13.
[101] Ibid., 13.
[102] Ibid., 13-14.

justice, revolution…and U.S. intervention."[103] Gonzalez described Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA), the ruling party in El Salvador, as "a fascist party founded by the father of the infamous 'escuadrones de muerte' death squads, Roberto D'Aubuisson."[104] Gonzalez's attitudes towards the different factions of El Salvadoran politics played a significant role in SVRI's organizing under his leadership.

Gonzalez's articles also reveal that Velásquez was not the only organizer who used a non-partisan organization to promote partisan goals. Between 1993 and 1994, Gonzalez oversaw the LAP's efforts to export its voter registration model to local partners in El Salvador. The LAP received most of its funding for the El Salvador project from the U.S. Agency for International Development (US-AID), with the condition that their efforts were strictly non-partisan.[105] While the LAP stuck to non-partisan guidelines, Gonzalez said its efforts were geared toward benefitting the FMLN. SVRI had to contract partner organizations from both sides of the political spectrum, but Gonzalez admits that it intentionally hired more left-wing outfits associated with the FMLN over those related to the El Salvadoran right.[106] US-AID was aware of this tactic and sent SVRI a letter reiterating its non-partisan guidelines and advising the inclusion of more right-wing affiliates if the institute wanted to avoid charges of bias.[107] The LAP acknowledged the charges when they asked their El Salvadoran partner Luis Monge to resign in 1993 over his partisan activities.[108] But the accusations persisted to the point that Gonzalez sent US-AID a letter demanding that someone put an end to the allegations.[109] Between the complaints from US-AID and Gonzalez's later statements, there is little doubt that the LAP was stacking the deck in the FMLN's favor.

Partisan or not, Gonzalez assumed the LAP's efforts benefited the FMLN. The LAP's efforts targeted the poorest areas of El Salvador, and Gonzalez believed "of course, indirectly anything to help poor people get into the electoral process would help the FMLN."[110] That quote echoes Andy Hernández's, SVREP's first research director, description of Velásquez's organizational strategy, "We were training [disadvantaged grassroots] people to think about voter registration, politics, and campaigning in different ways. It wasn't civic duty stuff for Willie. It was all about creating the conditions out of which we could win."[111] For Gonzalez and

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[103] Antonio Gonzalez, "From the Frying Pan to the Fire: From Nicaragua to El Salvador," *Tales of Central America*, no. 2, May 16, 2018. https://wcvi.org/files/TalesfromCentralAmerica-Vignette2-2018.pdf.
[104] Gonzalez, *Can You Come to DC, right now*?, 6.
[105] Ibid., 6.
[106] Gonzalez, *Can You Come to D.C. Right Now*, 5-6.
[107] Letter From Charles E. Costello to Andrew Hernandez, November 3, 1993. MS 452., Box 207. Folder, Partisan Policies: 1994-1995. Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Records, 1974-1994, 1-2.
[108] Antonio Gonzalez, Issues of Partisan Activity in El Salvador project, July 20, 1995, MS 452., Box 207. Folder, SVRI, Latin America: SVRI Non-Partisan Policies: 1994-1995, Letter from Andrew Hernandez to Charles Costello, November 23, 1993, MS 452., Box 204, Folder AID P.I.L's, 1993-1994, Southwest Voter Research Project Records.
[109] Antonio Gonzalez, Observations for USAID Hearings, March, 1995, MS 452., Box 204, Folder, SVRI, Latin America: AID Hearings: 1995, 1-2.
[110] Gonzalez, *Can You Come to DC, Right Now?*, 5-6.
[111] Found in Sepulveda, Su Voto Es Su Voz, 156.

Velásquez their organizing was not about benefiting a certain political party in any country; it was about empowering working-class and Latino people by whatever means possible

Conclusion

Velásquez spent his adult career pursuing his vision of Latino empowerment. That vision led him to form MAYO, SVREP, SVRI, and the LAP. For Velásquez, empowering the Latino community inherently meant empowering working-class people and vice-versa. Velásquez's time with MAYO gave him the experience and connections necessary to make SVREP a success. But as Velásquez saw the power of his community grow, he knew they had to learn how to use that power. Velásquez demanded Latino representation in government, including a voice in foreign policy. Velásquez formed the LAP to quantify Latino's foreign policy preferences and hold politicians accountable to their demands. Velásquez wanted the rest of the U.S. to recognize that Latinos are a significant force in politics and that they deserve a seat at the table of foreign policymaking. Velásquez did not live to see it, but under the leadership of his successors, the George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton administrations answered his demand when they contracted SVRI to conduct election monitoring and voter registration drives in El Salvador.[112]

Velásquez made it his life's work to empower Latinos, and his mission did not stop at the U.S. borders. Velásquez and the other representatives of the LAP held an affinity for the Latinos of Central America because of their shared culture and struggles against oppression. They understood that the Latino effort to achieve recognition for their basic civil, economic, and human rights were an international struggle. Velásquez's sympathy for working-class people led him to form connections with the Sandinistas and the FMLN, the only groups in El Salvador and Nicaragua he viewed as compatible with his vision for empowering the working class. After Velásquez's passing, his ideological compatriot Gonzalez carried his vision forward until his unfortunate passing in 2018. The SVRI continues to pursue Velásquez's vision of Latino empowerment and has been aptly renamed the William C. Velásquez Institute.

[112] Antonio Gonzalez, "There Will be No Elections in Jucuarán!: Observing El Salvador's 1991 Elections." *Tales of Central America*, no. 5. June 8, 2018. https://wcvi.org/files/TalesfromCentralAmerica-Vignette5-2018.pdf., 1-2, Gonzalez, *Can You Come to DC, right now*, 1-3.

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The Development of Orientalism in the Ottoman Imperial Harem

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Abstract

This essay is an expansion of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. This research demonstrates that Orientalist discourse developed in the West long before the periods of history that Said examines. As this essay shows, Orientalism developed over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the European-Ottoman (Christendom-Islamic) world's power dynamics shifted. Orientalist discourse defined European perceptions of the Ottoman and the broader Islamic world for centuries that are still prevalent today. By targeting the Ottoman's premier institution of the Imperial Harem, the West could conjure perceptions of Ottoman sexuality, morality, politics, and slavery from imagination. Orientalist discernments of the Imperial Harem defined the "others" to Europeans by exhibiting what Europeans were not. This essay employs primary literature, paintings, and photographs to display the development of Orientalism from the sixteenth century onward and how the Orient of European imagination became preferred to Ottoman reality.

Orientalism is a theory developed and published by scholar Edward Said in his text *Orientalism* in 1978. Orientalism is a perspective that distinguishes the "Orient" from Western civilization. The Orient, of which Said writes, refers to what is commonly known as the Middle East, while the Western civilization refers to the Imperial Powers of Europe and the United States. Said contends that Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[1] Orientalism eradicates any chance for accurate understandings of peoples and geographies that are different. It takes away from the reality of these cultures and conjures stereotypes that replace the truth. Those deemed "oriental" were given such a label by people outside the so-called Orient. The origins of such a view were to undermine the peoples there, to exploit and colonize those deemed naturally subaltern. While being a product of European imagination, the Orient has continually been viewed as a real place by the West throughout history.

Despite the validity of this proclamation, Said's book ignores a significant factor in the development and perpetuation of Orientalist discourse. Said focuses on the development of Orientalism through British and French imperialism in the Orient during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and how it has continued throughout the twentieth century concerning American interests and occupations of the Middle East. Said's narrow focus does not permit an examination of the West's crucial relationship with the Ottomans which existed as a powerful

[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) P. 3.

Muslim empire on the fringes of Christendom. This essay will expand upon Said's theory of Orientalism, examining the development of Orientalism in the late Renaissance period through an investigation of the Ottoman-European relationship. The focal point of this study will be the Ottoman Imperial Harem, utilizing primary sources from various mediums to demonstrate how the Ottoman Imperial Harem became a driving fascination for the West to push Orientalist perceptions of the Ottomans that would outlast the empire.

The Ottoman-European relationship, which existed before European colonialism, is a significant component in the foundation and endurance of Said's theory of Orientalism. The development of the West's relationship with a Muslim state in such proximity to Christendom motivated Orientalist perceptions of the Islamic world in Europe. The Ottoman Empire's relationship to the West is integral to understanding Orientalism. Edward Said's exclusion of an examination of this relationship hinders understanding of how Orientalism became so widespread in the West before colonialism and after.

Orientalism is also crucial for European identities and cultural development by having the Orient (or other) to contrast with itself.[2] Donald Quataert argued that the Ottomans served as a way for Europeans to define themselves. Europeans looked to Ottoman culture sometimes to determine qualities they wished to possess, but they also utilized Ottoman culture to express what they were not.[3] Quataert says that "[e]ven in the nineteenth century, European imaginings marked the Ottoman East as the degenerate site of pleasures supposedly absent or forbidden in the civilized and vigorous West, where Europeans by contrast allegedly were restrained, sober, just, sexually controlled, moderate, and rational."[4]

Orientalism influenced and coincided with how the West understood the Ottomans. The "invincible Turk" narrative would eventually lose its place in European minds, as European imperial power would rise in the centuries after the Renaissance. Orientalist motifs in literature and paintings would become more commonplace. As the imperial prowess of the West grew, its perception of the Ottomans through the lens of Orientalism increased. The Imperial Harem became fundamental for the West's perception of Ottoman politics, sexuality, morality, and slavery. The Orient of European imagination became more important than the reality of the Ottoman world.

The Ottoman Imperial Harem was one such Islamic institution that was immensely Orientalized and shaped Westerners' understandings of the Ottoman state and society. The Imperial Harem of the Ottoman Sultan was an institution that was off-limits to outsiders; only the women, the eunuchs, and the Sultan could enter. This secrecy led Western observers to begin fantasizing and mystifying the harem and, more importantly, its women. Orientalizing the Ottoman harem shaped how Westerners understood Ottoman politics, slavery, and sexuality. Orientalism created the perception of the Ottoman Sultan as despotic, his underlings merely

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[2] Said, *Orientalism*, P. 3.
[3] Donald, Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*. 2nd ed. New Approaches to European History. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) P. 7.
[4] Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*. 2nd ed. New Approaches to European History, P. 7.

slaves to his will, and the women of his harem nothing more than sex objects. However, the reality of the harem and its inhabitants was much more complex. The harem was indeed an institution of slavery, but elite slavery.

Moreover, this is not to detract from the oppression these women faced; they lost control of their sexual autonomy, were forcibly uprooted from their homes, and relocated to Istanbul (Constantinople) to serve the Sultan. Nevertheless, they were crucial to the Ottoman political/social structure, and slavery in the Ottoman world was not a social death like in the transatlantic context. Enslaved people were essential to Ottoman society from the lowest to highest ranks in the social ladder.

To understand the effect of Orientalism in shaping Western perceptions of the Ottoman harem, it is necessary first to understand the reality of the harem. Orientalism detracts from a proper understanding and replaces it with an otherizing substitute to serve Western interests. Leslie P. Pierce dispels the notion that women of the Imperial Harem were merely sexual objects. Pierce contends that sex was an aspect of life in the harem, but it poses a minute component, and the women of the harem possessed a power that went far beyond the Imperial bedroom.[5]

An aspect of the Ottoman world, which was hard for Westerners to understand, was the roles of public and private spaces and how they differed from the East to the West. The public/private domains differed from the Ottoman's concerning family in the West. In the West, the family was viewed as part of private space and thus apolitical. In the Ottoman world, the family was political. Pierce contends that the members of Ottoman families' males and females "had socially sanctioned and legally protected rights against one another, as well as state-supervised mechanisms for obtaining legal redress."[6] This distinction of the family and politics meant that the larger the household for elites, the more structured its harem would be.

Furthermore, as for the Imperial Harem, it belonged to the household of the Sultan, and the hierarchy possessed opportunities for immense political and financial power. Pierce illuminates the difference between Ottoman versus European power structures. Power tended to grow on a vertical axis in the West, whereas power grew horizontally in the Ottoman world. The closer in, rather than up, defined power in the Ottoman world, with the Sultan being the vortex.[7]

The Ottoman harem was a political institution, and the harem women were responsible for the continuation of the dynasty. Female palace slaves were given new identities and education and made a utility of the Ottoman state. Their lives did not end with enslavement; they became assimilated into the elite stratum of Ottoman society. Female palace slaves were unfree, but they became part of elite society. If the Sultan did not choose them, they might marry other various high-ranking officials of the Ottoman elite. The harem itself presented occupational opportunities for women.

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[5] Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), P. 5-7.
[6] Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, P. 6-7.
[7] Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire,* P. 9.

Betul Argit has studied the lives of female palace slaves of the Ottoman court after their manumission. While Argit focuses on women's lives after their time in the harem, her text also illuminates the reality of harem women during their time as palace slaves and, importantly, their role in Ottoman society. As palace slaves, they were provided for by the Ottoman state through a new identity, education, and salaries to support themselves.[8] Women of the harem were educated and compensated for the role they played in the structure of the Ottoman State. That payment could increase depending on their level in the harem hierarchy and whom they later married, possibly from the Ottoman court.[9] The institution of slavery possessed immensely different functions in Christendom than in the Islamic world. Slaves were a crucial element of society; they were not merely free labor but played pivotal roles in Ottoman households, social conflicts, and politics.

Educating, paying, or assimilating an enslaved person into society, let alone the elite of society, was an unheard-of concept for Westerners. Ancient historian Moses Finley has argued that there were only five actual "slave societies," and all others constituted "societies with slaves."[10] The flaw in this analysis is that Finley only included Western societies, those being ancient Greece, Roman Italy, modern Brazil, the Caribbean, and the U.S. South. Such an examination only focuses on societies where the enslaved possessed no agency or experienced a "social death."[11] There are dramatic differences between Transatlantic slavery and Ottoman slavery, which underscore how Europeans could misconceive the nature of life in the Imperial Harem. The Imperial Harem was a forbidden space that left room for speculation by European observers. This secrecy of the Ottoman Imperial Harem allowed curious Western observers to take liberties in their perceptions and narrations of the harem and its inhabitants.

Argit contends that the prevalence of Orientalist literature on the Imperial Harem portrays the Ottoman harem as symbolic of slavery, decadence, luxury, sexism, and despotism. Westerners use Orientalist discourse to understand the harem and the broader Ottoman culture.[12] Argit's analysis of the harem women's lives after serving in the harem demonstrates the fallacy of the Orientalist perspective, showcasing the misconceptions of European imagination regarding the role of the harem and the women of it.

The experience in the harem for female palace slaves was only one phase in their lives. Once their service in the harem ended, many harem women's crucial ties to the Imperial Palace continued through the patronage relationships formed during their service. Harem women's proximity to the vortex of power (i.e., the Sultan) was viewable in their roles and exhibited in their lives after the palace. When women of the harem left the Imperial Palace, their statuses were reflected in their new homes after their years of service. The proximity of their new homes

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[8] Betul Argit, *Life After Harem: Female Palace Slaves, Patronage, and the Imperial Ottoman Court*, (Cambridge: University Printing House, 2018), P.168

[9] Argit, *Life After Harem: Female Palace Slaves, Patronage, and the Imperial Ottoman Court,* P.168

[10] Lenski, Noel, and Catherine M. Cameron, eds. “What Is a Slave Society?”, In *What Is a Slave Society?: The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) P. 1.

[11] Lenski, Noel, and Catherine M. Cameron, eds. “What Is a Slave Society?”, In *What Is a Slave Society?: The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective*, P. 9.

[12] Argit, *Life After Harem: Female Palace Slaves, Patronage, and the Imperial Ottoman Court,* P.226-227.

would represent how close they got to the vortex of Ottoman power. The higher status when in service is now showcased in broader Ottoman society. The patronage relationships formed by female palace slaves analyzed by Argit and Pierce demonstrate that women of the harem gained opportunities to develop and exercise varying levels of agency during their service. The level within Ottoman Imperial hierarchy that harem women obtained reflected in their civilian lives. While it may be fair to view these women's lives as simply making the best of their situation, harem women's privileged position granted them agency in their lives during service, and even after the harem, illuminated how Orientalist discourse detracts from their reality. These women were enslaved, but their connotation of slavery possessed an entirely different meaning and reality in the Ottoman world as opposed to the European. Both Argit and Pierce demonstrate in their works that the women of the Imperial Harem in the Ottoman state were more than just sexual objects. These women could and did rise to immense importance in Ottoman society. They secured the continuation of the dynasty and created and maintained patronage relationships, accrued wealth, and engaged in philanthropic activities in society.

Heather Madar argues that Orientalizing the women of the Ottoman harem paralleled the perception of the whole Ottoman Empire that European powers possessed throughout centuries following the Renaissance. The portraits of Ottoman women that Madar examines demonstrate that Orientalist discourse of the Ottoman harem was not always commonplace. Rather than creating or continuing Orientalist depictions, these portraits do quite the opposite. Madar contends that the Renaissance "did not embrace the harem as its overarching representational system for the Ottoman Empire because harem imagery was ill-suited to the period of the 'invincible Turk,' the 'terror of the world.'"[13] Madar's work focuses on Sultana imagery which appears very similar to portraits of European women of power. The work of Madar is demonstrative of Europe's relationship with the Ottoman Empire in that when perceiving the Ottomans as a rival or formidable foe, European visual representations displayed prominent Ottoman women as other, but still distinctly powerful and with a striking resemblance to European portraiture. (See fig. 1&2).

Madar's work is illustrative of the development of Orientalist discourse concerning the Ottoman empire and the women of the Imperial Harem. During the Renaissance, pre-colonial Europe perceived the Ottomans as a force to be reckoned with and depicted them as such. Madar asserts that in 1683 the second siege of Vienna by the Ottomans stood as a watershed moment in Europeans' perception of the Ottomans. This event is when a tilt in the balance of power led Europeans to view the formidable foe, the Ottomans, as weakening.[14] Madar concludes that multiple events and ideologies (political, philosophical, colonialism, gender roles, sexual morality, high profile Ottoman Visitors to Europe, rise in popularity for Turkish things, translations of *Arabian Nights*) pushed the Ottoman harem to the forefront of European

[13] Heather Madar, "Before the Odalisque Renaissance Representations of Elite Ottoman Women," *Early Modern Women* Vol. 6 (2011): 1-41. P. 35.
[14] Madar, "Before the Odalisque Renaissance Representations of Elite Ottoman Women," P. 32.

curiosity.[15] However, the exclusivity of the harem allowed European imagination to fill in for the Ottoman reality. As the perception of the Ottomans changed from rival power to lesser power in the eyes of European empires, such imaginations fueled Orientalist discourse, utilizing the inaccessible Imperial Harem as the focal point.

