

The Confluence

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THE CONFLUENCE

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Volume 3, Issue 2





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Crash Analysis for Lake Saint Louis Police Department

Anna Carter, Joseph Smith, Melisa Murillo, Mackenzie Holmes

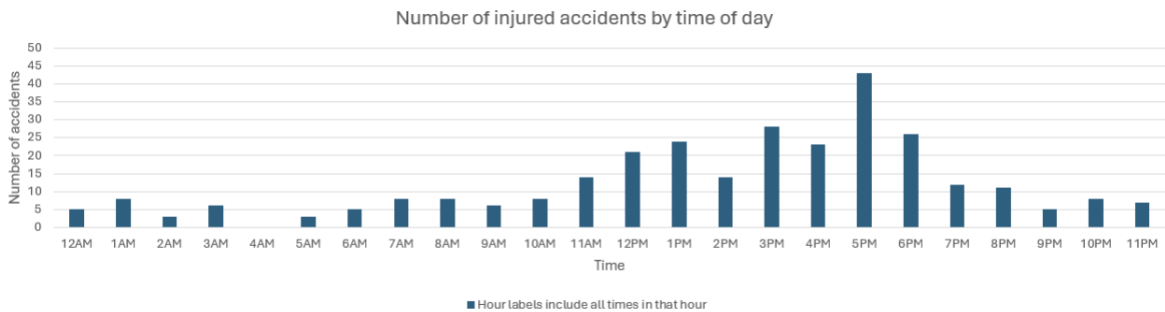
April 25, 2024

1 Industrial Problem

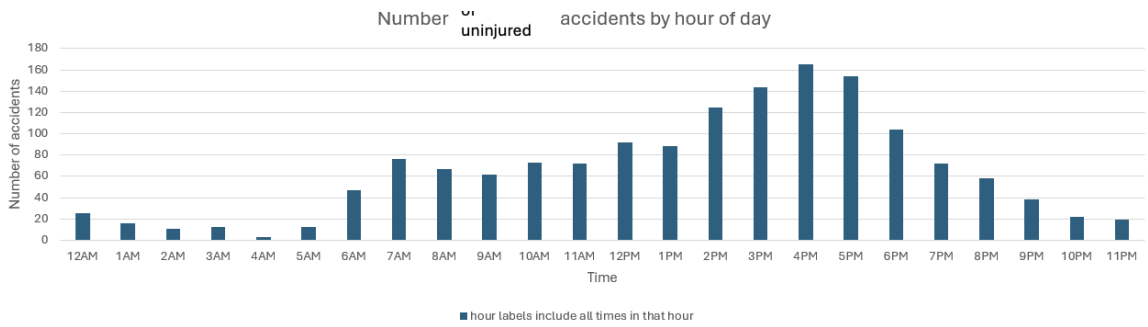
Lake Saint Louis is a small city of just under 17,000 people in the same county as Lindenwood University. Originally a planned community, it is easily accessible by Interstate 64 and Interstate 70. It also contains two large lakes and shopping centers that attracts visitors to the area. As a result, there have been a number of traffic crashes in the area. The Lake Saint Louis Police Department (represented by Lieutenant Josh Gilliam) along with George Ertle, the City Administrator, has requested that Lindenwood’s PIC Math group review data from 2019-2023 to identify patterns. We have reviewed the crash data at several locations and under multiple conditions and have uncovered some noticeable trends. We also have insights that may result in changing driver behavior or provide an engineering solution that may reduce collisions.

2 Overview of Results

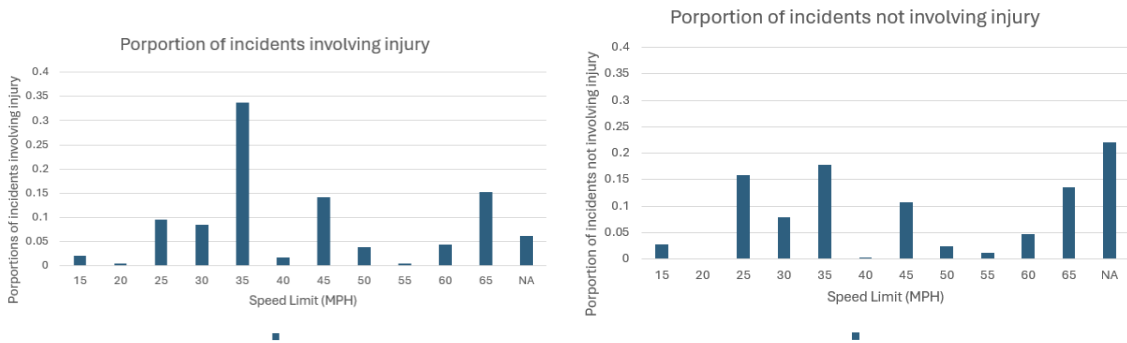
We split the overall data into two groups organized by crashes with injuries and crashes without injuries. From there we compared the proportions of speed limits, proportions for probable causes of collision, and the time day crashes were occurring. We noticed that the majority of crashes happened during ideal conditions of clear or cloudy weather, dry roads, and daylight lighting. We can assume that there are more cars on the road in these ideal weather conditions compared to days with hazardous or less ideal weather and road conditions. This naturally happens especially in severe snow storms because many businesses and schools are closed. We can also assume people are more attentive during bad weather to avoid involvement in a collision.



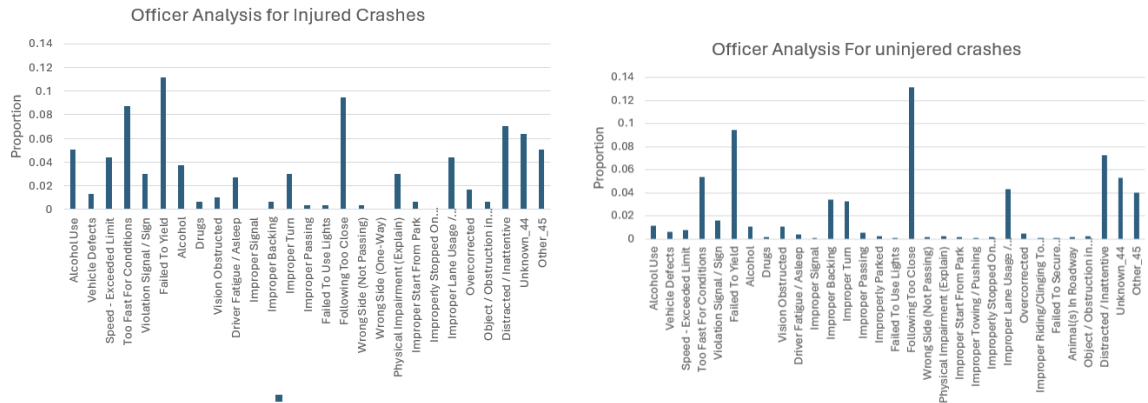
Submission to The Confluence



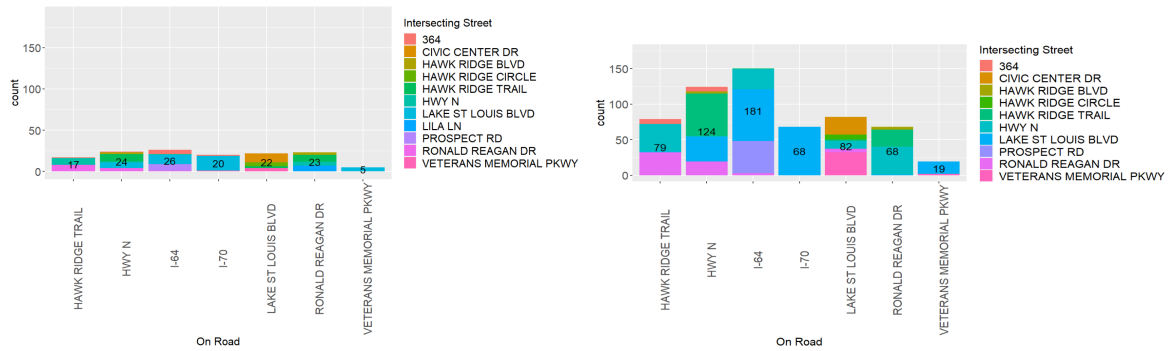
Above is the graphs depicting the time of day that most collisions transpire. It is clear that the general trend shows most crashes happen between 3pm and 7pm with the peak at 5pm. Most people are travelling home from work and excited to finish up their activities for the day, so they would be more likely to drive less cautiously.



These graphs show the proportion of collisions at various speed limits throughout Lake Saint Louis. We noticed in our data that numerous crashes without injuries happened on private property such as parking lots. That would help explain the significant number of crashes reported with "N/A" as the speed limit. It is clear that most incidents, regardless of injury status, occurred at the 35 mile per hour speed limit. One reason is that Lake Saint Louis has one road (Lake St Louis Blvd) at that speed limit that is the main road of travel to get anywhere within the city. Generally, there are more miles of road with the speed limit of 35 in Lake Saint Louis.



These graphs show the proportion of collisions for various reported causes. For uninjured crashes, the cause with the highest proportion was following too close. For injured crashes, the cause with the highest proportion was failing to yield. This demonstrates a relationship between failing to yield and a higher risk of injury.

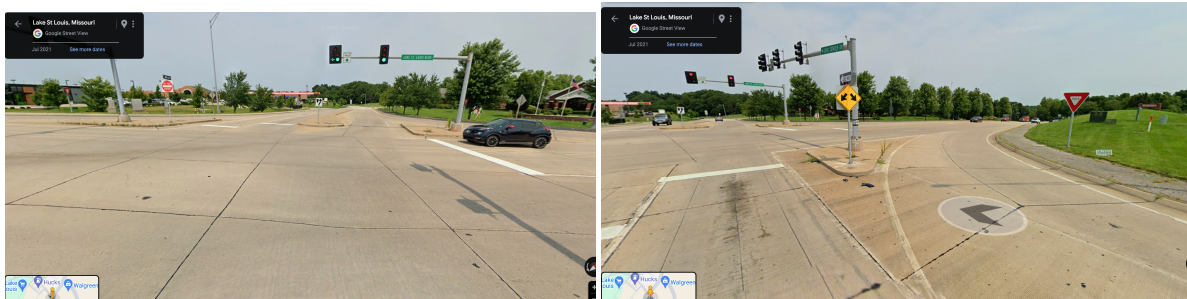


After looking at the data altogether, we separated the data into various intersections first looking at the road on which the collision occurred then the intersecting street correlating to the crash. The graphs above exhibit the significant intersections due to the high number of collisions these roads have had in the past five years. We decided to look into two different intersections that clearly reported a high number of crashes.

The first intersection is Lake Saint Louis Boulevard and Civic Center Drive which is represented in the orange section in the Lake St Louis Blvd column. This intersection was more significant in the crashes involving injury compared to the rest of the inured data.

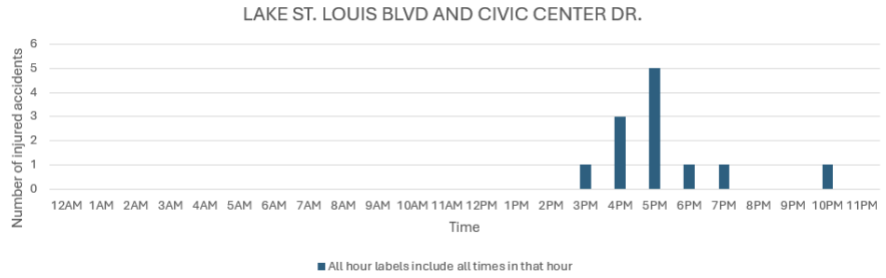
The second intersection we compared is Highway N and Hawk Ridge Trail which is represented in the green section in the Hwy N column. This intersection was evident to be more significant for crashes without injuries compared to crashes with injuries.

3 Lake Saint Louis Boulevard and Civic Center Drive

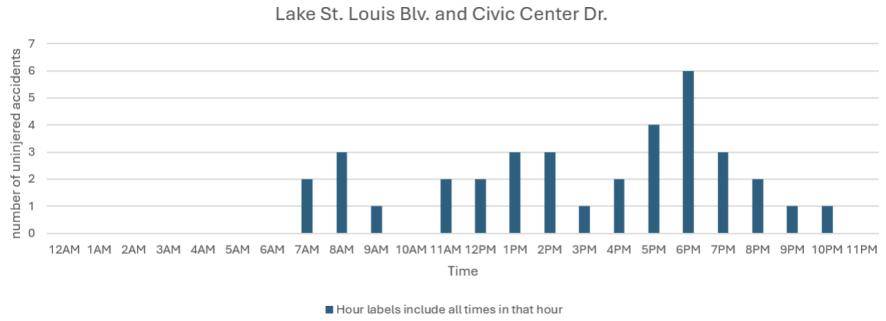


The first intersection depicted here is the intersection at Lake Saint Louis Boulevard and Civic Center Drive. We noticed that the weather and road conditions for crashes at this intersection follow the general ideal weather, road, and lighting conditions mentioned above.

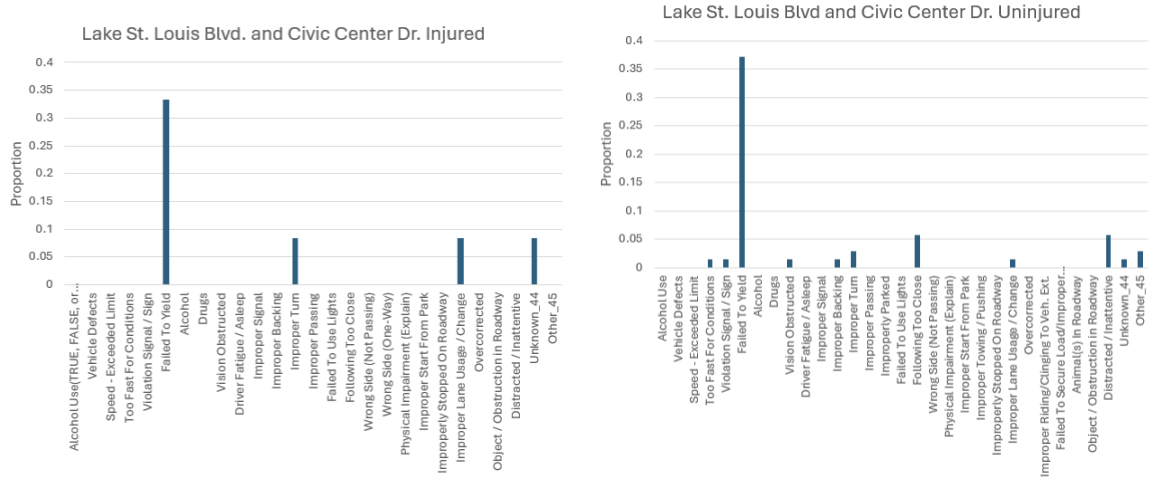
Injured Crashes



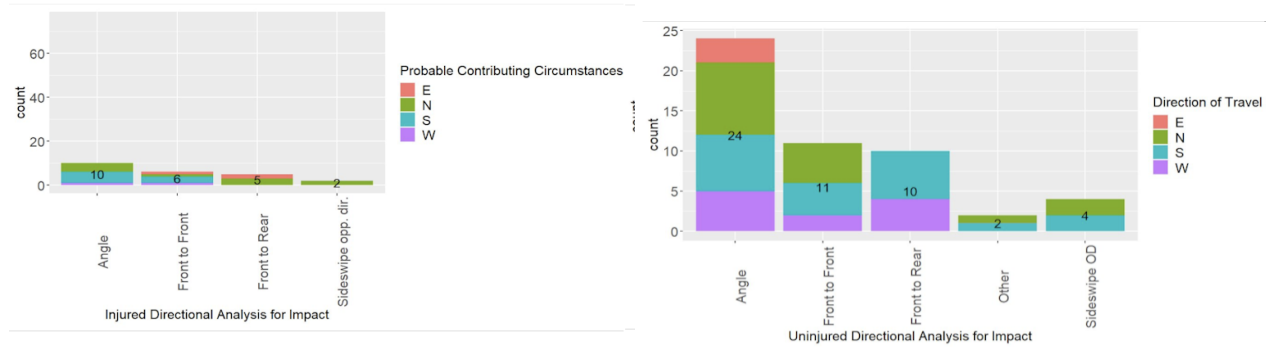
Uninjured Crashes



These graphs show the time of day that most crashes happen. The time frame when most crashes happen for this intersection is 4pm-7pm which follows the general time frame we saw in the overall data. It is interesting to see that the majority of crashes occur in the evening rush rather than the morning rush, as one would think there would be an even split.

