A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of the representation of the Rohingya minority group in Myanmar.

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Abstract

This paper explores the representation of the Rohingya minority group in Rakhine State, Myanmar, through the methods of corpus-assisted discourse studies. The research is based on the NOW Corpus, curated and designed by Mark Davies at Brigham Young University. On the basis of concordance and collocation analysis, this paper draws several important conclusions, arguing that online media have in general depicted the Rohingya people as a homogenous, passive group of victims, while minimizing agency of the Myanmar Security Forces and Government of Myanmar, their persecutors. In addition, the data reveals that the representation of the Rohingya people focuses heavily on depicting them as Muslims and creating a sharp dichotomy between Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar. This in turn neglects opportunities for Buddhist and non-minority supporters of the Rohingya people to be heard. This suggests that more should be done to counteract the homogenous representation of the Rohingya people, and provide more well-balanced online journalism which accepts the divisiveness of creating such religious dichotomies.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies, Critical Discourse Analysis, Rohingya, Representation, Myanmar, Rakhine State, Religion, Peace, Conflict.
List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


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Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 12
Literature review .......................................................... 14
I. The Representation of Islam and Muslims in News Media .......... 14
II. The Representation of the Rohingya ................................ 18
III. Corpus Linguistics and Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies ...... 26
Methodology ............................................................... 33
Pilot Study ................................................................. 36
Data Collection ........................................................... 38
Results and Discussion I - Collocation Analysis ....................... 41
Results and Discussion II - Concordance Analysis .................... 48
Conclusions ............................................................... 59
Limitations ............................................................... 62
Recommendations ....................................................... 64
Appendix ................................................................. 67
Introduction

The following is a corpus-assisted discourse study on the representation of the Rohingya people, an ethnic and religious minority present in Rakhine state, Myanmar, among other areas throughout the world.

Rohingya people are recognized as suffering greatly at the hands of Myanmar’s government and the Myanmar security forces. This has been acknowledged recently in a flash report by the United Nations, who claim that crimes against humanity are taking place against the Rohingya people (UN, 2017).

The situation is indeed dire. As the Rohingya people feature more and more frequently in the news, among other studies aimed at reducing and solving this conflict, which is in parts ethnic, religious, and political, there is an increasing need to analyze how the Rohingya people are depicted by news media, and how this may contribute to the filter with which we view the events taking place. The primary research question that this paper intends to answer, or at least explore, is ‘how are the Rohingya people commonly represented in online news media?’ This is an extremely important question as there are multiple interpretations of the situation occurring in Myanmar. There is therefore, a great need for investigating how the Rohingya people and their struggles are framed in media discourse. It is this problem that the research intends to at least in part, contribute to deciphering.
Through analysis of collocations (primarily quantitative) and concordance analysis (primarily qualitative), this research posits that there is a tendency to disguise the agency of those committing atrocities against Rohingya people, namely the government of Myanmar. There is also a tendency for the media to represent the Rohingya people as a helpless, homogenous group of Muslims persecuted entirely by Buddhists. This characterization of the religious dimensions of the conflict in Rakhine state, which some are labelling genocide, is potentially harmful and reduces the opportunity for Buddhist and local support in Rakhine state. In addition, language used often implies that the Rohingya people are in dire need of rescuing, again, without explicitly stating who they are in need of rescuing from. There is some evidence that the problem is depicted in terms of requiring intervention from Western or more developed states, and that there is no recourse for grassroots or locally coordinated campaigns of solidarity and peacebuilding. There is therefore, a need for a renewed appeal to mainstream online media to report the situation in a manner that doesn’t politicize religion so explicitly, and reports more truthfully on the campaigns undertaken by Myanmar’s government aimed at removing and exterminating the Rohingya population at any cost.
Literature Review

Section I Islam and Muslims In Media Representation

In recent decades the representation of Islam globally has been a fertile area for research. A recent literature review (Ahmed and Mattes, 2016) examined a compendium of over 345 academic articles, dating from 2000 to 2015, and found that on the whole, especially in the Western media, Muslims are characterized primarily as ‘others’, ‘outsiders’, and ‘outside of society’ (Ahmed and Mattes, 2016, p13). In addition, the authors contend that globally there is an ‘ethno-political consensus’ that Muslim migrants are a threat to national cultures (Hussain as cited in Ahmed and Mattes, 2006, p13). While the authors suggest many causes for this ‘thematic pattern’ of the ‘other’, a major contributing event is the September 11th 2001 attacks, although numerous other global events have been identified as causative (Ahmed and Mattes, 2006, p13).

In addition to this meta-analysis, there have been a number of other framing studies which have also examined the representation of Muslims through specific events (Stromback et al., 2008; Galender 2012; Malcolm et al. 2010; Morey 2010). Again, from this research, Ahmed and Mattes contend that in many mainstream Western media sources (The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Washington Post), there has been a common, unfavorable theme of representing Muslims as ‘terrorists’, ‘extremists’, ‘fundamentalists’, ‘radicals’, and ‘fanatics’ (Ahmed and Mattes, 2006, p13).
However, this representational attitude and tendency to present Muslims and Islam in a negative light is not mirrored in academic settings. Ahmed and Mattes argue that in opposition to these negative representations, there is a ‘constant effort’ by critical scholars to oppose unfair, broad-strokes linguistic and non-linguistic representations of Muslims and Islam. However, they also contend that academic discourses may incur a risk of misrepresentation as well, as academics may unconsciously use pre-constructed media categories when studying Muslims and Islam (Ahmed and Mattes, 2006, p18). In summarizing this research, the authors argue that different paradigms and forms of research regarding Muslims and Islam must be explored.

Contained within this meta–analysis are many flagship studies which have explored the representation of Muslims and the Islamic faith in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Some of the most notable have argued that misrepresentation of Islam is a common occurrence in the UK’s national print media (Moore K, Mason P, Lewis J 2008; Gabrielatos C, Baker P 2008; Baker P 2010; Richardson JE 2004; Gabrielatos C, McEnery T 2012). Particularly, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2012) highlight that through a large scale diachronic corpus analysis of the word ‘Muslim’, several patterns emerge. Firstly, the ‘Muslim community’ and ‘Muslim world’ are depicted as ‘reasonably homogenous’ entities that are ‘quick to take offence’, while other media strategies also aim to legitimate negative stereotypes of Muslims by using columnists, which ‘distance themselves’ from the newspaper itself, effectively allowing for the production and duplication of more
extreme viewpoints. In summary, Gabrielatos and McEnery state that the media representations over the examined decade contribute to the idea that Muslims belong to a ‘distinct and separate imagined community’, both nationally and internationally, which therefore contributes to the discursive process of ‘othering’ as previously mentioned by Ahmed and Mattes (2006, p13).

In addition to the use of traditional newspapers, analysis of the linguistic representations of Islam and Muslims has recently moved to digital media Mohideen and Mohideen (2008) for example, conducted an analysis of the language of Islamophobia in internet articles. The authors findings give them reason to believe that there has been an ‘onslaught’ against Islam and Muslims from ‘both sides of the Atlantic’, which results in a common depiction of the faith and its followers as intolerant, terrorist, and opposed to modernity (2008, p75). This, in their view, amounts to a ‘linguistic form of domination and manipulation’, resulting in Islam becoming the ‘new “other”’ (Mohideen and Mohideen, 2008, p84). While this seems to be an emotionally charged conclusion, and for that reason, less than objective, it is clear that there is evidence of Islamophobic linguistic representations in many online media articles.

Finally, Iqbal, Iqbal and Danish (2014) conducted an analysis of attributive words used alongside the word ‘Muslim’ in the TIME Corpus. Their findings suggest that there is a ‘negative discourse’ underpinning the representation of Muslims in the TIME Corpus. However, this is not necessarily as convincing as the studies listed above. The
reasoning behind this is that in Leech’s criticism of Millar’s (2009) analysis of the TIME Corpus, Leech argues that the use of such an internally consistent corpus as the TIME Corpus may only display the ‘evolving language of TIME magazine’, and this does not justify any assumption that if the English of TIME magazine is changing in a certain direction, the same change will apply to English in general’ (Leech, 2009, p549). For that reason, while there may be a negative discursive representation of Muslims in the TIME Corpus, this is only representative of the mentions in TIME magazine, and not the ‘American world’.