Madar's assessment holds when examining Europeans' representations of the Ottoman world in mediums other than portraiture. Michele Longino examines travel literature produced by French bourgeoise who traveled to the Ottoman Empire. Longino's examination confirms Madar's conclusion that the development of colonialism appears to be presently targeting the Ottoman world within some of the travel narratives. The narrative of Guillaume-Joseph Gerlot demonstrates this occurrence. Gerlot's writing and illustrations (Fig. 3) attempt to capture the magnificence of the Ottoman Empire, but he is reluctant to create anything that may be intimidating to Paris. Gerlot's narrative argues the significance of ruling from Constantinople, which the French King should emulate because, had not Emperor Constantine moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople?[16] If Constantinople was the best place to rule the world, it is clear that Gerlot did not feel the Ottoman Sultan should be on the seat of power. Gerlot's gift to King Louis XIV, illustrations of the Ottoman world, were intended to be more valuable than jewels or other material gifts his contemporaries may have presented. Gerlot's work alluded to giving his king the city. Longino contends that Gerlot's work is illustrative of the development of the colonialist mentality underlying attempts to understand or illustrate the Ottoman world.

Longino noticed a trend when examining French travel narratives. When French travelers began to articulate the beauty of the Ottoman world, they were quick to couple these descriptions with equal criticisms of the Ottoman people and architecture. These critiques indicate that to the French; the Ottomans were underserving of the natural beauty of their territory.[17] In Gerlot's work, when remarking about the beauty of the Ottoman territory, he is sure to include that Ottoman beauty is still lesser than what his home of France has produced, to remain politically aligned with the king whom he serves:

> Now it is not to be imagin'd, that the Gardens of the Serraglio are in any manner to compare with that of the Thuilleries, Versailles, Fontainebleau, nor with the Gardens of several private Gentlemen in France; nor is it to be thought, that the Buildings which they enclose, can boast of any thing comparable to the Louvre, the Escurial, or the Magnificent Palaces of many Christian Princes; for there is nothing handsome or regular about the outside of this building; so that if it vaunt itself over all the palaces in the universe, it is only the prospect which renders it the most delightful palace in the world.[18]

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[15] Madar, “Before the Odalisque Renaissance Representations of Elite Ottoman Women,” P. 32.
[16] Michele Longino, *French Travel Writing in the Ottoman Empire: Marseilles to Constantinople, 1650-1700*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), P 112.
[17] Longino, *French Travel Writing in the Ottoman Empire: Marseilles to Constantinople, 1650-1700*, P 113.
[18] Longino, *French Travel Writing in the Ottoman Empire: Marseilles to Constantinople, 1650-1700*, P 114.

Madar demonstrated that Orientalist discourse was not Europeans' only perception of the Ottoman Empire. Longino's work establishes the underlying colonialist agenda Europeans began to possess regarding the Ottoman territory. Both Madar and Longino's efforts showcase that Orientalist discourse coexisted with one another. The century difference (the 1500s & 1600s) between the primary sources may make the longevity of these coexisting views hard to conceive. However, an analysis of primary source material by Marianna D. Birnbaum illuminates that this coexistence was prevalent even in the 1400s, long before the portraiture examined by Madar and the travel narratives by Longino. Birnbaum utilizes a memoir written by a Christian captive enslaved person in the Ottoman Empire named Giovanni Antonio Menavino, *I costume et la Vita de Turchi*, from the late fifteenth century. Menavino got captured when he was twelve and dwelled in the harem of Bayezid II. During his time as a captive, he received an education from four tutors in Arabic, literature, philosophy, mathematics, poetry, geography, and even studied the Qur'an.[19] Menavino also describes the reality for women within the harem, observing that they were each taught literacy, embroidery, music, and notates that the education that the harem women received was only to be paralleled in Europe by the women of the aristocracy.[20]

Menavino's captivity appears to be rather pleasant considering the reality of other enslaved Christians in the Ottoman world. Because of the privileged position as a captive, Menavino can make firsthand observations about the Ottoman world, specifically the harem, that is not Orientalist discourse. Menavino's comments align more with what the works of Betul Argit and Leslie Pierce have illuminated in modern scholarship. However, the significance of Birnbaum's work to this study is to illuminate how both Orientalist discourse and non-Orientalist prevailed until the rise of colonialism in Western Europe. Birnbaum's work examines another enslaved Christian named Bartul Djurdjevich, who presented anti-Turkish sentiment in his writings about the Ottomans.

It is essential to consider that Djurdjevich and Menavino had very different experiences during their captivity. Djurdjevich got captured during the Battle of Mohaca in 1526. Because he attempted to escape, he endured harsher treatment during his captivity.[21] Djurdjevich eventually returned to Europe through many tribulations, but once there, Birnbaum explains that Djurdjevich became a fierce advocate for the anti-Turkish sentiment. Djurdjevich is critical to this study because his resentment towards the Ottomans is primarily due to harsher treatment. However, his later writings take more direct aim at attacking the faith of the Ottomans and upholding his Christian faith.[22] Birnbaum looks at a debate that Djurdjevich had with one of his masters during captivity named Chelebi. This debate centered around their faiths, and Djurdjevich refused to acknowledge any issues with Christianity, even when Chelebi chastises Christianity for allowing dogs to enter churches where they defecate and fornicate on the floors.[23]

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[19] Marianna D. Birnbaum, "Renaissance Orientalism" *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* Vol. 28, no. ¼ (2006) pp. 379-389.
[20] Birnbaum, "Renaissance Orientalism", 379-389.
[21] Birnbaum, "Renaissance Orientalism", 379-389.
[22] Birnbaum, "Renaissance Orientalism", 379-389.
[23] Birnbaum, "Renaissance Orientalism", 379-389.

This point made by Birnbaum is related to the development of Orientalism in that Orientalism was utilized to place the West (i.e., Christendom) on moral high ground above the Orient (i.e., Islam), especially by utilizing the Ottoman harem, as will be demonstrated later.

The works of Madar, Longino, and Birnbaum demonstrate that there persisted two ways of perceiving the Ottoman "Orient" prior to the eighteenth century. Conflicting perceptions of the Ottomans existed. Western powers perceived the Ottomans as rivals whose prowess and distinctions merit depiction (shown by Sultana portraiture & Menavino's narrative). The other perceptions were altogether Oriental, which insinuated the Ottoman territory ought to be controlled by a European power (as shown by Gerlot) and viewed the Ottomans as morally lesser due to their faith (as shown by Djurdjevich). Events such as the second siege of Vienna (1683) and new developments in academia, politics, philosophy, colonialism, gender roles, sexual morality began to push Orientalist perceptions of the Ottoman world over reality, becoming a fascination.[24] The Orient of European imagination justified colonialist views of the Ottoman territory. The Ottoman harem became foundational for Orientalism. The spark that gave Western European imaginations of the harem as an Orientalist motif to utilize was Lady Montagu's Letters from the end of the eighteenth century, which circulated throughout Europe after her death in 1762.[25] The harem came to embody the otherness Western Europe attributed to the Ottomans. To European imaginations, the harem was a forbidden sanctuary filled with luxury, exoticism, eroticism, and most importantly, enslaved foreign women serving a Muslim despot.

Lady Mary Montagu was a British noblewoman who visited the Ottoman Empire with her husband, Edward Wortley Montagu, the British ambassador to the Sultan's court. Montagu's letters represent a unique perspective; because Montagu was a woman, she gained entrance into the world of elite Turkish women, where no prior European male observer could enter.

Hasan Baktir stresses the importance of Lady Montagu's letters: "Among all 18th-century texts about Ottoman Turkey, the most path-breaking and influential one is Lady Mary's *Turkish Embassy Letters*; she seems to enjoy writing about the mistakes of preceding male travelers."[26] Baktir devotes time to analyzing previous Western observations that Lady Mary's work contests. Baktir argues that Lady Mary Montagu disputed observations made by English travel writer Robert Withers in his writings: *A Description of Grand Seignior's Seraglio* from 1650. Both Lady Mary Montagu and Robert Withers are crucial sources because they demonstrate that up until this time, there were two competing ways of perceiving the Ottomans. Due to the secrecy of the Ottoman harem (being barred from men), those who were not permitted to enter tended to Orientalize what they were capable of encountering. Baktir exposes the fallacies present in Robert Withers's *Description* by comparing it with Lady Mary's *Letters*. Withers, in his *Description,* claims to have observed a Turkish custom regarding the Sultan. During his selection of a mistress from the harem, the Sultan indicates his decision by dropping a handkerchief into

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[24] Madar, "Before the Odalisque Renaissance Representations of Elite Ottoman Women," P. 32

[25] Muslim Journeys | Item #91: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Visit to a Harem", November 21, 2021, http://bridgingcultures-muslimjourneys.org/items/show/91.

[26] Hasan Baktir, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature*, (Ibidem Verlag, 2014) p.158.

her hand.[27] However, Baktir then contrasts this observation with Lady Mary's account. She writes of a conversation with the Sultana herself, who assured her that this was merely fiction: "the throwing of the handkerchief was altogether fabulous."[28] Lady Mary's description is demonstrative of how perceptions of Ottoman society differed. Lady Mary's narrative was from firsthand accounts and interactions with the women of the harem. In contrast, Robert Withers had to utilize his imagination because he could not enter the harem. It showcases how easily fabricated the story of the harem and its inhabitants could become.

Fantastical fabrications became popular with those who write these accounts and those who will eventually read and be captivated by them. Robert Withers also showcases an example of Orientalism when describing the Turkish women whom he possibly came across during his travels. Withers views the veiling of Turkish women as a sign of their enslavement, therefore indicative of the "uncivilized, inferior, and barbaric aspect of the Ottoman civilization."[29] Baktir does not delve into what women Withers may have accounted for, whether enslaved or free. However, Withers's expression is of Orientalist nature in labeling a culture different from his own, which he does not understand, as barbaric.

Moreover, Withers does not stop with his Orientalizing there; he surprisingly then notes the beauty of Turkish women: "the Turkish women are the most charming creatures in the world… They seem to be made for love…Their actions, gestures, discourse and looks are all amorous."[30] Such conflicting perceptions make his account all the more questionable.

Robert Withers was not alone in accounting for the Ottoman world and its women. Baktir examines another English travel writer who similarly describes the Ottomans. Jean Dumont's travel narratives portray a scene that would become immensely prevalent in Orientalist discourse during the nineteenth century and a prevalent motif for Orientalist artworks. According to Dumont, Turkish men appear to be entirely happy with their situation: "they sit whole days on sopha, without any other occupation than drinking coffee, smoking tobacco, or caressing their wives."[31] Jean Dumont expresses Orientalist perceptions of the Ottomans. Dumont's account depicts Turkish men as lazy, weak, and immoral people who live a life of excess and luxury. Accounts such as these will become the embodiment of nineteenth-century Western Orientalist art. Their lives of luxury weaken Turkish men, and Turkish women are merely sexual objects for the taking. It is becoming more apparent in European travel literature (French & English) that the Ottoman character possesses less morality than Europeans. Again, these narratives are based mainly upon imagination since entering the harem was prohibited.

Lady Mary Montagu's work is of the utmost importance as it is one of the only travel accounts from an individual that gained access to forbidden spaces. Montagu appears to attempt an honest description of the Ottoman harem and women of it. Baktir has utilized her work to challenge more imaginative male travel accounts from England. Lady Mary's work is not without

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[27] Baktir, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature,* p.158.
[28] Baktir, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature*, p.158.
[29] Baktir, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature*, p.158.
[30] Baktir, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature*, p.159.
[31] Baktir, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature*, p.159.

fault in impacting Orientalist discourse. Montagu's accurate portrayals of the Ottoman women of the harem are one of a kind. However, her work would later become widely circulated throughout Europe; it influenced Orientalist painters and writers by fueling curiosities. It is apparent that Orientalist perceptions were already present in travel logs, and Lady Mary Montagu's letters serve as another source. Although the content is relatively objective, many Orientalist elements such as opulence are cherry-picked from Lady Mary's account and portrayed in later paintings. It seems apparent that the formation of an Orientalist motif for artworks in the nineteenth century took what was similar between travel accounts from previous centuries. The luxury, exoticism, and beauty of the harem women are captured in Lady Mary Montagu's *Letters*, not with the intent of otherizing but instead embracing. Lady Mary Montagu gave an account of what she saw and experienced in the harem, setting her account apart from the more imaginative male English and French travelers. The travel accounts only focus on the opulence portrayed by Lady Mary Montagu's *Letters*.

> I confess, though the Greek lady had before given me a great opinion of her beauty, I was so struck with admiration, that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features! that charming result of the whole! that exact proportion of body! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art! the unutterable enchantment of her smile!... She was dressed in a caftan of gold brocade, flowered with silver very well fitted to her shape, and shewing to advantage the beauty of her bosom, only shaded by the thin gauze of her shift. Her drawers were pale pink, green, and silver, her slippers white, finely embroidered; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds, and her broad girdle set round with diamonds, upon her head a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver, her own fine black hair hanging a great length in various tresses, and on one side of her head some bodkins of jewels. I am afraid you will accuse me of extravagance in this description….[32]

Here Lady Mary Montagu alludes to the magnificent beauty of the women she encounters. Nineteenth-century Orientalist artworks seem only concerned with capturing this aspect of Lady Mary's account and pairing it with the more otherizing accounts from male travelers. This quote from Lady Mary Montagu's *Letters* captures beauty, luxury, and wealth: significant components of Orientalist artworks. An aspect of Lady Mary Montagu's letters that will not be present in nineteenth-century artworks is the character and manner of the Ottoman women whom she encounters. Lady Mary Montagu's account differs from her male counterparts. It gives scholars a glimpse into a very secluded space in the Ottoman world, gaining insight into the character of some of the women in it:

[32] Muslim Journeys | Item #91: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Visit to a Harem", November 21, 2021, http://bridgingcultures-muslimjourneys.org/items/show/91.

> The Sultana Hafiten is what one would naturally expect to find a Turkish lady, willing to oblige, but not knowing how to go about it; and it is easy to see in her manner, that she has lived secluded from the world. But Fatima has all the politeness and good breeding of a court; with an air that inspires, at once, respect and tenderness; and now I understand her language, I find her wit as engaging as her beauty. She is very curious after the manners of other countries, and has not that partiality for her own, so common to little minds.[33]

Such descriptions do not seize the minds of nineteenth-century painters, as exoticism, luxury, eroticism frequently permeate their artworks.

The visual representation of the exotic and sexualized nature of the harem became a demanded visual representation of Ottoman culture in the nineteenth century for Europeans and is very apparent in the artwork. The Orientalist fantasy depicted in nineteenth-century artworks is similar to that of male traveler accounts in that male travelers could never enter the harem. The painters of the nineteenth century often never traveled (or did not until much later) to the Ottoman territories.

Isra Ali has examined the trend in artwork during this period of portraying the Ottoman harem as the focal point of the Orient through an analysis of several Orientalist painters and writers. The first example pertinent to Orientalism in the harem is Jean-Jules-Antoine-Lecomte de Nouy's painting titled *L'Esclave de Blanche* (Fig. 4), translated as *The White Slave*. The painting depicts a Circassian palace slave of the harem. As Ali notes in her piece, the artist never visited the Ottoman Empire or the harem. Nouy painted this scene from his imagination, likely influenced by the narratives circulated in Europe in the previous century.[34]

In her work, Rana Kabbani, whom Ali references, asserts that this painting displays the Circassian palace slaves as being in a state of "pleasing vulnerability."[35] This depiction aligns with the Orientalist notion that women of the harem are merely sexual objects, always ready to be of use to the Sultan they serve. The "White Slave" depicted (Fig. 4) alludes to the Orientalism emitted by Jean Dumont, mentioned in the work of Hasan Baktir: the Circassian palace slave in this scene barely clothed, with a spread of food and drink while smoking tobacco. This work exhibits the characteristics proclaimed by Dumont. The woman shown is ready to be sexually arranged; she is lazily enjoying the luxuries of her exotic world and partaking in the smoking of tobacco while she relaxes near a bath. By 1888 it seems the Orientalist perspective had become immovable.[36] Despite the overarching Orientalism displayed, Nouy does showcase an actual Ottoman distinction in the harem. The African women in the background of the painting were

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[33] Muslim Journeys | Item #91: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Visit to a Harem", November 21, 2021, http://bridgingcultures-muslimjourneys.org/items/show/91.

[34] Isra Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings" *Dialectical Anthropology* Vol. 39 no. 1 (2015) pp. 33-46. (P.40)

[35] Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings," (P.40)

[36] [http://www.flickr.com/photos/99051133@N00/559446195/ Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte de Nouy: The White Slave] * Uploaded by Atlaslin |Date=June 16, 2007, at 23:42 |Author

subject to more domestic labor roles, as is shown. In contrast, the white Circassian women were usually depicted as concubines in the harem, enjoying extravagance.[37] Nuoy may have included this more realistic cultural depiction because European culture possessed a similar racially-based social hierarchy; perhaps the French painter included this aspect because he could believe it.

Ali also examines artist Jean-Leon Gerome's work *Le Garde de Serail* from 1859 (Fig.5). Ali contends that this painting stresses the seclusion of the harem from outsiders by depicting a black eunuch. Eunuchs of the Imperial Harem were responsible for protecting the harem and its women.[38] Ali contends women of the harem often are portrayed as "inviting," and the men who guarded it depicted as "obstacles" to the entry of the Orient.[39] As Orientalism does today in the United States, it characterized those deemed Oriental as violent and forbidden to outsiders even through force. Ali takes a moment to point out the Orientalist depiction of harem women in literature through the example of Gustave Flaubert, who wrote, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, in which his female characters of the Orient (Egypt) possess dumb and overtly sexual characteristics.[40] In reality, the palace slaves of the harem received the type of education and healthcare reserved for only the most elite women in European societies.[41]

Ali's work delves into another Orientalist painting by Eugene Delacroix in 1827 titled, *The Death of Sardanapalus* (Fig. 6). Like many Orientalist painters, Delacroix painted images of the Ottomans from imagination. Delacroix's Orient in this painting is violent, despotic, and sexually charged.[42] Delacroix did not visit the "Orient" (Algeria) until more than a decade later to visit the Sultan of Morocco as part of a diplomatic envoy (King Louis Phillipe would also commission Delacroix to paint the Sultan Moulay Abd-er Rahman).[43] In the 1830s, France had begun colonizing parts of Algeria, alluding to the rise in depicting the "Orient" as "oriental" rather than a realistic representation based upon firsthand experiences. Orientalist artwork and literature, in many instances, was based upon fabrications to portray the land and peoples that were being colonized as other(s) to nourish a demand.

