Mission

ATINER is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent and non-profit **Association** with a **Mission** to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, **as well as engage with professionals from other fields**. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to *Plato's Academy* and *Aristotle's Lyceum.* Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, **Athens***"…is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". (*"Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War).* It is ATINER's **mission** to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. *Education* and *(Re)searching* for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why *Education* and *Research* are the two core words in ATINER's name.

Athens Journal of Social Sciences
Editorial and Reviewers' Board

President's Message

All ATINER's publications including its e-journals are open access without any costs (submission, processing, publishing, open access paid by authors, open access paid by readers etc.) and is independent of presentations at any of the many small events (conferences, symposiums, forums, colloquiums, courses, roundtable discussions) organized by ATINER throughout the year and entail significant costs of participating. The intellectual property rights of the submitting papers remain with the author. Before you submit, please make sure your paper meets the basic academic standards, which includes proper English. Some articles will be selected from the numerous papers that have been presented at the various annual international academic conferences organized by the different divisions and units of the Athens Institute for Education and Research. The plethora of papers presented every year will enable the editorial board of each journal to select the best, and in so doing produce a top-quality academic journal. In addition to papers presented, ATINER will encourage the independent submission of papers to be evaluated for publication.

The current issue is the fourth of the seventh volume of the *Athens Journal of Social Sciences* (AJSS), published by the **published by the Social Sciences Division of ATINER.**

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Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER

Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

15th Annual International Conference on Psychology
24-27 May 2021, Athens, Greece

The Psychology Unit of ATINER organizes its **15th Annual International Conference on Psychology, 25-28 May 2021, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Social Sciences. The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars and students of psychology and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2021/FORM-PSY.doc).

Important Dates
- Abstract Submission: **20 October 2020**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **27 April 2021**

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- **Dr. Thanos Patelis,** Head, Psychology Unit of ATINER & Research Scholar, Fordham University, USA.

Social and Educational Program
The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
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- Delphi Visit
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More information can be found here: www.atiner.gr/social-program

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Conference Fees
Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
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Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

15th Annual International Conference on Sociology
3-6 May 2021, Athens, Greece

The Sociology Unit of ATINER is organizing its **15th Annual International Conference on Sociology, 3-6 May 2021, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Social Sciences. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Sociology, Social Work and other related fields. Theoretical and empirical research papers will be considered. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2021/FORM-SOC.doc).

Important Dates
- Abstract Submission: : **5 October 2020**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **5 April 2021**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference
- **Dr. Domenico Maddaloni,** Head, Sociology Research Unit, ATINER & Associate Professor, University of Salerno, Italy.
- **Dr. Yorgo Pasadeos,** Director Social Sciences Division, ATINER & Professor Emeritus, University of Alabama USA.
- **Dr. Sharon Claire Bolton**, Head, Management Research Unit, ATINER & Professor, The Management School, University of Stirling, Scotland.

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USA Violent Cause Mortality: Analysis of Trends and the Political Controversies of Prevention

By Sonia Salari*, Carrie LeFevre Sillito† & Terry Allen‡

Population adjusted violent cause mortality (VCM) is higher in the United States than any of the other developed nations. This paper examines data available to compare international differences as well as U.S. within group patterns of suicide, homicide, murder-suicide, familicide and mass public fatalities (mass shootings) by sex and age. The majority of weapons used in U.S. VCM events are firearms, but they vary in the capacity to injure and kill victims. Adding to the conditions, the estimated rate of private gun possession has recently increased. Our research compares the U.S. with international data from a number of sources. To better understand violent cause mortality within the U.S., we analyze national level data from the Center for Disease Control Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (CDC WISQARS), 32 years of FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR), news surveillance Intimate Partner Homicide Suicide (IPHS) and key findings from a mass shootings data archive. We then describe the cultural and political context across various states in the U.S. and the forces working in favor and against violence prevention.

Keywords: *Homicide, Suicide, Murder-Suicide, Mass Shootings, Prevention, Policy.*

Introduction

Sociologists have long noted that violent death rates in the form of homicide and suicide have a disruptive influence and signal larger societal distress. Much of this violence can be attributed to available weapons utilized, also referred to as 'lethal means.' High levels or increases in violent death mortality indicates a serious threat to public health, and may require legislative or governmental intervention for the sake of individual, family and community health. We illustrate how international comparisons can shine a light on prevalence and policies to deal with violence within a cultural context. Next we examine a number of sources to determine within group differences in the United States for suicide, homicide, murder-suicide, familicide and mass fatalities by sex and age. Relationships are important as well, since much of this violence occurs among acquaintances for male victims and intimate partners and family for their female counterparts. While young women are struck down in the process of leaving a violent relationship, older women are murdered by suicidal husbands who decide to kill her, usually by firearm. Mass killings, whether they are in families (familicide) or among strangers in public, are made possible in part, by access to lethal means --with

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the capacity for widespread fatal injuries. In the discussion, we provide history and cultural context description of American political ideologies and pressures which provide a greater understanding of the conditions which foster these violent cause mortality patterns. U.S. gun laws protect private ownership, and any regulations are controversial. A powerful and well-funded gun lobby has influenced American political election campaigns. Future practice and policy implications for prevention of violent death mortality are discussed.

Literature Review

Most developed nations experience a natural increase quality of life and longevity among residents over time. American life expectancy (LE) was on the same track in the past, however recent decades have shown stunted growth and even a decline in LE for multiple years in a row. The causes of this pattern are attributed to poor access to affordable healthcare, the opioid epidemic, an increase in suicide (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017) and a corresponding uptick in homicide rates as well (Allen, Salari and Buckner, 2018; FBI 2018). This paper focuses on violent cause mortality, so we concentrate on the latter two indicators, and discuss how they relate to U.S. policy and prevention.

Lethal Means

According to the Small Arms Survey (2018) The United States is number one in the world for private possession of guns, and this saturation has increased from 89 per 100 in 2011 to 120 per 100 in 2018. This source estimates Yemen is a distant second with 51 privately held firearms per 100 persons. How does this statistic play out in American homes and families? Not everyone in the U.S. owns a gun. Estimates suggest 42% of American households contain one or multiple firearms. In addition, gun ownership is more common among men, whites and those in rural areas (Parker et al, 2017). Research has found guns in the home are associated with greater risk of suicide among occupants and also increases the chance of being the victim of a homicide (Anglemyer, 2014). A 2016 survey of 1,444 American gun owners found less than half secure all of their weapons (Crafasi et al, 2018). Access to lethal means is a major factor related to the violent cause mortality patterns described in this article.

Most developed nations have legislated some degree of control over the public possession of firearms (Small Arms Survey, 2018). However, in the U.S., states vary with regard to their level of regulation and enforcement. For example, there is no country-wide gun registry for all states, so it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers or to remove lethal means from those banned from possession (such as violent felons, subjects of a protective order or those convicted on domestic violence offenses). In addition, some states require a criminal background check for purchase of guns, while others allow unregulated private sales from online classified ads. Record keeping rules of official gun dealers are also variable, depending upon state. These and many other loopholes have been intentionally

encouraged by the powerful gun lobby, which strives to influence political representatives, and removes or steps back regulations.

The Dickey Amendment has resulted in a barrier to federal funding to the CDC for firearm injury research which could lead to gun control, and this has been in place in the U.S. Federal Budget over 2 decades. Over that time period, 500,000 American lives have been lost to gunfire, and 1.5 million additional persons have been injured (Rajan et al, 2018). Why does the U.S. ignore this costly problem, rather than instituting reforms which would improve public health? The anti-reform perspective is supported by the gun manufacturing lobby and is built upon concerns of a 'slippery slope,' where one gun regulation, lawsuit or education about household injury risk is feared to result in additional limitations, thus reducing 'gun freedoms' set forth in the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Only states committed to gun control (mostly in New England, such as New York or other states with major metropolitan areas, such as California or Illinois), have instituted gun registries and restrictions for purchase and possession. Rural states and those with pro-gun culture (such as the Intermountain West and Deep South) may intentionally lack documentation which would serve as barriers to enforcement of firearm laws. As an example, after the 2012 Sandy Hook Newtown Connecticut massacre where 20 first graders and 6 teachers were gunned down, 109 laws went into effect 39 tightened gun restrictions (including New York State), while 70 loosened gun restrictions (e.g., Utah, etc.) making it easier to obtain a firearm (New York Times, 2013). Siegel et al (2017) have collected a comprehensive State Firearm Law Database to examine suicide and homicide rates in states with varying levels of regulation. They have found evidence to suggest states with more regulations have reduced levels of VCM from firearms (Siegel and Rothman, 2016; Siegel et al, 2019).

U.S. Suicide

Self-harm in the form of suicide has grown in recent years and accounts for 44,876 recorded deaths in 2016, or 13.89 per 100,000 population (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC, 2017). In that year there were 123 suicides per day in the U.S., which works out to one every 11 minutes (Violence Policy Center, 2018a). Firearm suicides accounted for 22,938 deaths and a population adjusted rate of 7.10 suicides per 100,000 population (CDC, 2017). Miller & Hemenway (2008) note that suicide tends to be an impulsive decision by many, and readily available firearms make this combination particularly lethal.

Suicide patterns emerge as they are broken down by age and sex. Teen suicide is a big problem in the U.S., and has been traditionally a male behavior. However, teen girls have shown a marked increase in lethal self-harm in recent years (Washington Post, 2019). Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for 10-34 year olds). Rates are also high in mid (4th leading cause of death 45-54) and later life (8th for 55-64). Older (mostly white) men have been known to be highly suicidal, and that trend has only accelerated with the aging of the Baby Boom cohort (Washington Post, 2013) and those in the younger generations of people who are

shown to have even higher rates (Phillips, 2014).

Fatal self-harm is four times higher among males (22.4) compared to females (6.1), especially among older men (31 per 100,000) (CDC Fatal Injury Data, WISQARS, 2017). Women are less likely to kill themselves, and if they do, their methods differ from their male counterparts. Specifically, men and boys tend to suicide using highly lethal means (e.g., firearms), and the fatal intentions are more often completed. Girls and women are as likely to attempt suicide, but tend to use less violent methods (poison or pills), and to survive, when compared to male patterns.

U.S. Homicide

In the United States 2016, there were 19,103 homicides (5.91 per 100,000) (CDC 2017). The FBI Uniform Crime Reports indicate an 8.4 percent increase from 2015 to 2016 (FBI, 2018). While the patterns have declined since the peak 1980s/early 1990s, the rates seem to again be on the rise. The U.S. also holds the distinction of having the highest population adjusted homicide in the developed world (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016), and the majority of these deaths are caused by discharge of a firearm (Washington Post, 2012). In 2016 gun discharge mortality accounted for 4.46 homicides and 14,415 individuals lost (CDC, 2017).

Homicide victims and offenders are most often male. In 2015, females made up 21 percent of U.S. homicide victims (Office for Victims of Crime, 2018). Their assailant was typically a current or former intimate partner (Allen, Salari & Buckner, 2018). Women age 50+ comprised 26% of female homicides (representing the largest female age group), by contrast men of that age range comprised only 15% of male homicide victims (Office for Victims of Crime, 2018). Young adults have the highest rate of homicide among any age group, measured at 11.9 per 100,000 (Smith & Cooper, 2013). Among leading causes of death, homicide ranks as the 3rd for those 15 to 44 years old in 2016. For individuals aged 40-54, homicide continued to rank in the top 10 LCD. Above age 50, disease surpasses injury causes of death, but suicide remains salient (14th LCD) (CDC, 2017). Interestingly, the percent of homicides increased for people age 50 and over between 2007 (14.4%) and 2015 (17%) VPC 2015 and recent years have marked an increased frequency of arrest among older offenders (Carson & Sabol, 2016).

U.S. Murder-Suicides, Familicide and Other Mass Killings

Many intimate partner murders of women are followed by suicide of the perpetrator. Murder-suicides are estimated to comprise 1,000 to 1,500 deaths per year and the majority (2/3rds) involved intimate partnership (Violence Policy Center, 2018). The exact figures are unclear, because linked homicides and suicides have traditionally been counted separately. Salari and Sillito have examined intimate partner murder suicides (IPHS) across age categories for over a decade, and found age and sex patterns. Men were the perpetrators and they most frequently utilized firearm methods. Younger male perpetrators more likely

exhibited 'homicidal' motives, driven by rage toward their current or former partner. Older men typically exhibited secretive, inward, suicidal motivations, and decided to kill their wives in the process (Salari & Sillito 2016). Secondary victims are potentially injured or killed during IPHS events, and Sillito and Salari (2011) examined the child outcomes among parents age 18 to 44. 'Familicide' is the term used to describe kinship relations with multiple fatalities in an event. These types of mass killings have been occurring in American families for decades, but without adequate attention to paid to the problem. Now 'mass killings' have spilled over into public places. These may or may not include the suicide of the perpetrator. However, guns with high powered capabilities and ammunition magazines are more often used intentionally to cause maximum death and damage.

Our research utilizes a variety of datasets and cumulative expertise on these topics to examine violent cause mortality (VCM) differences, highlighting firearm homicides and suicides, murder-suicide, familicide and mass public killings-- asking how do U.S. and other countries in the developed world compare? This is important because those other nations have more tightly regulated guns, even when the culture has a pro-gun stance. Secondly, we ask, what are the within group differences found in the United States, particularly as it relates to patterns of VCM by age and sex—and state differences in regulation and firearm culture? Finally, we will bring this information together with firearm laws to propose potential solutions for VCM prevention.

Methodology

This research article is primarily descriptive, to bring a better understanding of graphic depictions illustrating violent cause mortality. The research questions will be addressed, with the use of national level data sets to improve our understanding of homicide and suicide mortality by sex and age, along with cultural and political explanations of these trends. This paper is based on research from a compilation of sources to examine US homicide and suicide and mass victim mortality, along with data on state firearms laws.

A comparison of the most recent data for violent death mortality figures around the world can be found at https://www.gunpolicy.org. These data were utilized to create figures comparing international developed countries to the United States. The countries chosen include Japan, France, Finland, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Israel and the UK.

Suicide and homicide cause of death within the United States can be obtained using the Centers for Disease Control Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System—(WISQARS) CDC 2017 Data https://webappa.cdc.gov/sas web/ncipc/leadcause.html. This source was used to map official population adjusted suicide rates on a U.S. map using the program called Map Chart https:// mapchart.net/usa.html. In order to see the variations in population adjusted mortality, we noted the top 5 states in red, those above the national average of 13.24 in pink and white represents below the average suicide rates.

We utilized FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) to determine patterns

of single victim, single offender homicides over 32 years, 1980-2011. The figures show jittered scatterplots for individual homicides, by age (10 year increments) and sex broken down by offender and victim. Jittering allows us to distinguish among data points, which may have laid on top of one another if this technique of smearing the results were omitted.

To examine the most common form of murder-suicide (VPC 2018), we utilized data collected by Salari and Sillito documenting news surveillance of 728 intimate partner homicide suicide IPHS events nationwide, which documented the details of approximately 1600 deaths between 1999 and 2005. Key words were searched for over 1200 television transcripts and newspaper sources from an online clearinghouse as well as Lexis-Nexis, google alerts, library articles and several other sources. Murder-suicides and joint suicides were added if they included a current or former intimate partner. Violence among other family relationships (such as siblings, parent-child), neighbors or co-workers were excluded. However, secondary victims to the IPHS were included in the sample and content analysis. Additional data collection is in progress, which will include 20 years of cases between 1999 and 2019. The analysis will be informed by research which is published and under review (Salari & Sillito 2016; under review). These IPHS cases had the potential to include additional secondary victims, such as children and other family members. Sillito and Salari 2011 provides information about child outcomes in these violent events, including those who witnessed IPHS, others who were killed or the children orphaned but not present.

Mass public shootings among strangers, acquaintances or current/former family members are another form of violent cause mortality in the United States. Journalists and others have kept track of these incidents and catalogued their details. One such database includes 'indiscriminant rampages,' which are defined as mass shootings with four or more deaths (not counting the offender) for the years between 1982 and 2019. Gang violence and deaths in the commission of traditional crimes are excluded. These cases are publicly available at https://docs. google.com/spreadsheets/d/1b9o6uDO18sLxBqPwl_Gh9bdhW-ev_dABH83M5 Vb5L8o/htmlview#gid=0 (Follman, Aronsen and Pan, 2019). Their methods of inclusion represent a conservative estimate, since President Obama's Public Law112-265 encouraged government accounting of incidents and defined 'mass killings' as 3 or more fatalities (Follman, Aronsen and Pan, 2019).

Policy regarding firearms will also be addressed in the discussion section of this research article. To inform this topic, we will rely on studies of violent cause mortality using the State Firearm Law Database – from Boston University. These data are publicly available with permission and a comprehensive report of the contents is available at http://www.statefirearmlaws.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/report_0.pdf

With the shortage of space, we describe work we have done with these data and report the main findings from the Siegel et al's (2016) research team.

Findings/Results

We use a variety of sources to bring together a picture about VCM in the United States, particularly as it relates to suicide, homicide, murder-suicide and familicide/mass homicides. Using official statistics, we find in 2016, in the US is higher than other developed countries (NCHS, 2017).

International Comparisons

Figure 1 illustrates homicides and suicides from all methods, indicating suicide outpaces homicide in all the selected countries, particularly in Japan. While the Japanese regulate guns, the high pressure and collectivist attitude results in a great deal of self-harm from non-firearm methods. Still, the United States has the greatest rate of mortality from homicide and suicide causes combined, and also by far the highest population adjusted homicide rate.

