

<b>Institution:</b> The University of Manchester		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 (History)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Corpses of Mass Violence: Changing practice in forensic exhumations		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2011-2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Jean-Marc Dreyfus	Reader in Holocaust Studies	2007-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  Dreyfus's research examines the treatment of human remains during and after mass violence and genocide. The collaborative <i>Corpses of Mass Violence</i> programme and Dreyfus's individual research have: 1) altered processes of mass grave exhumation by NGOs; 2) contributed to the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN Human Rights Council to develop new guidance and standards for the treatment of the dead in humanitarian emergencies and for the handling of mass graves; 3) informed the training of forensics students in France and medical and legal practitioners working in Africa; and 4) influenced the practices of researchers in medical and research institutions, including informing the work of a German medical research institute in its ongoing effort to address its own treatment of Holocaust victims.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b>  <i>Corpses of Mass Violence</i> (CMV) was a European Research Council programme carried out between 2012 and 2016. Dreyfus, a historian at The University of Manchester (UoM), directed the programme with the anthropologist Elisabeth Anstett (CNRS, Paris). The multidisciplinary research team included Jonathan Shute (UoM Law School), Sévane Garibian (Geneva) and Caroline Fournet (Groningen). CMV brought together perspectives from history, social anthropology and law to assess how societies have coped with one of the most pressing consequences of genocidal violence: the mass production of dead bodies. With a focus on three primary issues – destruction, research and identification, and the return of human remains to society – CMV explained how various social and cultural treatments of dead bodies simultaneously challenge common representations, legal practices and morality [1, 2]. The findings were disseminated through several peer-reviewed publications, all open access, including a new academic journal, <i>Human Remains and Violence</i>, published by Manchester University Press. Five edited volumes were published, of which four [1-4] were edited by Dreyfus and Anstett, each with a co-authored critical introduction by the editors. Dreyfus's specific research contributions included: writing on corpses of the Holocaust; the transfer of ashes and body parts as a commemoration process; the integration of anthropology into historical research; and religious aspects of the CMV programme.</p> <p>Alongside the collaborative CMV research, Dreyfus contributed individual scholarship, including the British Academy-funded project 'Disclosing Post-Holocaust and Deportation Exhumations', which examined the French search for the material remains of the Holocaust and related deportations [5, 6].</p> <p>The key findings fall into three main categories:</p>		
<p><b>1. Genealogy and the globalisation of exhumations.</b> The research described and analysed the many occurrences of corpse searches, exhumations, and identification processes during the 20th Century [1, 2]. It explained the tremendous efforts made to search for and recover the corpses of civilian victims of mass violence and genocides and revealed the diversity of engagements with corpses on the part of individuals, families, religious communities, national administrations and international organisations. The sheer scale of these search, recovery and identification efforts was not understood before the CMV research. In the example of the Holocaust, tens of thousands of corpses were exhumed and reburied.</p>		
<p><b>2. Analysis of 'power play' over corpses.</b> The research examined the role of NGOs in relation to the roles and responsibilities of police and military forces, various state administrations, the</p>		

Churches and other religious authorities (Jewish, Christian and Muslim), as well as in relation to the needs of families of victims and the survivors themselves. The research found that forensic research can be conducted ethically, respecting the needs and requests, but also the reticence, of all communities involved. Dreyfus *et al.* crafted the term 'forensic turn' in the course of the research to describe the critical role of forensic pathologists and anthropologists as 'the decisive agents' of new practices of transitional justice and the political, social and diplomatic implications of their work [3, Introduction, p. 4]. They argued that the recent globalisation of the forensic turn has revealed new problems, but that the very possibility of the exchange of experiences among practitioners and academics can lead to ways of pursuing respectful exhumations.

**3. New practices in the treatment of recovered body fragments and skeletons.** The research considered the influence of DNA banks on political movements and the emergence of co-management of exhumations with families, called 'forensic civicism' [4, 6]. CMV demonstrated the importance of specific cultures and traditions in the treatment of corpses *en masse* but also the shared problems and challenges. For example, Jewish law normally forbids exhumation, which meant that new legal decisions had to be made. Similar questions emerged in relation to Islamic law, for example in Bosnia after the genocide.