Edward Said argues that the creation of Orientalist paintings relies upon previous references and narratives about the Orient rather than relying upon the Orient itself.[44] Furthermore, even artists who eventually traveled to the "Orient" remained fascinated with the Orient of their imagination. As Ali points out, Delacroix is a prime example of this; once in Algeria, Delacroix utilized models in a studio instead of actual Ottoman women or settings to create paintings that would quench the thirst for the Orient of their imagination.[45]

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[37] http://www.flickr.com/photos/99051133@N00/559446195/ Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte de Nouy: The White Slave] * Uploaded by Atlaslin |Date=June 16, 2007, at 23:42 |Author
[38] Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings," P.40
[39] Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings," P.40
[40] Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings," P.40
[41] Birnbaum, "Renaissance Orientalism," P. 384.
[42] Judy Sund, *Exotic A fetish for the Foreign*, (Phaidon Press, 2019).
[43] Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings," P.42
[44] Said, *Orientalism*, P. 23.
[45] Ali, "The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings," P.42

A desire for Orientalist artworks in Europe is prevalent through the critiques of artist Henriette Browne's, *A Visit: A Harem Interior* (Fig.7). Ali contends that Browne's work goes against what her Western audiences wanted. This artwork lacks opulence, wealth, sex and instead attempts to capture a more realistic depiction of the harem and its women.[46] Ali brings forth two critiques of Browne's work that support the validity of European Orientalist preference: "Critic Oliver Merson saw Browne's depictions of the Orient as a mistake rather than an alternative and perhaps more realistic perspective… Leon LeGrange attributed Browne's lack of depictions of hypersexuality and languorous partially clothed odalisques in the harem to sexual naivete."[47]

Ali showcases the demand for Orientalist art because an attempt to capture a more realistic representation (based upon experience in the Ottoman world) obtains rejection in favor of the "fantasy."[48] The Orient of the imagination was what the Western world wanted. It gave them a sense of moral high ground. It justified the colonialist and imperialist action surrounding the Ottoman world because these people are understood as backward, requiring Western influence to be civilized.

The Orientalist artworks of the nineteenth century and their demand illuminate that there could no longer be two coexisting interpretations of the Orient. One was grounded in experience, and the other conjured through imagination. The West had made its decision of the Orient they preferred. It is important to remember that Britain and France had begun carving out their portions of the world during the nineteenth century, many on the fringes of the Ottoman empire. Perceptions and portrayals of the Ottomans as Oriental fueled a colonialist mission to undermine their society.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, new technology brought about a way to capture subjects rather than through paintings. Saadet Ozen from Bogazici University conducted a seminar with her students in which they examined photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Once viewing the photographs, neither the students nor the professor initially could identify the women in the photographs. There was nothing that indicated to them their social status or cultural allegiance.[49] Ozen notes that photography found its way to Ottoman Empire in 1842, Iran in 1844, and India in 1840.[50] The significance of these photographs (Fig. 8 & 9) and this seminar by Ozen is that it shows how ingrained the Orientalist imagery has become. Even in the twentieth century, the understanding of the Ottoman Imperial Harem remained one of a sexualized, exotic, luxurious, opulent nature.

Ozen proclaims, "With their thick eyebrows, wearing tutus inspired from the ballerinas that the Shah saw in Europe, and not least because of their serious, direct gaze to the viewer, these women challenged our immediate visual codes of the harem aesthetically, bodily, and

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[46] Ali, “The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings,” P.44
[47] Ali, “The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings,” P.44
[48] Ali, “The Harem Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century Orientalist Paintings,” P.44
[49] Saadet Özen (2017) The Visual Making of the Harem, Art in Translation, 9:sup1, 51-58, DOI: 10.1080/17561310.2015.1088220 p.51-52.
[50] Özen, The Visual Making of the Harem, Art in Translation, 52-53.

behaviorally."[51] Ozen maintains that these photographs "challenged" the European "odalisque" misinterpretation; these photographs by lacking the opulence expected made those in her seminar feel almost judgmental when facing an actual image of harem women.[52] The possibility of preserving the photographs was due to the Ottoman government, which became "dichotomous" during the republican era. One faction wanted to utilize the realistic representations of harem women (which had ended) preserved through photography. The other (Mainly Turkish Elite) opted for the continuation of Orientalist harem image production, done for centuries in the West (such as French Postcards using model substitutes for harem women) (Fig.10).[53] Those opting for Orientalist imagery promoted imaginary representations.

An examination of Orientalism of the Ottoman empire, specifically harem imagery, demonstrates that Edward Said's theory should incorporate a study of the Ottoman-European relationship. The exclusion hinders an understanding of the development and purpose of Orientalism. In the 1500s and 1600s, it seems apparent that the threat of the Ottoman Empire to Christendom led artists to capture the prowess of the harem women in portraiture, making them appear equivalent to Europeans. However, as the end of the seventeenth century approached, the myth of the invincible Ottoman Empire began to decline; the rise of imperial and colonialist Europe was only beginning. The power shift, the change in the level of threat, appears to have made the perception of the Ottomans more a matter of choice. The few accounts based on firsthand experience in the harem or with the women of the harem receive little attention. What sticks are portrayals of hypersexuality, objectification, decadence, despotism, violence, and a sense of otherness. Henriette Browne, Lady Mary Montagu, and Giovanni Antonio Menavino gave realistic representations of a people not well understood, and unfortunately, the accuracy went largely ignored. The fantasy of the Orient was too alluring. As colonialist powers such as Britain and France began carving out their portions of the world, portraying the peoples and place they intended to make subaltern embody otherness made spreading their hegemony justifiable.

The harem was a crucial institution in Ottoman society. To begin to appreciate the significance of these women's lives in the trajectory of the Ottoman state requires one to shake their Western influence as much as possible. The harem was an institution of slavery but religiously sanctioned slavery. These women were abducted and sold into the institution. However, they then had the opportunities to embrace a new life with the best education, medical care, and amenities that the Ottoman world offered. These women engaged in philanthropy; they held occupations within the harem structure itself and never served for life. After service in the harem was over, these women continued to be cared for by the state. The women whom the Sultan may have selected were then responsible for securing the continuation of the entire

[51] Özen, The Visual Making of the Harem, Art in Translation, 53.
[52] Özen, The Visual Making of the Harem, Art in Translation, 53.
[53] Özen, The Visual Making of the Harem, Art in Translation, 54-56.

Ottoman dynasty, an alternative to Europe where dynastical challenges often occurred with catastrophic results. Orientalism in the Ottoman harem prevailed throughout the centuries, despite honest attempts to capture the reality of the Ottoman harem. It shaped how the West perceived Ottoman culture, understanding the women in the harem as uneducated and merely sexual objects serving a despotic Muslim ruler.

In reality, as the politics of the empire changed after the seventeenth century, the Sultan was held more responsible by the Ottoman people and administrative elites. Harem women possessed influence and agency. The eunuchs were well-educated sacred figures. However, through an Orientalist lens, he was an Emperor of slaves and surrounded himself with women and wealth. The eunuchs who guarded the harem were not well educated, not religiously versed, and not sacred beings in Ottoman society. Orientalist discourse represented them vicious as Africans who knew nothing but violence and only responded to orders from their tyrant. The reality was the opposite.

Donald Quataert proposed in his work the significance of what the Ottoman Empire's resistance to the Western hegemony symbolized to much of the world: "The Ottomans, together with imperial China and Japan, were the most important of such states which survived with any strength. As independent states, they became models and sources of hope to the colonized peoples of the world in their struggles against European imperialism."[54] The Ottoman Empire could prove a model of resistance against the European colonial hegemony. However, despite Quataert's optimistic view of the Ottoman model, Orientalism in the past as well as now seeks to make sure that the West will only continue to view and understand the Ottomans (as any other "oriental" peoples) as others, and most importantly as subaltern to Western culture.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is a landmark text that exposes how the West has viewed and acted towards the peoples and places of the world that are non-Western. Said delivers a very well-supported theory. However, as this essay has demonstrated, examining the Ottoman-European relationship in the centuries preceding colonialist Britain and France is necessary to understand how Orientalist discourse took shape. The sources analyzed throughout this essay showcase that Orientalist discourse developed before the eighteenth century. Once Orientalist discourse captured European fascination, the harem served as a pivotal institution to otherize Ottoman culture.

Orientalism in the harem has shaped the West's understanding of the Ottoman empire and continues to shape Western understandings of the Middle East. The West views other parts of the world through an Orientalist, and arguably colonialist/imperialist, lens. Orientalism still captivates the minds of Westerners today. The previous Orientalist discourse had not been critiqued or replaced but instead perpetuated to undermine non-Western peoples and fulfill imperialist operations there. The same Orientalist depictions of harem women have modernized to fit modern Western settings and situations in the Middle East. Popular media continues to draw on Orientalist discourse to perpetuate the Middle East of imagination, to keep the Orient a real place.

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[54] Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*, P. 11.

Images

Figure 1: Studio of Titian, La Sultana Rossa, 1550s, Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, Collection of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida.

Figure 2: Titian, Cameria, Daughter of Suleiman the Magnificent as St. Catherine, ca. 1555, © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery.

Figure 3: Foldout View of Approach to Constantinople. Guillaume-Joseph Grelot (1680).

Figure 4. Jean-Jules-Antoine- lecomte de Nouy. 1888.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_White_Slave.jpg

Figure 5. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Guard of the Harem.* (1859) ©The Wallace Collection

Figure 6. The Death of Sardanapalus, 1844 - Ferdinand-Victor-Eugène Delacroix, French, 1798 – 1863. Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Henry P. McIlhenny Collection in memory of Frances P. McIlhenny, 1986, 1986-26-17

Figure 7. Henriette Browne's *A Visit: A Harem Interior* © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Figure 8. Group of women from the Nasiri court. Late nineteenth–early twentieth century. Photo credit: Fahimeh Rastkar and Sohrab Daryabandari Collection, http://www.qajarwomen.org/en/items/1250A23.html.

Figure 9. Nasîr al-Dîn Shah in his inner quarters. Inscription: “Za‘faran Baji, Aqa [?] Khvajah.” Photo credit: Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies, http://www.qajarwomen.org/en/items/1261A58.html.

Figure 10. Saadet Özen (2017) The Visual Making of the Harem, Art in Translation, 9:sup1, 51-58, DOI: 10.1080/17561310.2015.1088220 p.56.

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[http://www.flickr.com/photos/99051133@N00/559446195/ Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte de Nouy: The White Slave] * Uploaded by Atlaslin |Date=June 16, 2007, at 23:42 |Author

Radiant to Radioactive: Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster of 1986

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"In the early hours of April 26, 1986, the world witnessed the worst nuclear catastrophe in history," stated Ukrainian historian Serhii Plokhy. [1] The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant Disaster of 1986 was the largest nuclear accident in history.[2] This event and its effects will be analyzed chronologically and thematically, beginning with the background on the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the city of Pripyat, as well as the initial reaction to the disaster, such as the cause and evacuation. Following this, the impact on the environment, people, and media is examined through peer-reviewed historical and scientific books and articles. Emphasis is placed on the initial role society had on influencing the environment and the shift to the influence of the environment on society following the disaster. This paper will focus on the role the disaster had historically and environmentally, therefore it will not dive into the more scientific studies and reports discovered due to the event.

Before beginning to describe the disaster and its effects, it is important to discuss how the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant was constructed and the creation of the city of Pripyat. The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, officially known as the Vladimir Lenin Nuclear Power Plant, is located in the north of Ukraine, or the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic at the time, and is located approximately 100km from the capital of Kiev.[3] The plant is located four kilometers from the city of Pripyat and sixteen kilometers from the city of Chernobyl.[4] Officially, the area where the plant is located is called the "Belarussian-Ukrainian woodlands."[5] Although the focus is held on the effects of the disaster on Pripyat and the surrounding area, it is important to delve into the history of the plant itself. The construction of the plant was separated into three waves, each containing two units. The first and second units, Unit No. 1 and Unit No. 2, were finished by 1977. The following units, Unit No. 3 and Unit No. 4, were completed in 1983. In addition, prior to the disaster, two other units, Unit No. 5 and Unit No. 6, were scheduled for construction

[1]Serhii Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up: How Officials Botched Evacuating an Irradiated City," *History Reads* (2019), 1.
[2] Timothy A. Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," Annual review of ecology, evolution, and systematics 52, no. 1 (2021): 90.
[3] H. M, Ginzburg and E. Reis, "Consequences of the Nuclear Power Plant Accident at Chernobyl," *Public health reports (1974)* 106, no. 1 (1991): 32.
[4] Igor Laćan, Joe R McBride, and Duane De Witt, "Urban Forest Condition and Succession in the Abandoned City of Pripyat, Near Chernobyl, Ukraine," *Urban forestry & urban greening* 14, no. 4 (2015): 1068.
[5] R.F. Mould, *Chernobyl Record: The Definitive History of the Chernobyl Catastrophe*, (Baton Rouge: CRC Press, 2000), 16.

but the plans were disbanded due to the explosion of Unit No. 4.[6] The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant was the first plant established on Ukrainian soil.

The city of Pripyat was founded on February 4, 1970, accumulating a population of approximately 50,000 individuals prior to the disaster of 1986. This city "served as a residential center for the administration staff and workers at the Chernobyl power plant."[7] Pripyat was a "purpose-built town" due to the creation of the plant, but it is important to differentiate this city from the city of Chernobyl itself.[8] Chernobyl was an older city, located approximately sixteen kilometers from the plant with a population of nearly 12,000. Although these two cities are now a part of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, which will be expanded on later, the city of Pripyat housed more workers than Chernobyl despite its name. In addition to the city of Pripyat and Chernobyl, an abundance of cities and countries were affected by this accident. Whereas most of the heavily affected areas include Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, some sources state that the radioactivity spread as far as Greece and Sweden.[9]

From the night of April 25, 1986, to the early morning hours of April 26, 1986, reactor Unit No.4 was scheduled for an "experiment" by the plant's management and specialists in order to "test the ability of the turbine generator to power certain of the cooling pumps whilst the generator was free-wheeling to a standstill after its steam supply had been cut off."[10] In more approachable and less scientific terms, the experiment was conducted in order to test how efficiently Unit No. 4 would work if its power had been temporality shut off. This test had not been approved or properly planned. Additionally, most of those working on the site and ordering the experiments were not specialists in nuclear reaction plants.[11] The lack of preparation and planning of this experiment was due to the lack of training of the staff in case of emergency and the possible dangers of the experiment were not discussed prior to the night of April 25. The combination of all these factors, mixed with the faults in the concept of the reactor and the lack of fire drills or alarms, and other broader problems within the plant, lead to the initial cause of the disaster and its effect on the workers inside of the plant.[12] The text *Chernobyl Record: The Definitive History of the Chernobyl Catastrophe* by R.F. Mould goes into depth on a chronological description of the plant's activity leading up to the disaster.[13] The explosions began at 1:24 in the morning on April 26, 1986. There were two explosions back-to-back which created sparks and debris. This led to the creation of over thirty fires around the plant.[14] The fires

[6] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 17.
[7] Laćan et al., "Urban Forest Condition and Succession," 1069.
[8] Paul Dobraszczyk, "Petrified Ruin: Chernobyl, Pripyat and the Death of the City," *City (London, England)* 14, no. 4 (2010): 372.
[9] M Hatch et al., "The Chernobyl Disaster: Cancer Following the Accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant," *Epidemiologic reviews* 27, no. 1 (2005): 56.; Dobraszczyk, "Petrified Ruin," 372.
[10] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 29, 32.
[11] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 32.
[12] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 33.
[13] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 34-38.
[14] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 38.

continued to burn during the following ten days, leading to the release of radiation into the environment.[15]

The initial explosions and the fires lead to the destruction of multiple parts of the plant. Various ceilings and walls within the plant were destroyed, including the reactor's core.[16] The first reaction was to control and extinguish all fires caused by the disaster. This difficult task was handled by firemen and helicopter pilots. From April 27 to May 10, "5000 tonnes of boron compounds, sand, clay, dolomite, and lead" were dumped onto the open flames.[17] In addition to the spread of the fire during this period, the spread of radioactive material was just starting to begin. Between April 26 to May 6 radioactive material, such as gases and aerosols, was released into the atmosphere.[18] According to Mousseau's "The Biology of Chernobyl," this "injected 80 petabecquerel of radioactivity into the atmosphere and contaminated >200,000 km of Europe and Eurasia." Following this came the wind that shifted more radioactive particles into the cities.[19]

To aid the chronology of the retelling of events after the disaster comes the discussion of the evacuation of those in the surrounding area. This portion will only touch on the evacuation as, later, there will be a section thoroughly dedicated to analyzing the impact on the environment and the people. An offsite emergency plan was created during the Soviet Union era for the Chernobyl Power Plant for preparation in the case of an accident or disaster. Although there was a plan constructed, it may not have included an evacuation plan for nearby cities that could be affected by a potential emergency.[20] In addition, the community in nearby cities, such as Pripyat and Chernobyl, were not fully aware of the seriousness of the accident. It is stated that only 1% of the affected population was given an official government report stating the grave situation.[21] Most citizens were left to hear of the disaster through rumors around the towns, leading most to disregard the situation altogether.[22] Officials, such as Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, were not told of the severity of the explosion, therefore they did not feel the need to notify other members of the Soviet leadership during the early morning hours.[23] Those who worked at the plant were prohibited from sharing information about the explosions with their families or friends.[24] The official evacuation of the city of Pripyat began at 00:00 in the morning on April 27 on the orders of Boris Shcherbina, a member of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.[25] From here, the entire population of Pripyat and those living within a thirty- kilometer radius of the Chernobyl plant were evacuated.[26] Citizens of

[15] Laćan et al., "Urban Forest Condition and Succession," 1068.
[16] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 40.
[17] Mould, *Chernobyl Record*, 45.
[18] Ginzburg et al., "Consequences of the Nuclear Power Plant," 33.
[19] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 1.
[20] Takashi Ohba, Koichi Tanigawa, and Liudmila Liutsko, "Evacuation after a Nuclear Accident: Critical Reviews of Past Nuclear Accidents and Proposal for Future Planning," *Environment international* vol. 148 (2021): 2.
[21] Ohba, et al., "Evacuation after a Nuclear Accident," 3.
[22] Ohba, et al., "Evacuation after a Nuclear Accident," 3.
[23] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 1.
[24] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 4.
[25] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 6.
[26] Ginzburg et al., "Consequences of the Nuclear Power Plant," 35.