In summarizing these studies, there seems to be a consensus in the academic world that representation of Muslims and Islam in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and other ‘Western’ countries tends to be situated in a negative discourse, i.e. it depicts Muslims as ‘terroristic’, ‘others’, and ‘aggressive’. There is also strong evidence of media using linguistic means to create discourses describing a homogenous, transnational Muslim community which harbors a number of disagreeable attributes that are incompatible with acceptable modern values. Muslims are also frequently represented as a threat to national cultures, untrustworthy, and extremist. There are few studies which disagree with these interpretations, although they offer differing degrees of intensity. It is not wholly improbable that those who are more emotionally involved with the subject will offer a stronger opinion about the cause and acceptability of these negative representations. On the other hand, those who are have less personal involvement with the subject are likely to take a more moderate, yet
still emphatic stance against these kinds of misrepresentations. This is to be expected, as all social research is biased in some form or another (Burr, 1995). While there is therefore a capacity for bias, the use of multiple approaches, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies in multiple domains suggests that this consensus, and negative media representation, on the whole, is based on robust data and therefore unlikely to be a misleading conclusion. There is then, significant reason to accept the hypothesis that Muslims are situated within a negative discursive framework in both print and online media.

The following section of the literature review will narrow in on studies that have represented the Rohingya people or discussed the Rohingya people, as a religious and ethnic minority group in Myanmar.

Literature Review Section II
Representation of Rohingya Identity

The Pew Research Centre, a nonpartisan ‘fact tank’, funded through a charitable trust, offers several pieces of crucial information regarding the Muslim faith worldwide. In light of the recent presidential executive order under President Donald Trump (USA) to bar immigration from seven Muslim majority countries, which has widely been labelled as a ‘Muslim ban’, Pew has re-released data estimates on the regional distribution of Muslims around the world (Pew, 2017).

As of 2010, Pew’s estimates suggest that there are in excess of 1.6 billion Muslims around the world, present on every habitable conti-
nent. The largest community of Muslims globally is in the Asia-Pacific region, numbering close to 1 billion. Although Muslims are united as one by the ‘Ummah’, there is significant diversity in this sense of unity (Harvard Divinity School, 2017), and this is a far cry from the media representations of the homogenous ‘Muslim world’ as discussed by Gabrielatos and McEnery (2012). Consequently, Muslims form an extremely diverse community of ethnicities, backgrounds, languages, cultural practices and traditions.

The Rohingya are one such example of an indigenous minority Muslim group in Arakan (Rakhine) State, Myanmar (Burma) (Mazhar and Goraya, 2016, p30). The Rohingya people account for approximately 1% of the Myanmar state population and 4% of the population in Rakhine State. However, the Rohingya account for up to 45% of the Muslim population in the country as a whole (Habibollahi as cited in Mazhar and Goraya, 2016, p30). The Rohingya have been recognized by some as an indigenous Muslim ethnic group since Myanmar’s independence in 1948. However, in 1982 the enactment of the Citizenship Act (Afzal, 2016, p89) has effectively rendered them ‘stateless’, in other words belonging to no nation state and without the benefits afforded by citizenship to a sovereign state. Myanmar’s government has, by most accounts, refused to offer members of the Rohingya ethnic group citizenship in Myanmar, despite their historical basis for receiving such citizenship. Afzal points out that the ensuing crisis has been framed in multiple ways, including but not limited to ‘a refugee crisis, anti-Muslim racism, ethnic minority issues’ and more (2016, p89).
However, defining ‘Rohingya’ identity is not as straightforward as it seems. One of the key authors in this field, Leider, argues that despite the popularity of the term ‘Rohingya’, there is no single description which is agreed upon, as to who the term denotes or what identity the people refer to when they use it (Leider, 2012, p248). The ‘Rohingya’ identity, in Leider’s view, is fluid and both Buddhists and Muslims struggle to ‘anchor a particular Muslim ethnic identity in Rakhine’s past’ (Leider, 2012, p248). Leider states that at a ‘superficial level, the Rohingya identity is uncontroversial, obvious, and easy to defend, but at second sight, it is just as easy to contest because it is diffuse and historically opaque (Leider, 2012, p248). As a result, ‘editorialists around the world have taken an easy approach to a complicated issue, and the approach by which ‘Rohingya’ are described is ‘not admissible in the national context of Myanmar, where issues like ethnicity, history and cultural identity are key ingredients of legitimacy’ (Leider, 2012, p249).

Leider also states that Buddhist Rakhine authors’ viewpoints are not always that of the population at large, but rather that ‘Muslims should be Muslims, but not pretend to be Rohingya’ (2012, p249). In other words, many Buddhist authors in Rakhine state see ‘Rohingya’ as a false identity which conflates ‘Muslim’ and ‘Rohingya’. This is a key area of conflict, as many Muslims hold the belief that they have existed in Rakhine state for many generations, but this claim has been contested by the Buddhist majority and government of Myanmar (Leider, 2012, p207).
Outside of Myanmar and Rakhine state, Leider argues that the public sentiment has largely been pro-Muslim, and the ‘communal conflict’ has been set in terms of xenophobia, Muslim victimhood and ‘dys-functional state organs’ which have fundamentally violated, and continue to violate, human rights (p209, 2012).

In summary, Leider’s argument is that the number of Muslim victims has greatly outweighed the number of Buddhist victims, and this has led to the common view that violence has been xenophobic and religiously and ethnically driven, but the international show of solidarity and sympathy for the Rohingya has led to limited discussion on Rohingya identity and history (Leider, 2012, p209). In other words, ‘shows of solidarity with Muslim misery have had nothing to do with the discourse of the Rohingya about themselves’ and a discourse of ‘Rohingya identity’ has been ‘inadvertently acknowledged as true in the sense of political rightfulness’ (2012, p209). This has led to a ‘one-sidedness’ that has limited the prospects of discussion on community formation and increased tolerance, in Leider’s view, and causes anyone who disputes the general ethno-religious category of ‘Rohingya’ to be accused of being a ‘Rakhine chauvinist’ (2012, p209).

However, while the identity of what it means to be ‘Rohingya’ may be contested by scholars, the suffering experienced by people in Rakhine is hard to dispel. Ullah points out that there are 50 million refugees
worldwide, and the third highest refugee-generating country in South-east Asia is Myanmar. For that reason, contested identity or not, ‘by any reckoning’, the Rohingyas are ‘one of the most vulnerable populations in the world (Ullah, 2016, p287). Ullah also argues that aside from historical precedence, there are legitimate legislative records that state the Rohingya should be entitled to claim citizenship in Myanmar. Ullah points out that in 1946, General Aung San guaranteed rights and privileges to the Rohingya (Zaw in Ullah, 2016, p287). However, they have never been granted citizenship, and this has resulted in restrictions on their freedom of movement, as well as discriminatory access to education, forced labor, and the confiscation of owned property without reason (Ullah, 2016, p287).

This has been reiterated by the United Nations, who released a report in February 2017 highlighting new abuses by the government and stating that widespread human rights violated are effectively an indication of crimes against humanity (UN, 2017). The UN indicates that murder, gang-rape, sexual violence, burning of houses, schools, markets, mosques, and the destruction of food sources are all likely taking place in Rakhine state against Rohingya populations. Discriminatory shooting, beating, and raping have been reported along with ethnic and religious slurs. The perpetrators of these acts are the Myanmar Security Forces (UN, 2017). These acts, according to the UN, have increased since the 9th October 2017, and the Human Rights Branch of the UN (OHCHR) have also stated that the Government of Myanmar have consistently failed to grant the organization access to areas of Rakhine state where violence is most prevalent. Estimates of almost
66,000 Rohingya have fled from the area since 9 October (UN, 2017). This has in kind, led to further abuse, particularly for women, who are extorted, detained, raped and abused by border guards and pirates alike (Ullah, 2016, p290). Other authors have argued that as stateless ethno-religious minorities, Rohingya women are vulnerable to an extremely wide range of sexual violence (Kojima in Ullah, 2016, p 290).