The research outputs have opened up and strengthened the field of genocide studies by providing proper intellectual grounding and theoretical tools for a better understanding of the aftermaths of mass violence in today's societies. The term 'forensic turn' is now widely used in genocide/Holocaust studies [3]. CMV and Dreyfus therefore plugged an analytical gap, and were well-placed to engage with and influence increasingly common, practical, encounters with mass graves today. Exhumations of genocide sites, the legacies of twentieth-century mass violence, have recently been, or are currently being, undertaken in (among many other countries) Germany, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Bosnia, Rwanda, Spain, Argentina and Uruguay.

### 3. References to the research

1. **Dreyfus, J-M., & Anstett, E.** (eds) (2015) *Human Remains and Violence: Methodological Approaches* (1 ed.) (Human Remains and Mass violence). Manchester University Press. <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/9781526125026/9781526125026.xml>
2. **Dreyfus, J-M., & Anstett, E.** (eds) (2014) *Destruction and Human Remains: Disposal and Concealment in Genocide and Mass Violence*. (1 ed.) (Human Remains and Violence). Manchester University Press. <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/9781526125002/9781526125002.xml>
3. **Dreyfus, J-M., & Anstett, E.** (eds) (2015) *Human remains and Identification: Mass Violence, Genocide, and the 'Forensic Turn'*. (Human Remains and Violence.) Manchester University Press. <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/9781526125019/9781526125019.xml>
4. **Dreyfus, J-M., & Anstett, E.** (eds) (2017) *Human Remains in Society: Curation and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Genocide and Mass-Violence*. (Human Remains and Violence.) Manchester University Press. <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/9781526129338/9781526129338.xml>
5. **Dreyfus, J-M.** (2016) Le docteur Julius Hallervorden et sa collection de cerveaux en République fédérale d'Allemagne. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 131, 139-150. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44114919>
6. **Dreyfus, J-M.** (2015) The Transfer of Ashes after the Holocaust in Europe, 1945-1960. *Human Remains and Violence*, 1(2), 21-35. Open access. <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/journals/hrv/1/2/article-p21.xml>

The quality of the underpinning research is demonstrated by its successful passage through peer review, its translation into languages other than the original English and/or French, and by positive reviews in leading journals. Julie Fleischmann in *Genocide Studies International* described [2] as "outstanding research" (2015).

#### Key grants:

- i. 2012-2016. PI Anstett; Co-organiser **Dreyfus**. European Research Council, 'Corpses of Genocide and Mass Violence', ERC-2011-STG-20101124-283617, UoM awarded GBP310,800 (total project value EUR1,197,367)

- ii. 2016-2017. PI **Dreyfus**. The British Academy, 'Disclosing Post-Holocaust and Deportation Exhumations: The example of the French national search mission for corpses, 1945-1958', 'Thank-Offering' Fellowship, SF150085, GBP45,760
- iii. 2018-2019. PI **Dreyfus**. University of Southern California, Centre for Advanced Holocaust Research, Senior Fellowship, GBP21,000
- iv. 2017. PI **Dreyfus**. Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah Paris, Funding for research mission in Lithuania, EUR3,000.

#### 4. Details of the impact

The CMV research was produced in the context of a steady expansion in the practice of exhumation as a way of coming to terms with violent pasts and as part of transitional justice processes across the world. For example, there has been a re-discovery of WWII corpses, such as in Holocaust mass graves across Central and Eastern Europe; a re-emergence of victims of the Gulag in post-Soviet territories; and a move towards identification of the 'disappeared' from periods of the Latin American dictatorships. Alongside these developments there has been a growing demand from local civil societies, victims' families and NGOs to take the fate and dignity of human remains more into account. By linking anthropology, archaeology, forensic techniques, history and psychology, the research has contributed to globalising a new, socially and culturally sensitive approach to the handling of bodies and mass graves in post-genocide contexts.

The impact of the research is demonstrated in four key areas:

**1. Forensic teams and NGOs: linking forensic exhumations to civil societies.** The CMV research involved extensive engagement with forensic teams, judges and representatives of major humanitarian NGOs, including *Doctors without Borders*, the *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)* and *Merlin*. Practitioners participated in 15 project workshops (see [A], for example), which together facilitated reflection on the history of the 'forensic turn' [4, 6] and created a forum for the exchange of best practice and knowledge. A leading forensic scientist with the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Spain, explains that CMV allowed participants to "*debate crucial issues in the [...] historical and socio-political processes where human bones play an integral role.*" [B] In this way, CMV enabled practitioners to reflect and develop their practices in dealing with corpses and facilitated the development of a new set of principles for best practice in contexts of mass violence.