Pripyat were given a fifty-minute notice of the evacuation, told to only take important documents due to supposedly returning home after a few days. The nearly 50,000 residents of Pripyat, 17,000 of those being children, were transported via the use of 1,200 buses and 200 trucks.[27] These occupants were left to occupy nearby settlements in the province of Kiev and surrounding areas. Although the inhabitants of these areas were told they would be away from home for only a few days, this was false. The city of "Pripyat will not be habitable for decades, if not centuries, to come."[28] In total, this disaster caused the displacement and permanent evacuation of over 116,000 people living near the Chernobyl plant.[29]

After the disaster, initial reactions, and evacuations comes the impact of the incident, especially on the environment surrounding the plant. This accident was "largely a result of human error" which, in turn, created a major terrestrial outcome.[30] The severity of ecological and environmental consequences caused by the disaster is still widely unknown.[31] These environmental impacts may include but are not limited to, the effect on soil, plants, and animals, specifically birds and dogs. The effects of the radiation impacted each group of organisms and plants differently, with a greater impact placed on the plants rather than animals.[32] To begin with, "grassy plains, fields, and bare ground" were most affected by contamination.[33] According to "Chernobyl Today" by France Bequette, approximately 144,000 hectares of agricultural land and 492,000 hectares of forest land are unusable and avoided as a direct result of the contamination caused by the disaster.[34] The contamination of agricultural land affects the ability to not only plant and grow crops, but also create an accessible area for farm animals to roam. In addition, bark, moss, mushrooms, and firewood along with other items, are often contaminated in the forest surrounding the plant.[35] Due to this contamination, Belarus released a fifty-five-page document titled "Radiation: How to Survive in the Radiation Contaminated Areas," which served as almost a how-to guide for those living on the contaminated lands. This text provides the reader with a better understanding of what crops are least likely to contain radionuclides, the best ways to avoid contamination in soil, and tips to keep themselves safe from radiation.[36] The contamination of the land creates a domino effect that impacts the life of organisms in the area.

The effect of radiation on the animals in the contaminated area is still underexamined. These impacts are still currently being studied and tested, therefore the extent of the effect of radiation from the disaster on the animals is still widely unknown. The consequences of radiation on wild birds and dogs in the area will be a focus in the following section. To begin with, the

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[27] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 5.
[28] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 10.
[29] Jonathon Turnbull, "Checkpoint Dogs: Photovoicing Canine Companionship in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone," *Anthropology today* 36, no. 6 (2020): 21.
[30] Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," 90.
[31] France Bequette, "Chernobyl Today," *Unesco courier (Paris, France)* 49, no. 4 (1996): 2.
[32] Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," 96.
[33] Bequette, "Chernobyl Today," 1.
[34] Bequette, "Chernobyl Today," 1-2.
[35] Bequette, "Chernobyl Today," 2.
[36] Bequette, "Chernobyl Today," 2.

examination of wild birds, specifically in reproduction aspects, is oddly contrasted. On one hand, reports have stated that wild birds in Chernobyl, specifically barn swallows, have up to ten times higher quantity of sperm than barn swallows living in a controlled environment.[37] In addition, another study reinforced this idea by stating that nine out of ten birds from Chernobyl had a higher sperm count than those in controlled environments throughout Europe.[38] In contrast, the wild birds in Chernobyl have almost a forty percent increase to be aspermic compared to those in controlled areas. This led to the decline of the population of wild birds, due to sterility, in the Chernobyl area directly caused by the contamination and effect of radiation.[39] This example and the effect on wild birds was only one of the ways this disaster impacted animals in the area.

Other groups of animals that were largely affected by the disaster of 1986 were dogs. Many inhabitants of Pripyat and similar cities were forced to leave their pets behind following the supposed three-day evacuation procedures, particularly dogs.[40] This led to an abundance of dogs in the area left to fend for themselves. Following the disaster, the dogs retreated into the woods to create makeshift packs.[41] Eventually, due to the lack of food and supplies within the forest, the dogs made their way back into the radiation-filled city to scavenge for food and water.[42] There are now hundreds of descendants of family dogs, now stray, that roam the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.[43] Later, employees working in the plant post-disaster began to feed and care for these abandoned pets or descendants of abandoned pets.[44] This led to a growing need for healthcare for these pets, such as rabies and vaccinations, to keep the members working at the plant safe from disease.[45] To control the population of strays in the area, the Chernobyl Plant hired an employee to kill the dogs, but this employee refused. A non-government organization from the United States, Clean Futures Fund, now does its best to provide resources and provisions for these dogs.[46] Checkpoint guards in the area also have a soft spot for these pets, creating shelters for them with available materials in the area.[47] The guards and dogs have a mutual relationship by providing security to one another within the Exclusion Zone.[48] In addition, these dogs serve as a visible representation of those affected and left behind because of the disaster. They gain empathy for those who visit due to their once domesticated nature shifting

[37] Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," 96.
[38] Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," 96.
[39] Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," 96.
[40] Ryan Lenora Brown, "The Dogs of Chernobyl: Are Virtual Tours the Future of Tourism?" *The Christian Science Monitor (1983)*. Boston, Mass: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 2020, 1.
[41] "U.S.-Based Group Sending Veterinarians to Treat Stray Dogs of Chernobyl Area. Radio Free Europe Documents and Publications," Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC, 2017, 1.
[42] "U.S.-Based Group Sending Veterinarians," 1.
[43] Brown, "The Dogs of Chernobyl," 2.
[44] "U.S.-Based Group Sending Veterinarians," 1.
[45] "U.S.-Based Group Sending Veterinarians," 1.
[46] Jonathon Turnbull, "Checkpoint Dogs: Photovoicing Canine Companionship in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone," *Anthropology today* 36, no. 6 (2020): 22.
[47] Turnbull, "Checkpoint Dogs," 23.
[48] Turnbull, "Checkpoint Dogs," 24.

into a more feral temperament.[49] From the impact on the environment to the impact on organisms in the disaster zone comes the impact on humans and health.

Although community members from the surrounding thirty kilometers from the plant, along with many others, have been affected negatively in a plethora of ways, such as through resettlement, major shift in economics, and trauma, this section will attempt to summarize and place emphasis on health impacts caused by the radiation from the disaster. Many studies can be broken down into categories separating examinations of different groups in the community. Often studies are measured by those there at the time of the explosion and disaster, those later affected such as liquidators, and lasting effects or genetic effects. In addition, these categories can further be broken down to study the age, gender, and location of the people directly following the disaster.

To begin with, after the disaster, many did not feel any immediate health effects of the radiation.[50] With the "invisibility" of the effect of radiation at times, such as on people or the environment, it was difficult to examine the immediate effects of the disaster on the population.[51] Although these impacts were once underexamined, it is now more thoroughly researched and tested. It is noted that the effects of radiation may not be visible within the first few days or weeks following exposure and may continue to grow years after the event.[52]

The article, "The Chernobyl Accident: An Epidemiological Perspective," by E. Cardis and M. Hatch breaks down the lasting impacts of the radiation on the population surrounding the Chernobyl Plant.[53] One of the major effects that can be tracked as a result of the disaster is cancer caused by radiation exposure. A trend in the rise of thyroid cancer and leukemia, as well as other cancers such as breast cancer, can be found in those who were present in the area during the disaster and explosions of 1986.[54] Through these scientific studies, it was determined that children under the age of fourteen were more likely to be affected by the threat of thyroid cancer.[55] As of the 1990s, 3,000 cases of children with thyroid cancers as a result of the disaster were reported.[56] Although this risk is heightened in children or adolescents present within a thirty-mile radius of the plant during the disaster, the presence of thyroid cancer may not be discovered or actively affecting the person until later in life.[57] In addition to the threat of cancers

[49] Turnbull, "Checkpoint Dogs," 22.
[50] Olga Kuchinskaya, *The Politics of Invisibility: Public Knowledge About Radiation Health Effects after* Chernobyl, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), 1.
[51] Kuchinskaya, *The Politics of Invisibility*, 20.
[52] Ekatherina Zhukova, "Nuclear Disaster as Chronic Crisis: Accounts of Radiation Embodiment by Survivors of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster from Belarus Born before, in and after 1986," *Health (London, England: 1997)* 24, no. 5 (2020): 593.
[53] E. Cardis and M Hatch, "The Chernobyl Accident — An Epidemiological Perspective," Clinical oncology (Royal College of Radiologists (Great Britain)) 23, no. 4 (2011): 254-255.
[54] Cardis et al., "The Chernobyl Accident," 255.
[55] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 4.
[56] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 4.
[57] Zhukova, "Nuclear Disaster as Chronic Crisis," 593.

in this community, other health concerns were also found during routine tests. These various health concerns include cardiovascular disease and cataracts.[58]

Though those present in the city of Pripyat or similar areas surrounding the plant, were a majority of those directly affected by the disaster, other groups, such as liquidators or descendants of those living in the areas, may have also been affected.[59] Liquidators, those employed to work and clean up the plant following the disaster, are known to suffer from health concerns such as cancer, specifically thyroid cancer, and other non-cancer concerns.[60] These liquidators are also known to suffer from sterility due to prolonged exposure to radiation.[61] The descendants of these liquidators or others contaminated with radiation from the disaster are often still affected. Mostly from the fathers' DNA, descendants are at an increased risk of developing cancer or genome instability, despite not being exposed to radiation themselves.[62] The impact of the disaster and radiation on the descendants of these liquidators is an ongoing examination that does not have solidified results yet due to the modernity of this scientific research.[63] These environmental and health effects represent the long-lasting results of the disaster.

The Chernobyl Accident of 1986 was later dubbed a "catastrophe" or a "tragedy" by many due to the term "accident" being seemingly too minimizing or understating just how impactful this disaster was on the community and the environment.[64] According to Serhii Plokhy in the article "The Chernobyl Cover-Up: How Officials Botched Evacuating an Irradiated City," this disaster released "50 million curies of radiation… into the atmosphere – the equivalent of 500 Hiroshima bombs."[65] Over 400,000 people were displaced and permanently evacuated, this led to these people having a lack of homes, money, or jobs in an area they are, most likely, not familiar with.[66] In addition to the ongoing health risks to those in the area and their descendants, the number of fatalities due to the disaster is unimaginable. Officially, the United Nation agencies suggest that the total number of initial deaths range from thirty-one to fifty-four people, with a predicted 2,000 to 9,000 cancer-related deaths in the future.[67] Although this is later disregarded when the organization and environmental charity Greenpeace suggested that over 200,000 had already passed as a result of radiation exposure because of the disaster and predicted 93,000 further deaths to be witnessed in the future due to cancer or other similar health concerns.[68]

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[58] Cardis et al., "The Chernobyl Accident," 256.
[59] Cardis et al., "The Chernobyl Accident," 257.
[60] Cardis et al., "The Chernobyl Accident," 257.
[61] Mousseau, "The Biology of Chernobyl," 96.
[62] V. I. Kovaleva and N. V Bagatskaya, "Cytogenetic Effects in Peripheral Blood Lymphocytes in Descendants of Chernobyl Disaster Liquidators Under the Impact of Mitomycin c in Vitro and Folic Acid in Vivo," *Cytology and genetics* 47, no. 1 (2013): 53.
[63] E. P. Guskov, et al., "The congenital developments in descendants of liquidators after 10 years Chernobyl accident," (1997): 167.
[64] Kuchinskaya, *The Politics of Invisibility*, 4.
[65] Plokhy, "The Chernobyl Cover-Up," 1.
[66] Bequette, "Chernobyl Today," 2.
[67] Sonja Schmid, "Chernobyl: Ruin, Redux," Nature (London) 566, no. 7745 (2019): 450.
[68] Schmid, "Chernobyl: Ruin, Redux," 450.

In addition to the lasting impact of radiation on the people, comes the impact on the environment and ecosystem. Although this was previously discussed, it is important to reiterate just how devastating this disaster had on the land. As of 2021, thirty-five years after the initial disaster, high amounts of radionuclides in the land are in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.[69] This zone encompasses approximately "4300 km^2 area in Belarus and Ukraine."[70] This area is still uninhabited and radioactive due to the disaster of 1986. Due to this being an ongoing impact that is not predicted to end any time soon, the complete environmental impact is truly unknown and produces a hazard for present and future generations.[71] According to Zbigniew Jaworowski in the article "Observations on the Chernobyl Disaster and LNT," this disaster is a "historic event that provided invaluable lessons for nuclear industry and risk philosophy."[72] The lasting effects of the disaster on the environment and community is constantly growing and being researched by scientists and historians across the world. Therefore, complying and encompassing all continuing impacts is an impossible feat.

In addition to the impact of the disaster on scientific studies, historical evaluations, and personal documentaries are its role in modern media. "Chernobyl was a media event," David R. Marples suggests.[73] The creation of mostly abandoned, or "ghost towns," mainly focusing on the city of Pripyat, has created a desire for dark tourism and a genre of film and videogames based on the nuclear accident and the lasting effects of radiation.[74] To begin with, the idea of dark tourism is a development and expansion in tourism that surrounds the topic of death, suffering, or events of disaster.[75] People travel from all across the world to gain access to the restricted area, the Exclusion Zone, to tour the abandoned city and homes.[76] In some cases, those who visit the abandoned area document their experience via YouTube videos. For example, the channel "Exploring with Josh" hosted a three-part series about his experience in the city.[77] Although some disagree with this form of tourism, stating that Chernobyl is not yet a historic site but rather a site still plagued with tragedy.[78] Following this progression of gaining more insight into the abandoned area, is the influence on other forms of media such as television shows, films, and video games.

With the ever-growing genre of the post-apocalyptic film industry, comes the interest and influence of the city of Pripyat and other "ghost towns" in the area. Andrei Tarkovsky's film

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[69] Dmytrii, et al., "Scots Pine Stands Biomass Assessment Using 3D Data from Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Imagery in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone," *Journal of environmental management* 295 (2021): 1.
[70] Michael E. Byrne, et al., "Evidence of Long-Distance Dispersal of a Gray Wolf from the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone," *European journal of wildlife research* 64, no. 4 (2018): 1.
[71] Zbigniew Jaworowski, "Observations on the Chernobyl Disaster and LNT," *Dose-Response* 8, no. 2 (2010): 156.
[72] Jaworowski, "Observations on the Chernobyl Disaster and LNT," 148.
[73] David R. Marples, *The social impact of the Chernobyl disaster*, (Springer, 1988), x.
[74] *U.S.-Based Group Sending Veterinarians,* 1.
[75] Ganna Yankovska and Kevin Hannam, "Dark and Toxic Tourism in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone," *Current issues in tourism* 17, no. 10 (2014): 929.
[76] Kevin Hannam, and Ganna Yankovska, "Tourism Mobilities, Spectralities, and the Hauntings of Chernobyl," In *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*, 319–333. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 330.
[77] Josh, "Chernobyl abandoned ghost town Ep1," YouTube video, 16:42, March 10, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojSIrED1xEk.
[78] Dobraszczyk, "Petrified Ruin," 372.

Stalker predates the Chernobyl disaster, being released in 1979. The film *Innocent Saturday* directed by Alexandr Mindadze was released twenty-five years after the Chernobyl disaster.[79] This film depicts the struggles that everyday people may have faced following the disaster rather than a historical documentary, attempting to evoke emotion from its viewers.[80] Similarly, the television show *Chernobyl* was released in 2019 and was directed by Johan Renck. This show depicts the life of those living in Pripyat and the disaster of 1986.[81] Although it is depicted as a historical drama or tragedy, many aspects of the show can be separated by the boundary between fact and fiction.[82]

In addition to the disaster's impact on the film and television show industry, is its impact on video games. To begin with, the video game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R* developed by GSC Game World is a four-part series including the games "Shadow of Chernobyl," "Clear Sky," "Call of Pripyat," and "Heart of Chornobyl."[83] These action-adventure games are set to take place in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.[84] The role the Chernobyl disaster played in the influence of these games is undeniable, but the developers were also influenced by the *Stalker* film. Additionally, Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare contains a mission that includes the depiction of the Moscow Eye, or the Ferris wheel, that is often photographed and related to the abandoned city of Pripyat.[85] Following the discussion of the Chernobyl Disaster of 1986's influence on modern media, it is important to discuss the controversy surrounding this. Some believe this is not an appropriate use of the site due to the tragedy that remains in the area and the ongoing impact on those who lived there.[86]

The Chernobyl Disaster of 1986 was a major tragedy to the environment and community surrounding the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. It is important to understand the chronological order of events that derived from the accident on the early morning of April 26, 1986. The cause of the disaster and the evacuation that took place afterward plays a great role in understanding what the days following the event entailed. In addition, the main aspect to understand and discuss is the impact of the disaster on the environment and ecology of the area. Here it is seen how society impacted the environment through the role of human error in creating the disaster in the first place. This error has made the land surrounding the plant continuously inhabitable and unable to determine when the soil or environment will lack these radioactive entities. In addition, this disaster also shows how the environment impacts society. Due to the radioactivity of the

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[79] Johanna Lindbladh "Coming to Terms with the Soviet Myth of Heroism Twenty-Five Years after the Chernobyl' Nuclear Disaster: An Interpretation of Aleksandr Mindadze's Existential Action Movie Innocent Saturday," *The Anthropology of East Europe review*30, no. 1 (2012): 113.
[80] Lindbladh "Coming to Terms with the Soviet Myth of Heroism," 123.
[81] Sonja D. Schmid, "Chernobyl the TV Series on Suspending the Truth or What's the Benefit of Lies?" *Technology and culture* 61, no. 4 (2020): 1154.
[82] Tim Bradshaw, "Chernobyl and Why Some TV Shows Should Be Unbingeable," *FT.com* (2019), 2.
[83] Maria Gravari-Barbas, Nelson H. H. Graburn, and Jean-François Staszak. *Tourism Fictions, Simulacra and Virtualities*. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 200.
[84] Tim Hutchings and Katya Linden, "Tourists at Chernobyl: Existential Meaning and Digital Media," In *Heritage of Death*, 209–221. 1st ed. (Routledge, 2018), 212.
[85] Gravari-Barbas, et al., *Tourism Fiction*," 206.
[86] Dobraszczyk, "Petrified Ruin," 372.

soil, which was of course caused by the disaster, people were forced to evacuate the area. The continuing radioactivity of the soil makes it necessary for inhabitants in surrounding areas to examine where they grow their food and what they eat. Following the impact of the disaster on the environment is the impact on the people. Although the total fatality count is highly debated, the impact and effect this event had on the lives of those in the area are undeniable. People will continue to be affected by the radiation and suffer from health risks such as cancer, not to mention the lesser-known health risks that descendants of these liquidators must deal with. The advancement of media and tourism in the area provides more information on the disaster itself, but it is debated if this is making light of an ongoing tragic event. The Chernobyl Disaster of 1986 will continue to affect the environment and community, not only the surrounding areas but the world.

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Review of *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake*, by Tiya Miles, New York: Random House, 2021, 385 pp, $18.99.