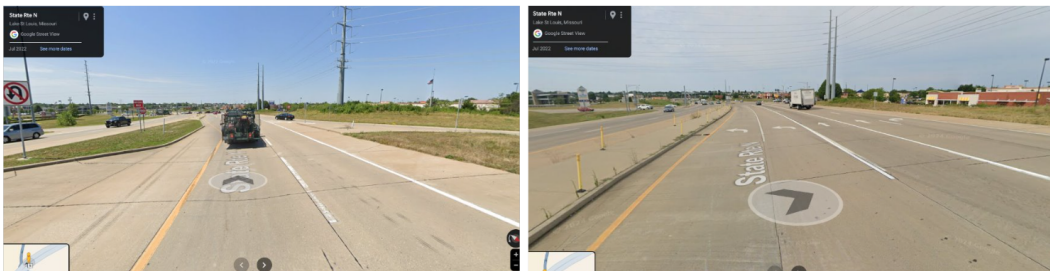


These graphs are showing the major probable causes for crashes at this specific intersection. It is clear to see that failing to yield is the highest cause of crashes for both injured and uninjured. This could be useful for the police department to use when responding to a traffic collision since failing to yield is a traffic offense for which the driver can be cited.

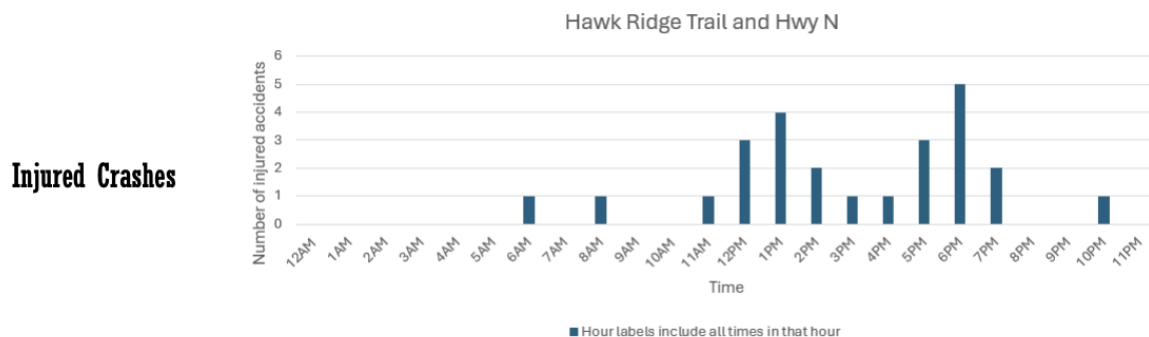


Upon request from the police department we investigated the effect direction of travel had on the amount of crashes occurring at this specific intersection. There was some anticipation that this would've proved to be a crucial factor, where in reality that didn't come to fruition. It can be seen that there is an even split of directions travelled within the crashes, as no particular direction stands out as being more severe than the others.

4 Highway N and Hawk Ridge Trail

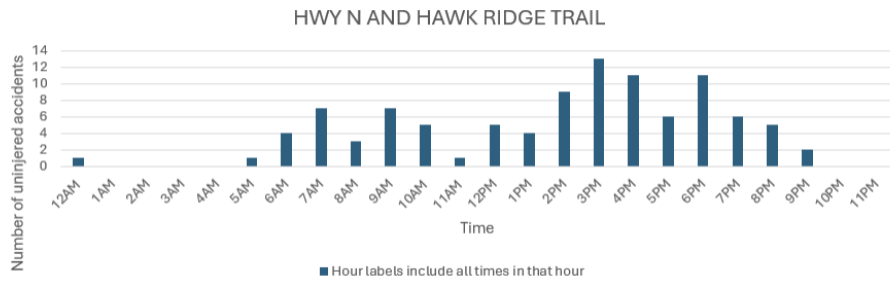


Here is look at the intersection. As you can see in the pictures, there is not much to see as far as road signs go. As you drive down this road, the two lanes depicted in the image on the left split into five different lanes. There are no paint markings or road signage to direct drivers once this happens. Additionally, this intersection reaches a stop light after the road randomly changes from Highway 364 (a major freeway connecting large cities) to Hwy N (a main road connecting major parts of the city to each other). We noticed there are no road signs to alert drivers of this change in speed on the roadway. This creates a chaotic, unsafe environment for all drivers.

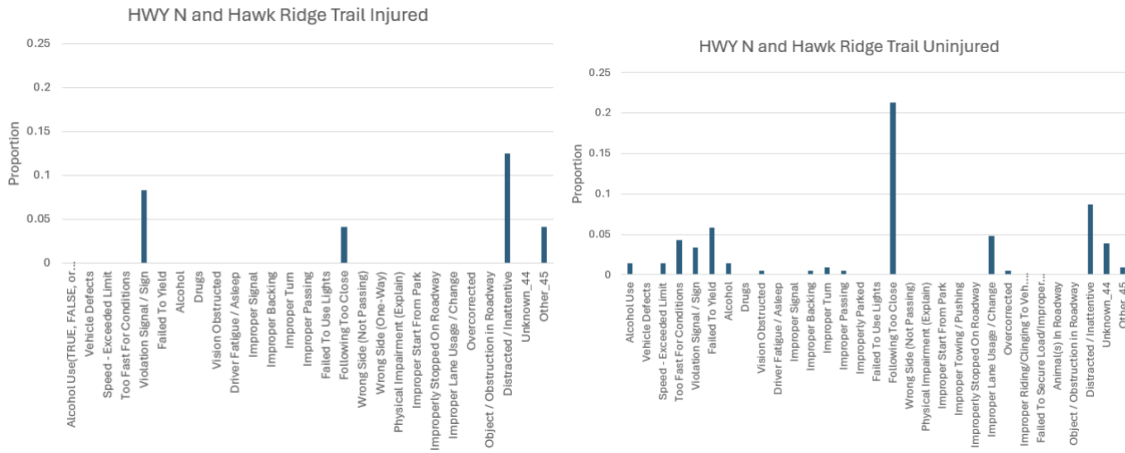


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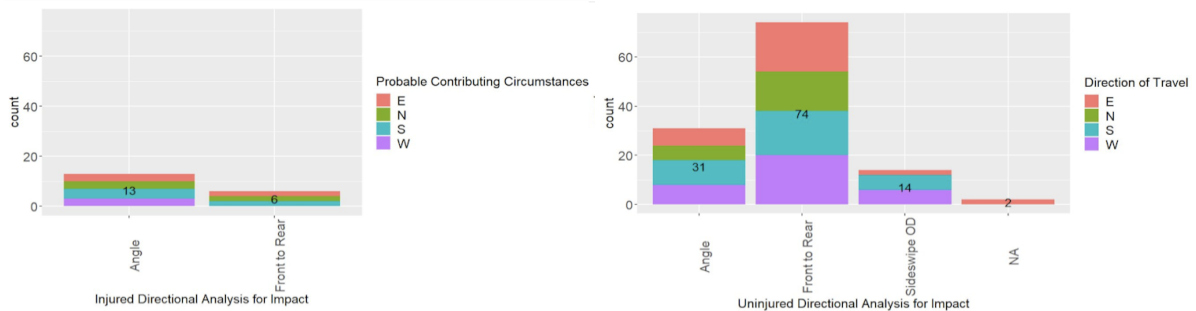
Uninjured Crashes



These graphs show the time of day most collisions happen at this intersection. Much like the data found in the Lake St Louis Boulevard and Civic Center Drive intersection, the majority of crashes occurred during the evening rush. This was also the same trend found in the general data, as there is a disproportional amount of crashes occurring, and not a consistent spread.



These graphs are showing the major probable causes for crashes at this specific intersection. It is clear to see that the majority of crashes occurring for those that were injured were due to inattentive and distracted driving, followed closely by following too close. Whereas on the other hand, the majority of crashes that occurred for those that are uninjured were following too close, with other factors not being as prevalent. These causes are different to the previous intersection, however all of the probable causes can be grouped under the same bracket of not taking enough care and attention when driving.



These graphs show the trend between the type of crash and direction of travel. As seen in the previous intersection, there are no consistent trends in the collisions. Crashes happen in each direction of travel at this intersection.



These images depict the road sign options that could mitigate the chaos at this intersection. This is helpful for the city administrator to bring up when they meet with MODot when it comes to deciding where funding should go.

5 Possible Limitations of Solutions

The intersections that we analyzed were on roads maintained by the state Department of Transportation (MoDOT). Installing new signage for these intersections—better communicating changes in direction and speed of travel to drivers—would require a significant amount of money from MoDOT.

On the report that police officers fill out for a vehicular collision there is a section to indicate probable contributing circumstances. The officers can mark what they believe (based on evidence of the crash or witness statements) was the cause for the accident. For about half of the accidents in the data provided the police officers marked "N/A" for the probable contributing circumstances. After discussing with Lieutenant Gilliam, it is probable that newer officers may struggle with confidently identifying a probable contributing circumstance. Having more information in this section would allow us to draw stronger conclusions.

It is possible that some officers might have written the information wrong on the reports where the on road and intersecting street are switched. There was not a satisfactory solution to identify when this was the case, so we just executed analysis based on the information provided.

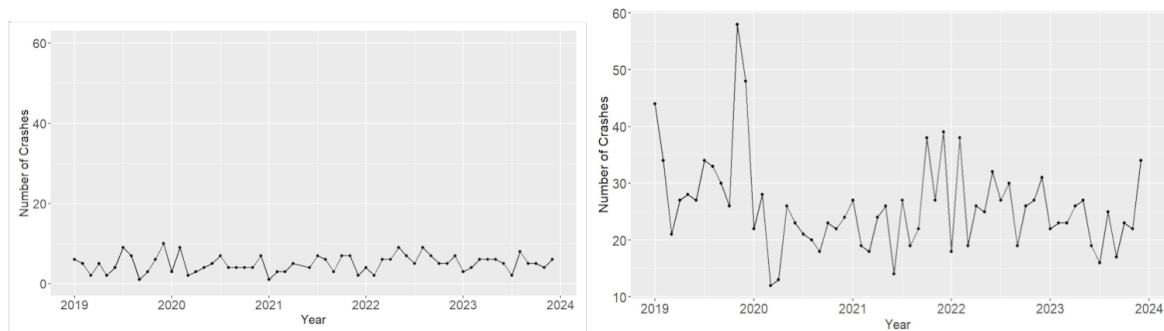
We created multiple spreadsheets of data to complete various tasks. Although we were diligent in our efforts to keep errors minimal, it is possible that errors were made in the data when converting one sheet to another. It is also possible different sheets were used to make each graph in one section of research.

6 Conclusion

It is clear that the time of day follows the trends seen in results for all collisions; however, the officers mostly report that following too close and improper lane usage are the probable causes for collisions. Thus, we recognized a need for change at this intersection. Additional signage could be added to alert drivers of the stoplight and

lane direction.

We created a time series graph and noticed some interesting peaks. To further our research, we want to sort the data according to the peak time of year and analyze probable causes for those crashes and where those collisions take place. Pictured below is the time series graph for injured and uninjured crashes over the past five years.



Other future work includes the following:

- Conduct further analysis on additional intersections.
- Conduct research to intersections maintained by the city/county
- Analysis of other intersections with probable cause of collision failed to yield.
- Create a heat map of crash at each intersections in Lake St. Louis
- Sort crashes by time of day and find significant intersections.
- Correlation between time of day and type of crash (angle, front to rear, etc.)
- Correlation between number of cars involved and type of crash or probable cause
- Correlation between number of injuries and type of crash or probable cause

7 Acknowledgments

This opportunity and connections were provided by our Mathematics Professors Dr. Nick Wintz and Dr. Wojciech Golik. Our data was provided by George Ertle, City Administrator for the city of Lake Saint Louis, and Joshua Gilliam, Lieutenant of the Lake Saint Louis Police Department.

PIC Math is a program of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM). Support is provided by the National Science Foundation (NSF grant DMS-1722275). These governing bodies provided us with this project, and also provided rough guidelines to follow throughout.

PIC Math Report Youth In Need

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1 Introduction

Youth in Need is a nonprofit that offers mental and physical health resources to kids under the age of 19 in the St. Charles area. They have been in operation for 50 years. Youth in Need is concerned that their services may have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. They have asked Lindenwood's PIC Math group to review their data over 2015-2023 and identify trends. This is an important matter since identifying these trends may help the client optimize their resources. This could lead to furthering Youth in needs mission of service for the community. So far, the group has identified trends when the intake of new clients occurs as well as trends between the counselors' client-scores and clients' self-scores at the beginning and end of treatment. The group has also identified improvements to the questionnaire used to determine the youth's risk score.