The workshop outcomes led to fundamental changes in the practice of forensic teams between August 2013 and the present. Practitioners from countries including Mexico, Argentina, Spain and the UK and from a dozen organisations and research institutions confirm that their consequent understanding of the genealogy of exhumations changed their ways of working [B, C, D, E]. The project produced and shared new knowledge concerning political conflicts over mass graves and the different forms of identification involved in exhumation processes. The leading forensic scientist states that CMV was "*an important influence*" on his exhumation work of Francoist regime victims. "*Specifically, the project has influenced our approach to the concept of identification. [...] naming a deceased with a degree of scientific certitude through the comparison of antemortem with postmortem evidence is not the only possible identification at play in human rights investigations.*" [B] He continues: "*Affective and political identification are both present during the exhumation and in the returning of the bones for a dignified burial. [...] I don't hesitate to state that the debates promoted by the project *The Corpses of Mass Violence and Genocide* have been a very important contribution in this direction.*" [B]

Forensic practitioners testify that this research has led them to take into account the humanitarian, political and social dimensions of their exhumation work. Now the needs and interests of the many stakeholders involved in exhumations are considered in an informed way and the various cultural and religious practices of affected communities, including emerging ones, are better understood. In practical terms, it led exhumation teams to consider their relations with the media and to make more ethically aware decisions about the use of the pictures they produce in the course of their work. An archaeologist who led the official commission in search of the corpses of dictatorship victims in Uruguay explains that the research and collaboration with CMV "*changed the way I dealt with the public aspect of corpse recovery. I could modify the way I work with the media, the way to announce the exhumation of a corpse, being made aware of the*

*tremendous impact those announcements had.” [D] The research also led them to work with families of victims with due sensitivity to help identify, memorialise and rebury remains with dignity. In turn, the new approach “really changed Uruguay politics and society. The procedure to return the corpse to the family was also conducted in a smoother way, as I was made aware of the complex game of power around recovered human remains [...]. The team I have trained, and myself, have learned to accompany the relatives of those Detainees Disappeared.” [D]*

**2. Contributing to international guidance and human rights standards.** In 2018, based on their participation in the CMV project, members of the research team were asked by the ICRC to convene a meeting of specialists to develop guidance to guarantee the dignified treatment of the dead in humanitarian emergencies. This meeting, and the resulting written report, built on the expertise of the CMV team and its findings [F], agreeing *“on the need to address the appropriate and dignified handling of the dead not only in relation to how it might be conceived through forensic protocols, training and practice, but also in connection to the social, cultural and religious aspects that surround the recovery and identification of the dead in crisis scenarios”*. Beyond that, the risks that standardisation of practices may involve have been identified. CMV research was also integrated into the last report that the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, submitted to the UN General Assembly (75th session) (2020) [G]. The report makes recommendations for steps towards respectful and lawful approaches to the handling of mass graves. Following an interview with Dreyfus in March 2020, the insights of Dreyfus and those from other CMV participants and CMV publications are included in the report. Specifically, they inform the report in relation to: religious and cultural considerations in the treatments of mass graves [G, p. 6]; memorialization, reburial and public display [G, p. 11]; and the participation of families and affected communities in the recovery of loved ones [G, p. 12]. The work of the CMV project clearly appears in the report’s recommendations, particularly paragraph 90 [G, p. 20] requiring *‘the active, meaningful participation of victims’ families and communities upon whose land mass graves are located, possibly ensured through such standard as that of “free, prior and informed consent”*.

**3. Training of forensic practitioners.** The research has directly shaped the training of forensic practitioners. Since 2015, Dreyfus has led a team that organises and delivers an annual two-week course for postgraduate degree forensics students at La Timone medical school in Marseille. Drawing on insights from the research, especially [3], the course, ‘Archéologie et anthropologie des conflits armés récents’, embeds humanities perspectives into what had hitherto been a purely technical field. The course explains the current conditions of mass exhumations and case studies of exhumation practices on historical, anthropological, and judicial levels. The CMV team initiated the proposal to run the course and worked with La Timone to integrate it into the school’s training programme. This particularly specialised and prestigious course is unique and path-breaking in Europe. Between 2015 and 2020, the 60-hour course reached 150 forensics students. The programme director states that the course has *“modified the way French experts but also practitioners who work with them and whom we train, now conduct their work”* and has *“contributed to inaugurating a more humanistic dimension to their expert work”* [C]. The course has also opened new employment routes beyond the traditional positions offered to forensics graduates. It has been successful in *“diversifying the positions for which our students can apply. They can apply to international organisations (such as the International Committee for the Red Cross) or to NGOs in charge of identification or corpses in post-conflicts contexts. One of our former students works for the prestigious EAAF (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team)”* [C]. Several graduates are now engaged in important recovery work with the International Criminal Court and national criminal courts and NGOs.