Figure 1. *All Cause Homicide and Suicide per 100,000 Population Selected Developed Nations*
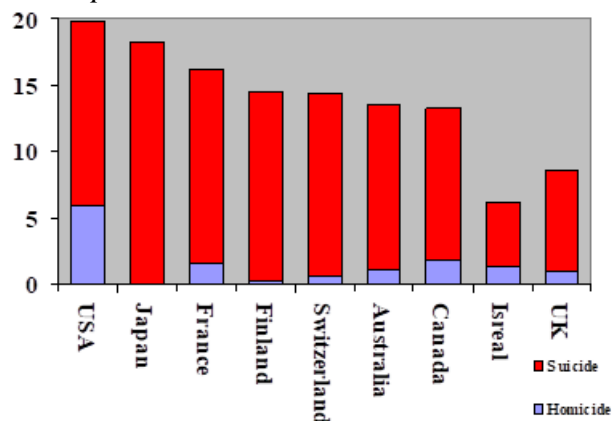
Sources: See bottom Figure 2

To get a better indication of the role of guns as the mode of killing in the United States, we examine Figure 2 which shows the homicides and suicides, specifically from firearm methods. The United States has the greatest firearm ownership in the world, and the highest population adjusted homicide as well. That, along with the high suicide rate reveals a pattern of the violent cause mortality by firearms which far outstrips other developed countries, not just those which applied strict removal and regulations (i.e, Australia in 1996), but even 'pro-gun' cultures such as Switzerland (Brueck, 2018) with the 4th highest possession of private firearms in the world (Small Arms Survey, 2018).

Figure 2. *Firearm Homicide and Suicide per 100,000 Pop. Selected Nations*
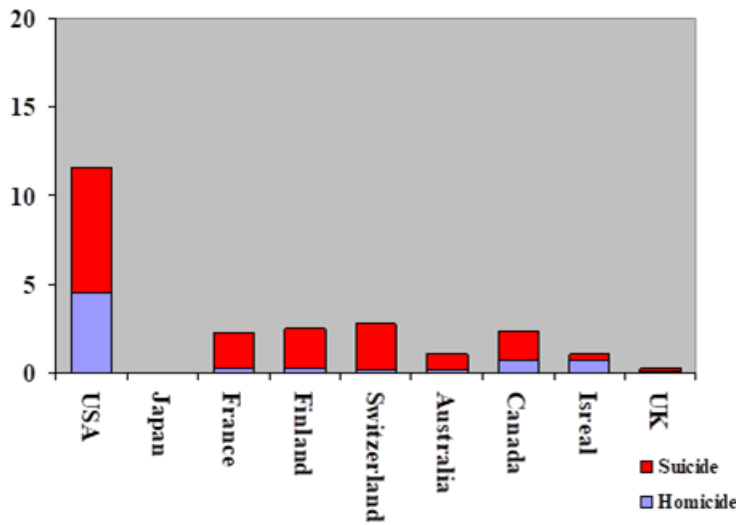
Multiple Sources: Figure 1 and 2: Australia 2017; Canada 2018; CDC 2017, Switzerland, 2019; WHO 2016; 2019

Figure 3. *Suicide Rate Per 100,000 by State, 2015*
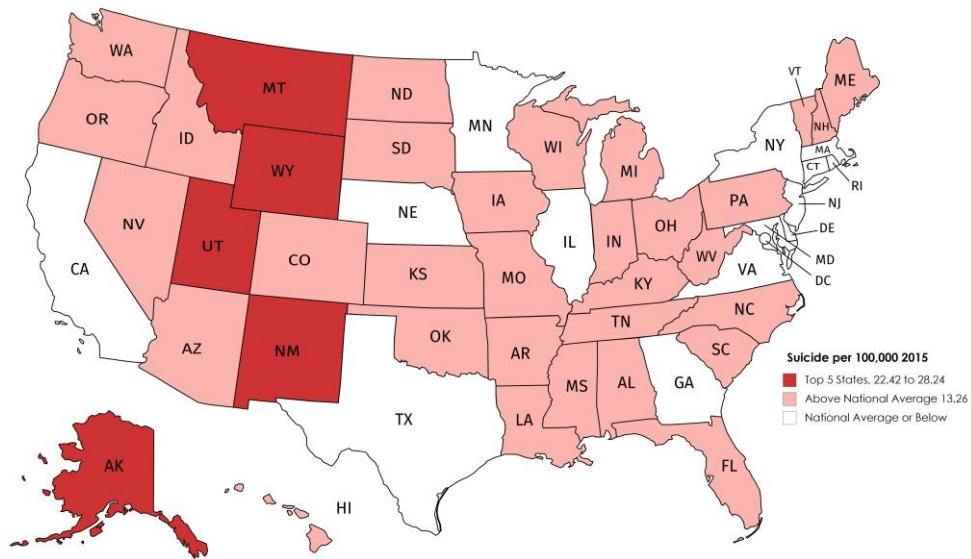
Source: *CDC Data and Statistics, Fatal Injury Report, 2015*

U.S. Suicide

In the United States, suicide is a major cause of death and rates differ by state and region. Figure 3 utilizes CDC information for 2015 to illustrate differences on a map. White states have suicide rates below the national average of 13.26. States

in the Northeast tend be depicted in this category, such as New York with a rate of 7.81 per 100,000 population. The pink states are above the national average and red indicates the top 5 states with the highest population adjusted suicide rates. Wyoming has the highest rate of 28.24 per 100,000. Interestingly, the intermountain west and Alaska represent areas with very 'pro-gun' cultural attitudes, along with few state gun regulations-- and findings indicate the suicide rate is very high (CDC 2017). Siegel and Rothman (2016) found a strong relationship between state-level firearm ownership and gun suicide rates among both men and women, but for men only when examining suicide from all causes.

U.S. Homicide

Taking a closer look at murder in the U.S., we present jittered scatterplot graphs by age and sex utilizing data from 297,110 homicides in the FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) over 32 years 1980-2011. Jittering adds a random number between 0 and 1 to victim and offender ages, to reduce overlap. We found men are far more likely to die from VCM. Figure 4 illustrates our jittered scatterplot for male homicide offenders by age, whose victims are other males. These made up 64% of the homicides examined. Infant victims are visible near the horizontal axis. The darkest area of the graph indicates deaths are most likely to occur in the teen and early adult years. In another article by two of us, Allen et al, 2018 found these male on male offenders were mostly acquaintances, and it is relatively rare for murdered men to die at the hands of an intimate partner.

Figure 4. *Jittered Scatterplot of Male Homicide Offenders Who Killed Male Victims by Age N=190,187*
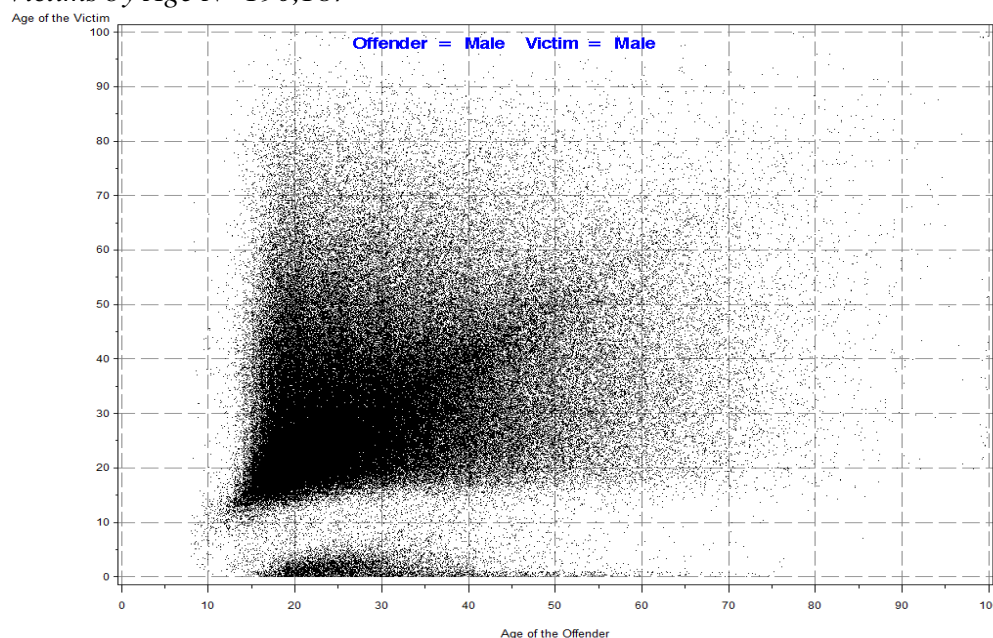
Figure 5 indicates the pattern for male offenders who kill females (23.4%). Women's killers are also usually male, but the offenders have a closer

relationship—typically a husband, boyfriend, or ex-partner. Intimate partner killings show up graphically in Figure 5, where male offenders kill female victims by age. A line of data points can be seen, representing similar ages of those involved (indicative of couples). This linear pattern continues into old age, indicating husbands and other types of partners continue the killings into later life. Compared to their female counterparts, older women 50 and over have proportionally the highest rates of femicide (female homicide), so these patterns are important to study across the life course.

Figure 5. *Jittered Scatterplot of Male Homicide Offenders Who Killed Female Victims by Age N=69,593.*

Figure 4-7 Source Federal Bureau of Investigation FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports, for single offender/single victim, 32 years 1980-2011

Female offenders are noted in Figures 6 and 7. The first impression of these graphs is unmistakable, specifically the relative lightness in the scatterplot densities. In general, female offenders are more uncommon than males. Figure 6 indicates the results for female killers of male victims, 10% of the cases in the SHR data set. The darkest pattern illustrates a line, where the victim offender ages are similar (indicating potential intimate partnerships). Infants are also victims, shown down along the horizontal axis, these might be victims of a mother with post-partum psychosis. Interestingly, in Allen et al (2018) we found the time of greatest safety from homicide for children, was between the ages of 6 and 12. This time represents an age where children are in school part of the day, they can perceive and run away from danger and their same age peers are not yet old enough to target them as victims of lethal behavior.

Figure 6. *Jittered Scatterplot Female Homicide Offenders Who Kill Male Victims by Age N=29,806*

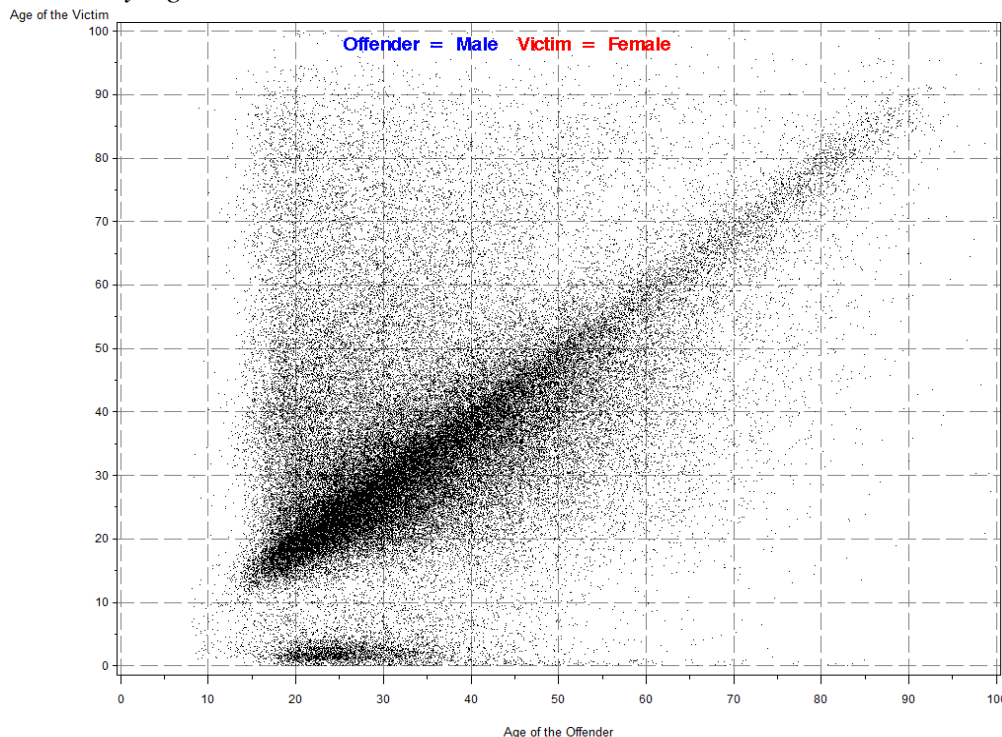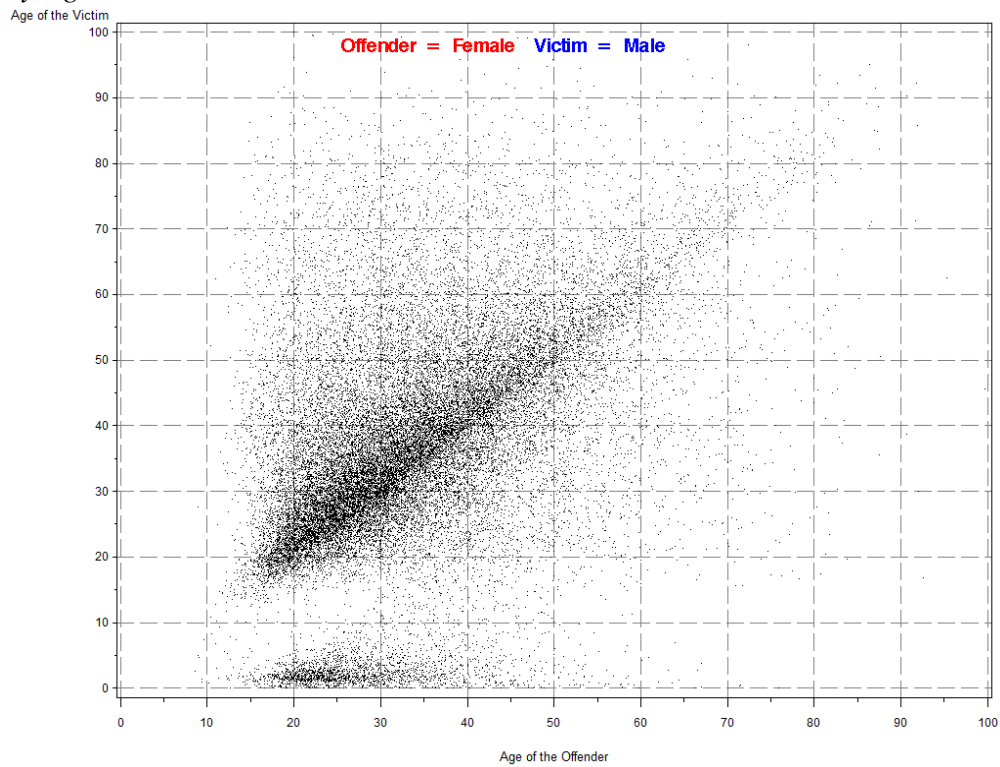**Figure 7.** *Jittered Scatterplot Female Homicide Offenders who Killed Female Victims by Age N=7,524*
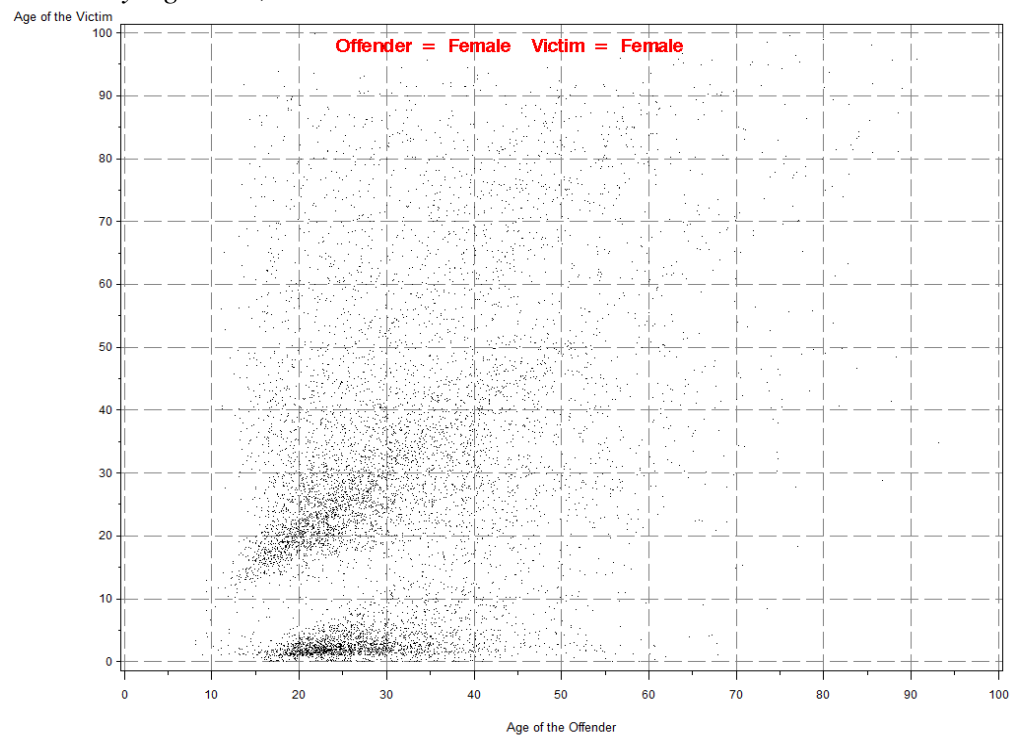
Figure 4-7 Source *Federal Bureau of Investigation FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports, for single offender/single victim, 32 years 1980-2011.*

Figure 7 looks almost blank, when compared to Figures 4-6. Over 32 years, there were relatively few females who killed other females (2.53%). The darkest pattern represents female filicide, where a parent killed a young child. Again, for women, some of these child abuse homicides are hypothesized to relate to mental health problems associated with childbirth.

