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Preface

This book covers key areas of humanities and social sciences. The contributions by the authors include generic green skill, tessellation, creativity, regular polygon, motif, innovation technology, collectivist culture, context sensitivity, disabling contexts, enabling contexts, individualist culture, GLOBE study, Singapore studio Era, social cultural criticism, World council of churches, ecumenical disability advocates network, un convention on the rights of people with disabilities and sustainable development goals, world health organization, disability justice, inclusion, liberation, problem-based learning, focus group, macroeconomics, online education, face to face education, insurance sales, transformation, consumption basket for a decent living, multi-type maltreatment, externalizing behavior, internalizing behavior, social support, factors affecting mental health, well-being assessment, reinforcement, scaffolding, stress. This book contains various materials suitable for students, researchers and academicians in the field of humanities and social sciences.

The Role of Generic Green Skills for Enhancing Creativity and Innovation: Tessellation of Regular Polygons

Abdullahi Musa Cledumas^{1*}, Yusri Bin Kamin¹, Haruna Rabi¹,
Mohammed Umar Isa¹ and Shuaibu Halliru¹

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ABSTRACT

This work presents a better modelling approach for tessellating regular polygons that is also environmentally friendly. Tessellation of polygons that have been innovated through created motifs, as shown in this work, is a departure from standard tessellations of things and animals. In comparison to employing irregular polygons or other items, the fundamental contribution of this work is the simplification and innovation of new patterns from existing regular polygons, in which only three polygons (triangle, square, and hexagon) that may be freely tessellated are employed. This is accomplished by lowering the size of each polygon to its smallest value and then tessellating each of the smaller figures to the right or left to produce two distinct patterns of the same unit called motif. After then, the motifs are joined to form a pattern. The proposed approach is shown to be superior than tessellating ordinary regular polygons in this innovation because more designs are obtained, and more colours can be obtained or introduced to produce meaningful tiles or patterns. Tessellations, in particular, can be observed in many aspects of life. Tessellations can be found in a variety of places, including art, architecture, hobbies, clothing design, including traditional wears, and many other places.

Keywords: Generic green skill; tessellation; creativity; regular polygon; motif; innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

On this subject, a substantial amount of literature has been published. This research, which involves the tessellation of polygons that have been created using constructed themes, is a departure from standard tessellations of things and animals. Tessellations can be found in a wide range of contexts. Tessellations can be seen in a variety of mediums, including art, architecture, hobbies, and many other fields. Specific examples include oriental carpets, quilts, origami, Islamic architecture. According to [1], tessellations and tiling are sometimes used indiscriminately, despite the fact that they have distinct and widely used interpretations in many aspects of life from around world. Furthermore [1] maintained that these include arts, architecture, hobbies, and a variety of other topics are among them. Any recurring design of symmetrical and interlocked structures is known as a tessellation. As a result, there must be no gaps or overlaying regions in tessellations.

According Levin and Brain [2], designing Tessellations opens the door for quilters to thousands of new and exciting patterns by showing them how to create tessellations--designs made up of the repeated use of seemingly complex but deceptively simple shapes that interlock perfectly to flow across a quilt. Levin and Brain [2], introduces quilters to the fascinating world of symmetry and then clearly shows how to experiment with shapes and images to create sensational, tessellating designs. Quilters will not only learn how to produce interlocking geometric patterns, but also will learn how easy it is to create [3].

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In a research findings, by Franses [4], the marvels of Islamic patterns, the most recognizable visual expression of Islamic art and architecture, are not just a beautiful accident. The ancient practitioners of this craft used traditional methods of measurement to create dazzling geometric compositions, often based on the repetition of a single pattern [5]. As maintained by Gu [5], the results are magnificent in their beauty and awe-inspiring in their execution.

2. GENERIC GREEN SKILLS

Generic green skills are required in almost any occupation to understand and appreciate the issues and demands of green growth. According to Adzmi, Hamid, Awang, Kamin, and Atan [6], the transition towards green economy, GGS are becoming increasingly essential due to labour demand and skills supply. Various definitions of generic green skills have been provided such as by CEDEFOP, Pavlova, Swinburne University of Technology, Zilkiflu et al, , UNIDO and OECD, [6]. It is defined as skills for sustainability that cover knowledge, values and attitudes that can support the green growth. Green employment, according to the United Nations, are industries and occupations that reduce waste generation and pollution [7]. Therefore, specialised green skills that relate to new green occupations are deemed to be country specific, as what is in one country may be topping up on existing skills but could be the development of new training packages for newly established occupations in other countries. Alwi, Kamis, Affandi, Yunus, and Rus [8] states that, green skills are a set of abilities, values, and attitudes that are required in the working place to develop or support the long-term viability of social life, economic activity, and business, industry, and community outcomes.

Green jobs are seen by youths as unpopular and low-status jobs, so they pay less attention to the importance of green skills. According to [9], many countries have focused on green growth in recent years, with the vision of attaining a resilient, low-carbon, and resource-efficient economy model that improves people's quality of life and promotes their well-being. Furthermore, [10] explained that, the need for an explicit account of innovation stems from the possibility of economic and environmental rebound effects. If "green industries" contribute to economic growth, the resulting increase and spread of income and production throughout the economy, which is multiplied across traditional sectors, could have negative environmental consequences. Therefore, tessellation will contribute in providing employment for the youth. In some country's occupations related to renewable energy, waste management, green business management could be new [11].

This study focuses on the application of generic green skills. Tessellation is a work that doesn't require much energy; therefore, the surrounding environment is safe in terms of heat. Major skill needed in tessellation is attitude, enough knowledge of creativity, polygons and drawing.

3. TESSELLATION

3.1 What are Tessellations?

In Latin, the word tessera refers to a little stone cube. They were used to create tessellata, or mosaic pictures that were employed to form floors and tiling in important architecture. The phrase has become more specialized, and it is now commonly used to refer to symmetrical graphics or tiles, typically in the form of animals and other life forms, that span the surface of a plane without overlapping or creating gaps Kourkoulis [12]. Furthermore, in the illustration at right Note maintained that the artists used several tiny square tiles to create a single large image of a bull. The word "tessellation" has grown to have at least four meanings nowadays.

It now has the original sense of large images made of small square tiles, but it also implies uniformly shaped tile-sized images or large images made of tiles that are not only square-shaped.

Tessellation can also mean simply filling a large surface, without gaps or overlaps, using *non*-square tiles. We see this kind of tessellation in nature in broken mud, turtle shells, and other locations. We see it in architecture in man-made areas, for instance... from brick walls and bathroom floors to spectacular, decorated structures such as the Alhambra in Spain. Tessellation refers to the 'wire frame' shape formed from tiny interconnected non-identical polygon shapes in the world of three-

dimensional CGI (Computer Graphic Imagery)—not just squares. These give us the shape—but not the coloring—of dinosaurs from Jurassic Park, monsters and heroes from video games, and other invented animals and objects.

Tessellation now also means tile-sized pictures made from single tiles that repeat to fill a 2D or 3D space completely without gaps or overlaps. Most people call these "M. C. Escher-style tessellations". In these tessellations, the tiles aren't square. The individual tiles are the shape of animals, people, and things. Nowadays, when we say "this is an animal tessellation", we don't see lots of little tiles making a big picture of an animal. Instead, each little tile *is* a little picture of an animal. The tiles cover a surface -- usually a 2D (i.e., flat) plane -- in a symmetrical way without overlapping or leaving gaps. You can see examples in the many art galleries here at Tessellations.org.

3.2 Types of Tessellations

According to Obradović and Mišić [13], tessellations can be divided into several categories; sample subsets include the following:

3.3 Regular Tessellations

Regular tessellations form patterns consisting of a single shape. Only three types of regular tessellations exist: triangles, squares, and hexagons. These shapes by themselves can fill a surface because their interior angles are exact divisors of 360° . Of these shapes, only the squares line up with one another without requiring rotating or shifting.

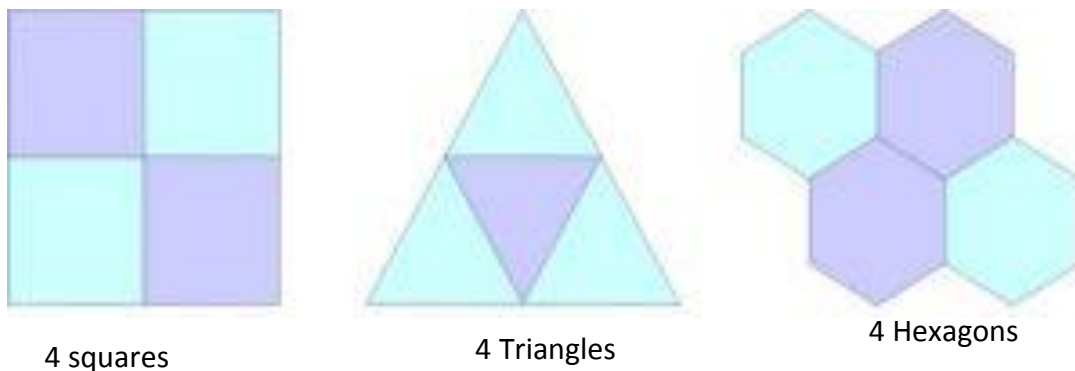


Fig. 1. Tessellations using one type of polygon

3.4 Semi-Regular Tessellations

Semi-regular tessellations combine two types of polygons that share a common vertex. For example, a regular hexagon with a 1" side can line up with a 1" square. Nine types of semi-regular tessellations exist.

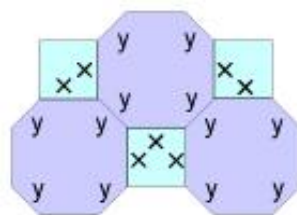


Fig. 2. Tessellations using two types of polygons

3.5 Replicating Shapes (Rep-Tiles)

Rep-tiles consist of congruent shapes that are rotated to create ever-larger versions of the shaped in an infinite series. Often called polyforms, rep-tiles are implicit in such phenomena as the classic illustration of the Golden Mean and the Penrose Tile.

3.6 3D Tessellations

Tessellations can take 3 dimensional forms as in truncated octahedrons and in geodesic domes. In such forms of combinations of shapes; only five are regular polyhedral (i.e. platonic) shapes.

3.7 Non-Periodic Tessellations

Non-periodic (aperiodic) tiling have no regular repetitious patterns but rather evolve as they expand over a plane. The Dutch artist M.C. Escher produced well-known examples of such tiling, such as his graphic of birds that morph into triangles.

3.8 Creativity and Innovation

Companies that are doing the best for a long period of time are those that are the most creative and innovative in nature Sukumar, Jafari-Sadeghi, Garcia-Perez, and Dutta [14]. Furthermore, [15] emphasized that innovation would then be critical in permitting both an increase in well-being due to improved environmental conditions and an increase in well-being due to conventional forms of consumption to occur at the same time. Rampa & Agogu e, [16] in his study maintained that, these types of organizations normally create and innovate things rather than copying from other organizations; they may make use of some individuals in the organization to innovative from existing ideas to come up with a new and unique application, product, or services. In related issue Kronemeyer, Eilers, Wustmans, and Moehrl [17] is of the opinion that, instead of competing with them, the company will prefer to distance itself from competition. In the contrary, they make something new and better if they see another organization copying what they do. In other words, they are able to leverage their creativity and their innovative capabilities to attain long-term success. In fact, as well an individual can be more creative and innovative no matter what his/her expertise, product, or service. When you apply creativity and innovation to everything in the aspect of your business, you are able to stay ahead of a changing marketplace and the competition [18].

3.9 What is Creativity

According to Adilbekovna [19], creativity is seen as a function of knowledge, interest, resourcefulness, and assessment of service or product in life. The higher you grow in terms of knowledge, base and level of your interest, the more ideas, patterns, and combinations of objects you can achieve, which then correlates to creating new and innovative products and services. Furthermore, however, merely knowledgeable will not guarantee someone the creation of an improved pattern, but the little steps and pieces must be shaken up and go over again in new ways. Then the developing ideas should be assessed and developed into practical ideas. In another vein, Ismoilov [20] further explained that, in other words, there is really a process in creativity, and these processes could be mastered through three important levels which includes: - discovery, invention, and creation.

Furthermore, Ismoilov [20] defined these levels as:

- i. Discovery is the lower level of creativity, just as the name implies, it is after you become aware of or you slip upon something, that you discover it, just like in the issue of tessellation, where you obtain different tiles in tessellating some shapes to discover new designs.
- ii. Invention is a higher level of creativity, for instance, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. The question is, "Would the telephone have been invented without Bell?" of course yes, because the science was there, the only thing is how long will it happen. The same thing tessellations, motifs are obtained from polygons, the idea of polygons came first before it was

innovated to form what we call motifs. So invention is higher than discovery, because it is going to happen.

- iii. Creation is the highest level of creativity. For example, the tessellation of an object to produce tile or a design. Similarly, there are things that only you can create! The major fact is tapping into what those things are.

This study is concerned with creating or innovating some designs from the tessellation of the original shapes (regular polygons) to an improved design for nowadays application.

As mentioned earlier in this study, there are only three types of regular tessellations; these include, triangles, squares or hexagons. While some Semi-regular tessellations may be obtained by combining two or more polygons sharing a common vertex; but only a very limited number of these types of shapes exist. However, to create an unusual tessellation, an irregular shape can be used in tessellation, but the end product may not give smooth ending or series of shapes — using a careful but simple methodology of polygon modification. This technique was used by Ismoilov [20] to create his famous “Metamorphosis” and is common in “diaper patterns.” Therefore, this study is concerned with regular polygons. These polygons include triangle, square and hexagon, where these figures reduced to smaller units and tessellated both left and right to form what is known as motifs that are created out of the regulation shapes to form a new innovation.

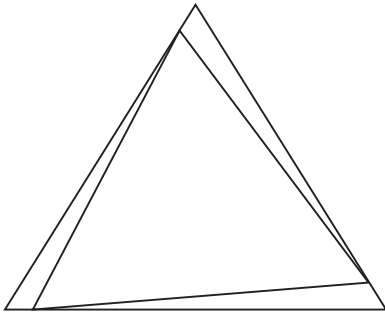
4. METHODOLOGY

Regular tessellations form patterns consisting of a single shape. According to Nadyrshine, Nadyrshine, Khafizov, Ibragimova, and Mkhitarian [21], the fundamental concept is to use one of the mentioned polygon's sectors to create a polyline that replicates the contour. To do this, from a vertically oriented polygon only three types of regular tessellations exist: triangles, squares, and hexagons. These shapes by themselves can fill a surface because their interior angles are exact divisors of 360°. Here the innovations obtained from the side polygons are described. More designs are obtained, more colours may be obtained or introduced to give meaningful tiles or patterns

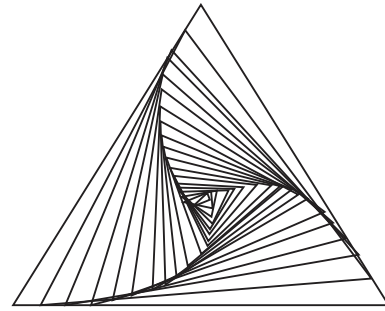
Taking from the existing polygon as can be seen, the figure (shape) is reduced to smallest visible size and tessellating each of the small figure reduced either to the right or left hand side. In doing so a figure known as a **motif** is obtained and this is the innovation in this work, then one unit of the motif is doubled and combined together to start forming a tile.

5. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF TESSELLATION

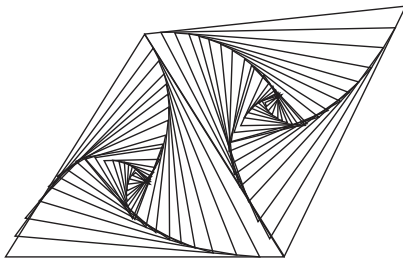
In design and architecture, tessellation refers to the tiling of walls, floors, or other surfaces in building with a pattern of small tiles (tesserae) made of ceramics, glass, metal leaf, stone, or other materials. In a study conducted by Nielsen [22], the methodology established reveals the wide range of options for using Islamic adornment in many types of public buildings and complements modern ways to enclosing structure architectural and design patterns. These tessellations normally are design into geometric shapes that combined together perfectly in either simple or complex designs in an apparently vast patterns while providing continuous and smooth surface coverage. Though there are some new innovations the ancient technique that can be seen in buildings and wall paintings in some countries like, Greece, Italy, Turkey, India, and many other countries. Tessellations are particularly more pronounced in Islamic art, but always forbids representational images of creator or His creations; therefore, designs always favour abstract forms with mathematical substructures. Tessellations can be found in many areas of life. Art, architecture, hobbies, clothing design, including traditional wears and many other areas hold examples of tessellations found in our everyday surroundings. Specific examples include oriental carpets, quilts, origami, Islamic architecture, and they are of M. C. Escher.



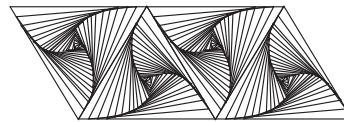
Reducing the size of the triangle continuously and tessellating it to the left will produce a motif



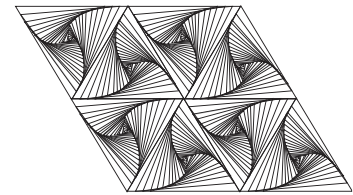
A motif A produced by tessellating the triangle to the left



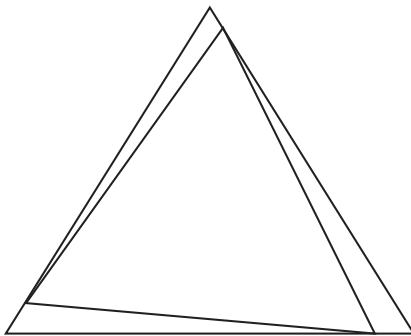
Combining two Motif on their base to obtain this figure



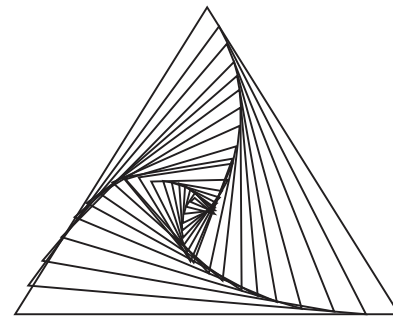
Combining four Motif on their base to obtain this figure



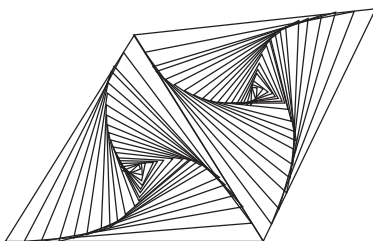
Combining eight Motif on their base to obtain this figure



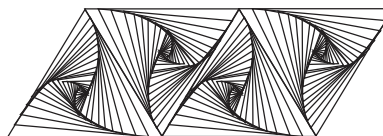
Reducing the size of the triangle continuously and tessellating it to the right will produce a Motif



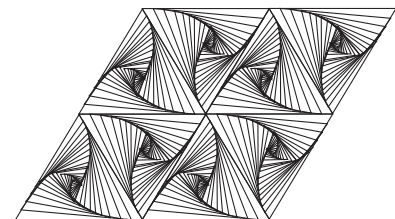
A Motif TB produced by tessellating the triangle to the right



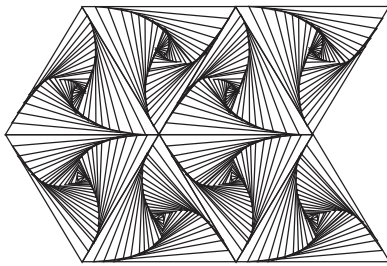
Combining two Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



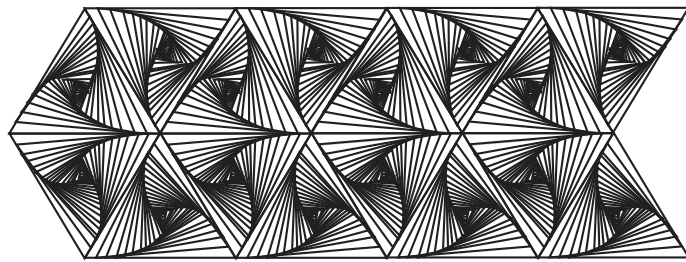
Combining four Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



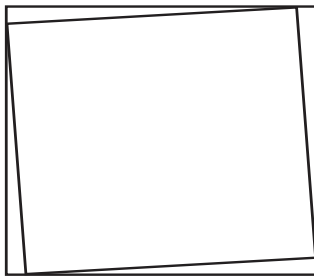
Combining eight Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



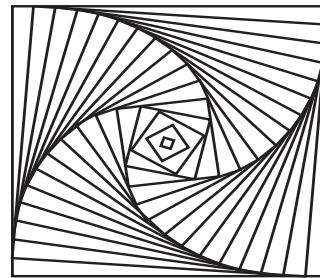
Combining 2 x 2 Motifs (both left and right tessellations) on their base to obtain this figure



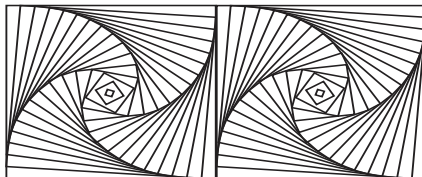
Combining multiple Motifs (both left and right tessellations) on their base to obtain this figure



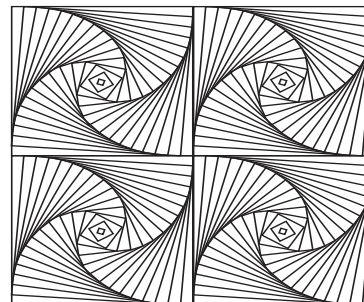
Reducing the size of the square continuously and tessellating each smaller figure to the right will produce this Motif



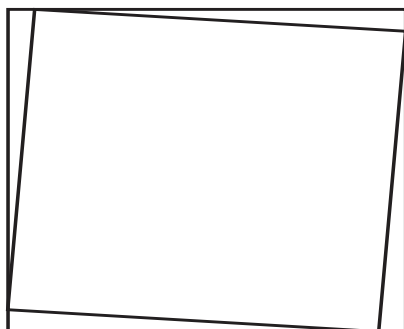
A Motif SA produced by tessellating the square to the right



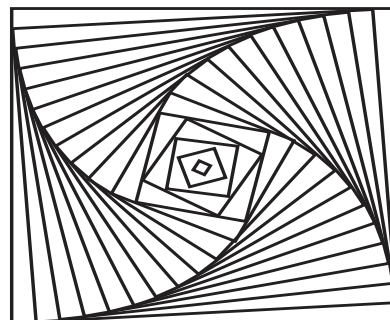
Combining 2 SA Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



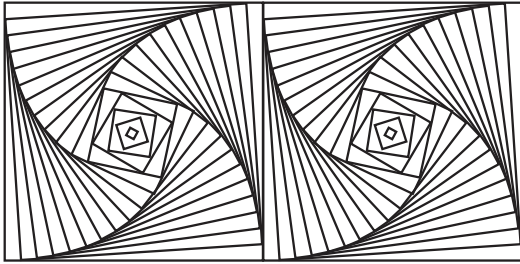
Combining 2 x 2 SA Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