The research prompted the establishment of a new permanent professional course on forensic medicine at the University of Geneva. The six-month course, ‘Droit, médecine légale et science forensique en Afrique’ [H], was in part designed by CMV team member Sévane Garibian, with the intervention of several members of the CMV team, drawing on the various findings of Dreyfus and the CMV project. The training is aimed at medical and legal practitioners and civil society representatives working in these sectors in Africa. Module 3 has been heavily influenced by the CMV findings and for the first time merges international criminal law and transitional justice with

forensic medicine. First delivered in 2019, 12 students have completed the course. A second session began in autumn 2020.

#### 4. Influencing the memory politics and practices of medical and research institutions.

Dreyfus's research has informed processes of commemoration. For example, it has influenced the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research (Frankfurt) in its ongoing effort to address its treatment of Holocaust victims. Drawing on his article on Julius Hallervorden [5], Dreyfus co-wrote a documentary: *Action T4: A Doctor Under Nazism* (2014). Broadcast on national television, France 3, on 29 February 2016, this Zadig Production directed by Catherine Bernstein was viewed by approximately 1,200,000 people on its first broadcast and won 'Best Documentary' at the 2016 Luchon Film Festival. It deals with the post-war fate of both Hallervorden and the 2,000 brains and brain tissues collected by him, many of which became housed in the Max Planck Institute. The documentary contributed to the Institute's initiative to recognise and commemorate this past [I.i], and particularly the treatment of the remaining tissues of children killed by the Nazis and used for research even into the post-1945 period. The Institute's Managing Director explains that the documentary "*contributed to convincing administrative officials of the Max Planck Society of the importance of publically recognising the exactions perpetrated by Hallervorden and changing its attitude towards publicising the murdered children and teenagers' identities*" [I.ii].

The research has also changed the way corpses of the Holocaust are handled. An example of impact concerns sites of Holocaust mass killing. These sites are currently being 'remade' and this is challenged by the demands of Jewish law and traditions, which generally forbid exhumations. CMV research on historic excavations [2, 3], which were first done without care in the post-war period before being totally banned after 1989, enabled more fine-tuned reflection on the tensions between Jewish traditions, the demands of Jewish communities, the interests of museum curators and those of scientific researchers. This reflection informed renewed and more sensitive excavation practices. An archaeologist active in the excavation of the Treblinka death camp (800,000 Jewish victims) states that the research "*has raised awareness of how the inappropriate treatment of corpses in the aftermath [of] episodes of mass violence can perpetuate the trauma inflicted upon communities and has provided core theoretical frameworks for scholars and practitioners like myself engaged in search, recovery and other aspects of post-conflict treatment of the dead. This deeper understanding of the challenges and failings of past exhumations has helped inform my own practice which focuses on the development of ethical approaches to archaeological investigations of Holocaust sites.*" [E]

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Workshop programme: 'Search and Identification of Corpses and Human Remains in Post-Genocide and Mass Violence Contexts', Manchester, 9-11 September 2013.
- B. Testimonial from forensic scientist, National Museum of Natural Sciences, CSIC, Spain (12 November 2018).
- C. i) Testimonial from programme director, Aix-Marseille Université [*In French; translation in section 4 by UoM*]; ii) Course description and timetable for *Archéologie et anthropologie des conflits armés récents*.
- D. Testimonial from archaeologist, Universidad de la República, Uruguay (23 October 2019).
- E. Testimonial from Professor of Conflict Archaeology and Genocide Investigation, Staffordshire University (15 January 2020).
- F. The development of guiding principles for the proper management of the dead in humanitarian emergencies and help in preventing their becoming missing persons: First Expert's Meeting: Geneva, 30 November–1 December 2018 (2019). *International Review of the Red Cross*, 101(912), 1213-1229. DOI:10.1017/S1816383120000223
- G. Report on mass graves by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary executions (12 October 2020).
- H. University of Geneva course, *Droit, médecine légale et science forensique en Afrique*: <https://www.unige.ch/formcont/cours/scforensique-afr#t1>
- I. i) Commemoration activities at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Brain Research: <https://brain.mpg.de/institute/history/a-dark-period/recent-developments.html>; ii) Email evidence from MPI (12 November 2018) [*In French; translation in section 4 by UoM*].