To add to this information, Siegel, Ross and King (2013) observed a "robust correlation" between higher levels of gun ownership and higher firearm homicide rates and states with higher rates of gun ownership had disproportionately large numbers of deaths by gunshot. Siegel et al (2019) found certain firearm laws in states were related to a reduction in violent gun related deaths.

U.S. Murder-Suicide

Using a sample of 728 intimate partner homicide suicides (IPHS), age and sex patterns were a factor in the 1600 deaths studied. Linked homicide-suicide events are almost exclusively male perpetrated (over 90%), and sometimes multiple secondary victims are harmed or killed. Young victims (18-44 years) were often aware they were in danger just before their deaths, as most of the offenders in that age group were primarily homicidal (showing evidence of intimate terrorism, other crimes against the victim, severe wounds, etc.). In contrast, older female victims were attacked by a partner who may not have shown previous domestic violence behavior. Primarily suicidal husbands in later life seem to incorporate their wives into their own demise—without evidence of consent or terroristic behavior. Unlike younger domestic homicide victims, these women may not realize they are endangered (Salari & Sillito, 2016). News media in the United States has sometimes romanticized accounts of these killings, attributing them to poor health or even 'mercy killing' however, there is no evidence the women are consenting—in fact there is evidence to the contrary. The CDC definition of mercy killing requires a request or consent of the person with a terminal and hopeless condition. Careful examination of cases reveal evidence that these do not qualify, and the women are typically unaware, sleeping, have plans for the future or are otherwise uninvolved (Salari, 2015). The post-war baby boom cohort has been particularly suicidal, which is of concern as they move into these stages of vulnerability. Women whose husbands own guns are particularly vulnerable to their husband's suicidal ideation and behavior.

U.S. Mass Shootings

We just discussed IPHS, focusing on the partnership, but there are often secondary victims included in those lethal events, such as children, other family, neighbors, friends, etc. These represent a form of mass killing, and historical records indicate familicides have been noted in some American households. Violence Policy Center calls these 'family annihilations' and they note, they typically end with the suicide of the assailant. Two of the authors of this article, Sillito & Salari (2011) found children of a couple involved in IPHS were at risk of witnessing (54%), being killed (23%) or orphaned, but not present (24%).

Offspring were at greatest risk of violent cause mortality at the hands of their biological fathers (compared to step fathers or mother's boyfriend) and in homes with in-tact marriages. These domestic violence murders break with traditional patterns of perpetration. Bio fathers were homicidal, but for many there was no indication this family tragedy was about to erupt. The suicidal ideation was probably kept from the victims, as many of them were murdered while sleeping in their beds. The majority of perpetrators among young men homicidal (80%), and targeted mostly the female victim. However, for the 20% who were primarily suicidal, the authors suggest the fathers were more suicidal and more likely to kill the whole family as a part of his final fatal event. Older couples were less likely to have young children in the home, so familicide involving more victims was very rare (Sillito & Salari, 2011).

Mass shootings in public places have increased over time in America. Frollman et al, 2019 dataset documented at least 110 mass shootings each with 4 or more victim deaths caused by a single killer in one event, over the past 4 decades. According to the cases listed there were at least 829 deaths and scores of injured survivors (as of February 15, 2019). Perpetrators utilized 143 firearms in these events and 71% were semi-automatic handguns. Just to name a few, the U.S. population has experienced news of a movie theatre massacre in Aurora Colorado, an elementary school shooting in New Town Connecticut, the assault on concert goers in Las Vegas, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas (MSD) High School in Parkland Florida, several churches, a Jewish Synagogue, shopping malls, government buildings and scores of others. Analysis of these data find a variety of high powered weapons (e.g., AR-15, Semi-automatic assault rifle, and other military style weapons). The majority (49%) of these guns were purchased or acquired legally in the United States (many were missing cases and 12% were illegally obtained). Shooters often had signs of mental health problems prior to the attack. One mass shooter was a woman, but men (mostly white) have predominated as assailants. All but two have acted alone.

Discussion

Violent cause mortality is a public health crisis in the United States, and it has endangered individuals, relationships, families, and communities. Male violent cause mortality surpasses female rates. Examining within group differences has uncovered important distinctions associated with the source and characteristics of the threat.

We are taught from a young age to fear strangers or the schoolyard bully, but with suicide, the risk comes from self-harm. This threat to well-being may be difficult to guard against if one has known or unknown risk-factors. When someone has given up hope for their own future, they may also become a danger to others. Patterns in suicide differ by place, sex and age, among other variables. Figure 3 map illustrated high-risk areas, specifically Alaska and four states in the Intermountain West. Individuals in New York State, known for strong firearm restrictions, had a suicide risk which was 3.5 times lower than that of a person in

Wyoming, where there are few gun regulations. Sex differences show males have the greatest risk of completed suicide, and are also more likely to use a firearm (compared to women). Suicide for women is less likely 'completed,' and more likely to involve poisons or pills (less violent methods). At either end of the spectrum, teens or older persons, males are more suicidal.

A man's killer is typically another man, probably an acquaintance. Women's killer is also more often a male, but with the relationship of current or former intimate partner. Intimate femicide, where women are killed by their current or former partners, is facilitated by access to lethal means. While a beating with a fist can be fatal (and many are), there is a greater chance of escape when the weapon is not a firearm. In terms of place, women are at risk of homicide in their own homes. We envision our residence as a place of safety, surrounded by trusted loved ones. In addition, intimate partner homicide offenders are more likely to take their own lives during the murder, resulting in an IPHS scenario. Men are the vast majority of perpetrators of murder-suicide and familicide, again, usually choosing firearms. These crimes go unpunished because the perpetrator has controlled the entire event and the fate of individuals in the partnership, not to mention secondary victims. Our justice system requires a live defendant to go through a trial, and be found guilty, not guilty or completely exonerated. Without this opportunity, the family and community may find it difficult to heal from the open wound. In contrast, only about 7 percent of male homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner (Cooper & Smith, 2011). Legislation can work to make structural changes in society and promote violence prevention, however enactment is only one component of justice. There must also be enforcement of the laws, and for some firearm laws—this component is lacking. For example, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Lauderberg Amendment restrict gun ownership among those who are the subject of a protective order or convicted of a domestic violence related crime. However, Salari & Sillito (under review) present evidence from the IPHS Data showing the majority of murdered women in their sample with an active protective order were killed by their stalker with a firearm (92%). The authors also demonstrated non-firearm attacks were more survivable than gunshots, and states with domestic violence related restrictions were less likely to experience fatal IPHS events. Sadly, VAWA policy has undergone a transformation, where it was widely supported in the 1990s by both the President and Congress. But now, it serves as a lightning rod or dividing point in politics. The reason is related to firearm bans for those who have battered or stalked their partner. Powerful forces in the gun lobby have threatened to weaken the gun restrictions contained in this legislation.

Mass shootings in public are most often perpetrated by men, and they may have origins in household or domestic violence, which spills over onto the streets. For example, Adam Lanza, the killer of 20 6 year old children and their 6 teachers in Sandy Hook Elementary School, began his rampage by shooting his mother to death. While some offenders have visible mental health issues, many do not. It is difficult to pick out of a crowd, the student or concert goer who suddenly turns violent on his (or her) surroundings. When an incident begins a downward spiral out of control, the suicidal individual may become a public health risk. Key to

prevention includes reducing the feelings of hopelessness (suicidal ideation), addressing mental health concerns, and most importantly reducing the access to lethal means. So often in the U.S., conversations about suicide include the first two, but rarely a frank discussion about securing or removing firearms. In fact, when the massacre at Sandy Hook took place, New York State tightened firearm access laws, while Utah made it easier to carry a gun (under the assumption it would be used to save lives). Similarly, school safety plans now involve teachers carrying guns and more armed security.

We have demonstrated much of the instances of American suicide, homicide, murder-suicide and mass homicide have been carried out with firearms. The nature of firearms make it easier to kill others at a distance, when compared to other direct contact methods (e.g., blunt force or knife attack). If carrying a firearm made us safer, the U.S. should be the safest country in the world, since we have the highest saturation of gun among civilians. Unfortunately, Americans are kept in the dark about the health risks and research on household firearms. The Dickey Amendment inserted a barrier to public funding of research into the United States Budget. The result has been a 20+ year ban on federal funding to study firearm related injuries (U.S. Budget, 2018). There is no similar ban on research and public education related to other types of injury to public health. Despite this barrier to funding for public safety, there has been some exciting work done on harm reduction associated with guns. Siegel's research group using the State Firearm Law Data Set have identified firearm laws which make a difference. Specifically, regulations of ammunition, dealers and buyers (including background checks, waiting periods), high-risk possession (e.g., domestic violence or suicidal), assault weapons and large capacity magazines, concealed carry permits, gun trafficking, and child access prevention (Firearm State Laws, 2017). Since the majority of Americans with guns do not lock them up, this might represent a beginning point for public education and action (Crafasi et al, 2018).

In addition to these new ideas, we would emphasize enforcement of laws already enacted such as the VAWA gun bans for domestic violence perpetrators. Some state law enforcement will not even try to remove guns from a domestic violence perpetrator. Very serious cases would require Federal Agents to travel to the state to remove firearms. As a result, it is not done frequently as it would be if local police would handle the matter.

Since there is no gun registry in our state of Utah, buyers can purchase from private sellers—there is very little paper trail, and difficulty knowing who has what firearm, leading to inadequate enforcement (Salari and Sillito, under review). Suggestions for reform include a reduction in the surplus weapons available to high risk individuals, such as suicidal teenagers or senior citizens (particularly males), those with a history of domestic violence or mental illness (e.g., depression, dementia). A voluntary buy-back policy might alleviate pressure in high risk households, to allow concerned families and individuals to turn in weapons for a small cash reward. This policy, along with public education campaigns and practices such as storing ammunition separately from firearms has worked in places like Switzerland, a country with a pro-gun culture and mandatory military service. The Swiss were able to reduce firearm homicides and suicides

using rational gun reform (Brueck, 2018). For example, they enforce restrictions associated with domestic violence, alcohol or drug problems. Ammunition is kept separately from firearms and it is illegal to carry a gun on the street (Brueck, 2018). Interestingly, Switzerland has recently agreed to comply with the new EU standards for stricter gun regulation (Fiorentino, 2019).

Evidence suggests US states with greater gun restrictions had fewer related fatalities. So, what prevents the U.S. from similar modifications across the board? Many use the argument of the 2nd Amendment of the US Constitution, which conditionally protects the right of the people to "keep and bear arms," and this argument has been used to justify the perceived need to 'protect oneself' from intruders, which invoke scenarios of governmental search and seizure or intruders on one's home or property (the 'stranger danger' anxiety). However, we have learned from this article, the real dangers lie in acquaintances for males, and intimate partnerships for females. Households which stockpile at least one gun endanger inhabitants, who are more likely to die from a suicide and/or homicide incident --with their own firearm (Moyer, 2017; VPC, 2018a; 2018b). The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has supported 'reasonable' firearm restrictions, but state control predominates. These 'reasonable' restrictions can be applied to gun purchase and possession in states whose residents/elected leaders wish to limit access. However, these court opinions may shift with the addition of two new conservative leaning SCOTUS Justices, who have the potential to change to the opinions of the court (Wall Street Journal, 2019).

After the Valentine's Day 2018 school shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland Florida—where the offender used a high powered weapon to kill 17 and injure many others-- National Public Radio NPR (2018) polled a sample of Americans. Three-quarters believed "gun laws should be stricter than they are today." Even before that tragedy, most agreed to some limitations, such as the regulation of purchase or possession of guns for those with known mental health problems or a history of domestic violence. Despite this majority viewpoint, the U.S. gun lobby has exerted influence over laws by contributing to the campaign funds of politicians—who in turn will do nothing to limit guns or hold manufacturers accountable (laws actually prohibit lawsuits aimed at that industry). The national gun lobby protected it's manufacturers by employing legal strategies to resist lawsuits (like those used to break up the powerful tobacco lobby in the 1990s). In 1994, Congress narrowly passed the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protections Act and President Clinton signed the assault weapons ban on September 13th. Ten years later, the legislation expired and has not been renewed (Washington Post, 2018). The U.S. continued lack of regulation of high powered military style weapons since 2004, means the violent death mortality risk is increasing exponentially over time during these attacks. The prevalence of such events has tripled in recent years, and some have spread to international locations, such as the Muslim Mosque in New Zealand. The key difference being *New Zealand's response, which immediately banned these high powered weapons.* Australia responded to the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre with vast reductions in overall firearms, which has drastically reduced mortality for over two decades (Calamur, 2017). In contrast, the United States has

done nothing to address the problem, due to the well-funded opposition and gun lobby—and the intentionally under educated American people. In the U.S., recent massacres using military style weapons, with little government response, have frustrated many Americans. The most recent elections suggests perhaps the political atmosphere has begun to change. The United States has many challenges related to the prevention of violent cause mortality, and research plays an important role to inform the public and change preventable behaviors.

Conclusions

Our research article has mapped out conditions in the United States which have fostered the highest population adjusted violent cause mortality in the developed world. Other high income counties (Australia and Switzerland) have been faced with homicides, suicides and even massacres in the past, but have chosen completely different effective routes to support prevention of further gun violence. In those parts of the world, the workable solutions were less controversial and divisive—where one person's rights did not tread on the safety of another. In contrast, American solutions ignore VCM, mis-inform the populace and avoid prevention methods for of homicide and suicide, if curtailing rights to private possession of firearms is involved. With talk of regulation comes serious resistance from some of the population (rural, white men) and they are heavily influenced by the powerful gun lobby. Constructive action is blocked by concerns of a 'slippery slope.' Honestly, who could have imagined prevention of violent deaths from suicide, family abuse or mass killings could be so political? We are left with some concerns about the future including 1) the powerful gun lobby, which seems unlimited, particularly in light of the Citizen's United campaign finance laws, which permit unlimited funding from special interests 2) the lack of federal funds for firearm injury research and education, 3) the increasing firearm ownership in civilian households 4) the recent increases in suicide and homicide among young and old alike. The aging of the Baby Boom cohort into ages of high self-harm, as they have been highly suicidal all their lives. And new research suggests GenX cohort is even more concerning (Phillips, 2014). And 5) The changing composition of the US Supreme Court, where new justices are thought to support the conservative agenda of doing nothing about gun violence.

We will leave you with positive developments. 1) We are in the process of expanding our IPHS data to cover twenty years 1999 to 2019, so we intend to focus on understanding modern cases of fatal family violence, with an eye toward promoting effective prevention, 2) After the Parkland Florida massacre at MSD High School, the students began a massive movement called #MarchforOurLives. They held very well attended protest marches in cities around the US. country to rally behind the students whose classmates were gunned down before their eyes. They have been fighting for structural changes to reduce access to military style weapons and improve the safety of students so they can learn. They note their assailant purchased his firearms legally, despite his clear mental health problems. These students have socialized adults twice their age, regarding what can be

accomplished by speaking out and becoming politically active. It worked, because mid-term elections were held in 2018, and the U.S. House of Representatives flipped toward philosophies with greater affinity for gun reform—without accepting donations from the gun lobby.

Acknowledgements

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The Voice of the Hijab: Perspectives towards Wearing the Hijab by a Sample of Palestinian Female University Students in Israel

*By Omar Mizel**

The question of the meaning of the hijab surfaces time and again, as various parties raise issues about its relationship with Islam and other faiths. Notions including liberty, terrorism, persecution, fanaticism, and democracy are addressed, among many others. It has been recently noted that the number of Palestinian university female students (PUFS) wearing the hijab is on the rise. This study seeks to explore the reasons behind this behavioural phenomenon and to understand how PUFS wearing the hijab view the hijab. It seeks to answer two central questions: "How do these female students justify their choice of wearing the hijab?", and "How do these justifications differ according to their socio-educational context?" The study consists of 25 in-depth interviews with female students studying at a mixed academic college of Arab and Jewish students. The study revealed that the perception and justification for wearing the hijab is not only religious; the hijab also expresses social, cultural, economic, and political perceptions. The traditional notion of the hijab as a means of oppressing a woman's freedom is no longer valid. On the contrary, PUFS indicate that wearing the hijab harmonises with modernisation and contributes to Moslem women's adaptation, wherever they are, serving as an essential factor for their engagement with society.

Keywords: *Hijab, University, Palestine, Israel, Islam*

Introduction

Several studies indicate that the phenomenon of women donning the hijab is one of the most ancient social phenomena. Both in Judaism and Christianity, the head covering has long been an expression of commitment to religious and moral obligations. In Islam, the hijab is considered a social and moral regulator that gives a woman respect, and protects her chastity and livelihood. Recently, it has attained a social value, and become a symbol of culture and identity. Undoubtedly, wearing the hijab was a religious obligation and a moral necessity and commitment before it became a social behaviour and a cultural practice. It is absolutely non-negotiable and irreplaceable in terms of form and design, as is the case for contemporary fashions. Even if the hijab undergoes some modifications, it still abides by the general framework dictated by religious regulations and teachings. However, it has been recently noticed that the hijab has become a tool to promote different tastes as well as modern design tendencies. Such practices often push the hijab towards becoming a fashion item.