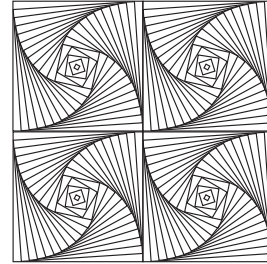
Reducing the size of the square continuously and tessellating each smaller figure to the left will produce this Motif



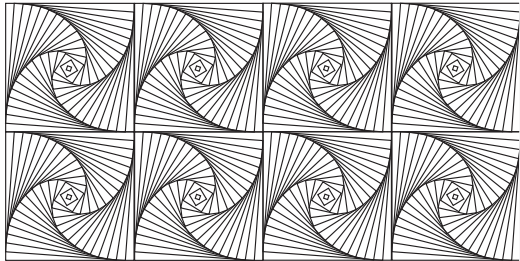
A Motif SB produced by tessellating the square to the left



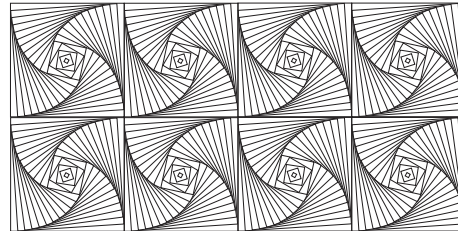
Combining 2 SB Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



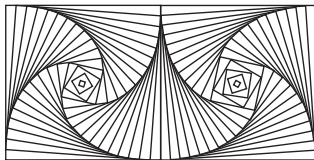
Combining 2 x 2 SB Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



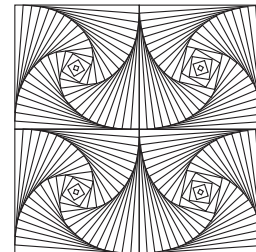
Combining multiple SA Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



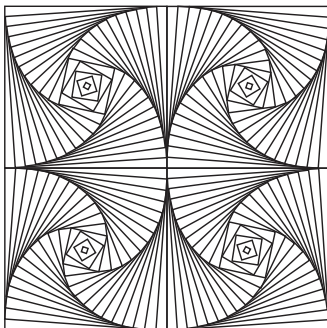
Combining multiple SB Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



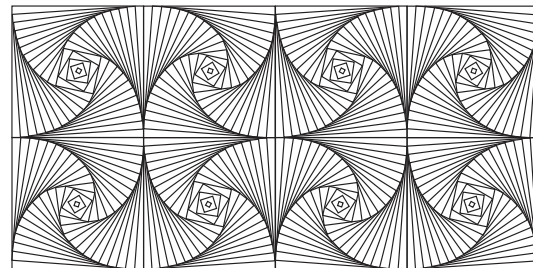
Combining SA x SB Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



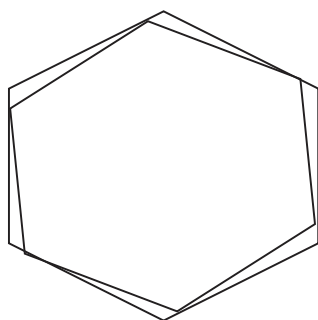
Combining 2 x 2 SA & SB Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



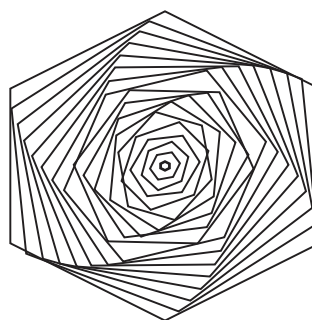
Combining 2 x 2 SA & SB Motifs on their base in opposite direction to obtain this figure



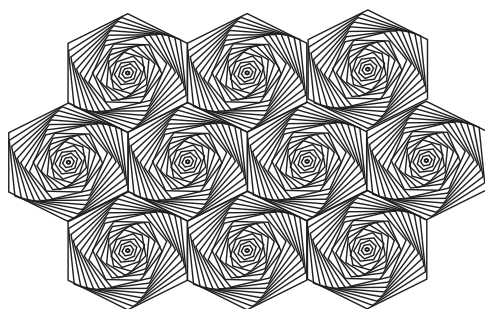
Combining multiple SA & SB Motifs on their base in opposite direction to obtain this figure



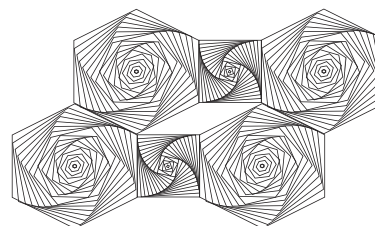
Reducing the size of the hexagon continuously and tessellating each smaller figure to the left will produce this Motif



A Motif HA produced by tessellating the square to the left



Combining multiple HA Motifs on their base to obtain this figure



Combining multiple HA & SA Motifs on their base to obtain this figure. This figures do not tessellate, because gaps are left between the figures

6. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to propose an improved modelling approach for tessellating regular polygons in such a way that it is environmentally sustainable. In this innovation it can be concluded that the proposed model is superior than tessellating ordinary regular polygon. The observation from this study suggests that more designs are obtained, more colours may be obtained or introduced to give meaningful tiles or patterns. This work has open up several questions that need of further investigation. Further work needs to be done to establish whether other polygons may be made to be tessellated or combining two or more polygons to form a pattern because tessellations have many practical applications today.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Impact of Context Sensitivity on Manager's Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine how manager's sensitivity to enabling and disabling contexts affects his behavior. A sample of 150 respondents, 50 from each of three different locations (Patna, Delhi & Mumbai) in India, participated in a study that explored the shifts in the behavior of managers when they moved from disabling to enabling or from enabling to disabling context. The results showed that in some instances manager's behavior improved as a function of the change from disabling to enabling and reversed as a result of the change from enabling to disabling contexts. Some of the behaviors were more positive in the enabling than in the disabling context. The study suggests a need to explore the issues further.

Keywords: Collectivist culture; context sensitivity; disabling contexts; enabling contexts; individualist culture

1. PREVIEW

Indians are reported to be highly sensitive to their contexts and they tend to balance their thoughts and actions in order to function effectively. Context sensitivity pertains to varying receptivity to specific persons, at different times and places [1]. In fact, context orientations differentiate cultures. Some cultures are high and while others are low in sensitivity to contexts. In the latter, people tend to think in terms of abstract principles and norms [2]. A large number of investigators [e.g., 3, 4, 5; 6] reported that Western cultures are low on context sensitivity while Eastern cultures such as China, India and South Korea are high on context sensitivity [7, 8, 9]. Indians indeed are highly sensitive to contexts in their thoughts and practices [10]. Hughes [11] also reported that Indians think, talk and act differently with different persons in the same situation at same point of time; but behave differently with the same person in different situations and at different points of time. In a more recent study by Sinha et al. [12] confirmed that Indians tend to sense others' expectations, selectively relate to those who are likely to be useful, judge the right time to think to initiate action and reach out to avail of opportunities. For example, Indians are concerned about what others think of them; they have the ability to figure out what others expect from them; and they behave accordingly; they sense what others mean and intend; and so on.

Collectivist cultures are known to be high on context sensitivity [3]. People in high context sensitive cultures are more receptive to cues from physical as well as cultural contexts and respond to them by behaving differently more appropriately than the people of low context sensitivity cultures who behave consistently across situations and times. In a high context cultures, people tend to rely on their history, their status, their relationships and a plethora of other information, including religion, to assign meaning to an event. In a collectivist culture, people paid more attention to context than did people from individualist culture [13]. Gupta [14] found that cooperative behavior and team work among Indians are extremely difficult in organizational context, though group solidarity is well known in times of crisis in Indian families. Another series of studies [e.g., 9, 1] showed that Indians are sensitive to their contexts. They have been culturally socialized to view events and episodes from a long term perspectives. It has been found that majority of Indian perceive a situation and the responses to it as

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one episode in-on- going flow of interactive relationship between situations and responses [15]. In the West people apply abstract principles and generalized norms to decide how to behave in different situations whereas Indians organize their thoughts, feelings and behaviours in order to meet specific contextual demands. Contexts have three dimensions of *desha* (place), *kala* (time) and *patra* (person), each having an enabling or debilitating potentials. Indians behave differently with different persons and different places as demanded by a situation – being positive in enabling and negative in disabling contexts [16].

Enabling and debilitating contexts are likely to affect human behavior all over the world; but cultures differ in their relative importance attached to enabling and disabling situations. Enabling contexts elicit different behavior. An organization having enabling contexts are characterized by a reasonable degree of security of job, opportunity and challenges to show their worth, a fair chance of getting rewarded for initiative and performance etc. However, Indians react to them sharply. Sinha et al. [17,18] found that disabling contexts are more pervasive in the country. Further, Sinha et al. [19] conducted a study in which four scenarios were given to the respondents to examine the extent to which a manager was likely to shift his behaviour as a function of the replacement of a disabling superior with an enabling superior (person effect) and takeover of a disabling organization by an enabling one (place effect). The first two scenarios were compared to see how a manager was likely to shift his behavior in case a disabling boss was replaced with an enabling one. The disabling and enabling conditions disclosed that the manager was likely to shift his behavior significantly in all respects, except one- flattering the boss. The manager was more likely to turn highly motivated to perform well, come up with new innovative ideas and share them with the boss, communicate employees' feelings to the boss, and emulate the boss's style, but changing from imposing on his subordinates under disabling boss to encouraging and inspiring them under the enabling boss. The next two scenarios were compared to see how a manager was likely to shift his behavior in case of disabling and enabling condition of the organization. They found that a disabling context changes into enabling one, people were likely to shift towards more positive behavior. Sinha and his associates did not examine to see how a manager would likely to shift his behavior in case of enabling to disabling condition of the context (place). The present paper attempts to explore the possibility to shift in behavior and proposed the following hypotheses for verification.

Hypothesis 1 *An enabling context will elicit more positive behavior than a disabling context.*

Hypothesis 2 *A changes in manager's placement from disabling to enabling will lead to move towards more positive and less negative behavior.*

Hypothesis 3 *A changes in manager's placement from enabling to disabling will cause a reversal towards less positive behavior and more negative behavior.*

2. SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH

To verify the above mentioned hypotheses, 150 respondents were drawn from three locations namely, Patna, Delhi and Mumbai. In all three locations, a sample of 50 respondents from each location participated in the study. They were the ones who were willing to participate. Fifty per cent of the respondents were Ph. D., 48 per cent postgraduate degrees holders and the remaining two per cent doing graduation. The respondents were on average 30.81 ($SD=11.21$) yrs old with the range of 20 to 75yrs. They had an average of 7.56 ($SD=9.28$) years of working experience. The three samples differed significantly in terms of age ($F_{2, 147}= 7.76, p <.01$). However, Patna had the highest mean-age ($M=35.24$; $SD= 15.86$) followed by Mumbai ($M = 30.38$; $SD=7.70$) and Delhi ($M= 26.82$; $SD=5.86$). The majority (65.30%) were males.

3. MEASURES

A questionnaire consisting of three parts was developed. Part I had two scenarios.

First scenario, in which two civil engineers (Ashok and Vivek) were graduated from a highly reputed college in Bangalore. The GCC International which has specialized in constructing rail cum road-bridge at several places in India and abroad, hired them. Ashok was placed at a site in Bihar where a bridge was being constructed over the Ganges. Vivek was placed at a site in Gujarat where a bridge

was being constructed over Narmada. Within three years, both Ashok and Vivek got two promotions and three slabs of raise in their pay and perks. The respondents had to guess the likelihood of 11 behaviors which led to their success.

Second scenario stated the following: As a company policy, Ashok and Vivek were transferred after three years, Ashok being placed at a new site in Gujarat and Vivek at a new site in Bihar. Respondents were again asked to guess how Ashok and Vivek would behave. In both scenarios, the respondents had to rate the likelihood of 11 behaviors that Ashok and Vivek might have performed in Scenario 1 and would perform in Scenario 2. The 11 behaviors that the respondents were asked to rate on a 4-point scale, ranging from Most Unlikely (1), Unlikely (2), Likely (3), and Most Likely (4). A sample of behaviors is as following:

- *Followed all rules and regulations of the company meticulously.*
- *Encouraged and inspired his subordinates to get best out of them.*
- *Will come up with new ideas that will improve his unit's performance.*
- *Will keep his superiors pleased by telling how ideal bosses they are.*

Part II of the questionnaire enquired about the age, gender, education etc.

Part III had 10 statements regarding educational institutions, health facilities, job opportunities, transport and communications, law & order situation, corruption level recreational facilities neighbourhood, pollution level and about people designed to measure about the city on a 4-point Likert type scale in which the respondents were residing.

The study was based on the assumption that Bihar had a disabling while Gujarat had an enabling milieu. In order to substantiate it, the two states (Bihar and Gujarat) were also compared on number of dimensions. Gujarat was one of the highly developed states (ranked 5th) and Bihar (ranked 12th) on the basis of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in 2014-2015 (Govt. of India, 2014). Gujarat state had 79.31 literacy rates whereas Bihar had 63.82 in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). Gujarat state has been ranked first amongst 20 major Indian states in terms of fixed capital investments and fourth in terms of total number of factories. Bihar's towns are far more crowded at 5,058 persons per sq km compared to 3,477 persons per sq km in Gujarat's urban areas. According to *Niti Aayog* data, per capita income in Gujarat at Rs 63,168 in 2013-14 at constant 2004-05 prices was about four times Bihar's per capita income, estimated at Rs 15,506. With regard to urbanization Bihar's had 2.5% where Gujarat 3.8%. Forty-two per cent of Gujarat's population lives in towns and cities compared to 11 per cent in Bihar [20]. There are just a few instances that illustrate the wide gap in development of the two states. Bihar compares poorly on access to basic amenities such as treated drinking water in taps (3.1% vs. 39.9%), electricity or lighting (16.4% vs. 90.4%) and LPG for cooking (8.1% vs. 38.3%). On the basis of above description of the two places (Bihar & Gujarat) where the managers were posted were considered as disabling (Bihar) and enabling (Gujarat). Data were collected from June to July 2016.

4. DESIGN

A 2 x 2 x 3 (Contexts x Persons x locations) factorial design was employed where the participants located at Patna, Delhi and Mumbai rated the positive and negative behaviors of two hypothetical managers, Ashok and Vivek, who worked and then shifted from disabling to enabling and from enabling to disabling conditions respectively.

5. ANALYSIS

As noted above the hypotheses were that managers behave more positively under enabling condition than under disabling ones, and if they shifted from disabling to enabling condition, their behavior becomes more positive while shifting from enabling to disabling, they suffered a reversal from positive to negative. The hypotheses were partially supported in some of the eleven behaviors which were examined in the present study. The findings were reported in Table 1 which indicated the significant effects of contexts, persons and locations and Table 2 that contained the mean values.

Table 1. Two-Way ANOVA displaying effects of contexts, persons & locations on managers' behavior

Statements	Context (C) ^a	Person	(P) ^a	Location	(L) ^b	C x P ^a	C x L ^b	P x L ^b	C x P x L ^b
1. Follow rules and regulations meticulously	5.47*	2.35		4.76**		.22	.21	.22	1.50
2. Come up with new ideas that improved performance	.37	.02		.09		.03	.21	.21	.42
3. Kept Superiors pleased telling how ideal bosses they were.	.99	1.19		1.84		4.60*	.02	.55	3.97*
4. More & more work completed on schedule.	.87	.37		4.91**		.02	2.70	.09	.12
5. Inspired subordinates to get best out of them.	4.63*	3.38		.79		5.63**	15.95**	13.43**	1.23
6. Manipulate records to show his better performance.	.23	.61		.59		7.22**	.68	.47	.60
7. Just lucky.	2.95	.21		3.26		10.09**	.36	.65	1.44
8. Visit his superiors at their residence and offer services.	1.27	3.46		.65		5.28*	.12	.66	.48
9. High technical competence and high motivation.	2.74	.36		1.29		1.61	2.46	.21	.19
10. Favored subordinates who praised him publicly.	.10	5.13*		.63		3.16	.28	.14	1.53
11. Maintained connections contractors who lobbied for him to management.	1.37	1.90		2.20		.39	.67	.09	.50

N=150, * p < .05, ** p < .01, ^a df= 1/147; ^b df= 2/147

Table 2. Mean & SD (parenthesis) of managers' success behaviors in disabling and enabling contexts

Statements	Ashok		Vivek	
	Disabling	Enabling	Enabling	Disabling
1. Follow rules and regulations meticulously	1.79 (.63)	1.68 (.70)	1.84(.76)	1.77(.71)
2. Come up with new ideas that improved performance	1.60(.68)	1.58(.67)	1.61(.61)	1.58(.66)
3. Kept Superiors pleased telling how ideal bosses they were.	2.27 (.87)	2.41(.88)	2.42(.88)	2.36(.89)
4. More & more work completed on schedule.	1.97(.71)	2.02(.79)	2.01(.73)	2.04(.83)
5. Inspired subordinates to get best out of them.	1.59(.65)	1.62(.60)	1.63(.65)	1.45(.68)
6. Manipulate records to show his better performance.	2.78(.97)	2.60(.94)	2.63(.95)	2.77(.94)
7. Just lucky.	2.61(.88)	2.50(.83)	2.41(.86)	2.66(.84)
8. Visit his superiors at their residence and offer services.	2.83(.89)	2.66(.89)	2.65(.91)	2.71(.95)
9. High technical competence and high motivation.	1.67(.64)	1.55(.61)	1.63(.63)	1.63(.63)
10. Favored subordinates who praised him publicly.	2.47(.84)	2.37(.83)	2.30(.85)	2.37(.86)
11. Maintained connections contractors who lobbied for him to management.	2.19(.87)	2.12(.87)	2.22(.90)	2.21(.94)

Table 1 disclosed that at least in two behaviors, the main effects of contexts were significant confirming hypothesis I. The mean scores of Table 2 of these two behaviors showed that in the disabling ($M=1.78$) condition both Ashok and Vivek followed rules and regulations more meticulously (Item no. 1) than in the enabling ($M=1.76$) condition. On the other hand, both Ashok and Vivek tended to inspire their subordinates to get best out of them (Item no. 5) in enabling ($M=1.62$) condition than in the disabling ($M=1.52$) ones.

There were five behaviors in which the shifts from disabling to enabling and from enabling to disabling were found to be statistically significant. It was clear from Table 1 which confirmed hypothesis two and three. Table 2 provided the details. It was found that when Ashok moved from disabling to enabling, he was reported more likely to inspire his subordinates in order to get best out of them (Item no. 5). When Vivek moved from enabling to disabling condition he was reported less likely to inspire his subordinates to get best out of them. Similarly, Ashok was reported to keep pleasing his superiors more likely when he moved from disabling to enabling while Vivek decreased this behavior when shifted from enabling to disabling. The remaining three behaviors (Item no. 6, 7, & 8) which were rather negative in nature, their trend was reverse i.e. Ashok was reported less likely to manipulate records to show his better performance to perceive just lucky and to visit his superiors at their residence offering services in enabling condition when shifted to disabling to enabling condition. On the other hand Vivek was reported engaging in all these three behaviors more likely when he shifted from enabling to disabling condition. Thus, all three hypotheses were confirmed but only in sum behaviors not in all 11 behaviors which were included in the study.

So far as the main effects of persons and locations as well as their double and triple interactions were concerned, only one out of 11 behaviors revealed significant effects. They were not interest of the study and therefore ignored in discussion.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

The present study aimed to contribute to our understanding of how context affects managers' behavior in an organization setting. Earlier work by Sinha [19] showed that Indians are highly sensitive to their contexts. If the context is enabling they organize their mindset in order to behave more positively. However, when the context is disabling they resort to more defensive and negative behaviors out of their concern for serving their interest in short term perspective. However, contexts are not static. They often change and may change from negative to positive or from positive to negative. It necessitated arguing that when a context changes from negative to positive, the persons within that context will also change from less to more positive or negative to positive. By the same token when a context deteriorates from positive to negative, the person within that context will also down grade their behaviors. Both anecdotal and empirical evidence have been reported to confirm these trends [12]. Sinha [21] for example, reported that a participatory leader reverse to authoritarian leadership when the organizational culture changed.

However, these trends still need further confirmation. One multi authored study by Sinha et al. [12] that was conducted in 12 different locations in which the first author was also a collaborator examined more rigorously how shift in the context affects managers' behaviors. The study reported to either in superiors' behaviors from autocratic to participatory or the organization being transformed from short term profit making to long term performance as well as person originated management.

The findings confirmed that shift either in superiors managerial styles or in the management of the organizations towards more positive side improves the various behaviors of managers. However, this study had a limitation that it did not examined whether a shift from more positive to negative managerial or organizational styles adversely affects managers' behaviors. The present study examined both the impacts of positive as well as negative shift in the contexts along with rechecking the main effects of positive and negative contexts.

The present study indeed confirmed that managers in at least in some cases behave more positively in enabling conditions and more negatively in disabling conditions. Furthermore, when condition shift from disabling to enabling, managers' behaviors improve. On the other hand, when the context turns

to be negative managers' behavior becomes more negative. However, the trend was observed in some of the behaviors not in others may be because the contexts in this study operationalized differently than the previous study. Contexts of the managerial behaviors can have two levels: organization and the surroundings milieu. There is a vast literature how organizational structure and cultural dimensions affect managers' behaviors [e.g.,22,23,24].

Organization as a context is itself part of the surrounding culture. The present study tapped impact of the surroundings cultures at the levels of states. Gujarat was found to be more developed states than Bihar on the basis of hard evidences. Therefore, the developed state was considered to be in enabling context and the less developed state of Bihar was considered to be disabling context. A better strategy for more comprehensive understanding of contexts on managers' behavior should include both organizational context and its surrounding context in one study.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings were mixed in showing that the behavior in some instances improved as a function of the change from disabling to enabling and reversed as a result of the change from enabling to disabling contexts. The study suggests a need to explore the issues further.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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American and South Korean Cultural Contexts: Present and Future Implications

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ABSTRACT

The cultural contexts of South Korea and the United States are vastly different in many ways. The purpose of this study is to examine the origins of these differences, the implications on the present-day societies, and to try to determine any trends for the future. The differing philosophies upon which each society was founded have caused Korea to become an exceptionally high-context society, while the United States represents a significantly lower-context society. While the GLOBE Study results for these countries confirm much of what we would expect of low- and high-context societies, this study concludes that the results indicate that South Koreans seem to be ready to cast off some of their traditional ways and embrace a more egalitarian society, and that the two cultures' acceptance of similar idealized cultural values will lead to a gradual convergence of even such drastically divergent cultures.

Keywords: United States; South Korea; GLOBE study; cultural context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Trying to compare and contrast differing cultures is always a complex task, more so when the cultures in question are separated by as great a geographic and cultural divide as are the Republic of Korea and the United States of America. These uneasy allies are drawn together by both an ideological stance against the aggressive communist regime immediately adjacent to South Korea, and by the bilateral trade relationship which has been growing steadily for many years and now stands at more than US\$168 billion per year [1]. While both countries stress how important this alliance is, the relationship has frequently been strained [2] and it is likely that the vastly different cultural contexts have played a role. To investigate the differences in these cultures, it will be helpful to look at them from different perspectives. The contrasts are clearly apparent when analyzing these countries through a historical perspective, through Edward T. Hall's concept of high- versus low-context cultures, and finally through the recent GLOBE research findings.

2. HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The history of Korea extends back for thousands of years. In fact, with the exception of China, Korea is the oldest continuous civilization in the world [3]. Trying to study Korea's historical origins is therefore problematic in that there are no credible historical records from its formative period but merely legends and myths. However, modern Korean values retain little from the prehistoric era, but rather derive primarily from the period starting in the early 15th century [4]. This was when the rulers of the newly established Chosun dynasty began systematically replacing the former dynasty's policies, which were heavily influenced by Buddhism, with their own policies which were very strictly aligned with Confucianism [5]. The strong influence of Confucianism continues to the present day [6]. In fact, Kohls [3] advises that, "anyone who wants to study Confucianism in daily life today would be well advised to go not to China or Japan, but to South Korea, where Confucianism is still very much alive" (p. 38).

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The United States is relatively unique in that its earliest origins are very well documented. Much of what eventually became the American value system came from the Puritan colonies of New England (Nevins & Commager, 1992). The new colonists founded an almost classless society with no aristocracy. The colonies in New England were also fortunate enough to be able to exercise a great deal of autonomy in governance [7]. While in other colonies a governor was appointed, or the king granted land to a specific individual or company who then ruled over that territory, the New England townships were given their own charter and were allowed to govern themselves however they saw fit as long as their laws did not conflict with the laws of England. Therefore, with no interference from the Crown, the colonists established their own governing bodies based on equal representation [7].

These preconditions helped lead to the modern American ideal of egalitarianism which establishes the basic value of each person regardless of financial status [8]. The American value of egalitarianism is not based on equality of result in a socialist fashion, but rather on equal opportunity to succeed or fail on your own merits [8]. This also allows a great deal more upward mobility than is possible in societies where status is inherited through class structures [8]. In contrast, Confucian cultures are marked by their absolute lack of egalitarianism. All relationships are considered unequal and the junior member is expected to yield to the senior member in the same way the grass must bend when the wind blows across it (Confucius, trans. 1893). The status differences are built right into the Korean language which has different levels of formality [4,3]. For each level of formality, verbs are conjugated differently and even different choices of vocabulary are sometimes required. For example, different words for food (jinji / bap), age (yeonsei / na-i), or house (daek / jip) should be used when speaking to a grandparent rather than the commonly used words. This causes Koreans to be very age conscious, since even a difference of one year in age may require a different level of formality when speaking [3].

3. HIGH- VERSUS LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES

When Edward T. Hall introduced the concept of high- versus low-context cultures in his book *Beyond Culture* [9], he frequently used Japan as an example of a definitive high-context culture and contrasted it with the United States as his example of a low-context culture. Although Japan and Korea have their differences, the similarities in their cultures have been noted, particularly by the researchers of the GLOBE study, who classified them together in a group they called the Confucian Asia cluster along with China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, noting that all of these cultures emphasized principles such as diligence, self-sacrifice, and delayed gratification [6]. Hall's descriptions of different countries as high- or low-context were based solely on his own observations, Kim, Pan, & Park subsequently provided empirical evidence that firmly established Korea as a high-context culture and the United States as low-context [10]. And while Hall spoke generally about the differences between cultures, in their study, Kim, Pan, & Park defined six aspects of a culture that identify it as being either high- or low-context. The first aspect is Social Orientation, indicating how deeply involved people are with those around them. The second is Commitment, meaning how strong the expectation is that one would follow through with what you have said you would do. The next is Responsibility. In high-context systems, the person in charge is considered solely responsible for the actions of their subordinates. The fourth aspect involves Confrontation and how comfortable one is in situations involving direct confrontation. People from high-context societies tend to avoid conflict. They are expected to mask and repress strong feelings rather than express them and risk offending someone. The next aspect is Communication. The structure and social hierarchy of high-context cultures serve to orient the members of that society so that much is understood without having to be openly expressed. Therefore, communication between members is very concise. Low-context cultures require more detailed and explicit communication. The final aspect is dealing with New Situations. Low-context individuals are most creative when dealing with a novel situation, rather than an old, familiar one. In contrast, high-context individuals are most creative in the familiar, but struggle with, what may be perceived to be, out of the ordinary.

An interesting finding of this study was that not only did the Korean subjects' scores indicate that they were much higher context than the American subjects, but they also scored significantly higher than even the Chinese subjects that took part, particularly on the dimensions of Responsibility, Confrontation, and Dealing with New Situations [9].

4. THE GLOBE STUDY

The GLOBE Study is the most extensive cross-cultural research ever done. This study was conducted by 170 researchers studying the cultural differences between 62 societies [6]. One of the primary focuses was how each culture scored on the 9 cultural dimensions identified by the study. These dimensions are performance orientation, uncertainty avoidance, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, assertiveness, gender egalitarianism, future orientation, and power distance. The research indicates not only how each culture currently scores on each of these dimensions, but also what each culture considers the ideal level for each dimension. The results for Korea and the United States (see Fig. 1) are quite illuminating.

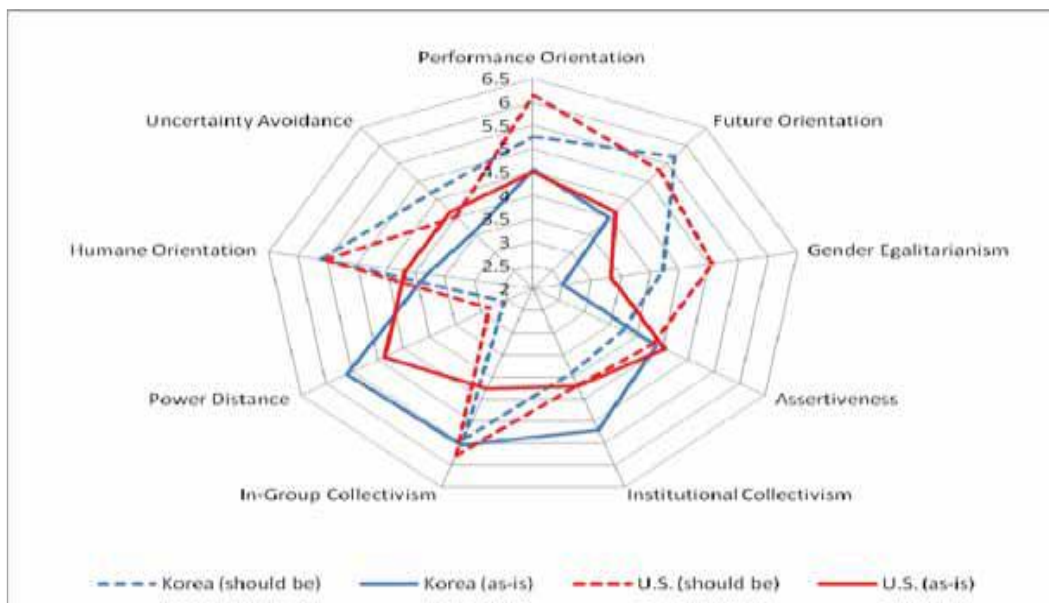


Fig. 1. Results for South Korea and the United States on the 9 cultural dimensions of the GLOBE Study

Note: The actual results are on a scale of 1 - 7, but since none of these results were less than 2 or greater than 6.5, I adjusted the chart's axis. To see the actual scores, please see Table 1 in the Appendix.

The results show some remarkable similarities on certain dimensions, namely Performance Orientation, Future Orientation, Assertiveness, and Humane Orientation. The other dimensions reveal some interesting differences. Gender Egalitarianism, or the degree to which the society promotes gender equality, is significantly lower in Korea. In fact, Korea scored the lowest among all 62 societies on this dimension. Even the United States did not score particularly high here, placing somewhere in the middle. However, both cultures do believe that this is an area that needs to be increased significantly. Korea ranks significantly higher in both Institutional Collectivism and In-Group Collectivism, which is not particularly surprising since Confucian Asian societies are known to be collectivist in nature [6], but what is somewhat surprising is that Koreans feel that in Korea, ideally, there should be much less Institutional Collectivism, meaning the degree to which the society encourages the collective distribution of resources, and Americans feel that in the U.S., ideally, there should be much more In-Group Collectivism, meaning the degree of pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in the organization. In fact, both societies seem to feel that the United States has the ideal level of Institutional Collectivism, while Korea has the ideal level of In-Group Collectivism. In the dimension of Power Distance, or the degree to which people agree that power should be concentrated at higher levels of the organization, Koreans scored much higher. This is not surprising for a strongly Confucian culture, since Confucianism is based upon the concept that all relationships are inherently unequal. More surprising is that Koreans believe the ideal level of Power Distance to be far less, less even than the American ideal level.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The differences between the cultural context in the United States and South Korea are significant and numerous. They can be traced back to beliefs that were established hundreds of years ago. The United States was founded on a belief in egalitarianism, while Korean values hold that every relationship is inherently unequal based on the teachings of Confucius. It is probable that Confucianism, with all of its rules of etiquette, is responsible for the Confucian Asian countries also topping the list of high-context countries, where people have significant expectations of the behavior of others. Whereas, the United States, with continual immigration of people from all over the world would understandably be low-context due to the great diversity of peoples living there. The GLOBE study results seem to confirm much of what Hall observed of low- and high-context societies, except that it indicates that South Koreans appear to be ready to cast off some of their traditional ways and embrace a more egalitarian society. The fact that South Koreans indicated such a low ideal level of Power Distance, may indicate that the younger generation is growing frustrated with the rigid hierarchy imposed upon them by their culture. This is an area that calls for further research. As South Korea has become a more developed and industrialized nation, it has had more frequent and more extensive contact with other societies, as evidenced by trade figures, and seems to have been influenced by them, as evidenced by the similarities in ideal levels on the GLOBE results. Although there are still significant differences in the current cultures and people from both countries are not entirely satisfied with the way things are, it looks as if both the United States and South Korea hold similar ideas of the way things should be. Leaders who can successfully appeal to these shared ideals may be able to motivate followers from either culture. Future longitudinal studies of value differences between generations might indicate that within another couple of generations, as the barriers to communication decrease and the frequency of cross-cultural contact increases, these cultures may start to converge as the differences slowly start to disappear. Until then, the best strategy for cross-cultural competence between Americans and Koreans would be to begin reaching for the shared ideal values while still being aware of and respecting the long-standing traditions that continue to play a crucial role in each culture. Then the interactions between these two peoples on the far side of the globe from each other can continue more smoothly.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Results for South Korea and the United States on the 9 cultural dimensions of the GLOBE Study

	Performance orientation	Future orientation	Gender egalitarianism	Assertiveness	Institutional Collectivism
Korea (should be)	5.25	5.69	4.22	3.75	3.9
Korea (as-is)	4.55	3.97	2.5	4.4	5.2
U.S. (should be)	6.14	5.31	5.06	4.32	4.17
U.S. (as-is)	4.49	4.15	3.34	4.55	4.2
	In-group collectivism	Power distance	Humane orientation	Uncertainty avoidance	
Korea (should-be)	5.41	2.55	5.6	4.67	
Korea (as-is)	5.54	5.61	3.81	3.55	
U.S. (should be)	5.77	2.85	5.53	4	
U.S. (asis)	4.25	4.88	4.17	4.15	

The results are on a Likert scale of 1 - 7.

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Study on Comedy Films of Malaysian Studio Era: An Approach to Social Culture Criticism

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ABSTRACT

Comedy often is a serious matter because it is based on works with comments upon and critiques on social and political issues that have the potential of being presented as serious. Meanwhile the cinema is a very powerful cultural practice and institution. The focus of this research rests on comedy film as an agency of criticism to society. Thus, this research is to examine the capability of comedy cinema as a medium of criticism. The insight developed of this research constructed through a qualitative research design. Focuses on the Malaysian cinema era of studio. It rests on the framework of comedy as critiques on social culture that has the potential of being presented as serious. The objectives of this study, to explore and to analyse the function of the comedy films of Malaysian Studio Era as an approach to social culture criticism. Regard to the finding, it shows that comedy genre does to a degree which strongly influenced by socio-culture does serve as an 'agency' of meaning. Thus, critiques on social culture that has the potential of being presented as serious and is viewed as having the potential to criticise cultural discourses by underlining their status as fiction.

Keywords: Malaysian Cinema; Southeast Asian cinema; comedy cinema; Singapore studio Era; social cultural criticism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Comedy defined by Geoff King [1:2] as 'a work that is designed in some way to provoke laughter or humour on the part of the viewer'. Comedy cinema generates laughter through the comics and humours presentational mode, is in reality of most serious genre 'in the sense that it [comedy] reflected through the comic mode the deepest moral and social beliefs.' (Andrew Bazin, 1948 in [2].

Comedy often is a serious matter because it is based on works with comments upon and critiques on social and political issues that have the potential of being presented as serious. For Bishop [2], 'the comedy text, then, functions like a discursive glitch, or linguistic stammer in the smooth-running machine of the social and political order. Meanwhile the cinema is a very powerful cultural practice and institution.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Books that draws on the issue of social cultural and political terrain of film comedy include Russell Ford's *Why So Serious: On Philosophy and Comedy* [3], Cynthia Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Viper's *The Laughing Dead: The Horror Comedy Film From Bride of Frankenstein to Zombieland* [4], Matthew Bevis's *Comedy: A Short Introduction* [5], Lisa Trahair's *The Philosophy of Comedy* [6], Micheal North's *Machine –Age Comedy* [7], Steve Neal and Frank Krutnik's *Popular Film and Television Comedy* [8], Steve Vineberg's *High Comedy in American Film* [9], Frank Krutnik's *Hollywood Comedian* [10] Christopher Beach's *Class, Language and American Film Comedy* [11], Geoff King's *Film Comedy*, Dan Harrier's *Film Parody* (2000) and Andrew Hurton's *Comedy/Cinema/Theory* [12].

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The texts contribute greatly to the discussion of the potential of cultural and political critiques which regards to comedy and cinema. Thus, adds to the conversation of film comedy in two primary and inter-related ways. First, argues that for the centrality of comedy in film as a means for staging political and cultural criticism. Second, focuses on the cultural and political formation emerged from the cinema itself.

On this note, Malaysian comedy can be taken as the object of scrutiny in the matter of identifying class, gender, low and high culture through their story representation through the film narrative. 'Paying attention to the cultural forms enjoyed by a large number of people, cultural studies have suggested, also allows us to understand the way that 'common sense' comes to be formed, a common sense that enables ordinary people to be governed in ways that are often far from their own interest' (Matthews, 2000:2).

In this regard, the term 'common sense' connotes 'identity' conception by the collective understanding which Matthews refer as 'cultural form enjoyed by large number of people', that concerned of us and others. Therefore, 'comes to be formed', refers to the process of 'formulating' this identity, hence constructed a particular sense of 'national' a particular community by us and them.

To this certain extent, cultural studies offers two rationales for taking popular culture such as comedy films, seriously. Both, in the sense that, the films serve as an 'agency' of meaning, in regards of social and political. Also in the sense that, the films suggest the negotiation in the interests of the powerful, which refers to political apparatus.

Having said that, Malaysian comedy film genre is often subjected to critical neglect and is categorised as of low standard - as they are viewed as of inferior quality due to their subject matter by the print media.

Such being the case, this circumstances demonstrate a fundamental gap for this research. By this point, this research therefore argues that the Malaysian comedy genre is influenced by socio-political events and change. Thus, serves as a representational system of constructing and manifesting a particular Malay national identity to us and others.

On that note the focus of this research rests on comedy film as an agency of criticism to society. Thus, this research is to examine the capability of comedy cinema as a medium of criticism. The insight developed of this research constructed through a qualitative research design.

Focuses of this research rest on the framework of comedy as critiques on social culture that has the potential of presented as serious. The objective of the study is to analyse these comedy films capable of functioning in a significant role as social criticism. Regarding the finding, it showed that comedy film does to a degree which strongly influenced by socio-culture does serve as an 'agency' of meaning. Thus, critiques on social culture that has the potential of presented as serious and is viewed as having the potential to criticise cultural discourses by underlining their status as fiction.

Regard to the finding, it showed that comedy film does to a degree which strongly influenced by socio-culture does serve as an 'agency' of meaning. Thus, critiques on social culture that has the potential of presented as serious and is viewed as having the potential to criticise cultural discourses by underlining their status as fiction.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Comedy has a long history in Malaysian culture. It was prominent in oral folktale literature and drama long before the existence of cinemas in Malaysia. There was a strong oral and play tradition that functioned as entertainment but with underlying moral themes that served an educational function especially in the rural communities.

Today, the cinema becomes a dominant mode of communication in Malaysia and it plays a very significant role in conjuring up the imagined community of a nation. 'Cinema has the power and the

obligation to represent the multiple and incompatible differences that are folded into the privileged and mono logical narrative of nationhood' [13: xxvi].

Comedy films were the popular 'mode of presentation' in the studio era of the 70's-90's and has remained so till today. Even so comedy films in Malaysia rarely win awards. Thus only three have won recognizable Best Comedy awards - at the Asian Film Festival; *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* (1959), *Nujum Pak Belalang* (1959) and *Madu Tiga* (1964), and two won the Best Film award at the Malaysian Film Festival; *Kala Malam Bulan Mengambang* (2008) and *Papadom* (2009).

In the pre-cinema era Penglipur Lara, *Tok Selampit*, *Awang Belanga* and *Awang Batil* were 'professional' story-tellers who would travel from village to village to recite the traditional stories which were inherited from generation to generation. The method of delivering these stories varied, sometimes just narrating, or narrating in the form of song with or without the accompaniment of musical instruments. The 'non-professional' storytellers would come from senior family members such as the mother, father, grandmother or grandfather who would relate these stories to their young.

In addition there is the *Mak Yong*¹, a traditional Malay dance-drama and, 'the most elaborate of the dance-dramas and possibly the oldest' [14:226], which flourished in the villages of Kelantan, a north-eastern state of Malaysia during the late 1800s. The major roles were mostly played by women, with men usually playing the two clown characters known as *Peran*; the comedian and the court jester.

Meanwhile the *Wayang Kulit*², a type of a shadow puppet theatre which is 'an ancient form of traditional theatre in Malaysia,' [15:14] represented stories drawn from the epics of *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata*. The Malay version is *The Story of King Rawana* which introduced clown characters. According to Matusky and Tan [15: 16], 'the two major clown characters, known as Pak Dogol and Wak Long, function as clown-servants to Rama.

These two characters have their origins in Malay culture from Kelantan and do not appear in the actual *Ramayana*. In other Malaysian states [...] these two clown characters are known by other names, but their physical resemblance is strikingly similar from one region to another.'³ For both *Mak Yong* and *Wayang Kulit*, it was their clown characters that held the audiences to their seats. *Peran* in *Mak Yong* and, *Pak Dogol* and *Wak Long* in *Wayang Kulit* structured the notion of the comedy in combination with other generic resources. For example, the *Mak Yong* reflected the characteristics of the drama genre while the *Wayang Kulit* highlighted the romances genre.

To some degree, the *Wayang Kulit*, which is narrated by the *tok dalang* who is also known as the puppet master, fosters crude versions of cinema art-form and the film-viewing situation. The stage has a white cloth screen which functions like the cinema screen, and the *tok dalang* who sits behind the screen functions like a director who narrates the story using a third person or omniscient point of view, accompanied by the musicians, a lighting 'technician' and, of course, the puppets who are the actors. These images – the shadow puppet 'actors' playing themselves became 'stars' to the audiences.

The *Peran* characters; the comedian and court jester in *Mak Yong*, clown characters; *Pak Dogol* and *Wak Long* in *Wayang Kulit*, and the comical characters in humorous oral literature such as *Mat Jenin*,

¹ *Mak Yong* is 'performed mostly by women, also the name of the leading female role within this form' (Osnes, 2001:205). *Mak Yong* 'is thought to be the creation of female attached to the Malay court of Patani, Southern Thailand [...]. Performances last a few nights, from sundown till the early morning hours. *Mak Yong* serves as a healing ritual. The role of the lead, *Mak Yong* is that of an entertainer and spirit medium. (Osnes, 2001:205)

² *Wayang Kulit* stories recited by a puppet master; *Tok Dalang* 'who manipulates the puppets in shadows projected on a screen. In this very old form of theatre a small ensemble plays the music to accompany the movement of the puppets and the events in the stories.' (Matusky & Tan, 2004:16)

³ There are four types of *Wayang Kulit* in Malaysia. 'Each with a specific name and distinctive style. These are the *wayang kulit Jawa* (also called the *wayang kulit purwa*; the Javanese shadow puppet play), the *wayang kulit gedek* (or simply *wayang gedek*; a mixture of Thai and Malay folk styles of shadow puppet play), the *wayang kulit Melayu* (also called *wayang Jawa*; the Malay court form of shadow puppet play) and the *wayang kulit Kelantan* (also called the *wayang kulit Siam*; the Kelantanese folk shadow puppet play)' (Matusky & Tan, 2004:16).

Si Luncai, Pak Kadok, Pak Pandir and *Lebai Malang*, made a particularly significant contribution to the development of humour and comedy in Malay[sian] society and culture. Thus, these comical elements in *Mak Yong, Wayang Kulit* and the oral literature celebrated and structured Malay popular culture. They served as a form of communication, artistic and aesthetic creation before the arrival of film 'culture', and fed into cinematic comedy.

Contrary to what is seen as a cinema that generates laughter through the comics and humours presentational mode, comedy is in reality of most serious genre 'in the sense that it [comedy] reflected through the comic mode the deepest moral and social beliefs.' (Andrew Bazin, 1948 in Ryan Bishop, 2014:1). Comedy often is a serious matter because it is based on works with comments upon and critiques all that has the potential of being presented as serious. For Bishop [2:11], 'the comedy text, then, functions like a discursive glitch, or linguistic stammer in the smooth-running machine of the social order.'

Books that draws on the issue of social cultural and political terrain of film comedy include Russell Ford's *Why So Serious: On Philosophy and Comedy* [3], Cynthia Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Viper's *The Laughing Dead: The Horror Comedy Film From Bride of Frankenstein to Zombieland* [4], Matthew Bevis's *Comedy: A Short Introduction* [5], Lisa Trahair's *The Philosophy of Comedy* [6], Micheal North's *Machine –Age Comedy* [7], Steve Neal and Frank Krutnik's *Popular Film and Television Comedy* [8], Steve Vineberg's *High Comedy in American Film* [9], Frank Krutnik's *Hollywood Comedian* [10] Christopher Beach's *Class, Language and American Film Comedy* [11], Geoff King's *Film Comedy* and Andrew Horton's *Comedy/Cinema/Theory* [1].

The texts contribute greatly to the discussion of the potential of cultural and political critiques which regard to comedy and cinema. Thus, adds to the conversation of film comedy in two primary and inter-related ways. First, argues that, for the centrality of comedy in film as a means for staging political and cultural criticism. Second, focuses on the cultural and political formation emerged from the cinema itself.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design focuses on qualitative research approaches. Centred on a case study method of Malaysian cinema comedy films of studio era in Singapore. For Creswell and Creswell [16:297], qualitative methods 'rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse design.' Thus, qualitative research method according to Creswell and Creswell is a holistic.

On this note, the holistic account needs what Creswell and Creswell [16] mentioned deductive data analysis. Hence, the process of deductive data analysis as to construct and understand the holistic account serves as the mechanism of analysis through the process of interpretation for this study.