2 Youth In Need

Youth In Need is a local organization in St. Louis, Missouri that provides direct service and support programs to the youth. Their mission is, "To build on the strengths of children, youth and families so they find safety, hope and success in life." Their vision is, "Equitable opportunities so children, youth and families in our region can thrive." They pursue their vision and mission by providing counseling sessions where the client rates themselves on a 40-point ORS scale which includes four 10-point questions:

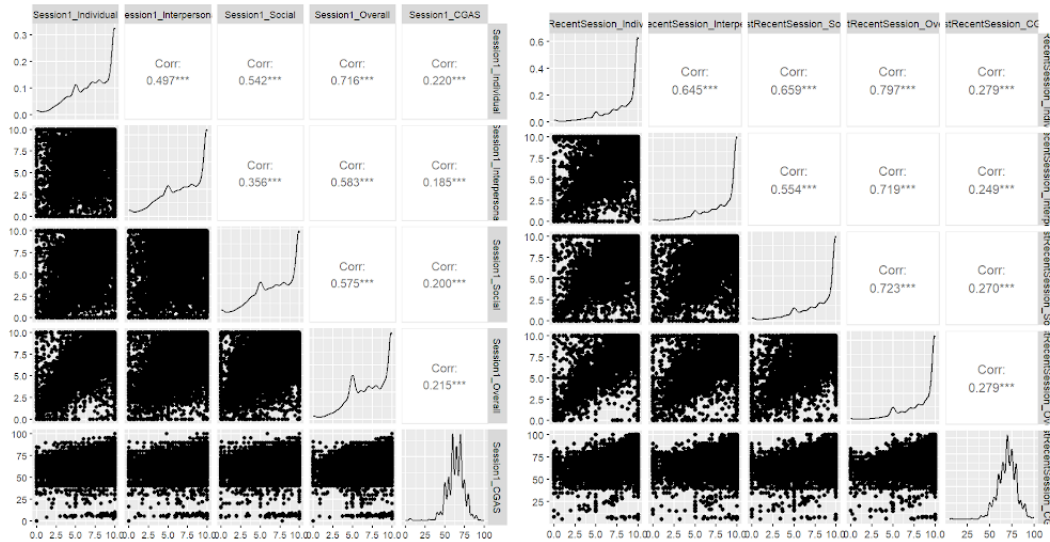
- Individual: Personal well-being
- Interpersonal: Family, close relationships
- Social: Work, school, friendships
- Overall: General sense of well-being

Additionally, the therapist rates the client on a risk rating/CGAS scale:

Risk Rating	CGAS Score
1 (High Risk)	1 – 14 Extremely Impaired
2 (High Risk)	15 – 24 Very Severely Impaired
3 (High Risk)	25 – 34 Severe Problems
4 (High – Moderate Risk)	35 – 44 Serious Problems
5 (Moderate Risk)	45 – 54 Obvious Problems
6 (Moderate Risk)	55 – 64 Some Noticeable Problems
7 (Moderate – Low Risk)	65 – 74 Some Problems
8 (Low Risk)	75 – 84 Doing Alright
9 (Low Risk)	85 – 94 Doing Well
10 (Low Risk)	95 – 100 Doing Very Well

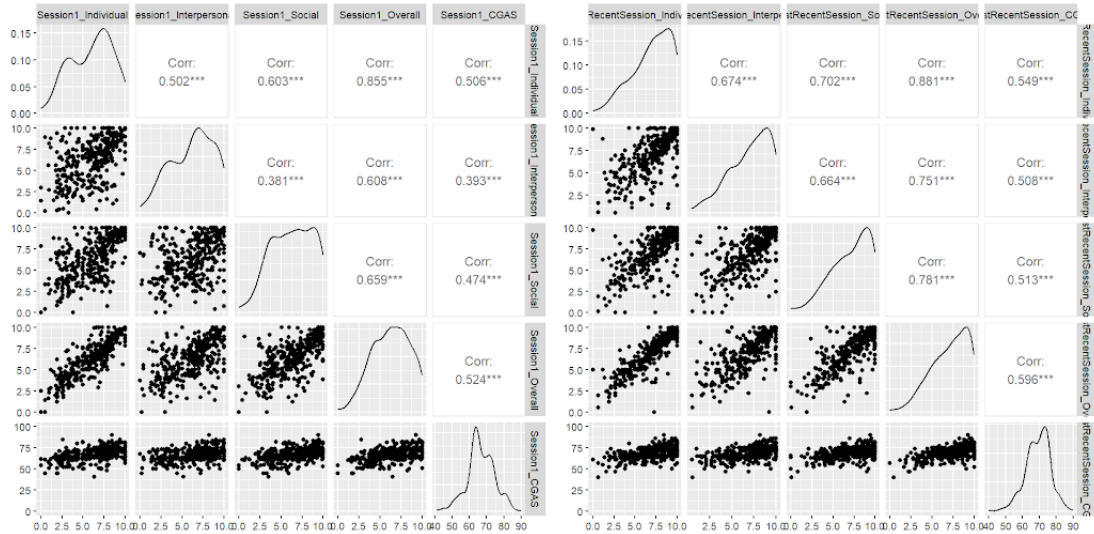
The industry liaison from Lindenwood University is Wendi Price, the Manager for Service Learning and Responsible Citizenship in Engaged Learning, Academic Affairs. The industry liaisons from Youth In Need are Stephanie Blakley, Continuous Quality Improvement Manager; Cara Merritt, Senior Director of Counseling Services; and Erin Strohbahn, Senior Director of Youth Programs.

3 Graphs



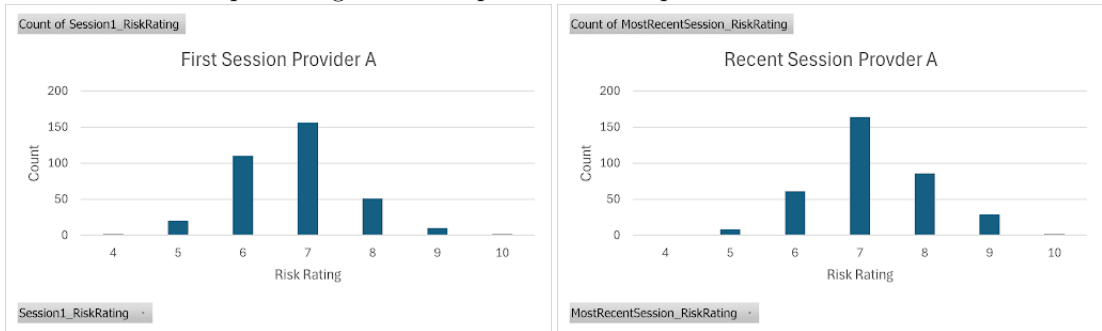
(1) Correlation plots for Session 1 and Most Recent Session

Correlation plots were created using all of the data points provided for the client counseling sessions, roughly 19,000, but we removed around 4,300 data points due to data entry errors. The graph yields frequency plots horizontally, correlation coefficients in the upper right diagonal, and plots in the lower left diagonal. There was a high correlation coefficient between Overall and Individual in both Session 1 and Most Recent Session. Similarly, in the Most Recent Session, every correlation coefficient increased. Also, in the frequency plots, the distribution shifted to the right in the Most Recent Session. Lastly, in the bottom row, which plots each individual ORS score against the CGAS, there is a clear line at the 40 mark, and also one above 0.



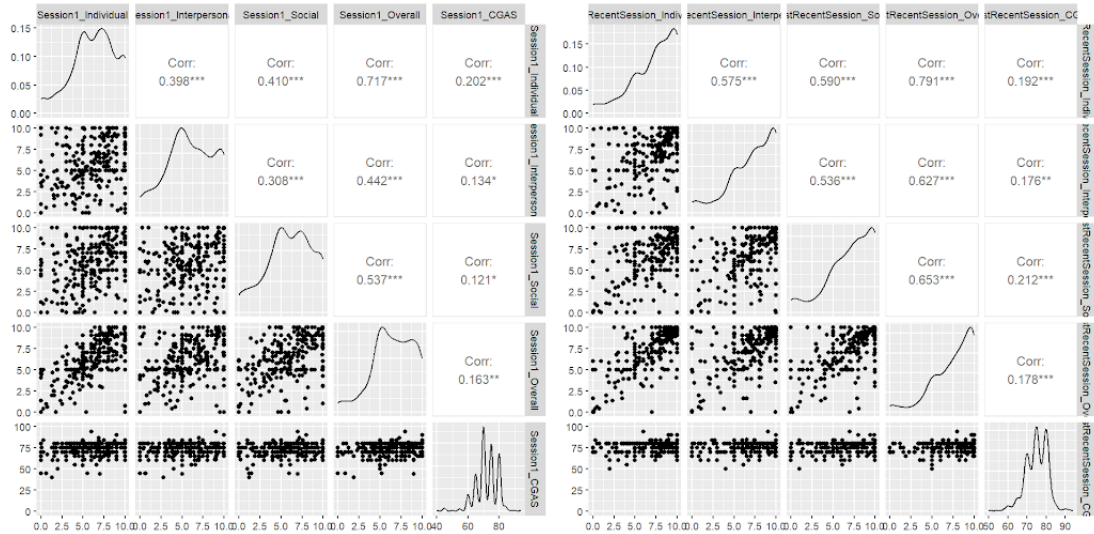
(2) Correlation plots for Therapist A

Similar correlation plot using data from particular therapist.



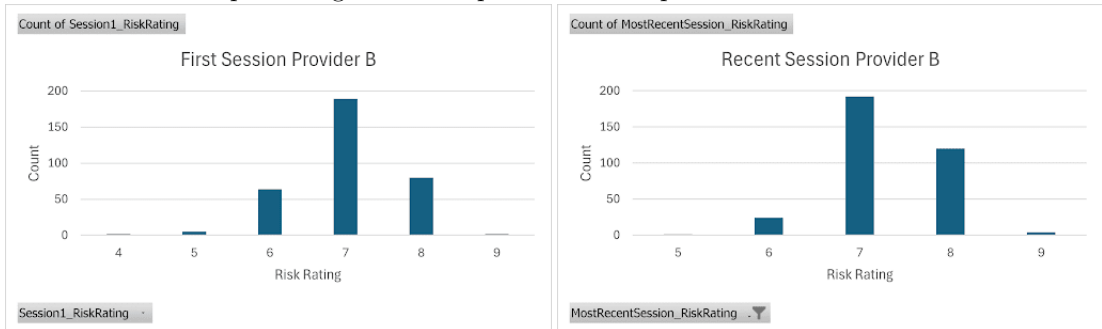
(3) Risk Ratings for Therapist A

Risk ratings associated with the same data.



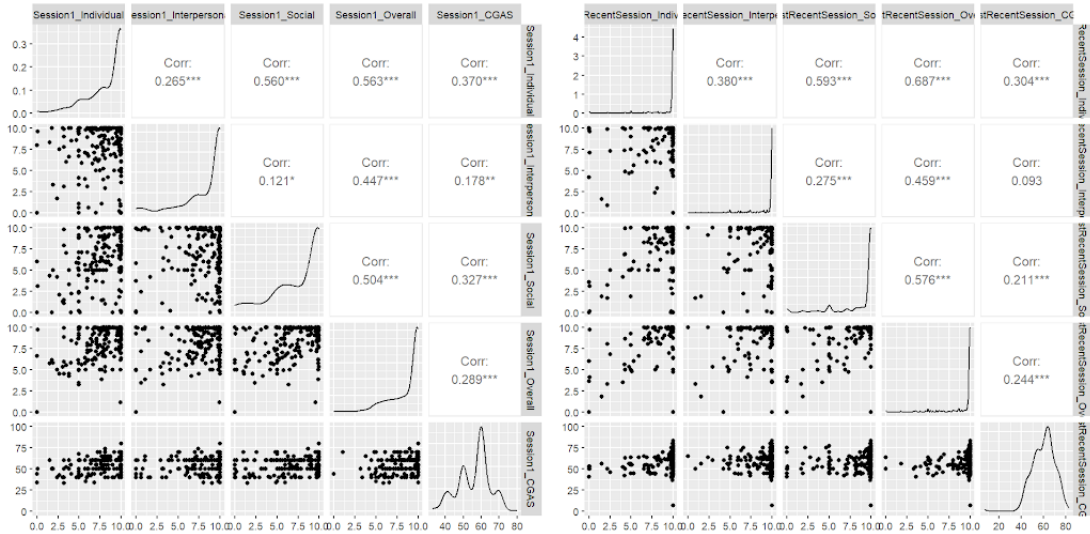
(4) Correlation plots for Therapist B

Similar correlation plot using data from particular therapist.

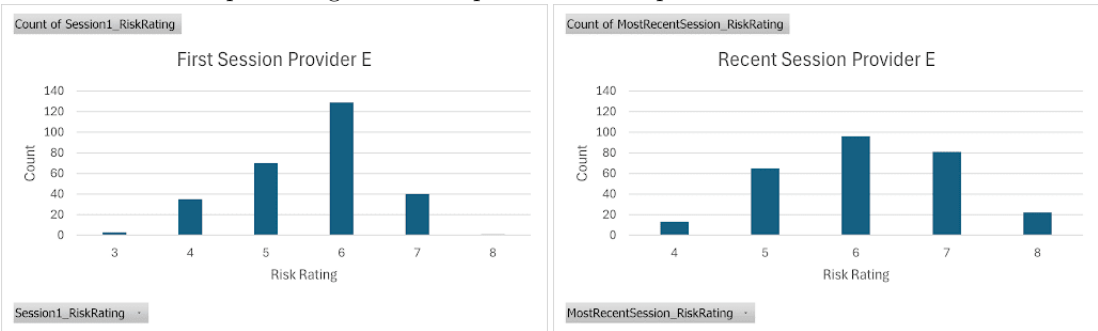


(5) Risk Ratings for Therapist B

Risk ratings associated with the same data.



(6) Correlation plots for Therapist E
Similar correlation plot using data from particular therapist.



(7) Risk Ratings for Therapist E
Risk ratings associated with the same data.

S1 Median	CSF							
20XX	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Ind.	7.2	7.7	8.1	7.8	8.0	8.0	7.6	
Ovr.	7.1	7.4	7.9	7.8	8.0	8.0	7.7	
Soc.	7.1	7.2	7.7	7.5	7.9	7.9	7.5	
Int.	7.1	7.4	7.9	7.9	8.0	8.0	7.9	
Total	28.0	28.8	30.0	29.5	30.2	30.5	29.0	
Risk Rating	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	
CGAS	63.0	63.0	65.0	69.0	65.0	61.5	60.0	

MRS Median	CSF							
20XX	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Ind.	9.2	9.4	9.2	9.0	9.0	9.5	8.9	
Ovr.	9.1	9.3	9.2	9.0	9.2	9.6	9.0	
Soc.	9.0	9.2	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.3	8.5	
Int.	9.1	9.4	9.3	9.0	9.0	9.5	8.9	
Total	34.8	35.5	35.3	34.9	35.1	36.7	34.0	
Risk Rating	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	
CGAS	70.0	70.0	71.0	72.0	70.0	69.0	63.0	

(8) Graph for CSF Session 1 and Most Recent Session
Table of various medians over the years for CSF.

S1 Median	CCRB						
20XX	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Ind.	7.4	7.5	7.1	7.6	7.0	7.2	7.2
Ovr.	7.0	7.6	7.0	7.3	7.0	7.2	7.4
Soc.	7.3	7.0	7.1	7.7	7.0	7.4	7.3
Int.	6.9	7.1	7.0	7.7	6.6	7.3	7.5
Total	28.2	28.5	27.3	29.0	26.3	28.8	28.6
Risk Rating	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
CGAS	67.5	65.0	66.0	66.0	65.0	60.0	60.0

MRS Median	CCRB						
20XX	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Ind.	8.5	8.4	8.6	8.4	8.0	8.8	9.0
Ovr.	8.5	8.5	8.8	8.4	8.0	8.8	8.9
Soc.	8.4	8.5	8.9	8.5	8.0	8.7	8.7
Int.	8.5	8.1	8.4	8.0	8.0	8.8	8.8
Total	33.5	32.8	33.0	33.0	31.8	33.7	34.1
Risk Rating	7	8	7	7	7	7	7
CGAS	80.0	70.0	75.0	70.0	70.0	70.0	70.0

(9) Graph for CCRB Session 1 and Most Recent Session

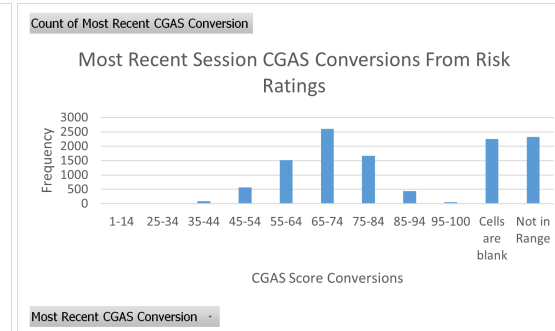
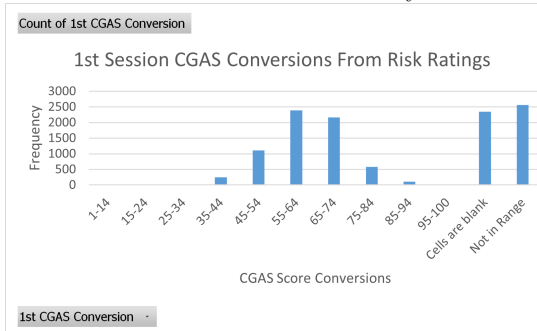
Table of various medians over the years for CCRB.

