



**The Politics of Influence:
Global Trends & Local Realities**

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Edited By

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Letter from the Editor

Makenzie Cossette

December 9, 2024

Dear Readers,

As Editor-in-Chief of the University of Connecticut's Undergraduate Political Review, it's an honor to share with you the release of our nineteenth edition. Each semester, our goal is to encourage UConn undergraduates to explore complex contemporary political issues that shape our world.

This edition features articles written entirely by undergraduate students, all of which underwent a rigorous, peer-reviewed drafting process led by our student-run editorial board. While some of our past publications have centered around specific themes, we left this edition open-ended. The writing spans from topics such as economic inequalities in housing markets to political polarization, celebrity influence, and global diplomatic relations. In light of this, we've titled the nineteenth edition of the Undergraduate Political Review, *The Politics of Influence: Global Trends & Local Realities*.

This publication wouldn't have been possible without the contributions of so many. I want to extend my gratitude to our editors and writers for their dedication and hard work this semester. Their commitment made this thoughtful and high-quality edition a reality. I also want to thank Dr. Perkoski, Dr. Oksan Bayulgen, and the University of Connecticut's Political Science Department for their ongoing support.

Lastly, I encourage any UConn student interested in writing for us to get involved. We welcome new contributors every semester. For more information, feel free to email us at uconnpoliticalreview@gmail.com.

Thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy this edition!

Sincerely,
Makenzie Cossette, Editor-in-Chief

We Are All Nationalists: Currency and ‘Banal Nationalism’

Michael Albino

During our daily lives, when we hurriedly reach into our wallets in pursuit of that last dollar bill or a handful of loose change, we rarely pause to contemplate the broader societal implications of our currency, or how it transforms us into nationalists. This pervasive yet unobtrusive nationalism, which manifests in a myriad of forms including currency, is what academic Michael Billig has coined as ‘banal nationalism.’¹ While most public discourse and media coverage on nationalism often gravitates towards the ‘hot’ and glaring expressions of the ideology— that sometimes veer away from nationalism and towards populism — banal nationalism draws our attention to the subtler and quieter means by which a nation’s identity is reinforced through our daily existence.

Banal nationalism is a relatively new study of nationalism that focuses on “making the nation a daily, unconscious presence in people’s lives.”² This can and should be seen as different to the widely understood definitions of nationalism we are accustomed to — that nationalism is a loud, virulent ideology that espouses harmful rhetoric towards groups of people or nations. Banal nationalism is effectively the opposite. It hides itself in symbols, institutions, and even language. What to many seem normal and irrelevant aspects of our daily lives instead actually become “[tokens] serving as proof of identity.”³ When a person encounters one of these emblems of nationhood, the nation is flagged, and the person is already subconsciously thinking about their connection to the nation. Banal nationalism is so effective, and so prevalent, because it allows for everyone in a society to collectively affirm that they are part of the nation while not even realizing it. Even those most opposed in theory to nationalism will find themselves in practice adhering to it through our neighborhood designs, street lights, types of cars, and more; by simply accepting these trivial aspects of life as “normal,” we subconsciously indicate that we are part of a community likeminded people who believe the same — a nation.⁴ The growth of the more widely recognized variants of nationalism is only possible due to the existing foundation of banal nationalism. While historical study has focused more on the dramatic and outspoken forms, and these forms are the most palatable for the public to digest, further research and study on “the constant reproduction of a sense of national belonging in everyday language use, media, and even sports” is necessary.⁵ While banal nationalism is often overlooked, the constant effectiveness of it provides an opening for other forms of nationalism. Therefore, it is critically important to understand examples of banal nationalism to understand where the root of national sentiment in our society comes from. One of those examples is currency. Whether it is bills, coins, or bank notes — whatever you use to buy, and sell, can be classified as currency.

¹ Billig, Michael. “Banal Nationalism” In *Nations and Nationalism: A Reader*, 184-196. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005

² Antonsich, Marco. “Nations and Nationalism.” In *Companion to Political Geography*, 297-310. Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

³ Geisler, Michael. “Introduction: What are National Symbols and What do They Do to Us?” In *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, edited by Michael E. Geisler, xiii-xlii. UPNE, 2005.

⁴ Antonsich, Marco. “Nations and nationalism.”

⁵ Calhoun, Craig. “The Rhetoric of Nationalism” In *Everyday Nationhood*, 17-30. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.3

Currency provides a “visible, tangible presence in people’s routine experience” due to its immense importance in today’s society.⁶ While it may seem tempting to view currency from purely an economic perspective, the sheer influence that currency has in our society today allows it to become a unique driver of a nation’s identity, and by extension banal nationalism.

The symbolism and figures on currency play a crucial role in advancing banal nationalism. Such symbolism is meant to simultaneously “serve as markers for the collective memory of the nation [and] represent the power of the state to define a nation,” according to Professor Michael Geisler.⁷ There can be no better marker for this than the United States Dollar. On every dollar amount, a different historical figure central to the nation’s core identity is present. As Geisler calls it, “shared mythic past” is produced, in which every American can instantly recognize George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and more. A connection is built between the public and the historical figures, the mythical representations of the latter taking on the task of forming and maintaining a shared national identity. It is this “imagery of national currencies” that “actually validates them as real and credible.”⁸ Removing George Washington from the \$1 note, for example, would do little to change the economic value of the note but would be akin to erasing history itself, a communal history that every American shares. The United States Dollar is, of course, not the only example of such mythology. Communications Professor Josh Lauer writes extensively about a similar phenomenon in American-occupied Iraq. With the toppling of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, “not only would the existing Hussein-emblazoned paper notes remain in circulation, but the United States would help print more.”⁹ While seeming antithetical to the goals of the United States government at the time, what would it mean to be an Iraqi if not for Saddam Hussein on the dollar (in addition to other national symbols)? Despite the seeming contradictory nature, it helps to serve as an example of the close bonds between historical figures and a nation’s identity.

But while currency helps maintain a national identity and subtly reminds the public of this now mythical past, it can also serve as a representation of how a nation’s identity changes and progresses into the present. It is important to note that nothing above suggests “that the designs of national currencies are natural or fixed; clearly they are not.”¹⁰ In fact, political debates currently held in the United States over the \$20 note show this is the opposite. If currency was solely made for economic value, there would be little concern for who was on the front or back of a bill. But a heated debate has clouded the country over the \$20 note’s fate. Instead of former President Andrew Jackson being on the \$20 note, some argue that “placing Harriet Tubman on the twenty-dollar bill will not only acknowledge a woman who helped shape American history, it also acknowledges a scar on American history.”¹¹ This argument is fundamentally shaped by the idea that who is on the dollar bills matters in regard to shaping what the United States of America stands for. And thus, a feedback loop begins figures from

⁶ Antonsich, Marco. “Nations and nationalism.”

⁷ Geisler, Michael. “Introduction: What are National Symbols and What do They Do to Us?”

⁸ Jennifer Lauer, “Money as Mass Communication: US Paper Currency and the Iconography of Nationalism,” *The Communication Review*, 11, no. 2 (2008): 109-132, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420802068359>.

⁹ Jennifer Lauer, “Money as Mass Communication: US Paper Currency and the Iconography of Nationalism.”

¹⁰ Jennifer Lauer, “Money as Mass Communication: US Paper Currency and the Iconography of Nationalism.”

¹¹ McNish, Megan. “Harriet Takes the \$20: Black Bodies, Historical Precedence, and Political Implications.” *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*, no. 166 (2016). <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/166>.

America's past and present are added to the currency, the inclusion of which further shapes the nation's identity. There will then be a desire to remove or add figures and symbols to make the currency represent the nation's identity better, the existence of which was only possible due to the "quasi-religious" standing of currency in the first place.¹²

It is not just the symbolism of currency that makes it such a potent example of banal nationalism, however; the simple decision of whether a nation should have their own currency is also an important factor. With the growth of regional blocs such as the European Union and the African Union, among others, talks of shared currencies across borders gain traction. In the European Union's case, the introduction of the Euro in 2002 had ambitions to "foster a pan-European identity, a shared feeling of 'Europeanness', in addition to (if not in place of) national identities."¹³ The role of the Euro is not just to interlink the economies of European nations but their people, as well. Likewise, this created a backlash against this idea of a pan-European identity. Most notably, the United Kingdom fiercely opposed the adoption of the Euro even in its tenure in the European Union. This had to do as much with economic concerns as it does with the United Kingdom's identity as a nation, for "the British political elite is not uniformly pro-European and Europeanised."¹⁴ Despite being in the European Union for 47 years (from 1973 to 2020), the United Kingdom had never expressed itself as a "European" nation but a British one. While under the constraints of the European Union, and before the nation finalized its exit from the bloc, one way to sustain a nation's identity is their currency. When British nationals use British pounds, they will find them emblazoned with the portrait of King George III — flagging the nation's identity and purpose of one that revolves around the constitutional monarchy under the House of Windsor, rather than the European Union.

In conclusion, currency's role in advancing banal nationalism underscores the profound influence it wields on shaping a nation's identity. Currency should not just be seen as a medium for economic value; it is a living reflection of a nation's collective history, values, and mythos. By using historical figures and symbolism on currency, a nation is calling upon a mystified common history that unites people beyond Geisler's defined "geographic outlines" or "ideological support structures."¹⁵ The nation and the beliefs and ideals its people hold closest are constantly flagged to the people wielding currency every day. As national identity is constantly evolving, so too does currency. The ongoing debates about featuring Harriet Tubman on the \$20 bill, as well as the United Kingdom fighting to resist the Euro, reflect the dynamic nature of a nation's identity. Questions will continue to arise about who or what deserves to be in a currency, and those questions will continue to race head-first into deep discussions about if doing so is truly reflective of the nation. Those who claim that there is a sudden rise in nationalism need not be shocked as it has always been present in the form of banal nationalism. As exemplified in this paper by currency, should be understood to mean that we are all nationalists engaging in a feedback loop. Our daily routine, unknowing as we may be, propagates

¹² Jennifer Lauer, "Money as Mass Communication: US Paper Currency and the Iconography of Nationalism."

¹³ Buscha, F., Muller, D., & Page, L. 2017. "Can a Common Currency Foster a Shared Social Identity Across Different Nations? The Case of the Euro." *European Economic Review*, 100: 318-336.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2017.08.011>

¹⁴ Miles, L., & Doherty, G. 2005. "The United Kingdom: A Cautious Euro-Outsider." *Journal of European Integration*, 27(1), 89-109.

¹⁵ Geisler, Michael. "Introduction: What are National Symbols and What do They Do to Us?"

the existence of the same nation we depend on for survival. So next time you check your wallet for loose change, take a second to realize that you too are fueling nationalism.

Digital Dominoes: How China’s Digital Silk Road Challenges U.S. Influence in the Indo-Pacific

Kate Czajkowski

Introduction

As tensions over the South China Sea threaten to further destabilize U.S.-China relations, a lesser-known conflict is unfolding between the two superpowers in the digital domain. The U.S. and China are currently neck-in-neck in a battle over the control and ownership of essential telecommunications infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region, a vast area that stretches from the U.S. Pacific Coast to the Indian Ocean, and the economic, political, and social power that comes with it. Despite efforts, however, the U.S. is falling behind. China has become far more technologically autonomous over the past decade and has poured significant funding and resources into the telecommunications infrastructure of countries like Thailand and the Philippines—two countries that the U.S. views as “major non-Nato allies.”¹⁶

This alarming situation raises two key questions. First, is the U.S. adequately prepared to counter the growing economic, political, and social national security threats posed by China’s expanding control over telecommunications infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region? If not, what policies could strengthen its ability to confront these threats? This essay seeks to explore these questions and examine how emerging technologies are reshaping the Indo-Pacific’s geopolitical landscape.

Background

China’s growing dominance over telecoms infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region aligns with the objectives of a broader Chinese initiative known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI, launched in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping, is a foreign policy strategy aimed at expanding the country’s global influence through large-scale investments in infrastructure projects such as power plants, railways, and ports.¹⁷ These investments appeal to governments around the world that need to build or improve upon their existing infrastructure but do not have the funds to do so—typically developing countries that are not allied with the U.S. and have high growth potential. To date, 147 countries—accounting for two-thirds of the world’s population and 40 percent of global GDP—have signed on to BRI projects or indicated an interest in doing so, with twenty-six located in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁸

One key component of the BRI is the Digital Silk Road (DSR). The DSR, launched in 2015, is best understood as an umbrella term for China’s vision of expanding its global influence

¹⁶ The Economist. “America v China: Who Controls Asia’s Internet?.” October 8, 2024.

<https://www.economist.com/asia/2024/10/08/america-v-china-who-controls-asias-internet>.

¹⁷ McBride, James, Noah Berman, Noah Chatzky. “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative.” Council on Foreign Relations, February 2, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

¹⁸ McBride, James, Noah Berman, Noah Chatzky. “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative.”

through large-scale investments in telecoms infrastructure.¹⁹ These investments include improving telecoms networks, artificial intelligence capabilities, e-commerce and mobile payment systems, and surveillance technology.²⁰ So far, China has signed agreements on DSR cooperation with, or provided DSR-related investment to, at least sixteen countries.²¹ The U.S. views these investments as a way for China to undermine global economic stability, influence global technology standards, and enable China to export its model of digital governance to partner countries— especially those in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region.²²

The U.S. and the Indo-Pacific

The U.S. considers the Indo-Pacific region strategically important for several reasons. First, the region accounts for 60 percent of global GDP and two-thirds of global economic growth.²³ It supports nearly three million American jobs and is the source of almost \$900 billion in direct foreign investment.²⁴ Second, U.S. alliances with Indo-Pacific countries like Australia, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea are vital for creating a foundation of security that allows regional democracies to flourish.²⁵ The U.S. has made clear that its vital interests require “a free and open Indo-Pacific, where governments can make their own sovereign choices.”²⁶ Third, U.S. alliances in the region play a pivotal role in counterbalancing the threat of China’s economic and political “coercion and aggression.”²⁷ The U.S. has pledged to “compete with the [People’s Republic of China]” to defend its interests and vision for the future and sees alliances with Indo-Pacific countries as a strategy to do so.²⁸

Threats

The U.S. considers the Digital Silk Road a national security threat because it views the initiative as a way for China to undermine global economic stability, influence global technology standards, and to export its model of digital repression to partner countries in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. believes that the DSR undermines global economic stability because Chinese dominance over the Indo-Pacific’s digital landscape hinders other players’ ability to capture local markets and compete.²⁹ For example, Chinese telecoms companies such as Huawei, ZTE, and

¹⁹ Gordon, David, and Meia Nowens. “The Digital Silk Road: Introduction.” International Institute for Strategic Studies, December 6, 2022. <https://www.iiss.org/sv/online-analysis/online-analysis/2022/12/digital-silk-road-introduction/>.

²⁰ Gordon, David, and Meia Nowens. “The Digital Silk Road: Introduction.”

²¹ Council on Foreign Relations. “Assessing China’s Digital Silk Road Initiative.” Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/china-digital-silk-road/>.

²² Lew, Jacob J., Gary Roughead, Jennifer Hillman, and David Sacks. “Front Matter.” *China’s Belt and Road: Implications for the United States*. Council on Foreign Relations, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29893.1>.

²³ The White House. “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.” February 2022.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

²⁴ The White House. “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.”

²⁵ The White House. “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.”

²⁶ The White House. “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.”

²⁷ The White House. “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.”

²⁸ The White House. “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.”

²⁹ El Kadi, Tin Hinane. “The Promise and Peril of the Digital Silk Road.” Chatham House, September 21, 2021. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/06/promise-and-peril-digital-silk-road>.

China Unicom have found success by “aggressively penetrating new markets in the region by offering [5G technology] at cheaper rates than Western competitors.”³⁰ This dominance, combined with the support of the Chinese government, has enabled Huawei and ZTE to corner 29 and 11 percent of total global 5G revenues, respectively.³¹ The U.S. also believes that the DSR undermines global economic stability because the initiative increases the likelihood that debt crises will materialize by funding projects in heavily indebted countries. This practice, labeled by critics as ‘debt-trap diplomacy’, is a geopolitical strategy that traps countries in debt that could allow China undue influence over their political, economic, and social institutions.

The U.S. also believes that the DSR influences critical global technology standards because the initiative calls for China to take an active role in setting international technology standards.³² Technology standards are important in today’s interconnected world because they allow products from different companies and countries to work together.³³ China has repeatedly called upon DSR partner countries in the Indo-Pacific to align their technology standards with China’s and has made clear efforts to influence international regulatory bodies in order to achieve this goal.³⁴ For instance, the United Nations’ International Telecommunication Union recently approved three new technical standards for sixth-generation (6G) mobile technology directly developed by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), a government-controlled institution, and China Telecom, a state-owned firm.³⁵ The U.S. believes that China’s control and influence over international standards setting is dangerous because it enables the country to wield greater influence over the Indo-Pacific region’s telecoms infrastructure and potentially restrict critical technologies that do not align with China’s political and economic interests.

The U.S. also believes that the DSR enables China to export its model of repressive digital governance to partner countries in the region. In Thailand, home to the world’s largest Chinese diaspora, agreements with China bolstered internet controls after the country’s 2014 coup.³⁶ In Nepal, there are concerns that security and intelligence-sharing agreements as well as surveillance capabilities are being used to surveil exiled Tibetans.³⁷ By exporting its model of digital governance to DSR partner countries in the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. believes that China is exporting a model of authoritarian governance that is at odds with international human rights and freedoms principles. China’s potential to spread and enable authoritarianism abroad is why it is

³⁰ Patil, Sameer, and Prithvi Gupta. “The Digital Silk Road in the Indo-Pacific: Mapping China’s Vision for Global Tech Expansion.” Observer Research Foundation, January 3, 2024. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-digital-silk-road-in-the-indo-pacific-mapping-china-s-vision-for-global-tech-expansion>.

³¹ Fletcher, Bevin. “Huawei still Dominates Telecom Equipment Market.” Fierce Network, December 16, 2021. <https://www.fierce-network.com/wireless/huawei-still-dominates-telecom-equipment-market>.

³² Patil, Sameer, Prithvi Gupta. “The Digital Silk Road in the Indo-Pacific: Mapping China’s Vision for Global Tech Expansion.”

³³ Sheehan, Matt, Marjory S. Blumenthal, and Michael R. Nelson. “Three Takeaways From China’s New Standards Strategy.” Carnegie Foundation for International Peace, October 28, 2021.

³⁴ The Economist. “China is Writing the World’s Technology Rules.” The Economist, October 10, 2024. <https://www.economist.com/business/2024/10/10/china-is-writing-the-worlds-technology-rules>.

³⁵ The Economist. “China is Writing the World’s Technology Rules.”

³⁶ Yang, Lin. “China’s Digital Silk Road Exports Internet Technology, Controls.” VOA, May 28, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-s-digital-silk-road-exports-internet-technology-controls/7626266.html>.

³⁷ Yang, Lin. “China’s Digital Silk Road Exports Internet Technology, Controls.”

imperative for the U.S. to actively and urgently counter the country's growing economic, political, and social influence and control over Indo-Pacific telecoms infrastructure.

Is the U.S. Prepared to Counter these Threats?

The U.S. is not currently prepared to counter the threats posed by China's Digital Silk Road. However, this is due more to U.S. inaction than to increasing Chinese aggression. The U.S. identified interest in promoting connectivity and trade in Asia long ago but never met the region's needs.³⁸ The U.S. has not joined regional trade and investment agreements that would advance U.S. economic ties to Asia.³⁹ The U.S. has also reduced advanced technologies research and development spending in the region, creating a vacuum that China has enthusiastically filled.⁴⁰ This inaction can be partially explained by domestic political opposition from both parties, concerns about job losses from increased competition, and a perception that such agreements could disadvantage American workers. However, while efforts have been made to narrow the gap between the U.S. and China, such as President Donald Trump's BUILD Act and President Joe Biden's Build Back Better World Initiative launched in collaboration with the G7, these efforts come nowhere close to providing the amount of money and support to partner countries that China's DSR does. More work needs to be done, and additional funding needs to be committed— and fast.⁴¹

Policy Recommendations

Although the U.S. is falling behind in its battle with China over the control and ownership of the Indo-Pacific's digital domain, there is still time for the U.S. to adopt policies that could change the course of the conflict. First, the U.S. should improve its competitiveness in the region by investing heavily in the regional development of next-generation technologies such as telecommunications networks, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. The U.S. could do this by investing in local universities and research institutions; promoting basic science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education at all levels; and championing private-sector innovation.

Second, the U.S. should strengthen its response to the DSR by working with allies to create an alternative to the BRI that benefits both the Indo-Pacific and the West. The U.S. could do this by working with allies and partners to develop a comprehensive approach to digital governance; create an Asian alliance for cyber-security and artificial intelligence; and lead a global effort to simplify the World Bank's often-lengthy project approval process so that it can be a better alternative to the DSR.

