Panel Title: **Cultural Violence and Civilian Fatalities in the Syrian War**

Presentation #1: Sequencing the Microdynamics of Conflict with Spatial-Temporal Analysis

Authors: *Michelle D. Fabiani (University of New Haven, USA), Fiona Greenland (University of Virginia, USA), Gregory A. Wadsworth (University of New Haven, USA), Rachel Swanson (University of New Haven, USA)

*Presenter

Wartime cultural violence – the destruction of sites, monuments, and objects having ethnic, religious, and artistic significance – is generally thought to be related to civilian casualties, but the theory and evidence on the issue are unclear. Sociologists have tended to study the issue as a matter of humanitarian violations, principally through the framework of genocide, while criminologists have not yet examined this issue. Yet, both the international destruction of cultural heritage and targeted civilian violence are important microdynamics of a conflict that may violate international law. Understanding the relationship between these two – if indeed there is one – is essential for any legal accountability in the aftermath of the conflict.

To that end, we take an empirical approach to examining the sequencing of cultural violence and civilian fatalities. Specifically, we present the first formal test of the so-called "prelude hypothesis," which states that deliberate cultural destruction tends to precede targeted killings of civilians. We use a novel spatiotemporal dataset combining cultural heritage damage and destruction with incidents of conflict with civilian fatalities. The cultural heritage data are compiled using open-source investigative techniques based on the American Schools for Oriental Research Cultural Heritage Initiative (ASOR-CHI) reports as well as supplemental validation. Data on civilian fatalities comes from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Both sources were synthesized and reconciled to provide geolocated incident-level data.

Our analysis tests the Prelude hypothesis across multiple specifications, moving from a broad understanding to specific spatio-temporal relationships. Through this holistic approach we are able to explore with more nuance the boundaries of the hypothesis. Our results speak to the implications of such causal hypotheses for legal accountability and more generally on the relationship between cultural destruction and mass violence. The presentation will focus on both the methodological approach and the implications of the findings for practitioners and scholars.

Presentation #2: Towards a Spatiotemporal Understanding of Cultural and Civilian Violence: A Replication of Braithwaite and Johnson (2015)

Author: *Gregory Wadsworth (University of New Haven, USA), Michelle D. Fabiani (University of New Haven, USA)

Understanding conflict necessitates examining the spatial and temporal clustering of conflict. Prior work by Braithwaite and Johnson (2015) provided a strong analysis of the clustering of Iraqi insurgency activity near densely populated areas and key infrastructure. The current study seeks to replicate Braithwaite and Johnson's analysis by examining instances of cultural heritage destruction and fatal conflict during the height of the Syrian Civil War. We hypothesize that acts of cultural heritage destruction and fatal conflict will be more likely near population centers, such as cities and camps for Internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as near road networks and protected cultural sites. Conflict and destruction are also expected to be more common in areas where both conflict and destruction were previously documented. Mirroring Braithwaite and Johnson's analytical scheme, logistic regressions with spatial and temporal buffers are utilized to examine patterns of cultural heritage destruction and fatal conflict in Syria. The findings speak to the relevance of spatiotemporal analysis of these phenomena.

Presentation #3: Creating A Comprehensive No Strike List for Cultural Heritage in Syria

Author: *Rachel Swanson (University of New Haven, USA), Michelle D. Fabiani (University of New Haven, USA)

Wartime cultural violence – the destruction of sites, monuments, and objects having ethnic, religious, and artistic significance – is generally thought to be related to civilian casualties, but the theory and evidence on the issue are unclear. Sociologists have tended to study the issue as a matter of humanitarian violations, principally through the framework of genocide, while criminologists have not yet examined this issue. Yet, both the international destruction of cultural heritage and targeted civilian violence are important microdynamics of a conflict that may violate international law. Understanding the relationship between these two – if indeed there is one – is essential for any legal accountability in the aftermath of the conflict.

An important element of such an analysis is accounting for relevant covariates. This portion of the analysis focuses on the creation of a comprehensive dataset for cultural heritage no-strike locations. These represent important locations that ideally should be safe in a conflict. Thus, if they overlap with locations that have been targeted may suggest an important and purposeful violation of international laws. Additionally, no strike lists for cultural heritage during this conflict were compiled in haste by scholars in archaeology and history but were not made available to the public. Here, we draw on five different no strike lists compiled at the beginning of the conflict that were themselves from open sources at the time (in 2014 – archaeological and historical surveys, guidebooks, websites, etc.). To create the comprehensive no strike list, we used geolocated sites and independently verified the contents of each list. Each dataset was compiled then reconciled to remove duplicates and standardized the coding classifications. The finished No Strike list resulted in the most comprehensive no-strike list available totaling 1,709 sites across 22 categories. This presentation reviews the process of creating this variable, with an emphasis on ensuring accuracy, validity, and reliability of the end result for the broader analysis.

Biographies:

Dr. Michelle D. Fabiani is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of New Haven. Her interdisciplinary research examines patterns of behavior in international and transnational crime with a focus on cultural heritage and cultural property crimes in conflict zones. Her work applies novel methodological approaches to data collection and analysis to produce robust and reliable findings for hard-to-reach crimes. She is the co-director of the Cultural Resilience Informatics and Analysis (CURIA) Lab.

Gregory A. Wadsworth is a doctoral candidate in Criminal Justice at the University of New Haven. His research has focused on correctional program evaluation, risk assessment validation, and the spatiotemporal distribution of conflict with a strong emphasis on research methods and qualitative analysis.

Rachel Swanson is a graduate student at the University of New Haven in Forensic Technology. She received her bachelor's in criminal justice, also at the University of New Haven. Her research currently focuses on synthesizing disparate data sources to create robust and reliable products for forensic and analytical purposes.