Hijab-wearing women engender a huge dilemma for many people, and there are varying views regarding this topic. Some consider it an obstacle placed before a woman in attaining her liberty and humanity. A second party views it from a

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religious standpoint that makes it impossible to reject, or in fact express any opinion about it. The first party indicates that the hijab was linked to a specific period that ended with the end of the Prophet's time. It was not required of all Muslim women, but was limited to prophets' wives. Not wearing the hijab was not considered a grave sin that leads to hell, but rather a minor transgression forgivable by God the Almighty (Mussap, 2009; Swami 2012).

Supporters of the second opinion can in turn be divided into two groups: the first completely believe Islamic teachings and strictly wear the hijab in observation of God's verse: "*Wama kana limuminin wala muminatin itha qada Allahu warasooluhu amran an yakoona lahumu alkhiyaratu min amrihim waman yaAAsi Allaha warasoolahu faqad dalla dalalan mubeenan*" ["It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path"] (Holy Quran, chapter Al Ahzab, verse 36). As for the second group, they are reluctant to abide by God's teachings and are unable to implement his orders for a number of reasons (Mahfoodh 2008):

- Weak belief in God the Almighty
- Ignorance of religious teachings and orders
- The concept of the hijab is associated with intellectual misconceptions resulting from customs and traditions (Abdallah 2011)

Various forms of cloth covering are used by Moslem women. They vary in their degree of covering, and include the hijab, which covers the head and neck; the niqab, which also covers the face but not the area around the eyes; the khimar, that covers the head and continues down to the waist; and the burka, that covers the whole face and body.

This study focuses on the hijab. For the purpose of this study, the hijab is defined as a garment that covers the woman's head. The hijab is used nowadays to refer to a piece of cloth that women use to cover their hair. They tie it down the neck or use pins to fit it, but they keep their face uncovered. Its precise shape differs according to social and geographical requirements and traditions. As viewed by sociologists, the hijab is one of social traditions that are considered part of the social and cultural elements. Some researchers hold the view that the hijab is crucial for the fulfilment of social belonging and security in Moslem societies (Swami 2012, Siraj 2011).

Recent decades have witnessed a powerful return of the hijab in the Palestinian society in Israel. This return is distinguished by the fact that many university and college female students wear the hijab. Consequently, interest in studying this phenomenon has increased. Some studies (Latifi 2006; Shawish 2002) indicate that there are two rationales that lead to wearing the hijab. There is the religious rationale, of course; the second type of rationale for hijab-wearing is related to individual decisions which might be based on social, psychological, economic, and other considerations.

Faisal (2004) explained that wearing the hijab does not carry a single significance. Some categorize it under religious rubrics, while others refer to a

completely different set of variables that are mainly political, yet wrapped in religion (Faisal 2004). Faisal claimed that there has been a social dimension for wearing the hijab, especially in recent years. The social aspect has influenced the shape and quality of the hijab, leading to the traditional religious hijab, modern hijab, fashionable hijab, political symbol hijab, tribal hijab, and others. These other reasons for wearing the hijab stem from a philosophical perspective, as it gives value to humanism that originates in the existence of the human being, as well as taking into consideration the significance of values, principles, customs, and traditions (Khan et al. 2005).

Other social aspects of wearing the hijab relate to marriage –indeed, this has become one of the important reasons for hijab-wearing among unmarried girls. Latifi (2006) explained that, "Marriage became an ambition for several girls who were competing to find their future husbands". Accordingly, we understand that the hijab signifies the high morals and commitment of the woman or girl who wears it. Al Hufi (2006) indicated that there was another social aspect for wearing hijab, linked to poverty. The hijab in many cases would be a simple solution to make up for the girl's inability to keep up with new and fashionable clothes (Al Hufi 2006, Witkowski 1999).

In the Arab world, empirical studies were conducted to identify why the hijab spread among university female students. One study, conducted in Iraq by Shahba Khazal (2006), concluded that students wore the hijab for mainly social rather than religious factors. The social aspect included parents' influence and physical beauty to attract admiration. A very low percentage wore the hijab out of decency, chastity, or to conceal their beauty. Interestingly, shop window displays also had a great impact on making girls wear the hijab. The percentage of those influenced by this variable reached 45%.

The same study by Khazal (2006) found that the hijab represented one of the manifestations of Islamic thought; it was applied to show the border line between the message of Muslims and that of secular people. The study stressed that the hijab was not confined to Muslims; in fact, other peoples also use it. The most ancient people who subjected women to the hijab were the Assyrians (Syriacs). The study emphasized that other monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Christianity also require using a similar article of clothing to the hijab for religious activities.

In a field study, Al Akhras (1967) interviewed a sample of 400 females from Damascus City and its surroundings, of which 180 were married. The study showed that 44% of married women wore the hijab when they went outside their homes while 7% of them wore religious hijab all the time. In Egypt, the researcher Radwan (1984) conducted a study to identify why Egyptian university female students wore the hijab. He found that the majority of hijab-wearers come from middleclass families and believe less in women's right to education and work. Ninety-four percent of hijab-wearers reject women's work outside her home country because of prevailing customs, traditions, and the requirement of having a *mahram* (escort) with her.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research derives primarily from symbolic interactionism**.** The term "symbolic interactionism" was originally coined by Blumer (1962). Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to these things:

1. The meaning of things derives from social interactions.
2. These meanings are created and modified through an interpretive social process.

The hijab serves as a means of social interaction and has visual and verbal meaning.

Goffman (1959) claims that there is a separation in the Moslem woman's world, and that her world is divided into two spaces: a private and a public space. The private space exists with her family, her husband, etc., and there she can dress as she likes. The public space imposes on her wearing the hijab to achieve a conservative interaction with others. Accordingly, wearing the hijab symbolizes the border of the space between her and the public space.

Wearing the hijab has different meanings in different parts of the world. In certain areas, the hijab represents identity and belonging to a certain ethnic group. In addition, wearing the hijab may mean something different to the one wearing it and the one observing it. The woman wearing it is preserving a space of purity, piety, and honour; while the one observing it can give it various interpretations, though he would normally see it is as drawing the border line for Moslem woman in relation to their interaction with others (Alvi et al. 2003).

The stereotypical conception that women wear the hijab because of oppression by males is incorrect, and most research rejects this claim. Since the events of September 11, 2001, Moslem women and their hijab have become a stigmatic symbol in Western society; a symbol linked to radical Islam (Badr 2004: 335). This assumption is not correct, and does not reflect reality according to Western studies such as (Ali 2005: 517, Alvi et al. 2003, Al Wazni 2015). These studies claim that wearing the hijab does not reflect extreme religiosity, but that Moslem women in Western countries wear the hijab to create a cultural and social space for themselves. It is actually an attempt to help them build an identity in reaction to the society in which they live, to show that the hijab does not represent a radical religious Islamic conception, and that Islam is not evil or threatening.

Other researchers (Williams and Vashi 2007, Rinaldo 2013) explain that Moslem women wear the hijab deriving from free choice, and nobody forces them to dress like that. Respect is a central component in their feelings, and they get a lot of appreciation from others around them (Droogsma 2007). Still other researchers claim that the hijab forms a kind of protection that allows women to move in the public space without being criticized. The hijab also improves women's communication in mixed workplaces, signalling to men that they cannot gossip about them or view them as sexual objects, and that the Moslem woman is not open to contacts (Omair 2009, Bullock 2002: 103). In other words, the hijab acts as a requirement from others as to how they should behave.

On the other hand, others (Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksari 2009, Al Wazni 2015) claim that hijab-wearing among academic Moslems in the USA frees them from the oppressive "beauty culture" of America, and from the unnecessary male gaze that follows them (Alvi et al. 2003; Bullock 2002) claim that wearing the hijab forces others to focus on women's personality rather than their sexuality.

In general, it is possible to say that the hijab creates a kind of a line of behaviour in the spirit of Islam; hijab-wearing women will always be under close scrutiny to test if their behaviour fits the spirit of Islam.

The question asked by many researchers is why Moslem women in Western societies wear the hijab even though there is no pressure on them to do so and they can dress as they wish. The answer can probably be found in multiculturalism and the various issues that allow them to present their identity in the social space without worry (Ali 2005). Therefore, it seems credible to claim that wearing the hijab is more an expression of their self and not of the society in which they live.

Figure 1. *Reasons for Wearing the Hijab*
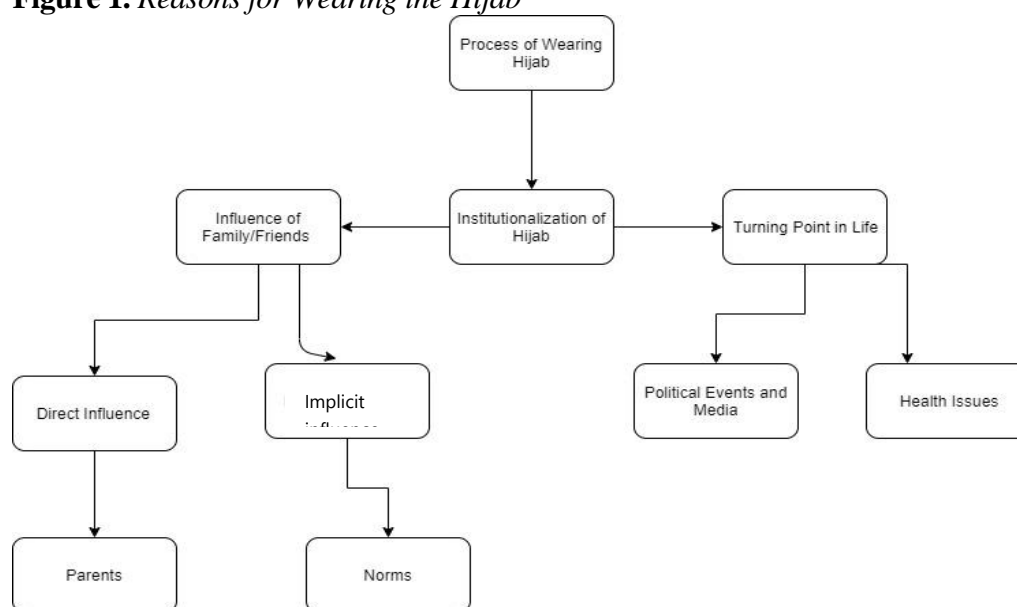
Hijab and the West

The topics of Islam, fundamentalism, terrorism, extremism, and women's status preoccupy the minds of a considerable number of scholars. The common mainstream discourse in the public domain talks about backwardness, violence, and barbarianism. As for the oppression of women, it is taken for granted. The situation was gradually further aggravated by various events in the Arab world towards the end of the twentieth century (Bullock 2011, Abdurraquib 2006, Unkelbach et al. 2010). This paper confronts the Western stereotypical image of the hijab as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women –a veritable uphill battle!

As for Muslims living in the West, there is an urgent need to change the negative stereotypical image of the hijab as a manifestation of oppression. There

are cases that scientifically and objectively proved that Muslims are harmed by the negative perceptions of the hijab and Islam. In 1995, a number of Muslim female students were expelled from their schools in the province of Quebec in Canada because they refused to take off their hijab. A hijab-wearing teenager studying at a school in Quebec felt greatly humiliated when her schoolteacher announced on television that Islam degraded women. The girl said in response to her teacher's announcement: "I do not understand why any person says such a thing. She knows me and knows my personality. I am not like what she says." In 1997-8, many cases were documented of hijab-wearing women being expelled from their workplaces because of their headdress. This happened at a Dunkin' Donuts in Boston, in the Boston Market Restaurant, and at the Sheraton Hotel, Washington, in 1997 (Council on America Kelly Islamic Relations 1998, Bartkowski and Reed 2003, Droogsma 2007, Pasha-Zaidi 2015).

In Israel, a lecturer at Bar Ilan University asked a Muslim student to remove her hijab; when she refused, she was expelled from class (Ya'il Oom, News 29/10/2017). The same happened with a medical student when she was detained for a short period for wearing the hijab.

I do not wish in this research to follow up on all these cases, since this is not the purpose of the study. But in summary, based on these incidents, it may be concluded that the West expresses aggressive views toward the hijab and those who wear it, as well as associating it with the concepts of oppression and terrorism.

In a study conducted by Katherine Bullock (2002), "Western view of Hijab", interviews with a number of women in Toronto, Canada were conducted. It was found that the hijab is a religious outfit and not a form of oppression. In fact, it is part of a religion that gives dignity and respect to Muslim women. The public image of the hijab does not reflect the experience of women wearing hijab. The misrepresentation of the hijab always served Western politics, and continues to do so in the 21st century. The association of the hijab with oppression is based on a Western view of the concepts of equality and freedom. Such established views obstruct other ways of understanding equality and freedom. Bullock concluded that Western culture is radically biased against Islam and Muslims, and that the media plays a central role in propagating a negative view of the hijab.

Academic Education in Israel

Israeli society consists of different ethnic and religious groups. There is a big difference between Jews and Arabs with regard to religion, language, lifestyle, and national aspirations (Jabareen 2005). Israeli Arab society is characterized by deep chasms between those who desire to integrate while preserving traditions and customs, and those who wish to head towards Western concepts and integration into Western culture. Different researchers (Herzog 2004, Jabareen 2005) showed that the younger generation has wished to emancipate itself and integrate into Western culture from the establishment of the State until the present time.

The number of girls who seek university education, especially at teacher

training colleges, has increased (Addi-Raccah 2006). The majority of Arab female students study at mixed Arab and Jewish colleges. However, there are two colleges (Qasimi and Sakhnin) where only Arab students learn. The total number of students studying in teacher training colleges in Israel is 26,320. Of this, 10% are Arab females, and 4.6% are Arab males, making a total of 14.6% of Arab students (Higher Education Council 2017).

This research focuses on the issue of the hijab worn by Arab female students who study at teacher training colleges. The research addresses the following question: How do Arab female students view the issue of wearing the hijab, and what are the mechanisms they use to adapt to their situation at these institutions? Since those students spend most of their time in the public domain rather than the private one, wearing the hijab makes the challenge of adapting and integrating more formidable.

Research Methodology

This research deals with a sample of female students studying in teacher training colleges, focusing on those wearing the hijab. It was noted that the forms of hijab they wore are varied and different. The research focuses on how these students view the hijab and what is the accepted perception with regard to the hijab. The research methodology is qualitative.

Research Tools

This research is based on in-depth interviews; the purpose is to identify how the female students view hijab. Analysis of interviews depends on the girls' stories with regard to the hijab. This methodology is important and appropriate for qualitative research; it helps to reveal the truth, understand the positions of those interviewed, and give it a deeper meaning. The interviewees each talk at length about her story (Lieblich et al. 1998). By using the method of in-depth interview or story, the researcher gets a deeper conception and understanding with regard to his/her attitudes and understanding of it (Polkinghorne 1995). Analysis of interviews (stories) enriches the research with a better understanding of the phenomenon in a deeper and more objective manner (Stake 2006).

Participants

In this research, 25 female students from two different colleges were interviewed. Some study at an exclusively Arab college, while others are enrolled at a mixed Arab and Jewish college: 10 and 15, respectively. All the respondents wear the hijab and their ages are between 18-26 years old. Five of them are married. All of them are seeking an educational diploma to become teachers.

Research Question

How do Palestinian university female students justify their choice of wearing the hijab?

Research Significance and Procedures

The topic has been a matter of fascination for me for some time. When the researcher was at a conference in the United Kingdom, during the discussions, the researcher noticed an Arab woman wearing the hijab and at the same time drinking a glass of wine. When the researcher asked her about it, she said the following, "My hijab reflects my identity rather than my religion." I do not think that this statement can be generalized, but it is an important indicator and an important gesture on the role of hijab. Furthermore, the research topic emerged out of a discussion in one of the courses the researcher teaches (analysis of events) where hijab-wearing students and non-hijab-wearing students discussed the religious aspect of the hijab. This increased the interest of both the researcher and the students to examine how female students viewed the hijab, its importance, and reasons for wearing it.

The researcher asked all female participants in this course to write an anonymous report on how they viewed the hijab and the reason why they wear it. Following a review of their written answers, it was found that the female students wrote about different aspects, including social, economic, and political ones, and not only the religious aspect. Their answers were general and did not provide in-depth answers. The female students were asked whether they were willing to participate in the research fifteen female students out of 35 gave their consent. In the second college, in a classroom discussion on democracy, culture of dialogue, and the hijab, some female students expressed their willingness to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon, so the number of those who chose to take part in the research was 10 out of 40 female students. Ultimately, a total of 25 hijab-wearing women from both colleges were interviewed in this research.

Research Ethics

The significance, objectives, and mechanisms of research were explained to the participants. The researcher further committed to keeping the names of both students and colleges in strict confidence. Interviewees were given the opportunity to read the transcripts of their interviews and hear the researcher's opinion about them. The researcher also made it clear that interviewees were free to withdraw from the research at any time. The voices of the interviewees were not recorded, to preserve their confidentiality and observe Arab customs and traditions. Interviews took place at regular research facilities at the colleges, during class breaks. Each interview lasted for half an hour and all interviews were conducted during one semester of the academic year 2017-2018. All students remained in the research

group throughout, except for one student who withdrew for personal reasons that were not explained to the researcher.

