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The *Crimson Historical Review* is composed of undergraduate students at the University of Alabama who are passionate about history, academic writing, and publishing. Interested in becoming a staff member? Undergraduate students at the University of Alabama are invited to contact crimsonhistorical@ua.edu. The *CHR* is not operated by the University of Alabama. The opinions and views within this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the University of Alabama and its staff.
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Dear Readers,

It is times like these—the unprevented and uncertain—when history feels most essential. If nothing else, this pandemic has been a lesson in living without knowing what tomorrow, a week, or a year from now will look like. The study of events from the past helps us to remember that this uncertainty, albeit difficult, is not uncommon.

The breadth of the articles in this edition is prodigious: from eighteenth-century Ireland to the early twentieth century U.S.-Mexico Border, from Sino-American relations during the Cold War to Allende’s Marxist Chile in the 1970s, closing at the University of Alabama in the 1980s. The articles span across various times, continents, and cultures, and they demonstrate the commitment of the CHR to plural historical inquiry.

It is difficult for me to believe that, though it was founded a little over a year ago, the CHR has become so integral to my life. Growing the CHR in a few months from an idea to a robust undergraduate research journal (that received nearly forty submissions from a diverse mix of students internationally) has been incredible.

I would like to thank all the authors who have submitted their work, and for believing that the CHR was a worthy place to feature their research. Further, every CHR Staff member deserves recognition for their efforts, meticulously reviewing every submission and copyediting selected articles.

Dr. Margaret Peacock, the journal’s faculty advisor, is once more characterized by her steadfast leadership and dedicated efforts to continuously guide the CHR. Aaron Eitson worked diligently to ensure that all review functions ran smoothly. John Pace has a meticulous set of eyes that catch every detail and a presence that brightens every conversation. Jackson Foster has been absolutely integral in establishing the CHR. From the very first interest meeting, he has been eager to work, in whatever capacity necessary, to ensure the CHR’s success. For that reason, and many more, I am entirely confident in his capacity to take over as Editor in Chief.

Again, I offer to you that, while times remain uncertain for the foreseeable future, we are not the first to face these challenges. Similar to those before us, we will persist, and our lives will be studied by historians in generations to come (and perhaps published by the Crimson Historical Review).

Signing off for the last time with all my best,

Jodi Vadinsky
Editor in Chief, Crimson Historical Review
DEMystifying Feminine Ireland
During the Rebellion of 1798

Cecilia Barnard

Although the role assigned to women by Irish historians during the era of the United Irishmen is one of background involvement and passivity, Mary Ann McCracken and Elizabeth Richards provide important case studies to the contrary. Directly opposing not just history but contemporary propaganda, Elizabeth and Mary Ann stood firmly for their beliefs and now provide important insights into the rebellions. Instead of being a passive Hibernia or a ragged Granu, the women of Ireland in the 1790s had experiences and emotions that ranged from distrust and terror to active involvement in the movement. Irish women were part and parcel to the events in the rebellion, and that including them as active participants in the story of the rebellion provides an insight that the historical context will continue to miss if their participation remains in the background rather than the forefront.

Introduction

The prescribed role of Irish women during the Irish rebellions of 1798 was as victims of exploitation, both in propaganda and in life.¹ Even though the Irish Unionist movement promoted itself as an egalitarian movement dedicated to the common good, this common good did not include women. Women were not seen as equal partners in the movement. The United Irishmen gave no significant consideration of the extension of the franchise to its female members at any time in its activism, which historians point to as modern evidence of their entrenched gender inequality.² It’s doubtful that women were only the passive participants described by historians and Unionist propaganda during the Unionist movement and the rebellions as a whole, but their historical contributions have been largely neglected by the larger scholarship on Irish history.³

The aim of this paper is to analyze the differences between women in Unionist legend at the time and the recorded lived experiences of women from the 1790s, specifically women who documented life in their own words in the late 1790s. Although victimized by shifting political ideologies, exploited by the United Irishmen as a symbol for a broken, corrupt, and destroyed Ireland, and denied the franchise under Irish Republicanism, Irish women’s varied experiences ranged from distrust and terror to active involvement in the movement. These varied experiences, collected in

2 Ibid., 135
the form of diaries and letters, work to demystify the representation of women in Unionist literature and lend validity to their experiences and contributions in the Unionist movement and to the rebellions of 1798.

Primary sources are vital to this argument, especially primary sources authored by women. To discuss the legend of women in Unionist literature and propaganda I am relying on Paddy’s Resource, a contemporary collection of literature published by the United Irishmen. I am also using a collection of letters from Mary Ann McCracken to her brother, Henry Joy McCracken, executed for his part in the rebellions in Belfast in July of 1798. Mary Ann McCracken played an enthusiastic and fairly involved role in the United Irishmen and pushed for feminist reform—feminism in this paper meaning extension of both intellectual and political considerations to women—so this primary source will be used to discuss what an “active” role in the United Irishmen looked like for a woman. This source will be used to get a fuller picture of life for Irish women who were not just experiencing the rebellions and pushes for reform, but living them and actively working for their success. The Diary of Elizabeth Richards is the other primary source I am using to show the experiences of non-combatants and women who were not directly affiliated with the United Irishmen. These also provide a focus on Protestant women who were not, like the Belfast rebels or the common people, Presbyterian or Catholic. Elizabeth Richards was an Anglican, a steadfast member of the Church of England. The Diary of Elizabeth Richards shows an element of fear that accompanied members of the middling Protestant class during the rebellions that is a vital piece of the discourse on women’s lived experiences.

According to the preface of The Women of 1798, a collection of essays edited by Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong, “No aspect of the 1798 rebellion has been so neglected as that of the women’s role in the events of that year.” Thus, this paper contributes a new perspective to an often overlooked element of the scholarship in Irish history. The historical field is fairly narrow on the subject of Early Modern Ireland, and the primary expert on Early Modern Irish women is Mary O’Dowd. O’Dowd wrote A History of Women in Ireland 1500-1800 and edited an essay collection entitled Women in Early Modern Ireland, to which she also contributed an essay herself. In A History of Women in Ireland 1500-1800, O’Dowd writes that women were recognized in the revolutionary space not as assets but as scapegoats and symbols. They were denied the franchise by the United Irishmen in the 1790s, and were largely ignored by historians in their role during the rebellions until the nineteenth century. However, women still benefited from this movement in that their spheres of influences expanded. Women were now able to be seen in public more often, and were held up as examples of virtue. I hope that my original contribution is the demystification of the feminine mythos of United Irish literature, and that this paper contributes to the expansion of Early Modern Irish women’s history. I hope as well that this paper promotes a feminist basis for critical analysis of male dominated, Irish authored primary sources from the 1790s.

On October 14th, 1791, The United Irishmen’s Belfast chapter was founded in part by Theobald Wolfe Tone, an outspoken supporter of Catholic rights in Ireland.

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6 Keogh and Furlong, The Women of 1798, 7
Emboldened by Enlightenment ideals from the mind of John Locke as well as the beginnings of the French Revolution, Tone and his contemporaries at first sought out parliamentary reform as well as an extension of rights for Irish Catholics. The United Irishmen were not the first of their kind. Ireland was a hotbed for organizations pushing for social reform that included groups such as the White Boys, the Defenders, and, four years after the formation of the United Irishmen, the notorious Orange Lodgers or Orangemen, who supported British control and Protestant supremacy. During the 1790s, Irish high politics began to mirror the interests of the people. Governor of Ireland William Wentworth Fitzwilliam lasted just three months before he was recalled due to his positive views towards Catholic emancipation and “endeavouring to govern Ireland on behalf of her inhabitants.”

As the 1790s drew on, the United Irishmen made headway in bringing about reform that would better benefit their Catholic friends and neighbors. Reform did not come without a price, however. In April of 1793, for example, the Catholic Relief Act was passed which allowed Catholic men to vote and to hold most public offices. In retaliation, the Ascendancy, the upper-class Protestant controlled government, passed the Convention Act, which effectively banned all future meetings of the United Irishmen by prohibiting assemblies with political goals in mind.

As the power and scope of the United Irishmen grew over the course of the 1790s, the British controlled colonial government of Ireland began to panic. Sectarian and religious violence began to break out as early as 1794, when the Dublin branch of the United Irishmen was raided and suppressed by the government. Fitzwilliam, the short-lived Governor of Ireland in 1794, attempted to dismiss Ascendancy grandees during his tenure to make room for Catholic improvement, the same year that the Battle of the Diamond, fought between Catholics and Protestants, led to the formation of the Orange Order, a radical Protestant militia. The Orange Order remains a sectarian militia to this day. In 1796 the Irish government began to pass laws aimed specifically at acts of what they considered sedition: the Insurrection Act subjected people to searches and curfews, as well as high treason convictions for having sworn any oath not sanctioned by the government, such as an oath to the United Irishmen. Habeas Corpus was suspended in the same year as the government grew increasingly wary of pro-Catholic and pro-Celtic Irish sentiments that grew under the influence of the United Irishmen. In 1797 the press fell under attack when the Northern Star, Belfast’s United Irish newspaper, was forced to disband, and by March of 1798 most of the leaders of the United Irishmen had been rounded up and sentenced to execution. On March 30, Britain declared that Ireland was now under martial law and in a state of rebellion, which was an embellishment of the true situation. By May 23, 1798, the real rebellion had begun.

The rebellion itself was short lived and overall unsuccessful. Fighting only really lasted through the summer of 1798 and the British forces routed the rebels as a whole. 30,000 people lay dead at the end of the fighting, Catholic and Protestant alike. Theobald Tone, the progenitor of the United Irishmen, cut his own throat in prison in November, and Edward Fitzgerald, another progenitor, had been imprisoned.

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8 Oliver Knox, *Rebels and Informers: Stirrings of Irish Independence* (London: John Murray, 1997), 53
10 Wheeler, Broadley, and Norris, *War in Wexford*, 9
11 Knox, *Rebels and Informers*, xii
12 Knox, *Rebels and Informers*, xvi
13 Ibid., 268
since May 19 and died of sepsis during the early days of combat in June.\textsuperscript{14} Even the arrival of a French force, agreed upon by Tone and Napoleon, could not save the rebel cause. When the French did arrive, neglected by Napoleon’s changing focus to the East and stranded at sea for six weeks, the rebellion was all but over. The French were met on the beach by members of the British forces, and Tone was summarily taken to Dublin and thrown into prison, where he committed suicide less than a month later.\textsuperscript{15} 

A large consequence of the rebellion, besides a lack of success in the separation of the Irish from their Protestant landlords and government, was the fracturing of sects previously amenable to working together. The reformist ideology of the United Irishmen had been defeated by the failure of the rebellion to produce lasting change, and it was clear to many that the real motivating factor for the Catholic and lower-class participants had never been reform but rather the expulsion of the British from the Emerald Isle, and that the rebellion, intended to be carefully organized and cultivated, had devolved into sectarian mob violence.\textsuperscript{16} Despite the bloody efforts to unite the Irish people against the British under a coherent political ideology that supported reform and emancipation for non-Anglicans, the Act of Union, binding Ireland to Great Britain, was passed in 1799.\textsuperscript{17}

**Feminine Legend in *Paddy’s Resource* and Memoirs of the Rebellions**

The United Irishmen used women as tropes in their songbooks, a collection known as *Paddy’s Resource*. According to Mary Helen Thuene, “United Irish verse ... presented their major tropes of women - goddesses, mothers, maidens, and maniacs.”\textsuperscript{18} While considered more elaborate than simply representing the “typical sorrowing mother or maiden,” the United Irishmen still relegated women to legend rather than personhood in their narratives.\textsuperscript{19} This is not to say that *Paddy’s Resource* didn’t get some things correct: many women in rebel controlled towns during the rebellion were indeed raped by British soldiers after they seized control.\textsuperscript{20} The stereotypes played into by the book were very much grounded in reality, but still refused to consider the varying experiences of Irish women and focused on the experience that men believed they were most affected by. In the 1798 edition of *Paddy’s Resource*, Ireland as a country is personified as a woman. Hibernia, another word used for Ireland, is a feminine noun linguistically, using an ‘a’ at the end instead of a consonant or an ‘o’ that would mark a masculine noun. The catchphrase of the United Irishmen, “Erin ma vorneen! Slan leat go brah!”\textsuperscript{21} translates to “Ireland my darling! Forever adieu!” Ireland in this catchphrase, first quoted in the 1798 copy of *Paddy’s Resource* in “An Exiled Irishman’s Lamentation,” speaks of Ireland as a lover or a close relative.\textsuperscript{22} The song, from the perspective of a man who has been exiled from his home nation, mourns his native Ireland like he mourns the loss of his wife. The narrator uses she/her pronouns to refer to Ireland, singing that “if her foes e’re prevailed, I was well known to fight for it!”\textsuperscript{23} By fighting for Ireland, the song contributes to a traditional view of the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., xvi
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 256-257
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 271.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{20} Richards, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards*, 50.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 2.
United Irishmen held of feminine Ireland “as Hibernia, the graceful, dignified Roman matron whose honour and reputation needed to be asserted by her gallant admirers.”

Making Ireland feminine provided a specifically paternal sense of duty to a man’s own country. Traditionally, an unmarried woman’s protection was the responsibility of a male family member such as a brother, father, or uncle, and any violation of that woman was seen not only as a grotesque display of violence but also as a personal insult to her primary male protector. Ireland as well was being violated in a symbolic format as Ascendency class landlords disenfranchised the Catholic Irish, who saw themselves as the original Irishmen and thus owed land and primacy over the island and its government. By fighting for graceful, feminine Ireland, a United Irishman was protecting the sensibilities of a symbolic woman while also fighting for his own female relatives. His duty to his country was out of love but also out of propriety and the fulfillment of the traditional demands of masculinity. If he was caught refusing to fight to protect Ireland, he was seen as acquiescing to the British exploitation of the island, and just like if he had failed to protect his sister, he was personally emasculated by the insult that was the exploitation of his female-coded homeland.

Later on in *Paddy’s Resource*, in “Teague and Pat,” taxes imposed by the British authorities are attacked directly due to their impact on the less fortunate. Specifically mentioned is the “widow reluctant doth groan,” a maternal figure who is in peril and furthers the heroic, chivalric notion of a fight for Ireland as a fight to protect women. In Irish ballads, Ireland could also appear as “an old woman, Granu or the Shan Van Vocht, summoning her sons to protect and defend her homestead.” The old woman in “Teague and Pat” has no husband to protect her, and thus must rely on her sons. By vanquishing the British and doing away with their mandatory tithes, as well as other non-religious taxes, the United Irishman that chose to fight was protecting his mother, the woman who gave him life, as well as the island that he lived on.

The theme of protecting one’s female kin carries on through *Paddy’s Resource*. In “Freedom Triumphant,” the narrator entreats his male audience to do as the French did on “The fourteenth of July, in Paris Town.” France, which was a Catholic country who overthrew their tyrannical government, was used as inspiration by the United Irishmen during the 1790s to inspire their own people to fight back against the British control of the country. The narrator plays on this inspiration as he asks his audience “Why then should we not join to Free/ our children, Wives, and Mothers?” The threat, the narrator says, is not to men directly but to those who rely on men to stay alive. Women in *Paddy’s Resource* provided a convenient way of motivating men who otherwise would not have joined the fight against the British. By reminding the men reading or singing these songs and poems that they fight not for their own glory but to protect their female relatives and their female isle from the rape, both metaphorical and physical, of the British overseers, *Paddy’s Resource* painted the rebellion against the British forces as a just action to take in order to protect the virtue of those who could not protect it themselves.

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26 Ibid.
27 *Paddy’s Resource*, 3.
Curtain phrases this notion succinctly by saying that “The violation of their women was the price Irishmen paid for suppressing their own patriotism and their civic duty.” By presenting a united patriotic front, the men of Ireland were saving their women from horrible atrocities. *Paddy’s Resource* used the pride of Irish men to recruit them to the cause, but in doing so, relegated the women of Ireland to a background role in the movement, one that was entirely based around the notion of male paternalism and patriarchal standards of “manliness.” This singular role women were expected to play by the movement did not include the very real truth of many Irish women in the period, who both helped and hindered the progression of the movement in very active ways.

**Elizabeth Richards: Protestant Fear and Loathing in 1798**

If one was not involved in the United Irishmen, the rebellion itself was a shocking and often traumatizing moment in time. Elizabeth Richards had family members in the United Irishmen, but her diary reveals a lack of conviction and in fact an element of derision when faced with their ideals. As a member of Anglican Church, Elizabeth had little to gain and much to lose if the rebellion was to succeed. If she had been Presbyterian like Mary Ann McCracken, Elizabeth’s views on the 1798 rebellions may have been different, but as it stood she was an upper middle class Anglican woman who lived in relative comfort. The rebellion not only threatened her religion, but her home, town, and country. Elizabeth’s diary is a good record of the Wexford branch of the rebellion, combining her personal thoughts and feelings with dates and facts. Elizabeth’s diary reveals the fears that accompanied the rebellion and indeed the United Irishmen for members of the landed Protestant class, who feared that change would eliminate their privilege. Their fears of persecution by Catholic rebels for being Anglican. Protestants had a fear not only of loss of privilege but also of physical and retaliatory violence.

Elizabeth’s diary expresses a fear heavily laden with derision and disgust for the acts of the Catholics in Wexford, as well as a strong conviction in both her Anglican faith and the British forces in Ireland. The diary trades in rumors circulating among Anglicans in Wexford to express that fear. In the entry for June 1st, Elizabeth records that the rumors making their way around Wexford that “... a report that a massacre of all those who professed their [Anglican] religion was intended...” had completely shifted the atmosphere in her circles. This fear had driven some of her counterparts to “abjure[d] their faith, and suffered themselves to be christened by Romish priests from whom they had obtained written Protections...” Elizabeth is clearly both shocked and disgusted at this decision. The word Romish indicates a prejudice towards Catholics that was common in Anglican believers of the time as a spillover of anti-Catholic bigotry occurring throughout Protestant Europe.

Elizabeth herself refused to receive this protection by becoming a baptized Catholic, proof of her strong convictions in her own faith. She writes that “I was a Protestant, that I could die, but not become a Roman Catholic.” Elizabeth’s bravery in the face of what she considered certain death cannot be erased and must be commended. Her convictions were strong enough that she refused conversion even as the people around her assured her it was the only way to avoid being slaughtered by the rebel forces. Elizabeth and a family friend went to talk to the local priest, who they referred to as Mr. Corrin rather than Father Corrin. He “assured us no massacre was...

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33 Richards, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards*, 35.
34 Richards, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards*, 35.
35 Ibid., 36.
intended,” an excellent example of the power of rumor espoused in Elizabeth’s diary. A continuing trend of Catholic slurs reappears as the diary continues. Elizabeth claims that “our religion never ordered massacre” and that though the “Papists” claim that the Orangemen were murdering Catholics on their way to Wexford, “they do not in their hearts believe it.” She also in the same entry referred to the native Irish Catholics as “savages,” thus fully expressing her disdain for not only their faith but their culture as a whole.

Elizabeth expressed a great faith and joy in the actions of British forces during the rebellion of Wexford. The British militia used rape of Catholic Irish women as a tactic when taking rebel-controlled towns. Her willful ignorance of British atrocities towards Catholic women does seem to suggest a certain knowing ignorance of the atrocities they were committing in Wexford as they captured the town from the rebels, and echoes Elizabeth’s repeated disdain for the lower classes of her town, who were primarily Catholic and thus more likely to be victim to British military rapes. In the entry for Saturday, June 2nd, Elizabeth reported that “Letters were found with them [two members of the Protestant militia captured by the rebel forces in Wexford] which say 10,000 men had marched from Dublin against the Wexford rebels. Oh, what a joy for us!” Although Elizabeth did put up a good front by carrying rebel symbols when out and about during the rebellion, there is no questioning whose side she truly supported. In the entry for June 6th, Elizabeth made her feelings quite clear in action rather than thought, writing that “I pulled the odious green cockade out of my hat, and trampled on it. It was a satisfaction to me to disrespect the rebel colors.” In the same entry she entreated a rebel supporter, William Hatton, to listen to her arguments in support of loyalty to the British-run government of colonial Ireland and grew angry when he refused to take her seriously.

Later in the diary, in the entry for June 7th, Elizabeth expressed fear that ships appearing off the coast were French, rather than British. Given that the Irish had a deal in the works with France to support their rebellion efforts, her concerns are warranted. Elizabeth Richards forms a picture of the passive Protestant resistance to the rebellion. She expresses dislike and refuses to participate in activities that show deference to the rebels in control of her town, but she makes no active attempt to subvert rebel movements.

Mary Ann McCracken: Belfast's Feminist Rebel

Few people could have such diametrically opposing viewpoints on the Unionist movement and the rebellion than Elizabeth Richards and Mary Ann McCracken. The sister of notorious rebel Henry Joy McCracken, Mary Ann herself was deeply invested in the Unionist cause. Belfast born Mary Ann received a comprehensive education that was much the same as her brother’s, and indeed, Henry was her favorite brother. Mary Ann was a staunch feminist according to the definition mentioned in the introduction and was an advocate for women’s rights and the franchise. Her letters to her brother and Thomas Russell during their imprisonment and their executions reveal a firm belief in the political and social equity of a United Ireland, and a sharp mind.
Mary Ann, like many of the founding members of the United Irishmen, was not a Catholic but rather a Presbyterian, another dissenting sect of Christianity present in Ireland. Hesitant at first to advocate for the Irish Catholics due to a distrust in “Popery,” the Belfast Presbyterians developed an intense sympathy for the plight of their similarly-disenfranchised Catholic neighbors after the onset of the French Revolution. This sympathy, combined with the privileges of education and middle class wealth available to them because of their standing as Protestants, despite being Dissenters against the Anglican Church, allowed people like the McCrackens alongside Theobald Tone to form the United Irishmen.