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Where can a historian turn "when the archival ground collapses beneath (her)"?[1] How can she reconstruct past lives when the archival record of those lives is "abysmally thin?"[2] In her 2021 book *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake,* Harvard professor and MacArthur Fellow Tiya Miles uses an item of material culture, an embroidered cotton bag, to conjure vividly the story of five generations of black American women spanning the years from 1840 to 1940. She warns the reader "this is not a traditional history."[3] Though firmly grounded in evidence and context, her narrative also "accommodate(s) supposition and imagination."[4]

The bag is a stained and much-patched cotton sack which Miles first saw on her computer screen in a photograph brought to her attention by another scholar. She recalls being "stunned" as she read the stitched inscription, which described how the seamstress's enslaved great-grandmother, Rose, gave this bag to daughter Ashley, age 9, on the eve of the child's sale to another plantation.[5] Rose packed for Ashley "a tattered dress, 3 handfulls (sic) of pecans, a braid of Roses (sic) hair" and promised the bag would "be filled with my love always."[6] The seamstress, Ashley's granddaughter, possessor of the bag and its history, declared in embroidery "she never saw her again," then signed and dated her work as if in an affidavit: Ruth Middleton 1921. [7]

Miles was determined to know the history of the object. She began by contacting the Middleton Place Foundation, the institution that owned the artifact. The senior curator told her a flea market shopper sold the item to the museum. Once on display, Ashley's sack caused so many observers to burst into tears that docents carried tissues. Miles, who did not cry, conceded that "no remnant from those dark times had arrested my spirit quite like this one."[8] The embroidered message captured so much emotion, so much loss, in so terse a tale, it was a

[1] Tiya Miles, *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake* (New York: Random House, 2021), 301.
[2] Miles, *All That She Carried*, 301.
[3] Ibid., 21.
[4] Ibid., 17.
[5] Ibid., 295.
[6] Ibid., 5.
[7] Ibid., 5.
[8] Ibid., 294.

summary of slavery. The author traveled to see the sack where it was then displayed, in the basement gallery of the National Museum of African American History and learned more about the meaning of things and ownership and of chattel possessing property.

Miles next sought to find the people mentioned on the artifact, Rose, Ashley, and Ruth Middleton. Ruth could be discerned in the public record, listed, for example, in the census and written about in black newspapers. She left behind no diary or memoir or letters, however. The stitched saga of her foremothers was all that remained in her own voice. Miles found several candidates to be Rose by searching the archives of the Middleton Plantation, but only one Rose with the crucial "identifying feature: her love for a child named Ashley."[9] The author believed she had located the women in place and in time.

But how to revive their stories? Miles laments the "conundrum of the archives," that the few, spare facts about their lives had to be gleaned from slavers' records before she animates their narratives in a more creative way.[10] Following the path forged by Marisa Fuentes, she reads "along the bias grain," to use an ironically appropriate textile-based metaphor. In plantation records, Rose was valued at over $500. This meant she must have been a highly skilled and valued slave, likely in the prime of her life. By reading the slavers' records diagonally, in a new light, Miles hypothesizes that Rose may well have worked in the Middleton family's home in downtown Charleston as a cook. To understand what that position would have entailed and to imagine what Rose's life would have been like, the author relates the background of the Middleton family and the history of Charleston. By recreating Rose's environment, Miles is able to offer an educated guess about her life.[11]

But Miles goes beyond a diagonal reading of archival records. Following the example of Saidya Hartman, she imagines the inner life, the mind, and the emotions of her subjects. Miles does not have any evidence of what Rose thought when faced with losing her daughter or what Ashley felt when she was torn from her mother's arms. She does have, however, the memoirs of other enslaved women, such as Harriet Jacobs and Elizabeth Keckley, who were faced with similar crises. Miles universalizes the emotions of these women to understand what Rose and Ashley must have felt. To further explore Rose's mindset, she pursues the meaning of each item in the cotton bag, the braid, the dress, and the pecans, and concludes that Rose "address(ed) a hierarchy of needs: food, clothing, shelter, identity, and…an affirmation of worthiness."[12]

In this beautifully written, lyrical history of a frayed cotton sack and the women who owned it, replete with footnotes and illustrative photographs, Miles reminds the reader that "(h)orrible things take place. Nevertheless, survival is possible."[13] A victim can transform

[9] Ibid., 65.
[10] Ibid., 300.
[11] Erica Armstrong Dunbar used the same technique with great success in *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge.*
[12] Miles, *All That She Carried*, 20.
[13] Ibid., 274.

herself into a witness through memory and retelling. In uncertain, frightening times, "(w)ho better to show us how to act when hope for the future is under threat than a mother like Rose?"[14]

[14] Ibid., xv.

Accent Discrimination Towards Non-Native English-Speaking People of Colour

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Abstract

Accent discrimination is a universal yet socially accepted form of prejudice. When directed towards people of colour (POC), these attitudes may also represent subtle forms of racism. Previous research on accent discrimination towards non-native (NN) English-speaking POC was able to unravel patterns of accent discrimination, including mocking and stereotyping, and the effect that these negative attitudes have towards NN POC speakers as individuals and as part of society. This article explores these topics with examples from the classroom, the judicial system and offshore call centres, and advocates for increasing our exposure to NN POC accents to build trust and reduce listeners' accent biases.

Introduction

Our accents are unique, and they act as an advertisement for our social identity, even without face-to-face interaction. Within seconds of speaking with someone on the phone, we may build assumptions on the speaker's age, ethnic background and social class based on stereotypes associated with the accent we hear (Flege, 1984; Thamer Ahmed et al., 2013). Additionally, we are more likely to be biased against speakers who have accents that differ to ours (Lippi-Green, 2012). We then form a hierarchical view of accents depending on societal and cultural biases, and assign values such as pleasantness, prestige and intelligence to accents we find valuable, while stigmatising the ones that we find less desirable.

We often encounter a range of English accents in everyday interactions, and we can regularly differentiate between native and non-native accents by recognising variations in pronunciation and sentence structure. Non-native or foreign accents are influenced by phonological characteristics that belong to the speaker's native language, which results in foreign-accented speech that may be more difficult to process for unexperienced listeners. This leads to a common notion that it is a nuisance to interact with people with non-native accents. These negative attitudes are often seen as deeper forms of discrimination, even if listeners are unaware of them. As Hosoda & Stone-Romero (2010) explained, irrational or other forms of prejudices may surface when listeners are interacting with non-native English-speaking (NN) people of colour (POC). In turn, the perpetual negative bias towards NN POC speakers may lead to an unfair loss in opportunities, and make them a victim of linguistic racism, isolation and psychological damages (Dovchin, 2020). Faced with continual discrimination, many NN

speakers strive to attain a native-like accent, with promises of larger returns if they are willing to adopt a 'superior' standardised English accent.

When listeners are trying to understand NN speakers, they seldom question their responsibility as a listener in the communication process. It has been proposed that in many situations, miscommunication is not due to the presence of a foreign accent, but to the negative social evaluation of that accent and subsequent rejection of the communicative burden (Lippi-Green, 2012). This triggers assumptions and attitudes in the listener's mind about the speaker's other traits, regardless of whether these are correct or relevant. Additionally, it seems that the context surrounding the conversation also affects how tolerant listeners are.

In a world that firmly believes that achieving a 'native-like' accent will open doors and create opportunities, those that cannot acquire a 'desirable' accent are bullied and stereotyped. Meanwhile, there is little consideration of the effort NN POC speakers put into the conversation or how proficient their English actually is. As the communicative process involves both a speaker and a listener, this present paper will examine both the listener's attitudes towards NN POC accents and the effect this has on the NN speaker. Additionally, this paper contends that accent discrimination is a widely acknowledged form of discrimination and appears to be more socially acceptable compared to religious, gender or racial discrimination. This will be demonstrated by a review of the literature on accent discrimination throughout society, including specific examples in education, the court system and the overseas customer service industry.

Listener Perceptions of NN POC Accents

As the expansion of intercontinental trade and relations results in a rapid increase in globalisation and cultural diversity, we are increasingly exposed to a variety of NN POC accents. These speakers are faced with two external pressures during conversation: How others understand their speech, and more subconsciously, how others will judge them as social beings (Moyer, 2013). In these conversations, listeners use these social judgements to form attitudes and assumptions towards NN POC speakers. These are coloured by individual preferences, notions of prestige, and demographic factors, such as race, class and gender (Moyer, 2013). Even people who are generally accepting of diversity may still subconsciously hold these reactions to accented speech.

Non-native accents are often criticized and ridiculed as a sign of ignorance or lack of sophistication (Munro et al., 2006). These views are also reinforced by television and movies that regularly associate certain speech varieties with negative stereotypes (Lippi-Green, 2012). However, not all NN accents hold the same level of prestige. Giles (1970) set out to map British listeners' evaluations of different accents, including Received Pronunciation (RP; considered the standard form of British English pronunciation), regional British accents (e.g. Liverpool), NN European accents (e.g. French, German) and NN POC accents (e.g. Indian). Respondents were asked to rate each accent for 'prestige' and 'pleasantness'. The results showed a very clear pattern: RP accents ranked the highest, while NN POC accents such as Chinese and Arabic were all poorly ranked, faring worse than NN European accents such as German or French. More interestingly, replications of this study over the past fifty years have shown that these rankings

have remained largely unchanged during this time (Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Levon et al., 2020).

Similar surveys have been conducted in the United States, which showed that speakers with an RP or French accent were perceived as being 'cosmopolitan' and 'well-educated', whereas Asian-accented English speakers were found to be less favourable, and were considered to be worse communicators (Cargile, 2000; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Stewart et al., 1985). These studies outline a similar pattern of accent hierarchy, one that seems to penalise non-standard working-class and NN POC accents, while upholding the belief that standard accent varieties are the most prestigious. Many of these attitudes and assumptions towards accents are hinging upon an arbitrary, often-flawed evaluation of the speaker.

Several studies have shown that the ethnicity of a speaker, even just signalled by a photograph, significantly affected a listener's judgement of their accent (Rubin, 1992; Yi et al., 2013; Zheng & Samuel, 2017). In one study, US-based undergraduates listened to a passage recorded by a native speaker of American English, while seeing a picture of the purported speaker: either a face of a White or Asian individual. After the audio passage, students were asked to judge the accent of the speech and the competence of the speaker. The study found that when listening to an audio recording alongside a photograph of an Asian face, students reported hearing an NN accent, and found the speaker to be less comprehensible compared to the recording attached to a photograph of a White individual (Rubin, 1992). More recently, Kang & Rubin (2009) conducted a similar study that yielded comparable results. They found that participants that previously had negative associations with Asian speakers performed poorly on a comprehension test when they thought the speaker was Chinese, compared to those that did not express such attitudes.

In a third study, college students in the American Midwest were asked to identify the accent-origin of Korean-accent English speech. The responses ranged from Latino, Chinese, Indian, unspecified Asian or 'other', with only a small fraction of students accurately identifying a Korean accent. Even though most of the students were not able to accurately identify the accent origin of speakers in this study, the stigma of NN speech was still apparent. For example, there was a prevalence of descriptions such as 'lazy' or 'speaks poorly' (Lippi-Green, 2012).

The proof of an accent hierarchy, when viewed in light of what we know from other studies regarding how race impacts speech perception, builds strongly on our evidence base to suggest two new viewpoints. Firstly, the discrimination of POC with NN accents seems to be intertwined with subtle forms of racism. Racism is not only tied to someone's appearance, but also how they sound. These can manifest in obvious ways such as bullying and shaming, or more subtle or subconscious displays such as misguided compliments towards a native English-speaking POC's accent or the unintended social exclusion of NN POC speakers. Secondly, despite not being able to identify a specific accent-origin, listeners are still likely able to identify speech as being 'non-standard'. This suggests that a 'Standard Language Ideology' may be at work here.

Struggles of NN POC Speakers

Standard Language Identity (SLI), as defined by Lippi-Green (2012), is "a bias towards an abstract, idealised homogenous language imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class." In other words, SLI is a social construct that has historically favoured monolingual privileged groups. This system involves rules set by supposed 'experts', who often have disputed credentials and do not address the source of their authority directly. These rules assume that written and spoken language are equal, and that educated people are the only source of acceptable English. Their assumption is that others are not smart enough to be in charge of their own language, and must rely on experts to create structured authority (Lippi-Green, 2012). In order to find acceptance in society, students with non-standard accents are encouraged to assimilate to a standard accent. Those that do not assimilate face stigmatisation in employment, housing, education, media, courts and in everyday interactions (Lippi-Green, 2012). These external pressures also lead to a persistent feeling of self-devaluation, which has serious repercussions.

Dovchin (2020) looked at the psychological damages of linguistic racism in international students in Australia. The author found that the majority of international students surveyed have experienced linguistic racism, both in the form of bullying and mocking of their English accents, and also stereotyping based on their race, ethnicity and nationality. These victims are deprived of living a meaningful social life, are trapped between having an immutable NN accent, and perpetually facing different forms of linguistic racism. NN POC speakers are at risk of spiralling into a high level of fear, stress, and anxiety, developing a sense of non-belonging, social withdrawal, and mental health disorders including suicidal thoughts (Dovchin, 2020). In particular, it has been found that NN-accented Asian speakers seem to be often exposed to linguistic shaming, bullying and mocking of their 'ethnic accent' (Piller, 2016, p. 197). The social normalisation of excluding NN POC speakers due to their accent leaves these individuals vulnerable to ongoing aggression, hate and ostracization from those who feel threatened by people that are different to them. Beyond these challenges, society routinely pressures individuals to change their accents, which is akin to directing people to change a core part of their identity and culture.

These internal struggles motivate many NN POC speakers to invest a lot of effort into 'purifying' their English accent, even if they cannot identify the specific features that mark them as non-native (Derwing & Munro, 2013; Dovchin, 2020). This drives a demand for accent-reduction classes, a process that has been subjected to controversy. Accent modification is difficult, even for actors learning to imitate of another accent. Despite careful coaching and several attempts, many actors still struggle to accurately portray another accent, even in the limited capacity that is asked of them during filming (Lippi-Green, 2012).

While there are several challenges that affect a NN speaker during communication, the listener may also struggle to understand the contents of these conversations. It is important to remember that the degree of NN accent cannot predict the level of an individual's competency,

and that breakdown in communication is often thought to be due to the listener's negative social evaluations of the speaker's accent (Lippi-Green, 2012). To reach mutual intelligibility, both the listener and the speaker can take measures such as asking the right questions, using pauses, repetition and back-channel cues to negotiate past challenging points of communication (Pickering, 2006). Additionally, it may be helpful to communicate in an environment with less background noise, having a good telephone connection or establishing face-to-face contact. However, the listener may choose instead to completely reject their communicative burden and thus not put any effort into working towards mutual understanding. As evidenced earlier, these attitudes are often driven by negative perceptions of NN speakers, especially those belonging to minoritized racial groups. As outlined below, such attitudes lead to more serious consequences in society.

NN POC Accents and Their Consequences in Society

The negative public perceptions of NN POC accents, including the negative stereotypes associated with an individual's foreign accent, race, social class and ethnicity, all play a major role in the ways NN POC speakers are treated in society (Pickering, 2006). Linguistic prejudice continues to be a socially acceptable way to discriminate against racial groups, affecting NN POC speakers in all sectors of society, from children in education to those seeking employment and housing, and it is even prevalent in the court system.

In US schools, NN-accented children often feel pressured to learn and speak Standard American English, and teachers are made responsible to teach this form of 'perfect' English (Lippi-Green, 2012). NN-accented teachers are also discriminated against, with some parents convinced that their children are at risk of picking up their teacher's accent (Lippi-Green, 2012). However, this belief has no linguistic foundation, as young children acquire their phonologies from their families and schoolmates. By the time they are old enough to go to school, this acquisition process is largely finished (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Once in the workplace, NN POC speakers continue to be viewed as having an impediment. The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that a person with a different accent cannot be discriminated against if they are able to communicate and be understood effectively in English. However, employers can base an employment decision on an individual's accent if it is perceived that their accent interferes with their ability to communicate effectively, which may in turn negatively impact their business. The terms used here are very vague, and still place NN POC employees and job applicants at risk of being subjected to discrimination.

There are countless examples of accent discrimination cases presented before the tribunal, many debating on the NN speaker's ability to perform job requirements in which language skills are a prerequisite. In (*Kahakua v. Friday*, 1989), a university trained meteorologist in Hawaii with 20 years of experience was denied for a promotion because as a bilingual English-Hawaiian Creole speaker, he had a Hawaiian accent. Mr. Kahakua subsequently sued his employer on the basis that his language traits are linked to his national origin. The judge, not from Hawaii, stated that there is no racial or physiological reason why Kahakua could not attain a Standard American English (SAE) pronunciation, despite not

defining this explicitly. Additionally, the 'expert' chosen to testify on behalf of the employer, a speech pathologist, urgently recommended that Kahakua seek professional help in striving to 'lessen this handicap.'

This case is just one of many examples of misconceptions of language in the court system. The SLI was clearly at play here as the judge believed that a NN speaker should have no problem attaining a 'superior' SAE accent. It also demonstrates a failure of the court to acknowledge that accent is a largely immutable characteristic of national origin, and there was no objective assessment of the demands of the job or the plaintiff's English proficiency. Lastly, the 'expert' that was consulted was an expert in diagnosing and treating communication disorders, rather than one that studies the spoken language. In this case, a highly trained native-Hawaiian professional was denied a job opportunity by a white employer because he was unable to obtain a SAE, an accent that was modelled after the speech of privileged white communities. Rather than being valued for his bilingualism, Mr. Kahakua experienced discrimination as his native culture became an obstacle for further advancement, even in his homeland.

Another sector of society in which NN POC accents are frequently encountered is the overseas customer service industry. Many businesses reassign their customer service to a third party, typically an overseas call centre service which maintains agents who are trained to handle the business' incoming calls. These call centres present an interesting opportunity for the study of accent bias, because it allows us to examine both listeners' prejudices to NN POC accents in a voice-only service environment, and the struggles of individual NN POC employees.

For a customer service representative (CSR) working in a call centre service, the linguistic target is to attain a native-like accent. This accent is seen as a valuable commodity to their employers, and those that cannot mould their accents well or receive complaints about their language skills are removed (Rahman, 2009). In order to help CSRs reach their targets, agencies often provide in-office 'accent neutralisation' courses (Cowie, 2007; Rahman, 2009). Cowie (2007) describes this training process as an extremely immersive experience, even so far as to celebrate American holidays and implementing an 'English Only Policy' at the office. While CSRs work towards this 'neutral' accent with varying degrees of proficiency, they also create entire identities around it, including false biographies, westernised names and a cultural knowledge of the target country. However, despite the intensive training, this performance often typically only succeeds in enabling them to 'cross-over' to the desired identity for brief interactions (Rahman, 2009).