S1 Median	LCRB						
20XX	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Ind.	N/A	7.8	9.4	8.6	9.0	8.1	7.4
Ovr.	N/A	8.2	9.3	8.4	9.0	8.2	7.2
Soc.	N/A	7.9	9.5	8.4	9.0	8.0	7.0
Int.	N/A	7.8	9.2	8.0	9.0	8.7	7.1
Total	N/A	30.7	34.6	31.2	34.0	32.0	28.6
Risk Rating	N/A	7.0	6.5	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.0
CGAS	N/A	65.0	70.0	70.0	70.0	70.0	60.0

MRS Median	LCRB						
20XX	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Ind.	N/A	9.8	9.9	9.7	10.0	9.5	9.3
Ovr.	N/A	9.9	9.9	9.1	10.0	9.7	9.5
Soc.	N/A	9.6	9.9	9.2	10.0	9.5	9.0
Int.	N/A	9.8	9.9	9.1	10.0	9.7	9.4
Total	N/A	38.5	38.9	36.1	38.0	37.5	36.0
Risk Rating	N/A	7.5	7.0	7.5	8.0	8.0	6.0
CGAS	N/A	72.0	72.0	75.0	75.0	76.5	64.0

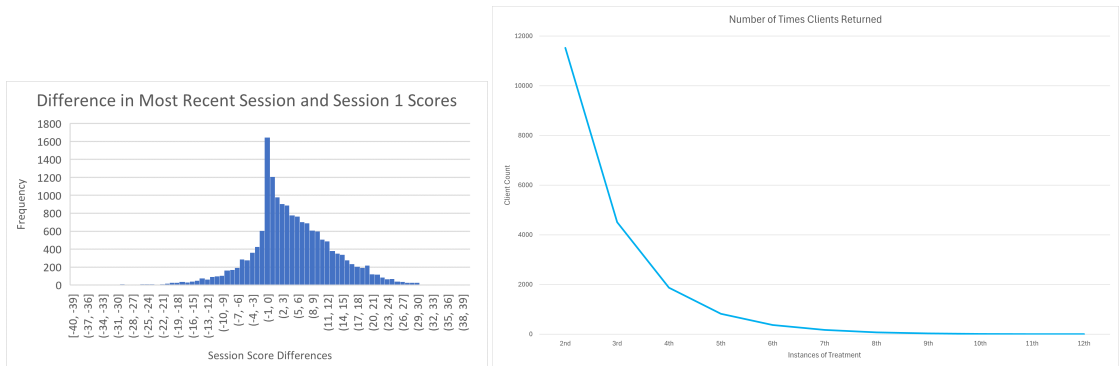
(10) Graph for LCRB Session 1 and Most Recent Session

Table of various medians over the years for LCRB.



(11) Graphs for Session 1 and Most Recent Session CGAS conversions

This graph looks at the risk rating and CGAS from each session, which are correlated. The CGAS was converted to the correct risk rating range, and the results were plotted. There is a large frequency where the cells are blank, this is because certain programs do not use a CGAS. But, there is an alarming amount of times where the corresponding CGAS wasn't in the correct risk rating range.

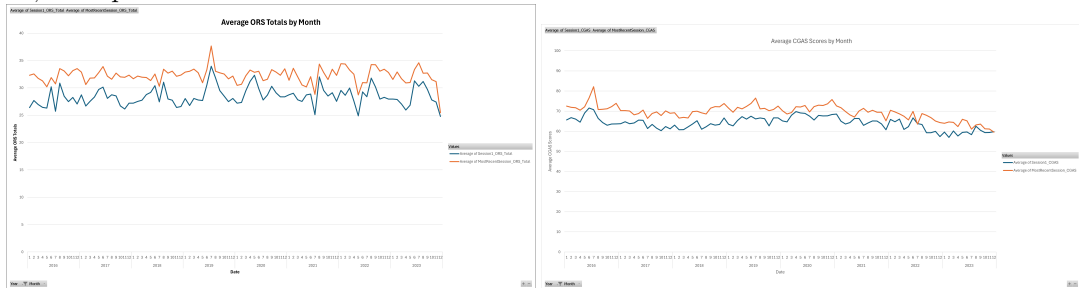


(12) Difference between Most Recent Session and Session 1

The graph took the ORS total from the Most Recent Session and subtracted the Session 1 ORS total from it. Thus, the graph showcases how much a client improved between their first and last session.

(13) Graph of Repeated IDs

The data we received had over 19,000 data points that each included an ID, and we analyzed how many of the IDs were repeats, which ended up being close to 12,000 repeats.

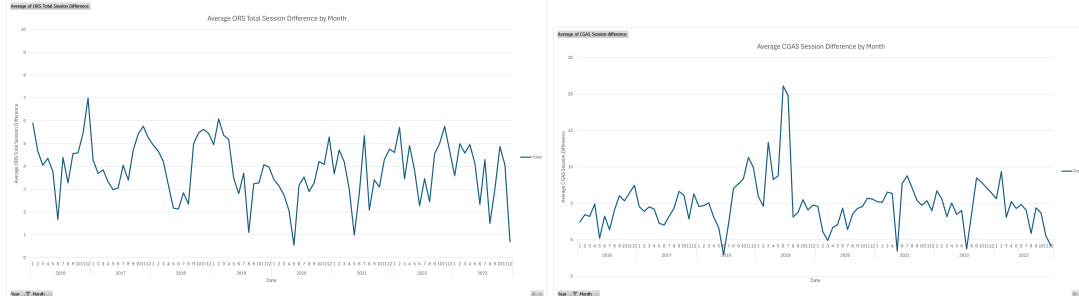


(14) Graph of the Average ORS Total Change by Month

The graph analyzed the average Session 1 and Most Recent Session ORS total for each month from 2016-2023.

(15) Graph of the Average CGAS Change by Month

The graph analyzed the average Session 1 and Most Recent Session CGAS for each month from 2016-2023.



(16) Graph of ORS Total Session Differences

The graph analyzes the difference between the ORS total of the Most Recent Session and Session 1.

(17) Graph of CGAS Session Differences

The graph analyzes the difference between the CGAS of the Most Recent Session and Session 1.

4 Approach

The approach of our project started with meeting with Youth In Need where they discussed where all of the data they gave us comes from, and what they were interested in seeing. So, our approach was to analyze any data that the staff asked us to look into. We started looking at small subsets of the data in order to get acclimated with Excel and R Studio. After that, we figured out how we would clean the data. Then, we analyzed the data Youth In Need gave us. We met up with them once more in the middle of the semester and presented what we had found thus far, and got their feedback about where to go next. Ultimately, we ended up looking into the different funding sources, analyzing the differences between Session 1 and Most Recent Session, observing the ORS and CGAS improvements, and analyzing the risk rating.

Our assumptions included that all counselors follow the same guidelines (scores in same ranges). Also, that every client had at least two sessions (didn't analyze dropouts or clients with missing entries). Finally, we only analyzed data in the range from 2015-2023.

5 Graph Interpretations

(1) Correlation plots for Season 1 and Most Recent Session - The correlation coefficients between Overall and Individual were highly correlated, this is because the questions for Overall and Individual are similar. Overall is stated as a general sense of well-being, and Individual is a person sense of well-being. The high coefficient tells us that the clients see the two questions as the same question. Also, the graphs shifted to the right, meaning that the clients improved in the Most Recent Session. Lastly, the line at 40 is because clients below that line are hospitalized.

(2) Correlation plots for Therapist A - This is the data of a particular therapist, there are a total of 352 data entries. This data spans from 2015-2022. We can see a trend line for the CGAS at 60, and the clumps on these graphs move slightly right (improving ORS scores).

(3) Risk Ratings for Therapist A - Risk rating scores generally increase with

more scores lying to the right of 7 in the most recent session.

(4) Correlation plots for Therapist B -This therapist had a total of 342 data entries. This data spans from 2018-2023. What's interesting about this graph is the CGAS scores are very stratified for both sessions. We might be seeing a tendency for "go to scores".

(5) Risk Ratings for Therapist B -Risk rating scores generally increase with more scores lying to the right of 7 in the most recent session. All scores rise above 4.

(6) Correlation plots for Therapist E -This therapist had a total of 274 data entries after cleaning (278 prior). This data spans from 2016-2023. The data for CGAS is very stratified again with noticeable shifts right in the most recent session(stratified to stratified clump).

(7) Risk Ratings for Therapist E -Risk rating scores generally increase with more scores lying to the right of 6 in the most recent session. All scores rise above 3.

(8) Graph for CSF Session 1 and Most Recent Session - Various medians for ORS scores, CGAS scores, and Risk rating over the years for CSF funding.

(9) Graph for CCRB Session 1 and Most Recent Session Various medians for ORS scores, CGAS scores, and Risk rating over the years for CCRB funding.

(10) Graph for LCRB Session 1 and Most Recent Session -Various medians for ORS scores, CGAS scores, and Risk rating over the years for LCRB funding.

(11) Graphs for Session 1 and Most Recent Session CGAS Conversions - Around 20% of the data was incorrectly entered, as seen in the "Not in Range" bar. This is deemed to be a training error.

(12) Difference between Most Recent Session and Session 1 - A large amount of clients leave their Most Recent Session at the same score as their Session 1, but a large portion also leaves Youth In Need better than when they first came. Additionally, one of Youth In Need's goals is for a client to improve six points before they leave, and the graph showcases that this happens a decent amount of the time

(13) Repeat ID's - Over half of the client data we received included the same client having at least two sessions. This is most likely because of the clients who go to counseling in schools, where every school year a new row for the client will be created.

(14) Average ORS Total by Month - The ORS namely has three low peaks post-covid. Also, there is a common trend of the ORS decreasing during the summer and increasing when school starts back up. This is because during the summer their clientele shortens to those who are most in need.

(15) Average CGAS by Month - In 2022 the Most Recent Session CGAS intersects with the Session 1 CGAS, indicating no change, which is abnormal compared to the rest of the graph. Also, there is a steady trend of the CGAS decreasing throughout the seven years.

(16) Graph of ORS Total Session Differences

There is a similar trend of the difference being lower during summer months and increasing when school starts. The lowest point was in May 2020, when covid was making an abrupt impact.

(17) Graph of CGAS Session Differences

There are four times in the graph when the difference is negative, three of which are post-covid. The graph follows similar trends of the ORS session difference graph.

6 Limitations

One limitation of our results is that we only had data available for a clients first and most recent session. This left a lot of questions open about clients experiences might have changed relative to there total number of sessions. Additionally, we weren't given the reason for why clients were discharged, this would have allowed us to draw conclusions about how effective counseling sessions were. Additionally, we weren't given information about why clients were at the counseling sessions. Teachers and families can recommend students for counseling, which would have been beneficial for data interpretation.

7 Conclusion

The Youth In Need Data Analysis was greatly received by the employees at Youth In Need. Some of their notions were confirmed to be true, and there were some unexpected findings as well. One of the main takeaways by the staff was errors in training, yielding a high amount of incorrect data entries. Additionally, they appreciated seeing how their clients on average leave Youth In Need better than when they started. Furthermore, they were intrigued by the different types of analyses each therapist has with their clients.

Future work for this project includes:

- Analyzing the likeliness of people who had a low CGAS to return
- Analyze other funding sources (not CSF, CCRB, LCRB)
- Analyze ORS scores of 40 and 0 and their change in the CGAS or average CGAS
- Age/race/etc. demographic analysis with average ORS and CGAS scores
- Rates of improvement for CGAS and ORS by length of treatment (days between Session 1 and Most Recent Session)
- For the Repeated Ids, analyze all of the session differences
- Analyze Repeated Ids pre/post/during covid

8 Acknowledgements

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Anātman & Lack: Between Nāgārjuna and Lacan

Carter Morris

Introduction

The fear of nothingness is a primal fear. The fear of the emptiness of the void shakes our very being. Such seeming nihilism fills us with dread. But what if “nothingness” or “emptiness” was at the very core of our being? Most of our prominent belief systems are built around ideas meant to refute this shocking and startling claim. They are meant to obscure and even maintain an illusion that our being is very much a real thing. The brain, consciousness, the soul; these are all things that our being desperately latches onto in order to feel at ease. In Christianity, there is the eternal soul. In Hinduism, there is the *ātman*. In neuroscience, there is the consciousness-producing brain, even if it is not eternal.

Two intellectual traditions—that of Buddhism and psychoanalysis—seemingly stand in defiance of these comforting beliefs and philosophies. Both of these traditions hold the incredibly similar belief that there is something fundamentally missing from the core of our very being. For the Buddhists, there is the non-Self, or the idea that the eternal self is void and empty. For the psychoanalyst, there is our desire’s lack, which we can never fill. The notion of the Self lies at the heart of subjectivity, but simply put, there is a hole in our subjectivity.

The aims of this paper are to compare and analyze the intellectual legacies of Nāgārjuna with his Mādhyamaka philosophy as well as Jacques Lacan with his innovations on Freudian psychoanalysis. Each of their similar, yet different, subversive theories of subjectivity will be presented, analyzed, and compared. In addition to examining these theories of subjectivity, this paper will also analyze and compare the metaphysics that underlie both of these systems. In the

end, it will be determined just how compatible *anātman* and lack truly are as philosophical concepts.

A Primer on Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamaka

The ancient Indian philosopher, Nāgārjuna, is considered by many traditions to be the pinnacle of Buddhist thought. This school of Buddhist philosophy is known as Mādhyamaka, and its tenets are laid out in Nāgārjuna's essential text, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (after this point referred to as the MMK). Central to the Mādhyamaka philosophy is the notion of emptiness—known in Sanskrit as *śūnyatā*. For Nāgārjuna, *everything*, when analyzed and broken down, is to be considered as fundamentally empty. Perhaps, most challengingly, is the notion that the person itself is empty: that there is, in contrast to Brahminical philosophies, no *ātman* or essential self. This doctrine of non-Self, or *anātman*, is crucial for understanding Nāgārjuna's conception of subjectivity.¹ This, therefore, warrants a further explanation of *anātman*.

Especially for those entrenched in the tradition of Western philosophy, the non-Self is a difficult idea to conceive of. How can there be no eternal self? How can there be nothing that is essentially me? Intuitively, we take our psychophysical experiences to be indicative of the existence of the Self. However, according to Buddhist thought, these psychophysical experiences are a bundle of five aggregates known as *skandhas*. “[I]n the standard Buddhist analysis, the person is not an entity that can exist independently of the five *skandhas*. Take away the complex, impermanent, changing *skandhas* and we are not left with a constant, substantial self: we are left with nothing.”² Our psychophysical experiences cannot prove the existence of the Self as the *skandhas* of our experiences are impermanent, and, in turn, empty.

Another important concept for the understanding of Nāgārjuna's philosophy is that of *svabhāva*. Often approximated as “inherent existence,” *svabhāva* is precisely what is rejected as

empty by Mādhyamaka.³ “[S]vabhāva is something which is superimposed on ordinary objects in the process of conceptualization.”⁴ Take the example of the five aggregates from above. The *skandhas* are seen as a unified, permanent, and independent Self, but this is merely because our superimposition of *svabhāva* onto the aggregates. In actuality, according to Nāgārjuna, because of the non-existence (or emptiness) of *svabhāva*, the Self cannot exist due to this faulty superimposition. Therefore, through the logical analyses of Mādhyamaka philosophy, *anātman* reigns supreme over *ātman*.

A Primer on Lacan’s Psychoanalysis

A disciple of classical Freudian psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan expanded and extended upon Sigmund Freud’s philosophical speculations and meta-psychological systems. Central to psychoanalysis as a whole is the concept of unconscious desire. As Lacan writes, “Desire is instituted within the Freudian world in which our experience unfolds, it constitutes it, and at no point in time, not even in the most insignificant of our manoeuvres in this experience of ours, can it be erased.”⁵ For the psychoanalyst, it is our unconscious desire which wholly mediates our experiences. Lacan elaborates on the concept of unconscious desire by grounding it in what he calls lack. “Desire is a relation of being to lack...[the] lack of being whereby the being exists.”⁶ For Lacan, lack is what causes desire to arise in one’s sense of being; it is because of lack that the experience of our existence is mediated by unconscious desire.