³⁸ Lew, Jacob J., Gary Roughead, Jennifer Hillman, David Sacks. "China's Belt and Road: Implications for the United States."

³⁹ Lew, Jacob J., Gary Roughead, Jennifer Hillman, David Sacks. "China's Belt and Road: Implications for the United States."

⁴⁰ Lew, Jacob J., Gary Roughead, Jennifer Hillman, David Sacks. "China's Belt and Road: Implications for the United States."

⁴¹ Lew, Jacob J., Gary Roughead, Jennifer Hillman, David Sacks. "China's Belt and Road: Implications for the United States."

Third, the U.S. should lead a media campaign in the Indo-Pacific that sheds light on the danger of China's dominance over the ownership and control of telecoms infrastructure. The U.S. could do this by creating a regional advertising campaign; promoting cybersecurity awareness education at all levels; and partnering with local governments.

Conclusion

China's growing ownership and control of telecommunications infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific and the economic, political, and social power that comes with it pose a serious and urgent threat to U.S. national security. The U.S. must take this threat seriously and implement policies that improve its competitiveness in the Indo-Pacific, strengthen its response to the DSR, and shed light on the danger of Chinese control and ownership of telecoms infrastructure. Failure to act decisively and with urgency will not only jeopardize U.S. influence in the Indo-Pacific but will also undermine global economic stability, influence global technology standards, and enable China to export its model of digital governance to partner countries. Ultimately, securing the region's digital domain is not just a matter of economic competition—it is a strategic imperative that will define the balance of power in the 21st century.

The Influence of American Imperialism on Iran-Israel Relations

Clyde D'Souza

Introduction

Before the United States had finished settling its own mainland, it had begun expanding its sphere of influence to surrounding foreign nations — this behavior was often instigated by the potential for economic and political gain. Before states such as Utah and Oklahoma had entered the Union, American settlers on the island of Hawaii had overthrown the reigning monarch in an attempt to consolidate economic ties. A few years later the United States would annex the already-autonomous territory of Hawaii for its own under President William McKinley. In exerting political authority over a foreign country in pursuit of its economic goals, America engaged in a system that has become known as Imperialism. This practice, in which one political entity expands its political, economic, military, or cultural influence over another, has become an intentional and unintentional hallmark of American foreign policy since the country's founding.⁴²

The Present State of Iran-Israel Relations

After Hamas' October 7th terrorist attack on Israel, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) was mobilized by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to invade the Gaza Strip in order to neutralize the threat and free hostages taken by the terrorists.⁴³ Gaza's coast was blockaded, preventing food, water and aid from reaching civilian areas, and a humanitarian crisis emerged. As Palestinian civilians tried to flee through the Rafah border crossing into Egypt, IDF forces led the 'Rafah Offensive' in an attempt to capture fleeing Hamas gunmen. Civilians were often caught in the crossfire, however, and the Palestinian civilian death toll mounted while Hamas was simultaneously weakened. Since the war's beginning in late 2023, Hezbollah, an Islamist paramilitary group based in Southern Lebanon, has traded fire with Israel in order to support Hamas and induce a ceasefire in Gaza.⁴⁴ The two groups' Islamic origins and shared hatred of Israel have brought them together in their efforts to push back against the IDF's incursion. The conflict's spillover in Lebanon came to a head, when on September 27, 2024, Israel assassinated Hezbollah's top leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Days later, on October 1, the IDF led an incursion into Southern Lebanon in hopes of weakening the remnants of Hezbollah.

It is Hezbollah that provides the crucial link between Iran and Israel. Despite being a paramilitary organization, Hezbollah is also a well-established political party within Lebanon, and its size and capabilities are extensive. Its strength is largely due the Iranian government's political support and funding. The two have pledged allegiance to one another in part because

⁴² McCarthy, Nichole. "Imperialism." LII / Legal Information Institute, April 10, 2022.

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/imperialism>.

⁴³ Vinograd, Cassandra, and Eve Sampson. "A Timeline of Iran and Israel's Recent Attacks." *The New York Times*, October 28, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/israel-iran-conflict-history.html>.

⁴⁴ Ioanes, Ellen. "The Conflicted History of Israel, Lebanon, and Hezbollah, Explained." *Vox*, October 23, 2024. <https://www.vox.com/israel/379168/hezbollah-israel-lebanon-palestine-hamas-gaza-history-beirut>.

they share anti-Israel as well as anti-Western views.⁴⁵ Iran has provided Hezbollah with military support, sending troops from its Republican guard and helping to train Hezbollah's soldiers. In turn, Hezbollah has essentially become an Iranian proxy. It was no surprise then that in the wake of Nasrallah's death, Iran vowed revenge on Israel on October 1, 2024, before shelling civilian areas within Israel with approximately 180 ballistic missiles. In the subsequent weeks, the two nations have flirted on the brink of direct war.

While their conflict is an ocean away from the U.S., make no mistake: the vengeance that these two nations have for one another has been propagated in part due to the United States' pseudo-presence in the Middle East and the political, economic, and social influence that comes with it. American Imperialism has fueled tensions between Israel and Iran for decades and is partly the culprit of this round of escalations between the two adversaries.

Friends Before Enemies

Israel and Iran are not likely enemies. The two nations do not border one another, and Israel has typically fought with its neighboring Arab countries — Iran, a Persian country, has been historically left out of this group. In the decades leading up to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran and Israel were not just indifferent towards one another but were close regional allies. Between 1925 and 1979, the Pahlavi Dynasty ruled over Iran. As Shah of Iran, Mohammad Pahlavi ensured that Iran was one of the quickest Muslim countries to recognize Israel's sovereignty in the aftermath of its creation in 1948.⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, Israel did not waste time in initiating friendly relations with Iran.

Against a backdrop of violence with its Arab neighbors, Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, put forth the Periphery Doctrine in the early 1950s. This doctrine held that Israel should form close geopolitical alliances with the non-Arab states that lay on the boundaries of the Middle East. To Israel, there was no better candidate to form an alliance with than Iran. In the aftermath of the Six-Day War — a conflict in 1967 waged between Israel and a group of its Arab neighbors, including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria — Iran helped Israel to meet its demand for oil. The alliance also seeped into military relations, with a notable example being Project Flower, a covert collaboration in which the two nations' militaries attempted to further the development of surface-to-surface missile systems.⁴⁷ The significance of this is twofold: not only did Iran and Israel work jointly to advance military technology, but they did so while trying to hide it from the West, — specifically the U.S — demonstrating the strength of their relationship. Sadly, this cooperation would not be a hallmark of Iran's next administration.

The Third Leg of the Love Triangle: The United States

So, what went wrong between Iran and Israel? Until 1979, Iran's relationship with Israel was friendly, and the Shah supported the alliance. However, in the later months of 1978 and

⁴⁵ Robinson, Kali. "What Is Hezbollah?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 4, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>.

⁴⁶ Kenyon, Peter. "How Iran and Israel Became Archenemies." *NPR*, April 12, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/12/1244281886/iran-israel-relations-enemies-gaza-war>.

⁴⁷ Sciolino, Elaine. "Documents Detail Israeli Missile Deal with the Shah." *The New York Times*, April 1, 1986.

opening of 1979, a popular revolution known as the Islamic Revolution led to the end of the Pahlavi dynasty. With this came the cessation of Iran-Israel ties.

During the period of positive Iran-Israel relations, the Shah maintained close ties with the West. In this respect, it is possible to see American Imperialist strategy at play. Attempting to replicate the explosive growth that the West had undergone during industrialization, the Shah ensured a distinctly Western air to the dynamics of the Iranian economy and politics. He was quick to accept technological and financial assistance from multiple American administrations and the pattern continued into the 1960s with the support of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. The country's industrialization culminated in the White Revolution which was marked by a period of widespread modernization and reform. Significantly, these improvements bore trademarks of the West: amongst other advancements, women received the right to vote, economic growth coincided with rapid industrialization, and urbanization was coupled with increasing literacy rates.⁴⁸ Despite the progress, America's imperialist motivation for supporting Iran's White Revolution cannot be overlooked. During this period, the West was in the midst of the Cold War and America was practicing a policy of "containment" in an attempt to counteract the spread of Communism by the Soviet Union. With Iran straddling the southern border of the Soviet Union at the time, maintaining strong ties with Iran meant that American forces would have another post to fence in the U.S.S.R.⁴⁹

However, America's involvement in Iran went further than trade or diplomatic measures. In 1953, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped to lead a coup that deposed the sitting elected Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadeq, who they believed had communist tendencies.⁵⁰ After the coup led to the return of the Western-friendly Shah, the Shah gave American companies control of 40 percent of Iran's oil fields.⁵¹ It was at this critical juncture that American forces directly swayed the political entity governing Iran out of self-interest. While the Shah was happy to be restored to power, the leaders of the Islamic Revolution, still over two decades away, would resent this Western involvement and remember America's interference in its national politics. Their view of the Shah would forever be tinted as they viewed him as a pawn of the West.

A Bad Breakup

The fact that the Shah was a close favorite of American forces was in no small part due to the economic and political prospects that he represented. While the Shah's White Revolution had produced many Western improvements throughout Iran, certain Western virtues — namely

⁴⁸ Iranian Knowledge. "The White Revolution: Modernization under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi from 1963 - 1979." *Iranian Knowledge*, April 6, 2023. <https://iranianknowledge.com/2023/04/the-white-revolution-modernization-under-mohammad-reza-pahlavi-from-1963-1979/>.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State. "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXII, Iran - Office of the Historian." History.state.gov., November 1999. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v22/summary>.

⁵⁰ Maloney, Suzanne. "1979: Iran and America." *Brookings*, January 24, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/1979-iran-and-america/>.

⁵¹ History.com Editors. "CIA-Assisted Coup Overthrows Government of Iran." *HISTORY*. A&E Television Networks., November 13, 2009. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/cia-assisted-coup-overthrows-government-of-iran>.

Democracy — were not supported by the Shah. For example, the Shah’s reliance on torture, censorship of the press, and persecution of his political opponents ensured that he maintained an iron-fisted and dictatorial grip over Iran. This behavior is best exemplified by the SAVAK, the Shah’s secret police responsible for arresting and terminating political dissidents amongst other functions.

The Shah’s authoritarian treatment of the masses was only the first in a long list of insults that would turn the Iranian working class against his rule. The Shah’s loyalty to the West enabled Western oil use to damage the Iranian economy, and as inflation rates rose, living conditions in Iran degraded. At the same time, the Shah’s Westernization of Iran led to a secularization of Iran. Conservative religious policies, and religious fundamentalism were replaced with liberal ideas — such as an expansion of women’s rights. These policies made him an enemy of many religious elite, and even secular intellectuals, within Iran.

Perhaps the most outspoken against the Shah’s reform was a religious leader and cleric, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. First known for his hostility toward the Shah’s White Revolution and collaboration with Israel, Khomeini was arrested in 1963 to the dismay of thousands of supporters. Despite days of riots, Khomeini was exiled and would only re-enter Iran during the Islamic revolution.

In late 1978 and early 1979, when Iran's public unrest came to a boil, riots culminated in a popular insurrection known as the Islamic Revolution of 1979. By January of 1979, the Shah and his family had escaped Iran under the guise of a “vacation,” and by the next month, Khomeini – with the widespread support of the Iranian public – had assumed power.

Crucially, the departure of the Shah and assumption of the Ayatollah meant that the Westernization and Americanization of Iran that had occurred over the past three decades was immediately under attack. Khomeini and his supporters immediately began reinstating conservative religious policies, and in many ways, Khomeini’s rule was more brutal than the Shah’s. Largely associating it with the Shah, Khomeini’s theocracy blamed the West for the liberalization and erosion of religion that had occurred during the Shah’s rule, and the new government took steps to erase traces of American influence in Iran. Khomeini’s and his supporters’ hatred of the United States was made clear during the Iran Hostage Crisis.

In October of 1979, American authorities learned that the former Shah was in need of dire medical attention that could only be provided in an American hospital. By late October, the Shah had been brought to New York City and was treated for cancer. Upset with the harboring and care of the former Shah on the part of the U.S., in early November of 1979, Iranian students raided and held over 50 Americans hostage in the U.S. embassy and would not release them for 444 days.⁵² The Iran Hostage Crisis evidenced Iran’s newfound hostility towards decades of American imperialism and drove a dagger into Iranian-American relations forever.

With American influence largely purged from Iran’s mainland, there was one large American flag remaining in the Middle East: Israel. The new Iranian government considered

⁵² Office of the Historian. “The Iranian Hostage Crisis - Short History - Department History - Office of the Historian.” State.gov. 2019. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/iraniancrises>.

Israel to be a bastion for continued American influence in the region, as a result of the close alliance between the countries, and saw Israel as both a local adversary, and a continued instance of Western imperialism. In essence, Iran's detestation for American Imperialism poisoned it with a vile hatred for Israel, a view that was corroborated by Khomeini, who referred to Israel as "Little Satan" and the United States as "Great Satan" in a speech given the day after the beginning of the Iran Hostage Crisis.⁵³

Conclusion

The current state of Iran-Israel relations cannot be seen as a product of centuries old rivalry nor a recent development. The relationship between Iran and Israel does not exist in a vacuum, but within an external environment that has largely been shaped by Western powers. Of these, the United States has played a pivotal role in cleaving a once close alliance and destabilizing the relationship between Israel and Iran.

American self-interest in the form of economic competition and geopolitical control led to an unbridled display of American imperialism within Iran. Through the Shah, successive American administrations secured ample oil and waged a middle eastern front of the Cold War, while enabling the Iranian Pahlavi dynasty to impart Western reform and industrialization to their developing country. However, by abusing his citizens and antagonizing religious and fundamentalist political dissidents, the Shah created enemies. This opposition would culminate in the Islamic Revolution, an insurrection that was at its core, a lashing out at the effects of American imperialism in Iran. It is through the lens of anti-Americanism that post-revolution Iran must be understood. Its attempts to cleanse itself of American interference have made Israel, a prime target. As a continued source of American influence in the current-day Middle East, Israel's ties with America have proven a reminder of Iran's past openness to American interference. Amongst the complex dynamics of relations in the Middle East, American imperialism must not be forgotten for the power that it holds to unite and divide.

⁵³ Levin, Daniel. "Iran, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad" *Wilson Center*.
<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/iran-hamas-and-palestinian-islamic-jihad>.

The Politics of Loneliness: Restoring Social Capital Amidst Social Impoverishment

John Haslun

In the years following the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a novel strain of disease has swept its way through the West, marked by distinct social, physical, and neurological ailments. This disease is loneliness, a word that, before 1800, did not even exist in the English language, and it is spreading at startling rates.⁵⁴ The emergence of this “loneliness epidemic” carries distinctly political ramifications, and should be a subject of immense alarm from policymakers. Not only do lonely populations put strain on mental and physical health services on account of their increased propensity for both biological and psychological illness, but they also struggle to exercise social capital— participation in civic and social institutions. The public health crisis of loneliness and its association with a decline in social capital has a startling link with our prevailing globalized modes of economic and social organization, and the decline of “third places” outside the home and family. This essay will provide an overview of the causes and current state of the loneliness epidemic in the United States, while offering policy prescriptions to combat the challenges it poses for healthy civic and social engagement.

The Loneliness Epidemic and Social Impoverishment

In the United States, independent studies have consistently found a startling increase in loneliness and isolation among American adults of all ages. One study of Californian adults resulted in a figure of 76 percent for those suffering “moderate to severe loneliness,” while a Gallup poll conducted across the U.S. found rates of stress and worry had jumped 25 percent over the last 12 years.⁵⁵ Loneliness does not discriminate; rates have increased in recent years among the old and the young and across the globe, from New Zealand to rural China to the United States.⁵⁶ Loneliness is not associated simply with negative feelings, but often manifests itself in the form of poor health. A national survey of adults over 45+ conducted by the AARP found that a respondent’s loneliness status was a close predictor of poor health.⁵⁷ Lonely individuals have been found to be more likely to be depressed, anxious, suffer from a mood disorder, or suffer from drug or alcohol abuse than their counterparts. In the United States alone, the deaths of 162,000 Americans a year have been attributed to social isolation, larger than those attributed to cancer or stroke, and the physical health hazards of loneliness are “comparable to

⁵⁴ Bound Alberti, Fay. “Loneliness Is a Modern Illness of the Body, Not Just the Mind.” *The Guardian*, November 2, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/01/loneliness-illness-body-mind-epidemic>.

⁵⁵ Jeste, Dilip V., Ellen E. Lee, and Stephanie Cacioppo. “Battling the Modern Behavioral Epidemic of Loneliness.” *JAMA Psychiatry*, March 30, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0027>.

⁵⁶ Anderson, Gretchen. “Loneliness among Older Adults: A National Survey of Adults 45+ Conducted for AARP the Magazine.” *AARP*, September, 2010. https://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/general/loneliness_2010.pdf; Cacioppo, Stephanie, Angela J. Grippo, Sarah London, Luc Goossens, and John T. Cacioppo. “Loneliness: Clinical Import and Interventions.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, March 11, 2015.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691615570616>; Jeste, Dilip V., Ellen E. Lee, and Stephanie Cacioppo. “Battling the Modern Behavioral Epidemic of Loneliness.”

⁵⁷ Anderson, Gretchen. “Loneliness among Older Adults: A National Survey of Adults 45+ Conducted for AARP the Magazine.”

smoking or obesity.”⁵⁸ In the face of clear evidence that loneliness is both a physical and mental health issue, policymakers should bear increasing attention to increasing rates of loneliness nationwide and their potential societal and political reverberations.

The causes of loneliness are varied; among the population surveyed by the AARP strong associations exist between loneliness and age, income, and marital status. In regard to factors that specifically increased the risk of loneliness, the AARP cited “an impoverished social network” as among the most crucial.⁵⁹ The distinction between an impoverished and rich social network on loneliness rates is particularly strong. The impact of social network quality on loneliness is particularly striking: 30% of religious attendees report feeling lonely, compared to 44% of those who never attend; 28% of volunteers experience loneliness, in contrast to 41% of non-volunteers; and 26% of individuals active in community organizations report loneliness, whereas this figure rises to 39% for non-participants.⁶⁰ In corroboration of the research of the AARP, similar studies on loneliness among an expanded sample of all American adults have seen it linked to “marital status,” “the frequency of contact with significant friends and family,” “the quality of significant friends/confidants,” and “the number of voluntary groups to which individuals belonged.”⁶¹

Political Causes and Manifestations of Social Impoverishment

The “impoverishing” of vibrant and voluntary social networks is itself a distinct result of changes in the political sphere, particularly those resulting from the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s, a socio-economic model that emphasizes a revival of free-market capitalism, the power of individual choice, and increased global economic integration. In 2000, political theorist Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone*, a seminal work that detailed the impoverishment of American social networks, which he called “social capital,” after the late 1960s. Putnam’s work found that this collapse in social capital had contributed to a disturbing decline in social engagement, trust in government, and participation in civic institutions.⁶² Putnam regards labor unions, once a symbol of working class social organization, as a network hit particularly hard by the post-1960s decline in social capital.⁶³ Formerly unionized white males in the industrial heartland, increasingly unhealthy and economically disadvantaged, are also increasingly lonely; this

⁵⁸ Jeste, Dilip V., Ellen E. Lee, and Stephanie Cacioppo. “Battling the Modern Behavioral Epidemic of Loneliness.”

⁵⁹ Anderson, Gretchen. “Loneliness among Older Adults: A National Survey of Adults 45+ Conducted for AARP the Magazine.”

⁶⁰ Anderson, Gretchen. “Loneliness among Older Adults: A National Survey of Adults 45+ Conducted for AARP the Magazine.”

⁶¹ Cacioppo, Stephanie, Angela J. Grippo, Sarah London, Luc Goossens, and John T. Cacioppo. “Loneliness: Clinical Import and Interventions.”

⁶² Jain, Sachin H. “Robert Putnam Practically Discovered Social Isolation: Here’s Why He Says It’s Time to ‘Join or Die.’” *Forbes*, August 1, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sachinjain/2024/07/21/robert-putnam-practically-discovered-social-isolation-heres-why-he-says-its-time-to-join-or-die/>.