Ullah argues that Rohingya peoples’ citizenship, or failure to obtain citizenship, is based in the mind-set of the government of Myanmar, and their ultimate goal of establishing a mono-religious, nationalist ideology – ethnic cleansing is one such way of achieving this objectives (Ullah, 2016, p287). Religion also plays a vitally important role in the current situation in Rakhine state and the persecution of the Rohingya. Buddhist monks have throughout Myanmar’s independence had ‘significant political power’, and as a result, during the pre-colonial period, Ullah contends that the relationship between Buddhism and the state was the most dominant public relationship in society (2016, p287).

With the goal of establishing a mono-religious, nationalist ideology, it is possible to see the religious influences that are leading to the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Svensson writes that ‘religion sometimes lends itself as a tool for political, economic, or ethnic mobilization of the faithful’, and that once religion has been utilized, politicized, and manipulated, this instrument can decrease the chances of settling an armed conflict peacefully’ (Svensson, 2012, p3). It seems from the available information through the UN, scholars, and main-
stream media that Myanmar, as a Buddhist majority country, has through official and non-official means, helped construct a polarized set of religious identities in the nation of Myanmar. The monkhood has been instrumental in perpetuating this ‘othering’ and has grown since 2001, when a senior monk, Wirathu, (the Burmese Bin Laden), began preaching an ever-more anti-Muslim message (Coclanis, 2017, p29). Coclanis argues that this is akin to religious terrorism, as the ‘Buddhist Bamar-controlled government - is ironhanded’ (Coclanis, 2017, p29) in attacking Muslims, and high-profile monks deliver anti-Muslim messages. Grassroots movements, including the 969 movement, an anti-Muslim, pro-Buddhist movement, have also gained prominence in Myanmar.

Given the above, it seems that the campaign of violence against the Rohingya people is part of a broader scheme of religious nationalism, and an attempt to ‘link religion and the nation state’ (Juegensmeyer, 1993, p40). While talking about two-sided conflicts, Svennson notes that this leaves less room for compromise due to the underlying governing ideologies of the cause of violence, and this is applicable to halting the spread of ethno-religious violence against Rohingya. It is also clear that the situation in Myanmar is one of religion playing the role of an identity marker. Svennson defines this as the situation in which parties in a conflict (or in this case, one-sided conflict) have different religious identities.

Coclanis argues that while some scholars maintain that many ‘Rohingya’ are in fact illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, this is of little
consequence, as large, indigenous communities that identify as Rohingya Muslims remain. Still, this is not of pivotal importance. What is important, in Coclanis’ view, is that large cross-sections of Myanmar’s population support ‘actions’ against Muslims in Rakhine (Coclanis, 2017, p32). It is likely that this is fueled by the creation of polarized ethnoreligious identities and the desire of the government to create a monoreligious state.

Coclanis also discusses a reason that the conflict is of particular interest to the media and public at large, namely, due to ‘news emanating from far-off Burma about "Buddhist terrorism”’, which is unique and different as it ‘cuts so deeply against the stereotype of Buddhists as peaceful, tolerant, and serene’ (Coclanis, 2017, p32). This, Coclanis believes ‘seems puzzling because it cuts so deeply against the stereotype of a peaceful, tolerant, and serene’ (Coclanis, 2017,p32). As we have seen in the first section of the literature review, there is a consensus that commonly Muslims are described as aggressors, terrorists, and otherwise in the role of inciting violence, rather than suffering from it.

This section of the literature review has discussed the current academic viewpoints on the Rohingya crisis in Rakhine State, Myanmar. An analysis of the literature reveals that while it is likely that Rohingya identity is not in actuality as clear cut as often portrayed, and there are difficulties in the use of the term ‘Rohingya’ as a homogenous whole,
there is undeniably horrific abuses of human rights undertaken by Myanmar’s government and National Security Forces, and these are directed specifically at Muslim and minority ethnic groups. There is also a gap in the literature for studies which analyses the way in which the media represent the Rohingya and the discourses surrounding this crisis, particularly with the renewed tensions and reported cases of murder, rape, arson, and abuse that has been highlighted by the United Nations in 2017 (UN, 2017).

The following section will propose a potential framework for undertaking the study of Rohingya representation in the media, focusing on a combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis.

**Literature Review Section III**

**Corpus Linguistics and Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis**

Currently there are few studies that examine the media representation of the Rohingya. While there are many publications focusing on how to solve the crises currently, and possible interventions that may have worked in the past (Balazo 2015; Lewa, 2009; Ullah 2011; Kipgen 2013; Parnini 2013), as well as relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar (Parnini et al in Afzal, 2016, p93), there are few representational analyses. The gap between studies of ‘Muslim’ representation, and studies of the media representation of the Rohingya Muslims, is therefore quite large, and there is a need for analysis in this area.
One of the few studies that examines the representation of the Rohingya and ensuing Rohingya crisis in current media comes from Afzal (2016), who investigated elements of pathos and media framing in newspaper articles based on the Rohingya Crisis in 2015. Afzal claims that the Rohingya crisis has been framed in different ways, as ‘a refugee crisis, citizenship war, political battle of survival, xenophobia, islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism, an issue of ethnic minority, genocide’ and more. Afzal suggests that media framing is significant as it serves as an alternative to objectivity (Afzal, 2016, p90). Framing theories suggest that news coverage brings changes in public opinions, and promotes particular definitions and explanations of political issues (Shah et al. in Afzal, 2016, p90). This can in turn influence decision making (Afzal, 2016, p91).

Afzal’s findings suggest that mainstream newspapers in Pakistan, Britain, and the USA have been significant in framing the Rohingya crisis, criticizing the government of Myanmar, and have succeeded in convincing readers to show sympathy for the Rohingya people, as well as highlighting the crises on an international level (Afzal, 2016, p96). This is therefore an important study from a neuro-cognitive perspective. However, it does not fully address the question of ‘who are the Rohingya?’ or more importantly, who are the Rohingya according to the majority of media? For that reason, there is a gap in the literature for a piece of research which investigates how the Rohingya are represented, how they are depicted by the media, and how that repre-
sentation may affect our interpretation of such events, particularly in our perception of religious conflict and religious issues.

Brooten et al. (2015) have produced possibly the only other investigation of the Rohingya crisis and its representation, with primary analysis of pages on the social media site Facebook. Interestingly, their take on the ongoing Rohingya crisis differs from Afzal. Where Afzal suggests that the generation of sympathy and highlighting of the crisis on an international level is a positive and effective tool, Brooten et al. utilize a ‘politics of immediation’ framework and suggest that commonly, newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post adopt a different framing of the Rohingya crisis, one which reinforces the ‘paternalistic, hegemonic role’ of the United States (2015, p731). The study of the Rohingya Community Facebook page, in the authors’ views, suggests that change is called for by the Rohingya in the form of a ‘bottom-up, global grassroots solidarity’ campaign, rather than a ‘corporate politics of immediation’, which provides an ‘elite, top-down perspective’ of ‘common humanity within a corporate framework’ (Brooten et al., 2015, p733). The authors argue that this kind of framework, represented in American media, offers a ‘very specific savior’ to the violence that the Rohingya experience, namely, the ‘father figure of the US and of foreign investment and its resultant economic growth’, thus, neoliberalist policies and paternalistic intervention on behalf of the United States represent the ultimate ‘savior figure’ for the Muslim minority Rohingya from the politico-religious government of Myanmar (Brooten et al., 2015, p733). An investigation of exactly how the worldwide media as a whole depicts the Roh-
ingya may then either add weight to, or detract from this interpretation.

From the above, it is clear that there are conflicting views on the media representation of the Rohingya people. Consequently, there is a need for an investigation into the representation of the Rohingya, how their situation is framed, and the discourse that the media create surrounding the current issues in Rakhine state. It is also worth noting how the representation of this Muslim group in multinational newspaper text contrasts with the conventional representation of Muslims in the press, as previously discussed, which is often negative and suggests aggression, ‘otherness’, and terroristic activities.

A suitable methodology for this project is that which allows for the large scale analysis of text, combined with more detailed close analysis of meaning. For this reason, a corpus linguistics approach combined with elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is suitable.