The three selected films: *Pendekar Bujang Lapuk* (1959), *Nujum Pak Belalang* (1959) and *Madu Tiga* (1964) of this era function as a research instrument. Measured through the film's narrative using a textual analysis method. These three films selected is justify giving the fact that they had been awarded The Best Comedy Film at Asian Film Festival in 1959, 1960 and 1964.

Data were sorted by the construction of social culture mocking conceptual defined through narrative variables: plot and characterisations.

5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

5.1 The Studio Era

Given the fact that both major studios, namely Malay Film Production and Cathay - Keris Organisation Limited, emerged in the era of British colonisation Malaysian comedy films produced in this era (see Table 1: Malaysian Comedy Films – Studio Era: 1940s -1977), fit Beach's [11:9] notion of comedy that serves as a utopian form of escape or wish-fulfilment for the locals that refers to Malay, as a response to the everyday and real situation of colonial Malaya.

The films offered a utopian vision to them. These films offered a 'non-colonised' world; in a Malaya 'world' with its own culture, politics and *adat*, while also entertaining the audience through their humour and songs. These wish-fulfilment fantasies of liberation from the British coloniser, thus allowed the audiences to escape into utopian dreams of a 'colonial free' world. In effect, these films invented the Malay sense of hopes and dreams. This can be exemplified in the case of *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* (1959), which tells a story of three bachelors who seek a *Silat* Guru to learn from.

Table 1. Malaysian Comedy Films -Studio Era: 1940-1977

No	Title	No	Title
1	<i>Ahmad Albab</i>	16	<i>Masam-Masam Manis</i>
2	<i>Ali Baba Bujang Lapok</i>	17	<i>Mat Karung Guni</i>
3	<i>Anak Bapak</i>	18	<i>Musang Berjantung</i>
4	<i>Bapa Saya</i>	19	<i>Nasib Do Re Mi</i>
5	<i>Bujang lapok</i>	20	<i>Nasib Si Labu Labi</i>
6	<i>Che Mamat Parang Tumpul</i>	21	<i>Nujum Pak Belalang</i>
7	<i>Do Re Mi</i>	22	<i>Pak Pandir Moden</i>
8	<i>Dua Kali Lima</i>	23	<i>Pendekar Bujang Lapok</i>
9	<i>Kaki Kuda</i>	24	<i>Ragam P. Ramlee</i>
10	<i>Keluarga 69</i>	25	<i>Satay</i>
11	<i>Keluarga Si Comot</i>	26	<i>Tiga Abdul</i>
12	<i>Labu dan Labi</i>	27	<i>Tiga Botak</i>
13	<i>Laksamana Do Re Mi</i>	28	<i>Seniman Bujang Lapok</i>
14	<i>Mabuk Kepayang</i>	29	<i>Siti Muslihat</i>
15	<i>Madu Tiga</i>	30	<i>Tukang Dukun</i>

Set in a Malay rural area, the audience can identify this world as 'theirs'. The three bachelors are constructed as role-model of resistance, in the sense that they disobey and go against Ahmad Nisfu who represents the colonial power and is always in colonial attire: a white suit and a white hat. *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* portrays colonial oppression in a humorous manner, offering an opportunity to laugh at a very serious issue.

It is important to note that films from the studio era were directed mainly by male directors, the most notable of whom was P. Ramlee. He was an established and distinguished director, actor, singer, songwriter and script writer who worked under Malay Film Production. To an extent, then, the studio era was synonymous with P. Ramlee and most of the successful comedy films in that era were directed and acted by him.

According to Hooker and Noraini [17:154] 'without doubt it was the musical films starring, and subsequently also directed by, the Penang-born musician P. Ramlee that came mostly to be identified with "Malay culture" in the minds of the Malay movie-going public.' At the same time his films gained international recognition at Asian Film Festivals: *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* (1959) won The Best Comedy Film in the Sixth Asian Film Festival, 1959, *Nujum Pak Belalang* (1959) won The Best Comedy Film in the Seventh Asian Film Festival, 1960 and *Madu Tiga* (1964) won The Best Comedy Film in the Eleventh Asian Film Festival, 1964.

The films constructed a mode of male prioritisation with the point of view, romance and concerns seen from a male perspective together with a dominant and positive Malay male father-figure image underlying the 'typical' ideals of domestic family life that secure the patriarchal system.

For example, *Madu Tiga* (1964) tells the story of Jamil, a middle-class man, who runs his father-in-law's company. With the approval of his father-in-law, he secretly marries another two beautiful women without his first wife's knowledge. In order that his secret is kept safe, all his three wives are kept in the dark about each other with the help of his assistant and his father-in-law. To them, he is a good husband that has only one wife. His bluff is accidentally exposed when his three wives become

friends. But, ironically, the film has a happy ending in which he lives happily with his three wives and with loving and supportive in-laws.

Some comedy films in the studio era did function to some degree as social critiques of Malay class differences and expressed a desire to close the gap between the classes. They served as a humorous assault on the peculiarities of social status. *Nujum Pak Belalang* (1959), for example, tells a story of a Malay lazy peasant, Pak Belalang, who has a young, smart and hard-working son.

Pak Belalang becomes well known and is recognised as a great fortune-teller after his son steals the villagers' cows and goats and later spreads the news that his father is a fortune-teller. It is actually the son idea to steal the animals and hide them. He then spreads the news saying that his father is a fortune teller while the whole villagers are looking for the lost animals. After a series of steals and hides done by the son, and later fortune-telling by the father, Pak Belalang become a famous fortune-teller in his village. One day, the Sultan loses his treasure and the village head suggests Pak Belalang to the Sultan, not knowing that he is actually a fake fortune-teller. But as luck is always on his side, he manages to tell the Sultan where the hidden treasure is.

The story ends happily with him being appointed as the country's fortune-teller and marrying the Sultan's daughter. *Nujum Pak Belalang* thus repeats the story of how the lazy proletarian is capable of outsmarting and fooling the bourgeois community, so elevating himself to a better position. As the Sultan has no heir, marrying the Sultan's only daughter makes him next in line to the throne.

6. CONCLUSION

Films of this era then, can be considered as 'Malay male comedic' narratives which subject women to the male gaze and present them as subordinate. Thus, the Malay identities constructed through these films also had a powerful influence on the way Malay perceived their place within the framework of British colonisation. Which to an extend the Malay represented signified with the characteristics of lazy and manipulative for the male. Fragile and slightly stupid or easily manipulated by the male. Having said that, these films function as escapist fantasies and illustrated a sense of hope of a Malay world of their own.

****NOTE**

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NGOs and Disability Justice Activism in the Religion Academy

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ABSTRACT

The World Council of Churches (WCC), an organization of 348 member churches, is a model of coalition building particularly through its support of individuals, churches, and their ministries for the inclusion, participation, and contributions of people with disability in its ecumenical work. The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) informs one of the initiatives of the WCC—faith in Jesus Christ and communion fellowship—in the journey toward visible unity and justice for people who were too often missing the banquet of a church of all and for all. EDAN and other international disability advocates have most recently embedded its agenda of inclusion into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations explicitly recognizes the Human Rights for persons with disability and, with the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), has raised protections against discrimination, exploitation, and abuse of people with disabilities to the level of international law. The World Health Organization works collaboratively in gathering data and local analyses of efforts to minimize preventable disability and maximize rehabilitation program availability with partners across the globe. These organizations, global in nature, have benefitted from the insights raised by people with disability and scholars working at the intersections of disability, religion, and justice. This essay examines the efficacy and opportunities of international coalitions available with these organizations so as to challenge the ethics of simple accommodations with a more robust social justice of affirmation and advocacy for people with disability: a new paradigm for our churches and our world.

The objectives of the study 1) consider how Christian communities understand diversity in the human family inclusive of People with Disability (PWD); 2) challenge Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to increase their support of PWD by making accessibility the key to initiative remedies; and 3) to encourage collaboration in mission efforts that ensure the inclusion of PWD and their allies in policy and decision-making.

Keywords: World council of churches; ecumenical disability advocates network; un convention on the rights of people with disabilities and sustainable development goals; world health organization; disability justice; inclusion; liberation.

1. INTRODUCTION

EDAN is a WCC sustainable structure to ensure that disability concern remains in the Agenda of the work with churches. Its main purpose is to improve the well-being of persons with disabilities both in the church and society and in this endeavour, it carries forward WCC vision of a just and inclusive society with a specific focus on work with persons with disabilities. It exists to provide a model of being church through advocacy for participation, inclusion and active involvement of persons with disabilities in all aspects of spiritual, social and development life of the Church and society. Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network [1].

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes persons with disabilities and has thus opened doors for their participation and recognition as active contributing members of society: who

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must not face any discrimination or be left out or behind. Persons with disabilities should be recognized as equal partners, and be consulted by Governments, the UN system, civil society and other stakeholders. Persons with disabilities strongly believe that only by utilizing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a guiding framework in implementing the SDGs, will it be ensured that exclusion and inequality are not created or perpetuated. Position Paper by Persons with Disabilities [2].

The World Report on Disability suggests steps for all stakeholders—including governments, civil society organizations and disabled people’s organizations—to create enabling environments, develop rehabilitation and support services, ensure adequate social protection, create inclusive policies and programmes, and enforce new and existing standards and legislation, to the benefit of people with disabilities and the wider community. People with disabilities should be central to these endeavors. World Health Organization [3].

History, literature, philosophy, science, and scripture are replete with stories of outliers, outsiders, and outcasts. Many of the people so identified by the dominant population expressed a disability of one sort or another. Think about the people behind the terms “the blind,” “the lame,” “the deaf . . . and dumb,” “the idiot,” “the leper,” and other derisions attached to individuals and of their places in—or more likely out of—their communities. Compare those terms as well with contemporary use to find the colloquial meanings of that vocabulary and the persons to whom such terms are applied remain relatively unchanged. Nevertheless, from those thoughts you can begin to appreciate the presence of people with disability in those storied accounts, not just the fact of their conditions, they were noticed if disparagingly.

Of course, these terms often carry pejorative metaphorical connotations; such deleterious terms are no longer acceptable referents to the people who live with those disability and some terms no longer acceptable for the condition implied—and yet those terms and their implied negative associations persist. The preferred terms today follow a general rule of people-first or identity-first language (e.g., people/person with disability, people/person with intellectual developmental disability, people/person living with x, y, or z; Blind, Deaf, Autistic).¹ My point is that regardless of geographic or social location, references to disability confirm that disability is not only or just an artifact, disability is a reality in the lives of many people—more than one billion—today.

From historical retrievals as well as in today’s news, individuals with disability have been born into the human family who often have become outliers by means of a condition attendant on or acquired after their births. Those disabilities resulted in their welcome to or rejection from their natural/natal communities, as the local powers and authorities—in the home, school, work, play, and/or religion—would have it. Still, taking seriously the likelihood of each and every person encountering and acquiring one or more disability in her/his lifetime. As the above quote from the WHO World Report on Disability recognizes and “Disabled World” reminds its readers, that “People with disabilities are the largest minority group, the only one any person can join at any time” [4]. Upon examination, with the tools of deontological and teleological ethics as guide reinforced by religious traditions, outlier status defies common sense, a common humanity, and the common good.

With the insights of work on behalf of justice in the US Civil Rights movements, the successes of their campaigns (with their promises yet to be fully realized) offered a way where it appeared there was no way . . . for a people to move from the margins of their communities to the center. The way forward arose from a collective memory and unshakeable belief among activists that, in spite of tribulations suffered and as the Isaiah prophesized, God was and remains on their side (Is 43: 1–7). Since mid-twentieth century, people with disability, their caregivers, and their advocates have followed “that way” to claim their right to places within their communities and beyond to undo the outlier status assigned and the many assaults perpetrated against them. Some of the rights to participate in personal, social, and ecclesial activities that have been summarily denied to people with disabilities are now granted to them though they are enjoyed only sporadically. Sporadic access is dependent largely on awareness

¹On language options in reference to disability, see Rachel Kassenbrock, “Should you Use Person-First or Identity-First Language.”

followed with action by those with power of the desire among people with disability to so participate—as the excerpt from the Position Paper to the UN Sustainable Development Platform by Persons with Disabilities quoted above demonstrates—or on the will of the dominant power and authority to admit that there are obstacles blocking their way.

Disability justice has come a long way since the days of exposure, ridicule, and warehousing experienced over the millennia, though a good deal needs to be done before the presence of people with disability is commonplace. In this chapter I am especially interested in how Christian communities appreciate or criticize the diversity present in humankind inclusive of the diversity of persons with disabilities (I leave a comprehensive exploration of similar initiatives engaged by the world's religious traditions to others). Modern communication technologies have facilitated international cooperation (and conflict, disruption, and interference) at unprecedented levels. Among the cooperative successes are the efforts by diverse Christian denominations to work together in a common interest of witness to faith in the Incarnate Word of God/Jesus of Nazareth/the Risen Christ of Faith. The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network, quoted above, models advocacy for and with people with disability in our churches. These efforts are reflected in coalitions built around a common Christian calling: to reject war and its assumptions of privilege by an aggressor; to serve those in need of food, shelter, education, healthcare, and friendship; and to make a way out of no way.

In what follows I examine the coalitions of the World Council of Churches and its Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN), the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the World Health Organization in dialogue with disability justice. The chapter unfolds in three parts: First, I present an historical overview of the international, global coalitions at work in the three organizations. Second, I consider disability justice at the crossroads of their concern. And third, I encourage a more deliberate effort on the part of scholars in Religion and Disability Studies to engage both these secular and religious initiatives with gratefulness and skills-related support. Where scholars from multiple disciplines inform a good deal of these global initiatives in behind the scenes work with these organizations, it is as imperative that we scholars in religion especially work also at the front lines of this mission for disability justice.

2. HISTORICAL OVERTURES AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Long before the establishment of the World Council of Churches, the United Nations, and the World Health Organization, individuals formed family units, communal activities for survival of clan members, and engaged in the arts, eventually leading to group organization beyond the local and familiar social spheres. From these groups, culture emerged and, along with culture, ruminations about the divine.² From ruminations and culture building, capacities for both self and group transcendence developed and continue to adapt to the many changes accompanying population growth and environmental change that have led, subsequently, to global initiatives of many kinds and for many—both positive and negative—ends.

3. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The World Council of Churches has its roots in late 19th to early 20th century lay, missionary, and Sunday school movements during a period of widespread immigration as a result of "rapid" mass transit and European colonial expansion east, west, and south. Members of these movements were concerned for evangelization, service, and fellowship with nascent Christian communities in "the colonies" (albeit forgetting that Christianity has ancient roots both East and South). Formal collaboration among them was modeled after the League of Nations, when other mission groups and the Orthodox Synod joined in conferences that met following World War I to labor deliberately through ecumenical networks to advance Christian fellowship and to thwart another global war. International in scope, the alliance of joint conferences intended cooperation under the banner of ecumenism in the mission of a unified witness to Jesus Christ. The ecumenical organization now known as the World Council of Churches was initiated by a vote of 147 Christian denomination leaders (missioners and

²On the development of human culture, see Fiorenzo Franchini, "Man, Origin, and Nature."

clergy) in 1937–1938. Unfortunately, the start of World War II delayed incorporation until this global alliance of churches for peace was not able to convene its 1st Assembly as the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam until 10 years later (22 August–4 September 1948).³ The purpose of the World Council of Churches—today it consists of 348 member churches worldwide—is to be a visible sign of the common calling of Christians to faith in Jesus Christ expressed in Eucharistic fellowship, mission and evangelism, and service in the promotion of justice and peace between people and for our common home [5]. In matters related to people with disability across denominational boundaries, the World Council of Churches (WCC) presents a new paradigm for being “a church of all for all.”⁴

Perhaps little known to the academies of scholars in studies of religion, texts, and theology, the WCC has identified the relevance of the church to, for, and with people who are or have been beyond the scope of interest, who may be inexperienced in the drive for power, and who are likely and deliberately marginalized—i.e., not simply ignored—by an agenda of able-bodied and able-minded normativity. The WCC has been attentive to the constellation of issues surrounding disability since its assemblies in the 1960s, establishing the need for sustained exploration of how the Christian churches could be more inclusive of people with disability than previously. To this end and as a WCC structure, the achievements of the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) “in working with the WCC, the churches and the wider disability sector since inception have been centered on sensitizing the society on inclusion and to help in providing ecumenical space, and facilitating the churches, regional, and national ecumenical bodies to become more responsive as beacons of hope, dignity, and inspiration for persons with disabilities” [1]. Recently, more than 60 members of the EDAN, all belonging to WCC member churches, attended the 10th WCC Assembly in 2013, where the full participation of people with disability was affirmed in word and in their presence, numbering 10% of delegates out of the 656 in attendance⁵ (a percentage close to par with global estimates of people with disability, i.e. 15%) [6].

My own tradition, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), has withheld itself from full membership status in the WCC. In place of membership, however, the RCC is a partner with the WCC, with delegates that work as voting members of the WCC’s “Faith and Order Commission” and “Mission and Evangelism.” A Joint Working Group between the WCC and RCC was formed in 1968, following one of the initiatives of Pope John XXIII, who convened the ecumenical Vatican Council II (1962–1965).⁶ Before the Council, John XXIII established a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (1960), “the beginning of the Catholic Church’s formal commitment to the ecumenical movement” [7]. The first public exchange between this Secretariat and the WCC was with five RCC delegates, who attended the WCC 3rd Assembly, New Delhi, India (1961). The Secretariat prepared four of the Second Vatican Council’s sixteen documents—*Unitatis redintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism (1964), *Dei Verbum*: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965), *Dignitatis humanae*: Declaration on Religious Freedom (1965), and *Nostra aetate*: Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (1965)—each concerned with the RCC’s relationships with other people of faith. The second most visible exchange was when two WCC observers attended the four autumn sessions of Vatican Council II.⁷ *Unitatis redintegratio* remains the guiding principle of the RCC response to the call for Christian unity, echoing a near identical recognition with the WCC of the scandal that is the disunity among Christians. As a result, though “Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only ... many Christian communions ... profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature” (Vatican Council II 1964, *Unitatis redintegratio* §1), Nevertheless, the principal reason the RCC does not become a full member concerns the nature of the RCC as a unified communion of Catholics globally and the nature of the WCC determination of delegates on the basis of denominational

³On this history, see World Council of Churches, “About Us,” 2013a; and Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches*.

⁴On this paradigm, see World Council of Churches, *A Church of All and For All*; and Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, “The Gift of Being.”

⁵On attendance at the 10th Assembly, see World Council of Churches, *Annual Review 2013*.

⁶On relations between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, see World Council of Churches, “What We Do. Joint Working Group with the Roman Catholic Church.”

⁷On participation at the Second Vatican Council, see World Council of Churches, *World Council of Churches Relations with the Roman Catholic Church*.

membership;⁸ Catholics outnumber—by the millions—members of other denominations: voting power by the RCC delegates would disadvantage votes by all other Christian communions.

The WCC meets in assemblies on average every seven to eight years with a total of ten global gatherings to date (the eleventh assembly is scheduled for 31 August-8 September 2022).⁹ Its concern for the subject of disabilities emerged at the 3rd Assembly, New Delhi, India (1961), in discussions on religious liberty along the lines of the United Nations “Declaration of Human Rights” and the potentially consequent penalties for the churches’ failures to apply those rights to persons with disability. At the 4th Assembly, Uppsala, Sweden (1968), the WCC began to explore the concept of a “more inclusive” church, which intensified concern of inclusion for people with disability (PWD) so much that beginning with the 5th Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya (1975), every subsequent WCC Assembly has reflected upon the place of PWD in the churches. The final report of the Nairobi Assembly, “Breaking Barriers,” included a section on “The Handicapped and the Wholeness of the Family of God,” a statement that affirms church unity inclusive of both PWD and the nondisabled. The 6th (Vancouver, Canada 1983) and 7th (Canberra, Australia 1991) assemblies continued exploring ways to facilitate participation and unity with and for PWD. At the 8th Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe (1998), ten persons with disability were invited to advise the WCC on inclusion strategies; that advice resulted in the formation of the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN), and EDAN was adopted as one of the program initiatives of the WCC. The work begun in Nairobi and raised again in Harare continued with initiatives designed by EDAN and directed 1) at accessibility, 2) at rights not charity, and 3) at inclusion and participation, as well as 4) a WCC commitment to non-offensive terminology and the adoption of the referent “people with disabilities” rather than crippled, mad, moronic thereafter [8]. Since the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2006), EDAN has been fully integrated into the work of the WCC. At its 10th Assembly, Busan, ROK (2013), the WCC fulfilled the initiatives from Harare and Porto Alegre in support of individuals, churches, and their ministries for the inclusion, participation, and contributions of PWD expressly in accepting human diversity, vulnerability, and the limits of mortality in all facets of its ecumenical work for peace and justice.

4. UNITED NATIONS

In light of the principles of the 12 August 1941 Atlantic Charter, the United Nations was organized during the Second World War with a 1–2 January 1942 twenty-six nation pledge: a “Declaration by United Nations,” against the war’s Axis Powers. From that pledge a series of conferences by heads of states—in Moscow and Tehran on the goals of international peace and security (1943), in Dumbarton Oaks on the future organization’s structure (1944), and in Yalta on voting protocols (1944–1945)—led to establishment of the United Nations in San Francisco (1945). It was in San Francisco that 850 delegates of fifty nation states along with 2650 persons of their staffs, “representatives of over eighty percent of the world’s population, . . . determined to set up an organization which would preserve peace and help build a better world” [9]. Among the affirmations and promotions of equality and equal rights, justice and respect for obligations, social progress and better standards of life, the signatories of the *Charter of the United Nations* thenceforth resolved to practice tolerance, unite in peace for security, and promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples [10].

Aside from the unprecedented international collaboration of nation states and a mere three years after its *Charter* was promulgated, the United Nations (UN) developed the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (10 December 1948) by which nations can measure their achievements in and protections of fundamental human rights in their communities and in others. Deliberately a-religious in its argumentation, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) opens nonetheless with a fundamental premise about human beings and recognition of their inherent dignity and equality that is familiar to many if not all faith traditions. Moreover, the UDHR proclaims that on account of this dignity “every individual and every organ of society . . . shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance” [11]. This reference to observance is key for any attempt to advance peace and security among the nations and peoples across the globe.

⁸On RCC participation with the WCC, see John Armstrong, “The World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.”

⁹On the work of the assemblies, see World Council of Churches, “About Us, Organizational Structure,” CC 2013b.

As recognition of the interdependent nature of contemporary realities confirms, the international standard enumerated in the thirty articles of the UDHR entail obligations and duties of an ethical nature to respect, protect, and bring to fruition the potentials and capabilities inherent to persons, to their human dignity, and to a genuinely fully human life.

The UDHR is the founding rationale of a number of UN program initiatives, among them: International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Program (WFP), and Women (UN Women). These initiatives and others respond to critical needs of all those affected in a series of internal UN programmatic growth—from paternalism to empowerment—regarding respect for PWD and inclusive of the particular needs of persons vulnerable to disability indifference. From 1945–1955 the UN Secretariat and its Economic and Social Council considered disability issues, promoting the rights of persons with disability in matters related to prevention and rehabilitation, and subsequently establishing the Temporary Social Welfare Committee. This initiative followed, in general, what scholars in Disability Studies have identified as the medical model of disability. From 1955–1970 the health and welfare model shifted to social welfare. This initiative has affinity to what scholars identify as the charity model of disability. The UN was mindful of a de facto entitlement of PWD to the fundamental human rights upheld by the Charter, the UDHR, and the anti-discrimination principles of the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” [12] and “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” [13]. In the decades that followed, the UN gradually approached disability more contextually when the General Assembly adopted declarations addressing “The Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons” (1971) and “The Rights of Disabled Persons” (1975), which declarations signaled the first recognition of rights for PWD. Unfortunately, the force of those rights was restricted on the basis of an individual's presumed capacity as determined by some agency and on local governments' abilities to fund programs that would facilitate an individual's ability to exercise those rights. These initiatives suggest a hint of what scholars identify as the social model of disability, the model preferred by PWD and their allies today. From these initiatives the UN moved along with some of its member states toward increased recognition of PWD in their midst.