⁶³ Delaney, Kevin J. “Robert Putnam on How to Reduce Workplace Loneliness and Polarization.” *Time*, August 25, 2024. time.com/chart/7014547/robert-putnam-loneliness-and-polarization/.

isolation has been effectively channeled into support for U.S. President Donald Trump’s populist nationalism, much of which specifically targets globalization and its aftereffects.⁶⁴

The political ramifications of the loneliness epidemic, particularly among those who once enjoyed the benefits of robust social networks, are clear. Middle-aged white Americans without a bachelor’s degree, the epitome of the “white working class” and the central demographic behind the rise of Trump, have seen a decline in their standard of living and a sharp downturn in life expectancy, the latter driven almost entirely by an increase of “deaths of despair.”⁶⁵ These deaths of despair include drug overdoses, suicides, and liver disease and cirrhosis from alcohol overconsumption, often the result of mental afflictions with which isolation is closely associated.⁶⁶ The white working class has also suffered a decrease in marriage rates and a decrease in church attendance, both striking predictors of loneliness.⁶⁷ It is no surprise that this demographic has additionally seen a sharp increase in anxiety over social status and mistrust of the government, factors which have contributed to a political radicalism and the emergence of a reactionary pattern of “white rage” against leading institutions.⁶⁸ A compassionate view posits that this rage is the natural result of severe, sustained, sudden isolation from vital community engagement.

As loneliness has increased and social networks that were once healthy outlets have become impoverished, an increasing number of those in isolation have pursued both harm to themselves and others. Self-harm has particularly struck the white working class, whose economic and social decline has seen it strike their communities in record numbers.⁶⁹ An uptick in interpersonal harm remains a clear pattern as well. David Pekoske, the head of the Transportation Safety Administration, has linked “a decaying sense of social civility” to an increase in incredulous outbursts on passenger planes, while United States Senators have in their own right noted an “increasing coarseness to our public dialogue and an increase in political violence.”⁷⁰ Research has found that loneliness contributes to distrust, hostility, and a cynical and unempathetic view of the actions of others.⁷¹ Loneliness and social isolation have even been

⁶⁴ Hochschild, Arlie Russell. “How the White Working Class Is Being Destroyed.” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/books/review/deaths-of-despair-and-the-future-of-capitalism-anne-case-angus-deaton.html>.

⁶⁵ Hochschild, Arlie Russell. “How the White Working Class Is Being Destroyed.”

⁶⁶ Hochschild, Arlie Russell. “How the White Working Class Is Being Destroyed.”

⁶⁷ Durongkaveroj, Wannaphong. “Book Review: Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism by Anne Case and Angus Deaton.” *LSE Review of Books*, August 12, 2021. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2021/08/12/book-review-deaths-of-despair-and-the-future-of-capitalism-by-anne-case-and-angus-deaton/>.

⁶⁸ Durongkaveroj, Wannaphong. “Book Review: Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism by Anne Case and Angus Deaton.”

⁶⁹ Murphy, Chris. “America’s Epidemic of Loneliness.” *Substack*, June 23, 2023.

<https://www.chrismurphyct.com/p/americas-epidemic-of-loneliness>.

⁷⁰ Murphy, Chris. “America’s Epidemic of Loneliness.”

⁷¹ Lieberz, Jana, Simone G. Shamay-Tsoory, Nira Saporta, Timo Esser, Ekaterina Kuskova, Birgit Stoffel-Wagner, René Hurlmann, and Dirk Scheele. “Loneliness and the Social Brain: How Perceived Social Isolation Impairs Human Interactions.” *Advanced Science*, September 20, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1002/advs.202102076>; Reynolds, Emily. “Lonely People Are Less Likely to Feel Moved by Displays of Kindness.” *British Psychological Society*, August 18, 2022. <https://www.bps.org.uk/research-digest/lonely-people-are-less-likely-feel-moved-displays-kindness>.

linked to targeted violence, terrorism, and the adoption of a frame of mind that believes either of the two is necessary to accomplish political goals.⁷²

Treating the Loneliness Epidemic

In light of the influence of loneliness on political violence, aggression, mistrust, the decline of critical social and economic communities, and “deaths of despair,” a comprehensive analysis on potential policy treatments is essential. One such treatment prescribes the re-emergence of “third places,” institutions of social capital outside the family or workplace like libraries, churches, local businesses, gyms, community centers, and bars.⁷³ Third places offer a myriad of benefits, contributing to documented positive outcomes in “crime, education, addiction, physical inactivity, malnutrition, and sociopolitical polarization.”⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly, the American loneliness epidemic has emerged largely in accordance with the decline in third places. From 2008 to 2015, the number of religious organizations declined by 17.60 percent, food and beverage stores 23.14 percent, and hobbyist stores 27.29 percent, all the while the number of commercial banks increased by 14.41 percent, according to data from the North American Industry Classification System.⁷⁵ Recommitting to developing third places and renewing community engagement could be central to reversing a trend of social impoverishment, a central risk factor for loneliness.

Sociologist Eric Klinenberg highlights one example of the value of third places through the lens of a particularly destructive 1995 Chicago heat wave.⁷⁶ Members of the Eastwood neighborhood were 10 times as likely to die in the heat wave as those in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood, a discrepancy he compellingly attributes to the presence of strong third places in the latter neighborhood.⁷⁷ In Auburn Gresham, community members reacted to the disaster by rallying behind community centers and community resources to provide life-saving assistance. Third places strengthened their disaster response; residents knew each other, and trusted each other, precisely because they had engaged at “dinners, parks, barbershops, and grocery stores... clubs and church groups.”⁷⁸ These were not differences of culture, Klinenberg notes, or even of class or economic standing, but differences in factors like “the density of shops” and “the

⁷² Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships. “Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships Mitigating Negative Impacts of Social Isolation to Prevent Violence: Information for Parents and Educators of School-Aged Children.” *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*, September 13, 2022.

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/mitigating_social_isolation_in_youth.pdf.

⁷³ Finlay, Jessica, Michael Esposito, Min Hee Kim, Iris Gomez-Lopez, and Philippa Clarke. “Closure of ‘Third Places’? Exploring Potential Consequences for Collective Health and Wellbeing.” *Health & Place*, 2019.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2019.102225>.

⁷⁴ Klinenberg, Eric. “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.” *New York: Broadway Books*, 2018.

⁷⁵ Finlay, Jessica, Michael Esposito, Min Hee Kim, Iris Gomez-Lopez, and Philippa Clarke. “Closure of ‘Third Places’? Exploring Potential Consequences for Collective Health and Wellbeing.”

⁷⁶ Klinenberg, Eric. “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.”

⁷⁷ Klinenberg, Eric. “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.”

⁷⁸ Klinenberg, Eric. “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.”

vacancy rate among streets”— that is to say, social capital.⁷⁹ Policymakers can take steps to make communities safer and more welcoming simply through the creation and advertisement of third places; in Philadelphia, a scheme for community residents to repair and revitalize abandoned properties, creating third places in their stead, contributed to a 39 percent reduction in gun violence.⁸⁰ In the face of an epidemic of loneliness, it is this type of prosocial behavior which can create a conducive environment for collective healing.

Another step policymakers can take to build social capital and community resilience in times of adversity is to actively build cooperative relationships between federal and local government institutions, private stakeholders, and third places. “Multi-sector partnerships between government, business, and community organizations” remain a central pillar of community resilience, notes public health academic Alonzo Plough.⁸¹ A campaign of a local community center to “strengthen neighborhood social ties,” a “volunteer effort to visit elderly residents” conducted by a business, and “improved methods of communication” pursued by a public authority, can and should be conducted in a collaborative manner.⁸² Not only do these activities build social capital, but they also, when done in tandem, “improve dialogue and trust with public agencies,” a notably important value in the wake of concerning data surrounding marginalized communities’ trust in the federal government. As of 2019, “white non-Hispanics, black non-Hispanics, and Hispanics indicate[d] an all-time low level of distrust in government,” and as an extension of that government, public agencies.⁸³ Teams like the Los Angeles County Community Disaster Resilience project, which brought together the federal CDC and over fifteen community-based organizations, emergency networks, and foundations, help take clear and actionable steps towards rebuilding social capital and community resilience through public-private partnerships.⁸⁴

The Church as a ‘Third Place’

Policymakers may also wish to look towards the spiritual. The church is among the most important third places in combating loneliness, and one of historical relevance to many of the communities suffering “deaths of despair” and political polarization. Compelling evidence exists that spirituality and religious connection is a significant barrier to social isolation and loneliness. Wisdom, of which spirituality is a central pillar under the six-point definition of the San Diego

⁷⁹ Klinenberg, Eric. “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.”

⁸⁰ Klinenberg, Eric. “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life.”

⁸¹ Plough, Alonzo, Jonathan E. Fielding, Anita Chandra, Malcolm Williams, David Eisenman, Kenneth B. Wells, Grace Y. Law, Stella Fogleman, and Aizita Magaña. “Building Community Disaster Resilience: Perspectives from a Large Urban County Department of Public Health.” *American Journal of Public Health*, June 5, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301268>.

⁸² Plough, Alonzo, Jonathan E. Fielding, Anita Chandra, Malcolm Williams, David Eisenman, Kenneth B. Wells, Grace Y. Law, Stella Fogleman, and Aizita Magaña. “Building Community Disaster Resilience: Perspectives from a Large Urban County Department of Public Health.”

⁸³ Gomez, David B. “The Influence of Race in Americans’ Trust of Government.” *Compassjournal.org*, October 27, 2023. <https://compassjournal.org/the-influence-of-race-in-americans-trust-of-government/>.

⁸⁴ Plough, Alonzo, Jonathan E. Fielding, Anita Chandra, Malcolm Williams, David Eisenman, Kenneth B. Wells, Grace Y. Law, Stella Fogleman, and Aizita Magaña. “Building Community Disaster Resilience: Perspectives from a Large Urban County Department of Public Health.”

Wisdom (SD-WISE) scale, is the largest preventative factor for loneliness.⁸⁵ In the past 25 years, 40 million Americans have stopped going to church, and now, for the first time in the nation's history, a majority of Americans no longer attend one at all.⁸⁶ These statistics are unsettling when placed in tandem with loneliness and civic engagement; it is clear from available data that Americans who are part of a church are more likely to volunteer in their community and more likely to describe their community and social life in a positive manner. Religious institutions, despite long-standing periods of controversy, have proven themselves to be a boon to community spirit and an essential salve against loneliness.

If loneliness is a metaphysical crisis as well as a political one, then it falls to policymakers to consider the effect that the decline of such a vital civic institution as the church has had on American public life. Churches not only provide spiritual relief in difficult times, but they also provide extra third places through ministries and community outreach programs, many of which are targeted towards populations who are at particular risk of social isolation, such as seniors. In Gainesville, Florida, religious communities bucked the nationwide trend of a decline in church attendance by supplementing day-to-day worship with a wide array of helpful programs and community outreach.⁸⁷ North Gainesville Baptist Church created a novel program to support single mothers at risk of social isolation and coupled it with domestic violence support initiatives, while Temple Shir Shalom, a smaller Jewish congregation, allied with local Christian churches to run the Bread of the Mighty food bank. Religious communities have a symbiotic relationship with the third places that they create; "if fewer people are showing up to places of worship, fewer people are giving."⁸⁸ Alternatively, popular organizations within churches have attracted young people in Gainesville to attend religious service itself; instead of coming into the church and proceeding to serve others, they serve others first through the church.

Conclusion

Regardless of the methods undertaken to solve it, there is no doubt that an epidemic of loneliness exists in the United States, an epidemic that is driving life expectancies down, throwing historic communities into disarray, and fraying the social bonds that unite us and keep us from polarization, mistrust, and radicalization. Processes of globalization and the rise of the neoliberal consensus have driven out small businesses and manufacturing jobs from many of America's most prosperous industrial areas, contributing to a hollowing out of civic institutions and local economic engagement. To embark on a life-saving policy initiative to address the epidemic of loneliness in the United States, third places, a bedrock of social capital and a bulwark against isolation, must see a proper revival. From the church to the labor union to the bookstore to the mom-and-pop shop two blocks down the road, American social institutions are

⁸⁵ Lee, Ellen E., Colin Depp, Barton W. Palmer, Danielle Glorioso, Rebecca Daly, Jinyuan Liu, Xin M. Tu, et al. "High Prevalence and Adverse Health Effects of Loneliness in Community-Dwelling Adults across the Lifespan: Role of Wisdom as a Protective Factor." *International Psychogeriatrics*, December 18, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610218002120>.

⁸⁶ Thompson, Derek. "The True Cost of the Churchgoing Bust." *The Atlantic*, April 3, 2024. <https://tinyurl.com/us-churchgoing>

⁸⁷ Winn, Alex. "Despite a National Decline in Attendance and Membership, Gainesville Religious Organizations Report Stability, Even Growth." *WUFT*, April 15, 2024. <https://tinyurl.com/gainesville-organizations>

⁸⁸ Winn, Alex. "Despite a National Decline in Attendance and Membership, Gainesville Religious Organizations Report Stability, Even Growth."

declining and are in need of renewal. Without meaningful revitalization, the country risks slipping further into isolation and metaphysical malaise, while our institutions become fragile to the point of collapse.

It Isn't Very Funny: How Humor Fuels Political Polarization

Michael Iacovacci

Introduction

Finding a comedian who doesn't joke about politics is like finding a needle in a haystack. Comedy and politics are so intertwined that a majority of the most popular comedic outlets in America regularly feature political humor --The Daily Show, Saturday Night Live, South Park, and American Dad -- just to name a few. This connection raises questions about the fundamental role of humor in politics. What functions does it serve, and what are some unintended consequences of its ubiquity? Insights into the psychological nature of humor and its interaction with contemporary politics reveal that humor may serve as both a unifying and dividing force -- bringing people who already agree with each other closer together and those who disagree further apart. The goal of this paper is to identify the polarizing components of humor, then analyze their role in contemporary American politics.

Understanding Humor

Humor is a universally intuitive concept yet almost impossible to define. There is not yet one objective definition of what humor is, but various reputable theories have been proposed that provide ample insight into its nature. In 2010, psychologists Peter McGraw and Caleb Warren published their paper *Benign Violations: Making Immoral Behavior Funny*, which proposed that comedy is born out of situations that are both a violation of a norm/expectation and, at the same time, benign, as in non-threatening.⁸⁹ This theory is especially helpful for explaining how different people can have entirely different reactions to the same joke. What one considers to be a violation depends on their expectations, developed within their particular environment and culture. Similarly, what one considers benign depends on their own perception, also shaped by their unique environment. McGraw and Warren identified three specific mechanisms that affect the benignity of a violation: Commitment to the violated norm, distance from the violated norm, and alternative interpretations of the violation that make it non-threatening. There is enough evidence to suggest that benign violation theory is a good approximation of what humor is, (even if it isn't airtight) and is incredibly useful to explain many social phenomena resulting from humor.

Key Functions of Humor in Politics

The oldest surviving explicitly political comedy are the satires of Aristophanes, an ancient Athenian playwright and comedian, whose work took the form of caricatures of politicians and political systems.⁹⁰ This exemplifies the most straightforward function of comedy in politics: to make fun of what one opposes. The fundamental difference between this and serious criticism is its benignity. An itemized list of a politician's evildoings is cause for anger,

⁸⁹ McGraw, Peter, and Caleb Warren. "Benign Violations: Making Immoral Behavior Funny." *Psychological Science*, August 2010. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41062345>

⁹⁰ Platnauer, M. and Taplin, . Oliver. "Aristophanes." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 26, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristophanes>.

but an over-the-top caricature of said politician in an absurd situation is instead cause for laughter. Both defy social expectations, but one is concerning and one is benign. Unlike straightforward criticism, poking fun is not meant to rouse negative emotions. Instead, it intends to cause amusement, theoretically making it easier to engage with while highlighting the same violation. However, as previously established, benignity is not an inherent quality of any form of humor but rather dependent on perspective. If a violation intended as benign isn't interpreted as such, it is threatening. Cleon, a frequent target of Aristophanes' political satire, did not take kindly to the playwright's jokes, even going so far as to sue Aristophanes for slander.⁹¹ This was not due to a lack of humor on Cleon's part but rather because his close association with the violated norm—his own actions—made the satire feel far more threatening to him than to others. This is the case for any type of poking fun -- those who are or are attached to the subject of the ridicule will inherently find it maligned, while those making the jokes only see them as amusing.

These effects are worsened when the butt of the joke doesn't realize there's a violation at all. Due to differing norms and expectations between cultures, violations are heavily influenced by cultural background. Oftentimes, people will participate in behavior which is normal to them, but ridiculous to another -- resulting in them being laughed at. For example, many native English speakers will poke fun at the accents of foreigners as they break the grammatical and phonetic norms of English.⁹² To the ones speaking, it is just how they talk. Situations such as these give rise to a counterintuitive phenomenon: as disparate cultures are exposed to each other, humor may push them further apart rather than closer together. When these cultures come into contact, their conflicting norms often register as benign violations, prompting them to laugh at each other. When one's cultural norms are laughed at, they may become threatened and offended. This does not mean that when two cultures interact they will necessarily push each other away, as there are other mechanisms by which cultures can grow tolerant of one another. It is generally believed that sustained, meaningful contact between cultural groups reduces intergroup prejudice, as stated by the widely accredited contact hypothesis.⁹³ In the modern day however, the internet exposes people to different groups without requiring meaningful contact between them, making it far easier for people to give in to their impulses to laugh at those different from them.

The final form of humor that will be discussed differs in one key way from the previous: amount of information. Every joke requires some level of background knowledge to understand. "Why did the chicken cross the road?" requires knowledge of what a chicken and a road is. Consequently, there exists humor that requires such niche background knowledge that the vast majority of people simply "wouldn't get it." These are called "inside jokes," usually invoked by groups of friends who share unique experiences. Most political comedy is designed to require the least amount of background knowledge possible to maximize appeal -- to do otherwise would be counterintuitive. However, political factions sometimes develop inside jokes of their own. Particularly, those committed to a political party's information channels, like news media or talk shows, develop shared experiences that lead to the formation of inside jokes. For example, a misinterpreted quote from former presidential candidate Al Gore spread across right-wing media

⁹¹ Platnauer, Maurice. "Aristophanes."

⁹² Yim, Celeste. 2017. "Why People Still Laugh at Asian Accents: An Investigation." *VICE*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/why-people-still-laugh-at-asian-accents-an-investigation/>.

⁹³ Stephan, Walter G. "The Contact Hypothesis in Intergroup Relations." In *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, edited by Clyde Hendrick, 13–40. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1987.

channels and led to people mockingly repeating the phrase “Al Gore invented the internet,” that is absurd and void of context.⁹⁴ Esoteric humor such as this serves a unique purpose: to strengthen the participant’s bond to the political party or ideology. A 2008 study by anthropologists Thomas Flamson and Clark Barret showed that jokes which took more prerequisite knowledge to understand were on average more enjoyable.⁹⁵ This led them to conclude that being part of an in-joke is more rewarding because it makes people feel strong social belonging, by signaling that they have the same knowledge as the rest of the group (Flamson and Clark dub this the “Encryption Theory of Humor.”) Thus, inside jokes almost act as a reward for those heavily involved with a political party’s culture. Laughing at such a joke signals to others that they are one of them. As a result, esoteric humor is inherently divisive in that it separates those who know from those that don’t. If someone who isn’t “in the know” encounters the joke, it will likely be perplexing, and not particularly funny. The people in the in-group don’t necessarily want those who don’t understand to be part of the joke, as they derive enjoyment from the exclusivity. As a result, the inside joke strengthens the bonds of those committed to their coalition but pushes those who are not away.

Humor in Contemporary American Politics

In contemporary American conservative culture, there is a perception that liberals are overly sensitive to comedy, interpreting benign jokes as offensive. Conservative comedians will often poke fun at marginalized groups, which many on the left find inherently maligned. For example, conservatives will crack jokes about pronouns and gender transitions, such as Rosanne Barr’s infamous “My pronouns are kiss my ass!” Those who make these jokes often view the listing of pronouns as a violation of their epistemic norms and have few to no connections to trans communities. They are both distant and uncommitted to the violated norm -- as a result, they find these jokes to be benign. However, those committed to the norm being ridiculed often feel threatened by the implied threat to transgender people. The right interprets the offense taken as “soft,” or “too politically correct.” However, this isn’t necessarily because liberals are more easily offended than conservatives, but rather what qualifies as offensive depends on one’s unique cultural standpoint. In this same manner, many liberals will make jokes at the expense of predominantly conservative demographics, such as the running joke in online circles associating the song “Sweet Home Alabama” with incest (invoking rural “hillbilly” stereotypes). This often is to the dismay of the targeted group, regardless of political affiliation. The reason conservatives may appear less prone to offense is most likely due to less reasons to feel threatened. Jokes at the expense of transgender people have the context of legitimate pushes by conservative politicians to restrict transgender rights, however no serious democratic politician has suggested doing anything harmful to Evangelicals, for example. Whatever the case may be, the characterization of the “snowflake liberal” creates a fundamental divide between the nature of liberals and conservatives, even though their mechanisms for interpreting jokes are the same. Those that

⁹⁴ Kessler, Glenn. "A Cautionary Tale for Politicians: Al Gore and the 'Invention' of the Internet." *The Washington Post*, November 4, 2013. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2013/11/04/a-cautionary-tale-for-politicians-al-gore-and-the-invention-of-the-internet/>.