The main incentive for these practices does not seem to be to deceive customers, but to make customers comfortable and avoid miscommunications (Moyer, 2013). However, research has shown that listeners still hold negative biases towards NN POC accents even when the content of the speech is completely understood (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010). Furthermore, a few controversies arise with this systematic approach of correcting local accents in order to create a performance of pseudo-American or British style speech to appease customers. For example, Western standards are extensively imposed on local speech standards, which degrade and devalue unique NN POC accents (Chand, 2009). In addition, the lengths that a CSR has to

take in order to create a new identity at work reinforces a SLI that views NN POC speakers as 'unintelligible' (Chand, 2009; Rahman, 2009).

In addition to these biases and controversies, CSRs have to manage customers that are experiencing a range of emotions relating to the content of these calls, such as those that are unsatisfied with the results. These emotions have been shown to skew the customers' accent biases towards NN-accented CSRs. In their survey, Wang et al. (2013) found that when service outcomes were unfavourable, frustrated customers speaking with foreign CSRs will express stereotypical beliefs (e.g. Indian-accented employees are not as competent) and subsequently NN-accented CSRs are negatively evaluated. However, when an outcome is favourable, these accent biases are suppressed and the CSRs are positively evaluated. Based on this information, it is suggested that when customers begin a service call already frustrated, they may be less able to suppress their negative biases.

There are mechanisms that can be put in place to set appropriate customer expectations and help improve customer emotions before interacting with CSRs. For example, one survey showed that messages apologising for hold times resulted in negative customer reactions, while message providing customers with information about their location in queue led to positive customer reactions (Munichor & Rafaeli, 2007). The results of this survey also suggest that customer emotions may be influenced by a range of conditions and are not exclusively expressed due to their negative perception of NN POC accents.

The attitudes towards NN-accented CSRs in offshore call centres are a good example of negative accent bias that is specifically targeted towards NN POC speakers. Although accent prejudice is prevalent in society, several studies have identified that increased exposure to NN POC accents, even for a short period of time, can build trust between interlocutors, facilitate comprehension and reduce listeners' biases against NN POC speakers (Boduch-Grabka & Lev-Ari, 2021; Bradlow & Bent, 2008; Clarke & Garrett, 2004; Derwing et al., 2002). Additionally, company leadership teams need to be aware of these socially acceptable implicit biases and help create change within their organisations. This can be done by fostering diverse workplaces and providing support to all team members, using strategies such as providing toolkits and inclusive practices to promote effective communication between team members with different backgrounds and accents, and instituting unconscious bias and cultural sensitivity training.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that linguistic prejudice continues to be one of the few remaining socially acceptable forms of discrimination, alongside weight and age discrimination. As shown in several studies, a listener's perceptions of NN POC speakers are influenced by implicit biases, racism and stereotypes. As a result, our society continues to discriminate against these speakers and pressure them into suppressing their accents in favour of a standardised dialect, simply because listeners find NN accents too difficult to process. Persistent exposure to discrimination negatively affects people's opportunities, mental and physical wellbeing, and sense of identity. For most, changing their accents is an impractical idea, and does not provide a viable solution to dealing with the discrimination they face in everyday life. It seems that the

problem is not with NN-accented speech itself, but the attitudes that listeners hold about NN speakers. Increased exposure to NN-accented speech can reduce prejudices and difficulties in accent processing, and interlocutors can employ certain communication cues to understand the contents of challenging conversations (Boduch-Grabka & Lev-Ari, 2021).

The way we speak is deeply intrinsic to our identities and how we perceive others, and we are already taking a step in the right direction towards reducing linguistic prejudice by simply being conscious of our accent biases and our role in systemic and institutionalised racism. As such, further research should be directed at understanding the connection between accent and racial discrimination.

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Los mayas: una comunidad indígena que aún conserva su identidad lingüística

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Resumen:

Las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso de la lengua maya han ido cambiando conforme los líderes del gobierno país mexicano aprueban políticas lingüísticas. Estas leyes lingüísticas, en algunas ocasiones favorecían el uso de la lengua nacional del país, el español. En otras ocasiones, estas leyes favorecían el uso de las lenguas autóctonas. El deseo de unificar al país con una sola lengua provocó que las lenguas indígenas, incluyendo la lengua maya, fueran desplazadas por el español. Los mayas sufrieron discriminación y racismo por no querer asimilarse a la cultura dominante del país. Sin embargo, el maya es una de las lenguas indígenas que se ha sabido mantener, a pesar de que han pasado más de quinientos años desde que el español llegó al país. Al ver la opresión política, social e histórica que sufrió la comunidad maya, uno se cuestiona cómo es que los mayas han sabido mantener su lengua hasta hoy en día. Al ver que la lengua maya ha resistido por tantos años, en esta investigación se proponen tres factores son los que han ayudado al mantenimiento de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán. El primero es que el gobierno mexicano reconoció que las lenguas indígenas son también nacionales. Segundo, la educación bilingüe que se ofrece en el Estado favorece la revitalización y normalización de la lengua en Yucatán. Por último, el uso de la lengua maya en el ámbito jurídico hace no solo que los mayas entiendan las leyes en su propia lengua, sino también que la lengua se siga manteniendo viva.

Palabras claves: Lengua maya, actitudes lingüísticas, políticas lingüísticas, educación bilingüe, y revitalización de la lengua.

El español es la lengua oficial en diecinueve países de Latinoamérica, entre estos países están México, Colombia, Venezuela, Perú, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador. Sin embargo, desde la llegada de los españoles al Nuevo Mundo en el siglo XVI, el español ha convivido con las lenguas indígenas. Los distintos reyes españoles decretaron que se les enseñará español a los indígenas para que aprendieran las costumbres europeas y la fe católica, pero los frailes optaron por utilizar la lengua indígena para comunicarse con los indígenas (Montrul, 2013, p. 78). El castellano pasó a ser la lengua de la élite con la que se hacían trámites, mientras que la lengua de los indígenas se hablaba para la comunicación. Aunque el español es la lengua de prestigio en México, los mayas no han dejado de usar su lengua para asimilarse a la sociedad mayoritaria; su perseverancia ha hecho que el gobierno mexicano y los habitantes del país vean

con buenos ojos el mantenimiento de esta lengua precolonial. Sin embargo, las diferencias lingüísticas, sociales y culturales hacen que las comunidades indígenas entre ellas los mayas sufran de racismo y discriminación. Chappell (2017) señaló que el racismo en el Estado fomenta otras formas de discriminación que son basadas en la edad, el género, origen geográfico o nivel social (p. 119). Los mayas han sufrido discriminación y racismo por tener una diferente lengua y cultura, los mayas han logrado mantener una unidad territorial, pero sobre todo lingüística y cultural (Medina, 2017, p. 58). Es impresionante ver cómo es que los mayas son una de las comunidades indígenas que han sabido mantener su lengua a lo largo de los años.

Al ver las opresiones políticas, sociales e históricas uno se pregunta: ¿Cómo han logrado mantener su lengua indígena dentro de la comunidad maya, a pesar de las presiones históricas y sociales de la lengua mayoritaria, el español? En esta tesina, propongo que hay tres factores clave que han contribuido al mantenimiento del maya en el estado de Yucatán. Primero, el gobierno reconoció que las lenguas indígenas forman parte de la nación, y como resultado las lenguas indígenas pueden ser usadas en más ámbitos sociales. Segundo, se les ofrece la educación bilingüe a los habitantes del Estado no solo a niveles básicos, sino también a niveles superiores. Por último, el empleo de jueces bilingües hispano-maya en el Estado de Yucatán sirve para asegurar que los habitantes de este Estado entiendan las leyes y derechos del país en su propia lengua indígena.

El propósito de esta investigación es dar a conocer cómo se llevó a cabo el proceso de la revitalización y normalización del maya en el estado de Yucatán en el ámbito social, educativo y jurídico que trajo la aprobación de la ley general de derechos lingüísticos a los pueblos indígenas en el estado de Yucatán. En la siguiente sección se describen los antecedentes históricos, políticos y sociales del país mexicano durante la conquista española, y durante el proceso de Estado-nación.

Antecedentes históricos, políticos y sociales

Los españoles llegaron a México en el año 1492. Los Reyes Católicos, que gobernaban España en ese entonces, consideraron importante imponer políticas lingüísticas a favor del uso del castellano para que se pudieran afianzar los poderes de la corona. Los Reyes Católicos observaron que el poder político de un país está ligado a la lengua que habla dicho país (Cuarón, 1991, p. 690). Para llevar a cabo las políticas lingüísticas de la corona, los frailes empezaron a enseñarles en español la religión católica a las comunidades indígenas pequeñas. De este modo se aseguraban que el español comenzará a ganar terreno en las Américas. Sin embargo, los frailes optaron por hablar la lengua más hablada por los indígenas, el náhuatl. Esta lengua también fue utilizada por los españoles para facilitar los trámites administrativos y facilitar la comunicación. De esta manera podían llevar a cabo la cristianización y la colonización en la Nueva España. El maya también se utilizó para comunicarse con los indígenas en la península de Yucatán (Montrul, 2013, p. 78). El motivo de hablar la lengua de los indígenas era para facilitar la comunicación con los habitantes del Nuevo Mundo. No obstante, la corona española impuso varias políticas lingüísticas para que con el tiempo el español fuera la lengua oficial de la Nueva

España (Cuarón, 1991, p. 692). Estas políticas lingüísticas mostraban las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso de otras lenguas.

Las políticas lingüísticas que se iban aprobando conforme a los intereses de la corona española. A su vez, estas eran solo el reflejo de las actitudes lingüísticas que los españoles tenían en la época de la colonización, otras veces eran la necesidad de cristianizar a los indígenas. De acuerdo con Bracamontes et al. (2003), estas políticas fueron antagonista con referencia a la población indígena porque marcaron la segregación racial y cultural de la comunidad maya. Además, para pertenecer a la comunidad mexicana la comunidad maya tenía que dejar a un lado su cultura, su lengua e identidad indígena (p. 84). Es claro que en la época del reinado español, las actitudes hacia las lenguas indígenas no favorecían el uso de estas. La aprobación de las políticas lingüísticas hacía que en ocasiones se favoreciera el uso de las lenguas indígenas, mientras que en otras ocasiones se les pedía a las comunidades indígenas que hablaran español.

Para el siglo XVII, el español era cada vez más hablado por los indígenas siendo los criollos los que dominaban el uso de dos lenguas. El hecho de que los criollos hablaran dos lenguas les abría la puerta a importantes puestos en el clero porque era requisito de la corona hablar dos lenguas para abrir una iglesia en las zonas rurales. Esto hizo que los eclesiásticos bilingües fueran más importantes que los que no eran bilingües. Hablar dos lenguas era una pieza importante para la cristianización y la colonización. Los eclesiásticos monolingües consideraron que era una falta de respeto que los indígenas hablaran español porque los indígenas bilingües comenzaban a tomar puestos importantes en el clero. Para evitar que los indígenas ocuparan estos puestos importantes en el fuero, los Reyes de la corona volvieron a utilizar las lenguas indígenas para educarlos y cristianizarlos (Cuarón, 1991, p. 697). Este cambio de políticas lingüísticas a favor del uso de las lenguas precoloniales provocó que las lenguas indígenas se volvieran a fortalecer. El uso de las lenguas indígenas volvió a cambiar cuando llegó el Rey Fernando VI al reinado de España.

Para 1749, el rey Fernando VI contradijo la ley que apoyaba el uso de las lenguas indígenas en el proceso de cristianizar y colonizar (Cuarón, 1991, p. 699). Con esta nueva ley, el castellano se volvió a usar con más frecuencia que las lenguas indígenas. Finalmente, al terminar el reinado de Fernando VI, Carlos III tomó el poder y publicó un documento en el que comunicaba las ventajas y desventajas de educar a los indígenas en varias lenguas. Dicho documento concluía y afirmaba que las lenguas vernáculas limitaban a los indígenas a comunicarse con los españoles (Cuarón, 1991, p. 702). A partir de ese entonces, el español es la lengua oficial de la Nueva España. Como se puede observar, no solo las políticas lingüísticas que implementaron los Reyes españoles hicieron que varias lenguas indígenas desaparecieran, sino también el deseo de unificar al país como nación.

Otro de los sucesos que afectó a las comunidades indígenas de México fue el proceso de Estado-nación. En este proceso, las naciones se unificaban por medio de una misma lengua, ciudadanía y por medio de la sangre. Según Bavaresco (2003), “La ideología del nacionalismo consiste en la afirmación de una identidad cultural ligada generalmente a un territorio, una lengua y una traducción histórica” (p. 56). Sin embargo, esta ideología de unir a los ciudadanos

por medio de una lengua, tradición e historia es contradictoria para los mayas porque para ellos es muy importante enseñarle el maya a sus hijos para que ésta prevalezca. Cuarón (1991) mencionó que los indígenas no permitieron que sus hijos fueran educados con solo el español porque, a través de la lengua vernácula, ellos pueden expresar las cosas de una forma con más énfasis sentimental y porque es la lengua de su patria (p. 699). Este hecho demuestra la importancia que los mayas le dan a su lengua ancestral porque el uso de la lengua maya transmite los deseos que esta comunidad tiene de heredar su lengua a las futuras generaciones. Para los mayas el deseo de unificar a la nación con el uso del español y una misma nacionalidad no tiene significado alguno porque desde su nacimiento nacen siendo mayas y hablando la lengua de sus ancestros. Los mayas no solo utilizan la lengua como una forma de identidad, sino también los patronímicos los identifican como parte de la comunidad maya (Medina, 2017, p. 59). Como se puede observar, el proceso de Estado-nación lejos de unificar a todos los habitantes del país mexicano, éste buscó borrar la lengua que identifica a los mayas con el pretexto de asimilarlos a la cultura dominante. El Estado-nación los marginó y discriminó no solo por ser indígenas, sino también fueron discriminados por el hecho de hablar dos lenguas. Ante esta situación de discriminación y aislamiento, los mayas preferían conservar lo que los identifica como lo es su cultura indígena y su lengua madre.

El movimiento del nacionalismo en México, como en muchos otros países, significa unir a los ciudadanos por medio del uso de una misma lengua, las tradiciones y las costumbres típicas del pueblo mexicano (Bavaresco, 2003, p. 59). El uso del español como lengua oficial en el país hizo que los indígenas mayas aprendieran el español como una segunda lengua. Esta situación lingüística conlleva a que varias comunidades indígenas hablen el español a diferentes niveles de competencia lingüística. El favoritismo hacia el uso del español para conducir a la nación mexicana hacia la hegemonía hace que los mayas fueran marginados. En esa época de opresión lingüística en el estado de Yucatán era visible porque los mayas no podían hablar su lengua ancestral en los lugares públicos. Este hecho causó que los mayas se desplazaran hacia las zonas rurales en donde había gente que hablaba la lengua maya. Este aislamiento social contribuyó a que la lengua prevalezca hasta hoy en día en las zonas rurales. Las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso del maya son positivas en las comunidades rurales en donde hay población maya. Sin embargo, las actitudes lingüísticas en zonas rurales eran negativas porque los maya eran discriminados en la capital del Estado cuando estos viajaban a la ciudad. Para evitar que los hablantes del maya fueran discriminados, cuando tenían que ir a la capital del Estado hablaban solo español (Lozano et al., 2014, p. 169). Este hecho indica que los mayas no tenían la libertad de expresarse con su lengua madre.

Los datos anteriores indican que, los mayas vivieron varios hechos que los orillaba a abandonar su lengua para asimilarse a una cultura occidental que fue traída por los españoles. Por el contrario, la aprobación de la ley general de los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas hizo que la situación lingüística del maya en Yucatán cambiará. Lozano (2014) mencionó que debido al cambio de las políticas lingüísticas hace que los hablantes bilingües vean el maya con más prestigio (p. 170). Medina (2017) realizó un estudio sociolingüístico en

los municipios de Valladolid para analizar la unidad lingüística de los habitantes de este municipio. Su datos indicaron que en este municipio habitaban 1.472.683 habitantes, de los cuales 497.772 son bilingües hispano-maya y 48.066 son hablantes monolingües en maya (p. 64). Estos datos indican que la perspectiva que tenían los hispanohablantes hacia el uso de lengua maya en la península ha cambiado, pues hoy en día 545.838 de habitantes en Yucatán hablan maya. Esta unidad lingüística que se observa en los mayas es lo que hace que la lengua se siga manteniendo. En la siguiente sección se analizan las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso del maya en el estado de Yucatán. Estas actitudes lingüísticas fueron cambiando con el tiempo.

Actitudes hacia el uso del maya

Estudios previos han demostrado las actitudes racistas y discriminatorias hacia los hablantes bilingües algunas décadas atrás. Lozano et al. (2014) demostraron en su estudio sociolingüístico que existían actitudes lingüísticas positivas hacia el uso del español, mientras que las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso de la lengua maya eran negativas (p. 160). El favoritismo hacia el uso de una sola lengua es demostrado en este estudio porque los autores indicaron que los hablantes monolingües y bilingües en el habla maya eran discriminados y aislados por hablar la lengua ancestral, e incluso en algunas ocasiones eran llamados "indios" de una forma despectiva; pues, solo los "indios" en México eran los que tenían la necesidad de hablar dos lenguas (p. 167). Este estudio demostró que los mayas eran presionados por los hablantes monolingües en español para que hablaran una sola lengua y se asimilaran a la cultura que trajo el español. En el ambiente de monolingüismo, los mayas tenían que aprender a hablar el español en lugares públicos, provocando que los mayas se sintieran avergonzados por hablar dos lenguas. Era tan normal ser monolingüe que en las instituciones gubernamentales como las escuelas públicas se hablaba sólo una lengua, el español. Estas actitudes provocaron que los mayas hablaran menos el maya porque no es ni la lengua oficial ni la lengua de prestigio en el país. Los mayas aprendieron que tenían que hablar el español en público y el maya en casa para evitar ser discriminados y aislados de la sociedad.