The experience of the 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons convinced the UN that social attitudes against PWD played a dominant role in the unjust construction of barriers to their inclusion and participation. In response, the UN adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons [14] that included policy benchmarks on the prevention, rehabilitation, and the equalization of opportunities for PWD. The UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983–1992) provided a timeframe for implementation of the World Programme of Action. The efforts of the World Programme confirmed the need of support to integrate a society for all, which support offered explicit guidelines that recognized persons with disability as agents of their own destinies and advocated for full participation of each nation's citizens, including their citizens with disability.¹⁰ Over five UN world conferences and numerous sessions of UN plenary and regional commissions on the economy and on social development (1992–2007), attention to institutionalizing and equalizing the rights and dignity of PWD were negotiated; an ad hoc committee was established in 2002 as a working group to prepare and draft the text of what would become the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD).

It seems to have been a long time in coming; nevertheless, those negotiations were affirmed when the UN assumed full responsibility for “all” people; this inclusion of “all people” was an important step in recognizing the equal standing of PWD alongside the normate¹¹ communities of people. In December 2006, the “UN General Assembly adopted by consensus the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and its Optional Protocol. The negotiation process represented the quickest [result] in United Nations history, with unprecedented levels of participation of civil society organizations. On 30 March 2007 the Convention and Optional Protocol opened ... with a record number of 82 opening signatories” (UN 2017b); to date the CRPD has 160 signatories. With this momentum, the intersection

¹⁰On the development of guidelines to implement these initiatives see Marcia Rioux and Bonita, “Human Rights in Context.”

¹¹This neologism, “normate,” was coined by Rosemary Garland Thomson, to suggest the corporal incarnation of a culture's collective, unmarked, normative characteristics as the norm for humankind. See Rosemary Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 8.

of Disability Studies and human rights for PWD is confirmed in the CRPD general principles (UN 2006, Article 3):

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
2. Non-discrimination;
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
5. Equality of opportunity;
6. Accessibility;
7. Equality between men and women;
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

The pressing question remains, how will the UN maintain its commitment to PWD? In addition to the *UDHR* and *CRPD*, the UN started a major campaign to “end poverty” as the central theme of its Millennium Development Goals (2001–2015). While specific attention to the goals for persons with disability was lacking, the success of the 2015 Millennium Campaign is recorded in dramatic figures of poverty reduction, millions more children enrolled in primary education and achieved parity in access to education for boys and girls, increased numbers of women in elected public service, decreased infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, increased access to retroviral treatment to millions preventing death from HIV and AIDS, and millions of lives have improved as a result of access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation [15]. As the immediate connections between poverty and disability are noted widely in the literature, the Millennium Campaign affected positively the lives of many PWD. With the end of the Millennium Campaign the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to promote prosperity while protecting the planet on which all depend.

The SDGs incorporate the work yet to be fully realized of the 8 Millennium Development Goals, particularly on poverty, education and gender equity, and healthcare. Further, the SDGs attend to decent work and safe working conditions, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, care for our common home planet Earth, and work for peace and justice through strong institutions and global partnerships. Like the Millennium Campaign, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines “a universal, integrated, and transformative vision for a better world.” Moreover, the language about the SDGs apply universally to all people: “countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, *while ensuring that no one is left behind*” [16], Sustainable Development Goals). Unlike the Millennium Campaign, the 2030 Agenda has been receptive to and has invited contributions to its Sustainable Campaign’s “Knowledge Platform” from major groups and other stakeholders, voluntary national reviews, intergovernmental forums and bodies, and partnerships and voluntary commitments.

Among the major groups and other relevant stakeholders invited to contribute to the Sustainable Development High-Level Political Forum “Knowledge Platform” is the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities. The 2016 “Position Paper by Persons with Disabilities” responding to the subject “ensuring that no one is left behind” was endorsed by 312 organizations;¹² the 2017 “Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities” input paper does not include signatories, yet the same NGOs (Adapt, CBM, EDAN) are suspected by the similar composition style. The 2016 “Position Paper” opens with the estimate of PWD worldwide, exposes the failures of the Millennium Campaign to reference PWD explicitly, identifies unfinished work of the MDGs, offers recommendations for inclusion and equitable access through enabling environments, and expresses what at face value appears as an insight from liberation theology in “reaching the farthest behind first” [3]. The 2017 Knowledge Platform “Input” addresses material hardship in households including persons with

¹²Among the 312 endorsing organizations, those identifiably Christian-based include *Asociación De Familiares De Niñas Y Niños Con Discapacidad “Los Angelitos,”* *CBM/International Christian Development organization,* *Christian Fellowship SHORE,* *Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba,* and the *WCC’s EDAN.* *EDAN reports extensive participation in drafting the position paper.*

disability, the discriminatory nature of the health sector toward PWD, barriers to participation by women and girls with disabilities, and the vulnerability of PWD to climate change and disaster-risk (UN 2017c). In addition to the contributions by PWD that addressed concerns surrounding disability, two other groups submitted papers to the 2016 Knowledge Platform and twelve other groups submitted papers to the 2017 Knowledge Platform with explicit concern for PWD [17].¹³

5. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Similar to the 19th century initiatives that gave rise to the WCC, the World Health Organization marks its roots in increased trade and travel with a secular concern for health crises of “foreign pestilence” from yellow fever, cholera, malaria, typhoid, and other epidemic diseases, which crises were ministered by the purveyors of modern medicine and international sanitary conferences in Europe and the US from 1851 to the end of the century. Those conferences led to the Pan American Sanitary Organization in 1902, the Office International d’Hygiene Publique (OIHP) in 1903, and the Health Organization of the League of Nations in 1921. The OIHP was instrumental in standardizing the classification of disease, establishing a common vocabulary for pharmacopoeias, publishing a report on the physiological base of nutrition, and publishing the *Weekly Epidemiological Record*. With the start of World War II, the League of Nations/OIHP model was transferred to the newly chartered United Nations in 1946 under its Economic and Social Council and that Council’s mandated responsibilities for health (and other) matters.¹⁴ Subsequently, the World Health Organization (WHO) became the directing and coordinating authority for health within the UN system in 1948.

The primary role of WHO is to direct international health initiatives and to lead partners in global health responses. WHO enjoys this authorization by virtue of Article 25 of UDHR, which states the right to “well-being ... including food, clothing, housing and medical care [and] to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood.” With this right, the Constitution of WHO was adopted in 1946 by the International Health Conference “to promote and protect the health of all peoples” with the single objective of “the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health” [18]. It would be another twenty years—1966—before the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights codified “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” [13]. Although cautions are in order on the potential conflation of health-to-illness as ability-to-disability, WHO has utilized the Human Rights model and the CRPD to recognize both the barriers to well-being experienced by many PWD and the failures to provide access not only to healthcare but to education, employment, family, community, religious, and public life.

WHO began to address disability through a lens more conducive to the social construction(s) of disability than the UN’s earlier efforts in a series of publications: 2001 *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* [19] and *ICF-CY* companion classification for children and youth [20]; with the World Bank, the first *World Report on Disability* [4]; and *Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021: Better Health for All People with Disability* [21]. Unlike strictly medical models of disability, these documents reject simple determinations of interventions for this or that disability. Rather and following the insights of social economist Amartya Sen,¹⁵ WHO has adopted a schema for determining the support or repression of human rights owing to all people on the bases of their “functioning capabilities.” The underlying principles guiding use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) point to universality, etiological parity, neutrality, and environmental influences. These principles inform conclusions that disability occurs everywhere, functioning is

¹³See inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Major Groups and Other Stakeholders: 2016 among a total of 23 group categories where disability was referenced were 3 major groups and other stakeholders—AP-RECM, Major Group for Children and Youth, and Persons with Disabilities; 2017 among a total of 48 group categories where disability was referenced were 13 major groups and other stakeholders—AP-RECM, Commission on Voluntary Service & Action, Education and Academics Stakeholder Group, KEPA, Major Group for Children and Youth (Child-focused submission), Major Group NGSS, Major Group Women, SDGs Kenya Forum, Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities, Stakeholder Group on Ageing, Together 2030, Volunteers Groups, and Zonta International. For both 2016 and 2017 inputs, see [22].

¹⁴On the developments leading up to the World Health Organization, see Sir John Charles, “Origins, History, and Achievements of the World Health Organization.”

¹⁵On basic human functioning capabilities, see Amartya Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*.

measurable across cultures with a set of common metrics, classification must include both positive and negative assessments of functioning (i.e., ability and limitations), and an accounting of the local geographic and social conditions that facilitate or thwart functioning.

In advance of the UN, WHO began to engage people who had direct experience with disability in their efforts to address the status of the health and well-being of PWD. Despite the value of the CRPD, the UN was not deliberately inclusive of PWD in determinations about disability (the UN has remedied this failure in part with the SDGs Knowledge Platform). Appropriately, the *World Report on Disability (Report)* presents narrative vignettes at the start of chapters two through eight (of nine) penned by PWD, living across the globe in twenty-one countries (from Australia to Zambia). Acknowledgments for support of the *Report* include CBM International, “an international Christian development organization, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in the poorest communities of the world” [22,23], among the sponsors. The “Introduction” notes that while each of the nine chapters was “written by a number of authors, working with a wider group of experts from around the world, wherever possible, people with disabilities were involved as authors and experts. ... The drafts of each chapter were reviewed following input from regional consultations ... which involved local academics, policy-makers, practitioners, and people with disabilities” [4]. Unfortunately, the *Report* does not provide biographical information on any of the contributors. Nevertheless, among named contributors, Tom Shakespeare, Professor of Disability Research at Norwich Medical School, Norfolk, UK, figures prominently: co-authoring the “Introduction,” contributing to chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9, serving on the Editorial Committee, and with three others preparing the final text of the *Report* summary. Additionally, PWD among members of the Advisory Committee include Amadaou Bagayoko and Miriam Doumbia, Sir Philip Craven, Kicki Nordström; of the remaining sixteen members of the Advisory Committee, six have extensive personal and/or professional experience with disability. The work by CBM, Shakespeare, and other members of the Advisory Committee offers a contemporary example of building coalitions between stakeholders and persons immediately affected by this or that initiative with policy and program leaders in the work and mission of disability justice.

The *Report* boldly “charts the steps that are required to improve participation and inclusion of people with disabilities” [4]. Appreciatively the *Report* admits, “Disability is an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual’s contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)” [4]. It is especially in reference to the contextual factors that scholars in religion and disability, especially in light of the compelling recognition of the intersectionality that disability presents in the academy, are well poised to contribute to the conversations and plans of action for disability justice.

6. CROSSROADS OF INTERNATIONAL COALITIONS AND DISABILITY JUSTICE

The WCC, UN, and WHO each have taken seriously the concerns of justice with and toward people who stand literally and figuratively outside of the churches and houses of worship of many religious traditions, often beyond the scope of the interests of international socio-political relations, and comparatively distant from the concerns of varied private sector institutions. As a result of these coalition efforts, disability justice is “on the books” in most of these entities, and many unaffiliated and smaller organizations have made commitments to the cause. No doubt like racial justice, LGBTIQ justice, and justice for women, disability justice presents a compelling intervention by these bodies as their members have come to recognize the intolerable ignominy of disadvantaging discriminations against not only individuals with disability but discriminations against the many and varied class(es) of people living with disability.

A good deal of the interventions by the WCC, UN, and WHO to interrupt and prevent harms depend upon an acceptance of the trend to nationalize and localize international law, most evident in the use of the *UNDHR* and, for the purposes of this chapter, the *CRPD*. In particular, while these organizations put forward humane appreciations for the respect of persons and the rights accruing to all, lamentably, the likelihood of local authorities (church, nation, and/or state) to incorporate these

initiatives will depend on the effect they bear on domestic and/or ecclesiastic law.¹⁶ However, one of the more promising possibilities of the *CRPD* is not its focus on PWD but its insistence that the *CRPD* applies the *UNDHR* and other instruments explicitly to PWD and, thereby, raises the bar for everyone. The *CRPD* does more for PWD by attaching enforcement of human rights to the *UNDHR*, interpreting and applying existing rights “as well as a new approach to treaty enforcement. For this reason, the *CRPD* is significant not only to people with disabilities but also to the development of human rights generally, by offering new human rights protections for all people, with and without disabilities” [24].

At this juncture it is critical to recall the consciousness raising success of people with disability and their allies and the still remaining work of disability justice writ broad and writ with those human rights protections. [As] success breeds success, as awareness of the social sources of disability and as more and more people with impairments act autonomously, their raised consciousness may be transformed into empowered consciousness. Empowered consciousness ‘means acting together to empower others. And an insistence on ‘active, collective contestation of control over the necessities of life: housing, school, personal and family relationships, respect, independence, and so on.’ ... [It] is to be expected that a period of success will be followed by one of quiescence on disability rights issues may follow [25].¹⁷

It is to this period of quiescence that the work of coalition building between scholars of religion, the initiatives of international non-governmental organizations, and local governing bodies can bear fruit. With the international instruments presented by the WCC, the UN, and WHO, religionists are well poised to raise the stakes regarding the imperatives of human rights surrounding disability justice. Religion scholars working in disability justice especially have access to the arguments for such justice on the basis of the fundamental claims about all people, identifying especially those who are vulnerable—like the sojourner, displaced person/refugee, widow/widower, orphan, unemployed, socially dispossessed, and otherwise impoverished—that faith or religious sensibilities enjoin practitioners to offer welcoming and inclusive hospitality, to uphold the rule of law, and to go further in developing and protecting human rights.

The Christian tradition, informed as it is by the communities of intertestamental Judaism and mindful of the periods of sojourn among our forebears the Patriarchs and Matriarchs through the desert Exodus, the diaspora Exile, the Return to Israel/Palestine, and the challenge of occupation has been especially formative for the WCC and, though unacknowledged, the secular UN and WHO international organizations as well.¹⁸ It is near impossible to not recognize the Judeo-Christian religious sensibilities in the secular sphere, given the language “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women ... and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (UN *Charter*, Preamble). Faith, dignity, justice, law, freedom, peace, and security—the barely couched religious terms enshrined in the UN Charter—ground the crossroads of collaboration with and for PWD that reach out to those who may be questioned about their right to such goods and access to the means not only to survive but to develop their capabilities and thrive thereby.

Disability justice in the vocabulary of the Judeo-Christian traditions may point to the harms that vulnerable persons and classes of people have suffered with a view to preventing those harms and to relieving the scars of any open wounds. It is to this “may point” that scholars in religion are called to respond in support of international initiatives to, in so many words, pay attention to those who are “othered,” “marginalized,” “alienated” and then harmed as a result of the failures to heed the moral

¹⁶On incorporating or failing to incorporate initiatives, see Daphne Barak-Erez, “The International Law of Human Rights and Constitutional Law.”

¹⁷Internal quote, James I. Charlton, *Nothing About Us without Us*, 119.

¹⁸On the Judeo-Christian influence on developments in the UN and WHO, see Karsten Lehmann, “Religious Presence in the Context of the United Nations Organization.”

imperatives of care. Those imperatives are found, for example, in Exodus 22:21–22, Psalm 82:3, Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 146:5–9, Matthew 25:35–40, Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 13:1–3.¹⁹

These international bodies have benefitted also from the extensive history and interpretative trajectories of the “natural law” owing in part to religious houses of study.²⁰ Many of these religious institutions inherited the natural law and enshrined its traditional schema, founded on philosophical theses regarding “the good” (that which all people seek) and the principles of practical reason given this or that contextual exigent determining what is right and just for human beings. Unfortunately, many of those enshrinements have been used at cross-purposes to liberty and justice (e.g., heteronormativity, racial hierarchies, normate hegemonies). Nevertheless, the fundamental insights—from Aristotle, Boethius, Augustine, and Aquinas to contemporary theorists—remain persuasive: the first principle of the practical reason is that all beings seek the good. Consequently, the first precept is that “good” is to be done and evil avoided. “Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations is the order of the precepts [:] ... preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles ... sexual intercourse, education of offspring, ... to know the truth about God and to live in society ... belongs to the natural law” [26,27]. From self-preservation to life in society, this trajectory developed into language and positive law surrounding both the common good and the support of access to that good that form the basis of human rights found in the UN *UDHR*.

The common good commands both attention and action in matters of protecting universal human rights and in building coalitions of disability justice to resist, and at last, to correct the negative determinations against PWD and others vulnerable to harm. Further, the common good extends the foundations of the “good” of human flourishing that is access to an exigent or a seemingly trivial requirement to thrive in this or that particular context. Moreover, in these days of hypersensitivity to the “other,” a practical working understanding of the common good will expose attempts to deny access to the means of flourishing on the basis of race, culture, religion, ethnicity, and ability. Denied access is contrary to the natural law, to individual and communal rights, to these international overtures, as well as to the Judeo-Christian tradition of care for those in need.²¹ Alternately, thriving will be the key measure of success with these NGO initiatives for and with PWD in their pursuit of justice for those threatened by complacency, complicity, or commission of sin: “the failure to bother to love” [28], to pay attention to another, to have concern for another’s well-being and welfare.

Clearly, being oppressed or neglected by dominant powers and authorities is no badge of honor, rather such an experience is an affront to the dignity of the person and classes of people so insultingly treated. Thus, inspired by scriptural, philosophical, and theological texts, religionists can remind their audiences of how these sources come to bear on local, national, and international initiatives to protect against and to relieve the injustices and sins of commission, complacency, and complicity. Further, scholars engaged in theological ethics can access these sources accordingly so as to encourage change among those with power and the institutions and systems constructed to support the scandalous, hegemonic and normative status quo. As religionists working in disability justice and those concerned with others who are vulnerable to discriminations have demonstrated, justice for people with disability—as justice for the widow, orphan, and sojourner—translates and extends to justice for everyone. The crossroads of disability justice taking shape in these international initiatives provide opportunities for scholars in religion to influence work with and for PWD, work that can affect positive change in the lives of PWD and many more others as well as to put our guild’s research and insights on human diversity alongside content- and context-diverse functioning capabilities into service with a broader, international public.

Related to these concerns is the ever-looming specter of climate change and environmental degradation. Globally, Indigenous peoples suffer most from the “development” of their lands. Such development may be more properly labeled annihilation of Indigenous people and the theft and disablement of their lands. “Land appropriation, resource extraction, forced removal, erasure, and

¹⁹Among others on the biblical sources of the failure to care, see Hector Avalos et al, *Thisabled Body* (2017); Sarah J. Melcher et al, *The Bible and Disability*; Candida Moss and Jeremy Schipper, *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*; Saul M. Olyan *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*; Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*.

²⁰On the libraries housed by religious, see Harry Y. Gamble *Books and Readers in the Early Church*.

²¹On the commonweal, see David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*.

devastation by settlers are all forms of land disablement that invariably wreak havoc on the land, spirit, livestock and bodies of Indigenous people.”²² Similar to war-borne disabling casualties,²³ an economic agenda supports colonizer rape of Indigenous peoples and their land for the purposes of capitalist gain, leaving Indigenous peoples with little recourse in courts managed by their oppressors and even less access to their native resources. Restoration of the land and sovereignty to Indigenous peoples would provide an important corrective to efforts of restorative and disability justice.

7. SCHOLAR ACTIVISTS IN LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL COALITIONS

I received a completely unexpected invitation to participate in a conference sponsored by the Council for World Mission,²⁴ EDAN (of the WCC), and CBM. I delivered the keynote address to “Building an Inclusive Community: Moving beyond Accommodation to Affirmation and Advocacy for People with Disabilities” in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 21 July 2014.²⁵ This address and the week of seminars that followed the opening plenary introduced me to the international initiatives among Christian churches and the WCC to advance the cause of inclusion as a mission imperative for their own and their denominations’ integrity. The conference received financial support from and presence of executive members of the CBM, one of the organizations that contributed to the WHO Report and a continuing presence in working towards a disability inclusive world [23,28,29].

I was humbled by the invitation, by Church leaders in attendance—among them many individuals with disability—in their work of advocacy and inclusion, and by the equal regard for and hands-on commitment to improving the lives of PWD. From this experience and my continuing interest in the work of the Council for World Mission, EDAN/WCC, and CBM, I realize the dearth of scholars who are building coalitions on the pressing needs of working with and for PWD in the trenches of Christian community life as well as in the broader national and international—ecclesial, economic, legal, political, and social—institutions of which we are all implicitly a part.

For Christian ethicists the challenge of putting moral imperatives into concrete action has evolved in fits and starts. I know that media personnel call upon many of us when an ethical quandary presents in the community, nation, or Globe and others of us may be asked to comment in our own congregational bodies. Yet, those responses may be guarded and our involvement curbed particularly when the subject involves our own communities. Mindful to not one-up or slight the local power structures of political or clerical authority where our research expertise may threaten, I suspect that many of us keep a low profile even when issues of local critical importance are exposed. However, it is to just such issues that we religion scholars ought to respond in activist solidarity with the authority earned by study and in service to the local, national, and international common good.

The WCC, UN, and WHO have made significant overtures on behalf of and with PWD, using their international platforms to recommend initiatives in the work of disability justice. As noted above, the likelihood of institutional powers to incorporate these initiatives depends on the construction of domestic, international, and ecclesiastic law. Still, it is to these efforts that informed activist scholarship in religion could be brought to bear on effective change.

The language and force of human rights present a compelling rationale for the contributions that religion scholars can make in these efforts. The challenge remains to engage concrete practices that will reflect international instruments like the UN Charter and WCC “Church of All.” Those practices have the potential to be locally and globally transformative.²⁶

To begin collaborative participation, religion scholar activists, in a necessary dialogue with PWD, can engage the inspiration and passion of their theologizing as a force of persuasion for what, in the language of ethics, could be argued is right and just in light of the common good. Next, informed by

²²Jaffe and Kelsey, “Disabling Bodies of/and Land,” 2.

²³See Iozzio, “The Ethical Implications of War-borne Disabling Casualties.”

²⁴On the partnership of churches in mission, see Council for World Mission, “Home,” 2014b.

²⁵On the 2014 conference, see Council for World Mission, “Justice and Witness,” 2014c; also Council for World Mission, “Affirmations,” 2014a.

²⁶On the foundations of this pragmatism, see Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics*.

collaboration with PWD, scholars can raise the insights of critical theory on the intersections of race, gender, and disability to construct frameworks tailored to particular contexts that motivate the (local) powers to think about all the people they serve and the goods owing to those most vulnerable or marginalized.²⁷ In this construction, scholars would be well advised to follow the recommendations in the “Position Paper” [4] and “Input” [17] for direct practical action.²⁸ With exposure of those contextual realities, scholars and their collaborators can work to mobilize their communities, utilizing, for example, the successful methods of ADAPT: a US “national grass-roots community that organizes disability rights activists to engage in nonviolent direct action, including civil disobedience, to assure the civil and human rights of people with disabilities” [30] Finally, as is true of most activist work, guard against fatigue and what appears as the slow pace of change by remembering the gains made in a relatively short period of time for women, racial minorities, and other marginalized people the world over, granted while the Parousia of these liberations is not yet realized it is nonetheless palpable, at least in part.