⁹⁵ Flamson, Thomas, and Clark Barrett. 2008. “The Encryption Theory of Humor: A Knowledge Based Mechanism of Honest Signaling.” *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, December, 2008.

believe this characterization think that liberals are simply incapable of laughing with them, thus severing a vital form of human connection.

On the other hand, liberals are often criticized by the right for being snobbish urban elites, a perception bolstered by their general comedic culture. The Kamala Harris campaign in particular made heavy use of esoteric humor, both in online circles and in person. A video posted by a French fashion influencer showcased a Harris NYC campaign event, highlighting several oddities: a rotating graphic reading “abortion rights are hot,” a couch labeled “property of J.D. Vance,” the “hall of hotties,” showcasing various prominent democratic figures, which opposed the “wall of weirdos,” featuring allies of the Trump campaign.⁹⁶ Many of the jokes and references present in the video are absurd to those not engrossed in niche online liberal circles. For instance, the association between J.D. Vance and couches comes from a single tweet claiming that Vance admitted to having intercourse with a couch in his memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, which, of course, is not true.⁹⁷ However, this did not stop prominent democrats from participating in the inside joke, including vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz, who referenced it at the Democratic National Convention. Humor so niche reaching the highest echelons of the party serves its purpose in terms of bringing its members closer together, but such amplification also leads millions to the “I don’t get it” response. This NYC campaign event -- which contains too many references like these to explain all of them – is emblematic of just how alienating to the average person an overindulgence of this esoteric humor can be.

A key factor underpinning all the polarizing effects of humor in contemporary politics is the internet. While all the effects discussed have existed long before the internet, they have been greatly exacerbated because of it. As identified previously, the propensity to laugh at another culture’s norms is worsened by the exposure to different cultures without requiring meaningful contact. Going back to a previous example, many of those making pronoun jokes don’t actually know a transgender person in real life (it is statistically guaranteed) but have been exposed to their existence through the internet. Due to this fact, those who poke fun do so without the typical considerations it entails. If one is poking fun at someone they see in person every day, it is a lot harder to ignore their feelings and sensibilities. The internet also explains the rise to prominence of esoteric humor -- it has never been easier to receive the same niche information as such a large group of people. The internet experience is so personally tailorable that people can choose to only consume content which aligns with their views, which they will then joke about to the utter confusion of those not plugged in to the same channels. In fact, it is arguable that an inside joke the size of a mainstream political party was unheard of before the internet, as there were no means for so many to acquire the prerequisite information.

Conclusion

Humor can exacerbate cultural tensions, alienate massive groups of people, and create harmful narratives which present similar people as diametrically opposed. It is important to

⁹⁶ Lyas (ly.as0). 2024. “America is Insane.” <https://www.tiktok.com/@ly.as0/video/7412093991077956896>

⁹⁷ Marquez, Alexandra. 2024. “Democrats Continue to Joke About False JD Vance Rumor After Years of Criticizing Trump for Spreading Misinformation.” *NBC News*.

recognize when humor is being used to these effects and attempt to curb potentially harmful comedic impulses.

The Taylor Swift Effect: Do Celebrity Endorsements Matter in Political Campaigns?

Marko Katra

On September 10, 2024, pop-superstar Taylor Swift posted an image on the social media app Instagram with a caption that read, “I will be casting my vote for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz in the 2024 [U.S.] Presidential Election. I’m voting for @kamalaharris because she fights for the rights and causes I believe need a warrior to champion them.” As of November 2024, this post has garnered 11,437,275 likes and, according to a report by CBS News, has driven over 400,000 users to the U.S. government site voter.gov, a site that offers information on U.S. voter registration and polling.⁹⁸ This situation raises the following question: Do celebrity endorsements matter in political campaigns? In short, it depends.

A Brief History

Celebrity endorsements are hardly a new phenomenon in politics – they have existed as long as the entertainment industry itself. From silent film star Al Jolson endorsing future President Warren G. Harding in the 1920s to legendary singer Frank Sinatra endorsing future President John F. Kennedy with a song that proclaimed “everyone is voting for Jack, because he’s got what all the rest lack,” politicians have always sought the support of celebrities and public figures to try and win votes and influence from their fans.⁹⁹ This most recent election cycle is no stranger to this phenomenon, with both the Democrats and Republicans taking full advantage of celebrity endorsements. Wrestler Hulk Hogan and singer Kid Rock headlined the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee in support of former President Donald Trump, while musicians Lil Jon, Pink, and Stevie Wonder all showed up to support Vice President Kamala Harris at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Celebrity endorsements have seemingly become as ubiquitous as the candidates themselves.¹⁰⁰ But does any of this fanfare actually matter?

Effective Endorsements

Dr. Megan Duncan, a communications professor at Virginia Tech, said it best when she explained that “celebrity endorsements work best on getting people who are disengaged from the political process to pay attention ... They’re most effective at getting people enthusiastic about voting for a candidate rather than talking about specific policies.”¹⁰¹ Such endorsements often target younger voters, who are usually less set in their beliefs than older Americans. Younger

⁹⁸ Mitchell, Kirsten. “Do Celebrity Endorsements Make an Impact When It Comes to Elections?” *CBS News*, September 27, 2024. <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/celebrity-endorsements-impact-on-elections/>.

⁹⁹ Desjardins, Lisa, and Zoie Lambert. “Do Celebrity Endorsements Matter? A Look at the Role of Pop Stars in Modern Politics.” *PBS*, September 15, 2024. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/do-celebrity-endorsements-matter-a-look-at-the-role-of-pop-stars-in-modern-politics>.

¹⁰⁰ Cashmore, Ellis. “Do Celebrity Endorsements Help or Hurt Politicians?” *Fair Observer*, July 20, 2024. <https://www.fairobserver.com/world-news/us-news/do-celebrity-endorsements-help-or-hurt-politicians/#>.

¹⁰¹ Virginia Tech News. “Celebrity Endorsements Expand Candidates’ Reach, Expert Explains How.” *Virginia Tech*, August 21, 2024. <https://news.vt.edu/articles/2024/08/celebrity-endorsements-presidential-election-expert.html>.

voters also tend to have less political efficacy, or the belief that their vote matters. A February 2020 study found that 19 percent of younger voters would be willing to change their preferred candidate based on a celebrity endorsement.¹⁰² Among all Americans, celebrities are most likely to motivate the opinions of those who hold weak political positions, pushing them to one side of the aisle and into the poll booths.¹⁰³

The most famous example of this effect was observed in Oprah Winfrey's endorsement of Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign. In a study by Craig Garthwaite and Timothy J. More, it was asserted that Winfrey's endorsement was likely responsible for over 1 million votes for Obama in his primary race against Hilary Clinton, as well as an increased turnout of 2.1 million voters. In addition, a survey result found that 23 percent of Democrats cited that they would be more likely to vote for Obama because of her endorsement. Not only this, but the endorsement of Obama also resulted in increased donations to his campaign, as seen below in Figure 2.

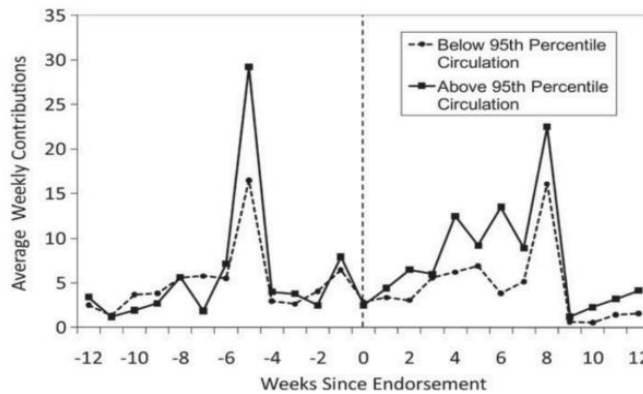


Figure 2. Average Weekly Obama Campaign Contributions by Percentile Circulation of Oprah Magazine.

To calculate these numbers, More and Garthwaite surveyed zip codes that had high subscription numbers to Oprah Magazine and found a correlation between increased votes and donations to the Obama campaign in the weeks following Winfrey's endorsement. To disprove any confounding variables, the two analyzed Obama's senate election in 2004 in which there was no endorsement from Winfrey, and found no correlation between the two, indicating that the spike in votes and donations had to have come from Winfrey's endorsements.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Longoria, Richard. "Could Taylor Swift's Endorsement of Kamala Harris Make a Difference? 19% of Young People Admit a Celebrity's OK Might Influence Them." *The Conversation*, October 26, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/could-taylor-swifts-endorsement-of-kamala-harris-make-a-difference-19-of-young-people-admit-a-celebritys-ok-might-influence-them-236284>.

¹⁰³ Santillan, Mia. "Examining the Effect of Celebrity Endorsements on Voting." *California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Undergraduate Journal of Political Science*, Spring 2021. <https://www.cpp.edu/class/political-science/participate/undergraduatejournal/vol5/5santillan.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ Garthwaite, C., and T. J. Moore. "Can Celebrity Endorsements Affect Political Outcomes? Evidence from the 2008 US Democratic Presidential Primary." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 29, no. 2 (February 10, 2012): 355–84. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jleo/ewr031>.

However, it seems that Winfrey’s influence was the exception, not the norm, with other factors such as party alignment and friends/family holding more influence.¹⁰⁵ In the years before and after Obama’s 2008 Presidential Campaign there has been little indication that celebrities can have much of a tangible effect on political campaigns at all.

Other Factors

Nevertheless, there are other indicators towards the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements, such as image and credibility. For example, author Mark Karvey, in an interview with PBS, discussed a study on singer Jessica Simpson in which it was found that “she was quite good at selling perfume [but] not good at all at selling pocket knives.”¹⁰⁶ He said that “a lot of [the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements] really has to do with image ... What makes this particular person match up with this product? That’s true for sales of products, but I also would argue it’s probably true in terms of selling an issue or selling a candidate.”¹⁰⁷ In a thesis published by California State Polytechnic, Pomona, it was found that people’s feelings towards celebrities will project onto the candidates they endorse, with positive feelings being attributed to increased support and vice versa.¹⁰⁸ As emphasized by Professor Dr Megan Duncan, “Our connection with celebrities is usually an emotional one rather than a policy one — and a celebrity can help transfer that emotion to a political campaign.”¹⁰⁹ In garnering emotional support for a campaign, politicians can gain support and votes from those who are otherwise uninterested in policy or politics but are invested in the values and beliefs in their idols. As furthered by Mark Karvey, “you have to not only know about the celebrity, but care about the celebrity in order for that celebrity to be influential.”

Ineffective Endorsements

However, not all endorsements result in positive trends for candidates. Controversial celebrities often wane support, with recent examples including rapper Kanye West’s support for Donald Trump and the support of multiple pornographic actors in the campaign of Hillary Clinton.¹¹⁰ A Quinnipiac University poll from September 2024 even revealed that Elon Musk’s endorsement of Donald Trump saw 21 percent of voters feel less enthusiastic about the Trump campaign.¹¹¹ Regardless, it remains to be seen if celebrity endorsements even matter at all. In a poll run by Gallup and USA Today from 2007, it was revealed that 60 percent of Americans don’t take celebrity endorsements into account when selecting a candidate, and that 10 percent believed that they made them less likely to vote for a candidate (in this case it was Oprah

¹⁰⁵ Santillan, Mia. “Examining the Effect of Celebrity Endorsements on Voting.”

¹⁰⁶ Desjardins, Lisa, and Zoie Lambert. “Do Celebrity Endorsements Matter? A Look at the Role of Pop Stars in Modern Politics.”

¹⁰⁷ Desjardins, Lisa, and Zoie Lambert. “Do Celebrity Endorsements Matter? A Look at the Role of Pop Stars in Modern Politics.”

¹⁰⁸ Santillan, Mia. “Examining the Effect of Celebrity Endorsements on Voting.”

¹⁰⁹ Virginia Tech News. “Celebrity Endorsements Expand Candidates’ Reach, Expert Explains How.”

¹¹⁰ Cashmore, Ellis. “Do Celebrity Endorsements Help or Hurt Politicians?”; Santillan, Mia. “Examining the Effect of Celebrity Endorsements on Voting.”

¹¹¹ Spring, Marianna. “What Impact Will Taylor Swift Really Have on the US Election?” *BBC News*, October 20, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy4d3y0kl4eo>.

Winfrey's endorsement of Barack Obama).¹¹² The ability of celebrity endorsements to rally support is often small, with effectiveness often only being found in extremely close elections, such as in the 2007 Democratic Primary between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. So, will Taylor Swift's endorsement of Kamala Harris influence the 2024 election? Some experts say yes.

The Taylor Swift Effect

Ellis Cashmore, an author and professor of sociology at Aston University, wrote in *Fair Observer* that Taylor Swift has many similarities to Oprah Winfrey, from her extremely large audience and reach to her overall impact on current pop culture.¹¹³ For example, a September 2023 post by Swift encouraging voter registrations saw 35,000 new voters registered within an hour and an increase in site traffic of 1,226%.¹¹⁴ When interviewed about Swift's potential reach, David Shultz, a political science professor at Hamline University, said "if we're talking about the Taylor Swift impact, it might be a generational impact."¹¹⁵ This generational impact is already starting to take shape, in the form of advocacy groups like "Swifties for Kamala." Although unaffiliated with either Swift or the Harris Campaign, groups like these are targeting people (in this case Taylor Swift fans) in swing states via phone call or direct message to encourage them to vote. In an interview with BBC News, Irene Kim, founder of "Swifties for Kamala," said that their group aimed to have 22 million direct vote contacts by election day and that they had already raised \$200,000 for the Harris Campaign as of mid-October.¹¹⁶ However, whether or not these factors will contribute to the results of the 2024 election is still yet to be seen.

Conclusion

It is evident that Taylor Swift, much like Oprah Winfrey, possesses a reach that few other celebrities were able to match in their endorsement power. However, too much advertising can be bad overall, and experts suggest that an oversaturation of celebrity endorsements can cause voters to tune out altogether.¹¹⁷ In an age where rallies and national conventions start to look more and more like elaborate star-studded hype shows than outlets for policy discussion, it remains to be seen how much more influence bread and circuses will have on the American people. In fact, with the rare exception of true celebrity superstars like Taylor Swift or Oprah Winfrey, there is little indication that celebrity endorsements have much of an effect on voting behavior at all. However, in an election as close as the most recent one, it seems like a risk both sides are willing to take.

¹¹² Santillan, Mia "Examining the Effect of Celebrity Endorsements on Voting."

¹¹³ Cashmore, Ellis. "Do Celebrity Endorsements Help or Hurt Politicians?"

¹¹⁴ Longoria, Richard. "Could Taylor Swift's Endorsement of Kamala Harris Make a Difference? 19% of Young People Admit a Celebrity's OK Might Influence Them."

¹¹⁵ Mitchell, Kirsten. "Do Celebrity Endorsements Make an Impact When It Comes to Elections?"

¹¹⁶ Spring, Marianna. "What Impact Will Taylor Swift Really Have on the US Election?"

¹¹⁷ Mitchell, Kirsten. "Do Celebrity Endorsements Make an Impact When It Comes to Elections?"

Gentrification in University & College Towns

Anagha Khisti

Introduction

With approximately 6,000 universities and colleges in the US, gentrification— the displacement of lower socioeconomic residents due to an influx of wealthier residents— has become an inevitable force affecting communities nationwide.¹¹⁸ Large universities such as Brown University and the University of Pennsylvania have become the driving economic force of the towns they reside in, ultimately driving out the population that can't afford the rising taxes that come with university developments and demolishing historical remnants of lower-income neighborhoods.¹¹⁹ The problem of gentrification is directly related to balancing economic progress while preserving historically significant communities. Gentrification can be further understood by analyzing its positive factors, how it weakens cultural societies, and addressing ways of solving it.

The Perceived Benefits of University Expansion

At first glance, it may seem that universities can improve the locality surrounding them. Universities provide new job opportunities for educators or labor workers and allow new or existing businesses such as local coffee shops, grocery stores, and bookstores to prosper.¹²⁰ Furthermore, universities offer additional benefits by investing within the community. For example, UPenn's investment in the city's infrastructure has contributed significantly to "public education, commercial development, and employee housing."¹²¹ Though these universities bolster the town's economy by providing new job opportunities, opening new businesses, and making investments, lower socioeconomic residents end up carrying the burden of the increased taxes that come with such economic growth.

How Gentrification Happens

Studentification- a process in which university students dominate a particular region changing its social, cultural, and environmental elements explains how university students' need for affordable housing exacerbates gentrification. As enrollment increases, students rent housing that can be converted into apartments, rentals, or luxury apartments— which become less affordable to low-income families. Nathaniel Pettite, a Brown University student, explains how

¹¹⁸ "Gentrification Definition & Meaning." *Merriam-Webster*, 17 October 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gentrification>. Accessed 27 October 2024.

¹¹⁹ Gattupalli, Ankitha. "College Towns in the United States: Revitalization or Gentrification?" *ArchDaily*, 27 September 2023 <https://www.archdaily.com/1007276/college-towns-in-the-united-states-revitalization-or-gentrification>. Accessed 27 October 2024.

¹²⁰ Gattupalli, Ankitha. "College Towns in the United States: Revitalization or Gentrification?"

¹²¹ Affordable Housing and Anchor Institutions." *Penn IUR*, https://penniur.upenn.edu/uploads/media/Affordable_Housing_Report_University_of_Pennsylvania_edited_7.10.pdf Accessed 27 October 2024.

this process unraveled at his school. He states, “We’re willing to put up with a lot and you can pack in three or four students into an apartment that was originally designed for, you know, a working-class Cape Verdean family in Fox Point [neighborhood in Providence, Rhode Island].” Studentification allowed Brown University to dominate the region in Rhode Island due to its overconsumption of housing.¹²² Consequently, students' demand for off-campus housing diverts resources from lower socioeconomic families already using them, exemplifying the negative effects of studentification and its effect on gentrification.¹²³

In addition to studentification, urban renewal contributes to gentrification. Urban renewal refers to the redevelopment of “blight,” or deteriorating communities to make room for new housing or business. Naturally, local politicians prioritize whatever industries generate the most revenue, leading to the neglect and demolishment of “blighted” neighborhoods.¹²⁴ Local businesses that capitalize on student consumption, bolster economic revenue within the town, and are consequently considered more valuable than protecting “blight communities”. For example, in Ann Arbor, Maine, old gas stations were replaced by new host restaurants, art studios, and hair salons – businesses thriving due to student consumption.¹²⁵ Residents of these neighborhoods already suffer from the rising costs of once affordable local businesses, and hardships accumulate when they’re forcibly pushed out of their homes to accommodate the often wealthier class of college students who can afford to live in and indirectly contribute to the new developments.

A tactic related to urban renewal is “exclusionary eminent domain,” a process in which the government takes property away from private property owners to use for the public, in return for some form of compensation, which contributes to gentrification and racial discrimination.¹²⁶ In cases of gentrification, exclusionary eminent domain refers to lower socio-economic neighborhoods that are targeted to accommodate wealthier developments. Historically, predominantly minority communities have been labeled as “blight” and consequently demolished.¹²⁷

How Gentrification Threatens Cultural Societies

Studentification, urban renewal, and exclusionary eminent domain allow for the demolition of the historic remnants of communities. Many college towns in Providence, Rhode Island, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania were originally of great historical significance.¹²⁸ Before Brown University, Lippitt Hill was a predominantly black neighborhood demolished by exclusionary eminent domain. Similarly, before UPenn, there was Black Bottom, a neighborhood

¹²² “The Bruno Brief: Gentrification and Housing on College Hill, Explained.” *The Brown Daily Herald*, 19 April 2022, <https://www.browndailyherald.com/article/2022/04/the-bruno-brief-gentrification-and-housing-on-college-hill-explained>. Accessed 27 October 2024.

¹²³ “studentification.pdf - Human Geography.” *Cardiff University*, https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/348510/studentification.pdf. Accessed 27 October 2024

¹²⁴ “studentification.pdf - Human Geography.”

¹²⁵ Gattupalli, Ankitha. “College Towns in the United States: Revitalization or Gentrification?”

¹²⁶ Dana, David A. n.d. “Exclusionary Eminent Domain.” *UChicago Journals*. Accessed November 9, 2024. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/656054>.

¹²⁷ “Brown Daily Herald.” The Bruno Brief: Gentrification and Housing on College Hill, Explained.

¹²⁸ Gattupalli, Ankitha. “College Towns in the United States: Revitalization or Gentrification?”

that used to be central to West Philly's Black community. In the 1950s, Brown University tore five blocks of historic homes to replace them with dormitories, and in the past 20 years, Brown has demolished over 37 buildings.¹²⁹ Likewise to Lippitt Hill, Black Bottom turned into another "university town." Around UPenn and Drexel University, basic centers that used to be central to the community such as West Philadelphia Community Center have been bought, demolished, and replaced by urban renewal plans in 1960 that fostered the development of the University City Science Center (a nonprofit dedicated to funding environmentally sustainable startups), and University City High School (a public high school), displacing thousands of black bottom residents.¹³⁰ The history of these "university" towns grows extinct as older residents get replaced, relocated, outpriced, or simply leave as the town no longer offers what it once did.