Interviews

To draw close to the research population, we choose the technique of the interview, a technique that is considered the most successful for gathering a largest quantity of data on a topic. It is one of the best techniques for anyone wishing to explore the deep incentives of an individual, as well as identify the common reasons for their behaviour through the exclusive nature of each case (Lieblich et al. 1998). We adopted the focused individual interview, which required the researcher to prepare an interview guide incorporating aspects related to the topic. Interviews were then directly conducted with the respondents; namely, hijab-wearing university students. This approach helped the researcher to be introduced to each woman so as to determine the way she interacts, speaks, and behaves. In this manner, we were able to explore the research subjects directly. Twenty-five official interviews were conducted with hijab-wearing university students during the academic year 2017-2018.

Data Analysis

The results were analysed according to the main classifications identified based on respondents' interviews.

Prevalence of Fashion and Modernity

It was found that Palestinian university female students have different attitudes towards wearing the hijab. The role of fashion in wearing the hijab is stronger than that of the religious/traditional aspect. The hijab-wearing university student is no longer someone who is an outsider, out of fashion, or oblivious to what is new. This happened as a result of the large-scale spread of fashionable clothes in window shops, magazines, and other types of mass media. During the interviews, it was found that the majority of students choose the fashionable hijab, and they now follow a fashion culture that requires them to be articulate in all the trademarks and brand names as well as fabric and quality of the cloth. Many of the students indicated that they have Turkish hijabs. Another student indicated that she was a member of a Facebook group where there was a lot of chatting and exchange of information about the importance, role, type, trademark, and quality of brands in the hijab market. Another student claimed, "There are clear boundaries that show the girl where she is allowed to be. The hijab came and allowed me to go places I was not allowed to go in the past. The society looks at the hijab as protecting a girl from harassment."

The results showed that wearing the hijab is considered a cultural value and

symbol, which carries one of the dimensions of identity. The hijab was a form of religious and moral behaviour before it acquired a social dimension. It expresses holding fast to identity. However, the presence of girls in Jewish/Israeli society (essentially a Western society) and the question of globalisation have greatly contributed to changing the shape of the hijab to match fashion. Thus, a few students explained that the hijab is a personal freedom, and fashion paved their way towards choosing to wear hijab. One student explained this by saying the following: "A month ago, I went to Nablus and stopped before a window shop. I was wearing the traditional hijab. What interested me was that there were so many types of the hijab that go along with modern fashion. Since then, I have worn the hijab according to fashion, and I do not think this contradicts our religion."

Religious Issues

A few students wearing the traditional hijab indicated that the reason for the hijab is deep religious conviction. One of them indicated, "I started reciting the Quran and deeply reading the prophet's life story; after that I started to wear it."

Influence of Families/ Friends (Society) Space and Identity

Some students indicated the importance of values and traditions in wearing the hijab. One of the respondents indicated: "I was obligated by my dad and grandfather to wear the hijab. Sometimes when I travel with my friends, I take it off; then I wear it when I return home." Some respondents indicated that the hijab helps them to move around since the concept of the hijab means more respect and less harassment. "It warns others not to come near me or touch me. This convinces parents that their daughter is respected, and no one dares to harass her, for the hijab protects her."

One 20-year-old single student said, "I wear the hijab because most of the time I am in non-Moslem company, it's important to me to be seen as special; for me it's more an identity than a religion". Another student said: "The hijab gives me space, and also allows me to integrate into foreign societies, without fear of being hurt or absorbing Western norms". It also helps freedom of movement, as a 19-year-old student said: "The hijab allows me to get to college for my studies without having an escort such as a parent or a brother".

A 22-year-old single student explained the importance of family: "I didn't wear the hijab before, but once I wore it, I felt that both my closer and wider family are pleased and proud of me. It is important to me that my parents be happy." A married student mentioned another aspect: "In my nuclear family I didn't wear the hijab. But when I got married, my husband asked me to wear it, and so I did."

The Political Event and the Media

Some respondents indicated that whenever they go to Jewish places, they take off the hijab to avoid inspection, racism, or humiliation. Two respondents said that they take off the hijab whenever they pass through Israeli military checkpoints because they are afraid of soldiers. Another student claimed that she was very much influenced by television shows especially the hijab news anchors on the Al Jazeera TV channel. In this way, she can abide by religious norms while also following the latest fashions.

Many students indicated that audio-visual media have an influence on their wearing of the hijab. Students indicated that religious satellite channels had a great effect on the practice of wearing the hijab. Two students indicated that the Egyptian Muslim preacher Amr Khalid played a major role in influencing girls to wear the hijab.

Marriage Issues

Girls wear the hijab as an important factor to speed up their prospects for marriage. Two students supported the idea that the hijab contributed to speeding up their marriage. The majority of young Arab men come from conservative families; therefore, they prefer hijab-wearing women. Some girls resort to the hijab only when they reach a certain age. Some of the respondents explained that the girl who wears the traditional hijab has a better chance for marriage; more than those wearing the Turkish hijab. The social pressure and fear of being left behind play an important role.

One girl related that a member of her family had been engaged to a girl from the north. When her family learned that the bride-to-be had recently removed the hijab, they broke off the engagement. Another hijab-wearing girl said that her hijab gives the impression that she is not too demanding in terms of wedding garments and preparations.

Health Issues

Two students made a connection between the hijab, health, and death issues. They said that a disease like cancer, as well as death, brought them closer to religion and to wearing the hijab because they believe it would protect them from such situations. One student said: "In my family there are two women who had cancer. Together with the disease came the hijab because it is important for them to be close to god and to be believers. I think all the time that perhaps the hijab cures the cancer".

Summary of Results

The results above were translated in a graph (see Figure 2) that describes the different classifications for the respondents' interviews.

Figure 2. *Respondent Classifications*
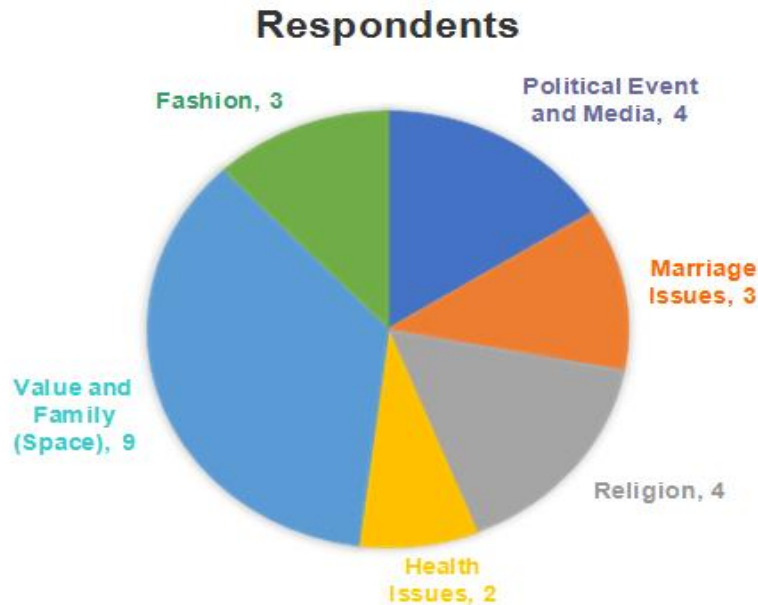
Conclusion

This research discussed the concept of the hijab and its meaning to "Palestinian Female University Students" in Israel. Wearing the hijab in the last two decades has become a popular phenomenon locally and globally; however, "to what extent do Muslim women need to cover up" is a debatable question among scholars as well as participants. The hijab holds multiple meanings for Muslim women.

Many of the current local and international views consider the hijab as a religious indicator only, and as reflecting the submission of women and an imposition of an oppressive policy upon them. However, the results of this study of the phenomenon of wearing the hijab among Arab Palestinian university female students in Israel, and the ways they viewed the hijab, showed clearly that the majority of the hijab concepts are not only religious.

The findings point out that the majority of students (9) wear the hijab as a result of the cultural and family values as the main factors, rather than a direct influence of religion. It should be noted that in many cases there is a distinction between the religion and the cultural values within Moslem society, and in many cases the weight of the cultural values is greater than that of the religious ones. In some cases, there is a contradiction between religion and culture. To demonstrate this, I bring an example that explains the contradiction. In the case of marriage, Islam encouraged marriage outside the extended family. But culture came up with a different approach, indicating that marriage should take place within the family.

Therefore, in many cases, the effect of social values is greater than the impact of religion.

The hijab is a manifestation of some of the psychological and social pressures on university girls who belong to a segment of society trying to reconcile the contradiction between two kinds of concepts and values. On the one hand, there are traditional concepts that they inherit or acquire culturally, and on the other, the newer concepts supported by scientific and technological developments. As university students, they seek social acceptance, and work on proving their presence and social status that distinguishes them as intellectual elite. The hijab does not cancel their personality, nor does it confine their freedom. One of the interviewees stressed this by saying: "Eat as you wish, but dress how others wish to see you." Therefore, the students think that the hijab harmonizes with the environment and allows for integration into the society. It goes alongside fashion on one hand, and religion on the other. In Arab Palestinian institutions in Israel, we have noticed a new hijab culture nowadays –a youth culture that focuses on thought and behaviour, such as consumption habits and trademarks. Fashion culture (i.e., the modern hijab) has noticeably spread among Arab girls via the mass media and cultural gatherings and contexts within a Western society, such as Israeli society and their place of learning on university campuses.

The hijab constitutes one of the students' psychological and social needs, and it is a cultural expression that distinguishes between men and women in Muslim society. It evolves according to the changing social, cultural, and economic conditions. In light of the distinctiveness and nature of the female body, Islam obligated women to wear the hijab due to social, psychological, and religious as well as aesthetic values. This latter value prevails nowadays among female Palestinian university students in Israel. Undoubtedly, the university female student sees the modern hijab as a strategy to hold fast to the Islamic religion and to please the family on one hand, while appearing in an elegant and beautiful light on the other hand. It also helps her to move about, easily and freely.

Finally, the hijab plays a significant role in attracting a future life partner, especially when the girl reaches marrying age. She then resorts to wearing a hijab as a means to avoid becoming a spinster.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the prevailing idea about the hijab in the Western world which claims that the hijab is a means of oppression, terrorism, and piety is basically a misconception. The hijab has become a means used by young women to attract admiration and attention of others, as well as to show that they are different. The Arab Palestinian female student expresses her freedom and independence in her tastes and choices, sometimes by escaping stereotypes and traditions, and by following values and standards which scientific and media developments advocate. Therefore, the model of the Palestinian university female student in Israel expresses her personality, piety, thoughts, desires, motives, and justifications at the same time.

Based on our findings, the idea of the religious and traditional hijab as seeking to detach the woman from strangers by using restraints that inhibit the woman from participating in public life is now obsolete. The introduction of the Arab Palestinian hijab-wearing student in Israel into the academic, scientific, and

university life has made it impossible to impose any restraint. Rationality stresses that the woman's honour, chastity, and virtue are not protected by locking her up within four walls. The model of the Palestinian university female student wearing the hijab is the best example of a Muslim woman's ability to adjust to a complex society by succeeding in establishing harmony between what is religious and worldly, and what is old and new.

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Ernesto Laclau: Pluralism and Radicalism

By Pedro Góis Moreira[*]

With the rise of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, the name of Ernesto Laclau was highlighted as an influence on the ideological line of these movements. This paper aims to analyze this post-Marxist author's thought, with a special focus on how his political theory reconciles pluralism and radicalism.Central to Laclau's project seems to be a sharp rejection of what we could call "essentialism," that is, the belief that social subjects, their interests, and their struggles are predetermined. In his work with Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985), this rejection takes the form of a radical break with orthodox Marxism: The Left, they argue, should abandon Marxism's essentialism and attempts to abolish democracy through a revolution. The Left, they contend, should accept pluralism in order to articulate a hegemonic bloc against Neoliberalism and foster the struggle for equality. In a second part, this paper will attempt to describe Laclau's position on populism. In On Populist Reason (2005), Laclau argued that populism emerged from the articulation of a number of demands that are not met by the political establishment. These demands, in their efforts of articulation, would then use a "populist" rhetoric, vague in nature: they would proclaim themselves as "the legitimate people," unite against an "enemy" ("the oligarchy," for instance), and attempt to retrieve a perceived "lost harmony" of society. In a third part, this paper will argue that, by replacing the "bourgeoisie" of the Marxist narrative by "essentialism," Laclau is able to create a skillful political theory combining radicalism, pluralism, and pragmatism. On the other hand, it will also be argued that Laclau's political thought seems to come in tension with pluralism: Laclau's sharp rejection of essentialism leads him to posit a political thought where no compromise is possible with any form of essentialism.

Introduction

With the rise of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, the name of Ernesto Laclau, one of the founders of post-Marxism, was highlighted as an influence on the ideological line of these movements. One of the factors that were frequently pointed out for the success of these movements was their respective "political narratives." These narratives presented the opposition of "the people" against "the oligarchy," decried the evils of capitalism, and emphasized a lack of democracy. Fascinated by the resurgence of political radicalism and its relationship with political narratives, this paper examines Laclau's work as an assumed radical and the political narrative he draws.

The paper proceeds in three parts. In the first and second part, it looks at two of Laclau's works that are more relevant for his political theory: his 1985 book with Chantal Mouffe *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and his 2005 book *On Populist Reason*, respectively. Thirdly, some reflections on Laclau's assumed radicalism are discussed and related to his political narrative.

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In the end, it will be clear that Laclau's radicalism, because of its pluralism and pragmatism, is well adapted to nowadays' style of democratic politics. Laclau's genius seems to be grounded in his ability to deconstruct the classical Marxist's narrative of emancipation. Indeed, a political narrative where an element of society (the bourgeoisie) has to be removed from reality in order to attain a good society usually comes in tension with pluralism. Laclau's deconstruction of this narrative enables him to maintain both a radical and pluralist political theory. However, this paper also argues that Laclau, in his attempt to deconstruct the classical Marxist project of emancipation, winds up with an emancipatory narrative of his own: his fight against essentialism leads him to posit a political theory where essentialism is absent in order to attain a good political order. Although not of the same kind, such narrative of emancipation creates some tensions with the pluralism that Laclau attempts to instill within the Marxist tradition.

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985)

One of the most relevant works to first approach Laclau's political theory is his book with Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, published in 1985. Although both authors will subsequently go on related but separated paths (Wenman 2003, Townshend 2004, Laclau will continue his post-Marxist project, Mouffe will develop her conception of radical democracy), this work ultimately shaped the direction of their respective path. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, this hallmark of post-Marxism, has two distinct movements: the first movement directed within Marxism, and the second directed outside of it.

This first movement within Marxism is directed against Marxist essentialism (and more specifically "Orthodox Marxism"). Laclau and Mouffe believe that Marxism, as it was initially formulated, was able to strive within its limited context of nineteenth century Europe. They argue that Marx's success was partly due to his use of the Jacobin imaginary and supplying it with the ideas of proletariat, revolution, classes, etc. The problem is that, in doing so, Marx created a time-bomb that, at some point, would necessarily be problematic: how can we reconcile the thick theory offered by Marx with new contexts, such as the fact that capitalism was becoming increasingly more fragmented and not homogeneous as Marx predicted? And what about the interests of the classes, how to isolate this crucial interest that would then lead to the final revolution? What Laclau and Mouffe tell us in the beginning of *Socialist Strategy* is the story of how Marxism, from a state of original innocence where theory and political struggle coincided, began to realize that theory was increasingly less adequate.

> "(…) Marxism finally lost its innocence at that time. In so far as the paradigmatic sequence of its categories was subjected to the 'structural pressure' of increasingly atypical situations, it became ever more difficult to reduce social relations to structural moments internal to those categories. A proliferation of caesurae and discontinuities start to break down the unity of a discourse that considered itself profoundly monist." (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 14-19, 18)

But they also tell the story of how Marxism, instead of solving the more contingent aspects of its theory, decided to remain locked within its original narrative. It is here that orthodox Marxism emerges. For Laclau and Mouffe, when the crisis of Marxism became evident and the Second International occurred, it was decided within Marxism to maintain theory as much as possible within its own essentialist parameters. Orthodox Marxism, for instance, argued that the fragmentation of capitalism was transitory or merely apparent. It maintained that there were necessary laws of history. Orthodox Marxism was also keen in creating theories that would endlessly capture what was the "true" interest and identity of a "class."

> "Marxist orthodoxy, as it is constituted in Kautsky and Plekhanov, is not a simple continuation of classical Marxism. It involves a very particular inflection, characterized by the new role assigned to theory. Instead of serving to systematize observable historical tendencies (…) theory sets itself up as a guarantee that these tendencies will eventually coincide with the type of social articulation proposed by the Marxist paradigm. (…) It is the laws of motion of the infrastructure, guaranteed by Marxist 'science', which provide the terrain for the overcoming of this disjuncture and assure both the transitory character of the existing tendencies and the future revolutionary reconstitution of the working class." (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 19)

Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe see the outcome of the first crisis of Marxism as a stubborn attachment to the original narrative of essentialist classes and interests. Now, of course, some concepts had to be offered in order to fill the hiatus between Marxist theory and political practice. Laclau and Mouffe believe that "hegemony" came precisely to fill this void. This concept, they argue, was at first a way for the proletariat to seize the power of the state in countries where the bourgeoisie was too weak to perform its historical task (paradigmatically, it was the case of Russia). The working class could, therefore, articulate its struggle with other classes while simultaneously maintaining its own class identity. For Laclau and Mouffe, the moment when "hegemony" first began to be applied under Lenin was also the first opportunity for Marxism to be more democratic than ever: the class struggle became increasingly coincident with the struggle of the masses; there was therefore the opportunity for the struggle to be more diverse, pluralist, and inclusive.