Also essential for understanding the Lacanian conception of subjectivity is the idea of the Other. The so-called “big Other” can refer to two concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis. First, the Other refers to the idea of an anonymous and authoritative power; this can be exemplified by the idea of God.⁷ Secondly, the Other can refer to something unknowable—an unfathomable emptiness of a withdrawn (and yet ever-so-close) otherness.⁸

Related to all these concepts is the Lacanian theory of anxiety. The theory of anxiety relates to desire and lack because anxiety sustains desire when the object of desire is lacking—which, as has previously been established, is perpetual and always the case.⁹ Anxiety relates to the concept of the Other, in so much that anxiety comes about when the subject becomes the object of desire for the Other. An example utilizing the last of this primer's Lacanian concepts will be helpful in illustrating this point.

The last of the crucial Lacanian concepts to cover is that of the Mirror Stage. According to Lacan, there is a transformation in psychological development when a young child first recognizes themselves in a mirror. This transformation is the birth of a fragmented subjectivity that occurs because of the child's identification with the ideal-I they see in the mirror's *imago*.¹⁰ In other words, the child sees themselves in the mirror and, as they become aware of themselves as an "I," they create a projected-Self—an ideal-Self—in the *imago* of the mirror image. This fragmentation of the subject is the beginning of the Self's sense of lack, and, therefore, also brings about desire and anxiety regarding the Other.

Comparative Psychologies

When examining the comparative psychologies of Nāgārjuna's Buddhism and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, one must begin with a discussion of subjectivity and the subject. These two intellectual traditions have similar concepts of subjectivity, yet they still depart from one another at crucial points. Compared to generalized conceptions of the subject in Western philosophy, both Nāgārjuna and Lacan offer subversive perspectives on subjectivity.

The current paradigm for understanding the subject and the Self in Western philosophy is based off of a Cartesian dualist worldview. "According to this (Cartesian) view, the [Self] is construed as a decontextualised object in order to be objectively studied and treated. The self is

constituted as a nominative entity, having an objective, separate and ‘real’ existence...in every case it is presumed to be an entity that exists in itself separate and distinct from the world.”¹¹ For Nāgārjuna, the *anātman* nullifies the Self as “a nominative entity, having... ‘real’ existence.” There is no real existence of the Self because the Self is empty and does not exist as such. For Lacanian psychoanalysis, subjectivity is a source of alienation and doubt—quite the opposite of the inherent coherence that defines the Cartesian subject of Western philosophy. This is because psychoanalysis privileges subjectivity over the materialist-empirical assumptions made about the Self by Cartesian philosophy.¹² Both Nāgārjuna and Lacan’s theories of subjectivity outright reject this Cartesian dualism.

However, Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity goes further still. For Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject and the Self are not one in the same. The subject, through Lacan’s rigorous theoretical framework, is “[stripped]...of so many of the characteristics usually attributed to [the subject] in Western thought...”¹³ In the terms of psychoanalysis, rather than the subject as a whole being equated with the Self and sense of “I,” it is specifically the ego that is the seat of this sense of self. “The ego [or Self] is, in Lacan’s view, the seat of fixation and narcissistic attachment. Moreover, it inevitably contains ‘false images’...[F]or the ego is by its very nature a distortion, an error, a repository of misunderstanding.”¹⁴ This immediately ties into the Buddhist idea of *anātman* because Nāgārjuna’s teachings on the non-Self also attribute distortion, error, and misunderstanding to our faulty superimposition of *svabhāva* onto the *skandhas* of our psychophysical experiences. Both the ego and *ātman* are misguided illusions of selfhood.

Another striking similarity between these two psychologies lies in the comparison to be made between the Buddhist doctrine of attachment (and the *dukkha* this creates) and the

psychoanalytic doctrine of unconscious desire. For Nāgārjuna, and, indeed for all Buddhists, attachment is the root cause of *dukkha*. The Pāli word itself, *dukkha*, is often simplified via translation into the term “suffering.” Therefore, suffering is yet something else that must be overcome—just as the Buddhist must also overcome the illusions of Self and of permanence. How, though, does attachment and *dukkha* relate to unconscious desire? According to psychoanalytic theory, just as attachment is the root cause of all suffering for the Buddhist, so too is desire the root cause of all of our psychic maladies. In Buddhism, the spiritual goal is to overcome attachment and to be able to let go, so that one may attain Nirvāṇa. In psychoanalysis, the therapeutic goal of the cure rests on the ability of the analysand to recognize their unconscious desire. As Lacan taught, it is important “to teach the subject to name, to articulate, to bring this desire into existence, this desire which, quite literally, is on this side of existence, which is why it insists... That the subject should come to recognize and to name his desire, that is the efficacious action of analysis.”¹⁵ This is where the similarities between Buddhist attachment and psychoanalytic desire end because, as Lacan demonstrates, unconscious desire “is on this side of existence.” Mādhyamaka philosophy, in contrast to Lacanian psychoanalysis, would posit that attachment is decidedly *not* a part of existence because attachment is fundamentally empty and can be overcome in order to achieve enlightenment.¹⁶

Though one may glean nihilistic attitudes in these philosophical outlooks, that is simply not the case. Nāgārjuna’s thought walks a fine line between essentialism and nihilism, but in the end, it takes the Middle Way between these two.¹⁷ Lacan is also often accused of having a nihilistic bent, but this is due to psychoanalysis’s anti-humanist outlooks and foundations because while the Self might not have agency, the unconscious certainly does. As this

comparison continues, the actual implied metaphysics of both Mādhyamaka and Lacanian ontologies will be examined.

Comparative Ontologies

Delving deeper than the psychologies of subjectivity offered by Nāgārjuna and Lacan, one can begin to appreciate the metaphysical implications of both Mādhyamaka doctrine and Lacanian theory. If one is to look for the ontological foundations of both of these traditions, they will find two seemingly analogous concepts: those being *śūnyatā* and lack respectively.

Śūnyatā is the fundamental emptiness of all things, or, more precisely, the emptiness of *svabhāva* or “inherent existence.” This emptiness is not only essential to the idea of the non-Self, but foundational to Mādhyamaka metaphysics as a whole. With emptiness being essential to Nāgārjuna’s metaphysical system, the concept of dependent co-arising is needed to make coherent sense of *śūnyatā*. As explained by scholar Jay L. Garfield in his commentaries on the MMK, “[W]e can make no sense of how [entities and their properties] fit together temporally, logically, or ontologically. It is important that objects and their characteristics, persons and their states, be unified. But if we introduce essence and entity into our ontology, this will be impossible...”¹⁸ Things must be empty of inherent existence because once essence is introduced, there is no ontological coherence to the unity of an object and their characteristics.

Lack is the starting point for a Lacanian ontology. The Lacanian subject is born out of lack. “Being attains a sense of self in relation to being as a function of this lack, in the experience of desire. In the pursuit of this beyond, which is nothing, it harks back to the feeling of a being with self-consciousness, which is nothing but its own reflection in the world of things.”¹⁹ Lack is

that which is nothing, and it lies at the very core of our being. This lack can never be filled by our desire because the subject desires precisely what it lacks.

In Chapter IX of the MMK, entitled “Examination of the Prior Entity,” there is written a verse ripe for both Buddhist and Lacanian exegesis on these matters. Take, for example, the following lines of Nāgārjuna’s text:

Someone is disclosed by something.

Something is disclosed by someone.

Without something how can someone exist?

Without someone how can something exist?²⁰

The narrative opponent of Nāgārjuna argues in MMK IX:5a-b that “the emptiness of all phenomena still requires that there be a subject for whom they are the phenomena.”²¹ Nāgārjuna responds in MMK IX:5c-d, arguing that subjectivity is the awareness that grounds perception, but that this awareness is also inherently empty.

Similarly, from a Lacanian viewpoint, MMK IX:5 could be read that *the subject* (“someone”) is revealed to be who they are by their *desire’s lack* (“something”). Subjects are not complete and are without coherent identity; instead, they are open subjects. For both Nāgārjuna and Lacan, there is a hole at the center of subjectivity—that hole corresponding to emptiness and lack respectively.

Why is it, though, that all things are empty and lacking? This can be explained by examining Chapter XV of the MMK. This chapter, entitled, “Examination of Essence,” discusses the necessity for emptiness in relation to essence and dependent co-arising.

According to Nāgārjuna, not only are all things empty, but all things are dependent on one another. Because essence itself is eternal and independent, it cannot arise dependently and would not be empty.²² “[W]hen Nāgārjuna argues that all phenomena originate in dependence upon conditions, that all phenomena are interdependent, and that all phenomena are fabricated..., he is thereby arguing quite directly for their emptiness.”²³ Therefore, essence cannot exist in a coherent metaphysical system. Without essence, one is only left with emptiness.

In the Lacanian theoretical framework, lack arises from the discovery of the Other during the Mirror Stage. The instinctual and intuitive Self—that would be, a self-thought to be with essence—is fundamentally lacking. This Self is lacking because the projected-Self (the *imago* of the mirror-imaged Self) is simultaneously the source of alienating anxiety as well as the mechanism that is assumed by the subject to compensate for this anxiety. The recognized disparity between the intuitive Self and the projected Self is the beginning of the subject’s sense of lack.²⁴ The unknowable Other that the subject finds in their mirror-image fills them with anxiety.

This is where the comparison between these two ontologies breaks. For the Mādhyamaka ontology, dependent co-arising is necessary for a system of emptiness to be coherent. However, in the example of Lacan’s Mirror Stage, one can see through the demonstration of anxiety that lack is a simultaneous process. Lack is simultaneously the source of the alienating anxiety and the coping mechanism for dealing with it. In this instance, lack cannot dependently co-arise as simultaneity precludes this.²⁵ Two verses from the discourse “Examination of Fire and Fuel” in Chapter X of the MMK illustrate this point:

If fire depends on fuel,

And fuel depends on fire,

On what are fire and fuel established as dependent?

Which one is established first?²⁶

...

Fire does not come from something else,

Nor is fire in fuel itself.

Moreover, fire and the rest are just like

The moved, the not-moved, and the goer.²⁷

Nāgārjuna's point in his argumentation found in Chapter X of the MMK is that "Strict identity and difference as determined by reference to phenomena themselves are only conceivable from the incoherent standpoint of inherent existence."²⁸ While using the metaphor of fire and fuel, Nāgārjuna demonstrates how apparently distinct entities, such as events and their causes, or, in our example, lack and the resulting anxiety, are absurd when viewed through a lens of *svabhāva* ("inherent existence"). For the exponent of Mādhyamaka philosophy, only when this superimposition of *svabhāva* is stopped and lack, with its accompanying anxiety, is seen as dependently co-arising can there be a coherent metaphysical argument. With Lacanian psychoanalysis being more grounded in the Western tradition, its metaphysics do not see the need for strict adherence to dependent co-arising, and therefore, the ontology of lack works on its own internal logic.

Conclusion

Anātman and lack—are they the same or does the truth lie somewhere in between Nāgārjuna and Lacan?

Through our examinations of both the comparative psychologies and comparative ontologies of Mādhyamaka Buddhism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the ideas and concepts of the Self, non-Self, śūnyatā, and lack have been explored. Though Nāgārjuna’s non-Self and śūnyatā have striking similarities with Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic lack, they depart at too many crucial points for it to be considered a one-to-one comparison. However, it is important to note that both of these thinkers offer strong and subversive challenges to dominant Western narratives about the Self and subjectivity.

Though the hole at the center of our subjectivity may be a challenging as well as frightening concept, it is important to meditate and reflect on these ideas. After all, for Nāgārjuna, such reflection could lead to enlightenment, and for Lacan, these realizations could lead to the psychoanalytic cure of the neurotic psyche. In other words, challenging the Cartesian notions of subjectivity could lead to liberation and a curious sense of freedom in the face of what, at first glance, seems like a form of nihilism.

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¹ Jan Westerhoff, *Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 157.

² Matthew Mackenzie, “Enacting the Self: Buddhist and Enactivist Approaches to the Emergence of the Self,” in *Self, No Self?: Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*, ed. Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 243.

³ Westerhoff, 19 & 53.

⁴ Westerhoff, 48-49.

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 222.

⁶ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, 223.

⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Translation in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 13

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII: Transference*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 268.

⁹ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII*, 363.

¹⁰ Lacan, *Écrits*, 76.

¹¹ Ken Bradford, “The Subject Matter of Psychology: Psyche, Dasein, non-self,” *Existential Analysis* 31, no. 2 (2020), 338.

¹² Bradford, 338.

¹³ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 35.

¹⁴ Fink, 37.

¹⁵ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, 228-229.

¹⁶ Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 180.

¹⁷ John Spackman, “Between Nihilism and Anti-Essentialism: A Conceptualist Interpretation of Nāgārjuna,” *Philosophy East & West* 64, no. 1 (2014), 151-152.

¹⁸ Jay L. Garfield, “Commentaries” in *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamikakārikā* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 158.

¹⁹ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, 223-224.

²⁰ Nāgārjuna, MMK IX:5, trans. Jay L. Garfield.

²¹ Garfield, 183.

²² Garfield, 220.

²³ Garfield, 221.

²⁴ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII*, 374.

²⁵ Garfield, 194.

²⁶ Nāgārjuna, MMK X:8, trans. Jay L. Garfield.

²⁷ Nāgārjuna, MMK X:13, trans. Jay L. Garfield.
²⁸ Garfield, 195.

To what extent did Karl Marx's political thought influence the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the 21st Century?

Madalyn A. Schroeder

Introduction

To what extent did Karl Marx's political thought influence the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century? The research into the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century holds significant implications for policymakers and governance, more specifically, in addressing issues of economic inequality and social justice. Understanding the depth of Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement can help to inform policy through income inequality and wealth redistribution, social justice, and economic policies, financial regulation and accountability, political activism, and civil liberties, economic and social movements, and public discourse. A varied understanding of how Marxist thought influenced the movement can inform policies that work to address income inequality and wealth redistribution. Having this knowledge can help policymakers develop more effective measures to ensure an equal distribution of resources and opportunities. Policymakers can also draw insight from the movement's alignment with Marxist ideas to shape social justice policies, which include reforms of labor rights, access to education, affordable healthcare, and social safety nets.

Understanding how Marx's thought influences the need for increased financial regulations and corporate accountability can guide policy decisions that are related to financial reform, corporate governance, and regulatory frameworks. Policymakers can also consider the impact of the Occupy Wall Street movement on political activism and civil liberties, which includes the right to protest and free speech. Having this information can help to inform policies related to the protection of civil rights and the handling of mass protests. Finally, the research can

work towards helping policymakers predict the emergence and development of future economic and social movements by recognizing the lasting appeal of Marxist thought in addressing contemporary societal challenges. This study on the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century offers valuable insight for policymakers in the realms of economic, social, and political governance. Overall, knowing the extent of Marxist influence within the movement can help policymakers craft more informed and effective policies aimed at addressing economic inequality and social justice, which can contribute to a more equitable and just society.

Occupy Wall Street

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement was a socio-political movement that emerged in the United States in 2011. The movement gained importance as a response to economic inequality, corporate influence in politics, and perceived injustices within the financial system. "3,000 supporters flooded the space and spilled out onto the adjacent sidewalks: Union hardhats, community activists, and civil libertarians, activated by word of mouth, by text or by tweet. Their handmade signs testified to their motivations and aspirations".¹ The movement originated in New York City's Zuccotti Park on September 17, 2011, when a group of activists and organizers gathered to protest the perceived greed and corruption of major financial institutions. The central theme of OWS was the critique of economic inequality. Protesters argue that a small percentage of the population, the 1%, held a disproportionality large share of wealth and political power. OWS participants expressed concern about the undue influence of large corporations on politics and policymaking. The movement aimed to draw attention to the perceived close ties between

¹ Michael A. Gould-Wartofsky. 2014. *The Occupiers : The Making of the 99 Percent Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=921066&site=ehost-live>.