Addressing Problems in Solving Gentrification

Some proposed solutions to solving gentrification include implementing rent control measures. Rent control at first appears to be a promising approach, since it provides insurance against rent increases which prevents displacement and ensures a lower cost of living for tenants. However, economists show rent control is inefficient since it lowers the supply of housing, reduces the quality of life for tenants, and reduces economic growth in surrounding communities.¹³¹ Since rent control lowers the price of housing units, this increases the demand for them. However, there's not enough supply to meet this demand. Hence, this leads to a shortage of housing units available to the community, and only a few people who already live in the units can enjoy the benefits of rent control. Additionally, the incentive of lower rent causes tenants to stay in the housing by any means necessary even if it needs repairs, ultimately reducing their quality of life.

Moreover, lower profits gained from each housing unit limit the number of housing units that can be bought, diminishing the economic benefit of the local community. For example, all rental units in Cambridge, Massachusetts before 1969 were placed under rent control.¹³² The economic magnitude of removing these rent control policies increased property values by \$2.0 billion.¹³³ The removal of rent control generated high revenue because it alleviated the direct and indirect effects of rent control on the surrounding community.¹³⁴ Hence, solving gentrification is much more complex than it initially seems.

¹²⁹ "Brown Daily Herald." The Bruno Brief: Gentrification and Housing on College Hill, Explained.; "Opinion/Buonanno: Brown's demolition fight shows its arrogance." 2021. *The Providence Journal*. <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/opinion/2021/10/12/opinion-buonanno-brown-universitys-demolition-neighborhood-shows-its-arrogance/5905669001/>.

¹³⁰ "Science Center." n.d. *Science Center*. Accessed December 2, 2024. <https://sciencecenter.org/>; "University City High School (Philadelphia)." n.d. *Wikipedia*. Accessed December 2, 2024. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_City_High_School_\(Philadelphia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_City_High_School_(Philadelphia)); Puckett, John L. n.d. "The University City Science Center and the Black Bottom." *West Philadelphia Collaborative History*. Accessed December 2, 2024. <https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/stories/university-city-science-center-and-black-bottom>.

¹³¹ Schuetz, Jenny. 2018. "What does economic evidence tell us about the effects of rent control?" *Brookings Institution*.

¹³² Schuetz, Jenny. "What does economic evidence tell us about the effects of rent control?"

¹³³ Schuetz, Jenny. "What does economic evidence tell us about the effects of rent control?"

¹³⁴ Schuetz, Jenny. "What does economic evidence tell us about the effects of rent control?"

Mitigating the Effects of Gentrification

Though there aren't any solid solutions to fixing gentrification, there are ways of mitigating it through preserving cultural heritage. One of the most detrimental effects of gentrification is the loss of historical value in communities. To prevent such loss, measures can be taken to create historical societies to preserve the communities' heritage. For example, Dr. Watler Palmer, the former "warlord" of Black Bottom dedicates his life to passing on stories of the past and works as an educator at UPenn to remind people of West Philadelphia's history. Consequently, UPenn's University Archive & Record Center provides resources and exhibits aimed at educating students on the city's history.¹³⁵ If such resources were abundant in all universities that have impacted their local community, more locals would feel as though their stories are valued and remembered.

Conclusion

The complexity of gentrification makes it difficult to fix in just one solution. However, the problem need not be dichotomized as an issue regarding economic revitalization versus preservation of lower socioeconomic communities. Rather in understanding the deeper causes- such as university expansion, studentification, urban renewal, exclusionary domain, and effects of gentrification- such as its impact on displaced communities, the possibility that gentrification could be prevented while bolstering economic growth and university progression is not unattainable. Mitigating the effects of gentrification through honoring the cultural identity of historical societies would be a step forward in gaining a progressive balance. In continuing a collaborative approach to solving gentrification we can create a society that honors the past and embraces future opportunities.

¹³⁵ n.d. University Archives and Records Center. Accessed November 9, 2024. <https://archives.upenn.edu/>.

Bridging the Gap: Examining Economic Insecurity and Health Disparities for Ethnic Minority Seniors in the U.S.

Yaeyoung Min

Introduction

In the United States, globalization and inflation have intensified Americans' concerns over the rising cost of living, especially for Americans ages 65 and above who struggle with financial security. Despite the government's efforts to solve this problem, beginning with policies introduced in the Great Depression, elderly populations still experience a higher degree of socioeconomic poverty, exacerbated by healthcare disparities and systematic inequalities. Across the diverse age groups within the U.S., ethnic minority seniors have an especially urgent need for greater access to healthcare services and financial stability. There is much more work that can be done within the U.S. government to improve the accessibility of healthcare for all ethnically diverse senior populations. The long-term economic impacts of the Great Depression, coupled with the United States' history of racial discrimination continue to disproportionately affect elderly citizens from ethnic minority backgrounds. There is an urgent need for stronger financial security measures and more accessible healthcare options for senior citizens. This paper will examine how economic policies, systemic inequalities, and healthcare access gaps disproportionately affect ethnic minority seniors, and how government programs and policies alleviate these challenges.

Economic Barriers Preventing the Elderly from Retiring

Why is the elderly population strained economically? Scientists and economic analysts predict that the entire group aged 65 and up within the U.S. is suffering financially today due to two main reasons. First, there has been a steep rise in inflation rates, which is one of the biggest contributors to increased costs of living.¹³⁶ As a result, Americans aged 65 and up require tighter financial resources on a federal level, as most of them cannot depend on a steady income. Secondly, around 20 percent of seniors are still unable to retire due to the economic backlashes (such as the rising costs of living, income instability, and increased healthcare costs) of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³⁷ To combat this financial instability, the senior demographic is compelled to continue working full-time.

Internationally, the world continues to undergo a demographic transition in age and ethnicity. We see that the compounding effects of globalization, which is the pressure on social safety nets and rising consumer prices, can be prominently seen in the U.S. where an astounding 56 percent of Americans feel that they are not on the path to retirement based upon societal

¹³⁶ Oner, Ceyda. "Inflation: Prices on the Rise." *International Monetary Fund*, July 30, 2019.

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/Inflation>.

¹³⁷ Fry, Richard, and Dana Braga. "The Growth of the Older Workforce." *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, December 14, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/12/14/the-growth-of-the-older-workforce/#:~:text=Some%2019%25%20of%20adults%20ages,18%25%20of%20older%20Americans%20worked>

expectations.¹³⁸ For those who continue to work to keep up with the rising costs of living, job security becomes increasingly difficult to obtain, influenced by factors such as age and occupation type.¹³⁹ As a result, many older workers from ethnic minority backgrounds find themselves facing dead ends at every turn, trapped in a never-ending battle of financial stress. Retirement benefits are essential to seniors because they promote economic stability.¹⁴⁰ However, the economic barriers faced by the senior demographics in combination with amplified income inequality immoderately affect the elderly population. There is an urgent need for a systemic solution from the federal government, such as strengthening social security and offering affordable healthcare, to help the elderly retire with financial stability.

Health Disparities Among African American Ethnic Minority Seniors

In 2019, around 14 percent of the national population identified as African Americans, with around 9 percent of those ages 65 and up also falling into that category.¹⁴¹ Many Black seniors are at considerable risk of spending their remaining years with limited financial mobility and access to financial resources. In addition to the issue of financial insecurity, on average, Black Americans statistically face greater health disparities than White Americans which are rooted in America's history of systemic racism.¹⁴² Black Americans face greater disparities in health outcomes due to higher uninsured rates and a higher likelihood of avoiding healthcare, resulting in poorer overall health status. Limited financial resources exacerbate health disparities, such as being unable to afford preventative care or medication. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), the life expectancy of Black American seniors with an average of 72.8 years is five years shorter compared to White seniors with an average of 77.5 years.¹⁴³ To recapitulate, the unique set of challenges that Black American seniors face include not only limited economic flexibilities but also significant health disparities that are rooted in systemic and interpersonal levels of racial/ethnic discrimination.

¹³⁸ McNair, Kamaron. "56% of Americans Say They're Not on Track to Comfortably Retire-How to Catch Up." *CNBC*, September 8, 2023. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/08/56percent-of-americans-say-theyre-not-on-track-to-comfortably-retire.html>

¹³⁹ Ghilarducci, Teresa, and Christopher Cook. "No Way Out: Older Workers Are Increasingly Trapped in Crummy Jobs and Unable to Retire: Growing Disparities in Work and Retirement in 30 Charts." *Economic Policy Institute*, April 28, 2023. <https://www.epi.org/blog/no-way-out-older-workers-are-increasingly-trapped-in-crummy-jobs-and-unable-to-retire-growing-disparities-in-work-and-retirement-in-30-charts/>.

¹⁴⁰ Gooden, Ronda. "Securing Our Future: The Importance of Social Security." *AARP*, October 10, 2024. <https://states.aarp.org/mississippi/securing-our-future-the-importance-of-social-security>.

¹⁴¹ Schaeffer, Katherine. "The Most Common Age Among Whites in the U.S. Is 58 – More Than Double That of Racial and Ethnic Minorities." *Pew Research Center*, July 30, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/07/30/most-common-age-among-us-racial-ethnic-groups/>.

¹⁴² Brooks, Rodney A. "Aging While Black: The Crisis Among Black Americans as They Grow Old." *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, June 8, 2021. <https://naacp.org/articles/aging-while-black-crisis-among-black-americans-they-grow-old>.

¹⁴³ Hill, Latoya, Samantha Artiga, and Marley Presiado. "How Present-Day Health Disparities for Black People Are Linked to Past Policies and Events." *KFF*, February 22, 2024. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/how-present-day-health-disparities-for-black-people-are-linked-to-past-policies-and-events/>

Addressing the Wage Disparity in African American Seniors

Not only does the issue of socioeconomic poverty affect elderly African American women more significantly than elderly African American men, but data from the U.S. Census Bureau also shows that African American women earn less than their male counterparts.¹⁴⁴ This shows that the wage gap contributes to the greater financial insecurity that elderly African American women face. The U.S. Census Bureau states that the median weekly earnings for an African American woman working full time is \$776 compared to African American men.¹⁴⁵ This wage gap amplifies the financial vulnerability that senior African American women. This is because the accumulation of lower-income earnings over time leads to a decreased likelihood of attaining financial stability by retirement. These salary discrepancies show that elderly African American women are overwhelmingly impacted by socioeconomic poverty in comparison to African American men. The economic hardships stemming from gender and racial wage disparities among senior women from ethnic minority groups highlight a deeper systemic issue within the U.S. demographic landscape.

Historical Government Interventions

The Great Depression was an economic recession in the 1930s that led to widespread poverty, homelessness, and a higher unemployment rate in the U.S. Enacted by President Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal implemented tax reforms and labor relations initiatives that provided relief to millions of Americans, alleviating one of the harshest economic collapses in United States history through a series of reformation programs aimed to help American society.¹⁴⁶ The New Deal included a new national pension system and unemployment benefits which helped keep the elderly afloat when they were least likely to secure jobs due to the job market crash. Today, the Medicare program (which was established after the New Deal) remains a foundational resource program that ensures that American seniors have the economic security necessary to access healthcare. It is also important to note that the Social Security Act, established in 1935, is also essential in providing government aid to the elderly during times of financial crisis.¹⁴⁷ The Great Depression emphasized the deep economic disparities faced by the elderly, and the establishment of programs like Social Security and Medicare has played a vital component in alleviating these challenges, ensuring that the elderly today and in future generations have access to health-care services.

In recent years, policymakers have been investing in improving work access for the elderly through anti-ageism efforts by expanding the budget for the Department of Labor Age Discrimination.¹⁴⁸ The expansion of the Department of Labor's budget or the Workforce

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Earnings of Full-Time Workers." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, March 1, 2023. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2021/home.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Earnings of Full-Time Workers."

¹⁴⁶ Overview: Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945: U.S. History Primary Source Timeline." *Library of Congress*. Accessed November 18, 2024. <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/great-depression-and-world-war-ii-1929-1945/overview/>.

¹⁴⁷ World Health Organization. "Ageism Is a Global Challenge: UN." *World Health Organization*, March 18, 2021. <https://www.who.int/news/item/18-03-2021-ageism-is-a-global-challenge-un>.

¹⁴⁸ "ASA's Policy Priorities-Tackling Ageism." *American Society on Aging*. Accessed November 18, 2024. <https://www.asaging.org/ageism>.

Innovation and Opportunity Act directly addresses age discrimination and supports elderly workers by investing in public awareness campaigns.¹⁴⁹ Through this, various public policy improvements were implemented to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act like investing in multigenerational federal education initiatives that strengthen cross-generational understanding, a resource especially beneficial to migrant communities. An example of a multigenerational federal education initiative is building industry connections and providing economic support.¹⁵⁰ However, compared to other progressive countries, the United States still lacks headway in policymakers' understanding of the importance of recognizing the impacts of ageism and enacting laws that aim to prevent ageist practices.¹⁵¹ As age discrimination evolves after rising senior poverty, the government must counter new forms of discrimination against senior populations.

Conclusion

The obstacles that the elderly face, particularly those of ethnic backgrounds, highlight how critical it is for the government and policymakers to actively take part in implementing effective and expansive resources for those who suffer from socioeconomic poverty, especially post-COVID-19. This action must be taken urgently, as the rapidly changing economic landscape significantly impacts how seniors navigate survival in a globalizing economy. There are historical efforts made by the federal government during and after the Great Depression in the 1960s like the introduction of a national pension system, provision of unemployment insurance, and implementation of Medicare/Medicaid. However, healthcare disparities and historically systemic inequities are still greatly present. Thus, efforts to combat the rate of ethnic senior poverty both economically and through the introduction of inclusive policies that help fight age-based stereotypes are necessary. Expanding age discrimination laws, implementing federal programs to assist ethnic minority seniors, and increasing access to affordable healthcare are all ways that we can combat the rate of ethnic senior poverty.¹⁵²

The World Health Organization says that ‘ageism is a global challenge’ where age has been seen as a factor in denying or accepting medical care.¹⁵³ Therefore, it is essential to formulate federal policies that will simultaneously address both economic poverty and age-based discrimination, and challenging stereotypes. In the U.S., there is considerable progress to be made in pursuing and securing freedom from the financial burdens of the American elderly. Ensuring that the current senior population is provided with adequate social-governmental

¹⁴⁹ Goodman, Veronica. “Recommendations for Reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.” *CAP 20*, June 11, 2024. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/recommendations-for-reauthorizing-the-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act/>.

¹⁵⁰ “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.” *Department of Labor*. Accessed November 19, 2024. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/>.

¹⁵¹ Weir, K. 2023. “Ageism Is One of the Last Socially Acceptable Prejudices. Psychologists Are Working to Change That.” *Monitor on Psychology* 54, no. 2 (March 1, 2023). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/03/cover-new-concept-of-aging>.

¹⁵² Chan, Denny. “Fulfilling the Promise of Equity for Older Adults: Opportunities in Law and Policy.” *Justice in Aging*, October 2023. <https://justiceinaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Fulfilling-the-Promise-of-Equity-for-Older-Adults.pdf>.

¹⁵³ Picchi, Aimee. “Inflation Is Slamming U.S. Seniors. ‘It’s a Scary Time,’ One Disabled Widow Said.” *CBS Interactive*, October 6, 2022. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-security-2023-cola-increase-inflation/>.

support sets an example for future generations and what they can expect in the future after working in America.

Districts and Deception: Pennsylvania's Gerrymandering Fight

Dhruv Nimmagadda

Hyper-Partisanship

American politics as a whole is divided. Democrats and Republicans in Congress are now further apart ideologically than at any point in the past 150 years. Congressional Democrats and Republicans have become increasingly aligned with their respective parties, voting in large blocks of their own party against large majorities from the other party.¹⁵⁴ While political tension is a given in any democracy, this hyper-partisanship often overshadows necessary mutual cooperation and compromise. In fact, it has led to an environment where political allegiance and loyalties affect opinions on issues unrelated to party principles.

Moreover, Republicans and Democrats increasingly harbor negative sentiments about individuals in the opposing party, rather than mere surface-level, ideological disputes.¹⁵⁵ Pew Research Center conducted a survey where they found a worrying trend: not only do party members hold negative thoughts and opinions on opposing party members but question their basic morality. In this survey, they found that 72 percent of Republicans found Democrats to be more immoral and dishonest than other Americans, and 63 percent of Democrats thought the same of Republicans. This is a phenomenon termed "affective polarization."¹⁵⁶ While this mirrors trends in other countries in the Western world, political polarization seems particularly acute in the American context with a study conducted by economists from Brown and Stanford University respectively finding that political polarization among Americans is growing at a rate faster in the last 40 years than the United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada.¹⁵⁷ The study suggested that one's political identity affects many facets of one's life, including inconsequential things like what they buy, and where they live.¹⁵⁸ This deepening political divide underscores how political affiliation has shifted from a mere matter of policy preference to an indicator of personal identity, further entrenching animosity and hindering efforts toward bipartisan cooperation. The politically polarized environment is the backdrop to increasing disingenuous and partisan tactics like redistricting.

Introduction to Gerrymandering

Understanding the intricacies of redistricting is essential for grasping the dynamics of an election. Redistricting, or the systematic drawing and redrawing of maps for congressional

¹⁵⁴ Bennett, Matthew M., and David W. Brown. "Polarization, Partisanship, and Health in the United States." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 49, no. 3 (2024): 329- 350.

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/49/3/329/387231/Polarization-Partisanship-and-Health-in-the-United>.

¹⁵⁵ Pew Research Center. "As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration with the Two-Party System." August 9, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/08/09/as-partisan-hostility-grows-signs-of-frustration-with-the-two-party-system/>.

¹⁵⁶ Pew Research Center. "As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration with the Two-Party System."

¹⁵⁷ Brown University. "Polarization in American Politics: How It Affects Our Lives." January 21, 2020. <https://www.brown.edu/news/2020-01-21/polarization>.

¹⁵⁸ Brown University. "Polarization in American Politics: How It Affects Our Lives."

districts following a census year, is constitutionally required in all 50 states.¹⁵⁹ State legislatures are entrusted with control of their own redistricting processes, with these updated district lines being passed similar to basic legislation through a majority vote.¹⁶⁰ Redrawing district lines based on updated census data aims to distribute voters more equitably across congressional and state districts, ensuring that state representatives better reflect the views of their constituents. Following the 2020 Census, many states have redrawn their electoral district boundaries, a process that holds serious implications for electoral outcomes. With critical races on the horizon, the aftermath of these changes sees profound implications, which not only affect congressional and state elections but also voter engagement and trust in the democratic process.

However, the process of redistricting can be exploited for partisan gain through favorable drawings of districts. Gerrymandering occurs when the political party in power at the time redraws districts to reduce the proportional representation of the opposing party in elections. These redistricting manipulations are long-standing in American democracy, with the term originating from Gov. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts and his peculiar 1812 redistricting. The *Boston Gazette* likened one of the oddly shaped districts to a salamander, coining the now-infamous term. Not only does gerrymandering affect the state representative races, but it carries significant consequences for the entire electoral college system.

Constitutionality

Gerrymandering inherently deprives voters of equal representation and disenfranchises them by definition. By prioritizing political parties and politicians over voters, one undermines the democratic fabric of the country. It is a disingenuous tactic used by political parties to stay in power by abusing the practice of redistricting. While the practice of extreme-partisan gerrymandering has been ruled a violation of the Equal Protection Clause, the Supreme Court has found it difficult to establish what standards are needed to consider a map unconstitutional. In a narrow 5-4 decision in *Rucho v. Common Cause* in 2019, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in his opinion that there will always be an inevitable element of partisanship in the reapportionment process, and the majority opinion concluded that there was no way of determining strict standards for unconstitutional and unjust maps.¹⁶¹ This decision by the Supreme Court essentially categorizes gerrymandering as a legal gray area, as the ambiguity and lack of strict metrics in determining what qualifies as a fair map makes it difficult to satisfy the burden of proof that falls upon the accuser. The ruling in *Rucho v. Common Cause* was then used as defense for the state of South Carolina for their alleged racially-based reapportionment against a lawsuit from the NAACP in 2024.¹⁶² Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, in her 2019

¹⁵⁹ McCrone, Brian X. "Gerrymandering and Redistricting in Pennsylvania, Explained." *NBC10 Philadelphia*, January 12, 2022. <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/decision-2022/gerrymandering-and-redistricting-in-pennsylvania-explained/3103646/>.