Mary Ann’s letters show a deep commitment to her brother, the cause, and feminism. Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, the year after the United Irishmen were formed, and its place in Belfast society and intellectual circles suggests good evidence that Mary Ann was not the only person advocating for the inclusion of women in the fight for an increase of rights for Roman Catholics. Mary Ann certainly left the most detailed evidence for a feminist position in her letters, given that political thoughts, ideologies, and meetings of political societies were suppressed in Belfast after 1793.

Just as she was what we would consider a dedicated feminist today, Mary Ann was fully committed to the Unionist cause, a commitment that was created in full after her brothers Henry and William were arrested in 1797 for their Unionist activities. Mary Ann wrote to her brother, Henry Joy McCracken, on March 26 of that same year, entreating him to stay true to the cause which she herself has become deeply committed; “If the complete Union of Ireland should demand the blood of some of her best Patriots to cement,” she wrote, “if they will not sink from their duty ... in the end the cause of Union and of truth must prevail.” Mary spoke of the highest sacrifice possible for one’s own country in her letter of encouragement and faith to her brother, that of martyrdom for Ireland. Indeed, she encouraged him to resist temptation to back out and to keep the faith in the Union by using the martyr motif, thus evoking in him a sense of sacred duty to Ireland.

Mary Ann also sat in on meetings and participated in Union events, as evidenced by the intelligence she passed her brother in their letters while he was incarcerated in Kilmainham. On March 16th she told him that “a Cousin of our own told Frank last night that a friend had shewed him the United Irishmen’s test, that he approved highly of it, and would not have the least objection to take it, as he had done more violent things often before.” Her participation in the Unionist movement seems to surpass simple information gathering to quasi espionage. McCracken herself had participated in criminal and illicit activities of the type that the United Irishmen trafficked in before outright rebellion. She lied to authorities, concealed contraband in her own home, and moved what we can only assume was a sensitive document out of Belfast for safe keeping. She wrote that “a certain article which was the only cause of uneasiness to you at the time you were taken up, was concealed in the house till the late strict search which has been made about town ... we gave it in charge to a man in whom we had confidence, who buried it in the country so that its being found can’t injure any person.” This letter shows a wholehearted participation in not just the ideals of the United Irishmen, but the activities they were conducting mostly in secret by 1797.

45 Gray, Mary Anne McCracken, 51.
46 Gray, Mary Anne McCracken, 51.
47 Ibid., 51.
48 Ibid., 53.
49 McCracken, *To Her Brother in Kilmainham Jail*, 56.
50 Ibid., 56.
Mary Ann used both her feminist and rebellious fervor while her brother was incarcerated to attempt to bring more women into the fold of true involvement in the United Irishmen. She wrote to him that “I have a great curiosity to visit some female societies in this Town… I wish to know if they have any rational ideas of liberty or equality for themselves…” Mary Ann discussed what was likely her most radical viewpoint, even to the most radical United Irishman: the equality of women and men. Writing to her brother, Mary Ann says that “for if we suppose woman was created for a companion for man she must of course be his equal in understanding,” accepting the common Christian narrative on the purpose of women but using it to further her own agenda, that of women’s rights. Although the United Irishmen themselves did not intend to expand the franchise to women, Mary Ann’s letter provides concrete proof that some among the membership and followers were amenable to certain extensions of women’s rights. Mary Ann expresses the hope that “the female part of the Creation as well as the male should throw off the fetters with which they have been so long mentally bound…” For Mary Ann, the rights of women were intrinsically tied to the rights of men. She believed in the cause of the United Irishmen, but her letters to her brother suggested that she believed they should do more to increase the rights of Irish women, not just their male counterparts.

**Legends vs. Life**

Women who lived through the rebellions of 1798 are often erased from scholarly history, but their contributions are notable. Diaries like Elizabeth Richards’ provide first-hand accounts of historical events and military action, and letters like Mary Ann’s provide evidence for the scope of female involvement in the United Irishmen that has been ignored by scholars for the past two centuries. There are two major differences in the legend of women in Ireland at this time and their actual experiences that I wish to discuss. First, women had more autonomy than the United Irishmen’s propaganda gave them credit for. Second, the women who experienced the rebellions had strong convictions in their beliefs that the propaganda of the United Irishmen tended to erase.

Both Elizabeth Richards and Mary Ann McCracken proved to be independent women and thinkers. Elizabeth Richards especially provides a good case study of autonomous female action during the time of the rebellion. She refused to take what she saw as the easy way out, deciding personally to remain loyal to Britain instead. She proved this loyalty throughout her diary entries by discarding her protective green ribbon and cockade, announcing to her diary that “It was a satisfaction to me to disrespect the rebel colors.” Elizabeth’s decision to do so was even more radically autonomous when you consider that she herself had close friends and family who were members of the United Irishmen and supportive of the cause she openly disputed. Elizabeth’s disputation of the cause meant that she was going directly against the male family members’ wishes for the country. In a patriarchal system where women were supposed to provide “ornaments from females whose breasts beat as high in patriotic ardour as those of their husbands, their sweethearts, and their brothers,” to prove their loyalty to the cause, Elizabeth’s autonomous decision to refuse support to the rebels diametrically opposed the “suffering maiden” that Paddy’s Resource made women out to be. Mary Ann McCracken’s autonomy was in service of the United Irishmen,

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51 Ibid., 57.  
52 McCracken, *To Her Brother in Kilmainham Jail*, 57.  
53 Ibid., 58.  
54 Richards, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards*, 38.  
but her decisions were her own. Mary Ann made strong and often dangerous choices in support of the rebellion. She was not, like in “Honest Pat,” “sore goaded by oppressors ... she loudly calls to one and all to cut her chains asunder.” 57 Mary Ann was an active member of the United Irishmen, working directly for the cause. Rather than waiting for her brother to return to her, Mary Ann continued his work by engaging in information gathering. In her letters, Mary Ann passes on information to high level United Irishmen. Perhaps her most distinct involvement with the cause, which directly contradicts the supposed need for men to break the chains of women, was her involvement in an attempt to break Thomas Russell from prison. She wrote to a friend, Eliza Templeton, of her involvement in this and said “I know of no other course I can pursue than writing by Mr. Ramsey tomorrow to know if it be possible to do any good by going, and if so to defy all proposition.” 58 In this way, Mary Ann took up the arms to break the chains of Ireland, rather than standing as a symbol of the suffering woman who must be rescued. She was acting in direct opposition to the place she had been assigned by United Irish legend.

Mary Ann and Elizabeth also had strong convictions that were not acknowledged by the United Irishmen. Elizabeth was a firm member of the Church of England, and when faced with what she believed was conversion or death, she chose death. In her diary she wrote that “I was a Protestant, that I could die, but not become a Roman Catholic.” 59 Like her decision to abjure the symbols of the United Irishmen, Elizabeth refused to give in to rumor and coercion. Although it was rumored throughout Wexford during the rebellion that “…a report that a massacre of all those who professed their [Anglican] religion was intended…” 60 Elizabeth refused to allow the fear of physical violence to sway her. She remained Protestant throughout the rebellions, despite her concern for her very life.

Mary Ann McCracken’s convictions were even more radical than those of the United Irish movement. Mary Ann believed in the franchise for women, and the complete inclusion of women in the United Irish movement. While the United Irishmen did have what Curtain calls a “female auxiliary, which attended to fund raising and providing amenities...” who “were certainly required to take the United Irish oath of secrecy, forbidding the swearer to reveal the secrets of the organization...” 61 they were not considered to be full members of the organization and the United Irishmen had no intention of extending full political rights to women. Mary Ann thought this remarkably foolish. Mary Ann was very clear in her feminist viewpoints, stating that “if indeed we were to reason from analogy we would rather be inclined to suppose that women were destined for superior understandings...” and that “I therefore hope it is reserved for the Irish nation to strike out something new,” meaning women’s suffrage. 62 Mary Ann McCracken was not satisfied with just the promises of men, but rather believed that women were vital to full republican liberty. Like Elizabeth, she never gave in to her doubts but remained steadfast to her convictions.

Although the role assigned to women by Irish historians during the era of the United Irishmen is one of background involvement and passivity, Mary Ann McCracken and Elizabeth Richards provide important case studies to the contrary. Directly opposing not just history but contemporary propaganda, Elizabeth and Mary Ann stood firmly for their beliefs and now provide important insights into the

57 Paddy’s Resource, 17.
58 McCracken, To Eliza Templeton, 61.
59 Richards, The Diary of Elizabeth Richards, 35.
60 Ibid., 35.
62 McCracken, To Her Brother in Kilmainham Jail, 58.
rebellions. The editors of Elizabeth’s diaries refer to it as one of the most complete accounts of the rebellion as it took place in Wexford, and her steadfast loyalty to the Anglican Church during an era of fear show a strong sense of dignity and self.63 Mary Ann McCracken, who was a devout rebel, did more than just “attend to fund raising.”64 She believed in rights that the United Irishmen never in fact took seriously, but that she championed herself. She carried information, and even attended an attempted jailbreak. While the legends and the literature of the time period refuse to see women as anything more than “mothers, maidens, and maniacs,” the actual evidence points to women who were just as involved as the men history remembers. Instead of being a passive Hibernia or a ragged Granu, the women of Ireland in the 1790s had experiences and emotions that ranged from distrust and terror to active involvement in the movement. When demystified using historical evidence and their own words, we can see that Irish women were part and parcel to the events in the rebellion, and that including them as active participants in the story of the rebellion provides an insight that the historical context will continue to miss if their participation remains in the background rather than the forefront.

63 Richards, The Diary of Elizabeth Richards, Preface.
References


BORDERS AND BODIES:
The El Paso Quarantine and Mexican Women’s Resistance
Eve Galanis

In January of 1917, hundreds of female Mexican domestic workers rioted against quarantine protocols implemented by the El Paso government, to combat the spread of typhus louse. This analysis addresses how the quarantine policy negatively affected Mexican women and why they responded with violence. Using intersectional theory, this historical inquiry draws connections between public health policy and hierarchical features of power. Inspecting the way race, class and gender interplay with power, measures the impact the policy had on female Mexican domestic workers. The results found Mexican working-class women were most negatively affected by the quarantine policy and most vulnerable to abuse by American officials. Examining the El Paso Bath Riots reveals the way U.S. public health and border policy can function to control the mobility of Latin American people.

In 1917, hundreds of female Mexican domestic workers resisted and rioted the United States quarantine policy to combat a typhus outbreak on the U.S.-Mexico border. This largely forgotten incident should be reconsidered using intersectional theory, which allows for a greater understanding of public health actions and their negative impact on marginalized peoples. According to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, intersectionality is “the idea that multiple oppressions reinforce each other to create new categories of suffering.” By applying intersectional theory as a form of critical inquiry to the “bath riots,” it enables to understand the “life and behavior rooted in the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised people.”

On Sunday January 28, 1917, the quarantine was enacted. Due to the typhus outbreak, Mexican workers entering from Juárez into El Paso were required to go through physical inspection. If suspected of having lice, people were forced to strip and take a monitored shower containing soap, water, and kerosene. Their clothing and baggage were sent through steam and cyanide gas treatments. Afterwards, they received a ticket, certifying their inspection to border officials.

The policy was protested immediately after it was implemented. At 8 a.m., Carmelita Torres, a seventeen-year-old domestic worker, was crossing the Santa Fe International Bridge when her streetcar was stopped. Border inspectors told the commuters to get off the streetcar to go through the quarantine baths, but Torres refused. After she vocalized her dissent, she gathered thirty other passengers, all women, to protest. They got off the streetcar, marched to the Mexican side of the

1 Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, Intersectionality (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 36.
bridge and refused to submit to American restrictions. They stopped the other incoming streetcars and mobilized domestic workers to take a stand against the action, demanding the order of forced bathing be abolished. The women laid down on the tracks, preventing cars from being moved. They also took motor controllers from the conductors and hid them in their stockings once officers arrived to make arrests.

As the crowd grew to upwards of five-hundred people, mostly women, they became incensed, throwing rocks and empty bottles at military and police officers. Additional troops were sent to the border, including General Murguía’s “Death Troop” Calvary of the Carranza army. José María Sanchez, a laborer, possibly misunderstanding the protest, shouted, “Death to Carranza, Viva Villa!” He was immediately shot four times by a Carranza soldier and killed. Eventually, the ‘Death Troops’ were able to disperse the crowd and arrest Torres for inciting the riot. While Torres nearly disappeared into historical obscurity, her story of resistance reveals the complexity of power behind the quarantine policy.

According to the CDC, public health is “the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities.” However, there are times in American history when public health was used as a tool to dominate and control populations. During the first two decades of the twentieth century in El Paso, a series of public health policies were enacted congruently with the closing of the city’s Mexican border, which shifted the culture of the region permanently. The questions are how did these policies affect labor-class Mexican women and why did they respond to the regulations with resistance?

Over the last century, the gradual militarization of the region can be traced back to policies such as the El Paso quarantine and Mexican resistance, which includes the bath riots. These measures reveal the U.S. has a pattern of using health crises to assert control over Latinx bodies. By applying intersectional theory to early twentieth century El Paso history, it is possible to understand why Mexican women resisted the quarantine. Using an intersectional frame of analysis includes investigating context-specific dynamics, which are based on converging or diverging identities. This essay will analyze the diverse ways race, class, and gender interplay with autonomy and mobility at the El Paso border and will scrutinize the actions taken by the state to exert power over Mexican women. By examining policies, such as the quarantine and the Immigration Act, as well as the actions and consequences of Mayor Tom Lea and their impact on Mexican working-class women, it is evident the quarantine was designed to dominate and control rather than protect. Drawing connections to past events such as the jail holocaust and harassment of women on the streetcar provides context that illuminates why the women felt compelled to protest their conditions. The quarantine was designed to directly rob Mexican people of their autonomy, deter border crossings and impose psychological terror on migrant workers. Mexican women domestic workers unified in immediate direct action against the policies and practices they perceived were designed to oppress them. Although unsuccessful, their struggle and resistance illuminate the truth behind those policies and the beginning of a century-long, modern-day militarization at the border.

In 1917, the same year the U.S. entered WWI, there were a series of drastic shifts in El Paso. Thousands of troops were sent to the border after the interception of the Zimmerman Telegram. Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917 that restricted access of migrants and immigrants coming into the United States from Mexico, especially those in lower social and economic classes. The El Paso police department deployed “purity squads” to round up and arrest sex workers under the guise of public health. 1917 was also the same year the U.S. Public Health service passed the typhus quarantine policy and opened delousing stations.

This intersectional historical analysis will draw connections between public health policy and the hierarchical features of power. Inspecting the way race, class and gender interplay with power, measures the impact on Mexican women. This research does not go against prior historiography, but rather reinforces it. Intersectional theory threads together the policies and their consequential resistance; arguing Mexican working-class women were the most negatively affected and most vulnerable to abuse by American officials.

Scholarly Debate

While El Paso public health policy may not be mainstream to American historical memory, historiography reveals the long-lasting effects on North American society over the last century. Additionally, research regarding immigration and public health in other ports of entry illustrates discrimination was not limited to the southern border. Overall, historians have documented instances where the U.S. had ulterior motives behind enacting certain public health policies. Analyzing context and policy design of the quarantine regulations, criminalization of sex work and immigration reform reveals the actions were not necessarily made to protect the public. Instead, historians found the federal, state and local government working in tandem, using public health as a means to dominate and control marginalized populations, particularly Mexican women.

In an intersectional analysis of immigration and disability studies, “From Fictive Ability to National Identity: Disability, Medical Inspection, and Public Health Regulations on Ellis Island,” Roxana Galusca asserts that, in the early twentieth century, Ellis Island represented an institutionalized notion of an ideal nation, excluding disabled or diseased bodies. Officials regularly prohibited individuals with physical or cognitive impairments from citizenship and entry into the U.S. Their actions were reinforced by the perception of disability as pollution and corruption of the nation-state. By applying intersectional theory to health and immigration, Galusca breaks down the normative concepts of health and ability, which she describes as invisible markers for fueling gender and racial inequality. While Galusca briefly touches upon the regulations observed in El Paso, her primary focus of analysis is centered on Ellis Island. Regardless, her framework of analysis serves as an accurate model for applying intersectional theory to health and immigration policy at U.S. ports of entry in a broader context.

Focusing on El Paso, Ann Gabbert explores the transformation of culture in El Paso during the Progressive Era in her article, “Prostitution and Moral Reform in

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She focuses on El Paso’s ‘red-light’ district and its vice zones, investigating how national rhetoric influenced the criminalization of sex work under the guise of a public health crisis. Gabbert states that prior to 1890, El Paso functioned in a different cultural space and had a more “lawless” nature. Over the next two decades, the culture, attitudes, and laws of the city shifted to a more conservative space that regulated sex workers’ mobility. She found that the police-assembled “purity squads” targeted Mexican sex workers by limiting their ability to rent hotels and apartments, frequent establishments, and walk about the city. While Gabbert’s research illustrates a facet of power and marginalization of working-class Mexican women, she does not draw connections to other examples of militarization of public health in El Paso such as the quarantine, which was occurring simultaneously.

The most well-known chronological history of the United States quarantine policy in El Paso and the consequential bath riots is David Dorado Romo’s *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez.* This monograph explores the hidden history of El Paso and even draws explicit connections from the El Paso delousing to Nazi Germany. Romo explores a variety of topics connected to policy and resistance, revealing all the layers of the conflict in a linear fashion. His historical contributions are a foundation for understanding the quarantine and its negative effects on the El Paso community. While he addresses the conflict between class, race, and ethnicity, he does not address gender and other intersecting identities such as LGBT people and those with disabilities in his analysis.

From a medical history perspective, Alexandra Minna Stern has written in great length about El Paso’s quarantine policy and the medicalization of power. In her essay, “Buildings, Boundaries and Blood: Medicalization and Nation-Building on the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1910-1930,” she provides analysis of health and border policy and the infrastructure and facilities used to implement and execute eugenic medical science. Stern asserts that infrastructure can be a form of domination, citing the social impact of the gradual militarization of the border.

In Stern’s book, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America,* she approaches the topics surrounding eugenics in the United States more broadly, including the El Paso border. Stern examines the history of practices such as forced sterilization and racial hygiene, in describing such measures as scientific racism. For example, in March 1916, the U.S. Public Health Service implemented the practice of branding people’s arms in permanent ink with the word “admitted” after being physically examined and bathed at the Laredo border. She also cites Mexican health services had quarantine and fumigation plants in the border cities of Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo and Piedras Negras, as early as the 1890s. While Stern provides an in-depth analysis of white supremacy in science and health, she does not draw connections from public health to gender and class. Furthermore, there is a notable inaccuracy in Stern’s research: she states Carmelita Torres was forty-seven years old, however, according to the *El Paso Morning Times,* published the day after

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the riots, Torres was said to be seventeen. With that said, newspaper media documenting the riots must be examined.

“Auburn-Haired Amazon … Leads Feminine Outbreak”

The only evidence of the bath riots is what was documented in newspapers at the time. The newspapers used in compiling evidence were the El Paso Herald, El Paso Morning Times, New York Times, and local papers around the country such as Wisconsin’s La Crosse Tribune. There are no photos of Torres, and her story seemingly ends with her arrest. The newspaper articles themselves have a U.S. bias and do not speak in favor of the women. However, there is much to be interpreted about the riot based on the information provided. For example, the El Paso Herald published on January 29th reveals vital information regarding motivations of the women to protest. Juárez officials cited rumors of sexual violence and fears of Mexican women being burned to death: “Stories that Mexican women were burned to death in the gasoline baths, that American soldiers had photographed the women when they were stripped for their baths and that outrages had been committed on the women by American soldiers were said to have been circulated among the ignorant class in Juárez.” This accusation of violence exposes the catalyst to the protests as well as the genuine fear reverberating among the women.

The reports of the bath riots in newspaper publications were all unfavorable towards the women’s efforts. There was sexist, hyperbolic language, which painted the women as violent and hysterical. El Paso Morning Times, for instance, reported the women as crazed: “Composed largely of young girls, the mob seemed bent on destroying anything that came from the American side … one of the streetcar motormen … emerged from the mob with half a dozen women clinging to him, endeavoring to drag him down.” Comparing the women to a swarm of bees and calling the rocks and empty bottles “missiles,” the American media was fixed in its message that the women were not valid in their protests. Publications geographically further away from the protest were less accurate and more dramatic. Additionally, there were conflicting accounts, even within the same articles. Some articles stated there were no reported deaths. Others, like New York Times, acknowledged that shots were fired. It quoted Carranza officers and government inspectors who claimed no one was hurt. However, in the same article, it confirmed the detailed story of José Maria Sanchez getting killed, despite what officials claimed.

A newspaper decides which wire reports to use, and the La Crosse Tribune, a local newspaper in Wisconsin, decided to go with a story that framed the riot to be explicitly anti-American and pro-Pancho Villa. The writers made little mention of the quarantine policy, nor did they mention why the women were protesting it. Instead, they claimed the women were Villa supporters and were protesting America: “The women tearing his clothing and scratching his face and shouting, ‘Kill the gringo! Viva Villa! Death to the Americans!’” The article claimed the riot resulted from General Perishing’s withdrawal from Mexico, which was forced by the Carranzista government. Lastly, the article mentioned the quarantine protocol included giving Mexican migrants baths but critically failed to mention that they included kerosene.