Wall Street and the U.S. government. Calls for wealth redistribution and a fairer distribution of economic resources were common. Protesters advocated for politics that would address income disparity and provide more opportunities for the middle and lower classes. OWS Targeted major financial institutions, especially Wall Street banks, as symbols of the economic system they opposed. The movement criticized the role of these institutions in the 2009 financial crisis and subsequent bailouts. OWS was not only concerned with economic issues, but also addressed broader social justice concerns. Activists focused on issues such as affordable housing, healthcare, and education.

The movement was known for its strategy of occupying public spaces, particularly Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan. Participants established an encampment to sustain their protest and engage in discussions. OWS has a decentralized organizational structure, with decisions made through a consensus-based process in general assemblies. This structure allowed for inclusivity but also posed challenges in terms of articulating specific demands. Occupy wall street has a significant impact on public discourse. It brought issues of economic inequality to the forefront and influenced political conversations during the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign. Despite its visibility, OWS did not result in significant policy changes or systemic reforms. The movement faced criticism for lacking clear demands and a cohesive agenda. While the physical occupations dissipated, the themes and concerns raised by OWS persisted in subsequent activism. The movement left a lasting legacy in terms of influencing discussions about economic justice and social inequality. In summary, Occupy Wall Street was a protest movement that captured global attention by highlighting economic inequality, corporate influence, and broader social justice issues.

Karl Marx's Political Thought

Karl Marx, a 19th century Germany Philosopher, economist, and political theorist, is known for his influential ideas on social, economic, and political structures. His political thought laid the groundwork for various movements and revolutions throughout history, including the Occupy Wall Street movement. Marx's primary focus was on critiquing capitalism. He argued that capitalism inherently led to economic inequality, exploitation of the working class by the owning class and alienation of workers from the products of their labor. Marx's concept of historical materialism posited that societies evolve through class struggle, "Marx's writings of the relationship, in capitalist society, between the political state, on the one hand, and the economically dominate class, on the other" he believed that the capitalist system would naturally create tensions between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, ultimately leading to a revolutionary transformation of society.² Marx discussed the alienation of workers within a capitalist system. He argued that workers become estranged from the products of their labor, the process of labor itself, and even from their own human potential. This alienation contributes to social discontent. Marx's ideas also extended to the global stage with his analysis of imperialism and its role in sustaining capitalism. He argued that powerful nations exploit weaker ones for resources and markets, perpetuating economic inequality on a global scale.

The Occupy Wall Street movement, which emerged in 2011, echoed Marx's concerns about economic inequality and corporate influence. Protesters focused on the disproportionate power held by financial institutions and corporations, highlighting the 1% versus the 99% divided. Occupy Wall Street criticized the growing wealth disparity, corporate greed, and the

² Wolff, Jonathan, and David Leopold. "Karl Marx." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, December 21, 2020. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/#StatCapiSoci>.

perceived undue influence of financial elites on political decisions. These align with Marx's prediction about the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. While Occupy Wall Street did not explicitly identify as a Marxist movement, it reflected a broader anti-capitalist sentiment consistent with Marx's critique. Participants sought economic justice, fairness, and a reevaluation of the existing socio-economic structure. Marx's ideas have had a lasting impact on political thought, inspiring various movements that challenge economic systems and power structures. Occupy Wall Street, in drawing attention to economic disparities, brought Marx's critique back into the public discourse. Overall, Karl Marx's political thought, with its emphasis on class struggle, critique of capitalism, and predictions of economic inequality, contributes to the ideological understanding of movements like Occupy Wall Street.

Literature Review

Scholars and researchers have explored various areas of this topic, providing insight into the extent of Marxist influence and the broader sociopolitical context in which the movement emerged. An overview of Karl Marx, written by the Sandford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, provides great insight into who Karl Marx was and what he stood for within his ideologies and theories. It outlines his entire life from his early years all the way through to his legacies, which will provide an in-depth analysis of how his theories and ideologies could relate to the Occupy Wall Street movement through further research. A book called "The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement" by Michael A. Gould-Warsofsky is a perfect example. It dives into the Occupy Wall Street movement by conducting interviews with activists. It offers valuable insight into the movements of political thought, ideology, and its relationship with Marxist principles, providing an overall understanding of how Marx's ideas influenced participants.

Another great example is the article by Nick J. Sciullo “Reassessing Corporate Personhood in the Wake of Occupy Wall Street”, This article examines the dynamic evolution of corporate personhood jurisprudence in the United States Supreme Court, concurrently providing a Marxist analysis of this legal framework. This analysis is intertwined with an exploration of how Occupy movements have challenged corporate dominance within the U.S. legal and policy outlook. The articles dive into the influence of Marxist criticism on legal discourse and emphasize the significance of applying a Marxist framework in contemporary legal critiques. Furthermore, it highlights the contributions of various authors and their works that have shaped the ongoing resistance against corporate personhood and made known the interplay between the Occupy movements and the world of law and capitalism. A source by Jackie DiSalvo “Occupy Wall Street: Creating a Strategy for a Spontaneous Movement” is one of the rarest sources. This source is a first-hand account, with the writing being primarily from her involvement in Occupy Wall Street. She goes into her Marxist views, the strengths of Occupy Wall Street, her experiences, and what it was portrayed as through different points of view, sources of Occupy Wall Street’s contradictions, as well as Occupy Wall Street’s weakness and its demise. It is mainly a first-hand account of the Occupy Wall Street movement with slight mentions of Marxism but provides great insight into what it was like to be a part of the movement and different aspects of it.

Finally, there was also a wide division between the public over the Occupy Wall Street Movement that is covered within the Pew Research Center. It gives statistics for the support and opposition for the movement on the scale of strongly and somewhat as well as including a section for neither support or oppose and don’t know whether they support nor oppose it. It shows that there is an overall 39% support of the movement, with strong support being 16% and

somewhat support being 23%.³ Similarly, it shows that there was an overall 35% opposition towards the movement with Strongly oppose being at 16% and somewhat oppose being at 19%.⁴ With 6% being neither and 20% being don't know.⁵ It goes into how it compared to the tea party and how supportive those were who tracked the Occupy Wall Street movement. These works offer a wide range of information and perspectives on the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century. These studies provide valuable insight into the movement's correlation with Marxist ideas and the ideas of the Occupy Wall Street Movement and Karl Marx himself.

Hypothesis

Karl Marx's political thought has a notable and visible influence on the ideological foundation, discussions, and strategies of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century. The movement's core principles and demands, reflecting Marxist concepts of class struggle and economic inequality, were shaped by Marx's ideas to a substantial extent. This demonstrates the enduring relevance of Marxist thought in shaping contemporary movements aimed at addressing economic inequalities. Examining the influence of Marx's ideas on Occupy Wall Street helps the understanding of how ideological foundations impact the goals and strategies of social movements. If the movement's core principles align with Marxist concepts, it implies a deliberate choice to frame issues in terms of class dynamics and economic disparities, potentially

³ "Public Divided over Occupy Wall Street Movement." Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy, October 24, 2011. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2011/10/24/public-divided-over-occupy-wall-street-movement/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

impacting the movement's objectives and the way it addresses societal issues. The hypothesis suggests that Marxist concepts influenced not just theoretical discussions but also practical strategies for social change. If this influence is substantial, it raises questions about the movements potential effectiveness in addressing economic inequalities and class struggles. Assessing the impact of Marxist thought on the movement can provide insight into the practicality and implications of applying such ideologies in contemporary activism. If Marx's ideas are prominently reflected in the Occupy Wall Street movement, it focuses on the ongoing relevance of discussions surrounding economic inequality. The movement contributes to a broader dialogue on economic disparities, bringing attention to issues that are deeply rooted in historical theories of social and economic structures. Analyzing the connection between Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement sheds light on the interplay between ideology and activism.

Understanding how theoretical frameworks influence the practical aspects of a movement provides valuable insights into the dynamics of contemporary social and political engagement. If the Occupy Wall Street movement is significantly influenced by Marx's ideas, it highlights the enduring legacy of Marxist thought in shaping not only academic discourse but also real-world movements. In conclusion, looking at the implications of Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement goes beyond acknowledging historical connections. It works to understand the movement's potential impact, its role in ongoing societal dialogues, and the broader implications for contemporary activism and efforts to address economic inequalities.

Variable Definition and operationalization

The independent, dependent, and control variables within this research topic will be used to assess the extent of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement and to identify

any factors that may affect the relationship between Marxist thought and the movement's ideological position. The independent variable of this research proposal is the influence of Karl Marx's political thought. The operationalization of this independent variable will work to uncover the extent to which the key principles and ideas from Karl Marx's political thought such as class struggle, economic inequality, and anti-capitalist sentiments, were all embraced within the ideology and goals of the Occupy Wall Street movement. To measure these influences, content analysis of movement manifestos, slogans, speeches, and other primary sources will be employed.

The dependent variable of this research proposal is the Occupy Wall Street movement's ideological alignment with Marx's political thought. The operationalization of this dependent variable will work to show the degree to which the Occupy Wall Street movement's ideological foundations, principles, and strategies line up with Karl Marx's political thought. This will be assessed through a structured coding system that categorizes and qualifies specific instances of ideological unity with Marx's concepts.

The control variables of this research topic are the socioeconomic context, external influence, demographic characteristics, and media coverage. The Socioeconomic context is based on the broader socioeconomic and political context of the 21st century, which includes economic crisis, income inequality, and public sentiment. External influences are the factors that are not Karl Marx's political thought that may have influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement, such as other ideological traditions, social movements, or political events. Demographic characteristics are characteristics of the movement's participants, which include age, education, and political affiliation, which could affect the movement's alignment with Marxist thought. Finally, media coverage could change the ideological position of the Occupy Wall Street

movement through the extent and nature of the media covered as well as public perceptions of the movement.

Research design to test the hypothesis.

To test the hypothesis that Karl Marx's political thought significantly influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century, the research design will work through a mixed methods research design that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to be employed. The quantitative phase will focus on content analysis, such as data collection, coding system, and quantitative analysis itself. To begin with data collection, gathering comprehensive data of primary sources related to the Occupy Wall Street movement, which includes manifestos, speeches, protest signs, and official statements, as well as compiling documents and writings of Karl Marx and his theories. An example of a primary source would be Jackie DiSalvo's own involvement in OWS, "My Marxist views are very different, and conclude that the potential of OWS to spur a large, militant, national class conscious, multi-issue mass movement, unprecedented in our time, was squandered partly due to anarchist influence".⁶ When it comes to coding systems, there will be a development of a structured coding system to identify and categorize instances where Marx's ideas are mentioned or implied in the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse.

The quantitative analysis will analyze the coded data using statistical methods.

Calculating the quantitative measures of influence about the percentage of documents that

⁶ Disalvo, Jackie. 2015. "Occupy Wall Street: Creating a Strategy for a Spontaneous Movement." *Science & Society* 79 (2) (04): 264-287. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1521/isis.2015.79.2.264>. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/occupy-wall-street-creating-strategy-spontaneous/docview/1662048331/se-2>.

mention Marx's ideas, the frequency of specific Marxist concepts, and material patterns in their use. The qualitative phase will focus more on an in-depth analysis of content analysis expansion, thematic coding, and a comparative analysis. The content analysis expansion will focus on the selection of a sub-sample of documents with the highest frequency of Marx-related references from the quantitative analysis to provide a more detailed, efficient, and targeted analysis within the broader context of content analysis. The thematic coding is conducted through a qualitative analysis to identify and categorize the specific themes and concepts derived from Karl Marx's political thought. This will include concepts that are related to class struggle, economic inequality, anti-capitalism, and other relevant ideas. The comparative analysis will compare the thematic content obtained from the Occupy Wall Street movement's discourse with Marx's original writings to assess the depth of influence and alignment. This is shown in "Reassessing Corporate Personhood" in a comparison between occupy movements and Marx political thought with how "Marxist criticism of corporate personhood juris prejudice that culminates in a discussion of the Occupy Movement's logic of resistance to corporate domination in the United States Law and Policy."⁷ To enhance the qualitative analysis, there will also be interviews conducted with individuals who were a part of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

The results of the quantitative and qualitative phases will be triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement. Some of the limitations to this research design may be the challenges that come from proving a direct link between Marx's ideas and the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse and actions. Some other limitations may be external factors, ideologies, and historical

⁷ Sciullo, Nick J. 2013. "Reassessing Corporate Personhood in the Wake of Occupy Wall Street." *Widener Law Journal* 22 (3): 611–85.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.404538159&site=eds-live>.

events that could have also influenced the movement which will be considered and controlled. Employing this research design will allow a deeper understanding of how Marx's political thought influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement and how Marx's ideas were manifested in the principles and demands of the movement. All in all, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the research question and hypothesis.

Barrier/ problem and solutions

There will be several different barriers and problems that will be encountered while conducting this research on the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement. Some of the potential barriers and problems that are crucial to be aware of while conducting this research are data availability and quality, inability to establish a direct link, selection bias, subjective interpretations, changing discourse, interview access, and ethical considerations. When it comes to data availability and quality, there is an obvious barrier, limited access to high-quality primary sources, such as internal communications and private documents of Occupy Wall Street activists, which may delay a comprehensive analysis. Establishing a direct link between Marx's ideas and the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse and actions is challenging as well, and other ideological influences and historical factors may complicate attribution.

Another big challenge is selection bias. The individuals and documents may not fully represent the entire Occupy Wall Street movement. The interpretation of references to Marx's ideas in Occupy Wall Street documents can be subjective and can potentially lead to different conclusions "About four-in-ten Americans say they support the Occupy Wall Street movements (39%) while nearly as many (35%) say they oppose the movement launched last month in New

York's financial district".⁸ However, the coding system will help towards controlling the subjectivity that may affect the conclusion. Another challenge is the changing discourse within the Occupy Wall Street discourse due to its evolving which makes it challenging to capture the entire scope of influence accurately. Gaining access to participants for interviews may be difficult, since they may have dispersed or become less active since the movement's peak.

Finally, ethical considerations are the most important when research involves interviews since there are concerns surrounding privacy and informed consent. Continued, to combat the challenges presented above, there will be a wide variety of solutions employed. To begin with data availability and quality, the solution to this problem is to collaborate with organizations and individuals who were involved in the movement to be able to access relevant documents as well as use documents that are available to the public. To combat the challenges that arise from the inability to establish a direct link, the employment of a mixed-methods approach to triangulate evidence, combining quantitative and qualitative data, as well as consider employing control variables to account for external influences. When it comes to selection bias, The use of random sampling techniques when selecting documents for analysis and conducting interviews with various participants to mitigate that selection bias will work as a solution. The solution to the problem of subjective interpretation would be to use a structured coding system and involve multiple researchers to enhance the reliability of the analysis, as well as provide a comprehensive guideline in the coding to minimize subjectivity.

⁸ "Public Divided over Occupy Wall Street Movement." Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy, October 24, 2011. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2011/10/24/public-divided-over-occupy-wall-street-movement/>.

