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Human Rights Attitudes

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Human Rights Attitudes

Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated, at least according to the UN (UN Population Fund 2005) and others. Human rights are supposed to reduce inequality while promoting societal membership. These are great reasons to work and spend resources on human rights. Every day, we see people across the world contribute to human rights expansion. Government and UN officials, NGO representatives, and advocates press forward in drafting, implementing, and monitoring human rights treaties. Resources are devoted to ensuring human rights are enforced. Experts and leaders develop objectives around human rights, like the Sustainable Development Goals, organizing international efforts over the coming years.

Yet we know very little about what people think about human rights. Over the course of a day, do human rights matter? How? What do people think about human rights? Do they hold human rights in high regard? Or do they think human rights are irrelevant? Or worse? Are some human rights more important than other rights? Are some rights essential; others not so much? Do people believe everyone possesses the same human rights?

This issue of *Societies Without Borders* benefits from ground-breaking studies of attitudes and opinions of human rights. McFarland demonstrates that support of human rights not only varies by region, but by type of right. What explains these differences? Focusing on gender and sexual rights, Asal, Murdie and Sommer find that advocacy of non-governmental organizations can encourage governments to make crucial contributions to human rights advancement to appease national and international advocacy. Experts have established measures of human rights, typically at the level of the state, yet we are only starting to investigate whether third-party ratings match sentiment among national residents. Clark finds that opinions of human rights dramatically vary within a country. Individuals' socio-economic statuses and political perspectives, Clark finds, shape these perspectives. Two contributions examine how people remain motivated to undertake human rights in their work. Vandeyar and Vandeyar use narrative inquiry to investigate how Nigerian immigrant academics of a South African university respond to an unwelcome reception from their colleagues. These academics reconstruct their professional identities by drawing on their resources, including intellect and religious beliefs, and resources found in the academe to reconstruct their professional identities. McPherson finds that human rights activism is key to sustenance of professional identities of Brazilian social workers and their willingness to engage in debates and conflict over social change.

This issue presents scholarship on forced immigration. Comparing the cases of Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sudan, Niazi and Hein find that political economies surrounding resources generate conflicts that lead to internal population displacement. This issue benefits from reviews of important books. Susan Pearce reviews *Silent Violence: Neoliberalism, Islamist Politics, and the AKP Years in Turkey*, which Simten Coşar and Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir edited. Pearce offers insights into this important book and how the AKP Party, which espouses pro-Islamic principles, became committed to western economic systems. Meltem Ince Yenilmez examines Larissa Fast's *Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism* According to Yenilmez, Fast's work identifies dangers and obstacles to doing humanitarian work while

suggesting changes to ensure safety and effectiveness of humanitarian workers. Katie Dingeman characterizes Tanya Golash-Boza's *Deported: Immigrant Policing, Disposable Labor, and Global Capitalism* as path breaking and important to scholarship. This sobering book explains the rise of deportation is part and parcel of a neoliberal capitalism that is shaking up the world. Together, Niazi and Hein's work and these outstanding books emphasize the values of social science scholarship to tackling social forces that violate everyone's human rights, yet often go unnoticed by elites and political leaders.

The vision of this issue's scholarship on human rights attitudes belongs to Dr. Russell Shekha. Dr. Shekha developed his idea of this issue as he furthered his own research on human rights attitudes and opinions. Employing a comparative perspective, Dr. Shekha asked if human rights truly are universal, do people across the world share similar opinions of human rights? *Societies Without Borders* is grateful to Dr. Shekha for his insights and enthusiasm for developing this research agenda.

This issue could not be published without the energy, thoughtfulness, and hard work of Lacey Caporale. A PhD student of Sociology, Lacey is key to the journal's progress. Without Lacey's foresight and commitment, this issue would not have overcome challenges that arose over its history. On behalf of *Societies Without Borders*, I sincerely thank Lacey.

Brian K. Gran
Editor

Reference

United Nations Population Fund. 2005. "Human Rights Principles." Accessed October 16, 2017: <http://www.unfpa.org/resources/human-rights-principles>.