In terms of methodological approach, a similar project was undertaken in 2013 by Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery (2013). Their publication combined corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to interpret and analyses representations of the word ‘Muslim’ in a corpus, that is to say a collection of texts, published in the years 1998 – 2009. The authors contend that generally, the representation of Islam in Western news media has been negatively biased, referencing Awass (1996) and Dunn (2001), the former of which found that Islam was commonly linked to fundamentalism and terrorism, while the latter depicting
Muslims as ‘fanatic, intolerant, fundamentalist, misogynist and alien’ an overwhelmingly large percentage of the time, in 75% of cases (Dunn, 2001, p296).

Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery’s results broadly showed that the word ‘Muslim’ was most commonly used in its adjectival form in the corpus, and only 2% of the noun collocates accounted for over 50% of all nouns being modified, suggesting an especially strong relationship between the two (Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013, p1). This means that ‘Muslim’ was used as an adjective most commonly with words relating to conflict and violence, such as extremist, fanatic, soldier, and terrorist (Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013, p1). This study also found, as discussed earlier, that there is a strong preference for describing the ‘Muslim world’, regardless of the fact that Muslims inhabit every continent and come from vastly different cultures and lifestyles. The authors highlight that this is used as a strategy to group large numbers of Muslims together (Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013, p1). Overall, Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery found that in their analysis, both quantitatively and qualitatively, Muslims were cast in a negative light, which contributes towards a process of ‘othering’ as discussed by other authors in the field.

Corpus linguistics is a means for the empirical analysis of language (O’Keefe and McCarthy, 2010, pXXVII), and has been adopted as a means of looking at language patterns of large data sets. It’s been documented that discourse analysis benefits from the use of Corpus Linguistics (O’Keefe and McCarthy, 2010, pXXVII XXVII). Critical
Discourse Analysis, on the other hand, attempts to expose the ideologies which inform and underlie texts, as well as investigating media texts which focus on language choices which may be ideologically motivated (O’Keefe and McCarthy, 2010, pXXVII). There is said to be a synergy in the combination of these two approaches, and O’Keefe and McCarthy state that the exploitation of CL makes the case for CDA stronger by providing associated empirical evidence.

Baker et al. (2008) highlight that despite CL and CDA being informed by ‘distinct theoretical frameworks’ (2008, p274), the two can combine to create a useful combination for analysis. CL methods are useful in combination with CDA methods as they provide a greater degree of objectivity (Baker et al., 2008, p277). In the RAS project, the authors investigated the frequency of collocates, the node, and the collocation (Baker et al., 2008, p278). This was then combined, or supplemented with the examination of concordances in co-text through critical discourse analysis methods (Baker, et al., 2008, p279). This is useful as statistical methods and collections of raw data in corpus linguistics often wholly ignores context, and has been criticised for doing so (Mautner and Widdowson in Baker et al., 2008, p279). In contrast, CDA provides a useful framework for problem-oriented social research, and therefore is suitable for the investigation of religious roles and representation in the arena of conflict. CDA can be used to analyse discursive and linguistic data as social practice which reflects and produces ideologies (Baker et al., 2008, p280). A further way in which this analysis of the production of ideologies benefits from corpus linguistics is the inclusion of analysis of lexical patterns.
(Baker et al., 2008, p281). CDA has been highlighted as focusing primarily on grammatical features such as passivation and agency. For that reason CL can assist in quantifying ‘discoursal phenomena’ (Baker et al, 2008, p281).

For the above reasons, combining corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis is a fruitful methodological approach which combines both quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis of context, including political, historical, and cultural data contexts (Baker, 2008. p293). For this reason, analysis of the representation of the Rohingya in the current crisis in Myanmar through corpus linguistics combined with CDA is one of the most suitable methodological apparatus available.

That said, the form of CDA employed in this study is based on that of Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, which is broadly influenced by Fairclough’s textually oriented discourse analysis, which involves the ‘linguistic description of the language text, interpretation of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text, and explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes’ (Fairclough in Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013, p1). In essence, this study, much like Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, does not follow ‘typical modes of CDA’ like transitivity analysis (Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013, p1) but is influenced by CDA approaches in analyzing the representation of social issues, by acknowledging that discursive and linguistic data is a social practice which both reflects and produces ideologies (Baker, 2008, p280). This comes under the heading of
‘corpus assisted discourse studies’, and is the chosen framework for this research project.

Methodology

Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

To investigate the representation of the Rohingya people using a corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis approach, the decision was made to use the Brigham Young University News On The Web (Hereafter: NOW) corpus. Mark Davies, at Brigham Young University, has pioneered several corpuses which are publicly accessible via a specialized website, including a corpus of Wikipedia articles, the Corpus of Contemporary English (COCA), the TIME Corpus, Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), and the corpus of Global Web-Based English.

This wide choice was then narrowed to two corpora: The TIME Corpus and the NOW Corpus. The TIME corpus was considered as it is especially internally consistent (Millar, 2006, p193), therefore providing less diffuse and more robust data. However, the NOW Corpus is more representative of a wide range of news on the web, and more representative of global journalism as a whole. This contrasts to the TIME Corpus, as Millar has received strong criticism for claiming the TIME Corpus to be representative of American journalism as a whole (Leech, 2009, p549). A further factor to consider however, was that the TIME Corpus has been successfully used in many studies, including ones in representation of conflict, for example Popp and Mendel-
son’s investigation of the Iraq war (Popp and Mendelson, 2010).

The NOW Corpus was eventually selected, despite few published re-
search articles having been successfully undertaken using the corpus,
on the following basis. Firstly, the NOW Corpus is one of the largest
corpora in existence, containing 4.2 billion words of data, and grow-
ing by 5-6 million words of data per day (Davies, 2017). As such, it is
updated on the fly, and therefore repeating searches will likely pro-
duce ‘fresh’ results. This means, effectively, that research undertaken
is likely to be extremely relevant and useful for studying ‘what is hap-
pening with language this week, not just 10 or 20 years ago’ (Davies,
2017).

In addition, investigating the representation of the Rohingya people is
best suited to a synchronic study that doesn’t solely focus on the peri-
ods that have constituted a crisis in the past, but the ongoing situation
as of early-mid 2017. This research study comes at a time when the
United Nations have published a new report, based on eyewitness tes-
timonies and satellite imagery analysis from independent sources indi-
cate that Myanmar security forces have ‘deliberately targeted the Roh-
ingya population’ and attacks including killings, torture, rape, and
other forms of sexual violence constitute the current crisis to be the
‘worst it’s ever been’ (UN, 2017, p43). Investigating how the media
are representing, and continuing to represent the Rohingya people in
light of this crisis, is therefore an important and time-sensitive under-
taking.
While this research study can be labelled as both quantitative in the analysis of collocate frequency, and qualitative in the CDA analysis of individual concordances, it is worth noting that there is a deliberate eschewal of statistical measures that are commonly found in social science research. White argues that although there is a perception that quantitative techniques provide more ‘rigor’, it is more important for rigor to apply techniques properly, especially as different techniques are appropriate to different settings (White, 2002, p512). While there is some element of quantitative techniques here, the addition of more complex modelling (for instance linear regression, tests of statistical significance and so forth) would not be productive in comparison to devoting more time to in-depth textual analysis. Although it may be argued that the use of CDA is more interpretational, a study in statistics on the strength of collocations in this instance would only provide extra, unnecessary corroboration to what is already apparent: some collocations are stronger than others, and this can be ascertained based on the strength of their appearance in the corpus and the frequency by which they appear.

To take advantage of the ‘synergy’ that White argues takes place between quantitative and qualitative techniques then, it is crucial to identify where and how they should apply effectively. In this case, concordance frequency and collection is an effective quantitative technique, but the expansion of this in statistics would be widely unnecessary, and again playing to the belief that ‘rigor’ is implied with a focus on quantitative analysis (White, 2002, p512).
Pilot Study

Once the NOW Corpus had been selected, the next step was undertaking a pilot study. Prior to beginning data collection, the strategy for investigating the Rohingya people’s representation had to be devised. Teijlingen and Hundley describe the term ‘pilot study’ as having two different definitions in social science research (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The first definition refers to feasibility studies, which are ‘small scale versions or trial runs, done in preparation for the major study’ (Polit et al. in Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The second version, on the other hand, is a ‘the pre-testing or ‘trying out’ of a particular research instrument’ (Baker in Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). This pilot study follows the second definition, as it involved coming to an understanding of the NOW Corpus, the parsing and labelling system used in the corpus, and the user interface.