Conducting a longitudinal analysis will help to combat the issue of changing discourse due to its ability to trace changes in the movement discourse and the evolution of its alignment with Marxist ideas will be the way to override this challenge. The solution to Interview access would be to reach out to former participants through social networks or online forums will work to provide a solution to this problem while ensuring confidentially an ethical consideration in interviews. To combat the biggest challenge of ethical consideration, this research will adhere to ethical guidelines, obtain informed consent, and protect the anonymity of participants when conducting interviews or accessing personal documents. To conclude, anticipating and dressing these barriers and problems in this research proposal will enhance the quality and reliability of the findings which will ultimately lead to a more comprehensive and information-filled analysis of the extent of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research works to shed light on the profound impact of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that unfolded in the 21st century. By employing a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing political theory, social activism analysis, and historical context, the study aims to measure the depth and significance of Marx's influence on a modern sociopolitical movement driven by concerns of economic inequality and social justice. Through an exploration of primary sources, protest literature, and the discourse of the movement, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how Marx's ideas, originating in the 19th century, resonate within a contemporary activist context, contributing to a broader comprehension of the dynamic relationship between historical ideas and present-day activism. The research design, employing a mixed methods approach, aims to test the hypothesis that Marx's political thought significantly influenced OWS movements. By utilizing quantitative

content analysis and qualitative thematic coding, the study seeks to uncover the extent of alignment between Marx's ideas and the movements ideology. Control variables, such as socioeconomic context, external influences, demographic characteristics, and media coverage, will be considered to provide a comprehensive analysis. Despite potential challenges, such as data availability, establishing a direct link, and ethical considerations, the research proposes solutions, including collaboration with relevant organizations, a mixed-methods approach, random sampling, structured coding system, and adherence to ethical guidelines. These solutions aim to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. In essence, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between Karl Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement, offering valuable insight for policymakers dealing with issues of economic inequality and social justice in the contemporary sociopolitical landscape. By examining the enduring influence of Marx's ideas on modern activism, the study provides a foundation for informed policy decisions that address the challenges of our time, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of a more equitable and just society.

Madalyn Schroeder

To what extent did Karl Marx's Political Thought Influence the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the 21st Century?



Variable Definition & Operationalization

The independent, dependent, and control variables within this research topic will be used to assess the extent of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement and to identify any factors that may affect the relationship between Marxist thought and the movement's ideological position. The independent variable of this research proposal is the influence of Karl Marx's Political thought. The operationalization of this independent variable will work to uncover the extent to which the key principles and ideas from Karl Marx's political thought such as class struggle, economic inequality, and anti-capitalist sentiments, were all embraced within the ideology and goals of the Occupy Wall Street movement. To measure these influences, content analysis of movement manifestos, slogans, speeches, and other primary sources will be employed.

The dependent variable of this research proposal is the Occupy Wall Street movement's ideological alignment with Marx's political thought. The operationalization of this dependent variable will work to show the degree to which the Occupy Wall Street movement's ideological foundations, principles, and strategies line up with Karl Marx's political thought. This will be assessed through a structured coding system that categorizes and qualifies specific instances of ideological unity with Marx's concepts.

The control variables of this research topic are the socioeconomic context, external influence, demographic characteristics, and media coverage. The Socioeconomic context is based on the broader socioeconomic and political context of the 21st century which includes economic crisis, income inequality, and public sentiment. External influences are the factors that are not Karl Marx's political thought that may have influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement, such as other ideological traditions, social movements, or political events. Demographic characteristics are characteristics of the movement's participants which include age, education, and political affiliation, which could affect the movement's alignment with Marxist thought. Finally, Media coverage could change the ideological position of the Occupy Wall Street movement through the content and nature of the media covered as well as public perceptions of the movement.

Barrier/Problems

Some of the potential barriers and problems that are crucial to be aware of while conducting this research are data availability and quality, inability to establish a direct link, Selection bias, subjective interpretations, Changing discourse, Interview access, and Ethical considerations. When it comes to data availability and quality there is an obvious barrier, limited access to high-quality primary sources, such as internal communications and private documents of Occupy Wall Street activists, which may delay a comprehensive analysis. Establishing a direct link between Marx's ideas and the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse and actions is challenging as well and other ideological influences and historical factors may complicate attribution. Another big challenge is selection bias. The individuals and documents may not fully represent the entire Occupy Wall Street movement. The interpretation of references to Marx's ideas in Occupy Wall Street documents can be subjective and can potentially lead to different conclusions. "About four-in-ten Americans say they support the Occupy Wall Street movement (19%) while nearly as many (35%) say they oppose the movement launched last month in New York's financial district". However, the coding system will help towards controlling the subjectivity that may affect the conclusion. Another challenge is the changing discourse within the Occupy Wall Street discourse due to its evolving which makes it challenging to capture the entire scope of influence accurately. Gaining access to participants for interviews may be difficult since they may have dispersed or become less active since the movement's peak. Finally, ethical considerations are the most important when research involves interviews since there are concerns surrounding privacy and informed consent.

Hypothesis

Marxist concepts influences not just theoretical discussions but also practical strategies for social change



Abstract

The research will investigate the intriguing influences of Karl Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement that came to be in the 21st Century. The study looks to measure the depth and significance of Marx's influence on a modern sociopolitical movement driven by economic inequality and social justice concerns. By taking a multidisciplinary approach that combines political theory, social activism analysis, and historical context, this investigation shows the extent to which Marx's ideas informed the ideological foundation and strategies of the Occupy Wall Street movement. By looking through primary sources, protest literature, and the discourse of the movement, this research provides a varied understanding of how Marxist political thought, which originated in the 19th century, is seen within a 21st-century movement, thus contributing to a broader comprehension of the dynamic relationship between historical ideas and contemporary activism. The findings of this study work to create a deeper understanding of the relevance of Marxist thought in the pursuit of economic and social justice, as well as showing its continued influence on the modern sociopolitical landscape.

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Conclusion

This research works to shed light on the profound impact of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that unfolded in the 21st century. By employing a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing political theory, social activism analysis, and historical context, the study aims to measure the depth and significance of Marx's influence on a modern sociopolitical movement driven by concerns of economic inequality and social justice. Through an exploration of primary sources, protest literature, and the discourse of the movement, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how Marx's ideas, originating in the 19th century, resonate within a contemporary activist context, contributing to a broader comprehension of the dynamic relationship between historical ideas and present-day activism. The research design, employing a mixed methods approach, aims to test the hypothesis that Marx's political thought significantly influenced OWS movements. By utilizing quantitative content analysis and qualitative thematic coding, the study seeks to uncover the extent of alignment between Marx's ideas and the movement's ideology. Control variables such as socioeconomic context, external influences, demographic characteristics, and media coverage will be considered to provide a comprehensive analysis. Despite potential challenges, such as data availability, establishing a direct link, and ethical considerations, the research proposes solutions, including collaboration with relevant organizations, a mixed-methods approach, random sampling, structured coding system, and adherence to ethical guidelines. These solutions aim to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. In essence, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between Karl Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement, offering valuable insight for policymakers dealing with issues of economic inequality and social justice in the contemporary sociopolitical landscape. By examining the enduring influence of Marx's ideas on modern activism, the study provides a foundation for informed policy decisions that address the challenges of our time, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of a more equitable and just society.

Solutions

To begin with data availability and quality. The solution to this problem is to collaborate with organizations and individuals who were involved in the movement to be able to access relevant documents as well as use documents that are available to the public. To combat the challenges that arise from the inability to establish a direct link, the employment of a mixed-methods approach to triangulate evidence, combining quantitative and qualitative data as well as consider employing control variables to account for external influences. When it comes to selection bias, the use of random sampling techniques when selecting documents for analysis and conducting interviews with various participants to mitigate that selection bias will work as a solution. The solution to the problem of subjective interpretation would be to use a structured coding system and involve multiple researchers to enhance the reliability of the analysis as well as provide a comprehensive guideline in the coding to minimize subjectivity. Conducting a longitudinal analysis will help to combat the issue of Changing discourse due to its ability to track changes in the movement discourse and the evolution of its alignment with Marxist ideas will be the way to override this challenge. The solution to interview access would be to reach out to former participants through social networks or online forums will work to provide a solution to this problem while ensuring confidentiality an ethical consideration in interviews. To combat the biggest challenge of ethical consideration, this research will adhere to ethical guidelines, obtain informed consent, and protect the anonymity of participants when conducting interviews or accessing personal documents.

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The Making of a Survivor: Chopin's Use of Identity and Rebirth in *The Awakening*

Amber L. Budd

Suicide is a complex topic to broach in any setting. Very few people want to discuss the reasonings for ending one's life, especially when they have to agree or disagree with the motive. Literary suicide is an entirely different situation—if a character ends themselves, it is generally for a narrative or thematic purpose. It has to be approached from an alternate perspective. Yet what happens when a suicide is not explicitly depicted, yet scholars seem to believe it happens off the page? What if that conclusion does not feel like an accurate portrayal of the supposedly dead character? Contrary to popular scholarly belief, Edna Pontellier does not commit suicide after the conclusion of *The Awakening*; her development as an individual and exploration of identity make death counterintuitive, and Edna is not a tragically ending character.

After reaching the novel's conclusion, many scholars interpret the final pages as a prelude to suicide due to societal pressures both within and without the novel. According to an article by Peter Ramos, Edna was a morally incorrect character in the eyes of the audiences that were reading the novel; they would have wanted Edna to be punished, and so, from Ramos' perspective, Chopin succumbed to their whims and implied a suicide (Ramos 146). Female gender roles and expectations at the time when *The Awakening* was written were more conservative and submissive than how Chopin depicts Edna. As such, it seems logical to assume that Chopin wanted her novel to sell and thus wrote an ending that satisfies the masses while still allowing her to convey the story she desires. However, this is a compromised argument. The ending of a novel is meant to tie up all previous events and messages. For Chopin to sacrifice a clearly delineated ending defeats the purpose of writing *The Awakening*. The narrative would fall flat if this is the case. Others argue that Edna's suicide is logical because it is her only method of

escape from the suffocating rules of the patriarchy. Mary Cuff postulates that, by dying, Edna undermines the patriarchal society holding her back—the society she cannot control or destroy, thus leaving her with few options for escape (Cuff 328). On the surface, this seems a reasonable conclusion. Yet Cuff ignores a third possible option for escape: reimagining an individual's role. The novel, in its entirety, follows Edna's discovery and growth of the self; dying defeats the purpose of that development. Reinventing her place in society is a triumphant ending for Edna, making room for her new sense of self without compromising her character's integrity. Societal pressures primarily drive scholarly analyses toward suicide, though it is not the only reason Edna's story is viewed as tragic.

There is a separate collection of reasonings in favor of Edna's suicide that derive their conclusions from Edna's sense of identity. In her article "The Bird That Came out of the Cage," Clark explains that suicide boldly indicates Edna is entirely unwilling to give up any amount of the freedom she desires, like a bird observing their old cage and refusing to take a new one (Clark 344, 345). Clark views the possibility of suicide as the closing statement on Edna's growth as an individual when, in fact, this is contradictory to the idea of developing individuality. Death is not the ultimate growth stage; it is giving up when the situation becomes complicated. Ivy Schweitzer's article takes a darker stance by claiming that Edna "does not feel she possesses herself" (Schweitzer 163). This older reading of the novel contradicts some newer ideas of Edna's accepting perception of herself. However, it essentially goes against Edna's recognition that she could not be possessed by anyone, not even her husband, lover, or children (Chopin 167, 176). If no one outside of Edna possesses her (at least from her perspective), then she is, by definition, a free woman. The only person who can lay claim to Edna Pontellier is Edna herself, which she acknowledges, and this ultimately refutes the theory that Edna commits

suicide from a lack of autonomy. Identity does play a role in readings that explicate suicide, but it can also be used to prove her survival.

Before an accurate conclusion about the novel's ending can be made, it is vital to understand how scholarly and textual definitions of identity have evolved regarding *The Awakening*. Schweitzer's article discusses a previous belief that the identity of motherhood is separate from that of being an individual (Schweitzer 162). This is not as widely accepted as it was in the past, mostly due to further examinations of specific passages. One such example is when Edna has moved into her pigeon house, living as an individual while still loving and caring for her children, who are staying with their grandmother (Chopin 151). This break away from conventional society gives Edna a chance to find the balance between motherhood and selfhood, in that she can temporarily give her entire being to her children before returning to the comfort of her semi-solitary existence. Schweitzer also has the idea that one's sense of identity is intrinsically bound by contradictions of freedom and desiring another man (Schweitzer 181-182). This might be true in other scenarios, but not as much in *The Awakening*. In the final chapter, Edna acknowledges that people (specifically lovers) will come and go from her life and that it does not matter in the long run (Chopin 175). She wants freedom more than any one person and is unwilling to compromise on this. Edna's identity is born from the need for the self to exist independently without needing someone else to make her whole. These are early ideas for identity in *The Awakening*; more recent analyses suit the argument for suicide versus survival to a greater degree.

Modern interpretations of individuality and identity in *The Awakening* lend themselves to examining why Edna survived her final swim in the sea. It does not take much to realize that Edna's evolution into a person results in her distancing herself from many situations and people

who once dominated her life. Robert Treu notes that loneliness in some forms can destroy a person, but that it is also known as solitude, which is ultimately necessary for freedom (Treu 30). Individuality inherently requires separating from other people, either physically, emotionally, or both. Edna knows this—consciously or unconsciously—and works to extricate herself from being wholly owned by the other people in her life. She becomes “the regal woman [...] who stands alone” (Chopin 145). Nevertheless, Edna is also “unwilling or unable” to express herself, Teddy Duncan argues, because when she does, she is met with arguments, confusion, and anger from those around her (Duncan 194). Identity and individuality for a woman include, in the context of the novel, an unspoken need to leave certain thoughts unsaid in order to fully enjoy and entertain the growth of the individual. If Edna were to have explained every notion she has but does not understand, then the patriarchal society would have made sure to prevent any further deviations from what is acceptable for a white, middle-class woman. Her identity is firmly rooted in the secrecy of her thoughts, in the privacy of an individual’s mind. A proper understanding of how identity and individuality function within *The Awakening* is essential for any critical reading of the novel, especially when analyzing the technically ambiguous ending.

Edna’s growing sense of self provides context for the implication that she does not die after the novel’s conclusion. In the penultimate chapter, Edna finally admits to Doctor Mandelst that the only thing she truly wants is to live her own way, though she claims to recognize that this is an enormous ask considering how it would “trample” on prejudices and lives (Chopin 171). In several other situations throughout her maturation of identity, Edna is so impulsive in following her desires that even Madame Ratignolle comments that Edna is almost childlike in her spontaneity (153). If Edna is prone to acting immediately and surely on her desires, then it makes no sense that she would choose to die rather than continue to follow her own path as much as

possible. It is essential to her character to seek happiness and fulfillment in whatever way is available to her. On the other hand, the article “The Bird That Came out of the Cage” explains that Edna’s death should be viewed as an act of liberation, at least according to Clark’s interpretation. However, this is a flawed view of Edna’s character. Liberation from the patriarchy and stifling societal expectations of women does not equate to a death sentence. Clark paints suicide as a positive element of Edna’s internal development. Yet death is succumbing to external forces—not defying them. Edna would be surrendering the fight by removing herself from the ring in the middle of a match. All she wants is her way, her individuality. Death contradicts that. Liberation can only come from perseverance until triumph, which means Edna has to survive in order to claim her victory. A careful examination of Edna’s sense of identity (as well as other elements external to her existence as a person) presents a suitable backdrop for the argument that she does not commit suicide.

Edna’s survival is evident in more than just her words and actions; the motif of the sea reveals that what is typically seen as her death is, in fact, a rebirth. Based on his own analysis, Robert Treu infers that Edna refuses to take a short swim under male supervision and instead swims past the point of panic as a way for her psyche to survive (Treu 32). This reading does define an ending of sorts, but not one of permanence. It is the end of the submissive, desperate Edna who ever listened to Leonce or wanted Robert’s love. It is the beginning of the individual Edna, who ignores the internal voice of her father and the fading echoes of a calvary officer, choosing to focus on the bees and the distinctly feminine scent of pinks. Cuff’s article “Enda’s Sense of an Ending” explains that Edna is seeking a rebirth as some form of feminist version of the Madonna or as an Aphrodite figure, free from the constraint of male examples (Cuff 328). In truth, Edna did not go into the sea in the final chapter to die, but in an attempt to bring out her

new self. She even notices how she feels like a naked, newborn creature when standing at the sea's edge (Chopin 175). Water (in both mythology and literature) is a longstanding, common symbol for rebirth; for example, this can be seen in Aphrodite's creation from ancient Greek mythology and Etain's evolution in medieval Irish mythology. It would be jarring and counterintuitive for Chopin to subvert this well-known, recurring motif when *The Awakening's* ending is already ambiguous. External elements, such as the setting of the sea, specify that Edna does not just survive the last depicted swimming scene, but actually experiences a metaphorical rebirth.