Regrettably, for many academics, including those working in religious ethics, disability is not on their professional or research radar. Even so, if as Christians believe, the Incarnate God, Jesus of Nazareth died by crucifixion then rose from death and was recognized in his resurrected body by the disabling wounds in his hands, head, feet, and side,²⁹ then Christian scholars have all the more reason to institutionalize disability justice in local, national, and international law. Minimally, Christian religion scholars can advocate on behalf of and for PWD as a class of persons who have been marginalized on account of their diversity in a world teeming with difference and whom the New Testament offers as the preferred companions of Jesus. Further, Jesus’ teaching about being neighborly, extending mercy to someone who has suffered injustice, and remaining attentive and accountable to what is right may offer additional incentive to get involved. While other examples could be cited, consider the example of Jesus’ teaching in the Beatitudes as a source for scholar-activism.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12) invite the hearer to ponder the ethical demands an eschatological future holds to Christians for the task of discipleship here and now. As such, the sayings refer to the already-but-not-yet future about which all of our lives are subject until our last breath and the kingdom come. This reading “calls for both active response within the community and attentiveness toward the ultimate end” [31]. While it is a stretch to suggest that each of the Beatitudes directs Christian religion scholars to social activism, surely “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Mt 5:6), “Blessed are the merciful” (Mt 5:7), and “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt 5:9) could readily inspire scholars’ work in strengthening the local, national, and international coalitions working toward justice for PWD. Consequently, when theological ethicists take note of and injustice in the distribution of resources, access to critical services, or worse harms like abuse or neglect, therein a righteous anger stirs us to expose the wrong and to persevere against the powers and the odds against human flourishing, right order, and the common good. Similarly, when a neighbor lies forsaken Christians are instructed to reach out in loving care—to feed, to clothe, to visit—as well as to ensure that a network will continue provisions in our absence. Likewise, when scarcity threatens and war sabers rattle we remind ourselves of the peace-shalom that comes in abundance with right relationship between all peoples and the cosmos that sustains us. In the ways that these scenarios goad Christians to action on behalf of an individual so ought we to be goaded on behalf of a class of persons in coalitions for justice at local, national, and international levels. Further, the Rabbinic tradition calls us to recognize, particularly with insights from the Prophet Isaiah, just how tightly bound are the will-to-power and disability. “When we insist on treating disability as a “defect” of an individual body, we miss how disability can be scripted onto entire populations, the way bodily devastation is writ large through social and structural violence. Treating disability solely as an exceptional accident of fate veils the relationship between disability and violence, between disablement, domination and colonial power.”³⁰

²⁷On contemporary critical theory and scholar activism, see Julia Sudbury and Margo Okazawa-Rey, *Activist Scholarship*; also Charles R. Hale, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*.

²⁸On social practice theology, see Val Williams, et al, “Understanding Disabling Barriers.”

²⁹On the disabling crucifixion and the resurrected Christ, see Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God*.

³⁰Julia Watts Belser, “Violence, Disability, and the Politics of Healing,” 191.

8. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The tradition of the common good and preferential justice serves as an antidote to stigma, austere policy setting, and decision-making on international efforts to assure communal resource allocation in reference to people with disability. Rather than the dominant normative assumptions about disablement, diversity more accurately describes the human condition inclusive of people with disability and the nondisabled alike. From a start with diversity, instead of denigration difference will be appreciated. From a start with diversity, everyone's needs for common goods will be measured by a preferential option for those who today may need more but tomorrow less so as to flourish. For those who have long-suffered under dominant ways and means, this antidote begins to remedy injustice.

People with disability defy the expectations of homogeneity and normative hegemony assumed in the development and imposition of norms and standards; as a result of their embodied diversity, PWD have been othered and stigmatized by dominant narratives. The UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* recognizes "that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" [32]. CRPD signatories have resolved "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity" [32]. The World Health Organization notes the diversity of gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, ethnicity, and/or cultural heritage among people with disability, and that "the disability experience resulting from the interaction of health conditions, personal factors, and environmental factors varies greatly" [4]. Disability Studies literature, led by scholars with disability or scholars with family members and/or friends with disability, and their allies, confirms: the experience of disability is multifarious and the experience of disadvantage multidimensional [33-75].

Disability Studies challenges the historical trajectory and portrayal of disability in religious literature (as a curse owing to one's own or another's sins), in legal and policy determinations (determining who is entitled to what), and in the hermeneutic assumptions of structural and social conditions that have othered people with disability from a presumed normative main. These histories depict people with many different kinds of disability as deviant. Such depictions prize conformity, homogeneity, and symmetry that permit social and legal discrimination against diversity and reinforce hegemonic normativity. Consequently, people with disability have been and continue to be othered by the nondisabled-normate,³¹ revealing discomfort with creation's kaleidoscopic diversity.³² Sadly, this discomfort and opposition to the remedial efforts of the CRPD [32], Civil Rights Act (1964) [76], Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) [77], as well as the efforts for accommodation and inclusion by ecclesial communities remains considerably widespread nationally and internationally.³³ The academy of scholars working in Religion and Disability Studies is encouraged to take up the cause beyond our research, writing, and teaching, to bring our insights to bear on local, national, and international efforts, including support for developments in law to build activist coalitions of and for disability justice, now.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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³²On human and creation's diversity, see Iozzio, "Norms Matter."

³³On the unfinished work of legislation concerning civil rights in the United States, see Iozzio, "God Bends Over Backwards to Accommodate Humankind."

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A Case Study on Students' Experiences of PBL in Macroeconomics at Higher Education in Trinidad and Tobago

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ABSTRACT

This research highlights the experiences of sixteen undergraduates who studied Macroeconomics at a higher education institution in Trinidad and Tobago called Prestigious College. The students used the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach for the first time and were extremely excited and anxious about learning through the use of the PBL strategy. Furthermore, they were quite willing to deviate from the traditional instructional method to accept the PBL. A review of the existing literature within the local context, indicated that there is a dearth of information about the experiences of these undergraduates who study Macroeconomics, using the PBL approach at Prestigious College. Hence, their voices and opinions about their experiences are absolutely necessary since they can be a catalyst for the proper creation of policy and implementation of PBL in this country. Moreover, their voices and opinions answer the research question: What are students' experiences with Problem-Based Learning in the study of Macroeconomics at Prestigious College? Consequently, an action research which used a case study was employed to adequately ascertain their experiences. It involved semi-structured interviews with four focus groups. Data were collected, collated, analyzed, and narrated using two major themes: PBL motivates learners and PBL facilitates self-directed learners. Recommendations strongly advocating student-centered strategies were also offered.

Keywords: Problem-based learning; focus group; macroeconomics.

1. INTRODUCTION

"PBL encourages persons to assist each other." "PBL leads to a better understanding."

"It was a different learning experience. I was motivated to do the work."

These voices mentioned above undoubtedly express some of the experiences of sixteen undergraduates who were actively involved in the study of Macroeconomics using a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach, over twelve weeks. They were eager and excited about this new and innovative learning strategy and gave it their full cooperation. Furthermore, they were quite willing to sacrifice the traditional method to experience this innovation called PBL. Carless [1] and Yueting Xu [2] suggests that these experiences coupled with constructive feedback often motivate students to accomplish and achieve their desired goals.

This research is an investigation about the experiences of these students who pursued a Macroeconomics course at Prestigious College. It is instructive to note that Macroeconomics is one of the core courses for students who read for a Bachelor of Education Degree, and it is imperative that they pass it, in order to graduate. After much deliberation at the management level PBL became the preferred method of instruction at Prestigious College. However frequent informal discussions and

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observations of lecturers teaching Macroeconomics, disclosed that the more common form of teaching is the traditional teacher-centered approach. A review of the literature revealed that the teaching of Macroeconomics using the PBL instructional approach at this institution has never been explored and officially recorded. In addition, the experiences of these students were never documented. This dearth of information led to the case study on students' experiences who use PBL in the study of Macroeconomics at Prestigious College. Too often policies in education at Prestigious College are implemented with little or no consultation with students. Thus, the principal objective of this study is to allow them to express their opinions freely and honestly. In this way, their experiences could influence and assist policy makers if more programmes are realized through PBL. Hence, this study could help to point a possible way forward especially if more PBL options are offered.

Since qualitative research focuses chiefly on the naturalistic approach, it was chosen to conduct this research. More specifically, a case study, which incorporated semi-structured interviews was also utilized with four focus groups. Moreover, it was best suited to properly understand and accurately answer the research question: What are students' experiences with Problem-Based Learning in the study Macroeconomics at Prestigious College? In this discourse PBL was explained and a justification for action research was offered. Data collection procedures were outlined, data analysis process was described, findings were extensively explained and narrated with the use of two major themes: PBL motivates learners and PBL facilitates self-directed learners. Recommendations advocating the use of more student-centered strategies were offered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Problem-Based Learning (PBL): The literature states that Problem-Based Learning (PBL) was first coined in 1969 at the Mc Master University in Canada [3,4]. It is fundamentally grounded in constructivism, which is a 20th century philosophical approach [5]. Constructivism is chiefly based on the premise that knowledge is constructed through interactions among a group of learners. This ought to be done through proper collaboration among peers in pursuit of the solution of original real-world problems [6].

Thus, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) represents a distinct and complete shift in the education process. According to the literature it involves moving away from the traditional instruction approach which is generally focused on the instructor in favour of a more student-centered one [7,8]. Hence, to concretize this student-centered method, PBL offers three distinctive features: authentic experiences, self-directed learning, and group work [9].

The first feature, which comprises authentic experiences, assists students in comprehending the context within which the knowledge is to be applied. The basis of this learning task is problem formulation and a deliberate attempt to find solutions to it. The facilitator begins the process by presenting a real-world problem. This initiative stimulates dynamism, provokes cognition, and motivates students to pursue solutions to the open-ended problem [10].

As noted in the literature, self-directed learning, the second feature, permits students to take responsibility for their own learning [6]. However, they must be aware of their knowledge gaps and own limitations. They also need to accumulate all possible information necessary. This includes their wealth of experiences as well as all learning and skills gathered from other courses. In addition, they must engage in relevant research to gather pertinent information and thus, solve the problem.

Group work, the third criteria encourage and motivates students to actively engage with their peers. In doing so they freely express their opinions and ideas. Learning becomes dynamic and engaging and thus, cognition is evident [6].

In addition to Problem-Based learning, recent educational innovations also endorse the following two learning strategies: the flat classroom project [11], and the flipped classroom model [12]. The flat classroom project is a global collaborative initiative, for students in the United States school grades 3 to 12, which uses Web 2.0 tools to promote international creative collaboration and communication between students in classrooms around the world. The flipped classroom promotes a form of blended

learning. In this model, the orthodox teaching approach is inverted, with students getting their instruction in the evening at home by watching pre-recorded lectures at their own pace, but still able to communicate with classmates and the instructor online [12]. They complete discussions, homework, laboratories, and tests in class under the teacher's guidance.

During a Dakar conference prominent academics revised the framework for action to meet basic learning needs for all by 2015. They also strongly advocated that there ought to be change with instructional approaches [13,14]. Furthermore, they recommended that tertiary level instructors devote more meaningful time to teaching and make greater use of student-centered learning methods. In addition, they suggested that less focus be placed on explicit instruction [13,15].

This student-centered approach is a direct result of innovation and research through educators who had a keen interest in promoting best practices at higher education [13,14,16]. The call to implement student-centered education was accepted globally. Traditional education which tends to stereotype students as 'surface' learners was also questioned [17,13,15]. The numerous calls for changes in instructional approaches caused international investigations into the learning styles and classroom behavior of students. Some studies have concluded that students portray themselves as mainly a homogeneous group of passive learners who rely on rote learning and memorization [18,13]. They lack critical thinking skills and are not "deep learners" [13]. Darling-Hammond [19] clearly highlighted that classroom instruction and improvement in teaching are receiving increased attention in colleges and universities worldwide. Moreover, researchers have reported that the study of Economics discouraged cooperation among students, who tend to prefer to work on their own, rather than in groups, in order to understand and clarify difficult concepts [20,18]. Hence, these and other findings should be tested via studies in the local context. The following segment describes a typical PBL intervention at Prestigious College.

A typical PBL intervention was generally conducted during one semester. The first two weeks of the PBL sessions, are aimed at introducing and training the students in their new roles. They receive training as: group leaders, note takers and presenters. A review of the literature suggested that PBL classes begin with the facilitators presenting a group of students with complex problems [21]. These problems must satisfy two basic criteria. One, they require more information because they are ill-defined. Two they are complex and thus, do not have a single correct answer. Hence, students must be willing to be flexible and collaborate because new information is constantly generated during classes. Moreover, this dynamic process fosters interest as well as stimulates controversy because it is open-ended, complex and requires students to participate fully [6]. In keeping with the criteria suggested by previous authors, students were given ill-defined and open-ended problems during this Macroeconomics study. It is against this background that this qualitative research was conducted.

3. METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Qualitative research: Tewksbury [22] together with Leedy and Ormrod [23] stated that qualitative research provides in-depth, detailed information and explores issues in their particular scenario. They further stated that it attempts to clarify issues and gain deep insight by asking questions such as: How many times? In what ways? Why so regularly? Similarly, Meyer [24] noted that action research involves a cyclical process of data collection, reflection, and analysis and maintained that the strength of this research lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems. Furthermore, it also empowers practitioners, by getting them to actively engage in the research [25]. Reason and Bradbury (2006) described action research as an approach that is used in designing studies and it also seeks both to inform and influence practice. Creswell [26] alluded to the fact that qualitative research is useful because researchers can explore and comprehend in greater detail what respondents convey. Since one of the principal aims of qualitative research is to explore, understand and represent the experiences, and actions of participants, it was specifically chosen for this research. Action research, in particular the naturalistic perspective, was also considered. Data were collected during a semester and also during the normal teaching/learning interactions. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also utilized.

Semi-structured interviews: Before the data collection process, a semi-structured interview was designed and scheduled. Each of the four focus groups was interviewed separately and interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes. This was deliberately done to heed the guidelines of Robson [27]. He stated that although interviews can be time consuming, 30 to 45 minutes allow participants the comfort and flexibility to speak freely. Hence, they are more likely to yield valuable and pertinent information. Conversely, interviews that extend beyond an hour may reduce participants' willingness to be a part of the research.

Semi-structured interviews provided a clearer understanding of the experiences of these students. Interviews were carefully selected because researchers felt that they would allow students to speak without inhibition and thus, address the research question: What are students' experiences with Problem- Based Learning in the study Macroeconomics at Prestigious College? Thus, semi-structured interviews with four focus groups were selected because they allowed researchers to explore experiences and opinions among students.

Semi-structured interviews gave students the great freedom to communicate spontaneously. In addition, researchers were also able to interact directly with them and thus seek clarification with follow-up questions. They also allowed researchers to gain information from verbal and non-verbal responses. In this way researchers were able to comprehend the nuances which added a deeper level of meaning. Furthermore, these responses addressed the research question: What are students' experiences with Problem-Based Learning in the study of Macroeconomics at Prestigious College?

During the interview process, notes of the various responses of students were documented immediately. Interviews were transcribed as soon as they were completed. This was deliberately used to improve accuracy and maintain the integrity of the data collected [26].

The experiences of students were transcribed into an Excel worksheet for easy retrieval, reading, coding and placing into themes, closely following the stages outlined by Creswell [26]. Two general headings emerged: PBL motivates learners and, PBL facilitates self-directed learners.

The interview process also allowed the researchers to gather demographic data from participants: Age range, gender, marital status and enrolment status. Students' previous experiences with PBL were recorded as a categorical variable for further analysis. Data collection was done through regular and consistent fieldwork. The days and the hours of contact were deliberately chosen to accommodate the students. Data were collected during students' time-table allocation for their study of Macroeconomics.

To complement this research, a case study was chosen because it was felt that this research strategy would provide an in-depth multi-faceted understanding about the experiences of these 16 undergraduates (prospective teachers) who were reading a course in Macroeconomics for their first degree, in their natural context.

Case Studies: They are holistic inquiries that seek to investigate a specific phenomenon within its natural setting. They are suitable for description, explanation and exploratory into arbitrary issues. According to Yin [28] case studies explain, describe, illustrate, and enlighten. Yin [28] also stated that they are empirical investigations and are chiefly based on knowledge and experience. They are also apt methods of qualitative research that intensely investigate a particular phenomenon within a specific context. In a similar way, Smith (1978, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, [25]) posited that case studies are versatile and dynamic and provides a thorough and detailed examination of a phenomenon. It is also an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit. Thus, Cohen, Morrison and Manion [29] described it as an inquiry into precise scenarios within a real-life situation. To accentuate transparency, reliability and validity were maintained.

Reliability and Validity: Pilot and Beck (2014, cited in Connelly, [30]) hold the firm view that reliability in qualitative studies refers to the level of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to support the quality. Additionally, Leung (2015, cited in Kee, [31]) stated reliability in qualitative research refers to exact replicability of the processes and the results. Thus, to enhance consistency,

intercoder reliability was established. A high level of intercoder reliability indicated that both reliability and replicability were present, and these strengthen evidence that the results of this qualitative study were scientifically valid (Kurasaki, 2000, cited in Mac Phail et al., [32]).

On the other hand, validity in qualitative research refers to the degree that the research measures what it purports to measure. It is not a single state, but rather the extent to which the researcher reports on data accurately [29].

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Demographic Characteristics	Sub-categories	Percentages
Age Group (years)	21-25	68.75
	26-30	25
	31-35	6.25
Gender	Female	81.25
	Male	18.75
Marital Status	Single	87.5
	Married	12.5
Enrolment Status	Full-time	87.5
	Part-time	12.5
Educational Attainment	O' Levels	100
	Economics O' Level	6.25
	Economics A' Level	6.25

Thus, to ensure a high level of reliability and validity, responses from semi-structured interviews were immediately recorded and clearly documented into the EXCEL 2007 programme. In addition, participants were provided with a copy of the transcribed notes from audio recordings that enabled them to review detailed interview responses and hence verify accuracy. This continuous member-checking was employed to enhance the reliability and validity processes.

To further enhance the validity of the findings of this qualitative research, careful thought was given to data reproduction. This enhanced the true sentiments and experiences of students [29]. The following segment provides a description and background information of the students and explains how data were analyzed.

4. DISCUSSION

Who are these students? As mentioned above, a total of sixteen students comprised the entire class population which participated in this research. Demographics are represented in Table 1.

The group was typically homogeneous in terms of their past knowledge on Macroeconomics. This added to the validity of the research since the lecturer did not have to address the idiosyncrasies among students. The only student who studied Macroeconomics at A' level was also the oldest in the group. In addition, he was unable to vividly recall some of the subject content during the semester. Variations reflected in the demographics also added to the richness in the data collected.

Duration of time using PBL strategies: Mention must be made that this was the first time that all sixteen students experienced the PBL strategy. They were all third-year undergraduates who read a Macroeconomics course. As documented in the introduction the duration of the course was one semester. There were fourteen sessions and classes were held on Monday from 12:30 - 3:30 p.m. On the thirteenth session, students had a final examination on the course content. On the fourteenth session, focus group interviews were held and during that interview they unanimously acclaimed that PBL motivates learners.

Analysis of data: A serious challenge lay in the effort to analyze accurately the experiences of these students, because very often their ideas were complex and complicated accounts and could only be best understood within their context. Since some of their perspectives were often couched in profound stories, in trying to analyze data researchers had to consider the form and context of these voices. To a large extent this involved examining how they conveyed their experiences. Researchers examined certain words, sentences, and linguistic features and focused attention on the way certain "slangs" were used. In addition, researchers paid close attention to when things were said, why they were said, and how they were said within the social context, to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of these sixteen students.

The analysis presented in this research took a narrative form and used examples from the data to clarify issues and to show the relationship between analysis and the given context. This narrative form reflects its ever-developing nature as it describes the two major components of the students' experiences: PBL motivates learners and PBL facilitates self-directed learners.

PBL motivates learners: During the interview process students stated that PBL method was apt, succinct, and non-judgmental. Since feedback was timely it inspired them to maximize their performance. Moreover, it encouraged excellent group collaboration and hence they were better prepared for examinations. It is instructive to note that the students also mentioned that since the research was an integral part of their activities, it was also relevant, appropriate and thus, motivated them to excel. Two students remarked that PBL provided: "Good understanding of content." and it caused them to become: "More involved in the learning of work." These findings are consistent with that of Barrows [33]; Hmelo-Silver [34]; Norman and Schmidt [35]. They affirm that one of the chief objectives associated with PBL is that it fosters intrinsic motivation in learners.

The sixteen undergraduates undoubtedly noted that the collaborative nature of PBL inspired them to become more engaged and hence, involved them in self-directed learning. They also carefully pointed out that the encouragement to do research, the clearer understanding of content, and the better information retention experienced certainly motivated them to keep focused. Some of them even remarked that they were: "... able to do the exam better." This is the exceeding satisfaction that students encountered with the PBL strategy. One student claimed that she: "Received a lot of feedback." Yet another enjoyed the PBL because: "Research was a part of our activities." During one of the group activities a student remarked that it encouraged 'social loafing.' This is a particularly important and valid statement. As this same student continued to actively participate more in group activities, his perspective changed. He viewed the PBL as a catalyst.

In the discussions with the focus groups, students were quite spontaneous and open with their responses. Some mentioned that: "Macroeconomics is hard, so we need more than board instructions." The way this statement was coined, coupled with the tone of voice clearly alerted researchers to the fact that these students were genuinely seeking motivation and encouragement. This was an extremely salient and potent message since it underscored the fact that learners were really motivated. Although they were somewhat dubious as to whether or not their appreciation for one instructional approach was superseded by PBL, nonetheless it motivated them to continue and thus maintain their focus. Similarly, when probed, they also admitted that although the language of Macroeconomics was not as straightforward as other disciplines such as Psychology, learning through the PBL method provided a tremendous source of encouragement. These three students provided an apt summary when they mentioned that PBL:

"Encouraged me to be responsible for my learning." "Encouraged good group collaboration."
"Encouraged collaboration."

Huei-Chen and Blanchard [36] also described PBL as one of those learning methods that motivates, incorporates, and engages students in the learning process. This also concurs corroborates some of the findings. The next segment continues to highlight the experiences of students using the heading: PBL facilitates self-directed learners.

PBL facilitates self-directed learners: Self-directed learning is normally conducted in a non-threatening environment. The students affirm that self-directed learning empowers and encourages them to become autonomous and take initiatives that will further foster their learning. They state that they can choose their learning styles, set their goals and ideals and sometimes conduct research independently. These experiences coincide with that of Akhand [37]. His research revealed that when students are taught in a self-directed atmosphere and are afforded autonomy, their learning becomes exciting to such an extent that their esteem is boosted. Moreover, their cognition is heightened and performance increases. According to this research, self-directed learning has become a key focus in academic arena since it informs institutional success and PBL underscores this fact. Thus, these undergraduates claimed that while success is attained it becomes more meaningful when it is self-directed.