After making the methodological decision to use ‘Rohingya’ as the node word, focus was given to exploring the collocations between the node and different word classes, including adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. The decision was made in this piece of research to focus primarily on the collocations between both pre and post-modifying adjectives in conjunction with the noun ‘Rohingya’, as adjectives often provide the description of the individual, rather than the actions they’ve taken or the manner in which they’ve been taken, as with verbs and adverbs. Rather, adjectives do a more immediate job of characterizing the subject in question. It was also decided to investigate other features of language later on through the use of corpus-
assisted discourse analysis of individual concordances, randomly sampled from the NOW Corpus.

Results from the pilot study indicated that when using other words aside from ‘Rohingya’ as the node, for instance ‘Myanmar’, ‘Minority’, or ‘Muslim’, the results returned were too broad to be considered suitable for a study on Rohingya representation. This is attributable to the size and lack of specificity in the NOW Corpus, and is thus a limitation of its use as a research tool.

The pilot study also indicated that firstly, while the NOW Corpus’s size can make it difficult to work with, there is significant data regarding the Rohingya people to make a project investigating their representation possible to conduct, with adjectives likely to be the most fruitful word class to analyses.

The pilot study also allowed for experimentation with spans of collocation. The definition for collocations in this project is based on that of Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013, p279), as the above-chance frequent co-occurrence of two words within a pre-determined span, usually five words on either side of the investigation. However, the pilot study indicated that for reasons of scope and relevance, the most productive choice was 2 words either side of the node. This ensured that adjectives were not likely to be modifying anything other than the node, as was found with spans of 3 or more.

The pilot study, therefore, focused the research in the following ways:
Firstly, it enabled recognition that the study was possible and productive, despite some reservations to do with the size of the corpus. Secondly, it provided the opportunity to select the most relevant word classes and spans for identifying the most robust avenue for exploring the representation of the Rohingya people.

**Data Collection**

Following the pilot study, data collection began. Searches were conducted using the term ‘Rohingya’. Data collection began on the 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2017. No part-of-speech marker was used for the node, meaning that it could also have returned uses of ‘Rohingya’ as an adjective, although this was not observed. The part-of-speech marker ‘\_j\*’ was used to return adjectives only for the collocates, and the span was set to within two words of the node, ensuring that pre-modifying and post-modifying adjectives in this range were returned by the search function.

The corpus software then sorted the list by strength of collocation, returning a number of adjective collocates within the span at varying frequencies from 959 occurrences to below 3 occurrences. Due to constraints on time and project scope, those collocates with a frequency below 10 in the NOW Corpus were discarded, while those with a frequency of above 10 were selected for analysis and evaluation. These were then tabulated and stored in a separate data file. The top 10 collocates in terms of frequency, were selected to form the basis of the discourse analysis section of the research.
After identifying the ten most frequent adjective collocates with the node ‘Rohingya’, the concordance lines were collected at a randomly selected interval. In each category, the tenth concordance line was retrieved and deposited in a separate text file for discursive analysis. Again, this is based on common protocol in corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis as for the discourse analysis portion of the research, information on statistical significance, the collocation span, or any frequency thresholds, is not usually provided (Piper, 2000; Sotillo and Wang-Gempp, 2004 in Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013, p1).

A total of 50 concordance lines were collected and stored for analysis, with five concordances relating to each of the top ten collocates for the node ‘Rohingya’. These are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten Most Common Collocates for ‘Rohingya’ in the NOW Corpus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stateless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desperate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to limit the possibility of error, each search and collection process was conducted twice and cross checked in separate files. However, due to the individual nature of this research project, and the large quantities of numerical data, it is still possible that mistakes in data collection have occurred, although it is unlikely.

To supplement the analysis of corpus data, specific concordance lines were collected for further by ‘examining concordance lines and attempting to uncover common patterns or prosodies associated with them’ (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013, p1).

Results and Discussion Section 1 – Collocations

An initial search for collocates of ‘Rohingya’ within a span of two adjectives either side of the node returned a total of 2,783 collocates ordered by the relative strength of the collocational relationship (i.e. the frequency with which the words co-occur). Those collocates with a frequency occurrence in the NOW corpus of under 10 were discarded, leaving a remainder of 39 adjectives which collocate strongly with the node ‘Rohingya’ and occur more than 10 times in the corpus.

These adjectives were then tabulated and categorized based on their connotations. Five categories were created to best describe the connotations and common patterns of the adjectives noted. The first category is those which strongly denote religious belief or affiliation – the strongest examples being ‘Muslim’ and ‘Buddhist’. The second category refers to adjectives that describe citizenship, statehood, or ethnic-
ity. Examples of this category include ‘undocumented’, ‘registered’, ‘stateless’, ‘Bangladeshi’, ‘national’, ‘Western’, ‘national’, and ‘illegal’. While ‘illegal’ may sound as though it doesn’t directly correlate to statehood, on close analysis of the concordance lines, this usage referred mainly to the citizenship status of the Rohingya / Rakhine Muslim groups in Myanmar, and not to anything else. However, the possibility of ‘illegal’ describing something other than the node ‘Rohingya’, or describing something other than citizenship, and being overlooked by the researcher, is a limitation which is discussed in further detail in the ‘limitations’ section below.

The third category is perhaps the most ideologically important in understanding the representation of the Rohingya in the NOW Corpus, and in online journalistic representation in general. These adjectives describe persecution or mistreatment and often pre-modify the node ‘Rohingya’. Examples of this category include ‘oppressed’, ‘impoverished’, ‘long-persecuted’, ‘fleeing’, and ‘desperate’.

The fourth category is oppositional in connotation to the third, and is reserved for adjectives describing the node ‘Rohingya’ as aggressive, violent, or possessing aggressive qualities. While again, it is possible that these adjectives in some cases do not only refer to the node ‘Rohingya’, the short span of 2 words either side of the node reduces this likelihood, and is confirmed with the random sampling of concordances in the discourse analysis. Examples of this category of adjectives include ‘armed’, ‘insurgent’, ‘militant’, and ‘suspected’. Although ‘suspected’ is perhaps not as strongly connotative as the other
examples, the decision to include it in this category was made as on inspection, it occurred commonly alongside other adjectives describing aggression, such as ‘suspected insurgents’. This will be discussed in detail further on.

The final category was that of ‘other adjectives’, adjectives which did not belong to the four categories listed above and did not have any strong connotations or clear attributive meaning. Examples from this category include ‘Young’, ‘Northern’, ‘Estimated’, ‘Other’, and ‘International’. While arguably ‘international’, ‘local’, and ‘northern’ could have potentially been included in the second category, they do not explicitly enough refer to a particular, specific state, status, or ethnicity, and so were deemed more suitable for the ‘other’ category. ‘Western’ on the other hand, refers to an ideological conception of a group of specific countries, i.e. Northern Europe, North America, and Australia.  
A table summarizing the categories and a pie chart displaying the results from this categorization is shown below.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of adjectives</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives describing religious belief or affiliation</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives describing citizenship, statehood, or ethnicity</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives describing persecution (passive)</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives describing aggression or aggressive characteristics</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other adjectives</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1
Categorisation of adjectives attributed to the node 'Rohingya'

- Adjectives describing religious belief or affiliation: 39%
- Adjectives describing citizenship, statehood, or ethnicity: 34%
- Adjectives describing persecution (passive): 11%
- Adjectives describing aggression or aggressive characteristics: 3%
- Other adjectives: 13%
As shown in Table 1, Figure 1, and Figure 2 above, the most common adjective that collocated with the node ‘Rohingya’ was ‘Muslim’. The exceptionally common use of ‘Muslim’ as a premodifying adjective for the node ‘Rohingya’ suggests the primary importance of describing Rohingya people by their religious faith.