An article written by Robert Kohn further proves that the sea is evidence of rebirth, though he does so accidentally. His article, "Edna Pontellier Floats into the Twenty-First Century," centers on a play written by Schvey that is based on *The Awakening*, with some creative liberties taken in the narrative's progression. In his play, Schvey rewrites the ending to have Edna be whisked away to an underwater kingdom that Kohn envisions as a representation of the Nirvana Principle, or "death drive," developed by Freud (Kohn 147, 150). The Nirvana Principle, in simple terms, theorizes that all beings yearn for a reduction to zero, or a state of empty feelings, which inevitably leads to a desire for death and the return to silent nothingness. Edna's joy (in the play) does not truly originate from an anticipation of death. Relinquishing her life on the land for a life in the sea is symbolic of rebirth and not the ending Kohn interprets it as. Even within the novel, the narrator describes the sea as a soothing embrace for the soul and body, evoking the image of a maternal figure holding a child only to release them again into the world (Chopin 57). Essentially, it is a place where Edna can exist unrestrained, representing comfort for the mind and freedom of the body. Death is not so tranquil nor protective, merely a device to

remove a soul from the world at its ending. Schvey's modern retelling aims to depict the favored reading of suicide, yet it accidentally proves otherwise.

Furthermore, the sea goes beyond solitary representations of rebirth, illustrating Edna's understanding of her developing identity and individuality in greater depth. Cuff's article "Edna's Sense of Ending" argues for the silence at the novel's end, seemingly knowing that Edna is now too far out from the shore and cannot turn back (Cuff 343). From Cuff's perspective, remaining in the sea would lead to death, whereas the shore symbolizes survival and perseverance. Edna is growing physically tired from the extended swim—that much is clearly stated by the novel in the last two pages. It could further be argued that Edna is emotionally and mentally tired as well from dealing with the troubles placed on her as a young woman and mother. Although, she will not drown (intentionally or not) just because she has grown weary in body and spirit from the trials of being a woman. When talking with Doctor Mandelet, Edna explains that she feels it is better to "wake up" and realize how long and how much she has been suffering than to remain asleep, easily tricked into a false delusion of happiness for the entirety of her life (Chopin 171). The sea is Edna's mode of awakening as a person and individual, which is an experience she is grateful for no matter what pain it brings along with it. She refuses to succumb to lies, deceit, or the powers of others, no matter how good-willed the intentions behind these things are. Edna will continue to fight for herself and her sense of identity, which inevitably implies that she will not commit suicide, if only for her own sake. On top of being representative of Edna's metaphorical rebirth, the sea mirrors Edna's perceptions of how her individuality affects her life.

With a complete understanding of Edna's character, it becomes clear that her survival is rooted in the act of redefining femininity. Ivy Schweitzer claims that in her defiant actions, Edna

is mimicking the male role models around her because they are her only examples (Schweitzer 171, 172). This appears to be a reasonable assumption. Humans learn how to behave by observing the actions of other people around them, so it seems safe to assume that Edna's new individuality is born from her understanding of how men operate in the world since they are the ones with the most societal freedom and power. Yet, at various points, Edna recognizes (or almost recognizes) that her position as a woman makes her vulnerable to the authority of the men. If she views it as a controlling regime that she wants to be free of, why would she actively work to make her person reminiscent of the men in power? Schweitzer also defines freedom as owning oneself and being able to give the self to whoever is desired (Schweitzer 177). The second half of this definition is inaccurate to Edna as a character. She so desperately wants to own herself that she admits she would laugh if Leonce or Robert made the presumption to own her (Chopin 167). Edna seeks freedom of her individual person, but she does not intend to find it by acting as the men do. Instead, she reclaims and redefines femininity according to her specific desires and needs. Edna recognizes that she might be acting in a way that is considered "unwomanly," but that it is only due to the development of her expressing herself (Chopin 165). "Unwomanly" behavior is not indicative of manly behavior. Instead, it demonstrates a new state of existence that is not typical of the novel's defined femininity or masculinity. In order to successfully redefine a gender role, there needs to be survival; otherwise, it is a failure. Edna is not trying to die—rather, she is ultimately working toward redefining femininity.

Overall, Edna is not meant to be a tragic character. Cuff notices in her article that Edna wants to avoid endings whenever possible (Cuff 332). This aversion carries over into the ending of life as well. In the grand scheme of existence, death is the epitome of endings. Once one has died, there can be no more beginnings, and everything else in life comes to an abrupt and

permanent stop as well. *The Awakening* as a novel may end, but Edna wants to continue and not let her story conclude with the final words or the implication of dying. Robert Treu even comments that one of the controlling factors of the final chapter is Chopin's vocabulary, which evokes feelings of "rebirth and rebellion" (Treu 30). Chopin's choice of words conveys her intention for Edna to be perceived as a strong, determined survivor. It is a subtle effect that does not overshadow the factual ambiguity of the ending, yet still subconsciously directs readers to see Edna's future in a positive, triumphant light. Her story is about her growth as an individual and her recognition of personal desires; its effect would be far more impactful if the heroine were to live, having successfully achieved her goal, rather than dying in a futile attempt at freedom. Tragedy is not the purpose of Edna's tale in *The Awakening*, as that devalues all of her previous growth.

Edna Pontellier does not commit suicide after the ending of *The Awakening*; she is not meant to be a tragic character, and death undermines the development of individuality and identity she undergoes earlier in the novel. Other scholars tend to believe in a suicidal narrative due to societal pressures and inaccurate interpretations of Edna's sense of identity. Even so, it is precisely because of how identity and individuality are presented in the novel that readers can conclude that Edna survives her final swim. The sea itself serves as a representation of Edna's rebirth and acts as a mirror for her growth, leading to modern retellings that support an argument for her survival. In the end, Edna is redefining the way femininity should be presented in the novel's society, further expanding the idea that Edna's story is not meant to end as a tragedy. Suicide is a difficult topic to talk about—thankfully, this story is not so sorrowful that death is something in need of discussion.

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The State of Democracy in South Africa

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In 1994, South Africa became a democracy. Since then, the country theoretically fulfills all the requirements to be a full, stable democracy. However, the country has since been evaluated to be a flawed democracy and there are continuous elevated warnings issued for the nation by the Fragile State Index (Democracy Index, 2022). The major question, then, is what are the factors that are contributing to the decline of the state of democracy in South Africa. If this question is adequately answered, it can open avenues for seeking solutions to address the problem. Further, nations facing similar problems, with similar conditions, can benefit from such answers. Not only can the research provide insight for nations facing similar problems, but South Africa also plays an important role in the global arena. The country is a member of influential global groups, including G20 and BRICS. South Africa also exerts notable regional influence and acts as a top exporter of many natural resources. Accordingly, the political environment within South Africa will impact other nations and it is therefore important to determine which factors are causing this problem within the nation. Several factors can provide an answer to this question. However, the primary factors that contribute to the declining state of democracy in South Africa are not a result of the system of government, but rather a result of the political culture in the nation.

To determine which factors are contributing to the decline of the state of democracy in South Africa, several things need to be evaluated. First, it must be proven that the state of democracy in the nation is declining. This can be done by evaluating what criteria establish whether a nation full, stable democracy or not. Thereafter, South Africa needs to be evaluated under these criteria. Then, the system of government must be evaluated and compared to nations with similar governmental systems. More specifically, South Africa's system of government will be compared to that of the United Kingdom. This provides support for the conclusion that the system of government is not a factor contributing to the declining state of democracy as the UK functions under a similar system but does not face the same problem. Then, an alternative hypothesis is established that a factor contributing to the declining state of democracy is the political culture within the nation. It is imperative to the research to establish what political culture means, what factors typically constitute it, and how it is measured. Thereafter, the factors creating the political culture in South Africa can be established. Once these factors are established specifically as they are found within South Africa, links can be drawn to connect these factors to political culture, and this specific political culture to the declining state of democracy. It is through this process that the research question will be answered.

The foundation of this research is that the state of democracy in South Africa is declining. To show that this is true, democracy must be defined, the qualities that measure the state of democracy must be established, and statistical measurement of these qualities must be provided. First, for a state to be a democracy, some conditions must be met. There must be universal suffrage which allows citizens to participate in free, fair, and recurring elections. Further, there must be more than one political party (Morlino, 2002). South African citizens who are 18 years or older are eligible to vote. Those eligible must register by completing a free process. Further, both provincial and national elections take place every five years, allowing everyone registered to vote. Elections are run by the Independent Electoral Commission and this commission ensures that elections are both free and fair. There are multiple political parties and fourteen of those

parties currently occupy seats in parliament (“Election in South Africa”, n.d.). Another condition that must be present in a democracy is the promotion of human rights and civil liberties. The South African Constitution contains an extensive bill of rights that establishes the rights of all people within the country. The Bill of Rights also states that it affirms democratic values including human dignity, equality, and freedom. Additionally, the Constitution also contains Founding Provisions in Chapter 1. This provision states that the country is founded on non-racialism, non-sexism, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, and a multi-party system of democratic government (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Looking at the values and principles in the South African Constitution shows that the country was established as a democracy, and it does support the principles needed in a democracy. Similarly, examining the eligibility of voters, the timing of elections, and the current parties in parliament shows that the country does exercise the fundamental conditions of democracy, and they are not just purely a façade to the rest of the world. Accordingly, South Africa meets the conditions to be considered a democracy.

However, several reports illustrate that it is the quality of democracy in the state that is cause for concern. The Democracy Index is one such report. The index measures democracy by rating several factors, which include electoral processes, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. In this measurement, the index labeled South Africa as a flawed democracy with a score of 7.05 in 2022, dropping its ranking from the previous year. Further, political culture received the lowest score of 5.00 out of all the factors measured (Olmunger, 2023). Additionally, the Democracy Report, created by the organization Varieties of Democracy, indicated that South Africa moved down several levels since 2012. It reports that the country was a liberal democracy from 1996 to 2013, and then lowered to an electoral democracy (Democracy Report, 2023). This report assesses, and thereby measures, qualities of democracy through evaluation by experts. These experts are often residents of the countries for which they provide evaluation and thereby know their political systems well. The organization also has a team of experts that supplement the former evaluation. Coding and statistical models are used to express the ratings and limit the bias, irregularities, or errors in the data (Bastian, 2023). Another report, produced by The Fragile State Index, places the country on an elevated warning list regarding its state of democracy. Examining this information from three different organizations, which all produce different reports, shows that there is a problem with South African democracy. This allows the conclusion to be drawn that South Africa possesses the requirements to be a democracy, but the state of democracy is declining.

It has now been established that South Africa possesses the framework needed for the country to be considered a democracy. Next, the system of government that is created by this framework and ought to promote democratic values needs to be examined. Therefore, a possible explanation for the declining state of democracy in South Africa is the system of government in the nation. In order to examine if this is the case, the South African system of government can be compared to a nation with a similar system. This comparison will occur between South Africa and the United Kingdom. The UK is a parliamentary system, just as South Africa is. Further, the prime minister of the UK and the South African president fill similar roles. However, the president has more power in some situations. Yet because of the checks and balances in both nations, this is not significant enough to create instability within the democracy. Accordingly, the countries have similar systems of government. Now, it must be determined if the UK is facing the same state of democracy as South Africa. To do so, the UK must be evaluated by the same three measurements that were used to establish South Africa’s state of democracy. The first

report is from The Fragile State Index. This index ranks the UK as 148th out of 179 countries. The closer the country is to 179, the better the state of democracy. South Africa received a ranking of 78. Additionally, the UK is labeled as more stable under the same report, while South Africa is under an elevated warning (Fragile State Index, 2023). Further, the United Kingdom received an overall score of 8.54 on the Democracy Index, which classifies it as a full democracy. South Africa did not meet the score requirement to be labeled as such and is instead labeled as a flawed democracy (Democracy Index, 2022). Lastly, the Varieties of Democracy organization states that the UK is a liberal democracy, and it has not been lowered to a different classification since 2012. In the same report, South Africa was a liberal democracy but lowered to an electoral democracy since then (Democracy Report, 2023). The same three reports that indicated the state of democracy in South Africa is declining illustrates that the UK does not have the same problem. So, the two have similar systems of government, but they are not facing the same challenges with democracy. It follows that the declining state of democracy in South Africa is not a result of the system of government. Rather, an alternative hypothesis is that the state of democracy is a result of the political culture within the nation.

Political culture is a notoriously difficult concept in political science. So, it must first be defined and described before it can be applied to South Africa. Political culture is the shared values, beliefs, and norms that create the expected relationship between the government and its people. Assumptions about the political world are the fundamentals that form political culture. If an individual acts following such assumptions, they are seen as a legitimate political actor. To an extent then, the political culture of a particular group defines what decisions and actions this group believes are permissible. Further, political culture can be described as the mindset of citizens within a particular nation or culture (Elkins and Simeon, 1979). Frequently, surveys are used to measure and understand political culture within a nation. Thus, survey data will be used in examining the political culture within South Africa. The survey that will be used is conducted by Afrobarometer, a non-partisan research network that has conducted multiple rounds of surveys throughout 39 countries in Africa. The research team conducted 1,600 interviews in South Africa in 2021 to understand people's perceptions of corruption. First, understand that corruption is a result of political culture. If either citizens or government officials perceive corruption as a permissible action, then that constitutes a portion of the political culture of that individual or group. The survey found that nearly two-thirds of South Africans believed corruption increased from 2020 to 2021 (Govindasamy and Patel, 2021). Further, 76% believed that the government was performing “very badly” in the fight against corruption. The survey also found that at least half of the citizens see institutions of the state as corrupt. This survey data indicates that South African citizens believe that corruption is occurring, and the government is part of the corruption.

As mentioned before, corruption is a product of political culture. This product of political culture contributes to the declining state of democracy in South Africa. If citizens believe that their government is corrupt, they can lose faith in the electoral process. This can account for the reduction in voter participation in recent elections. Voting is a cornerstone of any democracy, so the lack of voter participation can contribute to the declining state of democracy. Further, corruption leads to certain undesirable effects, such as a reduction in government revenue. This reduction will limit the government’s ability to fund services for its citizens, which can create further distrust of the government. Additionally, this can create economic inequalities. South Africa has some of the highest economic inequality levels in the world (“Six Charts Explain South Africa’s Inequality, 2020). This economic inequality can also be seen in poverty and

unemployment rates. However, a democracy must promote human rights, one of which is an adequate standard of living. Nearly 51% of the population lives in poverty and 25% of the population lives in food poverty (“Poverty and Inequality Platform”, 2020). That is a large portion of the population that does not have an adequate standard of living, which a democratic government is supposed to promote. Accordingly, corruption leads to distrust in the government, lower voter participation, reduced governmental spending on services, and economic inequality. It follows that this product of political culture weakens the state of democracy in South Africa.

This research shows that the primary factors that contribute to the declining state of democracy in South Africa are not a result of the system of government, but rather a result of the political culture in the nation. This was illustrated as the South African system of government was compared to the system of the UK, which is similar. The UK is not facing the same problem, so it is not the result of the system of government. However, corruption is a product of political culture and many issues stem from that, including a reduction in voter participation, economic inequality, and poverty. These issues can all be connected to the declining state of democracy in South Africa. In saying this, the research does not claim political culture is the sole cause of the declining state of democracy in South Africa. Rather, it shows that political culture is a major contributor. Future research should examine other contributing factors. After that, research can be done to determine how these factors, and the state of democracy, can be addressed.

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