16 “Auburn-haired Amazon at Santa Fe Bridge Leads Feminine Outbreak”
The La Crosse, Wisconsin 1910 Census shows no evidence of Latin American residents. The negative reports circulating about El Paso at the time could have incited fear in individuals who had no actual experience interacting with Mexican people. What is most essential in this report of misinformation, however, is its further illumination of Mexican women’s position in the United States. Not only were they one of the most vulnerable populations, but their actions were also painted to be more violent than they were.

There were no women of color working at these newspapers to correct the writers. They had no representation for their perspective and no chance to defend their actions and voice their feelings and experiences of oppressive treatment by the U.S. government. Gathering information on the bath riots from newspaper publications proves to be problematic. While these articles are some of the only surviving information about the events that transpired, they are marred with bias and conflicting narratives, muddying the truth in a way that has proved to be seriously detrimental to the public perception of Mexican women. However, reading between the lines and observing the text from an intersectional perspective allows one to see the women’s fears of being sexually assaulted and burned alive. Ultimately, those in the positions of power to construct the narrative used it to further the women’s marginalization by depicting the protest as unwarranted and futile.

The Jail Holocaust

A year before the quarantine was implemented, the county jail already had a delousing process put in place. Prisoners were given gasoline baths to kill lice, but on March 5, 1916, things went horribly awry. A match was lit near the baths, and the prison erupted in flames. Sixteen men were killed, and nineteen were injured, many of whom were not expected to survive. According to the El Paso Herald, H. Cross, a prisoner known for his drug addiction, was allegedly the man who struck the match. However, this could not be confirmed, as his location at the time of the incident did not corroborate with the site of the explosion; he was nowhere near the gas baths. Ernesto Molina, the youngest prisoner in the jail at seventeen, was within a few feet of the explosion but jumped out of a window to escape the flames. Because of the placement of the gasoline baths, prisoners had to pass through the flames to get out; however, because of the novel construction of the jail, many were trapped inside. Ocario Soto, arrested for vagrancy, was pulled out of the fire, but his body was so severely burned that it left a charred outline on the pavement.

The domestic workers migrating from Juárez to El Paso had surely heard of these grisly events leading up to the quarantine restrictions set upon them. Fears of being burned alive by American officials were not out of the realm of possibility, and the events at the county jail confirmed these fears. The New York Times article reported on the riot and made validations to this claim. The article confirmed the riot was due to resistance of the quarantine and made explicit connections between the

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protests and the jail holocaust. It also corroborated the claims of women being photographed while stripped by American soldiers.21

With regards to the sexual assault allegations, the only way of validating this information was discovered by historian David Dorado Romo, who uncovered confidential letters sent by El Paso Public Health Service authorities to their supervisors in Washington D.C., admitting they heard the rumors of women being photographed and the images being displayed in a local saloon. Based on this correspondence, there was an investigation launched. “It has been reported that pictures of nude women are displayed in a saloon in El Paso, with the inscription below that they were taken at the Service disinfecting plant. A detective how investigating this report and if possible, legal proceedings will be brought against dive keeper.”22 The alleged images never surfaced, however, nor was there a conclusion of the investigation. Therefore, it cannot be stated to be definitively true. Further research is required to locate this correspondence and find if there was a conclusion to the inquiry.

What the investigation does reveal, however, is the women had valid fears and anxieties about going through the quarantine. They realized their vulnerability and the robbery of their autonomy. Whether or not American health officials and military did violate the women, the fact is, they could have. The power that was granted to them by the government made the conditions possible for women to be sexually abused in the quarantine facilities. These allegations, coupled with the events of the jail holocaust, were likely the core explanation for the women’s revolt at the Santa Fe Bridge.

Power Behind the Policy

An understanding of the negative impact that United States policy had on Mexican women leading to their resistance requires a close examination of the policies themselves. This includes the Immigration Act of 1917 and the El Paso Typhus Quarantine Public Health Report, written by Senior Surgeon of the United State Public Health Service, C.C. Pierce. By analyzing the language and protocol within the documents, it is apparent labor-class migrants, disabled, LGBT, and illiterate individuals were discriminated against and targeted for inhumane treatment at the border.

The Immigration Act of 1917, drafted on February 5, 1917, was designed to regulate the flow of immigrants into the United States. While there had been immigration policy implemented in the past, the magnitude of this policy was unprecedented. The first sentence of the document makes clear it would use the term “alien” to define any person not native-born or naturalized in the U.S. By using the term “alien,” it makes space for dehumanization and an ‘othering,’ a common tactic for fearmongering.23

In the second section, Congress decided there would be a head tax placed on all individuals entering the United States. Anyone over the age of sixteen entering the country had to pay eight dollars upon entry. Further, the document guidelines defined specific populations of people that would be excluded from entry into the U.S., which included the following groups: “All idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons … paupers; professional beggars, vagrants … as being mentally or physically defective, such physical defect being of a nature with may affect the ability of such alien to earn

a living …” The act also explicitly excludes admission for sex workers. Because of its vague definition of what was determined to be a “mental defect,” it also made it possible to exclude LGBT individuals.25

The Act implemented a literacy test at ports of entry, through which immigrants had to prove they were physically capable of reading in their native language. This immediately impacted southwestern economies that heavily relied on Mexican labor and soon after the passage, there was a waiver allowing exemption for Mexican agricultural work.26 It is unclear if that exemption applied to domestic workers. What is certain, however, is that contractual labor was barred under the Act. Domestic workers hired for anything beyond temporary work in the U.S. would be doing so illegally. This certainly threatened the livelihood for women like Carmelita, who lived in Juárez and commuted daily to work for Anglo families in El Paso.

In the public health report published in March of 1917, entitled “Combating Typhus Fever on the Mexican Border” and written by Senior Surgeon of the U.S. Public Health Service C.C. Pierce, the theory and methods of the quarantine are outlined in detail. The protocol breakdown reveals explicit class discrimination.

Pierce began the report by stating the typhus outbreak was coming into the U.S. from Mexico. He cited their political instability as one of the root causes of the issue and distribution of the disease was concentrated among those in poverty. Considering Mexico was in a civil war, Pierce’s statement was not completely unfounded. The typhus infection is commonly found in refugee situations, war zones, and among homeless populations.27 He stated that while there had been quarantine facilities in Mexico for some time, they believed it would be more effective to have facilities in the U.S., suggesting American control would do a better job containing the issue as compared to the Mexican government’s efforts. And he may have been right – Mexico was in a state of political upheaval and may not have been able to provide proper health treatment.

Discrimination is found as Pierce outlined quarantine protocol being implemented in the El Paso facility. He states, “All persons coming to El Paso from Mexico, considered as likely to be vermin infested, are sent through this plant for

24 US Congress, the United States, 64th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917, Ch. 29.
26 Don M. Coerver, Pasztor, Suzanne B., and Buffington, Robert, Mexico: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Culture and History, (Santa Barbara, California, 2004).
disinfection.” How was were those “likely” to have typhus louse determined? People were not inspected for lice until after they were sent into the plant, so it is implied that officials were making judgments about those who physically appeared to be of the working class, either by dress or ethnicity. Mexicans that were white were typically of higher social classes; those of indigenous and mestizo races tended to be of lower social and economic standing.

After migrants were sent to the quarantine plant, they were separated by gender, forced to strip naked as their clothes and baggage were sent to steam and gas treatments, respectively. Once stripped, they were then physically inspected. If there was evidence of lice, men’s hair was shaved, and women were given a hair treatment mixture of kerosene and vinegar. All individuals passing through the plant were then ordered to take attendant-monitored showers, during which a mixture of liquid soap and kerosene sprayed from an elevated reservoir. The water was also controlled by attendants, which according to Pierce was because “The persons bathed do not understand modern plumbing and can not [sic] regulate the flow of hot and cold water …” In his perspective, he deemed them uncivilized and assumed they would not know how to control the pressure and temperature of the water, taking on authoritarian paternalistic approach.

After bathing, individuals then had to wait approximately a half an hour for their clothes and baggage to be treated. They stood around naked, waiting. No identification tags were attached to their belongings, so once their items were returned, they had to sift through a large pile to find their clothing. Once dressed, they were inspected once more and given unspecified vaccinations and a mandatory certificate, which confirmed they bathed and passed quarantine inspection. They presented this certificate upon entry into the country. Anyone of the labor class without a quarantine certification would not be allowed to enter.

This process was a dehumanizing event for all, and according to Alexandra Minna Stern, motivated illegal immigration to occur. People opted to cross by river or desert to avoid the risk of abuse at legal points of entry. Further, considering gender in this policy, women at this time were never nude in public. To huddle them together in a group, in a sterile, foreign environment, being watched by male, American attendants was shameful. This policy also took an economic toll; going through this process daily slowed down the ability for domestic workers to get to their place of employment. Overall, this policy was extremely restrictive and targeted Mexican working-class individuals, limiting their economic mobility and attempted to psychologically deter them from entering the United States.

30 Ibid.
Observing the United States Border Crossing data from Mexico to the U.S. provides a glimpse of the impact the quarantine had on mobility. Altogether, in 1917, 34,217 people passed through El Paso’s legal points of entry, the majority being of Mexican descent. There were also a significant number of Chinese people crossing. The day before the riots, one-hundred seventy-two people crossed through, eighty-six of which were women. The day of the riots, only seven people crossed, none of which were women. Clearly these small numbers were due to the border eventually closing for the day, but nevertheless it is curious that none of them were women.

Mayor Tom Lea: White Supremacist

Tom Lea was the mayor of El Paso from 1915 to 1917, and though he was not in office for very long, he was a key person in implementing and executing the quarantine. Interpreting Tom Lea’s actions and the consequences of his policies can provide additional context for understanding the bath riots.

Based on Tom Lea’s policies, one would think he hated Mexicans. His contempt, however, was concentrated towards the Villistas, those of the “lower classes.” Before he was the mayor, he was the attorney for Mexico’s ex-president, Victoriano Huerta. According to his son, Tom Lea Jr., he also liked President Carranza because “he was a little more for law and order.” In a thirteen-hour interview conducted by Adair Margo, Tom Lea Jr. also revealed personal information about his father that hinted at a possible obsession with germs. Apparently, Lea was so fixated on cleanliness and fear of typhus, he wore silk underwear. Dr. W. C. Kluttz, the city’s health officer and friend of Lea’s, advised him that lice did not stick to silk. While it may seem like an eccentricity on the surface, the notion of cleanliness and purity was connected to white supremacy, as is indicated by the eugenic scientists Lea aligned himself with. In fact, he was more extreme.

David Starr Jordan, the former Stanford University president and renowned eugenicist, believed in a master race through the breeding of whites. He called for forced sterilization and birth control for people of color, I.Q. tests and immigration reform to prevent the impurification of the Anglo race. Jordan was against American imperialism, he argued expansion caused miscegenation and defiled the “Saxon and Goth blood of the nation.”

Lea also vowed, with the help of military troops, to demolish hundreds of “germ-infested” Chihuahuita adobe homes and replace them with American brick

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33 Tom Lea Jr., “Interview no. 800,” interview by Adair Margo, Institute of Oral History, May 1993, interview (tape 1 side B) and transcript (16-34), Special Collections Department, UT El Paso.
34 Tom Lea Jr., “Interview no. 800,” interview by Adair Margo, Institute of Oral History, May 1993, interview (tape 2 side B) and transcript (48-67), Special Collections Department, UT El Paso.
After Chihuahuita snipers shot at the demolition squads, Lea advised the city’s health inspectors to carry rifles and to “shoot to kill” if anyone fired at them from Juárez. Under his Progressive-era policy, he also passed the first U.S. ordinance to outlaw cannabis, associating the drug with Mexican revolutionaries. What confirms Tom Lea’s association with germs and Mexicans, however, were his pleas to Washington for months, demanding a “quarantine camp” for Mexicans at the border.

It was only when his friend, Dr. Kluttz, passed away from typhus fever that actions were set in motion. Lea did not hesitate to politicize Kluttz’s death, calling him a martyr and leading a crusade against the disease. He claimed that had the federal government implemented the quarantine months ago, his death could have been avoided. Lastly, he mobilized the crowd around support for the quarantine: “May we as men and as citizens see that such a sacrifice was not in vain …” After he served as mayor, according to historian Shawn Lay, Tom Lea was part of the Ku Klux Klan, Frontier Klan No. 100 in 1920.

“Nationality and Ladyhood”

Years before the quarantine and the riots, an assault occurred in El Paso that launched a slew of op-eds, dominating the news cycle in the city for a little over a week. Observing the matter and the community’s response provides a clearer idea of the position and perceptions of Mexican women in El Paso. On July 5, 1911, a woman going by the pseudonym “A Mexican Mother” published a letter to the editor about an altercation she had the day prior with soldiers on the Fort Bliss streetcar. According to her, she and her daughters were riding on the car during the evening of the Fourth of July. They were verbally harassed by soldiers riding the car, who were “… using abusive language, and even addressing some words showing off their poor knowledge of our language.” The women were rattled and felt unsafe as they were belligerently accosted.

The racially motivated scene ignited responses from citizens on both sides of the debate. The letters to the editor ran from July 8th until July 12th and the title of the column was “Nationality and Ladyhood.” Some people wrote in support of the women, asserting that regardless of nationality and race, all women deserve respect and decency. One woman, presumably of Mexican decent named Marguerite Garcia, said the clothes and complexion of a woman should not determine whether she receives respect.

However, there were voices in the community condemning the women, rather than the soldiers. One person, simply going by the pseudonym “An American,” emphatically stated they didn’t blame the soldiers for acting the way they did. The author claimed that a visit to the river on a Sunday at the spot where Mexican women go to swim would explain why the soldiers acted in a lecherous way. The author concluded by stating, “and if those people are such desirable citizens, why are they...

arrested and watched so closely for shoplifting and other petty things.”

This op-ed reveals a lot about the negative attitudes towards Mexican women, suggesting they saw them as promiscuous and petty criminals.

Soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss responded to the incident, defending their position. One soldier, Private George W. Favors, claimed he had proof that exonerated the soldiers in question but provided no details beyond blaming a Chinese man that was also riding in the car that evening. He admitted there certainly were soldiers who drank far too much and could not control their actions, but the military had protocol put in place to address those individuals. He cites the real root of the problem in El Paso as the “ignorant classes,” chiding the culture of saloons and dives designed to tempt the soldiers into transgressions. “I beg to call on all to join in upholding the character of the feminine sex. But not condemn everyone for something that one man has done.”

Using the one bad apple argument, he urged people to view this incident as an isolated incident and not allow it to shape their perception of the military as a whole.

The Herald finally put the whole thing to rest with a published column entitled, “Unfounded Race Prejudice.” The editors of the paper seemingly took a side on the issue, asserting there was clearly prejudicial treatment of people of Mexican descent in the city. They recognized that Mexicans had been residing there long before Anglos had come along and therefore have every right to the city as they did. The editor said, “No finer types of true gentlemen and true ladies exist among those people we commonly call Mexicans.” They point out that racial antagonism should not exist and to cast judgment on a whole race of people is perpetuated by misinformation and intolerance. While this seemed to be a positive message, the article does have a classist slant. The editor clarifies, “There are social differences among white English-speaking persons, of the same nationality or of different nationalities; just so, there are social differences among Spanish speaking persons …” The “Mexican Mother” certainly was in a higher social class, as revealed through her depictions of the incident and her access to an education. In the editor’s column disavowing racial bigotry, they do not condemn all judgment; those of lower economic classes were still subject to scrutiny in their eyes.

The fact that the “Mexican Mother” was most likely of a higher economic and social class, compared to the protesters at the bridge, reveals harassment of Mexican women was not limited to wealth. They were considered second-class citizens, regardless of socio-economic status. Incidents like this could possibly reinforce the allegations of sexual abuse at the quarantine stations. This incident provides evidence of American military personnel, abusing their positions of authority to harass Mexican women.

**A Century-Long Aftermath**

While the typhus outbreak ended in 1918, the quarantine continued for decades. This fact alone could be used as evidence the policy had racially divisive intent. By 1920, border health officials had implemented the use of Zyklon B and later DDT in place of kerosene.

Accounts given by former braceros confirm officials were continuing the practice of spraying Mexican laborers into the late-1950s. With this in mind, it

46 Ibid.
is clear the practice of spraying laborers with chemicals had very little to do with typhus, and more to do with physically and psychologically controlling the flow of migrant workers.

While the decades-long practice confirms the women’s protest was largely unsuccessful, there is much to interpret from their attempts. For one, the failure of their protest and the subsequent decades of the policy illuminates the power the United States possesses over Latin American bodies. The policy was not disputed again until scientists and researchers found the chemicals were extremely toxic.50 Further, the century-long militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border reinforces the assertion of control of Latinx peoples.

In 1917, Mexico was amid a civil war, and the energy of this political uprising certainly influenced the women to mobilize and stand up for perceived injustices with swiftness. Unfortunately, that stamina did not carry into future decades. Transitioning into the mid-20th century to today, Latin American leadership has been at the behest of United States interests, at risk of economic isolation or a CIA-led government coup if they resist.51 Grassroots efforts continue, but they are certainly weakened by economic instability and violence. And while the U.S. government is no longer spraying noxious chemicals on Latin American labor-class people, one could argue the treatment of migrants at the border continues to be an exertion of physical and psychological power.

In the modern era, migrants seeking asylum in El Paso have experienced family separation, restriction of entry and imprisonment including open-air prisons under highway overpasses.52 On Saturday August 3, 2019, a young white man opened fire in an El Paso Wal Mart, killing twenty-two people and injuring twenty-four. The gunman posted a diatribe on the 8chan message board specifying this was an attack on Mexican immigrants, in pursuit of a white ethno-state.53 The national rhetoric has bolstered support of further militarizing the border and is stoking fear of labor-class Latin Americans seeking refuge, even triggering domestic terrorism. Furthermore, as witnessed in the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic, the United States government continues to mismanage public health crises. Leadership continues to exploit a health emergency to stoke racial animus and xenophobia.

There is no way to compare the events of the early 20th century to what is occurring in current-day systems. But the failure of the bath riots and any other method of Mexican resistance over the years has facilitated the U.S. to exert dominance over labor-class migrants consistently over the course of the last century. Latin American

women and children continue to be vulnerable to sexual assault in government custody.\textsuperscript{54} Migrant workers still face labor exploitation and racial bias. Lower-income people are more likely to face disease, with the least access to healthcare. While Carmelita Torres was unsuccessful in her attempt to thwart American policy, her resistance was not in vain.

Conclusion

Based on the treatment of Mexican women in El Paso at the time, the political rhetoric behind the quarantine and the Immigration Act of 1917, the leadership of Tom Lea and tracing the incidents and resistance of the bath riots, it is clear Mexican women were a marginalized group. They had very little power to influence their treatment, and multiple attempts have been made over the last century to dominate the autonomy and mobility of the working-class. Not much has changed over the last century; border militarization and public health problems remain like a hydra: for every issue addressed, ten more arise. However, preserving the events of the bath riots in North American historical memory serves to ignite a re-examination of modern-day border policy. Applying intersectional theory to the analysis of this microhistory facilitates a broader understanding of policy and its impact on groups of people, over time. Intersectional history provides us context for present-day atrocities and emboldens us to revisit our power structures.

References


CHILE: DEMOCRACY, DESTABILIZATION, DICTATORSHIP
Ethan Legrand

In 1970, self-described Marxist Salvador Allende won the Chilean presidential election and became the first elected Marxist in the region. Immediately upon his electoral victory, the United States began working against Allende, using diplomatic and economic sanctions and giving financial support to Allende’s opposition. Such pressures, combined with the instability incipient in Allende’s own radical reforms, led to a collapse of the democratic state. On September 11, 1973, General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the Chilean government and began a 15-year dictatorship in the country that haunts Chileans to this day. This paper uses declassified CIA documents to explore the forces that led to the coup d’etat of 1973 and explain the involvement of both the United States and President Allende in creating the conditions for the coup.

Introduction
During the Cold War, the United States pursued a global policy to prevent the establishment of governments that it feared would be sympathetic to the Soviet Union and its ideological allies. In Latin America, with its already-long history of U.S. intervention, this policy was especially intense. As part of this geopolitical strategy of communist containment, the United States’ foreign intelligence agency—the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)—involved itself in the overthrow of numerous left-leaning governments across Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Although it was neither the first nor the most aggressive incident of this involvement, the 1973 coup in Chile received significant press coverage and precipitated outrage across the United States and the world, even prompting the United States Senate to launch an investigation to determine the degree of U.S. involvement.

The coup did not happen overnight. Instead it was the result of years of an aggressively pursued policy of destabilization. So, while the U.S. Senate concluded in 1975 that the United States was not “directly involved,” it is true that the United States played a decisive role.¹ The Central Intelligence Agency sought subvert the democratic government of self-described Marxist Salvador Allende, who was elected in 1970.² The CIA pursued policies of economic destabilization, diplomatic isolation, and support of opposition groups to the end of this destabilization. The effects of these policies were exacerbated by the radical and rapid reforms of the Chilean president, finally resulting in a coup in 1973.