From a discourse analysis point of view, it seems that when writing about the Rohingya people, the first and foremost important point of representation is their faith as Muslims. The explanation for this however, is complex and must be interpreted with caution. It is possible that this is due to an over-emphasized centrality of religion in the current situation in Myanmar, as opposed to the more confusing political-citizenship-ethno-religious picture painted by Leider (2012). It is also possible, but less likely, to interpret this as an effort to ‘over-correct’
the previously established negative representation of Muslims as a category of individuals who are naturally aggressive and violent (Ahmed and Mattes 2006; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013), by often depicting the Rohingya people as primarily Muslim victims. This is supported by Leider, who claims that the international media have ‘rhetorically encased the Muslims (in Rakhine state) in a status of overall victimhood’ (2012, p210).

The second category accounted for 34.4% of all adjectives used with the node ‘Rohingya’. An overall frequency of 839 was recorded, the most common being ‘stateless’. Again, ‘stateless’ appears to be a part of a larger discourse of victimhood, as does ‘undocumented’. However, interestingly the second most common adjective in the second category is ‘Bangladeshi’. The occurrence of ‘Bangladeshi’ is explicated along with concordance examples in the second part of the results and discussion section of this paper.

The third category, adjectives which explicitly describe the node as in a state of suffering, or being persecuted, accounted for a minority of cases, 13% of total collocates and with a frequency of 307. However, these adjectives could be said to the most emphatic and ideologically charged. Interestingly, the use of these adjectives often removes any agency, for instance ‘long persecuted’, or ‘unwanted’ imply both a persecutor and a wanter, but rarely state explicitly that Rohingya people are persecuted by the government of Myanmar and Myanmar security forces. This again, contributes to the representation of victims and embedded in a discourse of victimhood, without clearly identify-
The fourth category of adjectives attributes to the Rohingya characteristic of aggression and militancy. This category accounted for a very small percentage of adjectives in the corpus. Only three adjectives - ‘militant’, ‘armed’ and ‘insurgent’ comprise this category. These adjectives describe the Rohingya as aggressive and ready to fight. While it is difficult to interpret this result, it is possible that the low frequency is due to the cases of aggression from the government of Myanmar vastly outnumbering reports on militant activity, again, this could be seen as contributing to an overall depiction of the node ‘Rohingya’ as more often the victims of aggression than perpetrators. This jars with authors like Leider, who claims that ‘the Rohingyas are best defined as a ‘political and militant movement’ (2012, p208). This does however, fit with Leider’s contention that by depicting the Buddhist Rakhine people as perpetrators, who enjoy a position to ‘rule the action’ and ‘devastate their neighbors’, this division in its ‘black and white’ characterization of Buddhist and Muslim has could result in a denial of communication between Buddhists who wish to support and show solidarity to Rakhine Muslims (Leider, 2012, p210). Overall, the incidence of adjectives that describe the node Rohingya as insurgents, aggressors, and otherwise accounted for just 2.5% of the data collected.

The fifth category of ‘Other adjectives’ accounted for 11% of the total recorded, and included such adjectives as ‘estimated’ and ‘fellow’. However, while these may seem on first glance to be less ideological-
ly charged than other adjectives used to describe ‘Rohingya’, this may not be the case on closer inspection. ‘Estimated’ is ideologically revealing, and also could be said to have ties to the representation of Muslims as homogenous in Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013, p1). ‘Estimated’ is often used to pinpoint a number, and often in regards to those depicted as suffering or undergoing persecution. It seems important therefore, that ‘estimated’ often co-occurs with ‘Muslim’ and ‘Rohingya’. This adds a tone of uncertainty to exact numbers and distances the reader from the reality – that each person being persecuted is important. Again, the use of ‘estimated’ along with ‘Rohingya’ as a mass noun reinforces the internalization of a large, unquantifiable group of suffering victims, rather than a personalized attitude that one might expect would draw more sympathy from the reader. This contrasts with previous studies which state that the media has wholeheartedly sought to create empathy with the ‘Rohingya’.

Results and Discussion Section 2 - Concordance Analysis

The below is a discourse analysis and discussion of concordances randomly sampled at the 10th interval and in order of frequency of appearance, from highest to lowest.
Concordance Set 1 – ‘Muslim’

Concordances samples for the word ‘Muslim’ are often placed directly before ‘Rohingya’, and then contrasted with ‘Buddhist’ and ‘majority’. This seems to place religion at the forefront of the conflict being described, and also sets up a dichotomous, black-and-white scenario of one religious group versus another, and this creates a strong ‘Muslim versus Buddhist’ discourse which isn’t reflective of the complex array of factors affecting actions in Rakhine state. For example, take the following concordances:

Rakhine has long been home to simmering tensions between the Muslim ethnic Rohingya minority and the country’s Buddhist majority population.

Francis also appealed for prayers for members of Myanmar’s Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority, who face official and social discrimination in Buddhist-majority Myanmar

Under international pressure over alleged abuse against members of the country’s Muslim Rohingya minority

While religious affiliation is important here, it is of no greater centrality than ethnicity and statehood. Equally, as stated by Leider (2012), by setting up such a ‘Buddhist versus Muslim’ discourse excludes the possibility of non-Muslim sympathizers, or Buddhist sympathizers, from having their voice heard in public online media.

As a result, it is possible to put forward the argument that in several
cases, online media organizations are making a deliberate choice to overstate the centrality of religious affiliation in Rakhine state. While religion is certainly implicated in the conflict, this oversight of other contributing factors does little to offer a well-rounded view of the situation. Instead, readers may be exposed to a take on the events that promotes a strictly religious conflict.

**Concordance Set 2 – ‘Ethnic’**

‘Ethnic’, ‘Ethnic Rohingya’ and ‘Ethnic Minority’ all appear frequently in the NOW Corpus. ‘Ethnic’ in itself seems to fulfil a similar function to that of ‘Muslim’, as it is often used to pre-modify the noun ‘Rohingya’. In the field of discourse analysis, the use and description of groups as ‘ethnic minorities’ has been linked to a number of social cognitions, including lack of adjustment and tolerance, deviance of established norms, including crime, and competition for scarce resources (Van Dijk, 1991, p13). However, in this case the broader meaning in nearly all concordances samples offers sympathy for the ‘ethnic Rohingya’, in accordance with the findings of Afzal (2016) and call for action to be taken on their behalf, opposing Van Dijk’s common conception of ‘ethnic minorities’. The following concordances are examples of this:

Defending the rights of the ethnic Rohingya and not allow them to be killed or forced out of their homeland

Malaysia has offered humanitarian aid to help ease the suffering of Myanmar’s persecuted ethnic Rohingya
ASEAN's non-intervention is aggravating the plight of ethnic Rohingya Muslims suffering widespread abuse by the Burmese military in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

While many of these concordance samples do not confirm the ‘ethnic minority’ connotations that Van Dijk (1991) points out, it could be said that there is evidence that media representations of the Rohingya people reinforce a discourse of victimhood. This is particularly revealing when interpreted through the theoretical lens of Ashraf and Akinro (2015). Ashraf and Akinro argue that different news outlets construct the ‘problems that the Rohingya and Myanmar face’ differently (2015, p731). While some news outlets, like the NYT, construct a paternalistic, hegemonic role, other outlets focus on participatory development and social and political change. Specifically, in some outlets, Burmese people and people’s organizations are constructed as the primary saviors of the Rohingya people (Ashraf and Akinro, 2015, p731).

This second version of representation is not seen in the concordances listed above. There is no championing of local agencies as the ‘primary saviors’ of the Rohingya people who need support and assistance. Instead, the primary discourse is one of requiring rescuing from others. ‘Not allowing’ the Rohingya to be killed or forced from their homeland indicates an agency and choice on behalf of an unknown actor, presumably the ‘West’, to end the Rohingya people’s suffering as an act of mercy. The primary representation is of a group that are in need of external assistance, from Malaysia or other states, rather than promoting local people’s organizations.
Concordance Set 3 – ‘Stateless’

In this example, ‘stateless’ is often used as a pre-modifying adjective, and combined with ‘Rohingya’ as the central noun, rather than using ‘Rohingya’ as an adjective to modify a noun such as ‘people’. This has the effect of collectively depicting the individuals who are being denied citizenship, and to some extent ‘homogenizes’ the Rohingya people as a group. It is possible that this aligns the reader in a covert way (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p100), to create an image of a group of people caught between two different countries, or caught in a ‘no man’s land’ scenario, which is not an accurate representation of the events unfolding in Rakhine state. This again contributes to the discourse surrounding the Rohingya people as a homogenous group of Muslim victims.