Para evitar la discriminación y el aislamiento social, los mayas hablaban la lengua maya a manera de diglosia. Montrul (2012) definió el término diglosia a la relación entre dos variedades de un idioma que se usan en una comunidad lingüística, cada una con diferente función (p. 28). Los hablantes del maya hablan el español para realizar trámites gubernamentales, ir al médico o por llamadas telefónicas. Por otro lado, usan la lengua maya cuando se encuentran entre familiares y amigos (Pfeiler et al., 2014, p. 453). Sin embargo, a raíz de las protestas que las organizaciones indígenas llevaron a cabo para luchar por sus derechos de libertad, las actitudes lingüísticas cambiaron en la Península yucateca. Pfeiler et al. (2014) demostró que los participantes buscan hablar el maya en el mercado, con los amigos, los familiares y con personas que deseen hablar el maya. Para ellos el uso de la lengua indígena es importante porque no solo es la lengua materna, sino también por medio de ella se puede comunicar con sus abuelos (p. 454). Este estudio demostró que al transcurrir los años, las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán han cambiado. Por ejemplo, hoy en día se puede oír el uso de la lengua maya en las escuelas, el mercado o con los amigos. Esto se debe a que a partir

de la década de 1970 hubo en casi toda Hispanoamérica una serie de movimientos activistas por parte de los indígenas por el reclamo de sus derechos y libertades (Montrul, 2013, p. 280). Estos movimientos activistas provocaron que para la década de 1990, las organizaciones indígenas en el país mexicano comenzaron a ver cambios respecto a sus derechos lingüísticos. A partir de entonces, se observó en México que las comunidades indígenas se integraron a la sociedad mexicana, al ámbito legal y se hicieron cambios en el sistema educativo (Blanco, 2010, p. 75). Estos cambios se lograron gracias a la perseverancia del uso de las lenguas indígenas y las protestas de las comunidades indígenas. Debido a ello es que los líderes de México reconocieron que es un país compuesto de diversas comunidades indígenas, las cuales cada una tiene su propia lengua autóctona y su propia historia, que a su vez son parte de la historia de México.

Para garantizar la libertad de expresión en la lengua indígena en México, el gobierno aprobó la ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas. Esta ley fue aprobada por el gobierno mexicano para garantizar a los indígenas el mantenimiento de la lengua y la cultura. A partir del año 2003, las lenguas indígenas y su cultura son patrimonio de la nación. Por tal motivo, el gobierno mexicano ha implementado nuevas formas para comenzar la normalización y la planeación de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán (Krotz, 2008, p. 109). La aprobación de esta ley no solo conlleva a revitalizar el uso de la lengua maya, sino también hace que las actitudes hacia el uso de esta lengua cambien y a que estas sean más habladas. Por su parte, la lengua maya tiene varias ventajas sobre las otras lenguas indígenas.

El maya es una lengua que es hablada en una región delimitada lo que provoca que sea una lengua sin variedad dialectal. Otra de las ventajas es que es la segunda lengua más hablada en el país. Gracias a que los mayas nunca abandonaron su lengua y a su resistencia a la asimilación a una cultura accidental es que hoy en día se puede ver la incorporación de la lengua en la sociedad yucateca. Hay que mencionar que para lograr cambiar las actitudes hacia el uso del maya no fue un camino fácil, pero al menos el gobierno mexicano ha reconocido la importancia que las lenguas indígenas tienen en el país porque estas han estado presentes en la historia desde antes de la colonización (Blanco, 2015, p. 84). En la siguiente sección, se observa los cambios que tuvo que hacer el gobierno mexicano para verificar que las comunidades indígenas fueran integradas a la sociedad.

El papel de los activistas indígenas y el reconocimiento gubernamental

Los años en los cuales las lenguas autóctonas sólo eran consideradas como parte de las comunidades indígenas han quedado atrás. Ahora las lenguas ancestrales son también nacionales y forman parte de la historia de México. Al ver que las comunidades indígenas de otros países de Hispanoamérica luchaban por sus derechos y libertad, las comunidades indígenas mexicanas también lucharon por sus derechos. Es debido a estas luchas indígenas, al ambiente multicultural, multilingüismo y multiétnico que el gobierno mexicano reconoce a las lenguas indígenas como parte del país (Blanco, 2010, p. 84). De esta manera comenzó un camino hacia el mantenimiento de la lengua y la cultura de cada comunidad indígena del país. En el estado de Yucatán el gobierno del estado también inició la incorporación de la lengua maya a la sociedad.

El primer paso del gobierno para la normalización y la planificación de la lengua indígena maya en la sociedad es reconocer que la lengua maya es parte de la comunidad de Yucatán. El propósito de la normalización de una lengua consiste en apoyar la comunicación eficaz, transmitir un pensamiento ordenado y coherente tanto dentro de la comunidad del hablante como la comunidad externa (Lehmann, 2018, p. 344). El proceso de normalización ocurre con la finalidad de aumentar el uso de las lenguas minoritarias de un país. En la Península de Yucatán, la normalización de la lengua maya ayudaría a los hablantes bilingües hispano-maya sientan la confianza de usar ambas lenguas en diferentes contextos. El hecho de que los mayas puedan hablar su lengua ancestral en cualquier contexto es resultado de la lucha que llevaron a cabo las organizaciones indígenas en los años 1990, siendo los mayas una de las más activistas.

La comunidad maya es una de las comunidades indígenas que más se ha involucrado por la lucha de sus derechos ante el gobierno mexicano y, como resultado, la ley de los derechos lingüísticos a las lenguas indígenas se puso en vigor en marzo de 2003 (Barceló & Bermejo, 2015). Esta ley no se habría logrado de no ser por los diputados bilingües interesados en promover las lenguas indígenas en el país. Yáñez (2008) explicó que "la ley general de los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas tiene por objeto regular el reconocimiento y protección de los derechos lingüísticos individuales y colectivos de los pueblos y comunidades indígenas, así como el uso y el desarrollo de las lenguas nativas del país" (p. 423). El autor también resaltó tres artículos que son los más relevantes para la normalización y planeación de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán. Los artículos son:

El artículo 3 menciona que las lenguas indígenas son también nacionales por su origen histórico y estas tienen la misma validez que el español. El artículo 6 establece que el Estado tomará medidas en las cuales se difunda la diversidad lingüística y cultural. Por último, el artículo 7 indica que las lenguas indígenas serán válidas al igual que el español y estas pueden ser habladas en cualquier ámbito público (Yáñez, 2008, p. 423). Estos artículos que forman parte de la ley indican que las lenguas indígenas han sido reconocidas como lenguas oficiales del país. Por lo tanto, los mayas no deben de sentir vergüenza por hablar su propia lengua, ni mucho menos deben de sentirse discriminados o aislados por no querer asimilarse a la cultura mexicana. Esta ley garantiza a las comunidades indígenas la libertad de usar su lengua en cualquier ámbito social.

Además de la aprobación de la ley general de los derechos lingüísticos de las lenguas indígenas, el gobierno mexicano ha creado otras instituciones para verificar la normalización y planeación de las lenguas indígenas, así como también la aprobación de un presupuesto para la creación de instituciones gubernamentales, las cuales tienen la finalidad de normalizar el uso de las lenguas indígenas del país. Por ejemplo, el Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI) fue creado junto con esta ley (García Vallés & Vallés, 2011, p. 24), y esta institución tiene la finalidad de revitalizar, fortalecer y desarrollar las lenguas indígenas nacionales.

Además, INALI colaboró con otras instituciones para normalizar las lenguas indígenas en el país. Por ejemplo, INALI trabajó con la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP por sus siglas) en la realización de programas bilingües para las comunidades indígenas. Estas dos instituciones

colaboraron juntas para crear libros en los cuales se observa la diversidad lingüística y cultural del país; la creación de estos libros hace notar a los estudiantes y padres de familia que México es un país con diversidad lingüística y cultural (p. 25). La creación de este material didáctico tiene la finalidad de informar a las nuevas generaciones del estado de Yucatán que el país es un lugar en donde hay diversidad lingüística y cultural, así como inculcar el respeto hacia aquellos que hablan más de una lengua. No solo la colaboración de la SEP con INALI ha ayudado a la normalización y revitalización de las lenguas indígenas, sino también la fundación de otras instituciones que brindan a las comunidades indígenas un buen servicio de salud o gubernamental.

Otro de los logros de INALI es la creación del Patrón Nacional de Intérpretes y Traductores en Lenguas Indígenas. Con este servicio el gobierno mexicano verifica que los indígenas cuenten con el servicio de traducción e interpretación cuando lo necesiten. También se creó el Comité de Normalización de Asuntos Indígenas en el Ámbito del Órgano Colegiado de Normalización en el Ámbito de la Salud (García Vallés & Vallés, 2011, p. 32), el cual facilita la comunicación entre el paciente indígena que no habla español y el doctor. Por lo que se puede observar la creación de estas instituciones gubernamentales y la aprobación de presupuesto es lo que garantiza que las lenguas indígenas se integren de nuevo a la sociedad mexicana.

La aprobación de la ley general derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas en el año 2003 trae varios cambios no sólo en las instituciones gubernamentales que ahora tienen que utilizar las lenguas indígenas para garantizar los derechos de estos, sino también trae cambios a la sociedad mexicana porque ahora en las oficinas de gobierno se puede ver el uso de las lenguas indígenas. Estos cambios hacen que se lleve a cabo el proceso de normalización de las lenguas indígenas en la sociedad. Al ser el maya la segunda lengua autóctona que más hablantes en el estado de Yucatán hace que el proceso de revitalización y normalización sea fácil y rápido.

Cabe mencionar que a pesar de que existe una gran diversidad de lenguas indígenas que se hablan en el país de México, la lengua maya tiene una gran ventaja sobre las demás. Una de ellas es que el maya es una lengua sin variedad dialectal, además de ser la segunda lengua con más hablantes en el país (Korst, 2008, p. 109). Estas ventajas evitan el desplazamiento lingüístico de la lengua, además son las que hacen prevalecer el maya en el estado de Yucatán. Por ejemplo, los hablantes de la lengua maya pueden hablar la lengua en las escuelas, despachos jurídicos y en otros ámbitos sociales. Esto hace ver que el fenómeno de la diglosia ha disminuido porque el maya no solo se hablaba dentro de los miembros de la familia y con amigos, sino también fuera de la comunidad indígena. La aprobación de la ley general de los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas trae varios cambios a la sociedad yucateca.

El hecho de que el gobierno mexicano haya otorgado derechos lingüísticos a las lenguas autóctonas del país es importante para el mantenimiento de las lenguas indígenas. Hamel (1995) mencionó que los derechos lingüísticos forman parte de los derechos humanos, tanto individuales como colectivos, esto implica que cada individuo puede aprender y desarrollar su propia lengua materna (p. 12). El apoyo del gobierno mexicano y la creación de instituciones gubernamentales apoyan a la comunidad maya y facilitan que la lengua indígena siga siendo

usada. Además, la aprobación de la ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas hace que las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el uso del maya cambien. Anteriormente, los indígenas mayas eran discriminados y aislados por hablar el maya; hoy en día no solo los nativos pobres son los que hablan dos lenguas, sino también aquellos que tienen un nivel socioeconómico alto. Por ejemplo, Lorenzo et al. (2014) mencionaron en su artículo que la lengua maya goza de prestigio casi como el español porque hoy en día se puede oír hablar el maya hasta en la radio (p. 169). El hecho de que la lengua maya se escuche en la radio ayuda a que los hablantes de esta lengua la sigan usando. Estos cambios de poder hablar la lengua en cualquier contexto no se hubieran logrado sin los activistas mayas y el apoyo de los líderes gubernamentales, porque estos últimos tienen un poder enorme para hacer que una lengua ancestral se normalice en la sociedad. Por ejemplo, el gobierno puede crear y aprobar leyes que apoyen el uso de estas lenguas. A continuación, se observa cómo se llevó a cabo el proceso de la normalización y la revitalización de la lengua maya en el ámbito educativo del Estado.

La educación bilingüe en el estado de Yucatán

La aprobación de la ley general de los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas desarrolló un proceso de cambio hacia la educación bilingüe. Por medio de la educación bilingüe, el maya se revitaliza y se normaliza la lengua autóctona de los mayas. Una de las instituciones del gobierno que más ha fomentado el uso, la normalización y planeación de la lengua maya en el ámbito educativo es la Secretaría de Educación Pública (García Vallés & Vallés, 2011, p. 19). Antes de que el gobierno mexicano aprobara la ley, la educación en México estaba dirigida al uso del español porque el español era la lengua oficial del país. Por lo tanto, la lengua de instrucción era el español. Esto indica que la educación en México era monolingüe y diseñada para enseñarles a los indígenas como hablar el español correctamente y así poder pertenecer a la sociedad mexicana. De hecho, la educación en 1930 era diseñada para "desindianización" con la finalidad de incorporar a los indígenas a la sociedad mexicana (Blanco, 2010, p. 82). El favoritismo por el uso del español provocó que varios maestros y promotores comenzaron a promover un programa educativo para hacer desaparecer la cultura y la lengua de los indígenas. Sin embargo, muchos maestros y promotores indígenas se dieron cuenta de que en realidad este proyecto acabaría con las lenguas y las culturas ancestrales del país (p. 82). Este tipo de educación que se enfocó en la castellanización de muchos estudiantes indígenas logró que un gran número de hablantes en las lenguas indígenas hablaran más el español que su lengua madre causando la pérdida de dichas lenguas.

Para remediar la pérdida de hablantes en las lenguas nacionales del país, los maestros crearon un proyecto educativo con contenido en donde las lenguas indígenas y las culturas ocupan un lugar en el aula. Para el año 1960 se adaptó una forma de educación bicultural, pero aún no tenía el apoyo de la ley de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas (p. 85). Este tipo de ajustes en la educación pública del estado de Yucatán fue el principio de un camino en el que se incorporaron la lengua maya en el aula. En 1978, la Dirección General de Educación Indígena reconoció que existen otras lenguas maternas, y se asumió que existen algunos estudiantes que al ingresar a las escuelas hablan otra lengua que no es el español. Esto no se

logró sino hasta marzo del 2003, cuando el gobierno mexicano aprobó la ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas. Una vez que se reconoció la diversidad de lenguas indígenas en el país, la Secretaría de Educación Pública comenzó a desarrollar programas bilingües y biculturales para iniciar el proceso de la revitalización y normalización lingüística del maya en las escuelas del estado de Yucatán.

Estos programas de educación bilingüe se llevaron a cabo junto con las normas de escritura para la lengua maya del 2014. Así se empezó a fortalecer el uso y la enseñanza de la lengua maya en las escuelas públicas del Estado (Guerrettaz et al., 2020, p. 5). Este tipo de educación en las escuelas públicas del Estado tuvo un gran cambio porque anteriormente los estudiantes que hablaban maya sólo podían hacer uso del español para comunicarse con sus maestros y compañeros. Ahora que la educación es bilingüe en el estado de Yucatán, el objetivo de la Secretaría de Educación busca que los hablantes de lenguas indígenas aprendan el español gradualmente. El objetivo de la educación bilingüe en el estado de Yucatán es que los individuos bilingües tengan una competencia lingüística en ambas lenguas y en diferentes contextos (Hernández, 1999, p. 44), pero el tipo de programa educativo que se ofrecía en las escuelas públicas bilingües en Yucatán eran transicionales. Este tipo de modelo va incrementando el uso del español en la instrucción educativa hasta que gradualmente la instrucción se da completamente en español. Esto indica que al final de la educación bilingüe, los estudiantes mayas terminarán la escuela primaria hablando la lengua oficial del país. Esta forma de enseñanza en la que solo se enseña el español gradualmente no es la más adecuada para la comunidad maya porque ellos desean que su lengua su lengua y su cultura prevalezca. Para lograr el mantenimiento, los mayas buscaban que las escuelas promovieran no solo su lengua, sino también su cultura.

Para solucionar la falta de información cultural y lingüística de la comunidad maya en las escuelas, las comunidades indígenas solicitaron al gobierno mexicano que se legalice la educación bilingüe y bicultural, así como la declaración y el uso de las lenguas indígenas dentro del aula (Blanco, 2010, p. 84). Esta protesta de la comunidad maya tuvo sus frutos porque al ver que la educación bilingüe no era la más adecuada para promover y mantener la cultura y la lengua de los mayas, se optó por cambiar la educación bilingüe por una educación enfocada a lo intercultural. Este tipo de educación favorece el reconocimiento del derecho a la diversidad cultural y lingüística dentro del aula (Torres, 2017, p.7). El hecho de que los maestros en Yucatán reconozcan la diversidad lingüística y cultural hace que mejore la atención educativa para los alumnos que hablan maya. De hecho, el maestro, que es bilingüe, los alumnos que no dominan el español pueden expresar sus ideas en su propia lengua porque el maestro habla hispano-maya. Además, las actividades en el aula están enfocadas a que por medio de la interacción social los alumnos conozcan la lengua maya y su cultura dentro del aula.

Torres (2017) mencionó que la educación intercultural es una propuesta educativa con el contexto de diversidad cultural para dar a conocer las actitudes y valores que permitan a los maestros y a los estudiante la posibilidad de comunicarse (p. 2). Dentro del aula, los maestros fomentan las actividades interculturales entre los maestros y los alumnos, así como las

actividades interculturales entre los mismos alumnos (p. 7). Actividades en las que los niños conviven con otros estudiantes que no hablan la misma lengua pueden ayudar a que ambos aprendan de las dos lenguas. A su vez, estas crean un ambiente en el que los alumnos aprenden sobre la cultura y la lengua maya, del mismo modo los estudiantes mayas aprenden más sobre el español. Torres (2017) mencionó que "los estudiantes en el aula pueden convivir e interactuar a pesar de tener diferencias lingüísticas porque los estudiantes tienen una concepción de la cultura en un sentido más amplio: las formas de vida, costumbres, modo de percibir el mundo" (p. 9). Con estas actividades interculturales en el aula se disminuyen los prejuicios que algún alumno hispanohablante pueda tener hacia la cultura y la lengua de los mayas. A su vez, se observan otros beneficios en la educación intercultural porque los estudiantes hispanohablantes pueden aprender de la lengua maya, y el estudiante que habla maya puede aprender a comprender no solo el español de su compañero, sino también aprende de la cultura hispana. Además de hacer que sean más positivas las actitudes lingüísticas de los estudiantes hacia la lengua y la cultura maya, fomenta un ambiente de inclusión, promoviendo el respeto hacia todos los estudiantes. No solo las actitudes lingüísticas de los estudiantes son importantes para mantener la lengua maya en el aula, sino también las actitudes lingüísticas de los maestros hacia el uso de esta lengua en el aula.

Las actitudes lingüísticas que tienen los maestros hacia el uso de la lengua maya son importantes para promover el uso de la lengua maya en el aula no importa cuántas políticas lingüísticas el gobierno mexicano apruebe, el proceso de revitalizar, usar y mantener la lengua minoritaria en las escuelas bilingües depende del maestro (Guerrettaz et al., 2020, p. 11). El papel que tienen los maestros del aula es importante porque los alumnos ven al maestro como la fuente de información que sabe como decir un enunciado ya sea en maya o en español. Esto indica que el maestro tiene un alto conocimiento lingüístico de ambas lenguas. Sin embargo, existen maestros que prefieren seguir educando a sus alumnos con el uso del español y dejan a un lado el uso de la lengua maya. Este hecho sugiere que el maestro tiene una actitud negativa hacia el uso de la lengua maya (Guerrettaz et al., 2020, p.17). Afortunadamente, la perspectiva de los maestros por la educación bilingüe y bicultural suele ser positiva, pues los maestros en Yucatán han buscado formas para mantener la lengua en la comunidad educativa. Esas actitudes positivas se observan no solo en la educación básica, sino también en los niveles de educación superior.