There are roughly three phases into which U.S. policy can be divided. The first phase was the campaign against Allende’s candidacy; this campaign saw the roots

¹ U.S. Congress, Senate, United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975, 2.
² Central Intelligence Agency, 40 Committee Meeting--Chile--October 6, 1970, 2.
of what would become the general U.S. policy, specifically with respect to supporting Allende’s opposition, which was the focus of this stage of the campaign. The second phase was the interim period between the election and the congressional run-off, where the United States began economic destabilization and diplomatic isolation in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent Allende’s inauguration. Finally, in the third phase, the CIA adjusted and ramped up these policies, coalescing them into a policy of general destabilization of Allende’s Chile that sought to prevent a meaningful execution of Allende’s program or even to end Allende’s presidency prematurely.

Historiography

The ascension of Allende to the presidency of Chile and the subsequent chaos is unsurprisingly divisive both in Chile and the United States. Scholars dispute the degree to which U.S. intervention is responsible and to which that intervention is justified. It is worth recognizing some of the nuance here, as it is critical for understanding how the CIA was able to destabilize Allende’s presidency beyond even its own predictions. By the beginning of the 21st Century, new information had been declassified by the Clinton Administration regarding U.S. involvement through a program called the Chilean Declassification Project. This new information served only to muddy the waters further, as the scale and complexity of the events in Chile became increasingly evident.3

Being such a politically divisive issue, it is not surprising that there are accounts that run the gamut of interpretations, from Lubna Qureshi’s bemoaning of the socialist paradise that almost was, to Johnathan Haslam’s more apologetic book, revealingly subtitled “A Case of Assisted Suicide.” As with any event that is so ideological in nature, there is ideologizing of the facts and there are untruths and overstatements to be cut away in most of these accounts, many of which are seemingly written with the objective of demonizing or exonerating either the United States or Salvador Allende.

It is partially the nature of history that one must phrase things in some way, and it is the prerogative of the historian to choose which he or she thinks is the appropriate way. Not every fact can be included and not every claim can be perfectly neutral to the facts of the case. It is the attempt of this paper to maneuver through the complicated forces that were in action in Chile between 1970 and 1973 and to find a properly nuanced account of the story, while also limiting the sacrifice of descriptive accuracy for normative claims regarding the events that transpired in Chile.4

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4 As an example, Qureshi is guilty of this sin when she describes the compensation for Chilean copper expropriation as “[honoring] the principle of fair compensation.” She goes on to quietly qualify this “fair compensation” with the fact that Allende deducted from this compensation what he considered to be “excess profits,” a concept that did not exist in international expropriation law until Allende invented it. Conveniently for Allende the value of the excess profits closely matched the compensation owed by Chile to the expropriated companies, from whom over $1 billion in compensation was deducted and the “fair” payout was $18 million (later raised by a Chilean court by another $1 million). By sleight of hand, Qureshi manages to make the claim that receiving just over 1% of the owed compensation is sufficient to be describable as “fair,” thanks to Allende’s ad hoc invention of the notion of excess profits. A discerning eye might suggest that this is a reductionist point to make, given the much more significant forces at play in Chile at the time; however, it is precisely this lack of compensation that was the “straw that broke the camel’s back” as far as the United States’ public opinion of Allende was concerned. Consequently, this partial justification for U.S. hostility is lost in the ideology of Qureshi’s writing as she tries to paint a picture of good versus evil on the canvas of such a complex event. This is not to say that Qureshi’s assignments of culpability are necessarily incorrect, nor is it to suggest that her writing is entirely valueless (in fact some of her work is used here), nor again is it to say that there are no “bad actors” and that everyone was acting for what they thought was the greater good. The claim is simply
The 1970 Campaign Against Allende

The election of 1970 was the fourth time that Salvador Allende had run for Chile’s presidency. Unlike previous elections, however, Allende was not simply the candidate of the Socialist Party; he was running under a coalition party called the Popular Unity. This coalition united the Socialist Party, Communist Party, the disaffected left wing of the Christian Democratic Party, and other radicals. The election was a three-way race where each wing represented one of the three primary currents of Chilean politics: Allende, representing the leftist Popular Unity; Jorge Alessandri, running under the conservative National Party; and Radomiro Tomic, who ran under the centrist Christian Democratic Party. The incumbent, President Eduardo Frei of the Christian Democrats, was not eligible to run in the 1970 election because under the Chilean system, the president serves terms of six years, and, while there is no absolute limit on the number of terms that a single individual can serve, consecutive terms are prohibited. It was over the background of this election that the CIA began its operations, and directly in charge of these operations was the 40 Committee.

Previously called the 303 Committee, the 40 Committee was the organization within the executive branch that planned and executed covert operations through the CIA. At the time the committee was composed of President Nixon, Henry Kissinger, the Secretaries of Defense and State through their undersecretaries, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of the CIA, among others. Importantly, there were no members of Congress—House or Senate—on the committee, meaning the most democratic branch of the United States’ government was left out.

On March 25, 1970, the 40 Committee approved its first funds—a cache of $125 thousand dollars—to be used in the election. The United States did not specifically support one candidate but instead directed its efforts against Allende. On June 27, 1970, the 40 Committee approved $300 thousand additional funds for the campaign against Allende. On July 16, the CIA refused to transfer a $350 thousand donation from ITT, a U.S. phone company with significant investments in Chile, to Alessandri’s presidential campaign (although the Agency did advise ITT on how it might secure that donation, and the money did eventually find its way to Alessandri). The 40 Committee’s two objectives were to divide Allende’s coalition and to strengthen anyone who opposed Allende. To accomplish the former, the CIA created statements that alleged to have come from one or another faction of the Popular Unity; these statements created tension and attempted to cause defections from the coalition. The latter included a massive “scare campaign,” which consisted of the dispersal of leaflets, posters, wall paintings that attempted to draw comparisons between Allende

that Qureshi is at best misleading about how she arrives at some of her conclusions for whom she thinks deserves condemnation. See Lubna Z. Qureshi. Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 87; Richard B. Lillich. “International Law and the Chilean Nationalizations—The Valuation of the Copper Companies,” The International Lawyer, 7, No. 1 (January 1973): 130
6 This information is specific to the years of 1970-73. The president had authority to add or remove people from the committee at will.
9 United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 58.
and the likes of Stalin. Additionally, money was funneled to women’s groups, civic action groups, newspapers, and radio shows.\textsuperscript{10} However, this campaign was significantly smaller in scale than during the previous Chilean election cycle.\textsuperscript{11} During the 1964 Chilean presidential election, the United States spent $4 million to ensure the election of Eduardo Frei of the Christian Democrats, compared to only $435 thousand in 1970. In the words of Henry Kissinger, the effort in 1970 was “minimal and ineffectual” and “much too little … far too late,” and it showed.\textsuperscript{12} Allende received a plurality of 36.3\% of the vote, followed by Alessandri who received 34.9\%—a difference of only 40,000 votes of the 2.9 million cast.\textsuperscript{13} Though he had not won a majority, Allende had won the election, and, while it was only a matter of time before the Chilean Congress would take on its role to officially select him, the CIA did everything it could imagine to prevent it.

The Interim Period

Chile has an absolute majority system. A plurality is not enough to win the presidency; a candidate must get more than 50\% of the popular vote. Consequently, when Allende received the most votes, although only 36\%, the election went to Chile’s congressional houses, where they would vote to select a president. The 40 Committee, led by Nixon and Kissinger, began furiously assembling plans and resources to be used against Allende. There were two simultaneously enacted plans to stop Allende’s victory: Track I and Track II.

Referred to as the “Rube-Goldberg Frei reelection gambit” by American Ambassador to Chile, Edward Korry, Track I was an attempt to prevent Allende’s rise to power by bribing and coercing Chilean congressmen to vote for Alessandri, who had sworn to reject any such vote.\textsuperscript{14} This, theoretically, would trigger a reelection in which Frei would no longer be prohibited from running by Chile’s one term system.\textsuperscript{15} However, by mid-September this was unworkable according to the analyses of the Agency,\textsuperscript{16} and the $250 thousand set aside for it was never spent.\textsuperscript{17} The remaining hope for Track I was that Frei would invite the military to “take over,” which he allegedly did, according to internal CIA reports, and the military “categorically refused.” By the end of September 1970, the CIA considered the Frei-invoked coup to be dead as well.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{10} United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{11} The reason for the lack of focus on this election compared to 1964 goes back to 1958. In the 1958 Chilean presidential election, Salvador Allende had come in an uncomfortably close second place, and the CIA was committed to preventing his potential victory in the next election in 1964. The CIA spent $3 million in that election, funding over half of the campaign of Eduardo Frei (He was not aware of this.), as well as funding a right-wing candidate to make Frei appear to be a genuine moderate under attack from both sides. The Agency also gave money to private groups, and by the end of the campaign it was distributing 3,000 posters every day and 50 daily or weekly political radio shows. Grace Livingstone America’s Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror (London, U.K.: Zed Books Ltd. 2009), 51-52.
\textsuperscript{12} Michael Grow. U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 97-98.
\textsuperscript{14} Central Intelligence Agency, 40 Committee Meeting--Chile--October 6, 1970, 2.
\textsuperscript{15} United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{16} Central Intelligence Agency, 40 Committee Meeting--Chile--October 6, 1970, 2.
\textsuperscript{17} United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{18} Central Intelligence Agency, 40 Committee Meeting--Chile--October 6, 1970, 5.
Planned simultaneously, Track II was more extreme, and the 40 Committee deliberately left Ambassador Korry out of the planning of it, saying that they did not need him running around in his “unguided-missile way.”19 Track II proposed a coup to be carried out by the Chilean right-wing extremist General Roberto Viaux, and it was only cancelled at the last minute on October 16, 1970, when the CIA determined that Viaux did not have enough support to execute the coup, though he was ordered to continue working to build support. He did, however, have enough support to execute the Chilean Army Commander-in-Chief René Schneider on October 22, 1970 in a botched kidnapping attempt two days before the ratification vote for Allende.20 Far from creating the perfect conditions for a military coup, the Chilean public recoiled from the assassination, and support for Allende increased, while the CIA’s network of agents in the Chilean military collapsed, as the various individuals involved sought after their own safety.21 By October 6, long before the Schneider assassination or the cancellation of Viaux’s coup, the 40 Committee had concluded that except for intervening “overtly and physically” an Allende presidency was assured.22

There was also an economic aspect to this campaign. The CIA sought to cause a financial panic, which would ideally suggest to President Frei, the Chilean Armed Forces, and the Chilean Congress that an Allende presidency would be disastrous for the economy, putting pressure on them to stop Allende’s confirmation vote on October 24.23 The CIA expected these economic pressures to aid both Track I and Track II.

Despite U.S. efforts, both plans failed. The forces that the CIA had determined to be capable of stopping Allende were “not only fragmented but left leaderless.” Radomiro Tomic acknowledged Allende’s victory and Jorge Alessandri, who had initially planned to oppose Allende’s inauguration, followed suit. Despite extremists like General Viaux (and evidenced by the lack of support for Viaux), the Chilean Armed Forces as a whole sought to maintain its apolitical and constitutionalist tradition, a position reinforced by Commander-in-Chief René Schneider until his assassination. Consequently, the Chilean Armed Forces abstained from interfering in Chile’s constitutional and democratic processes. The CIA found only an unmotivated malaise among Chile’s political actors, where one might expect to find reactions of “repugnance and gut concern” to the election of a Marxist. The CIA attributed this to the destruction of what it called “the anti-communist psychological curtain,” which occurred as Chile’s population had become accustomed to communist rhetoric through the decades of Allende’s career. Major actors who may have been able to stop Allende looked to each other for leadership, but no one was willing to make the first move.24

The nail in the coffin of Track II was the Schneider assassination, when the public and members of the Chilean Military correctly attributed the assassination to right-wing elements who sought to stop Allende’s ascension to power.25 As Allende was inaugurated, the 40 Committee began planning for its next course of action.

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22 Central Intelligence Agency, *40 Committee Meeting—Chile—October 6, 1970*, 2.
23 United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 23; Central Intelligence Agency, *40 Committee Meeting—Chile—October 6, 1970*, 2.
DESTABILIZATION OF ALLENDE’S CHILE

Economic Destabilization

The CIA had sought to destabilize all of Chile throughout Allende’s presidency in order to “effectively hamper … and effectively limit the impact of [the Allende] government in … the hemisphere” or, if this failed, to create a “coup climate.”

The first part of the plan to destabilize Chile was directed at the Chilean economy. The CIA in 1970 was considering, and would implement, a veto of Inter-American Development Bank loans as well as withholding new commitments of AID loans and Export-Import Bank loans and guarantees. This effectively turned Chile from one of the biggest per capita recipients of U.S. aid to receiving almost no aid at all. The Agency also considered what it called “miscellaneous” measures which included sabotaging the copper market to hurt Chile’s largest export. Additionally, it sought to meet off-the-record with companies with interests in Chile, such as Anaconda, an American copper firm, as well as the staff of Council of the Americas.

The CIA put its program into action effectively: bilateral aid decreased from $45 million in 1969 to $1.5 million in 1971, Import-Export Bank credits evaporated entirely from $234 million in 1967 to zero in 1971, Inter-American Development Bank credits dropped from $46 million in 1970 to a mere $2 million in 1972. In addition, U.S. strategic reserves of copper were sold to saturate the market and hurt Chile’s copper industry.

Another aspect of this economic destabilization was a boycott by the U.S., which cut off much-needed parts for maintenance and repair in Chile’s mining, manufacturing, and transportation industries. Historian Grace Livingstone cites this as a reason for Chile’s massive numbers of non-functional cars and trucks. Livingstone claims that, as of late 1972, one third of the trucks at the Chuquicamata Mine, one third of all city buses (public and private), and one fifth of all taxis could not run because of this boycott. However, the truth is less straightforward; a CIA report from February 1971 indicates that a denial of these parts for mining, manufacturing, and transportation would “inconvenience but not appreciably harm” Chile because such parts are easily accessible in other markets as well as the fact that Chile has enough reserves of mining products to last at least a year. The same document also makes reference to Cuba whose shortage of hard currency made the US boycott genuinely damaging, “a limitation Allende will not face,” according to the CIA’s internal reports.

The CIA was incorrect in this analysis. In December of 1972 (the same period referenced by Livingstone), it reported that Allende’s economic program had burned out nearly all of Chile’s stored economic assets: $550 million of its foreign reserves as well as most of its foreign credits—with an accompanying “serious deterioration in productive capacity.” The answer to how exactly the CIA made such a misjudgment lies in Chile’s domestic politics. These documents suggest that Allende’s program inadvertently exacerbated the effects of U.S. tactics.

It should be understood, however, that the problem was not that Allende was a socialist, nor was it a problem that his reforms were socialistic. The problem was
that, even if those reforms are good ideas, they amounted to a fundamental reorganization of the Chilean economy, and any change that dramatic is going to bring with it a degree of instability. It was in the midst of this instability that the United States launched the most potent parts of its economic destabilization program, the effects of which this instability magnified. There were several decisions that Allende made that were especially damaging.

First, Allende, rather predictably, called for a rapid expansion of state ownership into the private sector.\textsuperscript{34} Between 1970 and 1972 he increased state control of the mining sector from 45\% to 98\%, over manufacturing from 25\% to 45\%, over banking from 67\% to 96\%, and over energy, gas, and water from 60\% to 90\%. Such increases occurred across nearly every sector of the Chilean economy to similarly intense degrees. According to the CIA, this state expansion led many U.S. and even Chilean managers and technical experts to leave the country, the latter leaving because they feared losing their pensions and felt that they would not be respected by the political appointees who were running the newly nationalized facilities. This disruption was most pronounced in agriculture and mining and was less so in manufacturing.\textsuperscript{35}

Livestock production reached a peak in 1971, up 15\% from 1970; however, this peak was followed in 1972 by a precipitous decline where livestock production plummeted to 75\% of the 1970 levels. Much of this change in production—both up and down—was due to farmers’ fears of nationalization, which caused unusually high levels of slaughtering of livestock, in an attempt to trade the livestock products for more secure forms of capital. Similar trends followed for crop production which reached a high in 1971 due to good crop conditions, but by 1972 production had dropped to 80\% of the 1970 levels. This drop was due to the unsuccessful attempt by the state to organize nationalized lands into functional farmlands and fears that farmers would not be able to reap profits from their work, due to nationalization.\textsuperscript{36} All of this was compounded by a strike of roughly 60,000 campesinos (agricultural workers) in southern Chile during the Fall of 1972, who were fearful and frustrated by nationalization as well as the economic problems facing the nation (much to the delight of the 40 Committee).\textsuperscript{37}

Chile’s mining sector also suffered. The expropriation caused much of Chile’s foreign and domestic expertise to leave the country, as in agriculture. Less technical and managerial expertise combined with wage increases and price freezes meant that by the end of 1972 Chilean copper had gone from being the least expensive copper in the world to barely breaking even in order to stay competitive, even despite climbing copper prices. Government tax and profit revenues from the mines fell considerably from $260 million to $40 million from 1970 to 1971. All of these combined meant that copper production across Chile was operating at about 70\% capacity in 1971 and was similarly bad for 1972. Production of copper also grew at a slower rate than did capacity of production over these years.\textsuperscript{38}

The nationalization of the manufacturing sector was less dramatic than those of agriculture and mining, and the managerial problems that occurred in agriculture

\textsuperscript{34} The following numbers (through the end of this section) are from the CIA’s own contemporary data collection. These data are not necessarily perfect; however, they indicate unmistakable trends in the Chilean economy. These trends are the relevant data, not necessarily the precise numbers.

\textsuperscript{35} Central Intelligence Agency, \textit{Allende’s Chile: The Widening Supply-Demand Gap}, 4, 8, 11.

\textsuperscript{36} Central Intelligence Agency, \textit{Allende’s Chile: The Widening Supply-Demand Gap}, 5, 7.

\textsuperscript{37} Central Intelligence Agency, \textit{Reports on Strikes Throughout Chile; Legal Efforts to End Strike; Efforts to SPR}, 1.

\textsuperscript{38} Central Intelligence Agency, \textit{Allende’s Chile: The Widening Supply-Demand Gap}, 12.
and mining were less noticeable in the manufacturing sector due to the state’s already-large role in the industry as well as a slow-down of the state take-over in 1972. Due to rising demand for consumer goods, manufacturing had reached capacity, and shortages, labor discipline, and distribution problems were becoming alarming by the second half of 1972. As all of these nationalizations were taking place without the promised improvements in quality of life, the Chilean people were frustrated.

The second error Allende made, after his massive and rapid state takeover of industry, was his decision to increase wages by 45%, and, in order to stem the inflation that would naturally accompany such a large wage increase, he simultaneously implemented price freezes. This combination, unsurprisingly, lead to a sizeable increase in demand for all manner of products from food to manufactured goods. After having rapidly exhausted his reserves of spare parts and resources, Allende had no choice but to spend his foreign exchange reserves to support importation of goods to keep with the rising demand (and falling production caused by the aforementioned expropriations and nationalizations). In fact, imports increased immensely. Even as export earnings fell by 20% from 1970 to 1972, imports increased from $175 million to $400 million over the same period. Along with soaring public spending and a public deficit reaching 20% of Chile’s GDP, the total money supply increased by 114% in 1971, compared to the average of the previous five years, which was 42%. By 1972 real wages were beginning to plummet.

These increases in demand and imports caused distribution problems at ports and rail yards in Chile, which were worsened by striking workers and a lack of parts to maintain trucks and trains. The government stepped in to try to solve the distribution problem for foodstuffs, but with the only tangible result being the people’s blaming the government for shortages. And as individuals reacted to growing shortages, they began hording and stockpiling, causing even more problems. The Chilean people were bewildered at what they ought to do.

The third reason why the economic destabilization was surprisingly successful was Allende’s aversion to taking assistance from the Soviet Union and People’s Republic of China. Allende had $264 million in credits that he could have chosen to use as of March of 1972. While it is not entirely clear why he chose to abstain from using those credits, there are plausible reasons that the CIA identified. It is likely that he did not want to switch his nation’s equipment from American models to Soviet models; this would put unnecessary strain on the economy as people learned how to use new equipment and shifted to using different tools and spare parts for maintenance. Additionally, he considered the terms offered to him by the Soviet Union to be “less than generous,” and he was likely hoping for a better deal. Lastly, he did not want to increase the influence of Moscow over his government, often an unintended consequence of accepting aid from hegemonic powers. The CIA suggested that if the Soviets were willing to offer hard currency, oil, and consumer goods and if Allende was willing to turn to the USSR, then assistance to Chile could have rapidly increased, maybe even reversing the collapse of the economy. This would have saved the Marxist experiment in Chile and reflected well on socialism and Marxism globally.

40 Central Intelligence Agency, Chile’s Economic Vulnerabilities, 10-11.
41 Central Intelligence Agency, Allende’s Chile: The Widening Supply-Demand Gap, 12, 19.
42 This was exacerbated by the understandable decision of Allende’s government to spend Chile’s reserved capital on food and consumer goods rather than using that capital to purchase these parts from other countries.
44 Central Intelligence Agency, Communist Economic Assistance to Chile, 1-3.
One can only speculate why Allende opted to go for these policies when he did. It is possible that he wanted to maintain his popularity to avoid getting badly beaten in the congressional election in spring of 1973, after which the “fabric of Chilean society” had “strained to the breaking point” by the estimation of CIA Director William Colby.\(^\text{45}\) Or perhaps he believed that he had an obligation to pursue the goals that he had promised his people or that the people would see him as a weak leader if he reneged on his policies. Otherwise, he might simply have been misled by the economic advice of his cabinet. But, regardless, the economy of Chile suffered dearly under the weight of U.S. measures combined with the instability natural to the economic reorganization pursued by the Allende administration.