The crackdown as the culmination of years of discrimination and abuse suffered by the stateless Rohingya.

Called for the protection of women and children during army operations and for stateless Rohingya to be granted official government citizenship.

Human rights organizations and a leader of the stateless Rohingya told Reuters that the move risked sharpening intercommunal tensions in the region.
Concordance Set 3 – ‘Other’

Several examples of ‘other’ were located in the NOW Corpus, but they were not, as suspected, related to the concept of ‘othering’ as suggested by Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013, p1). Conversely, it seems that when ‘other’ is used, although less frequently, it serves to have the opposite effect of other adjectives which serve to genericize the Rohingya and other associated groups. For example, ‘Rohingya and other Muslims’ is a rare example of the differentiation between different ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar. In addition, the use of verbs such as ‘relocate’ is telling, as it implies two participants, the UN and the government of Myanmar, while ‘Rohingya’ is objectified. The UN are in this case asked to be the ‘doers’ and ‘Rohingya’ is the ‘done to’ (Machina and Mayr, 105). This may be evidence of objectifying the Rohingya people are portraying them as a helpless group in need of a benevolent savior, as argued by Ashraf and Akinro (2015. P731).

The President of Myanmar asked the United Nations to relocate Rohingya in other countries saying, " We will take care of our own ethnic nationalities.

Taking into account the struggle faced by the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar and the remarks by its officials

Even then the persecution of the Rohingya and other Muslims continued.
Concordance Set 4 - Illegal

In analyzing the concordances for ‘illegal’ several interesting linguistic patterns were recognized. At different times, claims were made about the agents who were referring to the ‘Rohingya’ as illegal immigrants. Take for example

Myanmar brands its Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and denies them citizenship

Myanmar's rulers also avoid, since they see the more than one million Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Many among the Buddhist majority in Myanmar view its 1.1 million Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh

The Buddhist nationalists in Myanmar call Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh

Ultra-Buddhist nationalists regard Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh who have no cultural or religious links to Myanmar

Here we see a confusing picture is painted by different sources in the over who is ‘branding’ or naming the Rohingya people as ‘illegal immigrants’. The focus switches between the metonymic ‘Myanmar’, ‘Myanmar’s rulers’, ‘Many among the Buddhist majority’, ‘Buddhist nationalists’, and ‘Ultra-Buddhist Nationalists’. Again, there is a clear focus on the Rohingya people as victims. There is not however, as much mention of who exactly is victimizing them; the evidence from
the NOW Corpus suggests there is a tendency in the media to not depict the Myanmar government and Security Forces as the primary drivers of violence and persecution.

**Concordance Set 5 - Displaced**

‘Displaced’ in the corpus often occurs as an adjective, modifying ‘Rohingya’. The use of ‘displaced’ is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it appears to presuppose a causation for their being ‘displaced’. Presupposition is used to imply without overtly stating meaning (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p132). It seems that this representation of the ‘displaced Rohingya’ doesn’t overtly state why, what, or who has displaced them, but as there is no explanation in other naturalistic terms (e.g. from a weather event, or hurricane) it seems that there is a presupposition that they have been displaced by the government of Myanmar. However, again the idea of ‘displaced Rohingya population’ is an extremely collectivized representation. We may for comparative purposes, contrast this concordance with its opposite ‘the return of displaced Rohingya population’ could be looked at side by side with ‘the several hundred thousand individuals who have been forced from their home by Myanmar’s government authorities’. This may supply evidence that the ‘Rohingya’ has become a generic construct in much online news, and that the media more often chooses to either presuppose, or disguise the perpetrators of such actions against Rohingya populations.
Addressing the root causes of violence and taking steps for the return of displaced Rohingya population.

...are quite happy to deprive the displaced Rohingya population of any humanitarian help or assessment.

Some 125,000 Rohingya remain displaced and face severe travel restrictions while living in camps.

**Concordance Set 6 – ‘Persecuted’**

‘Persecuted’ is similar in the use of presuppositions to ‘displaced’. Again, it is heavily implied in many concordances that the Rohingya people are being persecuted by the government of Myanmar, but it is rarely explicitly stated as ‘persecuted by the government of Myanmar’ or by ‘Myanmar’s national security forces’. This could be said to be evidence that much of the online media is unwilling to outright condemn Myanmar’s government as persecuting the Rohingya people, but also wants to enforce their suffering and generate empathy, as identified by Afzal (2016).

Northern Rakhine state following violent clashes between the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority and police.

Radical Buddhist nationalists protest the international pressure on Myanmar to accept the repatriation of persecuted Rohingya boat refugees #

20 people dead, including children, say the victims were from the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority and blamed
the tragedy on travel restrictions abroad failed to register in time, and most of the 1.1 million persecuted Muslim Rohingya minority are barred from participating.

Concordance Set 7 – ‘Desperate’

One of the final adjectives used frequently in the NOW Corpus is ‘desperate’, often as a pre-modifier which reinforces the status of the Rohingya people as desperate. However, again there is some element of presupposition here, as to be ‘desperate’ implies that the actor is desperate for something. The implication is that they are desperate to escape, particularly given concordances such as the second, to ‘escape unfolding chaos’, and ‘escape persecution’. Again however, there is an element of presupposition on behalf of the reader, as there is no direct reference to who exactly is persecuting the Rohingya people. Instead, we are given vague information about ‘unfolding chaos’, rather than ‘current violence, including rapes, murders, and arson directed at members of the Rohingya minority by Myanmar’s government security forces’. There is again, implication of a discursive pattern of concealment of agency, and the representation of the Rohingya people as a single, generic, mass of people undergoing severe trauma.

Thousands of desperate Rohingya from Myanmar’s western Rakhine state have flooded over the border into Bangladesh.

Torture and murder are emerging from among the thousands of desperate Rohingya migrants who have pushed into
Bangladesh in the past few days to escape unfolding chaos

Indonesia and Malaysia have finally agreed to allow thousands of desperate Rohingya refugees stranded in boats at sea to land.

Rakhine state has also been the departure point for thousands of desperate Muslim Rohingya who crowd onto small and dangerously overcrowded boats to escape persecution.

As such, desperate Rohingya pour across the borders into Bangladesh every year -- although they are Muslims

In summary, the quantitative corpus analysis demonstrates that the majority of attributive adjectives used to describe Rohingya people are religiously-based. While the reason for characterizing this group of people first and foremost by their religious affiliation is unclear, there are several possible explanations. Firstly, this may be to further clarify the distinct ‘us versus them’ representation of Islam and Muslims in Western media, as has been identified before. However, there may also be the possibility that there is the set-up of a dichotomy, of Muslim versus Buddhist, which as has been mentioned before, makes the current crises in Myanmar even more polarized and ignores the number of Buddhist or non-Muslim Myanmar citizens who object to the persecution of the Rohingya people by Myanmar’s government or at least sympathize with their plight.
The quantitative analysis largely paints a picture of the Rohingya as desperate, persecuted, stateless, ethnic Muslims. They are rarely depicted as militants, insurgents, or as anything over than passive victims. The qualitative analysis assists in uncovering some of the patterns that inform this discourse of victimhood. In addition, this framing of the Rohingya people in this discourse often places them as the object rather than the participant, as exemplified by ‘asking the UN to relocate the Rohingya’, or the frequent usage of ‘displaced’ which goes more towards depicting the Rohingya people as an object for placement. This is broadly in keeping with the views of Brooten et al. who contend that global human rights literature constructs the victim as powerless and dependent, a multitude of the nameless (Mutua, 2002) and this is part of a broader discourse of ‘savage-victim-savior’.

Conclusions

This analysis has attempted to answer the research question ‘How is Rohingya identity represented by modern online news outlets?’ In doing so, this analysis has built on the corpus and critical discourse analysis methodology first outlined by Baker et al.