Los maestros que trabajan en las escuelas de educación bilingüe y bicultural en el estado de Yucatán tienen la necesidad de saber más sobre la lengua maya. Por ese motivo, los maestros pidieron a la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán cursos que los ayuden a desarrollar material didáctico en el que se dé a conocer ambas lenguas y culturas. Con este material, los alumnos desarrollan el uso del español y el maya en diferentes contextos. Los maestros bilingües de Yucatán presionaron a la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán para obtener cursos de superación y preparación para desempeñar su trabajo como maestros bilingües en las aulas, los maestros solicitaron a la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán más cursos avanzados en lingüística y pedagogía para capacitarse profesionalmente (Burns, 1998, p. 23). De acuerdo con el autor, al

solicitar más cursos en la lengua maya, los maestros pasaron de ser agentes culturales entre la escuela y el Estado. Este papel activista busca promover las clases sobre la lengua maya con la finalidad de revitalizar la lengua maya (p. 23). Son los maestros quienes en realidad conocen y saben lo que se necesita para poder desarrollar la revitalización y normalización del maya en el aula, aunque también ellos saben los retos a los que se enfrentan para poder revitalizar y normalizar el maya.

No basta solo con el interés de los maestros por seguir usando la lengua maya en el aula, o capacitarse profesionalmente para dar mejores clases ambas lenguas, sino también se necesita saber superar las barreras a los que se enfrenta cada día en la clase. Uno de los mayores retos a los que se enfrenta la educación para normalización y planeación del maya en la educación bilingüe es que no existe material impreso para que los maestros se puedan apoyar para impartir las clases en las escuelas bilingües (Burns, 1998, p. 26). En el curso de verano que se impartió en la universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, los maestros crearon material pedagógico con temas sobre adivinanzas y juegos de palabras en maya, juegos idiomáticos y bromas en la lengua maya. También crearon material en temas como conversaciones en maya, profecías e historias orales, así como el placer de hablar que incluye canciones, poesía, y otros géneros (p. 23). Este material didáctico fue creado con la finalidad de utilizarlo en las clases con los niños monolingües en maya para desarrollar ambas lenguas y dar a conocer la cultura maya.

Como se puede observar, no solo el gobierno mexicano está interesado en revitalizar y normalizar la lengua maya de la península de Yucatán, sino también las instituciones educativas y los maestros, estos han hecho varios cambios en el ámbito educativo como la elaboración de material pedagógico, así como pedir que se proporcione cursos para saber enseñar el español y el maya. Otro de los cambios que se observa en el uso de la lengua maya en el ámbito jurídico del país mexicano. En la siguiente sección se observa cómo es que los mayas incorporaron su lengua precolonial en el ámbito jurídico tras la aprobación de la ley en la que se les concede derechos lingüísticos.

La lengua maya en el ámbito jurídico

Dentro del ámbito jurídico, la comunidad indígena maya ha sido muy activa. Debido a su activismo es que han logrado grandes cambios en el estado de Yucatán. De acuerdo con Mattiace & Llanes (2015), mencionaron que el estado de Yucatán se distingue por el énfasis que han puesto los líderes políticos y algunas organizaciones civiles, en la cultura, lengua e historia mayas (p. 610). Debido a esta distinción cultural y lingüística es que el gobierno del estado aprobó la ley Maya de Yucatán en el 2011. Esta ley reconoce y subraya la diferencia cultural maya, así como el fortalecimiento de la lengua, la cultura y el acceso a la justicia (Mattiace & Llanes 2015, p. 627). Para la comunidad indígena maya esta ley indica que ellos podrán ser juzgados por jueces que hablen la lengua maya siguiendo las reglas y costumbres de la comunidad maya.

El uso de su lengua es importante porque la idea de usar la lengua maya en los juzgados viene con la finalidad de que la comunidad maya entienda los procedimientos legales del estado de Yucatán. La ley Maya del 2011 reconoce el trabajo de los jueces de paz locales para adjudicar

y resolver conflictos de la comunidad maya a nivel local (p. 624). Otro de los beneficios de esta ley es que la comunidad maya tiene el derecho de elegir a los jueces por medio de un voto (Mattiace & Llanes, 2015). Estos jueces de paz son elegidos por el presidente municipal. Anteriormente, los requisitos para ser juez de paz en la comunidad maya era que el juez debía de pertenecer a la comunidad maya y hablar la lengua maya. Los requisitos de ahora es que tengan conocimientos de las leyes que rigen a la comunidad indígena, que tenga el bachillerato terminado y que hable maya (p. 626). Como se puede observar, la lengua maya es un factor importante para la comunidad indígena del estado porque es uno de los requisitos para que un miembro de la comunidad indígena sea juez. Por ejemplo, la comunidad maya soluciona sus problemas a través del diálogo que se da en maya entre los afectados y el juez de paz. Si no llegan a un acuerdo entre las partes afectadas se tendrían que ir al ministerio público en donde el conflicto se solucionaría según las leyes del país y sin usar la lengua maya. Estos cambios en el ámbito jurídico no hubieran sido posibles sin el activismo político de los mayas que tiene la finalidad revitalizar y normalizar la lengua dentro del ámbito jurídico.

Para revitalizar y normalizar la lengua maya dentro del ámbito jurídico, los jueces empezaron a emplear jueces que fueran bilingües para facilitar la comunicación entre las autoridades y la comunidad maya. De acuerdo con Ortiz & Escobedo (2015), "El objetivo de La ley del sistema de justicia maya del Estado es que a través de ella el gobierno reconozca el derecho de la comunidad maya a aplicar su propio sistema normativo en la regulación y solución de sus conflictos internos, en concordancia con la constitución de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos" (p. 13). La Ley del sistema de justicia maya del Estado establece que un juez de paz debe ser imparcial al momento de oír el conflicto que se desató en la comunidad maya. Durante el juicio, los involucrados deben de presentar su problema utilizando la lengua maya y, a su vez, el juez de paz informa a los involucrados la solución para dicho conflicto. La solución que dicta el juez de paz es dicha en maya también; sin embargo, los trámites son escritos en español. Es importante recalcar que todo este proceso legal tiene como objetivo resolver los conflictos de la comunidad indígena en su propia lengua y según sus costumbres. El hecho de que los mayas pidan que se les juzgue de acuerdo a sus costumbres y en su lengua nativa indica no solo que ellos entienden las leyes en su lengua propia, sino también indica que la lengua y su cultura se revitaliza y normaliza en el ámbito jurídico.

Se podría decir que este sistema de justicia es algo nuevo que los mayas crearon tras la aprobación de la Ley del sistema maya; por el contrario, este tipo de justicia se ha impartido desde hace siglos (Ortiz & Escobedo, 2015). Hoy en día, este estilo de impartir justicia de los mayas brinda la oportunidad de entender las particularidades que tiene cada comunidad indígena (p. 24) y demuestra lo importante que es la lengua maya para los indígenas, pues ellos entienden a través del maya cómo funciona el sistema de justicia y las leyes. Los cambios que se observan en el ámbito jurídico ayudan a la revitalización y la normalización de la lengua maya en un contexto más formal. Estos cambios que se observan a raíz de la aprobación de la ley de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas son los que ayudan a que el maya se revitalice y se normalice en el estado de Yucatán. Sin embargo, aún existen otros problemas económicos y

sociales que la comunidad maya debe de superar. En la siguiente sección se discuten los desafíos a los que aún se enfrenta la lengua maya para lograr la normalización y revitalización en la sociedad.

Desafíos para la normalización y revitalización de la lengua maya

Estudios previos han demostrado que las actitudes hacia el uso de la lengua maya provocaban que los hablantes sufrieran de discriminación y aislamiento social. De hecho, se creía que solo los nativos eran los que tenían la necesidad de hablar dos lenguas, la lengua de su comunidad indígena y el español (Lozano et al., 2014, p. 167). A pesar de la opresión social para que los mayas abandonaran su lengua y su cultura, para ellos existen dos factores que los identifican como parte de su comunidad. El primero se identifica por la sangre porque llevan con orgullo el apellido de sus familiares. El segundo factor es la lengua que tienen en común la comunidad maya (Medina, 2013, p. 59). Gracias a la perseverancia, al activismo político de los mayas y a que esta comunidad maya nunca dejó su lengua para pertenecer a la sociedad en la que la lengua de prestigio es el español, las actitudes hacia y el uso del maya han cambiado.

Hoy en día, el maya goza de más prestigio que otras lenguas indígenas porque en el estado de Yucatán hay un gran número de habitantes que hablan el maya y el español. El frecuente uso de esta lengua indígena hace que las autoridades mexicanas otorgaran derechos lingüísticos a las lenguas autóctonas. Esto significa que las lenguas autóctonas de México son también nacionales. Estos derechos lingüísticos no solo cambiaron la sociedad monolingüe del estado de Yucatán, sino también cambiaron las escuelas porque se crearon programas de educación bicultural y bilingües para ayudar a la revitalización y la normalización de la lengua maya. Estos programas educativos tienen la finalidad de conservar no solo la lengua maya, sino también la cultura maya. Dentro del ámbito jurídico también se observaron cambios para favorecer el proceso de la normalización y revitalización de la lengua maya dentro del sistema de justicia. Por ejemplo, en el estado Yucatán se emplean jueces bilingües (hispano-maya) para que la comunidad maya entienda en su propia lengua las leyes que los protegen. Debido a la aprobación de la ley general de los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas es que se pueden observar cambios en diferentes ámbitos.

Los cambios que se observan en la sociedad, la educación, y el ámbito jurídico hacen que las perspectivas hacia las lenguas autóctonas cambien porque antes se veían con poco prestigio a lado del español (Lozano et al., 2014, p. 169). Sin embargo, a pesar de que el gobierno mexicano creó políticas lingüísticas para revitalizar y normalizar el uso de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán, aún existen desafíos en el camino de la normalización y la revitalización de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán. Por ejemplo, los mayas prefieren aprender el español como una herramienta de trabajo para conseguir mejores trabajos. Lipski (1994) mencionó que los hablantes mayas trabajan como empleados domésticos, obreros y vendedores (p. 99). Este tipo de trabajos no es muy bien remunerado, por lo que muchos mayas viven en la pobreza. De acuerdo con Robles-Zavala (2010), en el municipio de Mayapán, ubicado a 70 kilómetros de la ciudad de Mérida, Yucatán, los mayas viven en condiciones extremas de pobreza (p. 108). Por este motivo los mayas aprenden la lengua mayoritaria para obtener mejores empleos y salir de la pobreza. Sin

embargo, el uso del español para que los mayas consigan mejores trabajos y salgan de la pobreza hace que limite el mantenimiento de su lengua ancestral. Al ver que su lengua madre no les ayuda a conseguir mejores trabajos hace que los hablantes del maya presenten un bajo grado de autoestima lingüística, y creen que su lengua no es tan útil como la lengua mayoritaria para tener éxito en el ámbito laboral (Montrul, 2013, p. 28). Para resolver esta situación en la que el español parece ser la única herramienta para salir de la pobreza, el gobierno mexicano debería de aprobar más incentivos económicos para los mayas, así como la creación de empleos para los de la comunidad aunque los hablantes de maya no tengan una capacidad lingüística alta. No solo la pobreza es un desafío que los mayas deben de superar para seguir manteniendo la lengua, sino también evitar el abandono de los estudiantes mayas en el aula de clase.

Dentro del ámbito de la educación existen problemas que también se deben de resolver para poder mantener la lengua maya en la región. La educación bilingüe y bicultural en el estado de Yucatán comienza desde el preescolar hasta el sexto grado. De acuerdo con Uribe (2002), existe en el estado de Yucatán un Subsistema de Educación Indígena que ofrece educación inicial indígena, preescolar, primaria y diversos programas de apoyo asistencial y técnico (p. 79). Sin embargo, muchas de estas ayudas gubernamentales no son conocidas por la comunidad indígena maya porque los estudiantes que hablan maya abandonan la escuela. La Secretaría de Educación Pública trata de hacer que la comunidad maya continúe sus estudios a nivel secundario. Por lo tanto, empezó a promover diversas acciones para que los niños y las niñas continúen sus estudios y no abandonen la escuela al terminar la primaria (p. 82). Una de esas acciones que se tomaron es la de incitar a los niños mayas a ver los beneficios de continuar los estudios. Para solucionar este problema, que se observa en el aula de clases, es importante que los estudiantes mayas que asisten a la escuela bicultural y bilingüe sigan asistiendo porque ellos son la pieza fundamental para que la lengua maya se siga manteniendo en el aula de clase. Al no haber estudiantes que hablen maya, la lengua y la cultura no se pueden dar a conocer. Existe otro desafío que pone en riesgo el mantenimiento de la lengua de los mayas, la falta de docentes bilingües. Las instituciones educativas en el estado enfrentan otro desafío que pone en riesgo el mantenimiento de la lengua maya en el Estado.

La falta de maestros que dominen la lengua maya en las escuelas es un desafío que limita la normalización y la revitalización de esta lengua. Guerrettaz et al. (2020) mencionaron que en el estado de Yucatán no hay suficientes maestros bilingües en maya-español para impartir las clases a los niños de la comunidad maya. Por lo tanto, se tiende a utilizar el español como lengua de instrucción. Los maestros, según los autores, son actores principales en la escuela porque están en el proceso de interpretar, traducir e implementar las políticas lingüísticas en el contexto educativo (p. 7). Este desafío en las escuelas bilingües en el estado de Yucatán hace que las instrucciones de las actividades educativas se digan en español y no en ambas lenguas. Para solucionar esta dificultad al cual se enfrenta el mantenimiento de la lengua maya, se debería de crear programas educativos que informen y capaciten a los hablantes bilingües en hispano-maya como puede formar parte de la educación bilingüe en las escuelas del estado. Estos hablantes

bilingües son de gran ayuda en el aula cuando el maestro no domina alguna de las dos lenguas. A su vez, los hablantes bilingües en hispano-maya también son de gran ayuda en el ámbito jurídico.

Dentro del ámbito jurídico también existen dificultades para la revitalización y la normalización de la lengua maya; en este ámbito laboral también hacen falta jueces de paz que sean bilingües. La falta de jueces bilingües hacen que resolver los casos jurídicos tome más tiempo que si se resolvieran con un juez que no pertenezca a la comunidad maya y que no tiene dominio en la lengua ancestral. Ante esta falta de jueces bilingües en hispano-maya hace que la comunidad maya se vea obligada a seguir usando más el español porque los implicados en un problema jurídico tienen la necesidad de resolverlo. Para resolver este último obstáculo, al que se enfrenta la comunidad maya para lograr el mantenimiento de su lengua en el ámbito jurídico, se debería de ofrecer la capacitación de intérpretes bilingües en hispano-maya para que estos ayuden en las cortes a la comunidad maya. Esta solución no solo ayuda a resolver los problemas a los que se enfrenta el proceso de la revitalización y la normalización del maya, sino también ayuda a que la comunidad indígena maya continúe sus estudios, y así poder llevar el conocimiento lingüístico que sobre la lengua autóctono del estado de Yucatán. En la siguiente sección se ofrece una recapitulación de los temas que se han tocado en esta tesina.

Conclusiones

Los mayas son una comunidad indígena que se establece en el sudeste de México. Desde la llegada de los españoles al Nuevo Mundo, el maya estuvo en contacto con el español, y desde entonces el maya se ha podido mantener hasta hoy en día. La pregunta que se planteó en esta investigación es cómo los mayas han mantenido su lengua hasta el día de hoy por lo que, se propuso que tres factores son los que han ayudado al mantenimiento de la lengua en el estado de Yucatán. Esos factores son: el apoyo del gobierno mexicano que aprobó leyes lingüísticas para revitalizar las lenguas precoloniales en el país, impulsado en gran parte por los activistas mayas. Otro factor que contribuye a la revitalización y normalización de la lengua indígena en el Estado es la educación bilingüe y bicultural que se imparte en algunas escuelas del estado de Yucatán. Los programas educativos biculturales tienen como objetivo promover la cultura indígena y mantener la lengua (Guerrettaz et al., 2020, p. 3). Un último factor que ayudó al mantenimiento de la lengua maya es el uso de la lengua indígena en el ámbito jurídico. En este ámbito de trabajo se hace uso de las leyes y costumbres de los mayas para resolver los conflictos que surgen en la comunidad (Mattiace & Salazar, 2015, p. 625). Los cambios que se dieron en el ámbito social educativo, y jurídico ocurren con la finalidad de revitalizar la lengua indígena y darle más prestigio a la lengua maya para que ésta pueda ser hablada en diferentes contextos. Desafortunadamente, para la comunidad indígena del Estado aún hay otros desafíos que tienen que superar para que la revitalización y normalización de su lengua ancestral tenga éxito.

Uno de los desafíos es la necesidad de obtener un trabajo bien remunerado para tener un nivel económico estable. En la búsqueda de empleo uno de los requisitos es hablar español para poder comunicarse con otras personas que no dominan la lengua maya. Esta situación conlleva a la lengua maya a un desplazamiento porque los hablantes del maya no solo van a hablar español en el trabajo, sino también en otros ámbitos sociales. Otro de los desafíos a los que se enfrentan

el ámbito educativo y jurídico es la falta de maestros y jueces bilingües que ayuden en ambos campos laborales al mantenimiento del maya. Para solucionar estas dificultades para el mantenimiento de la lengua se propuso que el gobierno proporcione a las comunidades mayas estímulos económicos para que los alumnos que hablan maya puedan salir de la pobreza y continúen sus estudios. Por otra parte, se propuso solucionar el problema de la falta de docentes y jueces bilingües con la creación de programas educativos que capaciten a los hablantes hispano-maya para que puedan formar parte del mantenimiento de la lengua maya en el ámbito educativo y jurídico. Es de esta manera como se podrá lograr la revitalización de la lengua maya en el estado de Yucatán. Son interesantes los cambios lingüísticos que se dieron en la sociedad yucateca; sin embargo, han transcurrido varios años desde que se aprobó la ley de derechos lingüísticos en el país. A la investigadora le gustaría hacer una investigación en el futuro para ver si otras lenguas indígenas como el náhuatl o el quechua han ganado terreno en los ámbitos sociales, educativos y jurídicos como la lengua maya.

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