Allende’s program, however well-designed or well-implemented, was necessarily going to cause instability as the state created and organized its apparatuses for controlling these new facilities. This instability compounded the economic sanctions’ effects also caused a loss of public support for Allende that gave General Augusto Pinochet the chance to carry out his coup in September of 1973. Additionally, Allende’s reforms gave his critics within Chile powerful ammunition to argue that his program was destroying the country, as it was not known at the time that the United States was playing such a critical role. This connection was incredibly important for the U.S. sanctions to be effective, as without the ability of the people to blame the government for the economic hardships, sanctions become strategically worthless.\(^\text{46}\)

**Diplomatic Isolation**

The diplomatic component of the CIA’s plan was relatively predictable: isolate Chile and pressure nearby states to condemn Allende’s actions. In a 40 Committee meeting in October of 1970 plans were made to “wind down … bilateral programs (between the United States and Chile)” and “build a ‘de facto entente’” of key states, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. The 40 Committee also called for concerted opposition to any Chilean move to “wreck the OAS (e.g. Organization of American States), recognize Cuba, or establish a third force” in Latin America opposed to the United States. In the same meeting the 40 Committee suggested a “cold but correct [posture] on the surface toward Allende,” and it called for the United States to make it clear that it does not approve of Allende and to take a guilty-until-proven-innocent stance toward Allende, saying, “he has to prove his acceptability, not prove his unacceptability.”\(^\text{47}\)

The purpose of these positions was to avoid giving Allende too much room to accuse the U.S. of not giving his administration a chance. If the United States had started the Allende administration by launching rhetorical attacks from the White House, Allende would have been able to use that animosity toward him to gain political capital both domestically and abroad by pointing to the United States and its unfair treatment of him. In effect, the United States sought to treat Allende unfairly while maintaining some plausible deniability.

Lastly, the Committee noted that military and economic aid as well as special trade treatment may be necessary to convince other Latin American states to take a stand against Allende.\(^\text{48}\) The notes of a National Security Council meeting in mid-November 1970 suggest an attempt to convince other Latin American nations


\(^{47}\) Central Intelligence Agency, *40 Committee Meeting--Chile--October 6, 1970*, 3.

\(^{48}\) Central Intelligence Agency, *40 Committee Meeting--Chile--October 6, 1970*, 4.
unilaterally make statements similar to the ones made by the United States on the reestablishment of relations with Cuba to show other states in the hemisphere that this deviation from U.S. foreign policy was not appropriate. The notes further suggest providing “selected” Latin American governments with information on Chile’s links to subversion in other countries.

The National Security Council recommended the following statement:

“The new President has taken office in accordance with Chilean constitutional procedures. We have no [wish] to prejudge the future of our relations with Chile but naturally they will depend on the actions which the Chilean Government may take toward the United States and the inter-American system. We will be watching the situation carefully and [be] in close consultation with other members of the OAS.”

A similar statement was eventually made by Nixon; however, the “cool but correct” façade was just that, a façade. Nixon, despite his cool and correct words, was arranging for “a diplomatic cordon sanitaire” to isolate Chile in Latin America. Ultimately, these policies were aimed at two goals: to prevent Allende from being successful in any serious foreign policy goals he may have had and to make an example of Allende, should any other Latin American nations feel encouraged by Allende’s rebellion from the U.S.-established status quo.

Support of Opposition

The Chilean people were frustrated and confused, and the CIA successfully directed these feelings against the Chilean government through its support of the opposition within Chile. This included money given to newspapers such as El Mercurio (which received $1.5 million to support it), radio shows, student groups, labor unions, peasant groups, women’s groups, and opposition parties in addition to money that was spent on individual pieces of propaganda, such as posters, wall “art,” and pamphlets. Between 1963 and 1973, 8 million dollars were spent on elections and political parties; $4.3 million on propaganda and mass media; and $900 thousand on influencing unions, student groups, peasant groups, and women’s groups.

One of the primary recipients of CIA funding was the Christian Democratic Party of Chile. In 1971 alone, the 40 Committee granted it $537 thousand directly. That same year the Committee approved $1.24 million to purchase media and fund other anti-Allende political activities, $815 thousand to fund opposition parties and to split the Popular Unity, and $160 thousand approved to be spent in the 1972 by-elections. In the following year, the Committee approved another $50 thousand to be used to split the Popular Unity, $46 thousand to support an opposition candidate, $24 thousand for an anti-Allende business organization, and $1.4 million to support opposition candidates in the 1973 congressional elections. In 1973, the Committee approved $200 thousand more for opposition candidates in the elections of that year as well as $1 million to support parties and private organizations that oppose Allende; the latter was apparently never spent.

All of these resources were used by opponents of Allende to magnify their voices beyond the scope of their support. Some of the funds delivered to private groups ended up financially supporting protests during Allende’s presidency, against

50 United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 27.
51 Central Intelligence Agency, *40 Committee Meeting—Chile—October 6, 1970*, 3.
52 United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 63-65.
53 United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 63-65.
of the CIA. Importantly, in a private message sent by the director of the CIA to Henry Kissinger, Director Helms states that none of those funds reached the groups that started and maintained the strikes that were “instrumental in provoking the military coup.” This may indicate that the CIA did not desire a coup as its primary goal, and the fact that at the end of August 1973 (less than a month before the coup) the CIA had approved over $1 million to be used for continued opposition to Allende through the summer of 1974 further supports both this conclusion and the fact that the CIA was not aware of any coup attempt in Chile until shortly before it transpired. The fact that it had initially supported Viaux’s potential coup indicates that the United States was not opposed to a coup; nevertheless, it seems to be the case that destroying the democratic nature of Chile was not desirable, unless the CIA considered it to be absolutely necessary.54

Conclusion
The events of Chile are unusual by the standards of traditional notions of what the CIA is and does. The CIA spent less effort in the 1970 election than it did in 1964, yet its agents were incredibly surprised when the election did not go their way. The hysteria of Nixon and Kissinger at the election results did not match the sober analyses of other CIA officials, which indicated that, for many reasons, Allende’s election was relatively inconsequential to the United States and was not a threat to Chilean democracy, at least in any sure or immediate sense.55 Never ones to be dissuaded by sober analysis, Nixon and Kissinger embarked on a mission to destroy Allende.

The first stage of their mission—stopping Allende from gaining a plurality—had failed, and the second stage would fail as well, with Allende’s inauguration on November 3, 1970. After three years of aggressively pursued economic destruction, diplomatic isolation, and enormous funding of opposition, the fabric of the strongest democracy in Latin America tore. Allende was assassinated, and General Augusto Pinochet rose to become the dictator of Chile. Somewhat poetically, Nixon was constitutionally impeached and resigned less than a year after Allende’s assassination in the presidential palace in Santiago.

The episode in Chile raised questions within the United States and abroad about the role of the United States in the affairs of other nations. An enraged Senate launched an investigation that uncovered much of the story, and the reaction from the debacle would materialize in the election of Jimmy Carter to the U.S. presidency. President Carter’s focus on human rights, especially in Latin America, decreased abuses; unfortunately, after one term there was a return to normalcy in the dictatorships of Latin America as President Reagan supported them as Cold War allies.56

55 Rabe, The Killing Zone, 132-133.
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US-CHINESE RAPPROCHEMENT:
The Impact of the South Asian Crisis
Reuben Francis

This paper examines the rapprochement between China and the United States, which signaled a turning point in Cold War diplomacy. It considers some of the potential instigators put forth by scholars, such as the Vietnam War or capitalist incentives, and then builds upon these factors by proposing another instigator: the South Asian Crisis of 1971. It demonstrates, through transcripts, telegrams, and other key primary sources, that the effects of this crisis, namely the solidification of the Sino-Soviet split, the emergence of shared US-Chinese strategic interests, as well as the motivation for Pakistani assistance, provided the impetus for the United States and China to enter into a strategic alliance focused against the Soviets.

Introduction
President Richard Nixon’s 1972 visit to China, which signaled a rapprochement between the United States and the People’s Republic, has long been hailed as a turning point in the Cold War and the Nixon administration’s greatest achievement. To this day, historians question what motivated Nixon, previously known for his staunch anti-communist credentials, to seek an improvement of relations with the Chinese communists. The Vietnam War, capitalist influences, and the Sino-Soviet split are some of the factors that have frequently been put forward by scholars as potential instigators of the US-Chinese rapprochement. One factor that has not received much attention is the South Asian Crisis of 1971. Contrary to popular perceptions, the impact of this crisis rippled far beyond the Indian subcontinent.

The Crisis, which refers to the 1971 Bangladeshi War of Liberation as well as the ensuing Third Indo-Pakistani War, was not simply its own isolated issue that just happened to occur during the Cold War era. In fact, it was much more connected to Cold War global concerns than we might initially expect. Along with various other countries, the United States, the People’s Republic of China, and the Soviet Union were all paying attention to and interfering with the South Asian Crisis. Previously adversarial relations between the United States and China would begin to improve due to their mutual ally Pakistan, as well as the emergence of common enemies in India and the Soviet Union. The topic of US-Chinese relations continues to be imperative even today, so an understanding of the origins of the rapprochement between the two countries should prove insightful. This paper will consider the following research question: “What was the impact of the South Asian Crisis of 1971 on US-Chinese relations?”

Within the historiography of the rapprochement between the United States and China, scholars have devoted significant attention to the impact of the Vietnam
This is understandable, especially coming from American scholars, for whom the Vietnam War holds an integral and controversial position within American history. However, by focusing instead on the impact of the South Asian Crisis on US-Chinese relations, this paper will explore an often-overlooked (at least in the West) instigator of the rapprochement between the United States and China. Since recent events have brought US-Chinese relations to the forefront once again, it is imperative that we get a better understanding of what shapes this diplomatic relationship. After all, despite President Nixon’s intentions, China continued to support the North Vietnamese long after Nixon’s famous trip to China. If the Vietnam War was truly the United States’ only concern regarding China, the rapprochement should have fallen apart instead of giving way to further US-Chinese strategic cooperation in Asia and Africa.

This paper will contribute to the ongoing historiographical debate surrounding the origins of the rapprochement to propose an overlooked perspective: that the South Asian Crisis of 1971 was instrumental towards the rapprochement between the United States and China. To do so, it will argue that the South Asian Crisis solidified the Sino-Soviet split, highlighted shared strategic interests between the Americans and the Chinese, and motivated Pakistani leadership to play a greater role in facilitating the rapprochement. Existing scholarship has considered this rapprochement primarily through the lens of the larger Cold War conflict, an understandable approach since it has had an enormous impact upon, and is so crucially interwoven with, the events of the Cold War. However, only considering the perspectives of the major Cold War powers can cause us to overlook other crucial instigators. The results of this paper will demonstrate that even incidents that did not directly involve the major belligerents of the Cold War can nonetheless have a significant impact upon them. Furthermore, even though there is an assumption that it was the Cold War powers that shaped the actions of the Third World during this era, this paper’s results will demonstrate that such influences can flow both ways.

This article makes use of a range of vital primary and secondary sources. Key findings are evidenced by transcripts, memorandums, telegrams, treaties and other primary documents. These resources are preserved in prominent historical archives, such as the State Department’s Foreign Relations Archive, the Richard Nixon Presidential Library’s National Security Council Archive, and the Wilson Center Digital Archive. The use of these primary sources, which originate directly from the individuals responsible for facilitating the rapprochement, is critical for deciphering the true impact of the South Asian Crisis upon decision-makers in China and the United States. Instrumental secondary sources will also receive due consideration, like Mahmud Ali’s *US-China Cold War Collaboration* and J.P. Jain’s *China, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. These books helped provide a foundation for this paper’s research through their discussion of South Asia and the US-Chinese rapprochement.

So as to better situate its argument, this article will first consider the historical background regarding US-Chinese relations, the India-Pakistan conflict and US-Chinese interests in the Indian subcontinent. Subsequent sections will examine the

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course of the South Asian Crisis, including the role played by American, Chinese, and Soviet intervention. Additionally, perspectives commonly proposed by scholars researching US-Chinese relations will be examined. The final section will consider how these existing perspectives tie into the paper’s thesis regarding the impact of the South Asian Crisis on the rapprochement between the United States and China.

**Historical Background: US-Chinese Relations**

The modern relationship between the United States and China can be traced back to the Chinese Civil War. Although the nationalist, Kuomintang-led Republic of China and the Communist Party had formed a temporary united front against Japanese forces during World War II, fighting between the two resumed following the defeat of Imperial Japan. Despite immense American support for Chiang Kai-Shek, his nationalist forces were militarily defeated by the Communists and forced to retreat to the island of Taiwan in 1949. With Communist control over mainland China solidified, the party’s chairman Mao Zedong established the People’s Republic of China (PRC). American leaders, already worried by the Soviet Union’s domination of Eastern Europe, greatly overestimated the Cominform’s influence over the new communist regime in China, believing the Chinese communists to be little more than Stalin’s puppets. Consequently, American policymakers interpreted the ‘loss of China’ as a disastrous defeat for the United States and a great victory for the Soviet Union. Terrified of falling behind the communist enemy, the United States became entangled in a Second Red Scare, refusing to recognize the new Chinese government and insisting that the exiled government in Taiwan was the legitimate representative of the Chinese people. Even at the onset of the South Asian Crisis, official diplomatic relations between the United States and the PRC were yet to be established.

The strained relationship between the two countries continued when the Chinese desire to spread Communism and the American policy of containment clashed in Korea. The American-led forces of the United Nations repelled the North Korean invasion of South Korea that started the Korean War, pushing the North Korean forces deep into their own territory in an attempt to unify the Korean peninsula under capitalist principles. As the allied forces got closer to the Chinese-North Korean border, the Chinese launched a counterattack to push the UN forces back. The war finally ended in a stalemate, with little territorial changes and the solidification of a divided Korea. Korea became an important component of US-Chinese relations going forward.

The next Asian conflict to pit the two powers against each other was the Vietnam War. Vietnam, much like Korea, was liberated from Japanese control at the end of World War II. Although the French, with American support, initially attempted to regain control over Indochina, this endeavor proved unsuccessful. Following the French withdrawal, Vietnam was divided into a communist North Vietnam, supported by the Chinese and the Soviets, and a capitalist South Vietnam, supported by the United States. China had previously helped the Communist Vietnamese face the French, and it continued provide them with financial and military aid as they clashed with South Vietnam and the United States. The Vietnam War severely damaged the already tense relations between the United States and China.

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9 Ibid.
This relationship remained tense until 1968, when President Johnson decided to wind down the war in Vietnam. To the Chinese, it appeared as though the Americans were slowing their expansionism in Asia. On the other hand, the Soviets, who had just engaged in a border conflict with the PRC, seemed like a more serious threat. Although Chairman Mao had looked up to the Soviet Union as a friend and teacher for most of his life, the land of Lenin and Stalin became his “number one enemy” in later years. As such, Chinese leaders believed that the diplomatically-isolated PRC could use a strategic alliance with the United States as a counterbalance against Soviet aggression. Therefore Chairman Mao, who once said “the day is bound to come when [the United States] will be hanged by the people of the whole world,” changed his country’s foreign policy. He entrusted Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai with coordinating an improvement of US-Chinese relations. Many in the United States considered similar options regarding an anti-Soviet Union strategic alliance between the United States and China. Scholars, such as John K. Fairbank and Arthur Doak Barnett, and organizations, like the National Committee on United States-China Relations, called for opening discussions and improving American relations with the People’s Republic.

Beijing was not initially receptive to Richard Nixon’s election as president in 1968, with the People’s Daily condemning him as “a chieftain whom the capitalist world had turned to out of desperation.” This was a result of Nixon’s strong credentials as an ardent anti-communist. However, in his 1969 inaugural address, Nixon stated that the United States and China were “entering an era of negotiation.” He and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger thought it in the United States’ best interest to overcome the immense differences between the two countries and to work together to counter Indian and Soviet ambitions. Furthermore, they hoped to secure China’s support in bringing the Vietnam War to end. And so, at the eve of the 1971 South Asian crisis, the United States and China officially proclaimed animosity while clandestinely desiring a rapprochement. The events that followed during the crisis provided the means and final impetus for this rapprochement to take place.

**Historical Background: India & Pakistan**

To understand the South Asian Crisis of 1971, it is crucial to briefly consider the modern history of the Indian subcontinent. The situation in South Asia had been tense since British India was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947. India was meant to be

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18 Ibid.
a country for Hindus. The Dominion of Pakistan, split into two geographically and culturally distinct halves to the east and west of India, was meant to be a country for Muslims. In the sectarian chaos that followed this hastily prepared partition, 14 million people were displaced and 2 million were killed. Relations between India and Pakistan were stained with blood from the very beginning.

Relations between the two halves of Pakistan, then known as West Pakistan and East Pakistan, were not pleasant either. The task of administrating two separate halves of one country, separated by around 1500 km of a larger rival’s territory, was a daunting task. Rising political discontent and Bengali nationalism in East Pakistan made things even harder for West Pakistan. Political discontent arose from the concentration of political power in West Pakistan, even though the size of the population in both regions was nearly equal. Further, the western half of the country received more money from the common budget. This made things worse in an already economically disadvantaged East Pakistan, where the West Pakistani economic policy of urban industrial development failed to translate to the primarily agrarian East. Bengali nationalism also increased in response to attempts by West Pakistan to suppress Bengali culture and language, and to replace it with a homogenous, religiously-informed Pakistani identity (including the Urdu language commonly spoken in West Pakistan). The Islamic vision that formed the basis of the East Pakistani identity in the 1940s asserted that the country’s residents were “Muslims first and Bengalis next.” However, East Pakistanis claimed instead that they were “Bengalis first and Muslims next,” and that their form of nationalism was defined by the Western principles of “democracy, socialism and secularism.” Soon thereafter, a political party known as the Awami League championed these ideals and push for greater Bengali autonomy through mass civil disobedience campaigns.

In 1970, after West Pakistan showed callous indifference to East Pakistan’s suffering from the devastating Bhola cyclone, the results of the first (and ultimately only) general election in both halves of the country surprised authorities. The Awami League won in a landslide, sowing the seeds for the 1971 crisis to erupt.

Historical Background: US-Chinese Interests in the Indian Subcontinent

During the decades leading up to the South Asian Crisis, global powers like the United States, China and the Soviet Union were paying close attention to the Indian subcontinent. During World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt called for Indian independence and the end of British colonialism in the subcontinent. When the end of the war actualized this proposal, President Truman’s administration hoped to secure both India and Pakistan as allies against the “Communist Menace.” In light of the tension between the two nascent countries, the United States initially favored India, believing the country to be “far the more valuable diplomatic prize.” However, the US did not appreciate Indian Prime Minister Nehru’s policy of neutrality. It wanted India to align more closely with the Western world, as evidenced by then-US

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26 Ibid.
Ambassador Henry Grady’s comments to Nehru: “This is a question that cannot be straddled,” and so, “India should get on the democratic side immediately.” Nonetheless, India refused to align itself entirely with the West and even began strengthening their relationship with the Soviet Union. Like India, Pakistan also attempted a policy of neutrality, in which friendly relations with both the Soviets and Americans could be maintained. However, unlike India, Pakistan had abandoned this policy by 1950 in response to increasing cooperation between the Soviet Union and India, as well as the potential for more military and economic aid from the United States. Pakistan became firmly aligned with the Western camp, a member of both the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).

Even though India maintained its policy of neutrality and Pakistan became the closer ally, the United States decided not to give up on India entirely. In the first twelve years following its independence, the United States provided $1.7 billion in aid to India. Furthermore, India sent Medical Corps to aid the United States in the Korean War. And the United States openly supported India during the 1962 Sino-Indian War, with President Kennedy proclaiming that “we should defend India, and therefore we will defend India.”

Relations between the United States and India did not truly deteriorate until after President Kennedy’s assassination. President Johnson tried once again to cultivate strong relations with both India and Pakistan and bring peace to the subcontinent. Despite his good intentions, his even-handedness only served to instill doubt about American friendship in both countries, pushing Pakistan closer to China and India closer to the Soviet Union. Once President Nixon was elected, he shifted away from his predecessor’s even-handed approach and established stronger ties with Pakistan. This was partially motivated by his tense relationship with then-Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, whom he considered to be too friendly with the Soviets. He also hoped to exploit the fact that Pakistan had grown closer to China. And so, in the months preceding the crisis, the United States found itself moving closer to Pakistan and farther from India.

The People’s Republic of China found itself in a similar position, although for different reasons. When the PRC was created in 1949, both India and Pakistan hoped to cultivate strong relations with their transformed neighbor. In 1950, India was the first non-communist country to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. However, disagreements regarding Kashmir and Tibet proved detrimental to Sino-Indian relations. In regard to Kashmir, both China and India claimed the Kashmiri region of Aksai Chin as part of their territory. In regard to Tibet, Prime Minister Nehru hoped that Tibet would serve as a buffer zone between the two powers and was disappointed by Chinese control over the region. The situation worsened when, following a failed Tibetan uprising in 1959, India permitted the fourteenth Dalai Lama to seek refuge there and form a Tibetan government in the Indian city of

29 Ibid, 40.
Dharamshala. These tensions eventually led to the 1962 Sino-Indian War, as well as post-war border conflicts preceding the Bangladeshi Liberation War. Due to all of this, Indian relations with China, like Indian relations with the United States, were at an all-time low just before the South Asian Crisis erupted.