The concept of self-directed learning has been defined differently among experts. The main understanding in this discourse is that students are actively engaged in the teaching/ learning process [38]. The effectiveness of PBL on increasing students' educational attainments has been extensively studied for higher education students in non-experimental settings [39,40]. Outcomes of self-directed studies indicated a significant positive effect on student achievements, motivation and hence student autonomy. Dos Santos, Padovan Otani, da Rocha and Sanches Marin [41] undertook a theoretical and integrated literature review from four databases between 2010-2015. Their analysis of 36 articles disclosed that PBL enables student improvement of autonomy for learning, critical thinking skills and motivation for learning.

In this case study, students unanimously expressed a great satisfaction with the use of PBL since it encouraged self-directed learning. They undoubtedly stated that it really caused them to reflect profoundly on course content. Thus, it stimulated their minds and broadened their horizons to such a degree that they were able to properly engage in self-learning. Aristidou [42] wrote comprehensively on the academic benefits and limitations of the PBL in his personal experience in the teaching of Mathematics. He stated that from his participation in a group observation and feedback from schools, they found that PBL enhanced pupils' skills, and thus fostered self-directed learning.

The four focus group students affirmed that self-directed learning also provided them with a deeper understanding of certain complex concepts. They described it as a renaissance and a new awakening since it was a different learning experience. They were motivated to do the work as well as they were encouraged to be responsible for their own learning. It further allowed them to ponder and unravel issues both individually and collectively. Many students supported both individual and group learning since they claimed that it motivated and encouraged them as well as heightened their leadership skills and thus, reinforced the fact that PBL is really ideal for self-directed learners [41,43,44]. This reality was confirmed when a student stated that PBL enhanced: "Leadership role." The students were also of the firm opinion that the study group formed during classes assisted them to think and perceive concepts beyond the learning experiences. Hence, they unanimously claimed that PBL definitely facilitates self-directed learners. The undergraduates gave high prominence to the following experiences: They worked in groups, they engaged in private and individual study during class time, and they used the internet as a source of reference material. Thus, the effective use of technology greatly enhanced the PBL strategies. The focus group findings also suggested that the students held positive views of the PBL since it fostered autonomy and self-directedness in the study of Macroeconomics.

Students stated that because PBL focuses on self-directed learning it enhanced their overall cognitive skills. Furthermore, they were able to think independently and hence became more responsible for their own learning. This outcome had significant implications for effective and sustained learning among the 16 undergraduate students in Macroeconomics.

PBL is important for these students because they are expected to be well equipped with numerous skills. Inherent in the PBL approach is content mastery. This means that students acquire knowledge and are in a better position to apply and share it. This is accomplished when they work in a collaborate and cooperative manner. In this way they are to assume responsibility for their own learning and engage in self-evaluation. As the participants stated, this PBL approach not only fosters

self-directed learning, in fact, it has the potential to equip learners with multiple skills such as: problem-solving and creativity. Developing and inculcating these skills are necessary for these prospective teachers since they would have to execute them regularly in their profession.

Albanese and Mitchell [45] concluded that students who experience PBL, study differently from those with exposure to the traditional learning. Moreover, PBL students are self-directed learners. They are less likely to ask the teacher questions for information which they need to understand the content of the course. PBL students - because they are self-directed learners are more likely to use the library and other resources to study and appear to seek more resources to understand the content of the problem they are required to solve [45]. Arul [7], Liu et al [46] together with Mergendoller et al [18] reported on students' PBL experiences of self-directed learning, information retention, enhancing personal skills and collaborative learning. Much of what they described was exhibited by the students in this study. The following three students aptly captured the significance of the use of PBL. They further mentioned that it is ideal for self-directed learners:

"Allows for independent and group thinking at the same time."

"It causes students to engage in self-learning."

"PBL encourages persons to assist each other."

5. CONCLUSION

Action research afforded researchers the great flexibility to interact informally with these sixteen undergraduates in their natural environment. Moreover, it also allowed the students to speak freely and spontaneously about their own experiences as they relate to the PBL strategies. Semi-structured interviews assisted researchers to maintain the focus and thus answer the research question. Data were collected, collated, and documented in a narrative form using two thematic headings: PBL motivates learners and, PBL facilitates self-directed learners. Recommendations advocating for the use of more student-centered education were offered.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregone the following recommendations are suggested:

- More PBL learning strategies ought to be implemented in various courses for undergraduate students.
- Tertiary education students should be provided with more self-directed learning opportunities.
- A combination of traditional teaching and PBL should be offered for Macroeconomics

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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A Genre-based Study of Insurance Sales Agent-Client Interactions in Transformational China's Rural Areas: A Prospective Approach

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ABSTRACT

Based on 10 authentic audio-recorded data, the study aims to explore the dynamics of the insurance sales agent-client interactions in transformational China's rural areas from a socio-cultural perspective. It sets out from generalizing the specific discursive patterns from moves and steps [1,2] of the utterances made in the agent-client interactions, governed by communicative purposes. The first move, warming up, deserves more attention as it serves crucial function in the interactions. The paper delineates the different types and functions of warming up, and relates them to the underlying operating mechanism of rural agent-client interactions; another vital move, establishing credentials and trust, has also been analyzed in details, since trust is the pillar stone in the conclusion of insurance sales. Through the analysis, the study aims to depict the transforming nature of the modern Chinese rural society, where old and traditional value system has been, for a large part, demolished, while new value system is yet to be established.

Keywords: Rural China; insurance sales; move; trust; transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes the dialogues between insurance sales agents and their clients from the perspective of genre analysis. More specifically, it studies the communicative purposes, moves and steps [3,2] of the insurance sales interactions in transformational rural China. The purpose is to uncover the dynamics of agent-prospect interaction in transformational rural China, represented by several villages in central China.

Insurance is a core institution of a society increasingly organized around managing risk. As Beck [4] argues, risk society is also an individual society. The utilization of insurance sales agents' identity to achieve economic goals interact with key contemporary social tendencies: the responsabilization of the individual consumer, the erosion of the social safety net, fragmentation, individualism and the attenuation of family ties, the growth of a "flexible" labor force, and the downloading of regulatory responsibility from the government. Until recently, the hidden world of insurance has received surprisingly little attention from social scientists [5,6]. Most academic research on insurance has been done by economists and researchers in business and finance. Nonetheless, insurance studies have recently emerged as a blossoming field for other researchers, especially in sociology, socio-legal studies and criminology [7,6,8], Ericson et al, 2003; [9,10,11]. In China, research on insurance are mostly from economic, business and financial perspective, their primary interest is to investigate the current situations in China's insurance industry and offer certain suggestions to improve the efficiency and profitability of the insurance institutions from political, economic and marketing perspectives [12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21]. Similar interests in this area also emerge [14], they adopt a sociological perspective and put insurance into social, economic and cultural contexts, then study the inter-relationship among them to consider the interaction between insurance and many other social,

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economic and cultural factors. However, such studies are still rather on the macro aspect and lack of empirical evidence, which gives rise to this study to investigate the more micro-aspect of insurance sales interactions in transformational rural China. Moreover, there are several problems in their research. To begin with, their research seems rather general and adopts a top-down approach. Secondly, most of their research is based on academic reasoning and previous literature, with very few offer empirical evidence, which might create a problem in its convincing effect. Thirdly, the stance they take is on the behalf of the organizations, they neglect the other side, that is, the agents in action and their clients. They take them as strictly passive recipients of the actions, which in reality might not be exactly the case.

Therefore, there is an urgent and imperative need which calls for concern in studying insurance that is based on sociological theories or concepts, yet can be analyzed into greater details and offer empirical evidence. The dialogues between insurance sales agents and clients, a contemporary genre situated on the boundary between public/organizational genre and promotional genre, are relatively under-researched and marginalized. The present study is such an endeavor intended to fill the gap and try to strike a balance between macro- and micro- studies for the purpose of revealing the hidden world of insurance sales discourse in transformational China's rural areas. Swales and Rogers [22] indicate that studies of organizational genre "offer a dialogic middle way of thinking about social control and human agency, reproduction and innovation, coercion and resistance, model and instance, and linguistic form and institutional setting". Moreover, as Drew and Heritage claim, interaction is a dynamic process and language is a crucial resource in managing social relations at work [23], thus an interesting question emerges: how is language employed to serve the realization of insurance sales in rural China?

2. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Based on 10 authentic naturally occurring conversations between insurance sales agents and their prospective clients, the chief methodology is discourse analysis, focusing on conversational analysis at the micro-analytic level. In sociolinguistics or business English studies [24,25] and cross-cultural/intercultural pragmatic studies [26], data are generally collected in a controlled and selective way and the focus is always on one or several types of speech acts. As Huo [27] noted, it is preferred that the type of data for such research be collected in a natural, uncontrolled way in that we did not confine ourselves to a certain type of data but include all instances of dynamics in our corpus. As Sacks et al. [28], Heritage [29], Jefferson [30] and many other researchers [31,29,32,33], many analysts have studied mundane social action and have achieved desired results in such areas of discourse organization as turn organization [34,35,26,37], Repair organization [38]. Other scholars study the structure of social interaction [39,40,41], intra-cultural communication in various languages [42] and intercultural communication studies [43,44,15]. Regarding Chinese data used in CA approach, most of it focuses on Cantonese [46,47,48,49]. However, their findings on Chinese communication may not satisfactorily explain the interaction pattern and linguistic features specific to the Mainland Chinese due to the data they collect and use for their analysis.

The data collected are recordings of conversations between insurance sales agents and their prospective clients at their homes, tea houses, meeting rooms or other places where the conversations take place during 2009 to 2013 (about 80 hours, 50 conversations in total). The selected data for the analysis are 10 conversations between 5 agents and their clients, while others are used for triangulation purpose. The data have been transcribed by the author himself according to the conventions of Conversation Analysis for discourse analysis purposes. Some of them involve two agents (the more experienced agent accompanies the less experienced one to visit their clients); some of them involve more than one client (their families or relatives may be present). In general, some of them involve two participants; some others may involve several participants since the conversations are rather informal in nature and there could be the prospects' relatives or friends present during the conversations. Their names, and some specific names of their products and their prices were replaced by pseudonyms or "X"s.

The procedure of analysis mainly starts from the transcriptions, followed by transcription study to identify some recurrent phenomena across the transcribed conversations. The procedures include:

Listening to the data—classifying the data—selecting the data—transcribing the selected data—studying the data for recurrent phenomena—in-depth discourse analysis of the excerpts by focusing on the phenomena—making cultural and linguistic interpretations of the analyzed phenomena—studying the interpersonal preferences—generating implications from the analysis.

The analysis is mainly qualitative, but supported by a quantitative approach with numerical evidence. A qualitative approach is applied first with an aim to discover and reconstruct patterns in insurance sales discourse. The data are examined for emerging patterns and language use that reflect the most striking features of the Chinese insurance sales agents in terms of discourse conventions, cultural patterns and values and linguistic manifestations in the sales process. The qualitative findings help to provide background information on the context and subject, acting as an aid for scale construction [50]. The quantitative findings were applied to provide the basis for qualitative study with an aim to generate and frame the preferred patterns and linguistic choice in insurance sales discourse.

In the analysis, the author studied the organizational structure and corresponding linguistic features of the data, then the author examined the data by focusing on identified phenomena and counting the frequency rate of each feature/phenomena to generate the global structure of insurance sales interactions and generic socio-pragmatic preferences of the participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We found that insurance sales is promotional in nature. As many other promotional efforts, it shares some common features such as certain communicative purposes, moves and steps, however, it has some particular features of its own. Moreover, the agents are one member of the professional community of insurance sales, who are well aware of the intent, positioning, form and functional value of the communicative purposes through their training and experience sharing meetings, simply put, their socialization. They can consciously or sometimes unconsciously exploit such constraints in their interactions with their prospect clients to achieve their intentions of concluding the sales.

3.1 Communicative Purposes

Communicative purpose is essential in determining the genre category of any given material, as Askehave and Swales [1] put it, it “has been used as an important and often primarily criterion for whether a particular discourse falls within a particular generic category”.

We can summarize the communicative purposes according to Bhatia's summary of sales promotion letters (Bhatia, 1993) as follows:

- Insurance policies are generally addressed to those potential customers who are known to have some need (immediate or future) for the product or service being promoted. Therefore, the most important function of the agent-prospect interaction is to offer a clear, objective and attractive introduction to the products or service in terms of the perceived interests, needs or inhibitions of the potential customer.
- Due to the rampant advertisement present in everyday life and most interactions are unsolicited, the busy working people nowadays are not likely to bother to waste their precious time on such promotional efforts, thus the interaction must be short and effective, mostly repetitive. However, this requirement contradicts sharply to another: there should be enough details about the promoted product or service in the introduction for those interested customers who already have some need for or intention to buy the product or service. Therefore, the interactions vary according to different (prospective clients), nonetheless, most insurance sales are done between familiars in rural China, trust plays a significant role, and trust building process is time-consuming, therefore, the vast majority of the interactions are repetitive.
- Insurance agents serve as the first link or communication channel between an insurance company and a prospective client. In this respect, they are generally seen as initiating business relations between the two parties. Therefore, the initial interactions need to solicit further communication between the two parties. There should be some ways by which the insurance

company can be contacted, in this specific context, the agent is seen as the embodiment of the insurance company.

With the above communicative purposes identified, for most of the time, the agents as one member of the professional community, they are well aware of the intent, positioning, form and functional value of the communicative purposes through their training and experience sharing meetings, simply put, their socialization. They can consciously or sometimes unconsciously exploit such constraints in their interaction with their prospect clients to achieve their intentions of concluding the sales. Next, it is important to discover the generic patterns in their sales efforts and communication with their (prospective) clients.

3.2 Moves and Steps

The moves and steps of the dialogues between insurance sales agent and prospective client can be generalized as follows:

Move 1: Warming up

Move 2: Introducing the offer

Step 1: Offering the product or service

Step 2: Essential detailing of the offer

Step 3: Indicating value of the offer

Move 3: Offering incentives

Move 4: Establishing credentials

Move 5: Enclosing documents

Move 6: Soliciting response

Move 7: Using pressure tactics

Move 8: Ending politely

The above summarizes the moves and steps in the dialogues between insurance sales agent and prospective client, in terms of their flexibility, move 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 are obligatory moves, while the others are optional ones. It differs from Bhatia's (1993) model for sales promotion letters in several aspects. First of all, for sales promotion letters, move 1 is establishing credentials, while for insurance sales dialogues, move 1 is warming up, this is the most significant difference between sales promotion letters and insurance sales dialogues.

Bhatia's (1993) seven moves analysis offers an excellent exemplar to refer to in the analysis of the dialogues between the insurance agent and the prospective client, it would prove quite useful and powerful in generalizing the general discursive patterns in the agent-client interactions. Consequently, the generalized generic patterns would be useful not only for the present study to lay its foundation of analysis in probing into the hidden world of insurance and the complex dynamics in transformational rural China, but also for insurance practitioners in improving their performance. However, owing to differences in oral and written language and the specific contextual factors, insurance sales dialogues in transformational rural China do have their own particular generic structure in terms of moves and steps despite the fact that both of them are promotional in nature, their similar communicative purposes of trying to achieve the sales of the product or service in general. For example, in insurance sales dialogues, there is this one obligatory move at each and every dialogue, that is warming-up or greeting each other/small talk (hereinafter as warming-up), which is exactly one of the most interesting parts that reveals the dynamics of insurance sales in rural China.

3.2.1 Warming Up

The first move, warming up is the most distinctive and obligatory move in all collected samples and it has important functions. Move 1 is found in all the collected data, since the whole insurance sales is initiated on the basis of the familiarity between agent and client. Though move 1 can be in different forms, it is obligatory in nature, which serves as a starting point.

From the analysis of the dialogues and the sample dialogue above, the most striking finding is that in each and every dialogue, actually in each and every interaction between the agent and the prospect, it is imperative to have the first obligatory move—warming up, different from Bhatia's (1993) analysis of promotion letters with the first obligatory move as Establishing Credentials. It may be argued that this is due to the differences between written communication and oral communication. It is quite natural and important for people to greet each other before they talk about anything else.

3.2.1.1 Types of Warming Up

Warming up serves an important function in insurance sales agent-client interactions, and it distinguishes itself from other sales encounters. For most of the time, they appear in the form of phatic talk, while phatic expression, first introduced by Malinowski [51] as one whose only function is to perform a social talk, as opposed to conveying information, or in other words, people use language to establish and maintain social contact in free, purposeless social talks. Such a view is echoed by Anthony (1964), "speech to promote human warmth", since for good or ill, we are social creatures and cannot bear to be cut off too long from our fellows, even if we have nothing really to say to them, and "phatic communication refers also to trivial and obvious exchanges about the weather and time, made up of ready-made sentences or foreseeable statements... Therefore this is a type of communication establishes a contact without transmitting a precise content, where the container is more important than the content." [52] Nonetheless, phatic communication serves as "important social lubricant" [53], in the words of Goffman [54], "The gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps in fact the fullest things of all". Phatic communication can occur in three categories of the conversations, that is, at the beginning, at the end and at anywhere as a space filler. Phatic communication is of great significance for insurance sales communication in the sense that it is exactly, for most of the time, where Guanxi dynamics (local interpersonal relationships) perform. Now the specific types of warming up used in agent-client dialogues are summarized as follows.

Greetings. Most commonly seen between agent and client who are not familiar with each other or first time meeting introduced through a third party. "XXX, Hi!" ("XXX, *Nihao a*") or simply such expressions used with certain time limits as "Good morning" ("Zao a"), "Good afternoon" ("*Xiawu hao*"), "Good evening" ("*Wanshang hao*"), "Hello, uncle X" ("*X diedie hao*"), "Hello, aunt XXX" ("*XXX Mama*").....etc, moreover, there are some expressions with specific Chinese distinctiveness, "Teacher Liu" ("*Liu laoshi*"), "Aunt Li" ("*Li ayi*"), "Manager Qian" ("*Qian jingli*").

Inquiry. For example, "Where are you going?" ("*Ni dao naer qu o?*"), "What are you doing?" ("*Zai Gao mazi?*"), "Are you XXX? I am ..." ("*Ni keshi XXXa? Woshi...*").

In spite of seeming to have little useful purpose or any specific content, such phatic communication is a bonding ritual and a strategy for managing interpersonal distance. For example, in one encounter between the agent and client, the agent pays a visit to the prospective client's home, they don't know each other before and the prospective client is introduced by a third party that both agent and client are familiar with. The conversation goes as follows.

A: *Nishi XXX ba?* (Are you XXX?)

B: *An, Nishi nage?* (Yes, and you are?)

A: *Wojiao XXX, woshi Liu laoshi jieshao laide, ta zuowan geini dale dianhua leba?* (I am XXX, I'm referred to by Teacher Liu, did he call you last night?)

B: *O, shide o, ta genwo dagai jiangle xiazi, ni jiushi XXX o.* (Oh, yes, he talked to be briefly about that, you are XXX.)

A: *An, hehe, wo jintian ganghao guolai, jiu xianglai Kankan, genni guagua—fanzheng bu yaojin, liaojie xiazi duhao a.* (A, yes, Hehe, I just came by to have a look, to talk to you—it doesn't matter, you can have some brief ideas.)

B: *An, haoa.* (Yes, OK.)

A: *Woting Liu laoshi jiang ni xiangmai...* (I heard from Teacher Liu that you are willing to buy...)
(Continues the talk on a specific policy)

At the beginning, “*Nishi XXX ba?*” (Are you XXX?), this simple inquiry is a self-answered inquiry, since the agent has been almost certain that is the one she is going to talk to. It serves as a starting point to open a dialogue to define the relationship between the agent and prospect as new acquaintances introduced through a third party. “*Wojiao XXX, woshi Liu laoshi jieshao laide, ta zuowan geini dale dianhua leba?*” (I am XXX, I'm referred to by Teacher Liu, did he call you last night?) in this way, it helps new acquaintances to explore and categorize each other's social position. In this conversation, “*Liu laoshi*” (Teacher Liu) has an extremely important role, since he is friends of both the agent and the client, he serves as the bridge to introduce both parties to know each other and carry on smoothly the interaction, such a way of operation can be best captured by Fei Xiaotong's “differential mode of association” [55] in rural China's network.

Comment/compliment. For example, “*Guniang shou xiaoqiaoqiao de*” (This girl's hands are little and cute), “*Xiegui hao haokan*” (You have very beautiful shoe cabinet) “*Aye, ni guode zhenhao*” (Wow, You look so well), “*Guaiguai, nijia de fangzi zhen piaoliang*” (Wow, you have so beautiful house).

The following is another reconstructed example in which an insurance agent tries to sell policies to one of her friends, who is not so interested at the very beginning of the conversation. The insurance sales agent is the kindergarten teacher of the prospective client's granddaughter. B (the prospective client) is one of the peasants under A's husbands' (A's husband is the village director)¹ management. A (the agent) and B (the prospective client) are talking about the little girl, who is B's granddaughter. The following script is an excerpt from a longer conversation; the conversation is transcribed in the local dialect.

A: *Liu ayi zai jiali a? zheshi ni sunnvr ba? Xiao guniang shou xiaoqiaoqiao de, xiaode henzi.*
(Aunt Liu, you are home. This must be your granddaughter, she has little and cute hands.)

B: *Xiaoqiaoqiao de a.* (little and cute...)

A: *Xiao guniang shou xiaoqiaoqiao de buyaojin... tade shou piaoliang, nikan tana xiaoshou. Zhe xiaoguniang zai women ban, jiu tade shou zui haokan.* (It's good to have little and cute hands, you see, how beautiful hands they are. She has the most beautiful hands in our class.)

B: *Haokan you shenme yong? Nianshu you bu guojing.* (There is no use to be beautiful, she is not doing well in study.)

A: *Xiaoguniang de shou shengde hao yao haoxie, hehe, jiu jue ding mingyun le... hehe, shou youxie jiangfa.* (For little girls, having beautiful hands is a great blessing, sometimes, it determines destiny... there is some saying about hands.)

B: *Najiu bu xiaode shi shenme yangzi lo.* (I have no idea about that.)

A: *Tade shou shengde hao,* (pause), *nide maomao baoxian banle meiyou?* (She has beautiful hands, pause, did she buy insurance?)

B: *Shou zhege dongxi nage jiangde qingchu? Hehe, nijia Wang Wen xianzai nian gaozhong le...* (Who knows about hands? Hehe, so your son Wang Wen is already in senior middle school...)

A: *En, shide o, rizi guode zhenkuai. Wojia Wang Wen ye maile baoxian, nijia maomao zenmeyang a?* (Yes, time flies. Wang Wen has already bought insurance, how about your girl?)

B: *Baoxian na? Baoxian ta mama zhunbei geita gao. Qunian zhaota baba, baba shuo guonian jiang, guonian houlai wo youmang, mangdao meiyou laile. Jinnian buzhi gaole meiyou, ruguo yaogao, ta kending yao genni jiang. Haiyou nage nage genta baba jiangle, taba mei daying. Jiangle, tashuo yaojiao haoduo nian laizhe? Yaojiao shinian ba, shinian dao shiba sui naqian*

¹Village director: in Chinese Pinyin, *Cun Zhuren*, means the head of a village.