The analysis shows some confirmation that as initially described by Ahmed and Mattes (2016, p13) Rohingya Muslim community members are similarly represented as ‘others’ both nationally and internationally. The corpus analysis section suggests that Rohingya people are primarily depicted as Muslim, and this is the most important and most frequent adjective associated with the term ‘Rohingya’. The dis-
course analysis section demonstrates that even in regards to other adjectives, it is common to depict Rohingya people as part of a distinct, homogenous mass, and thus in some sense a ‘distinct and separate imagined community’. This fits with Leider’s assertion that ‘editorialists around the world have taken an easy approach to a complicated issue’ in creating this imagined community of ‘Rohingya’ which is not reflective of the fact that ‘there is no single description which is agreed upon, or what identity people refer to’ when they use the term Rohingya (Leider, 2012, p248).

In addition, the findings of this analysis, particularly the discourse analysis section, conflict with the findings of Afzal. Afzal argues that mainstream newspapers in Pakistan, Britain and the USA have framed the Rohingya crisis in a way which criticizes the government of Myanmar (Afzal, 2016, p96). Afzal contends that these newspaper have ‘seriously evaluated the plight of homeless and displaced Rohingya Muslims’, and that representation has been overwhelmingly pro-Rohingya Muslim minority, and anti-Buddhist Majority Anti-Myanmar ruling elite’ (Afzal, 2016, p96)

While the analysis here revealed some criticism of Myanmar’s government and security forces, there was equally a tendency to ellipse the mention of the perpetrators of violence against the Rohingya people. An example of this is the common use of ‘persecuted Rohingya’, ‘long-persecuted’, or ‘fleeing’, without elaboration on what exactly they are fleeing from, or who is persecuting. This difference may be attributable to the multinational news collected in the NOW Corpus, the size of the corpus, how recent the analysis is and other events that
have affected representation since the publication of Afzal’s (2016) study, or due to the fact that the NOW Corpus is online, rather than print media. In order to further confirm or dispel Afzal’s findings, more research is warranted on this topic.

Finally, this analysis suggests that when describing the Rohingya, there is an overwhelming tendency to use extremely emotionally charged language which connotes desperation, fear, and intensity. The reasons for this are still unclear. As Afzal argues, this may be a ‘serious evaluation’ (p93, 2016), or as Brooten et al (2015) argue, it may simply be ‘maintaining an emotional edge’ to coverage, by depicting a ‘helpless, brutalized community’ related to a ‘corporate politics of immedation’ (Brooten et al., 2015). While this study has not been able to indicate one way or another the truth of this matter, it seems on balance likely that the emotionally charged nature of describing the Rohingya is more interested in highlighting the sensational and reinforcing Rohingya helplessness. This in turn, suggests that media coverage, in the NOW Corpus at least, is more geared towards ideological benefit than to disseminating a truthful representation of the complexities of the current situation in Myanmar, including the conflicting identities and descriptions of Rohingya identity, and the central role of Myanmar’s government and Myanmar’s security forces in their goal of establishing a ‘mono-religious, nationalist ideology through ethnic cleansing (Ullah, 2011).
Limitations

There are several limitations to this study which should be acknowledged. Firstly, all social research can be considered biased (Burr, 1995), and Critical Discourse Analysis is also ‘openly committed to political intervention and social change’ (Fairclough and Wodak in Machin and Mayr, 2012, p4). For that reason, it is clear that this research is not undertaken from an objective point of view, although that is not necessarily a limitation in and of itself.

In terms of the corpus methodology, there are several limitations which may impact the reliability of this study. Firstly, it is not replicable. Due to the nature of the NOW Corpus, and its on-the-fly updating, it is not possible to replicate the same search string and return the same results – rather, the results will have updated and changed in the intervening period. However, every effort has been taken to double check the veracity of the results and ensure a high level of accuracy. Secondly, the NOW Corpus is limited in that it surveys massive amounts of online news. This means that there is no distinction between different news outlets with different framing of events. However, that also may be a strength as it ensures a ‘fuller picture’ of the representation of the event from most, if not all political viewpoints. Finally, the scope of this study is relatively small due to constraints on timing, funding, and purpose. In order to make full use of such a large corpus, a more in-depth study of Rohingya presentation should be attempted. Use of sampling concordance lines at the tenth interval is
somewhat effective, but of course isn’t as comprehensive as if there were scope to sample every 5th, or even every 2nd concordance. In addition, this study only analyzed the top 35 adjectives that occurred in the corpus alongside the node ‘Rohingya’. Any collocating adjectives which returned a frequency of under 10 were discarded. These may have been useful terms for research, but once again, fell outside of the workable scope of this research.

There is also a limitation in the devising of categories for the adjective collocates found. By necessity, these categories had to be broad, and it is likely that by pigeonholing adjectives in this way, some instances which have different meanings were categorized similarly. There were also several instances where a decision had to be made, as theoretically some collocates could have belonged to more than one category. As an example, ‘ongoing’ was categorized under ‘other adjectives’, but in reality it is not so straight forward, as this could be describing ‘ongoing persecution’, and thus fit more neatly into persecution. There is however, a limit to how much time can be spent on categorizing and devising categories without ‘missing the forest for the trees’ so to speak. For that reason, this has to be accepted as a necessary limitation of the study.

Finally, as highlighted by Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, it is impossible to make claims about ‘the ways that readers internalize repeated sets of associations’ (2013, p1). While this quotation refers to newspapers, the same can be said for online news. It is pertinent to mention Hall’s (1973) theory of resistant readers, and as Baker et al
state, given the online nature of news, readers may no longer have a steadfast affiliation or commitment to the news source they follow and the opinions they espouse. For this reason, while there is some evidence that the Rohingya people are often classified as homogenous victims, genericized, and otherwise, this does not mean that readers agree with this interpretation.

**Recommendations for further study**

In future there are several areas for research to supplement the findings presented here.

Firstly, while the NOW Corpus has several advantages, namely its size and how frequently it’s updated, there is something to be said for the lack of replicability. Due to its constant updates, this research cannot be replicated. For that reason, extra research in other, static corpora may help enhance or confirm the conclusions of this study.

Furthermore, this study has only just begun to investigate the representation of the Rohingya people over the course of 2017. As time continues, there will no doubt be changes in this situation, and there will be even more need to complete practical research projects and academic research projects to raise awareness and offer solutions and information on the current state of emergency.

Other studies may wish to expand on this research by creating a comparative study of Muslim representation as a whole versus Rohingya
Muslim representation, or other minority Muslim groups, to see how the representational relationship varies across different sects of the same religious group.

A further avenue for exploration would be a more in-depth critical discourse analysis based on specific publications. While the NOW Corpus is an interesting cross-section of all the available online media, it is difficult to generalize patterns or theorize sweeping assumptions that count for all media sources. To continue this avenue of research, it would be worth exploring specific texts of different political standpoints, to see how representation of the Rohingya people varies across these publications.

Finally, a diachronic corpus study may also be used to add to the minimal existing body of research into Rohingya representation. The current research is firmly synchronic, in that it explores a ‘snap shot’ of representation and media patterns at a certain time. It does not therefore, analyses representational strategies across time and the ways in which they change and evolve. A similar study looking at collocations, prevalence, and frequency of Rohingya-based articles over time would help to offer a more comprehensive picture of how the media as a whole tend to represent the Rohingya people through active language choices.

This study has aimed to bring to light common patterns in the online media surrounding the representation of the Rohingya people. It is hoped that by doing so, more light will be shed on the way in which
media organizations make linguistic choices that misrepresent situations and create opportunities for divisiveness and ‘fanning the flames’ of already difficult politicized situations. This research demonstrates that there is clear evidence in the NOW Corpus of a tendency to overstate religion, genericize the Rohingya as a homogenous group, and show sympathy for the Rohingya people while simultaneously avoiding explicit mention of the role of Myanmar’s government and the Myanmar Security Forces.

There is therefore a need for activism and calls for online media outlets to portray events in a less sensationalized, less divisive, and more truthful manner. Further research may be needed to confirm this tendency, although this paper provides a starting point, with some significant qualitative and quantitative evidence for this hypothesis.
## Appendix 1 – Search Results and Categorization Table

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