Pakistan was much more successful in its attempts to befriend the PRC. As tensions between India and China became more apparent, Pakistan hoped to capitalize on the situation and secure China as an ally against India. Although the United States and Soviet Union both condemned China’s 1962 attack on India, Pakistan (which had its own border disputes with India) was supportive. In the aftermath of the Sino-Indian War, Pakistan and China peacefully settled their border disputes, with Pakistan even ceding the Kashmiri territory of Shaksgam to China. They also signed various trade and commercial treaties. Therefore, Chinese-Pakistani relations were better than ever before at the onset of the South Asian Crisis. With a mutual ally in Pakistan and mutual enemies in India and the Soviet Union, China and the United States found themselves embracing similar strategic aims. These shared strategic interests were further highlighted once the crisis began in earnest.

The Crisis

Despite the results of the 1970 Pakistani election, President Yahya Khan and the ruling military junta refused to allow the East Pakistani Awami League to form their new government. They annulled the results of the election and arrested the Prime Minister-elect, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The crisis itself began when the Pakistani military government decided to go even further, launching “Operation Searchlight” against the people of East Pakistan to curb the rising Bengali nationalist and self-determination movement. West Pakistan believed that they could eliminate all Bengali resistance in one swift and ruthless operation; President Khan proclaimed that West Pakistani forces needed only to “kill three million of them [Bengalis] and the rest will eat out of our hands.” Thus Operation Searchlight marked the beginning of the 1971 Bangladesh genocide, which claimed three million lives. The Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamic East Pakistani political party allied with West Pakistan, declared that Bengali women were now goninoter maal (Bengali for “public property”), inciting a ruthless campaign of genocidal rape. Around 10 million Bengali refugees fled to India, with another 30 million facing internal displacement. Instead of eliminating Bengali resistance as expected, this systematic violence actually inspired the Bengalis to declare independence from Pakistan and form the new country of Bangladesh. Forming the Mukti Bahini, a national liberation army comprised of military, paramilitary and civilian forces, the Bengalis instigated a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Pakistani Armed Forces despite facing heavy casualties.

The suffering of millions of war-weary Bengali civilians caused alarm throughout the world. A group of Indian, British, and American musicians, including George Harrison, Ravi Shankar, Ringo Starr, Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton, organized

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38 Ibid.
the world’s first major benefit concert in New York City to help raise awareness and fund relief for refugees in East Pakistan. Many in the United States Congress also began voicing concern regarding the situation in the Indian subcontinent. Senator Ted Kennedy, whose Crisis in South Asia report to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Refugees, denounced the West Pakistani “systematic campaign of terror and its genocidal consequences.” Furthermore, the staff at the United States consulate in Dhaka expressed their horror at the ongoing violence through the infamous Blood Telegram. This telegram, widely considered to be the most strongly worded expression of dissent in the history of the United States Foreign Service, decried American inaction in response to West Pakistani atrocities. It stated that the US government was “bending over backwards to placate the West Pak[istan] dominated government” and “has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy.” In spite of all this, Nixon and Kissinger decided that West Pakistan’s role in a rapprochement between China and the United States was too valuable to be dismissed.

China was similarly supportive of West Pakistan and remained wary of potential Indian involvement in the conflict. The PRC believed that India was secretly behind the rebellion and responsible for supporting and arming the Bengali rebels. And though the Chinese were concerned about an Indian invasion of Pakistan and a Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, they ignored Nixon’s encouragement to mobilize against the Indian border. This was because Prime Minister Indira Gandhi deployed eight mountain divisions to India’s northern border to defend against a potential Chinese advance. Consequently, China continued to label India’s actions imperialistic, but did not go so far as to risk military confrontation.

Soon after the Awami League (which had formed a government-in-exile in India) proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh, India began to support the nationalists by means of “diplomacy, military training, hospitality, refugee care, propaganda and artillery support.” Although India claimed to be motivated by fostering democracy and self-determination, it is much more likely that the Indian government simply jumped on an opportunity to weaken their regional rival. The two countries had already gone to war before in 1948 and 1965, and Indian involvement in what Pakistan considered to be its internal affairs soon provoked a third Indo-Pakistani war.

The third Indo-Pakistani war began when Pakistan launched “Operation Chengiz Khan,” a series of preemptive air strikes on Indian air stations. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi interpreted the air strikes as a declaration of war, launching retaliatory offensives aimed at West and East Pakistan. Within thirteen days, the war ended with an Indian victory and the official declaration of an independent Bangladesh.

The complex regional alliances of the Cold War elevated the South Asian Crisis to a level of global concern. The shake-up of the South Asian power balance attracted the attention of various world powers, such as the United States, People’s

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46 Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State, telegram, April 6, 1971, Historical Documents: Foreign Relations of the United States, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.
48 Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State, telegram, April 6, 1971, Office of the Historian.
51 N. Jayapalan, India and Her Neighbours (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2000), 19.
52 Van Schendel, History of Bangladesh, 169.
Republic of China, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom. The Soviet Union supported
its ally India and, therefore, the liberation movement in Bangladesh. In contrast, the
United States feared that Indian (and, by extension, Soviet) domination of South Asia
would undermine its global position, as well as the regional position of their potential
ally, China. Therefore, the crisis served as the first major incident in which the US
and China allied together against the Soviet Union. Ironically, the United States, the
world’s strongest democracy, supported Pakistan, a military dictatorship, against
India, the world’s largest democracy. Similarly, the Soviet Union, the world’s
strongest authoritarian state, supported India and Bangladesh against Pakistan. This
serves as yet another example of how, in foreign policy, core ideological differences
are overlooked in favor of immediate strategic advantages. Ideological differences
were similarly overlooked when the strategic advantages of a US-Chinese
rapprochement made themselves visible.

Rapprochement: Perspectives So Far

Within the existing literature, various theories have been put forward regarding the
cause of the US-Chinese rapprochement. The rapprochement is commonly attributed
to the Vietnam War, capitalism, and the Sino-Soviet split. While there is certainly
some truth to these explanations, they overlook the importance of the situation in
South Asia, and therefore do not tell the entire story. An examination of these
perspectives will prove useful.

The most common interpretation appears to be that the worsening American
situation in Vietnam motivated Nixon to seek a rapprochement with China. There is
no question that Nixon hoped rapprochement would improve the United States’ hand
in Vietnam. He stated in his post-presidential book regarding the Vietnam War that
he had “long believed that an indispensable element of any successful peace initiative
in Vietnam was to enlist, if possible, the help of the Soviets and the Chinese,” and
that rapprochement could be a “possible means to hasten the end of the war.”

In spite of the alleged importance of the Vietnam War, it is important to note
that Nixon did not get what he wanted in the Indochinese Peninsula. China not only
continued but increased the massive amounts of military and economic aid going to
the North Vietnamese. If the Vietnam War was truly the United States’ only concern
with respect to China, then logically the rapprochement should have fallen apart.
However, formal diplomatic ties between the two countries strengthened, paving the
way for strategic cooperation in Asia and Africa. This suggests that the Vietnam
War by itself cannot account for the rapprochement. Although it contributed to the
first considerations of a rapprochement, other factors account for why Sino-American
relations continued to improve even as the situation in Vietnam deteriorated.

Another interpretation is that American capitalists, attracted to the large
number of consumers available to them in the Chinese market, encouraged Nixon to
seek a policy of rapprochement. This explanation claims that American businesses
not only hoped to access the Chinese market, but also considered themselves to be
unofficial US ambassadors, developing Sino-American trade networks to improve

55 Ibid.
56 Ke and Shengzhang, Wenhua dageming, 416; Jian, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War.”
57 Jim Mann, About Face: A History of America’s Curious Relationship with China (New York: Vintage
Books, 1999).
58 Evelyn Goh, Constructing the US Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From ‘Red Menace’ to
relations between the two countries. They hoped such trade development would convert China into a market-oriented economy, eventually changing the Chinese regime’s political orientation. However, not all who supported the expansion of capitalism supported rapprochement with China. Senator Barry Goldwater and future president Ronald Reagan, despite their capitalist credentials, were some of the prominent critics of Nixon’s China policy. This suggests that, in some circles, hostility towards communism remained strong enough not to be overcome by financial incentives. Nonetheless, the boom in trade between the United States and China that followed rapprochement hints towards the merits of such an explanation.

Another important interpretation is that tensions between the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China were responsible for the rapprochement. This paper completely agrees with this interpretation. It is clear that the Chinese were becoming increasingly concerned about the Soviet Union, and that an anti-Soviet strategic alliance with the United States became progressively more appealing. It is also clear that Nixon and Kissinger hoped to exploit the Sino-Soviet split for their own benefit.

However, tense relations between the two communist powers was not a recent state of affairs. China and the Soviet Union had an uneasy relationship from the very beginning. Therefore, we must question why it is that the Chinese did not try to abandon the Soviets earlier. Although the foundations were already in place for China to move from an anti-American alliance with the Soviets to an anti-Soviet alliance with the Americans, it took the deterioration of the situation in South Asia for this to take place.

None of the aforementioned instigators of rapprochement were influential enough to be effective on their own, as monocausal theories are seldom useful in historical analysis. With that in mind, it should be noted that the South Asian Crisis was similarly not influential enough to cause the rapprochement between the United States and China on its own. Instead, the South Asian Crisis was an instrumental part of many factors that initiated the rapprochement. The Vietnam War, capitalist incentives, and the Sino-Soviet split all played crucial roles in creating the environment in which rapprochement could take place, yet it was the war in South Asia that provided the final impetus for a change in policy.

Rapprochement: Impact of the South Asian Crisis

Although tensions already existed between China and the Soviet Union, the South Asian Crisis provided impetus for the relationship to worsen enough for a Sino-

American strategic alliance to be conceivable. As already mentioned, Nixon and Kissinger desired to exploit the Sino-Soviet split to the United States’ advantage, potentially securing Chinese support in bringing an end to the disastrous American intervention in Vietnam. However, Kissinger believed that recent actions by the PRC “didn’t in any way prove to Americans that Beijing leaders were ready to carry out a more peaceful policy towards the USA.” As such, Nixon’s initial advances towards China were cautious.

Aware of members of the State Department (and other sections of the bureaucracy) that opposed a normalization of relations with China, Nixon used secret backchannels to enact his policy. During a 1969 state visit to Pakistan, Nixon asked its military dictator, Yahya Khan, to take a confidential message to the Chinese that expressed American desires to improve relations. Khan agreed to do so, and this further cemented American support for Pakistan’s ruling regime. And while Nixon spoke with General Khan, Kissinger deliberated with Pakistani Air Marshall Nur Khan. Nur Khan, who had recently spoke with Zhou Enlai in Beijing, confirmed Chinese anxieties regarding a potential Soviet attack and demonstrated that Zhou was “prepared to negotiate with (the) United States if US forces were withdrawn from Taiwan.”

Nixon’s request to Yahya Khan began to bear fruit two months later, when Kissinger committed to withdraw two American destroyers from the Taiwan Strait as an act of goodwill. Yahya Khan called the Chinese ambassador and vouched for Nixon, stating that his conversations with the American president conveyed to him that Nixon truly desired better relations. Beijing later informed Pakistan that they were supportive of American intentions and released two American yachtsmen arrested for entering Chinese waters without permission. Pleased with the Chinese response, Kissinger told the Pakistani ambassador to Washington that “the Pakistanis could tell the Chinese now that the US appreciates this communication,” and that if the Chinese desired “to have these conversations in a more secure manner than Warsaw or in channels that are less widely disseminated within the bureaucracy, the President would be prepared to do so.” This invitation secured Pakistan’s role as a secret intermediary between the United States and China. Although the South Asian Crisis soon diverted Yahya Khan’s attention to domestic concerns and not international affairs, he continued to facilitate US-Chinese proxy exchanges.

Relations between the United States, China, and Pakistan continued to improve as the crisis raged on, much to the alarm of India and the Soviet Union.

73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
Pakistan’s membership in SEATO and CENTO already elicited concern for both powers. Now, increasing American interest in Pakistan revealed a common security threat faced by both the Soviets and the Indians.76 Millions of Bengali refugees poured into overcrowded and underfunded camps along the East Pakistani-Indian border, straining India’s already overburdened economy, and the international community failed to provide support.77 Indira Gandhi believed it would be economical to go to war with Pakistan to bring an end to the refugee crisis, but remained apprehensive due to Yahya Khan’s close relationship with Nixon and Mao’s China. However, Gandhi hoped to deter American or Chinese countermeasures for an Indian attack on Pakistan with Soviet support. In addition to the situation in Pakistan, the Soviet Union hoped to increase their influence over the rest of the Post-Colonial World by using India’s status as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.78 And so, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in August 1971, proclaiming that “enduring peace and friendship shall prevail between the two countries.”79

The Indo-Soviet Treaty inspired further cooperation between the United States and China. Believing the Soviets to be the secret “backstage manager of the Indian expansionists,” the Chinese condemned their “joint conspiracy” directed towards Pakistan.80 Since 1959, when Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev favored India (over China) in a border dispute in Aksai Chin, China had been concerned about cooperation between India and the Soviet Union. In a conversation with Kissinger that took place during the South Asian Crisis, Zhou Enlai stated that Khrushchev’s denouncement of China in support of India “was the first such anti-China statement from the USSR.”81 And this statement, to the Chinese, marked the beginning of a shift in Soviet policy, so as to coordinate an anti-China alliance with India. With the Indo-Soviet treaty in place, the Chinese believed that their fears had been realized. Now that their primary enemy had secured an alliance with another of their neighboring enemies, the Chinese had additional incentives for seeking an improvement in relations with the United States.

Held back by American public opinion, Nixon was not as openly critical of India as the Chinese were, even after India’s alliance with the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, utilizing communication channels established by Pakistan, Nixon assured the Chinese that he personally did not support India’s actions, citing China and the United States’ shared friendship with Yahya Khan’s regime.82 Further, the war in South Asia did not slow down Yahya Khan’s support for a rapprochement. In fact, the war made American and Chinese support even more crucial for Khan, so he did what he could to please both sides. Another meeting between Khan and Zhao Enlai culminated in an invitation to Beijing for “a special envoy of President Nixon’s.”83

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78 Ibid.
80 Jain, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh, 183.
Khan also provided useful insights of his own to help Nixon formulate his response. Khan even convinced the Chinese to not discuss matters with any other American politician, resolving Nixon’s concerns of domestic criticism.

Once Nixon decided that Kissinger would be his special envoy to China, Pakistan played an even greater role in the US-Chinese rapprochement, helping to facilitate a clandestine exchange between Zhou and Kissinger. Initially, the location for this meeting was going to be either Pakistan or a southern part of China accessible through northern Pakistan. However, Beijing itself became the eventual destination. This progress elevated Pakistan’s position within American foreign policy and entangled its domestic concerns in superpower complexities. To ensure that the Pakistani channel of communication remained open, the American Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland, suggested a $250 million loan to Pakistan to help with the South Asian Crisis. Furthermore, Farland suggested that the US inform Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan of its determination to save Pakistan, so that these foreign powers would readjust their policies to align with the American position.

Although the Chinese soon suggested a potential visit to Beijing by Nixon himself, the American president preferred that the Zhou-Kissinger meeting go ahead first. And so, during a routine visit to Pakistan, Kissinger feigned illness near the end of a banquet hosted by President Khan and claimed to return to Islamabad for recuperation. In reality, he went to the nearby Chaklala airbase and boarded a Pakistani airliner to fly to Beijing. In the meeting, Zhou and Kissinger discussed a myriad of topics, including the South Asian Crisis. Crucially, this meeting laid the foundations for Nixon’s visit to China the following year. Even though this visit marked a turning point in relations between China and the United States, leading to the acceptance of public communication, Zhou recommended that Yahya Khan and Pakistan continue to serve as a channel of communication between the two powers. “We have a saying in China,” he stated, “that one shouldn’t break the bridge after crossing.”

The Americans and Chinese became increasingly concerned as the situation in South Asia intensified. Once India officially joined the war (following a Pakistani preemptive attack), Pakistani defeat seemed imminent. Although the Indo-Soviet treaty deterred the Chinese from being directly involved, the Americans still tried to support Pakistan’s military government, which, due to its role in the rapprochement, was a key ally of the United States. Nixon was also motivated by a desire to convince Beijing that the United States could be a reliable ally. Ignoring the concerns of the State Department, Congress, the Democratic Party, and others who sympathized with the Bengali people, the Nixon administration violated Congress’ imposed sanctions upon Pakistan and supplied them with military supplies routed through

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84 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid, 28.
93 Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State, telegram, April 6, 1971, Office of the Historian.
94 Ali, US-China Cold War Collaboration, 46
95 Ibid.
Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In the war’s closing chapter, Nixon even deployed the nuclear-armed USS Enterprise, later supported by the British aircraft carrier HMS Eagle, to the Bay of Bengal. When the Soviet Union responded by deploying nuclear-armed ships and submarines into the Indian Ocean, the Western powers retreated and allowed India to complete its subjugation of Pakistani forces.

Although the United States and China were ultimately unable to secure a conclusion to the South Asian Crisis that was favorable to their interests, the incident nonetheless brought the two countries closer together. First, the crisis helped solidify the Sino-Soviet split that was already growing more and more apparent. The Chinese were convinced that the Soviets had made India their puppet, claiming the Soviets orchestrated (or at least permitted) the crisis. The Chinese also perceived the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship as an attempt towards their encirclement. With this animosity towards the Soviet Union solidified, the People’s Republic was much more inclined to pursue better relations with the Soviet Union’s other enemy, the United States.

Additionally, the South Asian Crisis highlighted shared strategic interests between the United States and China, suggesting that there could be a potential for future collaboration. The defeat of the American-Chinese-Pakistani coalition at the hands of the Bengali-Indian-Soviet coalition presented the great threat posed by the Soviet Union and its allies, emphasizing the urgency of Nixon’s groundbreaking trip to China. With the Americans and Chinese both fearing the revival of Soviet expansionism, they believed that strategically cooperating together would be beneficial for both countries. Indeed, the two countries continued their strategic cooperation for the rest of the Cold War, battling Soviet influences in Asia and Africa.

It also important to note that the experience of supporting a common ally, Pakistan, against common enemies, India and the Soviet Union, facilitated bonds of cooperation between China and the United States. As the age-old proverb suggests, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Thus, even their mutual defeat served to bring them closer together. We see evidence of this in the communication between Nixon and Zhou following the conclusion of the South Asian Crisis. Nixon stated that he believed Pakistan was being “punished because it is a friend of China and because it is a friend of the United States” and that he retained “particular affection for Pakistan because we feel they helped to reestablish contact between the People’s Republic and the United States.” Zhou similarly praised Yahya Khan for his help in building links between China and the United States.

Truly, the rapprochement (at least as we know it) would not have occurred without the support of Yahya Khan and Pakistan. Since American and Chinese leaders

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100 Jain, *China, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, 183.
were both hesitant to carry out diplomacy through normal diplomatic channels, Pakistan’s crucial role as a mediator, facilitator and common ally cannot be overlooked. All these roles, as well as the overall utility of the Pakistani channel, were maximized by the South Asian Crisis. The war made American and Chinese support so crucial for Yahya Khan that he willingly engaged as an intermediary. Further, resolving tensions between the two powers and uniting them behind support for Pakistan aligned with Khan’s own strategic interests. Since Indian armed forces were militarily and numerically superior to Pakistan, Yahya Khan hoped that alliances with China and the United States would act as crucial counterweights to such a disadvantage. The war also provided crucial cover for Kissinger’s secret visit to China.

As previously mentioned, other incidents also impacted the normalization of relations between the US and China. While those incidents were crucial towards the motivations behind why the US-Chinese rapprochement occurred, the analysis presented in this section demonstrates that the South Asian Crisis was instrumental towards how the rapprochement occurred. The crisis intensified already-existing fears in China regarding the Soviet Union. It urged strategic cooperation between the United States and the People’s Republic, and the situation that Pakistan found itself in forced the country to play a greater, and eventually crucial, role in US-Chinese rapprochement. These factors ultimately led to Nixon’s groundbreaking 1972 trip to China, signaling a turning point in Cold War diplomacy.

Conclusion

The rapprochement between China and the United States was instigated by, amongst other factors, the South Asian Crisis of 1971. The impact of this crisis rippled far beyond the Indian subcontinent. Complex regional alliances ensured that this crisis was deeply entrenched in global Cold War tensions between the United States, Soviet Union and People’s Republic of China.

Until the crisis, tense and adversarial relations existed between the US and China. Although friction with the Soviet Union led each side to consider the benefits of closer cooperation with the other, the various differences between them proved too large to be overcome. However, the effects of the South Asian Crisis – namely the solidification of the Sino-Soviet split, the emergence of shared US-Chinese strategic interests, and the motivation for Pakistani assistance – provided the impetus for the United States and China to enter into a strategic alliance focused against the Soviets.

Although the historiography of the rapprochement between the United States and China has focused on various potential instigators of this normalization of relations, little attention has been paid to the South Asian Crisis. By focusing on the impact of this mostly forgotten crisis on US-Chinese relations, this paper considered an often-overlooked cause of the rapprochement between the United States and China. That is not to say that all other considerations had no effect, but rather that the South Asian Crisis was an integral part of a combination of factors. For example, the South Asian Crisis itself would not have provoked the reactions it did if the Sino-Soviet split had not already been initiated. On the other hand, the split was not yet wide enough to inspire a strategic alliance between China and the United States in early 1971; it took the opportunity presented by the South Asian Crisis for such a result to occur.