> "(…) it is important to note the ambiguity and the contradictory effects that stem from the centrality of hegemony in Leninist discourse. On the one hand, the concept is undoubtedly associated with the more authoritarian and negative tendencies of the Leninist tradition for it postulate a clear separation within the masses between the leading sectors and those which are led. (…) But, on the other hand, the hegemonic relation entails a conception of politics which is *potentially* more democratic than anything found within the tradition of the Second International. Tasks and demands which, in classist economism, would have corresponded to different stages are now seen to coexist in the same historical conjuncture. This results in the acceptance of current political validity for a plurality of antagonisms and points of rupture, so that revolutionary legitimacy is no longer exclusively concentrated in the working class. A structural dislocation thus emerges between 'masses' and 'classes', given that the

line separating the former from the dominant sectors is not juxtaposed with class exploitation. Combined and uneven development becomes the terrain which for the first time allows Marxism to render more complex its conception of the nature of social struggles." (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 55-56)

However, Laclau and Mouffe believe that what ultimately occurred under Lenin was, not the potential "democratic" practice of hegemony, but an "authoritarian" practice of hegemony: in order for the struggle to remain within a classist framework, a leader with a tremendous epistemological vantage had to be present. Indeed, only a leader could establish the distinction between the "true struggle" and the "contingent" one. And it is in this intertwining of epistemology and politics that Laclau and Mouffe identify the increasing authoritarian trend of Leninism: the more the struggle was democratic and plural, the more an authoritarian practice of hegemony was necessary in order to impose the "true" interest of the "working class" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 47-71).

It is therefore interesting to see that, for Laclau and Mouffe, Marxism's theoretical inadequacy is not only a burden when it comes to political practice: it actually gives way to an authoritarian style of politics. Hence, it is not surprising that Laclau and Mouffe see Gramsci as their main intellectual influence: Gramsci was, for them, the author that answered the crisis of Marxism by embracing the contingency of the struggle and confining its essentialism to a minimum. For Gramsci, hegemonic blocs should not necessarily be understood in terms of "classes," but rather as complex and organic collective wills. Although, for Laclau and Mouffe, Gramsci did not entirely abandon some essentialist premises, he did embrace the fact that the identity of the agents, their interests, their struggle, and their historical direction was not necessarily written.

Therefore, what I described as the "first movement" of Laclau's and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* finishes with a description of what Marxism should do, what is the alternative to Marxism's essentialism. For Laclau and Mouffe, Marxism should fully embrace the contingency of the concept of hegemony. It should stop thinking that the identity of the agents, their struggles, and their direction is somewhat aprioristically written. In other words, it should radically break with the logic of necessity within Marxism and fully embrace the logic of hegemonic contingency.

Now, the second "movement" of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (essentially present in the last chapter) is an argument directed outside of Marxism. It consists in arguing that the Left should fully embrace this hegemonic contingency in order to fight a worrying hegemonic bloc that has recently emerged: the "new right." This new right, for Laclau and Mouffe, essentially consists in neoliberals and conservatives fighting for the dismantlement of the welfare state. In order to face this powerful adversary, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the Left should enter the political arena without essentialism and apriorisms. The Left should form its own hegemonic bloc, and that without aprioristically knowing what kind of alliances it will find there and what kind of direction the struggle will take. In order to articulate the struggle in such a non-aprioristical way, the Left should fully embrace democracy, pluralism, while abandoning the idea of a final revolution. For the post-Marxist authors, democracy should be a kind of "discursive

compass": although one cannot aprioristically know what the political struggle of the Left will be, democracy should be the source of antagonism, the disrupter of social change that leads to increasing struggles for equality in all areas of society.

In the end, and as we can see, these two movements I described, one directed within Marxism and one directed outside of it, always comes down to what, for Laclau and Mouffe, is the crucial crossroad of the Left today. The Left must choose between the old essentialist illusions of Marxism and a Marxism that abandons these illusions. Only then will the Left be able to fight back against the hegemonic new right. The Left should be radical in the sense that it should entirely abandon a priory essentialism when entering the political arena.

Now, the crossroad which Laclau and Mouffe present between essentialism and left postmodernism is really interesting at the level of the political narrative they draw. Indeed, a political narrative usually attempts to demonstrate that, in order to fulfill its purpose and defeat its enemy, the political movement in question must first defeat its internal barriers in order to unleash its full potential. It is, for instance, what Marx did when he said that the workers had to unite in order to vanquish the bourgeoisie. We can see in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*: Laclau and Mouffe's political narrative suggests that Marxism should first vanquish the enemy within in order to fight the enemy without. But before addressing some conclusions on Laclau's work (that, as we will see, have implications for its radicalism), it is necessary first to briefly describe another of Laclau's work, written twenty years after *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, his work *On Populist Reason*.

On Populist Reason (2005)

Twenty years after *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the panorama could not have been more different, both for the world and for Laclau himself. On the one hand, Laclau and Mouffe were very quickly projected at the forefront of the contemporary scene. Although both were very well received by the general public, there is a notable difference in the way numerous scholars reviewed the works of each: Mouffe's project of a radical democracy and her conception of agonistic politics was widely praised, but Laclau's continuation of post-Marxism and hegemony received mixed, sometimes strongly negative, reactions (see also Wenman 2003, Townshend 2004: 275-279). In *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* edited by Mouffe), Richard Rorty saw in Laclau the kind of political jargon that he thought was detrimental to the Left ["an unfortunate over-philosophication of leftist political debate" (Rorty 1996: 71)]. In a strained exchange with Judith Butler in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Butler decided to no longer answer Laclau's arguments because "much of what [Laclau] produces by way of argument is more war tactic than clear argument" (Butler et al. 2000: 271). In this very work, we also saw the first salvo of harsh criticisms between Laclau and Zizek that would lead to their break.

This conflict with Zizek was symbolic of the greater rupture that was more evident at the time, against a Left that was increasingly considered (by authors like

Zizek or Badiou) to be very "negative" in its critique of objectivism, essentialism, and the Enlightenment and not offering anything "positive" in return (El-Ojeili 2015, McLennan 1996, 1999). In the last book he published with Butler and Zizek, Laclau would explicitly enunciate the problem:

> "A (…) criticism (…) which could legitimately be directed at my work is that in the passage from classical Marxism to 'hegemony', and from the latter to 'radical democracy', an enlargement of the addressees of the descriptive/normative project takes place, and that, as a result, a corresponding enlargement of the area of normative argumentation should have followed - while, in my work, this latter enlargement has not sufficiently advanced. In other words, in formulating a political project which addresses the new situation, the descriptive dimension has advanced more rapidly than the normative. I think this is a valid criticism, and I intend to restore the correct balance between the two dimensions in future works." (Butler et al. 2000: 295)

It is in this context that we can better understand the emergence of *On Populist Reason*. This work was published by Laclau in 2005 and attempts to thoroughly reestablish populism as a legitimate theoretical and political tool. Indeed, says Laclau, populism seems to capture something very important about the political, but no one so far has been able to define it very well due to some theoretical inadequacies. For Laclau, attempts to either define populism with a previous definition of populism, or through a previous typology of populist movements, always fail to correctly define populism. In the literature on populism, there is always the attempt to fill populism with a previously existing content (an ideology or a social basis), which in turn reduces what populism actually consists of and creates a myriad of exceptions (Laclau 2005: 3-20).

Laclau, at some point of his work, proposes the following example to better encapsulate what populism is (Laclau 2005: 73-74). Imagine a large mass of agrarian migrants who settles in the shantytowns on the periphery of a developing industrial city. The migrants at some point will begin to have *requests* for the political establishment (problems of health or housing for instance). If the political establishment does not meet those requests, they will accumulate and each unfulfilled request will start being identified with each other on the sole basis of this unfulfillment: the claimants will begin to see each other as linked on the sole basis of an unfulfillment. Now, this lack will be directed against something very concrete, the political establishment. And these demands, at some point, will attempt to give a name to this constitutive unfulfillment. This is where the rhetoric of populism emerges: those with unfulfilled demands will call each other "the people"; they will call the political establishment "the oligarchy" or, well, "the establishment"; and they will fight in the name of what Laclau calls "empty signifiers", that is, concepts such as "justice" or "equality" that mean nothing but the opposite of the situation of unfulfillment in which "the people" finds itself. And this is what, for Laclau, populism is all about: it is this radical antagonistic discourse between a "people" and an "establishment" in the name of concepts that, in fact, are empty. This is why Laclau was so critical of theories of populism that attempted to give it a previously existing content: Laclau believes that populism is

a discourse, a way of articulating the political that is eminently antagonistic. Populism is all about a part of the actual people thinking that they *represent* the *true* people, the fulfilled ones.

> "Here we have, in embryo, a populist configuration. We already have two clear preconditions of populism: (1) the formation of an internal antagonistic frontier separating the 'people' from power; and (2) an equivalential articulation of demands making the emergence of the 'people' possible. There is a third precondition which does not really arise until the political mobilization has reached a higher level: the unification of these various demands - whose equivalence, up to that point, had not gone beyond a feeling of vague solidarity - into a stable system of signification." (Laclau 2005: 74)

Now, of course, I am considerably simplifying Laclau's theory of populism (and, to be sure, this is a simplification he also makes in chapter 5 of *Populist Reason* (Laclau 2005) and also in Butler et al. 2000: 301-305). For instance, this example from Laclau is only illustrative: "the people" or "the oligarchy" will have a variety of different names according to the circumstances. The empty signifiers Laclau addresses are, of course, much more complex. For instance, "equality" is a signifier to which the political establishment will already have ascribed a meaning. There will be, therefore, a struggle between "the people" and "the establishment" in order to attract as many demands as possible on its own side.

Before concluding this second section, I want to argue why Laclau's theory is not simply a political analysis of populism: it actually implies a political program. Indeed, Laclau is very clear when he says that democracy and politics are "at their maximum," so to say, when a populist outbreak emerges. Indeed, for Laclau, to build the political within the establishment, and not in a radical and antagonistic manner, is a way of maintaining social underdogs at the margins of society. However, when a populist outbreak emerges, there is the possibility of radically integrating some of these underdogs. It is a way for these underdogs to be heard.

There is therefore something fundamentally democratic in populism: it intensifies antagonism, which intensifies politics, which in turn intensifies the egalitarian and inclusive potential of democracy. This is why Laclau is so critical simultaneously of "revolutionism" or "reformism": both contribute to attenuate or really kill the political, which in turn reduce its democratic energies. Here, hegemony and populism seem almost to be two faces of the same coin: both are deeply (if not quintessentially) political because, while the former articulates particularities in order to form a hegemonic bloc, the latter has the additional character of dividing society in two camps and further intensifying antagonisms (Arditi 2010).

This explains why Laclau is so strangely uncritical of his own notion of populism. Laclau is quite clear with the notion that "populism is politics," and then leaves the commentators puzzled as to why; in that case, do we still need the term "populism" (cf. Stavrakakis' puzzlement in Stavrakakis 2004: 262-264, Arditi's potential solution to this problem in Arditi 2010: 492-493). The reason is that, as we saw and will see in the next section, Laclau presents an anti-essentialist narrative of emancipation: more than reaching for the

usefulness of the concept of populism, Laclau wishes to offer a new narrative for a new epoch, a contender to replace the now-revoked Marxist metanarrative.

Laclau's Emancipatory Project

I see a narrative of emancipation in opposition to a narrative of accommodation: while the first seek to remove some part of society in order to achieve emancipation, the second attempts to find mechanisms of accommodation with the existing parts. This is one of the essential tensions between a radical and a pragmatic type of politics: while, for the former, no type of compromise is possible with the element separating society from emancipation, the latter sees compromise as desirable and/or a factor of progress.

Laclau's work skillfully plays with these narratives and is able to create the conditions for pluralism by modifying the classical Marxist narrative of emancipation. This classical narrative can be schematized in this way:

Figure 1. *Classical Narrative of Emancipation*
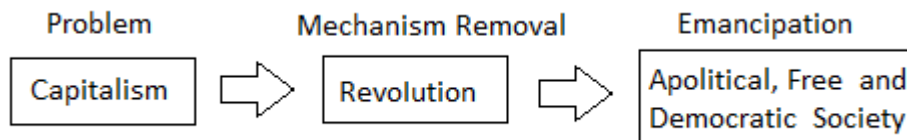
By undermining each of the elements of the classical narrative of emancipation, Laclau is able to gain some distance from it: "capitalism" or "bourgeoisie" are elusive categories that cannot be defined aprioristically; "revolution" is a mean to kill the political and is therefore not desirable; and an apolitical, fully free, and fully democratic society is impossible. What is possible and desirable, however, is the cyclical reintegration of underdogs within society, and this cycle can only be enabled if one presupposes some form of pluralism and political pragmatism: only in this way can a hegemonic operation begins and political antagonism against the establishment intensify.

Now, this is critical to understand what worries Laclau. For the Argentinian philosopher, the times of sweeping revolutions and heavenly utopias have passed: the innocent ages where one could hope for a fully emancipated state of things are no longer present. Nevertheless, and on the other hand, Laclau does not believe that we should fall back on some kind of social-democratic reformism, or any "centrist" form of politics. This, to him, seems to be a way to "play politics as usual," to perform a kind of politics where favors can be exchanged while maintaining the status-quo. If the very definition of a society implies some parts that *are not* part of society (the underdogs), then some mechanism must be found to, if not fully emancipate, at least cyclically reintegrate and generate awareness for these underdogs (this is of course more complex, more details in Laclau 2005: 69-71, Laclau 2007b: 36-46). This is why essentialism is so problematic for Laclau. Fixation and theoretical apriorism be it in the attempt to attain a fulfilled

society or in the preservation of a status-quo, are ways to keep the underdogs at bay, to prevent further emancipatory acts to be played.

Laclau's political theory is therefore very interesting and adapted to today's democratic politics because, on the one hand, it rejects Marxist essentialism by being pluralistic and pragmatic: a full-blown revolution attempting to reconcile society with itself would mean the death of the crucial antagonism necessary for the reintegration of underdogs. However, and on the other hand, Laclau's thought is yet a radicalism because it also rejects another form of essentialism: reformism and the idea that society can be handled in a piecemeal and partial way. This, for Laclau, is just another way to kill the political and stop the cycle of integration of the underdogs. Populism, for Laclau, is a third way between these two forms of essentialism.

> "(…) populist reason — which amounts, as we have seen, to *political* reason *tout court* — breaks with two forms of rationality which herald the end of politics: a total revolutionary event that, bringing about the full reconciliation of society with itself, would make the political moment superfluous, or a mere gradualist practice that reduces politics to administration. Not for nothing was the gradualist motto of Saint-Simon - 'from the government of men to the administration of things' — adopted by Marxism to describe the future condition of a classless society." (Laclau 2005: 225)

As we can see, the Argentinian philosopher is highly successful at keeping pluralism, pragmatism, and radicalism within a same political theory. Now, I would like to see what tensions might emerge from this delicate equilibrium. And a way to do it is by identifying what could be an emancipatory narrative within Laclau: essentialism, be it in the way of a revolution or under the guises of reformism, is the problem for Laclau. Both are ways of killing antagonism, the political, and the integration of underdogs. In other words, what is interesting about Laclau is the way his work can be read as a narrative of emancipation against essentialism.

There are several brief mentions within Laclau's work that brings him closer to such narrative. Toward the end of *Populist Reason*, for instance, he leaves us with this very suggestive idea:

> "Perhaps what is dawning as a possibility in our political experience is something radically different from what postmodern prophets of the 'end of politics' are announcing: the arrival at a *fully political era*, because the dissolution of the marks of certainty does not give the political game any aprioristic necessary terrain but, rather, the possibility of constantly redefining the terrain itself." (Laclau 2005, p. 222; for more on Laclau's idea of an increasingly fragmented world in need of a new political theory: Laclau 2005: 150, Butler et al. 2000: 201-204, 300-301, Laclau 2014a)

Such interpretation of Laclau becomes stronger when we see his brief references to the concept of freedom: freedom exists in the moments where hegemony is attempted, in the moments of displacement where an impossible object is placed as the fullness of society. This is the "source of whatever freedom can exist in society" (Butler et al. 2000: 79). Another enlightening passage, this time the last paragraph of "Beyond Emancipation":

"We are today coming to terms with our own finitude and with the political possibilities that it opens. This is the point from which the potentially liberatory discourses of our postmodern age have to start. We can perhaps say that today we are at the end of emancipation and at the beginning of freedom." (cf. also the lengthy explanation of this provocative sentence in the footnote right after it, Laclau 2007a: 18)

Laclau's view on democracy is suggestive. He is quite clear when he says that democracy is *only* present at its purest in moments of profound antagonism, when politics is intensified and underdogs can be reintegrated: "(…) the construction of a 'people' is the *sine qua non* of democratic functioning. Without production of emptiness there is no 'people', no populism, but no democracy either" (Laclau 2005: 169) As Laclau states elsewhere: "The only democratic society is one which permanently shows the contingency of its own foundations (…)." (Butler et al. 2000: 86)

Nonetheless, this is not because Laclau's work should be read as an attempt to "create a world" where essentialism would be "abolished" and where "freedom and democracy" would finally reign. This sounds too much like the adversary he is trying to fight. In fact, throughout his work, Laclau carefully avoids following the path of orthodox Marxism. For instance, "freedom" here has little to do with its classical Marxist sense; the increasing of spaces of freedom for Laclau is not a wholly positive experience because it also opens the possibility to the radical renunciation of freedom (totalitarian experiences, for instance). Freedom, in this sense, is "ambiguous." In the same vein, the intensification of antagonism, of politics and, therefore, of democracy, is not a wholly positive experience either. Despite these suggestive quotes, Laclau's political theory cannot be read as an attempt to "abolish" essentialism and as a mere replication of the Marxist classical narrative, but with other categories: "essentialism" instead of "bourgeoisie," a "fully political" instead of a "fully apolitical era," and so on.