¹⁶⁰ "Who Draws the Lines?" *All About Redistricting*, August 4, 2021. <https://redistricting.ils.edu/redistricting-101/who-draws-the-lines/>.

¹⁶¹ Benjamin Gonzalez, "The Supreme Court, Gerrymandering, and the Rule of Law," *Human Rights Magazine* (American Bar Association, 2019), https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/the-end-of-the-rule-of-law/the-supreme-court-gerrymandering-and-the-rule-of-law/.

¹⁶² American Constitution Society. "Alexander v. South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP." October 20, 2015. https://www.acslaw.org/scotus_update/alexander-v-south-carolina-state-conference-of-the-naACP/.

dissenting opinion to *Rucho v. Common Cause* asserts “Election Day . . . is the foundation of democratic governance. And partisan gerrymandering can make it meaningless.”¹⁶³

In *Alexander v. South Carolina NAACP*, in a 6-3 partisan decision, the Supreme Court overturned a lower district court’s ruling that South Carolina lawmakers had violated the Equal Protection Clause in their redrawing of district lines as it had racially gerrymandered its congressional map. The district court had found that South Carolina’s reapportionment process had abandoned many redistricting principles in order to “bleach” black voters. South Carolina turned to the Supreme Court, which ruled that the districts were drawn for purely political and partisan purposes, and that race cannot be used as a proxy for political characterizations.¹⁶⁴

The issue of gerrymandering and underhanded reapportionment has been a headache for the Supreme Court for years. Referring to the latest decisions by the court regarding this issue, it is safe to assume that gerrymandering will continue to subvert American democracy, and that its related constitutional violations will continue to occupy a legal grey area.

Pennsylvania Gerrymanders

Pennsylvania is one of the most important swing states on the ballot, with its 19 electoral votes crucial in the race for 270. The Keystone State has great influence on the future of the presidency and makeup of Congress; it has been one of the most closely contested states for the past few elections. The state’s diverse population, consisting of urban areas such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, as well as various rural areas allows for a unique and wide voter demographic, resulting in fierce political division. Pennsylvania’s status as a key battleground state has caused it to be the subject of gerrymandering over the years. A dispute filed in 2017 by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and a group of Democratic Pennsylvania voters claimed that the state’s 2011 congressional map was an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander and sought for it to be invalidated. The plaintiffs claimed that the map had unfairly misrepresented Democratic voters, violating important freedom and equal representation clauses of the state’s constitution.¹⁶⁵ The gerrymander was designed to pack Democratic voters into Pennsylvania’s 1st, 2nd, 13th, 14th, and 17th districts, so that they fell short of a majority in the 13 other districts. In the end, this maximized the number of congressional seats in Pennsylvania held by Republicans.¹⁶⁶ While Republican candidates won approximately 49 percent of the statewide vote, they had won 13 of 18 congressional seats, while the Democrats had only won 5 seats.¹⁶⁷ The drawn districts were

¹⁶³ Volić, Ismar. "The History and Possible Solutions to Gerrymandering." *Time*. April 1, 2024. <https://time.com/6851995/gerrymandering-history-solution/>.

¹⁶⁴ American Civil Liberties Union. "Alexander v. South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP." Accessed October 22, 2024. <https://www.aclu.org/cases/alexander-v-south-carolina-state-conference-of-the-naACP>.

¹⁶⁵ Brennan Center for Justice. "League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania." Accessed October 25, 2024. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/league-women-voters-pennsylvania-v-commonwealth-pennsylvania>.

¹⁶⁶ Public Interest Law Center. "Pennsylvania Redistricting Lawsuit." Accessed October 25, 2024. <https://pubintlaw.org/cases-and-projects/pennsylvania-redistricting-lawsuit/>.

¹⁶⁷ Public Interest Law Center. "Pennsylvania Redistricting Lawsuit."

unorthodox and described as a mockery. The Washington Post had nicknamed Pennsylvania's 7th District as "Goofy kicking Donald Duck".¹⁶⁸

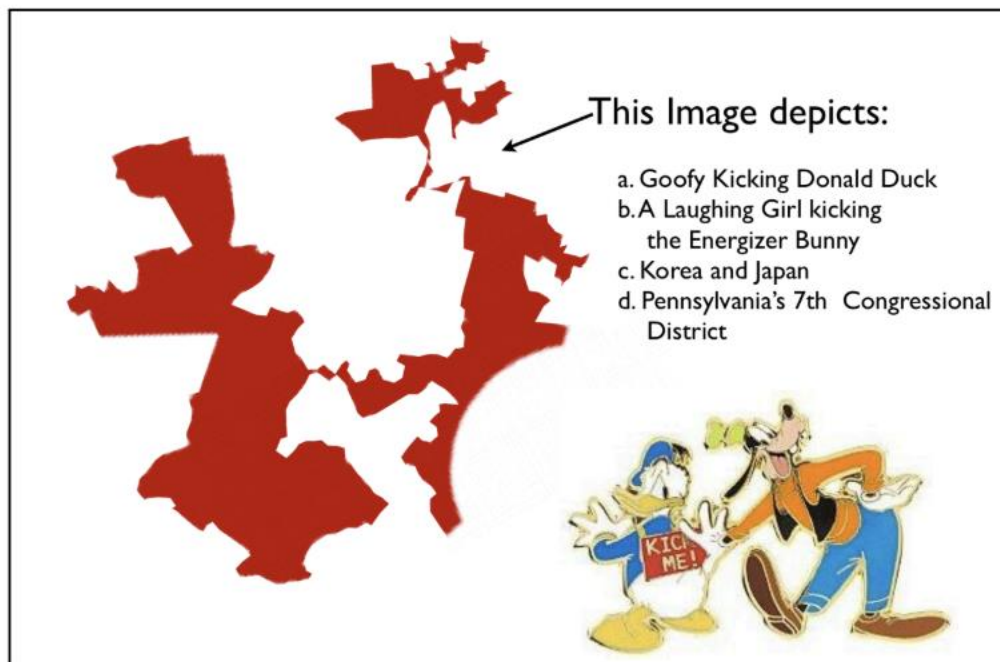


Figure 1: *Goofy Kicking Donald Duck*. New York Times, January 26, 2018¹⁶⁹

In 2018, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court declared that the 2011 congressional district map in fact was a violation of the state's constitution and invalidated it for use in the 2018 primaries, leading to the adoption of a new map. This new map split considerably less counties, drawn compactly to not favor either party. The Princeton University Redistricting Report Card graded the redrawn map an overall grade of a B, a subjective grade on partisan fairness, competitiveness, and geographic features.¹⁷⁰

Pennsylvania's redistricting process for legislative districts lacks any real checks or balances, essentially handing over the mapping power to a small number of leaders.¹⁷¹ Along with this, advances in data analytics allow politicians to engineer districts to suit their needs, picking what proportions of people they want and out of a voting district. Through

¹⁶⁸ Wong, Kriston C. "Pennsylvania Republicans Have Drawn a New Congressional Map That Is Just as Gerrymandered as the Old One." *The Washington Post*, February 11, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/02/11/pennsylvania-republicans-have-drawn-a-new-congressional-map-that-is-just-as-gerrymandered-as-the-old-one/>

¹⁶⁹ *Goofy Kicking Donald Duck*. New York Times, January 26, 2018#. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/us/pennsylvania-gerrymander-goofy-district.html>

¹⁷⁰ Gerrymander Princeton, "Redistricting Report Card: Plan ID recT95YHHudtpR3Fc," *Gerrymander Project*, accessed November 25, 2024, <https://gerrymander.princeton.edu/redistricting-report-card/?planId=recT95YHHudtpR3Fc>.

¹⁷¹ Fair Districts PA. "About Gerrymandering." Accessed October 25, 2024. <https://www.fairdistrictspa.com/the-problem/about-gerrymandering>.

gerrymandering, politicians employ different methods to protect incumbents and keep their political party in power. The most popular of these methods is cracking, which is the practice of separating and concentrating voters of one community or party among districts in order to lessen their influence in the election, as seen in the 2011 Pennsylvania legislative map.¹⁷²

Solutions

It is imperative to outline different solutions to gerrymandering, to ensure that all state-wide districts and their subsequent elections are competitive. One of the popular solutions to the gerrymandering problem was suggested by Professor Ben Schneer of the Harvard Kennedy School, called the Define - Combine Procedure (DCP). The DCP calls for one party to define a map of equal-population contiguous districts, and the other party to combine pairs of these districts to create a proper congressional map.¹⁷³ For example, if a state required 10 districts, the state's Republican representatives could define 20 evenly drawn districts, and the Democrats would choose districts to combine in order to form a 10-district map. This solution is beneficial as it doesn't require a bipartisan agreement or the need for a neutral third party to facilitate the drawing process. This approach offers a partisan solution to an extremely partisan problem. This approach has also been well-researched. Thousands of simulations were run using 2020 election data comparing the current model of redistricting to the DCP proposal, and researchers found that DCP had substantially reduced partisan advantage.¹⁷⁴

Aside from proposals such as DCP, it is imperative for the Supreme Court to support these different initiatives, while also taking a strong stance on the unconstitutionality of gerrymandering. Equal representation, a fabric of American governance, should be protected from partisan politics at all costs by the Supreme Court, which means cracking down on gerrymandering. Gerrymandering undermines democracy by allowing politicians to manipulate district boundaries for political gain, distorting electoral outcomes and reducing fair representation. It leads to uncompetitive races, voter disenfranchisement, and political polarization, and soils the electoral college in the process, through skewing the allocation of electoral votes. To protect the integrity of elections and ensure equal representation, reform is needed to address gerrymandering and its negative impact on both congressional and presidential elections. It is imperative in preserving the pillars of which American democracy is built upon.

¹⁷² Fair Districts PA. 2024. "The Problem: About Gerrymandering." Fair Districts PA. Accessed November 26, 2024. <https://www.fairdistrictspa.com/the-problem/about-gerrymandering>.

¹⁷³ "New Research Outlines Novel Partisan Solution to Partisan Gerrymandering." *Harvard Ash Center*. February 1, 2024. <https://ash.harvard.edu/articles/new-research-outlines-novel-partisan-solution-to-partisan-gerrymandering>.

¹⁷⁴ Derrick, Austin, and Kosuke Imai. "Cutting the Gerrymandering Cake: A Define-Combine Procedure Reduces Partisan Bias in Redistricting." *Institute for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS)*, February 2024. <https://isps.yale.edu/news/blog/2024/02/cutting-the-gerrymandering-cake-define-combine-procedure-reduces-partisan-bias-in>

The Ineffectiveness of The United States' Hate Crime Laws in Protecting Historically Marginalized Groups

Jayden Osei-tutu

Introduction

Over the past few years, the United States has experienced a stark increase in the number of reported hate crimes—criminal offenses that involve willful acts of violence motivated by biases towards a victim's identity, including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and or disability.¹⁷⁵ During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the FBI reported a total of 8,263 hate crime incidents committed against 11,129 victims, the country's highest number of hate crimes since 2001.¹⁷⁶ Among these incidents, 279 cases saw members of the Asian American community as targets for hate crimes, a 77 percent uptick from the year prior, many of which appeared as a direct result of the fictitious and racist discourse linking Asian Americans to the pandemic.¹⁷⁷ In the years that followed, these numbers have only increased, as just last year, in 2023, the FBI's annual report displayed a significant surge in the number of hate crime incidents, with a total of 11,862 cases reported, marking the third consecutive year since 2020 that incidents have reached an all-time high in the United States.¹⁷⁸

Unsurprisingly, these statistics have left a majority of the nation's population feeling anxious, particularly those of marginalized communities, whose fears of becoming victims of identity-based violence have drastically intensified in recent years. This troubling trend of hate crimes underscores the pressing need to address the root causes of hate crimes and discuss the various limitations presented by existing regulations. The United States' hate crime laws have proven to be severely inadequate in deterring identity-based violence, revealing a deeper, more sinister systemic issue at play. This article seeks to analyze what makes hate crime laws in the United States ineffective by analyzing these laws at the federal level, discussing the limitations presented by current iterations of hate crimes, as well as roadblocks that exist in instituting effective hate crime laws, and lastly, discussing what the United States can do to better serve members of marginalized groups moving forward.

Federal Hate Crime Laws-The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act

Signed into law by former President Barack Obama in 2009, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act (18 U.S. Code § 249) emerged in response to the

¹⁷⁵ U.S. Department of Justice. "Laws and Policies. Hate Crimes." November 22, 2024. <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/laws-and-policies>.

¹⁷⁶ 2020 FBI Hate Crimes Statistics. *Community Relations Service*. (2023, April 4). <https://www.justice.gov/crs/highlights/2020-hate-crimes-statistics>.

¹⁷⁷ Fleck, A., & Richter, F. "Infographic: FBI Sees Upward Trend in Reported Hate Crimes." *Statista Daily Data*, October 21, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/chart/33302/timeline-of-hate-crime-incidents-reported-to-the-fbi/>; U.S. Department of Justice. *2020 FBI Hate Crimes Statistics*. *Community Relations Service*. April 4, 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/crs/highlights/2020-hate-crimes-statistics>

¹⁷⁸ Fleck, A., & Richter, F. "Infographic: FBI Sees Upward Trend in Reported Hate Crimes."

murders of two victims of hate crimes in 1998: Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr.¹⁷⁹ James Byrd Jr., a 49-year-old Black man from Jasper, Texas, was the victim of a modern-day lynching at the hands of three white supremacists—Shawn Berry, Lawrence Brewer, and John King.¹⁸⁰ On June 7th, 1998, Byrd was assaulted by the trio and chained to the back of a pickup truck. The men drove three miles through Jasper, Texas, with Byrd attached to the back of the pickup truck, which resulted in his death when his right arm and head were severed after his body struck the edge of a culvert in the road.¹⁸¹

Later that same year, on October 6, 1998, Matthew Shepard, a gay 21-year-old student who attended the University of Wyoming, became a victim of one of the most notorious anti-gay hate crimes in this nation’s history.¹⁸² Shepard was lured into entering a pickup truck under false pretenses where he was beaten and tortured by two men, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney. Although Shepard managed to survive the initial attack, he was not found until 18 hours after the assault took place and succumbed to his injuries six days later in a hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado.¹⁸³ After their arrest, the men admitted that their motives for the murder were rooted in homophobia.¹⁸⁴

The Shepard-Byrd Hate Crime Prevention Act sets forth provisions that define what constitutes a hate crime under federal law and outlines the punishments for such offenses, including a prison sentence of no more than 10 years, fines, or both.¹⁸⁵ According to the statute, which applies only to criminal actions, for an act to constitute a hate crime, a perpetrator must deliberately inflict bodily injury against a victim or attempt to do so using fire, a firearm, and or other dangerous weapon, solely based on the victim’s actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.¹⁸⁶ The statute extends these prohibitions to violent offenses committed on the basis of a victim’s actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability if the actions of the perpetrator affect interstate commerce.¹⁸⁷ Perpetrators can be imprisoned for any number of years, including life, if their acts resulted in the death of a victim, involved kidnapping or

¹⁷⁹ Legal Information Institute. “Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.” *Legal Information Institute*.

https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/matthew_shepard_and_james_byrd_jr_hate_crimes_prevention_act#:~:text=Matthew%20Shepard%20was%20a%20gay,supremacists%20in%20Texas%20in%201998.

¹⁸⁰ Libguides. “The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009.” *Researching Hate Crimes & Hate Crime Legislation*. LibGuides at American University Washington College of Law.

<https://wcl.american.libguides.com/hatecrimes/shepardbyrdact>.

¹⁸¹ Libguides. “The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009”

¹⁸² Libguides. “The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009”

¹⁸³ Libguides. “The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009”

¹⁸⁴ Hawkins, E. “What Happened to Matthew Shepard’s Killers, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson?” *Oxygen Official Site*, July 17, 2024. <https://www.oxygen.com/uncovered-killed-by-hate/crime-news/matthew-shepards-killers-russell-henderson-aaron-mckinney-hate-crime>.

¹⁸⁵ Legal Information Institute. 18 U.S. Code § 249 - Hate Crime Acts. *Legal Information Institute*.

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/249>

¹⁸⁶ Legal Information Institute. 18 U.S. Code § 249 - Hate Crime Acts. *Legal Information Institute*.

¹⁸⁷ Legal Information Institute. 18 U.S. Code § 249 - Hate Crime Acts. *Legal Information Institute*.

attempted kidnapping, aggravated sexual abuse or an attempt to commit aggravated sexual abuse, or an attempt to kill.¹⁸⁸

The statute possesses three subsections that further articulate how a perpetrator can obtain a criminal conviction for a hate crime under federal law. Subsection (a)(1) criminalizes violent acts and attempts at committing violent acts using a dangerous weapon when said acts are motivated by a person's actual or perceived race, color, religion, or national origin.¹⁸⁹ An example of someone committing an act under this subsection would be if a perpetrator used a metal baseball bat to intentionally inflict harm against another person because they believed that the victim was Muslim.

Subsection (a)(2) extends its legal protection to a broader class of victims, criminalizing offenses motivated by the actual or perceived gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person. This subsection of the Act was passed pursuant to Congress's Commerce Clause authority, and as such, to convict a perpetrator, an act must affect interstate or foreign commerce.¹⁹⁰ Under this subsection, if a perpetrator employs the use of an explosive device to destroy a highway to target transgender women, they can be convicted of a hate crime. Lastly, subsection (a)(3) allows for criminals to be prosecuted for committing crimes motivated by any of the characteristics defined in subsection (a)(1) or (a)(2) when acts are committed within the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction of the United States, meaning that a perpetrator that targets a victim because of their identity on a U.S. naval base can be criminally prosecuted.¹⁹¹

The Shortcomings Presented by the Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act

While the Shepard-Byrd Hate Crime Prevention Act provides members of historically minoritized communities with protection under the law, making it clear that crimes rooted in animus towards a victim's identity constitute hate crimes, the Act itself possesses several legal limitations that prevent it from being effective. For a perpetrator to receive a hate crime conviction, one must prove that the motives behind the crime were rooted in hatred towards any of the characteristics mentioned in subsection (a)(1) and (a)(2) of the Hate Crime Prevention Act. This process of establishing a motive for a hate crime can be difficult to prove in a court of law. Even with concrete evidence, all criminal cases must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt, requiring a high burden of proof to convict a perpetrator of a crime.¹⁹² Civil cases, on the other hand, have a much lower threshold for criminal convictions, requiring a jury to believe that the perpetrator was most likely motivated by biases. What this means in the context of hate crime cases, is that for a jury to convict a defendant of a hate crime, the facts of the case must be so

¹⁸⁸ Legal Information Institute. 18 U.S. Code § 249 - *Hate Crime Acts*. *Legal Information Institute*.

¹⁸⁹ Civil Rights Division. "The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009." *U.S. Department of Justice*, May 30, 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/matthew-shepard-and-james-byrd-jr-hate-crimes-prevention-act-2009-0>.

¹⁹⁰ Civil Rights Division. "The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009."

¹⁹¹ Civil Rights Division. "The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009."

¹⁹² Duimovich, S. "A Critique of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act Regarding Its Protection of Gays and Lesbians (and How a Private Right Could Fix It)." *USC Gould School of Law*, Winter 2014. <https://gould.usc.edu/students/journals/rlsj/issues/assets/docs/volume23/Winter2014/4.Duimovich.pdf>.

convincing that it eliminates all sufficient doubt that the perpetrator targeted the victim because of their actual or perceived identity.¹⁹³

This process of convincing a jury of a perpetrator's motives for committing a hate crime is challenging, especially when considering that the jury must interpret the evidence presented before them to find that what drove the perpetrator to commit the offense was biases related to the victim's identity beyond a reasonable doubt. Motives are not easily discernible and can be concealed by perpetrators who feign ignorance, claiming that they were unaware of the victim's identity and, therefore, bias could not have been what motivated them to commit the crime, allowing them to evade being convicted for committing a hate crime. These structural loopholes fail to provide members of historically marginalized communities with adequate legal protection from identity-based attacks and instead allow perpetrators to be absolved of receiving appropriate punishments for their wrongdoings.

Inherent biases embedded in the criminal justice system are additional roadblocks in reaching a hate crime conviction that the current statute fails to account for. Jury bias, for instance, is a notorious issue that prevents the statute from operating effectively. In the context of hate crimes, jury bias is defined as a set of pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, or experiences held by jurors, in relation to the identity of the defendant or plaintiff, that significantly reduces their ability to interpret the evidence impartially.¹⁹⁴ These biases can be particularly problematic in hate crime cases, as the jury must be willing to set aside their biases and preconceived notions regarding the plaintiff's identity to reach an impartial verdict, especially when these biases are coupled with the high burden of proof needed to convict a perpetrator of a hate crime.¹⁹⁵ A biased jury can reach a verdict based in partiality which can lead to a less severe conviction or even an acquittal that completely fails to convict a perpetrator of a hate crime, even in cases where the evidence clearly indicates that a hate crime has occurred.