The implications of this paper’s assertions are plentiful. For one, it alters our understanding of a crucial historical event that Nixon himself and many others refer to as having “changed the world.”104 Existing scholarship has considered this event

104 Allen McDuffee, “How secret talks between the U.S and China led to the week that changed the world,” Timeline, December 7, 2017.
primarily through the lens of the larger Cold War conflict. This is understandable since the rapprochement had an enormous impact upon and was so crucially interwoven with the events of the Cold War. This paper, however, demonstrates that incidents not directly involving the major belligerents of the Cold War still had a significant impact upon them. Furthermore, though there is an assumption that it was the Cold War powers that shaped the Third World during this era, this paper demonstrates that influences can flow both ways. This, in turn, has implications for the study of bilateral relations more generally. Although obvious attention should be devoted to the stated bilateral priorities of the two states in question, it is also important to consider the role played by crucial third parties, even if the connection is not apparent at first glance.

This study is especially significant today due to contemporary events in international and US-Chinese relations. In recent years, the Trump administration has entered into a trade war with China, barred American companies from working with Huawei, increased visa restrictions on Chinese students, and designated the Chinese government as a “currency manipulator.” However, both countries have taken steps to improve their relationship, evident by the United States’ removal of its “currency manipulator” designation for China and by the US-China Phase 1 trade deal. It is clear that the relationship between the United States and China today remains as tumultuous and complicated as ever. And since the United States and China are (arguably) the world’s two strongest powers today, their relationship between has an enormous impact on the rest of the globe. An understanding of the origins of the relationship between the United States and People’s Republic of China, as conducted in this paper, will help us better comprehend the complicated present-day relationship between these two global powers.

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References


“Of Course Someone You Know is Gay” tracks the first two years of UA’s longest-lasting queer student group, exploring its creation, activities, and advocacy through oral histories and archival materials. This essay attributes the group’s unusual strength and length of life to its foundationally political nature, positing that the members’ willingness to be vulnerable or exposed as queer rights advocates was vital for the group’s survival in the South, where coming out was an inherently political act. Members’ willingness to defend themselves and educate their detractors enabled the group to flourish, as opposed to other apolitical groups which died out.

Introduction

In September of 2019, advocacy group GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) published an article by one of their campus ambassadors, Dorothy McIntush, about dating as a bisexual woman on a “historically conservative campus.”1 In the story, McIntush relates the change in her peers’ behavior as she became more open with her girlfriend—especially public displays of affection.2 The two received odd stares when holding hands, were heckled at a football game, and McIntush began to feel “‘too queer’ for a lot of [her] classmates.”3 Though McIntush was bisexual before this relationship, the increased visibility of her queerness “increased [her] fear of experiencing open homophobia.”4 McIntush explains that her college, Texas A&M, “topped a national ranking” of conservative student bodies, which added to her fear.5 Despite this, McIntush pushed through her discomfort and continued being more open about her sexuality. She believed in the necessity of her and other queer students’ visibility to create safer communities for LGBT people, doubled by her status as a campus ambassador for GLAAD.6

Her story, despite its recency, reflects major themes running through the histories of Southern queer movements, especially on Southern college campuses. The latter half of the twentieth century, a time of major social unrest, saw the development of more sophisticated movements, by students and for the LGBT community. In his A Queer History of the United States, Michael Bronski describes a shift in the 1960s among the queer community as “the beginning of a new kind of homosexuality that was, first and foremost, a form of political resistance.”7 By the end of the decade,

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1 Dorothy McIntush, “What’s It’s Like Dating While Bisexual on a Historically Conservative Campus,” AMP (blog), Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, September 20, 2019.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Michael Bronski, A Queer History of the United States (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 204.
queer people had been designated, using Marxist theory, as a distinct cultural group experiencing oppression, contributing to the development of queerness as being part of an identity, rather than solely being a marker of sexual attraction.8

The National Queer Movement

Over the next decade, the queer movement placed much higher importance on “coming out,” explained by Carl Wittman in his “A Gay Manifesto” as “free[ing] ourselves; [to] initiate self-defense and political activity.”9 In the same year, 1969, the famous Stonewall Riots occurred, a sect of gay rights activists who preferred a more anarchist, rebellious, physical kind of resistance developed. This sect, represented by the Gay Liberation Front, despite being “more of a process than an organization,” spread quickly across the country, especially in cities and on college campuses.10 Soon after, the more practical Gay Activists Alliance also formed, intended to increase cooperation with other major civil rights movements of the time. Though both would die out by the mid-1970s, the GAA and GLF exerted a major influence over the direction of the gay rights movement, in particular distinguishing it as its own, important political movement and establishing “the template” for later activism, preferring to reform, “not overthrow the system.”11 For LGBT youth, the GAA and GLF provided a “political and social framework in which to declare and celebrate their identity.”12

The latter half of the 1970s and the early 1980s further expanded upon the creation of this framework. Hollywood stars came out or were outed, the American Psychological Association officially removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and the movement experienced both legal wins and losses.13 Nearly half the states in the union had repealed their sodomy laws by 1980, but the backlash against such repeals resulted in some backtracking by governments, such as in Arkansas and Florida.14 In particular, the fight against the gay rights movement became distinctly moral and religious, best exemplified by the title of a book by Anita Bryant, a prominent figure in repealing a Florida ordinance decriminalizing sodomy: The Anita Bryant Story: The Survival of Our Nation’s Families and the Threat of Militant Homosexuality.15 Ironically, attempts to repress people with queer identities turned more aggressive around this time; Bronski highlights a fire-bombing in 1973 that killed 32 people in a New Orleans gay bar and the assassination of Harvey Milk in 1978.16

The early ‘80s dawned without major news for the gay rights movements, but not for lack of new developments. The AIDS crisis, which would not hit in full force until the second half of the 1980s, was first sighted in 1981.17 First called pneumonia, then cancer, then GRID, AIDS took 121 lives in that first year, but received little to no media coverage. Bronski points out that The New York Times, one of the biggest and most significant news publications in the country, ran only three stories about AIDS in 1981, and another three in 1982, in sharp contrast to the thirty-one stories run on the infamous Tylenol poisonings.18 31 stories for 7 fatalities in the month of

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8 Ibid., 207.
9 Ibid., qtd. on 208.
10 Ibid., 211.
11 Ibid., 212.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 216-218
14 Ibid., 219.
15 Ibid., 223.
16 Ibid., 224.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 225.
October 1982. For the gay rights movement, the early ‘80s were a period calm between the tumult of the ‘70s and the fear of the late ‘80s: the AIDS crisis had begun, but it was yet to receive any significant attention from the national media.

The Student Queer Movement

Alongside the development of national movements, student movements cropped up on many college campuses, starting in the ‘60s and on into the ‘80s and beyond. In an article examining a queer publication by the Gay Student Union on UCLA’s campus, David Reichard describes the creation of these student organizations as part of “public queer world making,” an effort to normalize and organize queer life. UCLA’s first “openly” LGBT student organization was created in 1969, the same year as the Stonewall Riots, making it an early example. Originally part of the Gay Liberation Front tradition, this UCLA organization was small, largely male, and mostly inactive, barring particular “political/educational” action. It would rename and revamp its image in 1972, as a “Gay Student Union,” rather than part of the Gay Liberation Front, which Reichard says had a “revitalizing effect on membership and attendance.” It now focused more on “community-formation” as opposed to political efforts. In 1973, the group successfully sought out recognition and funding from UCLA’s Student Legislative Council; though “contentious” the effort to do so went relatively smoothly.

In the environment of Appalachian State University in North Carolina, however, students experienced more difficulty in establishing their own LGBT organization. In 1979, the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association applied for university approval. Although it struggled to find a faculty adviser, its application came on the heels of other such organizations receiving recognition within the UNC system. The SGA approved the organization, but the university’s chancellor, Herbert Wey, stalled on official approval. He wrote several times of his opposition to the club, and the community of Boone, the non-university parts of the town, expressed opposition to the club as well. The AGAA did finally receive approval on June 13th of 1979, but only after several weeks of ambivalence from Wey and with obvious reluctance. Though the group received recognition, Staley points out that “[Wey’s] public disapprobation of AGAA gave tacit acceptance to anti-LGBT intolerance harassment.”

This last point touches on an important facet of the process of gaining official recognition for such LGBT student groups, and one which will be further explored in this paper, in the context of the University of Alabama. This give-and-take between the “dozens of gay college clubs organized” through the 1970s, and the schools’ administrations is an important theme in the development of the student movement for gay rights. Additionally, the difference in the AGAA’s experience and that of the UCLA GSU highlights the tension regarding time and place for such student groups, how quickly the social and political context could shift in favor of or against them. Los Angeles, CA and its authorities are quite different from those in a place like

19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 102.
22 Ibid., 103.
23 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 81.
26 Ibid., 83-85.
27 Ibid., 85.
Of course someone you know is gay

BOONE, NC, and by the mid-to-late-1970s, the “anti-gay movement” had organized more effectively, as noted earlier in the case of Anita Bryant and by Staley. As the decade wore on, new student groups faced more opposition.

The University of Alabama

Further exploration of these themes is important to develop an understanding of the queer student movement and the ways in which place affects such organizing. This paper offers an interpretation of the motivation behind Southern queer student groups’ activities and success by investigating the longest-running queer student group at the University of Alabama, the Gay Student Union. Founded in 1983, the GSU was not the first of its kind at UA but accomplished more than its predecessors and still survives to the present day, albeit by a different name (Spectrum).28 Earlier research projects regarding UA’s Gay Student Union can be found on the university’s Queer History website, but this paper focuses on the organization’s official and unofficial activities. By drawing on oral histories of several key members or their relations, articles from UA’s student newspaper, The Crimson White, a popular queer newspaper, the Alabama Forum, and select archival material available from UA’s Special Collections, this paper will attempt to construct a history of the early GSU and comment on what distinguished them from earlier groups such as GAZE (est. 1974), and suggest how these differences resulted in the GSU’s persistence.

The movement for queer rights at the University of Alabama began with the idea that being visibly queer and thereby forcing the campus—students, faculty, and administration—to recognize the existence of queer students was the first step towards greater social and political change. As such, the GSU focused its efforts on educational activities and being a perpetual and physical presence on campus. Its actions, minor steps as they may have seemed, were always conducted with political intent, in contrast to other groups that formed largely to establish community or for social reasons. This conceptualization of political advocacy as being about the consistency of visibility is a major factor in the GSU’s effectiveness. In the late twentieth-century South, rebellion against the University of Alabama’s attempts to deny queer people’s humanity by being visibly, audibly, and unapologetically queer was at the heart of the Gay Student Union’s formation and activities.

GAZE: Precursor to the GSU

Though perhaps the most significant queer student group at the University of Alabama, the GSU was not the first. It was preceded by “GAZE,” formed in the early ‘70s. Despite its similar goals, GAZE did not intend to make the news through visibility or political advocacy. First mentioned in an interview in The Crimson White (CW) in 1973, GAZE’s organizers Lynn Johnson and Pat McGough assured the CW that the group was not political, quickly assuaging possible backlash from the campus.29 Four years after Stonewall, the Gay Liberation Front and its more aggressive, militant politicism would still have been fresh, and the anti-gay movement well developed. Johnson expressed that the group was “just a common ground” where gay students could gather, and McGough followed by saying that she did not “see [GAZE] as a very politically oriented group.”30

At this point, UA’s queer community may have felt too endangered to organize politically and risk extra backlash. Earlier, the article mentioned the prevalence of homophobic graffiti in campus bathrooms, with many stalls covered in

30 Ibid.
slurs. Johnson expanded on this, adding that UA was a “very isolated, closeted campus as far as gay life goes.” Though openly discussing one’s queerness was an inherently political act at the time, Johnson and McGough clearly stated that GAZE’s purpose was to address the lack of community for queer students rather than to fight for queer rights or organize politically. Though intentionally apolitical, GAZE signifies the early presence of queer students on campus and their sustained interest in organization. In fact, the GSU’s founders may have been inspired by this initial group, considering the language that McGough uses to describe GAZE: “some sort of broad-based union of gay students.” GAZE and its officers were not ready for sustained political action, but their organization shows that UA students started building a community and establishing solidarity at least a decade before the GSU’s founding. Such a foundation provided invaluable support for the GSU.

GAZE cited its main goals as “to gain chartered status ... and to get a permanent meeting place on campus.” They achieved the former, as indicated by the CW from September of the same year. Entitled “GAZE chartered, no ‘expected’ controversy,” this article interviews McGough again, now as GAZE’s “official Moderator.” McGough announced plans for a speaker’s panel and a newsletter, but expressed frustration that GAZE had not been granted SGA funding. Her words demonstrate both the headway queer students made on organizing and the continued obstacles to sustaining a student organization long-term. Though it was granted a charter, the SGA denied GAZE full status as a student organization by withholding funding. Though McGough said she planned to pursue funding, the group likely did not achieve this goal.

In fact, the student organization burned out within less than ten years, as indicated by the need to form a new queer student group in 1983. Even with a spotlight article on the group’s acquisition of a charter, forces conspired against its survival. GAZE lacked SGA funding and a solid base to increase its membership, as a result of the continued and pervasive societal bias against queerness, still technically illegal and certainly viewed as illicit “activities.” McGough, when asked, estimated that there were “approximately 1,300” queer people on campus, but GAZE started with only 20-25 members. Furthermore, McGough expressed doubt that GAZE would be able to add many more students to its roster. She anticipated that the danger “coming out” could pose to many closeted students on campus would outweigh the positives of joining the group, saying: “There are career considerations, family relations, and some aren’t ready to have their friends know.”

Following this, McGough emphasized again the importance of community as GAZE’s founding motivation, an intent that was still controversial. The interview concludes with The Crimson White interviewer asking if funding GAZE would be illegal, as the state still adhered to and enforced its sodomy laws. McGough explains that just “[homosexual] acts are illegal,” but that it was not illegal to identify as gay. From the question’s crassness to McGough’s careful conclusion, “We’re just trying...”
OF COURSE SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS GAY

our wings out, being very cautious. By necessity,” the interview demonstrates the unwelcoming atmosphere that GAZE’s founders attempted to organize within.42 GAZE’s position was simply too precarious to openly campaign for queer rights.

The group’s short lifespan emphasizes the importance of sustained visibility for political action and the necessity of conviction in addition to visibility. GAZE did not explicitly intend to change campus opinion, so it did not reach its loftier goals, which the GSU would.43 However, the campus atmosphere in the ‘70s was significantly less tolerant than in the ‘80s, as indicated by McGough’s interview and the prevalence of homophobic graffiti and slurs in bathrooms across campus, so the group’s less political agenda does not diminish its accomplishments. Though GAZE neither politicized nor lasted the decade, the students who started it were doubly brave to have organized within their environment. Still, the difference between GAZE’s short and the GSU’s long life span seems to stem, at least in part, from the difference in political motivation.

THE GAY STUDENT UNION

Origins

The Gay Student Union formed to challenge community norms that made queerness both illicit and illegal. Founded officially in 1983, the group likely existed in some informal way before then, as indicated by GAZE’s “loose organization” of students, and the words of Rachel Barrow, a founding member of the GSU.44 Barrow described the GSU as a group of friends who formalized their connection, then elevated it by recruiting other students and acting on their political motivations.45 In addition, David Miller, the group’s first faculty adviser, noted this motivation as part of the group’s draw; they had run articles in The Crimson White expressing frustration about “getting thrown out of bars because of complaints from frat boys and sorority girls.”46 The GSU would serve as a vehicle for the students to “fight back” against such treatment.47 The GSU’s evolution from earlier groups’ social origins to a formal political organization with a sharp distinction in purpose supported its success and longevity.

Multiple accounts confirm that Elliott Jackson Jones, the group’s founder and first president, started the GSU in response to his experiences with homophobia and harassment. According to Rachel Barrow, a founding member of the GSU, Jones and some friends were passing time in a bar when other patrons began to harass them. A minor physical altercation broke out, and, when it settled, Jones and his friends, rather than their harassers, were asked to leave.48 Jones’s sister, Pat Richeson, mentioned that Elliott talked about experiencing this kind of altercation more than once.49 These accounts demonstrate the commonness of open homophobia in Tuscaloosa during the ‘80s and the danger of being openly “out.” This origin story demonstrates that the GSU developed openly as a reaction to oppression. It never attempted or pretended to be apolitical, because from the start its motivation was to prevent episodes like the one Jones experienced—which it could not do as a social

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 “Gay Students Planning,” 1.
45 Rachel Barrow, interview by Victoria Carl, Queer History, The University of Alabama, October 2019, transcript.
46 David Miller, interview by Abby Laurenson, Queer History, The University of Alabama, November 2019, transcript.
47 Ibid.
48 Pat Richeson, interview by Camryn Walker, Queer History, The University of Alabama, November 2019, transcript.
49 Ibid.
organization. Barrow underscored this point as she described the first unofficial organizational meeting for the GSU. After that last incident in the bar, Jones began campaigning for queer students to come together. Barrow says Jones drew on his own friend group for support, but also got members invested by highlighting the unfairness of their treatment as queer people.

Barrow belonged to that group of friends, though she said she was not with Jones the day he was kicked out of the bar, nor does she attribute her own politicization solely to that event. Instead, Barrow mentioned her sister’s reaction to Barrow “coming out,” that her sister claimed she had never known a gay person. Barrow, incredulous, said, “Of course [she] had. [She] had to have.” Though nearly ten years had passed since Pat McGough had expressed her concern over GAZE’s membership and the isolation of queer people on campus, visibility for queer community was still low. Barrow joined the GSU with a keen knowledge of this and a mind to improve queer students’ ability to be open about their sexuality.

Despite the danger, or perhaps because of it, Barrow remembered the first meeting “fe[eling] like a gazillion people were there,” estimating more realistically an attendance of roughly forty people. In addition, though Jones marketed the first meeting as “organizational,” Barrow remembered a representative from The Crimson White attending. The presence of The Crimson White indicated the extent to which Eliot had been prepping, and a difference between the conception of GAZE and the GSU. The presence of the CW also demonstrated Jones’s intent to spotlight the group in the student newspaper. If, as Barrow already mentioned, a single person coming out could be a political statement on its own, then a queer student organization “coming out” in the press would have an even greater effect. Jones planned to make a political statement with the GSU.

In addition, Barrow expressed that, in recruiting, Jones emphasized the unfair treatment queer people received in the city, “get[ting] [his friends] riled up.” With this overtly political motivation, twice as many people showed up to the first meeting as were cited as regular members for GAZE. Political action threatened the safety of queer people involved in the GSU, but despite the homophobia present in the UA community, these early members judged it worthwhile to endanger themselves in pursuit of a safer future. Though Jones’s friends may have made up the bulk of the GSU’s original members, queer students across campus responded to the possibility of advocating for their rights. By branding itself as political from the start, the GSU attracted passionate students who stuck with the club through the years and inspired new members to join.

**Gaining University Recognition**

Unlike GAZE, which received an SGA charter without “expected controversy,” the GSU faced obstacles to achieving recognition by the university. In large part, these obstacles stemmed from the university’s discomfort with queer students existing openly or with university approval. David Miller, the GSU’s first faculty adviser, said, “the university was reluctant to do it. But they had to find the right reasons to not do
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it,”^58 indicating that the university did not have legitimate reasons for barring the group’s existence—by this time, other such queer student groups existed across the country, from California to North Carolina. In addition, Miller revealed that when the university’s president announced that the group would receive recognition, the president said “the fourth amendment is alive and well on ... campus.”^59 As the fourth amendment references a citizen’s right to reasonable privacy, specifically to be “secure in their persons [and] houses,” these words reflect the contemporary belief that homosexuality involved only sex and private acts. The GSU formed to change this kind of thinking which defined queerness as an activity rather than an identity. Given the difference in motivation between GAZE and the GSU, it is unsurprising that the GSU experienced more difficulty pursuing a charter. GAZE’s leaders assured the administration that they had no express political purpose, but the opposite was true for the GSU. ^61

As part of the organization charter application, the SGA required the GSU to submit a roster of ten names to demonstrate that there was interest in and desire for the club. Despite their “gazillion people” at the organizational meeting, the group struggled to find students willing to be officially associated with the GSU’s advocacy efforts. Miller mentioned, as did Barrow, that most of the GSU members were not openly “out.” Miller referenced sorority members who were queer but might face consequences from their sororities if they came out openly. Miller also described the sense of risk for queer students and faculty, the latter unwilling to risk their positions and the former, who “didn’t think it was safe for them to come out.”^64 In the end, the GSU relied on “some straight allies who put their names on it,” who, like Miller, functioned as a layer of protection for the more endangered members of the club. Any association with queerness was risky for these students, so, like GAZE, they had to be cautious with who was recorded as active in the club for the members’ safety.

After finding ten members to list on the application, the GSU moved on to finding a permanent faculty advisor. An article printed in both The Crimson White and the Alabama Forum mentioned that, though the group had a provisional faculty sponsor, that person did not want their name printed and was working with students to find someone else. Eventually, Miller volunteered, inspired by the efforts of the students to organize and recognizing the lessened danger for him to act as sponsor, since he both had tenure and identified as straight. He sent out a memo to other faculty members, asking for extra sponsors as a show of support, explaining, “The president of the organization feels, and I agree, that as many faculty co-sponsor as possible would be a good idea.”^66 Such a show of faculty support would lend the GSU additional social legitimacy and encourage queer students to continue their efforts.