Figure 2. *Laclau's Revision of the Classical Narrative of Emancipation*
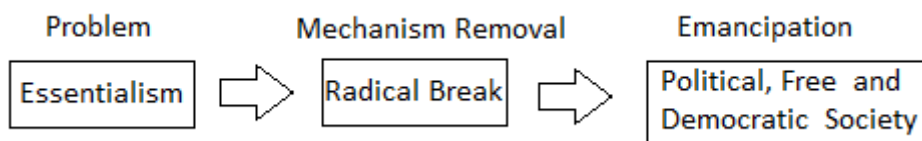
Freedom and democracy, for Laclau, are the spaces separating one's attempt toward an impossible fullness: their very existence depends on this separation. If both were to be fully realized, they would then cease to exist. (The same also happens with the ethical act that, for Laclau, is *only* present in such moments of striving toward the impossible object: Butler et al. 2000: 81). What is more, there is not for Laclau an "ever-approaching" state toward an object that cannot be ultimately obtained: that would be to presuppose that one has the ultimate concepts identifying what the "best" society would be.

(…) "at some point, the symbols of *Solidarność* Poland became the symbols of the absent fullness of society. Since society as fullness has no proper meaning beyond the ontic contents that embody it, those contents are, for the subjects attached to them, *all there is*. They are thus not an empirically achievable second best *vis-a-vis* an unattainable ultimate fullness for which we wait in vain. (…) History cannot be conceived therefore as an infinite advance towards an ultimate aim. History is rather a discontinuous succession of hegemonic formations that cannot be ordered by a script transcending their contingent historicity." (Laclau 2005: 226; this creates problems noted by Arditi 2010: 496)

There is, however, the possibility of constantly envisioning new forms of democracy and emancipation, an ever-receding totality that never comes (see Butler's description, Butler et al. 2000: 268-271). Populism is precisely one of the privileged terrains where this recession occurs, and this terrain of recession is for Laclau "the very essence of the political," (Laclau 2005: 222) the moment of delay between a politics of full reconciliation and a politics of the status-quo.

Nonetheless, and as Derrida would say, the deconstructor borrows the lexicon of the deconstructed, even if only partially (cf. Derrida 1993: 56). With associating "democracy" and "freedom" to the intensification of politics and the wholesale rejection of essentialism, Laclau does offer a narrative of emancipation where essentialism is the blocking element preventing democracy, freedom, and the integration of the underdogs. What is politically desirable, for Laclau, is present only when essentialism is not. The *ontological purification* of Marxism here emerges: what is politically desirable depends on the lack of an element of society. And this is where, I think, Laclau's pluralism comes in tension with his radicalism.

To be sure, the problem pointed out here is not so much Laclau's rejection of essentialism *per se*: the criticism of the idea that there is a kind of "underlying essence" of society is salutary. The problem is rather the wholesale rejection of it *and everything in between*: Laclau's political solution is allergic to essentialism and any other form of identity-fixation. This kind of pluralism is, to be sure, a better alternative than revolutionism, but it is still problematic because it contains an exclusive rather than inclusive character: an *exclusive* rather than an *inclusive* pluralism; a pluralism that rejects the ideas of its adversaries at the onset. This is problematic because the very idea of pluralism seems to imply that we are open, not only to ideas and solutions from our own sensibilities, but also to anything that might come from elsewhere.

The virtues and vices of Laclau's theory come from his very epistemology. Laclau's use of postmodernism was providential because it was able to free Marxism from its cage of the classical narrative of emancipation. Now, it is this very epistemology that gives to Laclau's political theory an ethnocentric aspect: what is politically desirable for Laclau is possible within his very postmodern framework, but not outside of it (cf. Charles Taylor's remarks on Rorty's ethnocentrism that apply here, Taylor 1994: 221, and cf. a rebuttal in Curtis 2015).

In this closing off within postmodernism, one recalls Richard Rorty when he quoted Heidegger: "A regard to metaphysics still prevails even in the intention to overcome metaphysics. Therefore our task is to cease all; overcoming and leaving metaphysics to itself" (Rorty 1989: 97, footnote 1). Rorty is well-known for

advocating a strategy of *conceptual starvation*: because the very attempt to overcome essentialism entails some form of essentialism, the solution is to leave essentialism to itself. This strategy, however, ends up generating two problems that we can see in Laclau.

On the one hand, Laclau was very critical of orthodox Marxism and its perpetual attempts to define elusive concepts. However, "essentialism," as much as "class" or "bourgeoisie," is also an elusive concept. There is always some way to see a given theoretical creed as having some form of "essentialism" because, indeed, there is no theory without some form of theoretical apriorism, fixation, rigidity, and so on. To be sure, what I am arguing here is not that essentialism is a *necessary condition* for theorization but, rather, that an "anti-essentialist" can keep on identifying the existence of some "essentialism" in any discourse because, indeed, any discourse does presuppose some form of theoretical rigidity and apriorism. This problem is exemplified in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, where Butler, Laclau, and Zizek accuse each other of different forms of "apriorism" or "Kantianism," while each makes his case for his own form of non-essentialist theory.

On the other hand, the attempt to conceptually *starve* essentialism and, in the case of Laclau, to create forms of politics where essentialism is rejected seems to close off an important debate instead of solving it. As Alasdair MacIntyre soberly noticed: "(…) to follow Rorty and Derrida into entirely new kinds of writing would be to abandon the debate from which the abandonment of debate would derive its point. So there is a constant return to the debate by those who still aspire to discover an idiom, at once apt for negative philosophical purposes in refuting metaphysical opponents, but itself finally disentangled from all and any metaphysical implications" (MacIntyre 1990: 55).

It is also interesting to notice that this breaking away from essentialism takes, above all, the character of a *reversal*. Indeed, classical Marxism was seen as dogmatic when it claimed to have the key to understand what the essence of society was. Now, Laclau *reverses* this position when he argues that there is no essence of the social. In this way, he radically departs from any attempt to theoretically create bridges that could undertake an inclusive pluralism. Of course, arguing that one detains the key to fully understand society is a good way to crush the undesirable parts of society. But should pluralism be taken for granted at the moment one claims that there is no such key?

Concluding, and as Derrida would say, "(…) ce qui reste aussi irréductible à toute déconstruction, ce qui demeure aussi indéconstructible que la possibilité même de la déconstruction, c'est peut-être une certaine expérience de la promesse émancipatoire (…)" (Derrida 1993: 102). In Derridean terms, one could conversely say that, as long as the experience of emancipation remains, it relies on a certain experience of accommodation: a side of the debate that keeps on appealing to more and more inclusive forms of pluralism and of conversation. This, we could say, is the cat-and-rat game between narratives of emancipation and narratives of accommodation: while the first attempts to create new forms of emancipation escaping its older and "naïve" counterparts, the latter strives to catch up and asks for more from this new form of emancipation. In an "Age of

Pluralism," (Tully 1994) an era where the idea of revolution seems to be out of fashion, pluralism becomes more demanding: it asks to be more inclusive than ever.

Conclusions

Since the first time this article began to be penned (2016) until the moment of its publication (2019), the relevance of Laclau for the contemporary scene has only increased. There are no doubts that Laclau's notion of populism had a profound impact in the study of populism (Katsambekis 2016: 391, Stavrakaki 2004: 257-258) and gave rise to an enlightening framework for analysis (such as the analysis of Syriza in Katsambekis 2016) and even real world applications (cf. the case of Podemos: Kioupkiolis 2016, Errejón and Mouffe 2016). The application of Laclau's ideas to the recent American situation and Trump's articulation of the "underdogs" of globalization within his populist chain of equivalence will also be a fruitful ground of analysis. Mouffe already noticed this problem of France's far-right "articulating" the votes of the workers (Mouffe 2014), something Laclau related to his own theory of populism many years before in *Populist Reason*.

Also very relevant is the increasing critiques within the Left against an allegedly "socially weightless" (McNay 2014) and "negative" (El-Ojeili 2015) way of thinking society that is often ascribed to Laclau and Mouffe. Rorty's critique of the "postmodern Left" as a "spectatorial left" that forgot to think capitalism and its traditional themes runs high today [a criticism implicit in Zizek's and Badiou's attempts to "relaunch" communism (Douzinas and Žižek 2010)].

Independently of the outcome of these struggles, it is quite clear that Laclau is one of the main representatives of this anti-essentialist Left. If the Marxist metanarrative is indeed deceased and no longer inspire, the Left might have to resign itself to think politics through the lenses of Laclau and the postmodern Left. Maybe this was what Laclau meant when he said that the Left needed a new social imaginary that would replace the old Marxist one (Butler et al. 2000: 306): not simply that the Left needed to build a new social imaginary, but that it should accept Laclau's anti-essentialist metanarrative as this new social imaginary. More than seeing the Left, proliferating the creation of particular struggles with new antagonistic frontiers, maybe Laclau wanted the Left to adopt the anti-essentialism frontier as the frontier above all the others. More than seeing the victory of this or that particular struggle, Laclau might have projected in the future the possible victory of his anti-essentialist philosophy. This would explain why he mysteriously said in his last interview that "[m]y work is for all eternity" (Laclau 2014b).

Acknowledgement

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The Demographics of Covid-19 in the European Union

By Gregory T. Papanikos[*]

This paper provides provisional descriptive evidence to answer two questions which relate to deaths due to COVID-19 in EU countries. First, to what extent variations in population sizes matter in EU countries? Can variations in deaths per capita (or people infected per capita) be explained by variations in population sizes? Second, does the economy matter? Can variations in total and per capita GDP explain variations in deaths per capita? Related is the issue of social spending. Can social spending explain variations in COVID-19 impacts? In answering these questions, data from EU member states are used. Simple stepwise descriptive statistical analyses show that population sizes and economies do matter in explaining the observed variations in COVID-19 impacts. It is found that only deaths per capita give meaningful and statistically significant results. This relation is non-linear. On average a one percent rise in population size increases deaths per capita by 0.49%.

Keywords: *COVID-19, European Union, Population, GDP, Per Capita GDP, Social Policy*

Introduction

Never before in history world population was so large, so old, so much travelling across the globe and so interconnected via technology. In the last millennium, the world has witnessed tremendous population growths despite the positive and preventive checks that so eloquently have been examined by Malthus in his famous book on *An Essay on the Principle of Population* first published in 1798. There is no doubt that technology has been the primary factor explaining this unprecedented growth in global population especially vaccines and human capital which has increased personal hygiene practices (Lee 2003).

Over the last centuries, these population upsurges have occurred in the midst of (a) catastrophic wars, (b) famines, and (c) natural disasters. The latter include lethal contagious diseases. But as Malthus (1798: 110) remarked these did not affect the population because of "… the greatest proportion of births to burials, was in the five years after the great pestilence". In other words, population losses were recovered in few years.

The same was highlighted by Thucydides in his book *The Peloponnesian War*[2]. Ten years after the plague, which struck Athens in the summer of 430 BCE, was forgotten, population rose sufficiently to support with fresh fighters a military expedition to Sicily and with a sufficient rise in public revenue.

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[2]I have examined elsewhere the Ancient Plague of Athens in comparison with the current pandemic; see Papanikos (2020a). Similarly using a simulation model, Court and McIsaac (2020) concluded that in case of collapses, their model responded with higher than usual birth rates resulted in larger and younger population. It seems that this is the case with the current pandemic given the disproportionate effect on older populations.

Presumably the ancient pestilence did not affect as hard the young generation. Only 15 years had elapsed since the plague which was more lethal during its second and last wave of 427 BCE. Those born after the plague would have been less than 12 years old at the time of the war in Sicily and could not serve as soldiers. This prompts the conclusion that those who were children at the time of the Plague of 430-427 BCE were not infected as much as older people otherwise would not have survived to join the ranks of the Athenian army. I mention this because relates to unequal impacts that pandemics may have on population in terms of age and gender.

This paper looks at demographic impact of COVID-19 in European Union (EU). My interest is policy oriented. The EU members may take a collective action to fight the pandemic or any future contagious disease and implement a common social policy. These policies are simply mentioned in the fourth section of this paper. In the following two sections, I compare the number of people infected and deaths of the pandemic in the EU member states in terms of their population sizes and age structure (section two) and its association with the size of EU economies and social policy spending (section three). The final section concludes.

My analysis here is basic. I use descriptive statistical tools to examine the issues and questions concerning this paper. I do not provide any literature review of the social and economic impact because this has been done in a paper I have already mentioned and another paper which looked at economic and tourism impacts of COVID-19 on Greek economy[3].

To What Extent Population Sizes Matter?

Data on total people infected (cases) and the number of people died from COVID-19 were retrieved from the World Health Organization (WHO); it includes deaths and cases reported as of 31 May 2020 (https://covid19.who.int/). Population and economic statistics are retrieved from Eurostat (https://ec.europa. eu/eurostat/web/national-accounts/overview. The most recent available data on population, GDP and social policy are used as of 31 May 2020.

Table 1 reports basic statistics of all 27 countries which are members of EU: total population, total number of people infected, total number of people infected per million of population, total number of people died by the disease, total number of people died per million of population, and the death per cases ratio.

A few comments on data limitations are in order here. The number of cases reported has been very controversial not only in EU countries but in other countries as well. The total number of people infected is underreported because does not include all those who were infected and for various reasons were never tested, e.g., lack of medical resources, no symptoms etc.

The death statistics are more reliable but even these possibly are underestimated. People who died outside the health system (hospitals and clinics) may not be counted as victims of the pandemic. In any case, the issue here is

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[3]Based on scenario analysis, economic and tourism impacts were found to be unprecedented for non-war period; see Papanikos (2020b).

whether these data biases differ between the EU countries. For the cases this may be true. However, the death variable may measure intra-EU variations more accurately. I will concentrate more on death variations, which, for all practical purposes, are more important. Those who were infected and survived may be a gain to society if they have become immune to the disease.

Table 1. *Total Population, Case and Deaths in the European Union Member States*

Country	Population (2020 estimate)	Deaths	Cases	Deaths per Million People	Cases per Million People	Deaths per Cases
Belgium	11542	9453	58186	819	6155	0.1625
Bulgaria	6939	140	2513	20	17950	0.0557
Czechia	10710	319	9230	30	28934	0.0346
Denmark	5843	571	11633	98	20373	0.0491
Germany	83270	8500	181482	102	21351	0.0468
Estonia	1331	67	1865	50	27836	0.0359
Ireland	4962	1651	24929	333	15099	0.0662
Greece	10652	175	2915	16	16657	0.0600
Spain	47217	29043	239600	615	8250	0.1212
France	66945	28717	148436	429	5169	0.1935
Croatia	4054	103	2246	25	21806	0.0459
Italy	60314	33340	232664	553	6979	0.1433
Cyprus	890	17	943	19	55471	0.0180
Latvia	1908	24	1065	13	44375	0.0225
Lithuania	2790	70	1670	25	23857	0.0419
Luxembourg	632	110	4016	174	36509	0.0274
Hungary	9752	524	3867	54	7380	0.1355
Malta	516	7	616	14	88000	0.0114
Netherlands	17482	5951	46257	340	7773	0.1287
Austria	8921	668	16638	75	24907	0.0401
Poland	37922	1061	23571	28	22216	0.0450
Portugal	10274	1396	32203	136	23068	0.0433
Romania	19294	1253	19133	65	15270	0.0655
Slovenia	2097	108	1473	52	13639	0.0733
Slovakia	5461	28	1521	5	54321	0.0184
Finland	5530	316	6826	57	21601	0.0463
Sweden	10373	4395	37113	424	8444	0.1625

Source: COVID-19 from WHO (https://covid19.who.int/) and all others from the European Union (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/national-accounts/overview).

By looking at the raw data of Table 1, there appears to be huge differences between countries with similar populations. For example, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and Sweden, with a population of about 10 million people, have reported different impacts on total number of people died from the disease: 668, 9453, 319, 175, 524, 1396 and 4395 respectively. From the surprisingly low statistic of Greece of 175 deaths as of 31 May 2020 to the huge and unexpected number of 9,453 reported by Belgium.

On the other hand, Germany and France -the two countries with the largest populations in EU-, have reported striking different numbers of deaths. Germany with a population of 83 million people reported 8.5 thousand deaths while France with 67 million population had three times higher this number (28,717). The picture looks the same if other variables reported in Table 1 are examined.

Table 2 reports summary statistics of all variables in Table 1. As of 31 May 2020, the average number of deaths in the 27 EU member nations was 4,741 people with a positive skewness.