This concept of a biased jury influencing the outcome of a criminal conviction is something that marginalized groups are far too familiar with, as it has proven to be an institutional barrier preventing these communities from receiving adequate justice. As a result, many members of marginalized communities are deeply distrustful of and dissatisfied with the criminal justice system, particularly law enforcement.¹⁹⁶ These feelings of distrust and dissatisfaction prompt members of minoritized communities to not report incidents where they have been the victim of identity-based attacks. The Hate Crime Prevention Act, as well as other statutes extending legal protection to members of minoritized communities, do not eliminate these feelings of distrust, as the structural loopholes often work to protect perpetrators rather than

¹⁹³ Duimovich, S. "A Critique of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act Regarding Its Protection of Gays and Lesbians (and How a Private Right Could Fix It)."

¹⁹⁴ Duimovich, S. "A Critique of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act Regarding Its Protection of Gays and Lesbians (and How a Private Right Could Fix It)."

¹⁹⁵ Wiley, E. "How Racism in the Courtroom Produces Wrongful Convictions and Mass Incarceration." *Legal Defense Fund*, January 19, 2024. <https://www.naacpldf.org/racism-wrongful-convictions-mass-incarceration/#:~:text=Filed:%20November%202019,white%20citizens%20in%20his%20district.>

¹⁹⁶ Navarro, C. "Hate Crime Reporting Barriers: Why Are Victims Reluctant to Report?" *Tackling Hate*, July 9, 2020. [https://tacklinghate.org/trainingmodule/hate-crime-reporting-barriers-why-victims-of-hate-related-incidents-are-reluctant-to-report2/.](https://tacklinghate.org/trainingmodule/hate-crime-reporting-barriers-why-victims-of-hate-related-incidents-are-reluctant-to-report2/)

those directly harmed. As such, many opt not to report incidents of identity-based violence, believing that with the high burden of proof required to convict a person of a hate crime, there is a slim chance that perpetrators will face appropriate consequences for their actions.

Many people rightfully point out that the Act fails to address the root causes of biases and instead offers criminal convictions and increased sentencing for more severe cases as remedies for the issue of hate crimes.¹⁹⁷ Incarcerating perpetrators of hate crimes as a sole remedy does not serve as an effective deterrent for preventing identity-based offenses from occurring in the future, as the severity of a punishment does not necessarily deter crime. The statute does not challenge the underlying beliefs or attitudes present within our society that have contributed to these crimes taking place nor do they offer lasting solutions to reduce the issue of hate within our society.

Conclusion

The Hate Crime Prevention Act is ineffective in meeting its intended purpose of protecting citizens from identity-based attacks. Factors such as a high burden of proof required to reach a criminal conviction, biases from members of the jury, and the criminal justice system more broadly, which contribute to the sense of distrust felt by members of minoritized communities, demonstrate the limitations and roadblocks presented by the Act. The enactment of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act is a tremendous first step toward requiring perpetrators to answer for their crimes in a court of law and one that should not be overlooked, as it demonstrates the significant strides made in our contemporary society. However, hate crime statutes alone are not enough to be considered the end-all-be-all, as this nation has a long way to go if it truly desires to prevent members of minoritized communities from experiencing identity-based violence in the future.

We must abandon the notion that increasing the severity of the legal consequences for committing hate crimes is entirely effective in preventing these crimes from occurring. Instead, understanding the sources of bias that are present within our society and adopting a transformative justice approach that seeks to reform the beliefs and attitudes that contribute to hate crimes must. We must also seek to rebuild trust between marginalized communities and the criminal justice system to ensure that the former feel as if they can rely on the latter to provide them with adequate legal protection.

¹⁹⁷ Navarro, C. “Hate Crime Reporting Barriers: Why Are Victims Reluctant to Report?”

The State of Medicaid in Connecticut

James Shiang

Introduction

Medicaid, the program that provides health insurance for low-income individuals and their families, was created in 1965 under President Lyndon B. Johnson. Administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Medicaid supports around 80 million people in the United States, an essential lifeline for those who would otherwise be unable to afford or access healthcare providers and pharmaceutical drugs.¹⁹⁸ The program is funded by a state and federal government partnership, but is largely administered by the individual states. While there are some general federal guidelines, states have flexibility in determining eligibility. Medicaid spending accounted for 19 percent of total healthcare spending in the United States, as of 2022.¹⁹⁹ The program typically reimburses private physicians, nursing homes, and other healthcare providers for treatment given to patients.

Connecticut's Medicaid program is called HUSKY Health, which is administered by the Connecticut Department of Social Services. HUSKY Health has four different components that cover different populations: HUSKY A covers children, teens, parents, and caregivers for medical, dental, vision, and prescription drugs; HUSKY B covers uninsured children (also known as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)), HUSKY C covers seniors who are blind or have another disability, and HUSKY D covers low-income adults.²⁰⁰ As of 2022, 22 percent of Connecticut's population was covered by Medicaid. With almost a quarter of Connecticut's residents in the program, hundreds of thousands of people rely on a system that is currently fraught with cost overruns, program expansions, and discussions of changing provider reimbursement rates.²⁰¹ Governor Ned Lamont and the state legislature have discussed substantial changes to the program to close the \$210 million budget shortfall in fiscal year 2024.²⁰² In short, the state of Medicaid in Connecticut is uncertain and in flux.

Historical Context and Evolution

When President Johnson introduced the Medicare and Medicaid programs to the country in the Medicare Act, he largely accomplished what President Harry Truman had longed for two decades earlier: "legislation establishing a national health insurance plan".²⁰³ However, fierce

¹⁹⁸ National Archives. "Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965)." *National Archives*, October 5 2021, www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/medicare-and-medicaid-act.

¹⁹⁹ Rudowitz, Robin, et al. "Medicaid 101 | KFF." *KFF*, August 29, 2024. <https://www.kff.org/health-policy-101-medicaid/?entry=table-of-contents-how-much-does-medicaid-spend-and-on-what>.

²⁰⁰ United Way-Connecticut. "HUSKY Health Plans – United Way of Connecticut – 211 and ELibrary." *Uwc.211ct.org*. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://uwc.211ct.org/husky-health-plans/>.

²⁰¹ CT Health Policy Project. "Medicaid." *CT Healthcare Explained*, November 16, 2022. www.cthealthexplained.org/medicaid/.

²⁰² Phaneuf, Keith M. "CT Projects \$210M Medicaid Cost Overruns, Challenging Spending." *CT Mirror*, September 3, 2024. Accessed October 23, 2024. <https://ctmirror.org/2024/09/03/ct-medicaid-cost-budget-challenges/>.

²⁰³ National Archives. "Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965)."

opposition from the American Medical Association and Republican-majority House of Representatives squashed that idea from becoming a reality.²⁰⁴ To compromise, Johnson launched two social insurance programs in his War on Poverty initiative to cover groups of individuals in what private insurers considered to be a “bad risk,” as they would be expensive and risky to cover.²⁰⁵ The War on Poverty in 1964 consisted of four pieces of legislation: The Food Stamp Act, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, The Economic Opportunity Act, and The Social Security Amendments of 1965, which created Medicare and Medicaid. Literature published at the time demonstrated that poverty was more prevalent in society than assumed and pushed President Johnson and Congress to act.²⁰⁶ Since the inception of Medicaid, the individual states have broad discretion on eligibility, additional benefits, financing, and reimbursement rates for health care providers.

Another controversial legislative battle erupted in 2010, when President Barack Obama signed the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, into law. A provision of the legislation was mandatory Medicaid expansion, which would have declared that anyone making less than 138 percent of the federal poverty line would be eligible for Medicaid (\$16,643 for individuals and \$33,948 for a family of four in 2017).²⁰⁷ However, the Supreme Court struck this provision down and ruled that Medicaid expansion was voluntary, effective in 2014.²⁰⁸ As of February 2024, 40 states and Washington, D.C. have expanded Medicaid, leaving ten states and about 1.5 million individuals without health insurance.²⁰⁹ Connecticut was the first state to adopt the expansion for low-income adults under age 65, and it has since expanded eligibility for adults with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant individuals.²¹⁰ Since the expansion, enrollment has increased by roughly 50 percent, meaning approximately 300,000 people now have health insurance through HUSKY Health.²¹¹

Around the same time conservative states challenged the Affordable Care Act in court, Connecticut was changing how it financed the Medicaid system, bucking the traditional managed care system implemented in the 39 states & Washington, D.C. In managed care, Connecticut “paid private health insurers to manage the care of their Medicaid beneficiaries under Comprehensive risk-based contracts.”²¹² The rate paid to insurance companies was a “capitated

²⁰⁴ Truman Library. “The Challenge of National Healthcare | Harry S. Truman.” *Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum*. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/challenge-national-healthcare>.

²⁰⁵ National Archives. “Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965).”

²⁰⁶ Matthews, Dylan. “Everything You Need to Know about the War on Poverty.” *The Washington Post*, January 2014. www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/01/08/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-war-on-poverty/.

²⁰⁷ HealthInsurance.org, LLC. “Connecticut and the ACA’s Medicaid Expansion.” Healthinsurance.org, www.healthinsurance.org/medicaid/connecticut/.

²⁰⁸ Rudowitz, Robin, et al. “Medicaid 101 | KFF.”

²⁰⁹ Rudowitz, Robin, et al. “How Many Uninsured Are in the Coverage Gap and How Many Could Be Eligible If All States Adopted the Medicaid Expansion?” *KFF*, February 26, 2024. <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/how-many-uninsured-are-in-the-coverage-gap-and-how-many-could-be-eligible-if-all-states-adopted-the-medicaid-expansion/>.

²¹⁰ HealthInsurance.org, LLC. “Connecticut and the ACA’s Medicaid Expansion.”

²¹¹ HealthInsurance.org, LLC. “Connecticut and the ACA’s Medicaid Expansion.”

²¹² Burns, Joseph. “Connecticut Bucks the Medicaid Managed Care Trend.” *MHE Publication*, vol. 33, no. 1, January 2023, www.managedhealthcareexecutive.com/view/connecticut-bucks-the-medicaid-managed-care-trend.

payment” (a set amount), allowing states to better manage their budget.²¹³ But due to a “loss of confidence” in the managed care companies, uncertainty about cost-effectiveness, and a lack of transparency, Connecticut ended its managed care program and moved to a fee-for-service model “where the state pays providers directly for services delivered to Medicaid beneficiaries.”²¹⁴ Recent reports have indicated that Governor Lamont and his administration have been contemplating a return to managed care.²¹⁵ The governor’s desire from his experience in the private sector, where his company used managed care for his employees.²¹⁶

Benefits & Services

With the HUSKY’s future uncertain, the state has been adding and limiting eligibility for immigrants and citizens alike. A new law that went into effect in July of this year extended Medicaid eligibility to children aged 15 and under, regardless of their immigration status, up from the previous age of 12.²¹⁷ This law made healthcare more accessible to thousands of previously uninsured children and was a huge step forward for the immigrant community, especially in Fair Haven, one of New Haven’s poorest neighborhoods.²¹⁸ Dr. Sue Lagarde, head of Fair Haven Community Health Care, highlighted the importance of health care as a human right by saying “For 53 years, we have been tirelessly advocating for access to Connecticut Medicaid. No one is healthy unless we are all healthy. I’m here to report that since January 1, 2023, at this health center alone, we have enrolled over 500 Children.”²¹⁹

At the same time, the Connecticut legislature was tightening the income threshold for HUSKY A, dropping the threshold from 160 percent to 138 percent of the federal poverty line.²²⁰ This change brought the threshold down to what it was under the Medicaid expansion, and Connecticut has expanded it for the last ten years. By lowering the poverty threshold, roughly 16,000 people will lose their health insurance and have to get Covered Connecticut, a subsidy for the health insurance exchange, or receive Transitional Medical Assistance, which would only extend their insurance for one year.²²¹

²¹³ Golvala, Katy. “Lamont Exploring Medicaid Managed Care, but Many Push Back.” *CT Mirror*, July 25, 2024. <https://ctmirror.org/2024/07/25/ct-medicaid-costs-managed-care-model/>. Accessed October 23, 2024.

²¹⁴ Golvala, Katy. “Lamont Exploring Medicaid Managed Care, but Many Push Back.”

²¹⁵ Golvala, Katy. “Lamont Exploring Medicaid Managed Care, but Many Push Back.”

²¹⁶ Ferraro, John. “Lamont Considering Return to Managed Care for Medicaid despite Costly History.” *CT News Junkie*, April 10, 2024, <https://ctnewsjunkie.com/2024/04/10/lamont-may-revert-to-managed-care-plan-that-raises-concerns-over-healthcare-access-for-poor-older-residents-children/>

²¹⁷ Maricarmen Cajahuaranga. “CT Kids Ages 15 and Younger Now Qualify for Husky Health Care, regardless of Immigration Status.” *Connecticut Public*, WNPR. July 2024, <https://www.ctpublic.org/news/2024-07-01/ct-kids-ages-15-and-younger-now-qualify-for-husky-health-care-regardless-of-immigration-status>. Accessed 23 Oct. 2024.

²¹⁸ Maricarmen Cajahuaranga. “CT Kids Ages 15 and Younger Now Qualify for Husky Health Care, regardless of Immigration Status

²¹⁹ Maricarmen Cajahuaranga. “CT Kids Ages 15 and Younger Now Qualify for Husky Health Care, regardless of Immigration Status.”

²²⁰ Golvala, Katy. “CT’s Stricter Medicaid Limits Could Reduce Coverage, Advocates Say.” *CT Mirror*, August 8, 2024. <https://ctmirror.org/2024/08/08/ct-husky-a-medicaid-income-limit/> Accessed 23 Oct. 2024.

²²¹ Golvala, Katy. “CT’s Stricter Medicaid Limits Could Reduce Coverage, Advocates Say.”

Conclusion

Medicaid has undergone significant changes throughout U.S. history, shaped by evolving ideologies and different administrations. From its creation in 1965, to its expansion in 2014, Medicaid's coverage has changed millions of people's lives. In Connecticut, the expansion of Medicaid marked a pivotal moment where low-income residents had increased access to healthcare. The state of Medicaid in Connecticut faces challenges like rising costs and ensuring access to quality care, but it remains a vital safety net for many. Different initiatives have expanded access for some while restricting access for others. Overall, Connecticut's Medicaid program is generous and covers almost a million people, about 25 percent of the total population in the state.²²²

Looking to the future, Medicaid in Connecticut will depend on how Governor Lamont views the program: as a vital social safety net for those with limited incomes, or just another program in the budget. On the federal level, it will be interesting to see what the new administration implements toward healthcare. President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to put Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in charge of the Department of Health and Human Services. If he does, Kennedy could cut off Medicaid funding, impose onerous work requirements, or other sweeping changes.²²³ Given that the "federal government pays for 59 percent of Connecticut Medicaid program costs overall," these shifts in administration could have consequences for Connecticut residents.²²⁴ The state would face challenges in adapting to reduced funding, accommodating stricter eligibility criteria and ensuring continuity of care for its vulnerable population. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve in the coming few months, the partnership between federal policies and state-level decisions will ultimately shape the future of Medicaid in Connecticut.

²²² CT Data Collaborative. "Census 2020 Explorer Page." *CTData*, www.ctdata.org/census-2020-explorer-page.

²²³ Guth, Madeline, and MaryBeth Musumeci. "An Overview of Medicaid Work Requirements: What Happened under the Trump and Biden Administrations?" *KFF*, May 3, 2022, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/an-overview-of-medicaid-work-requirements-what-happened-under-the-trump-and-biden-administrations/>

²²⁴ Connecticut Department of Social Services. *Overview, Vision, Structure, Strategies, Key Facts*. 2019. https://www.cga.ct.gov/hs/related/20190110_Medicaid%20Innovation%20Forum/Connecticut%20Medicaid%20101.pdf.

The Financialization of Housing: How Global Markets Are Turning Homes from a Basic Social Need to a Commodity

Ashley Soto

Introduction

Following the Global Financial Crisis, housing shortages have become one of the most pressing challenges facing cities worldwide. Driven by the financialization of housing, the crisis has transformed housing from a fundamental need into a commodity and a financial asset.²²⁵ Financial giants like Blackstone and BlackRock, along with numerous institutional investors, have driven this shift, turning housing into a lucrative sector.²²⁶ As a result, property values have risen sharply, rendering housing increasingly unaffordable for working and middle-class families.²²⁷ Combined with rapid urbanization and stagnant wage growth, these dynamics have widened the gap between housing costs and household incomes, exacerbating economic and social problems in cities across the globe.²²⁸

Key Drivers of the Housing Crisis

Several pivotal factors have contributed to the global housing crisis, fundamentally reshaping housing accessibility and affordability. At the forefront is the financialization of housing. Corporations like Blackstone and BlackRock have amassed extensive real estate portfolios, driving demand and inflating prices, making housing increasingly unattainable. Blackstone is an alternative asset manager that aims to help its customers with their business and financial assets.²²⁹ BlackRock is another leading asset management company that provides investment, advisory, and risk management services.²³⁰ These firms benefit from many working-class individuals' limited economic literacy, turning housing from a community resource into a risky speculative asset and potential profit source.²³¹

The legacy of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis has further exacerbated housing instability. The collapse of the U.S. housing market triggered declines in liquidity across global financial markets. In response, national governments adopted austerity measures to reduce public spending on housing.²³² According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and

²²⁵ OHCHR. Financialization of housing. *OHCHR*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/financialization-housing>.

²²⁶ BlackRock. 2024. "BlackRock in the U.S. | About BlackRock." *BlackRock*. <https://www.blackrock.com/us/individual/about-us/about-blackrock>.

²²⁷ Schaul, K. 2024. "Are Home Prices Still Rising? See How Prices Have Changed In Your Area." *Washington Post*, May 14, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2024/housing-market-price-trends-zip-code-map/>.

²²⁸ Wetzstein, S. 2017. "The Global Urban Housing Affordability Crisis." *Urban Studies*, 54(14), 3159–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017711649>.

²²⁹ Blackstone. 2020. "The Firm." Blackstone.com. <https://www.blackstone.com/the-firm/>.

²³⁰ BlackRock. 2024. "BlackRock in the U.S. | About BlackRock."

²³¹ Aalbers, M. B., & Engelen, E. 2015. Guest editorial. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 47(8), 1597-1605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X15599324>

²³² Duignan, Brian. "Financial Crisis of 2007–08." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. July 3, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/money/financial-crisis-of-2007-2008>.

Development, “austerity policies have reduced the scope for direct public intervention” in housing, increasing reliance on private markets for affordable housing solutions.²³³ Without sufficient public investment, housing shortages became widespread, fueling further competition and price hikes in urban areas.

Rapid urbanization and stagnating wages have compounded these challenges. As more people migrate to cities seeking economic opportunities, demand for housing has surged, especially in metropolitan hubs like London, New York, and Hong Kong.²³⁴ However, wage growth has not kept pace with soaring housing costs. In many cases, housing-related household expenses are rising faster than salary and wage increases.²³⁵ Rising income inequality has deepened this problem, as wealthy individuals and corporations acquire multiple properties, shrinking the available housing supply and exacerbating displacement among lower income populations.

Impacts of the Housing Crisis

The housing crisis has caused profound social and economic consequences, disproportionately affecting lower and middle-income households worldwide. One of the most notable impacts is worsening economic inequality.²³⁶ In many cities, housing expenses consume a growing share of household income, leaving families with limited resources for essentials like healthcare, education, and savings. This financial strain reduces opportunities for upward social mobility, reinforcing a cycle of poverty. Many are forced to live in overcrowded or poorly maintained accommodations, diminishing their quality of life and overall well-being.²³⁷

Spatial inequality is another significant effect, as high housing costs push lower-income residents away from urban centers to distant, less-serviced areas. This displacement disrupts communities and forces residents to endure lengthy commutes to access jobs, education, and healthcare.²³⁸ Moreover, as affordable housing diminishes, entire neighborhoods become gentrified, erasing cultural heritage and displacing longstanding residents. Growing cities, particularly in coastal areas, are more significantly affected than smaller cities in a country’s interior.²³⁹

The rise of a “Generation Rent” has also emerged, with younger people facing dwindling chances of homeownership due to exorbitant prices and stagnant wages.²⁴⁰ A report published by

²³³ Kennett, Peter, Roger Forrest, and Alan Marsh. "The Global Economic Crisis and the Reshaping of Housing Opportunities." *Housing, Theory and Society* 30, no. 1 (2013): 10–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2012.683292>.

²³⁴ Kennett, Peter, Roger Forrest, and Alan Marsh. "The Global Economic Crisis and the Reshaping of Housing Opportunities."

²³⁵ Wetzstein, S. "The Global Urban Housing Affordability Crisis."

²³⁶ Wetzstein, S. "The Global Urban Housing Affordability Crisis."