The memo also underscored the danger of alignment with the GSU, even for faculty, and therefore its importance. It read, “Nobody is asking for a commitment of

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^58 Miller, interview.
^59 Ibid.
^61 Ibid.
^62 “Gay Student Union Recognized by UA,” Alabama Forum, October 1983, 1 and 7.
^63 Ibid.
^64 Miller, interview.
^65 Ibid.
^67 Miller, interview.
^68 David Miller, Memo Sent to University of Alabama Faculty Requesting Gay Student Union Sponsorship, 1983, Miller-Stephens GLBTQ UA Student Organization Collection, The University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
time. It’s your good name we want to drag through the mud.” Ultimately, the group listed twenty-five faculty co-sponsors on its application for recognition; though such co-sponsors served little functional purpose, the stunt displayed support for the GSU and resistance against the SGA and the administration from a form of campus authority. Faculty members exist between the administration’s ultimate authority and the students, so their co-sponsorship provided some form of authority approval; this was not solely a student “rebellion,” but also support for a community of people being denied their right to exist in space they held partial ownership of.

Nonetheless, more obstacles lay ahead. Once the group found their ten members and twenty-five faculty sponsors, they again applied to the SGA committee which held the power to approve or deny their charter. After pushing the vote from the end of the spring semester to the following fall, as described in the Alabama Forum, the SGA “turned it down” again. Even as the group pushed through one obstacle to success, social factors worked to prevent their existence. Exasperated but determined, Jones took it upon himself to sue the university for discrimination.

Though it was unlikely that the university would ever be able to block the GSU from attaining official recognition, the process of initiating legal action—or at least, the threat of legal action—took several months. During that time, The Crimson White ran a variety of articles which documented the back-and-forth between the group’s efforts to legitimize their organization and the reactions of the student body. The fact that such a group was attempting to incorporate was significant to students. The research project “Tides of Hate at UA” examined patterns of public displays of hatred against the Gay Student Union, finding that “hate came in waves on campus,” especially when the group “pushed aggressively for more visibility, legitimacy, and larger institutional presence.” In particular, the project noted that several events experienced major responses from campus, among them the group’s creation. The audacity of queer students attempting to be visible in their meeting and community elicited a large, mostly critical response from campus, demonstrating the depth of homophobia at UA in the ‘80s and thus the importance of the GSU’s founding.

Because of the very public nature of the campus debates and the questionable legality of UA’s denial, Jones took care not to make it too obvious that he was the group’s leader. Richeson said he did not tell their family about it, and that they found out from a paper instead; in addition, Jones sued the university as “Jack Jones” rather than “Elliott,” using a shortened version of his middle name, “Jackson.” Though the university had no case, Jones, the group’s leader and organizer, still felt pressure to keep his identity secret. He listed his name on its roster and he was visibly their president, but he still felt the need, occasionally, to hide his identity as a queer man and defender of the queer community. This illustrates the constant tension in the group between the desire to increase their visibility and normalize queer life and the fear of repercussions against them.

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69 Ibid.
70 “[GSU] Recognized,” 1 and 7.
71 Ibid.
72 Richeson, interview.
73 “[GSU] Recognized,” 1 and 7.
74 Ibid.
75 Tides of Hate at UA, “Summary,” Queer History, The University of Alabama.
76 Ibid.
77 Richeson, interview.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
However, the GSU pushed on, determined to make change and recognizing that achieving university recognition would be a major win. Miller described the students’ original goals as stemming from them being “tired of taking shit . . . of being abused and discriminated against,” and their desire for “a safe place” as well as “a public presence.” In particular, the GSU wanted to define their presence as a community. Miller, remembering his response to a radio station interviewer’s question about “community standards,” summed up the purpose of fighting for recognition: “Who is the community? . . . Who has the right to say I’m the community and you’re not?” By forcing UA’s administration, student government, and the student body to recognize the GSU’s right to gather, its members claimed their right to be part of the college community and refused attempts to deny them the privileges of this community. Finally, in October 1983, the administration overturned the SGA’s decision, and the group was granted an official charter and recognition by the university.

VISIBILITY AND ADVOCACY

Educational Activities

The group set up a table at UA’s student organization fair, Get On Board Day (GOBD), for their first activity as an official organization. It featured a large banner, brightly colored and painted with the words, “Someone you love is gay,” and fourteen club members clustered around the booth to answer any questions about the group’s philosophy and activities. The banner, with its bold declaration that not only do queer people exist, but that they are far more common and closer to students than may be perceived, drew eyes to the booth, capitalizing on the past months’ controversy. Students were likely already aware of the GSU, given the back-and-forth in The Crimson White and the threatened lawsuit, so the banner clearly designated where the GSU could be found while also attracting students with no knowledge of it yet. Barrow emphasized the importance of Get On Board Days to being out and visible, saying that “we’d show up, just to be visible . . . even if there was somebody that thought they might be gay and they weren’t really ready to be out, that at least they could see us.” GOBD was a recruitment event, for sure, but the GSU also sought to utilize its publicity to the fullest by making a splash at its first official event. The act of being visible, of taking up public space without fear, reminded students that queer people existed on campus, reminded queer students they were not alone, and challenged the administration that sought to keep queer students quiet.

In addition to this, the group actively educated at GOBD in hopes of changing opinions. As mentioned before, members tended the table, ready to answer questions, and provided pamphlets discussing the “history and aims of the GSU, answered specific accusations of the group’s detractors,” and “various aspects of homosexuality.” One such pamphlet lays out clearly, in an easy-to-read font, the philosophy of the GSU: “We believe that all persons are created equal, and that discrimination of any form is unjust.” Though it does not list a year, its logo matches

80 Miller, interview.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
84 Barrow, interview.
one found on a GSU shirt from 1984, verifying the pamphlet’s association with the original iteration of the GSU. Such pamphlets made it easy to disseminate the GSU’s official position, even to students unwilling to talk to GSU members. This is indicative of the continuous focus on changing minds about who “gay people” were and what they were like.

Not long after GOBD, the GSU began planning “Speaker’s Bureau” events. Barrow and the one-year anniversary article for the GSU in the *Alabama Forum* reflect on the events as personal, educational, and largely positive opportunities for queer students to interact with straight students in an extremely visible way. Barrow describes the bureau, which she participated in, as about four to five students who presented at classes and organization meetings and “answered questions we probably had no business answering.” She said they often received questions ranging from intensely personal—“What was it like to come out, how did you know?”—to broad political questions like “gay positions on things in the world.” Students also asked what GSU members’ families felt about their being out, and Barrow said of this interest in their families and the process of “coming out,” that “a lot of people who were okay with us being closeted were not okay with us being out, and they would ask us why, you know, why would you come out?”

These experiences were an effective way to combat prejudice and ignorance about queer students and what it meant to be queer. Though Barrow and the other GSU members may not have been entirely accurate in answering question about “gay positions” on politics, their stories about what it was like to be gay and to come out, to deal with parents and family, placed a spotlight the humanity of queer people. Barrow highlighted this tension between what could be tacit acceptance of a difference in “sexual” behavior and what students or communities did not accept as a visible change in lifestyle. The difference in opinion as homosexuality exited private spaces also indicates the association made by most people between homosexuality and actual sex acts. By interacting in real time with students who thought this way, the GSU Speaker’s Bureau could offer alternate ways of explaining what homosexuality was and correct opinions or understandings caused by ignorance. Speakers had the opportunity to showcase queerness as part of their identity, rather than as an activity or sexual act.

Barrow also noted that “most of the time people were really trying to learn something,” and that “because we were students, and they were students, they felt that they could ask us stuff that they didn’t have any other way of getting the answer to.” Since a person’s sexuality may not immediately be obvious, most students, like Barrow’s sister, believed they had never met or did not know any queer people. Though they may have, the Speaker’s Bureau often acted as students’ first interaction with “out” queer students, and the visibility and personal nature of the event encouraged students critically consider what it would be like if their roles were swapped. Barrow felt “they really were trying to think, okay, if I were gay, how would I be in the world?” The effects of these Speaker’s Bureaus may be hard to quantify, but Barrow believes it helped. She said, “They would look at us and go, ‘oh,
well ... wait ... I know her, and she looks just like me.” These events heightened visibility in a more focused way; though they did not carry a giant, brightly painted banner with them from class to class, the personal stories that GSU members told impacted students’ and faculty members’ assessment of them and, by extension, of the club and the greater queer community.

The *Alabama Forum* article, “University of Alabama GSU Celebrates 1st Anniversary,” mentioned these events would occur “as many as three times a week” and spoke to a variety of groups, including “the fellowship group of a campus church, a graduate-level Home Economics class, and numerous psychology or nursing classes.” The author of the article characterized these events as “rewarding experiences due to the immediate and usually favorable feedback,” which tracks with Barrow’s memory of engaged and interested students. The article also praised the personal connections the events created as being just as valuable as the knowledge shared. Not only did the Speaker’s Bureau spotlight queer students, they provided opportunities “to present gay people as humans, not vastly different from straight counterparts, and certainly not different enough to warrant ... discrimination.”

Often, GSU members received approval from instructors, who “commended [their] eloquence and openness,” praise which was valuable as an indicator to students of faculty support for the GSU. Even “antagonistic listeners” noted the speakers’ “bravery” and “the normalcy of the gay students.” The article concluded by saying the bureau may have “succeeded in producing subtle changes which can lead to later changes in discriminatory laws and practices.” Both the article author and Barrow, forty years later, remembered these events with pride and positivity, indicating that they may well have had the effect desired. In addition, the bureau’s ability to speak to potentially hostile groups, such as the church fellowship group and the Home Economics class (which both emphasized traditional living), and its focus on the positive nature of these events demonstrate headway in changing the taboo nature of openly discussing queerness.

The GSU also maintained a small library, stocked with educational resources to help students better understand queerness, as well as books written by and about queer people. It even included whatever newsletters GSU members could get local, state, and national queer organizations to send to the group for free, addressing “AIDS research, local opinion of the UAGSU, the Metropolitan Community Church, and gay celebrities.” Called the Gay Resources Library, this was a perpetual space for learning about queer students and queerness in general. Barrow said it first operated out of a member’s apartment, but eventually took up semi-permanent residence in the communications building on campus (Reese Phifer Hall). The May 1984 edition of the *Alabama Forum* highlights this triumph—receiving space on campus—which “ha[d] long been one of [their] goals.” The office space, in the Department of Broadcast and Communications, “provide[d] a convenient place for meetings,” and allowed the group to have office hours, in addition to making the library more

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94 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Barrow, interview.
Their ability to have “a physical presence on campus” dedicated to education, to the GSU, and to queerness, was significant for the group’s ability to remain consistently visible over time. The existence of the library in an on-campus space suggested longevity and legitimacy and made both the library and the GSU more accessible for interested students.

In addition, Barrow remembered the experience of setting the library up quite fondly:

“There were three or four of us there one night, setting it up, making little boxes to put the periodicals in and stuff, and—and it was just fun, we felt like we were doing something. It felt like we were in on something ... important.”

Clearly, the students felt safe in the space they had for their library, and as one of few initiatives mentioned in the one-year anniversary article included in the March 1984 Alabama Forum, the library was very important to members and as a symbol of the GSU’s existence and permanence. Barrow emphasized the importance of having the space when she said, “I don’t know if a soul ever went there and checked out a book, or read a magazine, but to have that—to have that space ...” She cut herself off before concluding, but it is clear how important the existence of the library, and its permanence, legitimacy, and visibility as a space dedicated to the GSU, was to the group.

It is hard to divorce the GSU’s educational activities from their advocacy, as most of their official events were either overtly political or contained such undertones, stemming from the group’s inherently political motivations. The Gay Resources Library and the Speaker’s Bureau were featured in the GSU’s celebration of their first anniversary in the Alabama Forum, demonstrating the centrality of their importance to the group. It is also significant that even forty years later, these two events remained vital to Rachel Barrow’s memory of her time with the group. These activities, educational in regard to queer people and their lives and political in regard to “gay positions,” show the importance of politics and education in GSU’s club activities.

**Social Activities**

The GSU also planned social events, often in the form of parties. Barrow described the parties as “a fundraiser for the Gay Student Union ... [which] got lot of people who weren’t interested in organizing or politics or so forth to come and contribute that way.” Elsewhere, she mentioned they could have over a hundred attendees at the parties they threw, meaning that at about three to four dollars a person, the group could all at once significantly increase their visibility and personal interaction with students, give students positive associations with the group by providing a fun party, and earn money to fund the group’s more political acts. As Barrow pointed out, students who had no interest in political advocacy or the greater political purpose of the GSU would still attend the parties, increasing name and face recognition for the GSU and its individual members.

Another similar activity was the sale or distribution of GSU t-shirts to celebrate the group’s first anniversary. The Empowering Voices collection features a picture of such a shirt, with the GSU’s name and distinctive logo, the date, and the phrase “First Anniversary” printed on it. David Miller also mentioned an earlier t-
shirt they had, which featured “a picture of an empty closet with an opened door” that said “out and proud.”112 Most clubs sell t-shirts, so this was a good fundraiser for the group, but more significantly, it was a very public and personal way to draw attention to the group and its survival. A t-shirt also increases facial recognition and personalization; after all, a t-shirt must be worn by someone. In that way, groups or students who opposed the GSU, those who did not oppose it but were scared or embarrassed to join, and even those still ambivalent, saw how many and what kind of members the group boasted. Barrow emphasized the overall importance of the group’s continuance past its initial members.113 The t-shirts celebrated two major obstacles which the GSU overcame: the “out and proud” shirts honored the success of receiving university recognition, while the anniversary shirts lauded the group’s survival through a tumultuous first year. With the seven-month wait for official recognition and serious resistance in *The Crimson White*, it would have been much easier for the GSU to simply disband. Instead, it lived on, a feat which deserved to be broadcast to campus.

**Gender Equity**

In terms of membership, Barrow estimated that the group saw “thirty, forty, fifty people at meetings,”114 and more than a hundred at some parties, suggesting a strong regular membership. This membership was well-balanced regarding gender, roughly “50% women” according to Barrow.115 Though actual membership numbers were likely not that precise, Barrow seemed assured that the group did not face major issues with gender representation. The group was also “conscious” of this balance in both membership and leadership: “if the president was a female, we would try to make sure the vice president was a male,” and vice versa.116

Also supporting Barrow’s memory of a gender-conscious club is a hate letter written to female GSU President Natalie Maidden. Furthermore, an earlier letter, this time from the officers of the club to the attendees of the June 1983 Alabama Conference for Personal Rights, also indicates an equal balance between female and male club officers; they all signed the letter, listing a male president, a male treasurer, a female secretary, and a female vice president.

In this, the GSU was unlike the gay student unions of the 1970s; Michael Bronski mentioned in *A Queer History* the dominance of men, especially white men, in some forms of queer organizing. Having “grown up in a prefeminist world,” many GLF/GAA men discounted or excluded queer women.117 Though the GSU formed a decade after the height of the GLF/GAA, it truly managed a more equitable and fair gender balance, demonstrating the ability of the queer rights movement to learn and grow. Moreover, gender equity proved essential to the success of the GSU.

**Risk and Reaction**

The GSU has been characterized multiple times as a “quiet” organization. David Miller described it as such,118 Rachel Barrow said it was “under people’s radar,”119 and David van der Griff said that in his early years on campus it “[wasn’t] as

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112 Miller, interview.
113 Barrow, interview.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
118 Miller, interview.
119 Barrow, interview.
active.”\textsuperscript{120} Compared to recent, flashier examples of political demonstrations—the school walk-outs advocating for climate change or gun control legislation,\textsuperscript{121} the giant “Baby Trump” balloon used to protest the Trump presidency\textsuperscript{122}—the GSU’s efforts may seem unusually tame for advocacy. However, for their time and place, it managed to strike just enough balance between breaking the status quo and being guarded, drawing in queer students while starting gradual change among the larger student body and administration. Though “quiet,” these efforts were important advocacy activities that provided community for queer students and advocated for queer rights, while preventing more severe negative reactions from the community. Members of the GSU still faced discrimination, prejudice, and homophobia, but the effects of these were lessened by the group’s careful consideration of their activities and the tight-knit community.

In part, the GSU was limited in what it could do by the continuing air of homophobia in Alabama—both the school and the state. David van der Griff described multiple instances of harassment he or his partner experienced while at the school: a roommate of van der Griff’s, upon learning he was gay, immediately moved out, citing “religious differences,” and Steve, van der Griff’s later partner, had his tires slashed while parked in a dorm lot.\textsuperscript{123} Rachel Barrow mentioned a party thrown by the GSU at which a neighbor shot a gun into the air outside the party, attempting to scare them all—and, more concerning, the reluctance on the part of the police to punish such actions.\textsuperscript{124} Those from the Tuscaloosa community also did not approve, as indicated by a letter written in 1984 to president of the GSU, Natalie Maidden. It expressed the author’s belief that homosexuality was a sin and asked Maidden to “quit defying God,” by attempting to “legitimize homosexuality.”\textsuperscript{125} David Miller also received “threatening phone calls late at night from people who disapproved of the GSU.”\textsuperscript{126}

In addition, Miller speaks on the intense homophobia displayed by a group of radical conservative students, the Young Americans for Freedom, before and during the GSU’s existence. At a Get On Board Day, the YAF put up a sign that joked about the AIDS epidemic, writing “How does YAF spell relief? A-I-D-S.”\textsuperscript{127} The sign played on a Rolaids commercial to suggest that the death and suffering of queer people with AIDS was a goal or a wish of the YAF. Miller does say that the sign was quickly taken down, but the scene demonstrates the YAF’s cruel and concentrated opposition to the GSU.\textsuperscript{128} YAF also wrote in to \textit{The Crimson White} often arguing that the GSU should not receive university recognition nor exist.\textsuperscript{129} Though YAF was a radical group, the “Tides of Hate” research project notes that campus did not approve of the GSU either, as “upwards of 90% of the letters \textit{The Crimson White} published during the 1983-1984 school year that mentioned both the GSU and YAF criticize[d] both organizations.” Thus, the rest of the student body was barely more accepting. A quote

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] David van der Griff, interview by Blair Bunge, \textit{Queer History}, The University of Alabama, November 2019.
\item[123] Van der Griff, interview.
\item[124] Ibid.
\item[125] Letter from Lloyd C. Brannon to Natalie Maidden, September 10, 1983, The University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections, Box 3594-001, Folder 12-A.
\item[126] “Dr. David Miller,” \textit{Queer History}, The University of Alabama.
\item[127] Miller, interview.
\item[128] Ibid.
\item[129] Tides of Hate at UA, “Summary.”
\end{footnotes}
published in *The Crimson White* from this time demonstrates some of this homophobic sentiment in words:

“Homosexuality is a blatant form of mental illness at its optimum. It is truly inconceivable to think that such pitiful people are part of the human race. It goes to show you what a sick society we live in.”

This scathing letter to the editor demonstrates the worst of the sentiment regarding queer people in the ‘80s, and its publishing in *The Crimson White* shows the lack of taboo on such prejudice.

**Conclusion**

In such an atmosphere, with the added cultural stigma towards homophobia in the ‘80s, the GSU members likely could not afford to do much more than attempt to force the community to acknowledge queer people’s humanity—not an easy task. Members of the GSU actualized this goal by educating students, either directly through the Speaker’s Bureau, or indirectly by providing resources in the Gay Resources Library. Quiet as they may have been, these were important steps in the process of reducing negative views of queerness. David Miller perfectly describes the importance of the GSU’s quiet but consistent work:

“That’s a very gradual thing, it’s not like four quarters and somebody won. But they started doing that hard work and I’ve seen how it’s paid off. I’ve been back to the university since and I’ve seen the kind of progress that started with those students.”

The administration, at one point, asked that the group not run a celebratory ad in the *CW* for their first anniversary, something Miller protested against, specifically arguing that the group “has to be visible in order to sustain continuity over time.”

Though the students agreed not to run the ad in the *CW*, they did make the front page of the next edition of the *Alabama Forum*. They found ways to get around the worst of their obstacles on campus, at time seeming “quiet,” but still pursuing the kind of consistent visibility that characterizes effective political advocacy and, as Miller pointed out, that sustains student organizations through constant turnover.

Despite its obstacles, the GSU had a profound enough impact that it drew some students to the university. Van der Griff actually said in his interview that “part of the reason [he] chose to go to the University of Alabama was [he] knew they had an established gay student organization.”

Political advocacy concerns visibility, which determines how many people see and talk about a protest, as well as consistency, which builds a movement. The GSU had both, cared about both, and though it may be characterized as “quiet” by today’s standards, its work was important for starting the long process of changing community sentiment regarding queer people.

Unlike other groups, which formed solely for community and later died out, the students of the GSU in the ‘80s knew that community and advocacy could not be divorced. Their existence and openness were political statements, and instead of denying that, the GSU capitalized on it. The organization lives on today in the form of the student group Spectrum, and their work continues, as indicated by Dorothy McIntush’s experience. Queer people know that even in the Deep South, they are building on a legacy of defying discrimination to live truthfully and openly as queer people. The GSU, flawed as it was, is an important part of this history.

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130 Tides of Hate at UA, “Crimson White Quotes,” *Queer History*, the University of Alabama.
131 Miller, interview.
132 Ibid.
134 Van der Griff, interview.
OF COURSE SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS GAY

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