Table 2. *Summary Statistics*

Statistic	Population (2020 estimate)	Deaths	Cases	Deaths per Million People	Cases per Million People	Deaths per Cases
Mean	16579	4741	41208	169	2002	0.069
Median	8921	524	9230	57	1234	0.047
Maximum	83270	33340	239600	819	6359	0.194
Minimum	516	7	616	5	274	0.011
Std. Dev.	22300	9603	70915	221	1757	0.049
Skewness	2	2	2	2	1	1.059
Kurtosis	5	6	5	4	3	3.006

Italy holds the disappointment record of over 33 thousand deaths in total and 889 deaths per million of population. The minimum total was recorded by Malta (7) but per population the minimum was recorded by Slovakia of 5 deaths per million people.

Tables 1 and 2 show large differences in the death/cases ratio. But, as explained above, this may reflect the inaccurate record of cases. France, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and Spain which have higher death/cases ratio may be an indication of better recording the cases but countries with low rates may as well show better provision of hospital services. This important issue goes beyond the scope of this study.

The above evidence, based on raw data, may be misleading and the underlying relationship between the size of population and the number deaths may be statistically stronger. A scatter diagram of the two variables of deaths per capita and total population is shown in Figure 1.

Larger countries were hit harder relative to smaller countries. But a careful look at Figure 1 shows that this relationship is not linear. Also, there is a cluster of small countries with population less than 10 million people. But even this sub-section shows a negative relationship.

To ascertain non-linear effects, a regression equation was estimated of deaths per population as a function of total population. The results are reported in Table 3. The regression results show that population size does have an impact on the deaths per capita.

Three estimations are reported. Firstly, a logarithmic specification shows that there is positive relation between deaths per capita and population. The elasticity is 0.49. A 1% increase in population size is associated with 0.49% increase in the number of deaths per capita. The relationship is positive. Higher populations increase the number of deaths per capita.

Figure 1. *Deaths per Capita and Total Population*

Total Population in 000s
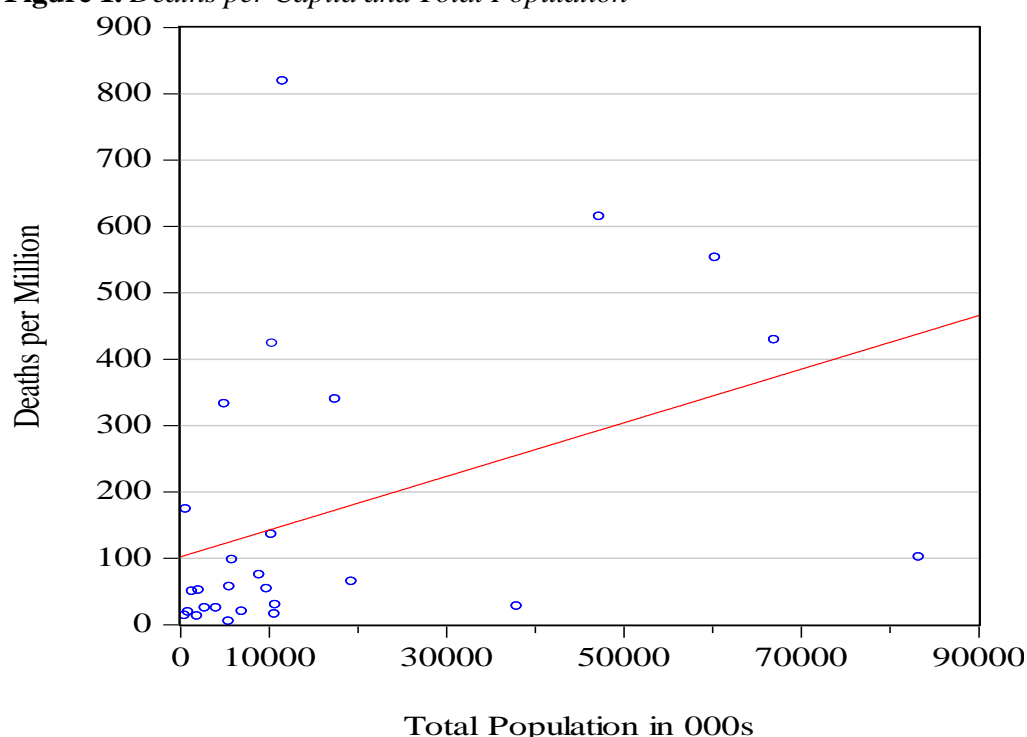
Table 3. *Regression Results of Deaths per Million of People*

Explanatory Variables	Log (Deaths per Capita) (1)	Deaths per Capita (2)	Deaths per Capita (3)
Constant	-0.044 (-0.02)	-720.6 (-0.67)	23.93 (0.54)
Log (Population)	0.49 (3.0)		
Population		0.3294 (2.74)	0.017 (2.21)
(Population)^2			-1.73E-07 (-1.8)
Adjusted R-squared	0.2029	0.1334	0.2253
F-statistic	7.62	5.01	4.78
Prob(F-statistic)	0.01	0.03	0.02

t- values in parentheses (a t-value above 1.8 shows that the coefficient is statistically significant at 10% level). White heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors & covariance estimates are reported.

Secondly, a linear model on levels also shows a strong positive relation between deaths per capita and total population. However, as shown in the last column of Table 3, the relationship is non-linear. A rise in total population increases deaths per capita at a decreasing rate.

Another interesting result is given by the coefficient of determination adjusted for degrees of freedom. In the logarithmic specification, the variation in the log of population explain 20.29% of the variations of the log of deaths per capita. In the linear and non-linear specifications, the coefficient of determination is 13.34% and 22.53% respectively.

The relationship between cases per capita and total population was not statistically significant in all three model specifications. Results are not reported.

In addition, the age structure of population was not statistically significant either. I used total and percentages of population over 65 years old and under 14 years old. Either variable was not statistically significant. This might relate to the aggregation of data. It quite possible that at the regional level the age structure may play a role. Kashnitsky et al (2020) examined age convergence using regional EU level data. They found a strong relation between age and economic convergence. Thus, regions do matter in analyzing age structure of population. Finally, population density or the area of the country was not statistically significant either.

Summing up, the results of this section, the answer to the question "to what extent population sizes matter?" is yes. The higher the population of an EU country, the higher the death rate; the latter is measured as the number of people died from COVID-19 per million of population. Why is this the case was not answered in this paper. Possible explanations could be that higher populations imply higher concentrations of populations and higher probabilities of spreading the disease.

This picture may be incomplete if we do not look at the size of the economies of the EU countries. The next section of this paper looks at aggregate economic impacts taking into consideration the findings of this section and controlling for the effect of population sizes.

Does the Economy Matter?

The 27 EU member states belong to the group of countries which can be called developed or relatively rich countries. However, great variations do exist within EU. From an economic point of view, large economies (those which produce a higher than average level of GDP) and rich countries (those with relatively high per capita GDP) do make a marked difference. Table 4 reports raw data on total and per capita GDP for the 27 EU countries.

One of the characteristics of the economy of the EU countries is different sizes. Small economies such as Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Luxembourg and Slovakia of less than 100 billion euro of GDP coexist with large economies Germany (3.4 trillion €), France (2.4 trillion), Italy (1.8 trillion) and Spain (1.2 trillion €). In the middle there are medium sized economies of higher 100 billion € and lower one trillion €. Almost half of the EU economies (13) are in the middle.

This is very important because the COVID-19 has had so far, a greater impact on long-term economic prospects of an individual country and an overall impact on the EU countries since their economies are integrated especially those which at the same time are members of the eurozone.

Table 4. *GDP, Per Capita GDP and Social Spending of the 27 European Union Member States, 2019*

Country	GDP (millions €)	GDP per Capita (in €)	Social Spending (% of GDP)
Belgium	473085	41195	20.7%
Bulgaria	60675	8678	12.1%
Czechia	220201	20632	14.5%
Denmark	310937	53438	17.9%
Germany	3435210	41336	17.9%
Estonia	28037	21117	13.5%
Ireland	347215	70373	8.7%
Greece	187457	17500	21.8%
Spain	1245331	26401	19.4%
France	2425708	36330	23.6%
Croatia	53937	13251	15.3%
Italy	1787664	29627	24.9%
Cyprus	21944	24925	15.0%
Latvia	30476	15941	12.8%
Lithuania	48433	17344	15.3%
Luxembourg	63516	102343	18.9%
Hungary	143826	14720	12.3%
Malta	13277	26523	9.8%
Netherlands	812051	46804	11.4%
Austria	398682	44905	19.5%
Poland	529029	13939	16.9%
Portugal	212319	20661	18.2%
Romania	223337	11503	13.4%
Slovenia	48007	22962	17.8%
Slovakia	94171	17266	16.1%
Finland	240078	43485	20.2%
Sweden	474148	46128	13.5%
Average EU	515880	31457	16.3%
Median EU	220201	24925	16.1%
Standard Deviation EU	815553	20750	0.04

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/national-accounts/overview

However, one expects a time lag of this impact. The lockdown of 2020 cannot affect the GDP of 2019. And this makes the interpretation of the simple regression results very difficult. The question though here is not if the COVID-19 will have a negative impact on the economy and how severe will that be but whether the large economies of the EU were hit harder. The hypothesis is whether the higher the total GDP, the higher the deaths per million people.

Table 4 shows the distribution of per capita GDP between the 27 EU countries. As was the case with the observations with total GDP, so with per capita GDP the EU countries can be categorized into three groups of equal size of nine countries.

The richest group of EU countries with a per capita GDP of more than 40 thousand euro in 2019 were: Luxembourg, Ireland, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Finland, Germany and Belgium**.**

The poorest group of countries (with a per capita income less than 20 thousand euro) were: Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Lithuania and Greece**.**

Between 20 and 40 thousand per capita GDP were the countries of Czechia, Portugal, Estonia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Spain, Malta, Italy and France.

The average economy of EU had a GDP of 515 billion. The median value was 220 billion euro which shows the skewness of the distribution of total GDP between the 27 EU countries as this is also portrayed by the high standard deviation of 816 billion euro.

Per capita GDP is not as disperse as total GDP but variations do exist. The average per capita GDP is 31.5 thousand euro, the median is 24.9 thousand and the standard deviation is 20.6 thousand euro.

Social spending as a percentage of GDP does show variations but are not as huge as the variations in GDP and per capita GDP. It seems that the EU countries have harmonized their social spending even though it belongs to national authorities to adjust their social spending.

How do all these economic variables impact on the deaths due to COVID-19? Table 5 reports regression results of an extended simple model which in addition to population now includes economic variables.

Many specifications were tried but they were not given statistically meaningful results. For example, the logarithmic specification was not statistically significant. This might be explained by the non-linearity of deaths per capita and the economic variables of total GDP and GDP per capita.

Table 5. *Regression Results of Deaths per Population of an Extended Model*

Dependent Variable: Deaths per Million of Population				
Variable	*Coefficient*	*Std. Error*	*t-Statistic*	*Prob.*
C	564.2439	462.4751	1.220052	0.2354
Per Capita GDP	11.66524	5.934804	1.965564	0.0621
(Per Capita GDP)^2	-0.092133	0.051239	-1.798094	0.0859
Social Spending-% of GDP)	-9778.335	4636.092	-2.109176	0.0465
(Social Spending-% of GDP)^2	34110.32	13076.45	2.608532	0.0160
R-squared	0.416792	F-statistic		3.930602
Adjusted R-squared	0.310754	Prob(F-statistic)		0.014827
		Prob (Wald F-statistic)		0.000002

White heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors & covariance estimates are reported.

Also, the size of population and GDP are correlated and this creates a problem of multicollinearity. The effect of these two variables cannot be ascertained separately. Instead, per capita income is used as an explanatory variable of deaths per capita.

Total deaths instead of per capita deaths give different statistical results. The GDP variable was not statistically significant. Table 5 reports the regression results of only a model of statistically significant coefficients. Per capita income and social spending as percentage of GDP were used as explanatory variables. The effect of both variables is non-linear.

Table 5 shows that economic variables do matter. It seems that the economies which were hit the hardest were the richer countries of EU. Countries with higher than average GDP per capita recorded higher than average deaths per capita but at a decreasing rate. On the other hand, social policy spending does matter. Countries with higher spending reported lower number of deaths per capita.

In concluding, the economy does matter. The richer the country, the higher the deaths per capita. On the other hand, the higher the social spending as a share of GDP, the lower the ratio of deaths to population. It seems that social policy does work and EU countries should consider coordinate and consolidate a common policy. This issue is briefly discussed in the next section of this paper in light of the current pandemic.

A Common EU Policy to Fight the Current Pandemic

The members of EU are not obliged to follow a common social policy and to that extent any policy which relates to public spending on education, health and welfare. Over the years this has created two problems.

The first is ideological. There is no doubt that the European Civilization has been at the forefront of what one may call an anthropocentric society. Never before and nowhere today the humanity has reached such levels of civilization as in EU. And this must be cherished by all European countries. Despite the differences shown by some countries which in statistical terms can be considered outliers, the European Civilization is the best humanity ever had. It is at the highest point of a steep mountain where at the top lies the ideal society. The European civilization is not perfect but it is the best. A demonstration of such a superior civilization is the treatment of all kind of minorities included those people who suffer more from the current pandemic. The European Union has not shown the solidary which one would expect from its superior civilization. Ideology relates to politics and the latter to democracy.

Pandemics affect political and social processes at least in the short term over the political cycle. Haffoudhi and Bellakhal (2020) have related democracy to age structure and demography. COVID-19 has had a differential age structure effect and this might have repercussions on the political process in the EU countries. Also, as Krieger and Meierrieks (2020) population size is positively related with government size. If this is the case, then EU countries with larger population which were hit harder with the COVID-19 may expect political instability and pressure as they will account the government responsible for the impact.

Related to this issue of democracy and politics is the fertility rate of women. Sommer (2018) using a sample of 140 countries found growth in democracy when fertility declines. A future study should examine how countries which differ in fertility rates and therefore in the role of women in politics have performed in terms of social policy and coping with the pandemic.

The second is economics. Countries who spend more on social policies which in some cases might include minimum wages financed by higher tax rates and less investment credits put themselves in a disadvantageous position than the other

countries of EU that use a curtailment of social benefits as a means to promote short-run economic growth objectives.

Both reasons are important. I do not suggest an increase or a decrease in social policy spending. What I do suggest is that the European Union must decide what kind of society it wants and one this decision is reached, then it must be applied to all countries. If some countries do not follow, they must not be part of the European Union; spiritually at least.

The current pandemic has sown the lack of a common policy to face the economic and social problems. Countries under panic started to take measures without consulting each other creating a deplorable situation. However, I must stress that relative to U.K. and USA, the European Union looks like a paradise. And if for the EU there is an excuse because 27 countries must coordinate their actions after a common decision is taken, for the other areas of the world there is no excuse. Table 6 reports comparative data of the EU, UK, Canada and USA. With exception of Canada, USA and U.K. have scored below the E.U. average.

Table 6. *Comparative Summary Statistics of EU, U.K., Canada and USA*

Area or Country	Population	Deaths	Cases	Deaths per Million of People	Cases per Million of People
EU	449641	128007	1112611	285	2474
U.K.	67192	38376	272830	571	4060
Canada	36475	6996	89741	192	2460
USA	333245	101567	1716078	305	5150

Finally, on the 13 May 2020, the EU took a number of initiatives which are stated in four documents (European Commission 2020a, 2020b, 2020c and 2020d). In what follows in this section, I make a few notes on them.

In my earlier paper (Papanikos 2020b), I indicated that the important issue was to reach a common decision to lift the variations in the lockdown policies. What is missing from these documents is the emphasis on the demand side of the equation or the consumer behavior. As long as countries report even a single case of infection, people will not resume traveling or undertake any other outdoor activity such as dining and shopping.

There is a demographic side to this story. Given the evidence that the disease hit disproportionally the older people, then governments must increase their spending targeting this age group. This might require a rationalization and restructuring of health services. Currently there is no common health policy even at the level of absorbing excess demand shocks. This is a research question which needs further investigation: how health expenditures affected the deaths and cases of Covid-19.

The recent discussion at the EU level to spend billions of euro to revitalize the economy to get out of the upcoming deep recession is towards the right direction. I consider it necessary but not sufficient. The EU must take common social policy measures which will include health provision. The EU has established a European University in 1972 even though the provision of education at all levels are regulated by each national government of member states.

I would like to see that extended to health provision. For example, I would like to see a top research oriented gigantic hospital with thousands of beds which will serve the European Citizens. One of its statutory obligations is to absorb excess demands at the EU level. It will work the same way as an insurance market. The larger the population, the lower the cost.

In the current pandemic, such as a European Hospital would have provided the facilities for a widespread testing, isolation of those affected, contact tracing and quarantine of those contacts. Given that the spread was a pan-European one, a European common action would probably have prevented the loss of lives and the mass lockdowns.

Conclusions

Population size and the economy do play a role in explaining variations in deaths due to Covid-19 in EU countries.

A one percent increase in population size is associated with 0.49% increase in the number of deaths per capita. But the relationship is non-linear. More populated countries were hit harder by Covid-19 but the rate of impact decreases as population size increases.

On the other hand, the economy does matter. The richer the country, the higher the deaths per capita. On the other hand, the higher the social spending as a share of GDP, the lower the ratio of deaths to population.

It seems that social policy does work and EU countries should consider coordinate and consolidate a common policy.

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