²³⁷ Wetzstein, S. "The Global Urban Housing Affordability Crisis."

²³⁸ Wetzstein, S. "The Global Urban Housing Affordability Crisis."

²³⁹ Wetzstein, S. "The Global Urban Housing Affordability Crisis."; Richardson, J., Bill Mitchell, and Juan Franco. "Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities." *National Community Reinvestment Coalition*, March 19, 2019. <https://ncrc.org/gentrification/>.

²⁴⁰ Richardson, J., Mitchell B., & Franco, J. "Shifting Neighborhoods."

Statista, an online platform specializing in statistics, highlights that although U.S. wage growth reached 6.7 percent in 2022, it remained insufficient to offset high inflation rates. One quote from the report underscores this issue: “Even the higher wage rates in states like California and Washington may be lacking—one analysis found that if the minimum wage had kept up with productivity, the minimum hourly wage in the U.S. should have been \$22.88 per hour in 2021.” These effects are not felt equally, however, as wage disparities are evident based on both gender and race.”²⁴¹ With fewer individuals able to own property, dependence on rental housing has increased, limiting tenants' stability and reducing their ability to build wealth over time. This shift threatens long-term economic security and intergenerational wealth transfer, impacting current individuals and future generations.

Policy and Governance Issues

Policy and governance challenges are central to the persistence of the housing crisis, as market-oriented policies and austerity measures have left governments struggling to address affordability. Neoliberal policy frameworks, which emphasize market solutions over direct government intervention, have limited affordable housing development in favor of incentivizing private investment. This approach has led to insufficient affordable housing stock, as developers often prioritize high-end, profitable projects, leaving affordable housing underfunded and underserved. The policies have often resulted in “market-friendly interventions [that] dominate affordable housing discourses and policy,” without addressing the needs of lower-income groups effectively.²⁴²

The resulting policy-outcome gap—the disparity between the intended goals of housing policies and their real-world effects—is evident worldwide. For instance, policies meant to encourage affordable development often fail to meet their targets because of inadequate enforcement and misaligned incentives. In some regions, rent caps and limited subsidies for affordable housing have been implemented. Yet, these measures rarely address the root issues of demand and availability and sometimes further disincentivize new construction.²⁴³ Institutional investors—large corporations managing investment funds on behalf of individuals, add another layer of complexity. By acquiring substantial housing stock, these investors drive up property values and prioritize profit over affordability. While investment in housing could theoretically increase supply, it has instead concentrated wealth in the hands of a few major players.²⁴⁴

These governance issues reflect a lack of political will and resources to regulate housing markets effectively. For meaningful progress, policymakers must balance market interests with stronger, proactive measures that protect housing as a fundamental right rather than a commodity. Housing affordability is generally assessed by the portion of a person's income spent on rent or mortgage payments. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

²⁴¹ "Wage Growth vs Inflation U.S. 2022." *Statista*, September 17, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1351276/wage-growth-vs-inflation-us/>.

²⁴² Wage Growth vs Inflation U.S. 2022."

²⁴³ Richardson, J., Mitchell B., & Franco, J. "Shifting Neighborhoods."

²⁴⁴ Economic Policy Institute. *Charting Wage Stagnation*. <https://www.epi.org/publication/charting-wage-stagnation/>.

Development (HUD), “spending more than 30% of income on housing makes someone ‘cost-burdened,’ while spending over 50% makes them “severely burdened.” Households in these situations often struggle to afford other essentials like food, healthcare, and transportation.²⁴⁵

To substantively address the crisis, policymakers must implement regulations that limit speculative investments, promote affordable housing development, and protect tenants from displacement. Governments should support individuals through housing subsidies, which differ from entitlement programs like food stamps or Medicaid. Unlike entitlements, housing subsidies require specific eligibility criteria and are not universally guaranteed. Policies aimed at increasing incomes—such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), raising the minimum wage, or implementing a universal basic income (UBI)—could alleviate financial strain and improve access to affordable housing.²⁴⁶

Conclusion

The global housing crisis highlights the complex interplay of financial, social, and policy-driven forces reshaping housing accessibility and affordability. Driven by financialization, rapid urbanization, and rising inequality, housing has transformed from a basic need into a profit-driven asset, making it increasingly unattainable for average citizens. The resulting impacts—worsened inequality, spatial segregation, and a growing generation of renters—underscore the urgent need for targeted policy intervention. Current market-led governance approaches, while intended to stimulate housing supply, insufficiently address affordability and availability. Without comprehensive measures, the housing crisis will continue to deepen social divides and undermine economic stability. Reframing housing as a societal priority is essential to fostering more equitable and sustainable urban futures for all.

²⁴⁵ Schuetz, Jenny. "How Can Government Make Housing More Affordable?" *Brookings*, October 15, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-can-government-make-housing-more-affordable/>.

²⁴⁶ Schuetz, Jenny. "How Can Government Make Housing More Affordable?"

Redefining Emergency Care: How EMTALA Applies To Reproductive Health After Dobbs

Yana Tartakovskiy

Introduction

Healthcare in the United States is becoming increasingly politicized, specifically in the context of women's reproductive freedom. Since 2022, the right to abortion and the regulations surrounding it have been heavily debated in the media. Abortion at its core is a medical procedure and the language surrounding it can be misconstrued by policymakers and others without a scientific background. Abortion first became politicized when it was established as a right in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). Abortion was found to be a right to privacy under a penumbra of Amendments; it was federally applied to women's reproductive rights in allowing them to take contraceptives and have abortions.²⁴⁷ In 2022, the landmark case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* overturned *Roe* and the federal government no longer recognized the right to privacy as it applied to abortions.²⁴⁸ This decision left it up to the state's police powers to determine whether or not to allow abortions and how to restrict this right. Thirteen states had trigger laws that automatically went into effect, banning abortions overnight. Some of these states did not have an exception for abortions in instances where they were necessary for life-saving care.²⁴⁹

In response to the bans, in July 2022, the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a mandate that hospitals and physicians in all states must provide necessary emergency abortion services to comply with the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA), a federal law enacted in 1986.²⁵⁰ The U.S. Department for Health and Human Services (HHS) is a federal agency tasked with overseeing the health and well-being of all Americans, which includes providing advances in the sciences underlying medicine, public health, and social services. Any mandate or law from this agency is seen to supersede state law because of the U.S. Constitution's Supremacy Clause, which establishes that the Constitution itself is the law of the land, regardless of state policy. HHS gets its power to govern and pass laws directly from the Constitution because it is established under the rule of the executive branch, specifically the President of the United States.²⁵¹ EMTALA was created in response to hospitals that transferred uninsured or Medicaid patients to public hospitals without providing stabilizing treatment, such as a medical screening. EMTALA requires hospitals that receive Medicare funds from the government and have operating emergency departments to screen and treat emergency medical conditions in a non-discriminatory manner, regardless of a patient's

²⁴⁷ *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973)

²⁴⁸ *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022)

²⁴⁹ "Policy Tracker: Exceptions to State Abortion Bans and Early Gestational Limits." *KFF*. Accessed November 17, 2024. <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/dashboard/exceptions-in-state-abortion-bans-and-early-gestational-limits/>

²⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Reinforcement of EMTALA Obligations Specific to Patients Who Are Pregnant or Are Experiencing Pregnancy Loss (QSO-21-22-Hospitals-Updated July 2022)." *Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services*, 2022.

²⁵¹ Shen, Wei-Wen. "EMTALA Emergency Abortion Care Litigation: Overview and Initial Observations (Part I of II)." *CRS Report No. LSB10850*, Congressional Research Service, 2022. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/LSB/LSB10850>.

ability to pay, insurance status, race, and national origin.²⁵² In the matter of abortion, EMTALA stipulates that “if a physician believes that a pregnant patient presenting at an emergency department is experiencing an emergency medical condition...and that abortion is the stabilizing treatment...the physician must provide that treatment. When a state law prohibits abortion...that state law is preempted.” Preemption is when federal law must take precedence over state law. If a pregnant person enters an emergency room in a hospital that accepts Medicare, and the only way to save their life is to provide an abortion, the physicians must proceed with the procedure, even if the state law has an abortion ban in place.²⁵³ Since the HHS mandate, there have been several legal cases challenging the authority of the mandate: *Moyle v United States* and *Becerra v. State of Texas*. The Supreme Court will decide if this mandate, as it applies to abortion procedures, is constitutional and will demonstrate the consequences if this mandate is broken down by the Court.

The legal debate stems from what the Constitution designates to states as “police powers.” Police powers of a state are broad and have historically been known to apply to healthcare regulation. State police power can mandate quarantines, confine the mentally ill, and require medical examinations or vaccines. The state’s police power can prescribe reasonable laws necessary to preserve order and public health, safety, welfare, and morals within the limits of state and federal constitutions.²⁵⁴ The HHS mandate oversteps these police powers in a way that states, like Texas, find to be unconstitutional. However, since the George W. Bush administration, HHS has been able to interpret EMTALA to require pregnancy terminations if it represents the stabilizing care necessary to save the pregnant patient’s life or prevent grave harm to health without any constitutional challenges. President Biden’s administration, per the HHS mandate, has clearly outlined that abortion is considered an emergency medical procedure and must be provided in life-threatening situations. Only in light of *Dobbs* has this interpretation been called into question.²⁵⁵ *Moyle v. United States* and *Becerra v. State of Texas* are forcing the Supreme Court to answer if state abortion bans are coming into direct conflict with EMTALA and resolve the issue of whether or not requiring an abortion, per the HHS mandate, is constitutional.

Moyle v. United States

Once *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, Idaho established a law that 1) prohibited abortion, 2) provided no exception for the grave harm pregnant people would experience, like fertility issues, and 3) the only exception was if the abortion was necessary to save the pregnant person’s life. Before the law went into effect, the United States sued Idaho under EMTALA, claiming that the Idaho ban did not allow hospitals that receive Medicare funds to perform abortions when needed

²⁵² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Reinforcement of EMTALA Obligations Specific to Patients Who Are Pregnant or Are Experiencing Pregnancy Loss*. 2022.

²⁵³ "Preemption." Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/preemption>.

²⁵⁴ 42 USC §1395dd.

²⁵⁵ Goodwin, Michael B., Anne M. Whelan, and Lawrence O. Gostin. "The Supreme Court and the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act—A Dangerous Time for Us All." *JAMA* 332, no. 15 (2024): 1233–1234. <https://doi:10.1001/jama.2024.14868>.

to prevent serious health harms.²⁵⁶ The district court ruled in favor of the United States and allowed HHS to establish a preliminary injunction that would stop Idaho from enforcing its abortion ban. Idaho appealed and the Supreme Court decided to hear the case instead of letting it go to the next level of appeals court. By doing this, the Supreme Court allowed Idaho to reinstate its ban in January 2024. In August 2024, the Supreme Court decided not to rule on the issue just yet, finding that the case should go through the regular appeals process and sent it back to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. However, the decision the Court issued did bring to light the justices' preliminary opinions on whether or not EMTALA supersedes state law as it applies to compelling hospitals to perform abortions. Justice Alito, while agreeing with the other justices to send the case back to the Ninth Circuit, still filed a dissenting opinion and wrote that "EMTALA never compels an abortion no matter how much the procedure is needed to prevent grave physical harm or even death."²⁵⁷ Justice Jackson, Kagan, and Sotomayor disagreed with Justice Alito and while agreeing with the majority opinion, wrote a concurring opinion emphasizing that EMTALA can compel abortion in specific cases as abortion is a medical procedure no different than any other procedure that EMTALA relates to. Justice Barret, while also concurring with the majority decision to send this case back to the Ninth Circuit, broadened the scope of the issue behind whether or not EMTALA preempts state laws. Specifically, Justice Barret asked if it is constitutional for EMTALA, which also gets its power from Congress's Spending Clause, to stop states from enforcing their criminal laws.²⁵⁸ The Spending Clause allows the government to "collect taxes, pay debts, and provide for the common defense and general welfare."²⁵⁹ Programs such as Medicaid and Medicare are funds that Congress allocates to hospitals under the Spending Clause. Justice Barret's decision references how the Biden administration is essentially telling states that unless they recognize abortion as an emergency procedure, even if it is criminalized in states like Idaho, the federal government will withhold Medicare and Medicaid funds that are administered through EMTALA and the Spending Clause. This is a gray area because the government does not send Medicare or Medicaid funds to the state, but rather to individual hospitals. Therefore, state opposition to the government using EMTALA and the Spending Clause powers to regulate "state policies and practices" may not apply here. Private hospitals are also not forced to receive Medicare funds and can opt out of receiving those funds. Should hospitals not comply with EMTALA by not providing abortions, the federal government can withhold the hospital from receiving future funds because they are allowed to attach conditions to the way they spend their money. The state may only regulate healthcare services to the extent of its police powers. However, these powers cannot conflict with Congress as the Constitution outlines. In *NFIB v. Sbelius* (2012), the Court found that a law, the Affordable Care Act, could not use Congress's Spending Clause to impose a condition on states to expand Medicaid but could allow states to opt out of the Medicaid Expansion Program and withhold future funds, as

²⁵⁶ *Moyle v. United States*, 603 U.S. (2024)

²⁵⁷ Moyle, "Improviently Granted," but Justices' Positions on EMTALA, Emergency Abortions on Display," *Health Affairs Forefront*, July 1, 2024. <https://doi:10.1377/forefront.20240701.185483>.

²⁵⁸ *Moyle v. United States*, 603 U.S. (2024); Plafker, Robert, and Ethan Lee. "Moyle v. United States." *Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School*. Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/cert/23-726>.

²⁵⁹ U.S. Const. art. I, § 8, cl. 1; "Art I.S8.C1.2.1 Overview of Spending Clause." *Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School*, Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution-conan/article-1/section-8/clause-1/overview-of-spending-clause>

long as states retained existing funding.²⁶⁰ This case applies to the EMTALA challenges of Moyle because private hospitals can choose to opt out of receiving Medicaid funding. What has yet to be determined in this case is the extent to which private hospitals retain the same rights as a state does when it comes to regulating healthcare services. The major question Moyle will answer is if private hospitals will be seen as an extension of the state, even if the state plays no direct intermediary role between the federal government and a private hospital receiving Medicaid funds.

Becerra v. State of Texas

The state of Texas challenged the HHS mandate, specifically that EMTALA requiring physicians to provide an abortion when that care is the necessary or stabilizing treatment was unconstitutional, and successfully won. The district court decided that the HHS mandate, through EMTALA, was forcing providers in Texas to administer what the court saw as elective abortions and ruled this unconstitutional, even though their understanding of “elective” included abortions that would mitigate the harm on a pregnant person’s life.²⁶¹ The Fifth Circuit Appeals Court upheld this decision because the court decided that EMTALA did not address specific medical procedures or treatments. It had a savings clause that limited the preemption of EMTALA over state law: “Provisions of this section do not preempt any State or local law requirement, except to the extent that the requirement directly conflicts with a requirement of this section.” Since the Fifth Circuit found that there was no conflict between what was required of hospitals under EMTALA and not providing an abortion, they ruled that EMTALA could not preempt the Texas abortion ban by requiring hospitals to perform those abortions. In deciding this, the Fifth Circuit upheld the injunction the state imposed on HHS’ mandate, which essentially allowed the Texas abortion ban to continue as the litigation proceeded and this ban is still in place today.²⁶² President Biden in July 2024 appealed to the Supreme Court to intervene, as it did in Idaho, hoping they would block the injunction and stop the ban. However, in October 2024, after deciding to send the Idaho case back to the Circuit Court for a regular appeals process, the Court denied this request.²⁶³ The Supreme Court agreed with the Texas Attorney General who argued that the Idaho and Texas bans were not the same, as the Texas ban, very vaguely, allowed abortion when necessary to prevent a serious risk of “substantial impairment of a major bodily function”. However, the lack of specificity in this phrasing confuses providers attempting to legally assist in an abortion. At the moment, because the Supreme Court will not hear the case, there is no other appeals avenue HHS or the Biden administration can take in suing the state of Texas until the Ninth Circuit Court rules on the Idaho case. Should the Ninth Circuit Court ruling come into conflict with the Fifth Circuit Court ruling, this may create enough standing for the Supreme Court to finally resolve this conflict between EMTALA and the abortion bans in states that do not have an exception for saving a pregnant person’s life or preventing grave harm to a pregnant person. However, as it is evident from what some of the justices wrote before they sent the Idaho case back to the Circuit Court, it seems that they will either not see a conflict between

²⁶⁰ *NFIB v. Sbelius*, 567 U.S. 519 (2012)

²⁶¹ *State Of Texas v. Becerra et al*, No. 6:2024cv00211 - Document 18 (E.D. Tex. 2024)

²⁶² *Texas v. Becerra*, No. 23-10246 (5th Cir. 2024)

²⁶³ Howe, Amy. "Court Turns Down Biden’s Bid for Intervention in Texas Emergency Abortion Dispute." *SCOTUSblog*, October 7, 2024. <https://www.scotusblog.com/2024/10/court-turns-down-bidens-bid-for-intervention-in-texas-emergency-abortion-dispute/>.

EMTALA and state abortion bans, or they will claim that EMTALA cannot stop a state from enforcing its criminal code, as abortion is currently illegal in those states in question.

The Future of EMTALA

These cases are a warning to future policymakers. Should the Court decide that EMTALA does not come into conflict with abortion bans or go even further as to say that EMTALA is not constitutional, this would create a major shift in the way women have access to healthcare in abortion-banned states. EMTALA serves to protect all U.S. residents from discrimination when it comes to providing emergency services, and by allowing abortion bans to continue, despite EMTALA, many women will be turned away from these services. As the law's protections become weaker for one group, a broader precedent will be set.²⁶⁴ If EMTALA excludes one medical procedure, it can then be used to justify other bans on life-saving medical procedures. This is the same warning Justice Thomas gave in the *Dobbs* decision, as he went as far as to say that this precedent would allow the Court to reconsider a lot of the rights that *Roe* paved the way for.²⁶⁵ In a similar fashion, excluding abortion from EMTALA today will harm women and other patients seeking another emergency medical procedure tomorrow, only because a state has decided to criminalize this procedure.

Another issue at hand is the way clinicians and medical providers will respond to the Court's decision on how EMTALA applies to abortions. Research since *Dobbs* has shown that many clinicians now fear losing their licenses because of the unclear exception under which abortion may or may not be performed. The inability to have a standardized system for practicing care has created moral distress amongst clinicians, pushing them to either practice only in states that allow abortion or quit their jobs altogether.²⁶⁶ These legal fears will continue to diminish the access women have to reproductive healthcare in abortion-banned states, and it is important to note those states have been experiencing a decline in access even before *Dobbs*. Reproductive healthcare encompasses more than just providing abortions, but not allowing abortions can lead to 1) women traveling to providers in neighboring states to receive those abortions, 2) states forcing maternal care deserts where women stop receiving timely access to healthcare, and 3) other states, where abortion is allowed, pressuring providers to over-admit the number of patients seeking abortion procedures.

In light of the recent election and administration changes, the Trump administration has made no comment on where his Department for Health and Human Services will continue pursuing these cases against the states of Idaho and Texas. Project 2025 outline recommendations for President Trump to drop these lawsuits and reverse President Biden administration's recommendation that mandated necessary emergency abortion services to

²⁶⁴ Goodwin, M. B., A. M. Whelan, and L. O. Gostin. "The Supreme Court and the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act—A Dangerous Time for Us All." *JAMA* 332, no. 15 (2024): 1233–1234. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2024.14868>.

²⁶⁵ *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 597 U.S. 215 (2022)

²⁶⁶ Heisler, M., N. Mitchell, W. Arey, M. Erenberg, K. Torres, and P. K. Shah. "US Abortion Bans Should Not Pre-empt the Duty to Provide Life-saving Abortion Care to Pregnant Patients in Medical Emergencies." *The Lancet* 403, no. 10434 (2024): 1318–1321. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)00551-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)00551-8).

comply with EMTALA.²⁶⁷

Conclusion

And so a pregnant person with an emergency complication will find themselves in one of two situations: they either live but with significant damage to their bodies, creating problems for future pregnancies or even preventing them from getting pregnant again altogether. Or they die, along with their fetus, and now there is one more pregnant person who adds to the already concerning high maternal mortality rate across the U.S. Abortion is a heavily debated social issue and understandably so, some choose to get one and some do not. In delaying their response to the conflicts EMTALA has with state abortion bans or in refusing to see this conflict, the Supreme Court finds itself responsible for the alarming rate at which pregnant people are dying and the rate at which clinicians are choosing to stop providing timely access to reproductive healthcare.

²⁶⁷ Sobel, Laurie, et al. "How Pending Health-Related Lawsuits Could Be Impacted by the Incoming Trump Administration." *KFF*, November 2024. Accessed December 1, 2024. <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/how-pending-health-related-lawsuits-could-be-impacted-by-the-incoming-trump-administration/>.