Village director is the head of a village, who is responsible for administrative matters of the village. Elected by the residents of the village and serves a term for three years. (Source: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/234559.htm>)

ba. *Tingta xiang nayang jiang, wo erzi jiangshuo xianzai jingji bu huofan, buxiang gao.* (Insurance? Her mother was thinking about it. Last year, someone approached her father and he said next year. After the new year, we've been busy. I don't know for sure whether we have had it already. If we are to buy, it's for sure he will come to you. Someone actually has approached her father, her father turned her down. It seems we need to pay for ten years? Then we have some payback, seems so. But my son says we are in tight budget, maybe later...)

A: *O... Xianzai henduo ren dushi gei xiaohai gao, dengyu gei xiaohai cun yibi qian a.* (Oh... Many people are buying it for their children, it's savings for them.)

B: *Shide a, xianzai xiangzhe qingkuang gao yehao, dengdao xiaohai dushu...* (Yes, now it's a good time, when she goes to school...)

A: *Fudan yao haodian.* (It can relieve us a little.)

B: *En, Fudan yaohao.* (Yeah, relives a little.)

A: *Yinian jiao liangsan qian ye wusuowei... ta qiannian ganghao jiang wu gaole, qiannian ne, qiannian ne ye mei chuqu, zhe qunian cai chuqu gaole yixia, ta gaodian qian you maige dianpingche, you zhige bingxiang, en, jiali zhi dongxi.* (It is not that heavy burden if we pay several thousand Yuan. He has refurbished the house last year, the year before last, he stayed at home. Last year he went out to work and bought one electric bike and a refrigerator, buys furniture.)

B: *Conversation continues, talking about the girl's mother, job and others...*

As introduced in the background, A is the kindergarten teacher of B's granddaughter, it sets up a complicated scenario as the agent A mentions B's granddaughter, she uses the privilege of being the teacher of B's granddaughter, moreover, it is their mutual knowledge that A is the wife to the director of the local village, such phatic communication creates a complex scenario that both parties are aware and are willing to maintain, it is expressively communicated but impressively communicated. The sentence "*Xiaoguniang shou xiaoqiaoqiaode*" (The little girl's hands are little and cute) "*Tade shou piaoliang*" (Her hands are beautiful) "*Zai women ban, jiu tashou zui haokan*" (Her hands is the most beautiful in our class). They are compliments and thus phatic communication in nature, however, they serve much more than the purpose of phatic communication, which will be argued in greater detail later.

Retrospect. For example, "*Haojiu bujian*" (Long time no see).

As argued all through the thesis, the insurance sales are achieved through Guanxi in transformational rural China, most of the interactants are either friends, relatives, familiars or at least introduced through a third party that both agent and prospective client are familiar with, thus, initial small talks to smooth up the atmosphere is an essential part of the successful conclusion of business. Since the degree of trust that the agents establish is one of the deciding factors of the success of their sales, as in the above sample, "*Zhege xiegui shanghao piaoliang de o*" (This shoe cabinet is really beautiful). In this setting, the client's husband is a carpenter, praising one of his works will definitely have a favorable impression on the client, and also a hidden message is entailed in this sentence—a carpenter with good craftsmanship will of course be relatively better off, it is time for them to think about having more additional well-being besides their living standard, that is insurance will offer them a better guarantee for their future life.

3.2.1.2 Functions of Warming Up

As Malinowski [51] observes, it is "free, aimless, social intercourse", which is manifested in exchanges characterized by "purposeless expression or preference of aversions, accounts of irrelevant happenings, comments on what is perfectly obvious", such exchanges have the important social function of creating ties of union by mere verbal exchanges, "the ties of the moment without which unifies social action is impossible" (ibid.: 149). While in rural insurance sales, such an atmosphere of sociality and interpersonal communion is of crucial importance to the successful conclusion of

business, i.e., the insurance sales. In this specific context, the little girl is the target of insurance sales (the proposed policy is for her), it would be wise to start a conversation related to this little girl, it creates "the pleasant atmosphere of polite, social intercourse (ibid.: 152), or establishes "rapport" between the interactants, thus facilitates the promotion of insurance sales.

Insurance sales in transformational rural areas distinguishes itself from normal sales in product or service encounters, especially in warming-up, for example, the following is short segment of a dialogue between a sales assistant and a customer in a convenience store.

Context: The sales assistant, male, does not know the customer (also male), they are strangers; both of them are in their thirties.

A: Sales assistant B:Customer

B: *Ni zheli you baiwei pijiu ma?* (Do you have Budweiser here?)

A: *You a.* (Yes)

B: *Zai nali?* (Where is it?)

A: *Bingde haishi bu binged?* (Iced or not?)

B: *Bingde.*(Iced)

A: *Zai zui limian de binggui li.*(In the frig down the shelf.)

(get the beer and come to the cashier.)

A: *22, Xiexie.* (22, thank you.)

B: *Hao, geini.* (OK, here you are.)

From this short segment of sales encounter, both of the participants are rather direct and to-the-point right away in the whole process, there is no warming-up at all, they don't have any social talk or friendship talk, both of them are very succinct and brief, yet the communication is still successful in nature, in terms of the outcome—successful conclusion of business. It is a customer-initiated talk with the customer's direct inquiry of "Do you have Budweiser here", very little or even no facework is found in this utterance. In the meantime, the sales assistant responds only the essential information with very brief "You a" (Yes). This response and pattern of interaction can, to a certain extent, illustrate that there is no much need for further and deeper or continuous interactions between the sales assistant and customer. The sales assistant's behavior is characterized by brief responses, lack of facework, and unwillingness to do anything beyond his routine (for instance, his only inquiry to specify the customer's need, "Bingde haishi bu binged?" (Iced or non-iced?) and his far too brief answers to the questions, "You a" (Yes, we do) "zui limian de binggui li" (In the frig down the shelf). In short, both of them do not imply any face-redressing strategies. Even with the last short segment of "xiexie"(Thank you), it is considered as very routine and habitual in sales or service encounters nowadays. Another reason for the above pattern of politeness behavior could relate to their mutual expectations of relationship continuity. The fact that the sales assistant didn't take care much of the customer's face is due to their mutual expectations of their relationship continuity. The sales assistant understands that the relationship with the customer is short-term. And it is also similar for the customer, both of them are aware that this relationship may not continue in the future. As a result, the sales assistant does not have the adequate motivation to build up rapport with him. However, it contrasts sharply with that of insurance sales in transformational rural China. If an insurance sales conversation goes like the above sample, it's very likely it would go wrong. It would be considered as rude, greedy, inconsiderate and impossible. Regarding this, one of my informants confesses as the following: "qishi women zuo baoxian jiushi zuoren na, yaoyou naixin, yaogen kehu manman gua... zaizhe changzi, zuo shiqing yebu rongyi, dajia dushi taitou bujian ditou jian de, na zenme hao yisi o" (Actually we sell insurance by making friends with others, we need to be very patient, and talk to the clients slowly, step by step. It's not easy to sell insurance here, we are all familiar with each other and see each other frequently, and it would be a shame – if we are too direct). It can be seen from the confession that relationship plays a vital role in successfully concluding the business, even to a certain extent, the success or failure of the sales effort largely depends on the rapport built between the insurance sales agent and the client, and the social resources the agent possesses, especially in transformational rural China. In a word, Guanxi is not only emotional, but also instrumental in transformational rural China.

After the opening-up and reform, the economy developed very quickly with the increasing level of people's living standard, at the same time, some of the resources are not easily accessible in people's work. Thus it would be important to establish instrumental interpersonal relationship on the basis of interest. Under the current circumstances, the number of people you know and the capability of getting things done have become one major criterion in evaluating the social resources that one possesses. In this kind of society, people tend to forge a kind of relationship which might bring some benefit to them, even though sometimes this kind of relationship realizes its role in the distant future. Insurance sales in transformational rural China conforms itself to the instrumental nature of the Chinese interpersonal relationship, as clearly iterated by the agent, "making friends" "talk and work slowly", etc.

The training sessions and experience sharing meetings, or the socialization process of the insurance sales agents also attach great importance to warming up, for example, in one informal experience sharing meeting of the agents, the one who had excellent performance says (in her forties with about 15 years experience), *"qishi women zuo zhege dongxi, man zhongyao yidian jiushi yao chayan guanse. Kaishi de shihou buneng taiji, ni yueji ni kehu keneng jiu yue fangan; jiang zhende, zai nongcun zuo baoxian bu rongyi, jingying kehu yiding yao yongxin, yao zhenzheng bat amen dang pengyou laichu, jiao pengyou le, jiaoxin le, caiyou jiaoyi. Jingchang youshi meishi zhao tamen guagua, zhao yiqie jiekou gen tamen jiaoliu, fanzheng zongyou jihui jiu jieshao dema. Zui zhuyao tamen yao xiangxin women, xiangxin baoxian, xiangxin gongsi. Haiyou yige yao xixin, kehu baifang ziliao yiding yao jilu hao; yijing chengbao de kehu ziliao fenlei zuzhi hao, biru wode kehu, shengao tizhong shouru jiating zhuangkuang wo duyong feichang xiangxi de jilu, suoyi buguan dao nail, zhexie ziliao suishi duneng chadao. Lingwai yige taidu yao zhenzheng. Fanzheng buguan zenmeyang, yaozhao jihui gen tamen la jiachang, yao dadong yixie kehu. Zhexie xijie yao tebie zhuyi, lajin yu kehu zhijian juli, hounian goutong jiu rongyi le. Biru jiang tamen jiali de qingkuang, haizi a, fumu a, fanzheng yiding yao zhaodao yige qieru dian."* (In this business, a very important point is that we need to be observant. You can't rush to conclude the deal, more haste, less speed. To tell the truth, it's not easy to sell insurance in rural areas, we need to be fully devoted to our clients. We need to really consider them as our friends, only after we have been friends, exchange hearts, can we have deals. Talk to them, talk to them whenever possible, we always have chance to promote. The most important thing is that we need to have their trust in us, in insurance and in company. For another, we need to be careful and well-organized. We need to keep a good record of the clients' information, such as classification, height, income, family status, etc. Thus, wherever we are, these data are always accessible. Still another is that we need to be sincere and honest. We try to talk to the clients, move them, pay attention to details, get the relationship closer and more intimate, it'll be much easier for later and further communication; for instance, we can talk about their family status, children, parents, etc., all in all, find something in common and grab an entry point). In this segment of experience sharing, such units as "sincerity" "trust" "friends" "observant" "patience" "keep visiting" "whole-heartedly" are clearly highlighted. As Sun [56] iterates, "Guanxi is established on the basis of the concept of 'reciprocity', it is reciprocal in nature. What one does in other's interest is considered as a kind of 'social investment', it is obvious he/she expects something in return [56]." Simply put, one salient feature of Chinese interpersonal relationship is its instrumentalism.

To summarize, warming up in rural insurance sales is an indispensable part of the successful conclusion of business, it build up rapport, facilitates the communication and paves the way for smooth communication between the insurance agents and their prospective clients, moreover, it is based on the social concept of "reciprocity".

3.2.2 Introducing the Offer

Move 2, introducing the offer, is the most important move of all the moves in agent-client interactions, and it is an obligatory move which takes up the vast majority of the time of the interactions. The success or failure of the sales mostly depends on the effectiveness of the introduction.

Step 1 of move 2, offering the product or service, is the formal initiation of the sales effort, and is the first time the topic of business brought up. In the sample above, *"Ni nage zenme jiang o"* (How do you think about the insurance we discussed last time?) is the indirect way of bringing up the topic, since

they have already met for several times before and both parties are well aware of what they are talking about. It seems in the local settings, direct mentioning of insurance and money is dispreferred, which may be due to the maintaining of face between the interactants. The concept of face, central to Brown and Levinson's 1978, [57] theory, is derived from Goffman [54] and the English folk terms "losing face" and "saving face". The theory assumes that all competent adult members of a society are concerned about their face, the self-image every member wants to claim for himself or herself and recognizes others have. Brown and Levinson further distinguish between negative and positive face wants. Negative face refers to basic claims of territory, freedom of action and freedom from imposition. While positive face refers to the desire of being appreciated and approved by others. It is in the reciprocal interest of the participants in conversation to maintain each other's face, there are in total five strategies offered:

- Bald on record, without redressive action
- Positive politeness
- Negative politeness
- Off record
- Don't do the face threatening act (FTA)

It is noted in the sample conversations that the fourth strategy "off record" and the fifth "don't do the FTA" are most frequently employed among others, throughout the conversation, it is rarely direct asking of purchasing, however, such an idea is implied and reinforced throughout, for example, "*nikan ye huabuliao duoshao qian*" (You see, it does not cost much) "*fentan dao meige yue, jiu jibai kuai*" (distributed to each month, just several hundred Yuan).

Step 2 of move 2, essential detailing of the offer, "introducing and explaining the specific terms", in this way, the prospective client would have a better understanding of the specific clauses, rights and obligations. Of course, as van Dijk [58] argues, there are certain strategies adopted in the detailing, for example, emphasize the benefits and downplay the detriments, all in all, creating a favorable impression on the part of the prospective client.

Step 3 of move 2, indicating value of the offer, is the most important part of all the introduction, all the efforts, either directly or indirectly, serves the purpose of emphasizing the value of the offer. For example, the sample dialogue, the agent distinguishes the insurance under discussion with rural cooperative medical insurance by emphasizing the deposit function of the insurance. "*women zhege you liangge gongneng, you cunqian you baozhang*" (This insurance has two functions, not only it offers coverage for medical care, but also some deposit"; for another, "*nadian qian gao shenme dongxi o*" (You can't do much with that little money) "*cha zhe liangqian kuaiqian buguo rizi la*" (two thousand Yuan is nothing much) emphasizing the much lower cost and much greater benefit that it brings; more detailed, "*jiaru jianjian kangkang de, ershi nianhou geini 9wan; wanyi youge shenme shiqing, mashang geini 9 wan, hetong zhongzhi. Ruguo you zhongda jibing, yibao nabian zhaoyang bao. Zhege baoni yibai sui, jiushi ni huo duolao bao duolao*" (If with good health, you'll get 90000 after 20 years; if anything happens, you get 90000 right away, and the contract terminates. If there are some major diseases, you can get reimbursed with your social security as usual. This one covers your whole lifetime, i.e., as long as you lives) , "*qishi naqian fangzai nali yejiu fangzhe le, maile yihou ruguo ziji youdian yali faner haishi haoshi*" (In fact it's a kind of deposit, it's good to have some pressure), "*ni xiang women xianzai du sishi laisui le, manman nianji dale, ye gaobudong le*" (We are in our 40s, and getting old and weak, cannot work as we were young), "*women suiran shi funv, yeyao gei ziji xie baozhang a, wanquan kao renjia ye dushi kaobuzhu, zui qima ziji you yidian, haoxie ai*" (though we are women, we need to have some assurance. It's impossible to completely depend on others. It'll be a better idea we have certain amount of money of our own) , "*Xiao jiahuo fudan ye zhongde budele, fangjia duogui*" (Our children will have heavy burden themselves, with so high housing prices) "*qima haishi bugei tamen zengjia fudan a, duoshao youge baozhang*" (At least we don't exert further burden on them, we have already got some assurance ourselves).

All in all, in this part, the agent employs mainly the strategy of "emphasizing the benefits and downplaying the detriments" by essential detailed introduction of the specific policy in question. All the interactions are centered on the purpose of persuading the client to make the purchase decision.

According to Montgomery's [59] model of "Ideals of Relationship" and Rogers and Miller's [60] maxims of friendship engagement, it is crucial for parties in communication to observe and practice the maxims, no matter consciously or unconsciously. In the communication between agents and clients, the agent consciously employed the maxims. For example, the Maxim of Trust, be sincere and be empirically veracious. The agent objectively describes the abstract insurance clauses and coverage for the client, presenting an image of being a professional insurance agent, but at the same time, delivers the message in the local dialect, convenient for the understanding of the client. Such expressions as "*women suiran shi funv, yeyao gei ziji baozhang*" (Though we are women, we need to have certain assurance) "*ershi nian hou geini 9 wan*" (Ninety thousand for you after twenty years) "*gei ziji yidian yali faner shi haoshi*" (Sometimes it's good to have certain pressure) "*nianji manman dale, gao budong le*" (We are getting old, we cannot work for long), "*duoshao youge baozhang*" (It's an assurance anyway) clearly reveal the maxims of Trust, Intimacy, Control and Positiveness.

3.2.3 Offering Incentives

Move 3, Offering incentives, is an optional move in the dialogues, it occurs when such policies are rather larger in amount or there are some promotional efforts, the additional bonuses are normally some household apparatus, such as quilt, pot, electric blanket, etc. For example, "*ruguo jintian xiadan women you XX lipin song*" (If you sign the contract today, there will be ... presents), "*xiadan dadao XX shue, jiuyou yitao XX jinian bi*" (When the contract value reaches ..., there will be ... presents), "*genju butong jine, xianchang xiadan you beizi, weibo lu, dian chaoguo, huoguo lu, dianre tan song*" (According to different contract value, we have different presents). This move is optional in that for most of the time, there is seldom such incentives, they mostly happen when there is a promotion meeting on site, that is, some prospective clients will be invited to a certain location (such as a fancy hotel, a local school, the hall of a company, etc) to carry out a promotion, the process goes like this, first the agent will seek support from the company, then some renowned lecturer of insurance or beneficiary of some insurance policies be invited to introduce (educate) the participants about the importance of insurance for their lives, the visible benefits they have received and enjoyed, clear contrast between having been insured and not having been insured offered, of course sometimes, the clients are also attracted by the additional benefits of the gifts, which has already become a popular promotional method widely employed by institutions.

3.2.4 Establishing Credentials

Move 4, establishing credentials is also an important move in realizing the persuasion process in insurance sales in transformational rural China, the following offers evidence from the transcriptions of dialogues and also interviews with the agent.

3.2.4.1 Establishing Credentials and Trust

Move 4, establishing credentials is an obligatory move and is found in each and every of the conversation. It plays a vital role in the successful conclusion of the insurance sales, since the establishment of credentials is the foundation of trust, meanwhile trust is the pillar stone in the conclusion of insurance sales. Trust can be classified into "interpersonal trust" and "institutional trust", "particularistic trust" and "generalized trust" [61,62,63], in which interpersonal trust corresponds to particularistic trust and institutional trust corresponds to generalized trust. Since particularistic trust is also called personal trust, which refers to a particular dyads trust relationship and is the outcome of the interactions between the two parties, if there is no acceptance and reciprocity from both parties, there would be no trust. In many circumstances, people would prefer someone familiar or someone who can trust, as a manager of a private company says, "I'd rather do business with good friends for only 200,000 Yuan profit, than for 500,000 Yuan profit with someone without trust [64]." Such a statement expresses the earnest concern of the Chinese people when it comes to business, since if there is lack of trust, the party concerned would have to shoulder so enormous risk that he/she could even lost the investment once and for all. In the context of insurance sales in transformational rural China, trust also plays a vital role. The trust is established, maintained and even enhanced not only in the actual dialogues, but more importantly in the casual interactions between the agent and the client. As one experienced insurance agent once put it in one interview sharing her experience in

successfully concluding a major policy, “Zhege kehu qishi zhiqian feichang fangan baoxian, ta dui baoxian keyi jiang yidian xiangqu du meiyou, danshi wo zhege ren shi zheyangzi de, wo kanzhun lede shiqing wo yiding hui quzuo, nawo jiu jingchang youshi meishi zhaota ma, zhaota gua, kaishi qishi ta men du burang wojin, nawo jiu guancha, wojiu faxian tajia youge xiao never, zhangde haode hen, you yici yige ouran de jihui wojiu xiaode le ta never shengri, wojiu paodao chaoshi maile yige xuexiji, nashihou xuexiji mangui deai, jiushi nazhong yina jiufa shengyin de nazhong a, haineng xue yingyu, wojiu songgei ta never. zhe xiazi haole, yinwei tamen gongzuo manga, mei shijian xiang zhexie dongxi, nawo jiu bang tamen jie jue le zhege wenti, houlai jiang ta never xihuan de budele, tiantian wan; zheyangzi manmande, tajiu jiawo weixin le, nawo jingchang zai weixin shangmian jiang a, xuanchuan a, ye jiushi yige qianyi mohua de xiaoguo, bannian duo shijian ba, houlai you yici tajiu zhudong zhaowo qianle yige shiwan de danzi. Xianzai xiangxiang, qishi yejiushi zuoren, xian jiaoren, zai jiaoxin, zuihou caishi jiaoyi. Dangran jiaoyi women ye bushi jiang yi chuizi maimai, houmian ta you shenme xuyao, wo zongshi jinjin jinli qu zuohao fuwu.” (This client is actually dislike insurance a lot, he had no interest at all in insurance. But you know me, I am determined to have it done once I'm in. So I noticed he has a beautiful little daughter, once I got to know her birthday, I bought a learning machine for her as birthday present. Since they are too busy to think about their daughter's study, I happened to solve the problem for them. I heard that the daughter loved the present a lot. Then gradually, we became friends on Wechat, I gradually made certain efforts in promoting the products. About half a year later, he purchased a rather substantial policy from me. Now when I look back, I firmly believe it's about making friends, making us trustworthy. It's not a once and for all job, it takes a lot of patience and time. Even now, if there is anything I can do for them, I still do it.”) (Interview, February 2013).

The above interview is a typical example of persuading successfully a prospective client, who was resistant to insurance at the beginning and finally after trust between the agent and the client established, concluding a major insurance policy (100,000 is considered as a rather large sum with the local standard). “Youshi meishi zhaota” (casual chat), “zhaota gua” (talk to him), “bang tamen jie jue wenti” (solve problems for them), “zheyang zi manman de”(slowly this way), “qianyi mohua” (exert imperceptible influence), “zuoren” (making friends) “xian jiaoren, zai jiaoxin, zuihou caishi jiaoyi”(making friends, being trustworthy, and deal at last), “bushi jiang yichuizi maimai” (it's not a once-and-for-all deal) are all clear manifestations of the central role of trust in insurance sales in transformational rural China.

Establishing credentials in the actual dialogue is an obligatory move. It includes both the credibility of the agent and the insurance company that offers such policy. For example, “Ni xiaode wo” (you know me) “Women zai zhebian ye bushi yitian liangtian, you shenme wenti, ni daoshihou lai zhaowo” (we are here not for just one or two days; if there's anything, you can come to me any time) “shijie wubai qiang, zhongguo zuida baoxian gongsi” (world top 500, China's largest insurance company), “canyu xibu da kaifa” (take part in the development of the west), “zai shijie gedi duyong da touzi” (major investment around the world). All such expressions serve to establish the credentials of not only the agent him/herself, but also the company, by presenting a credible, trustworthy and helpful image.

3.2.5 Other Moves

There are other moves, move 5, enclosing documents, soliciting response, using pressure tactics and ending politely, among which, enclosing documents and using pressure tactics are optional, while the other two, soliciting response and ending politely are obligatory. It is quite evident that soliciting response should be obligatory, since the successful conclusion of the policies, as mentioned, for most of the time, requires several or even more visits of the agents to the prospective clients, thus it's crucial for the agent to make sure further future communication is possible. Some examples of each of the above mentioned moves are listed as follows:

Move 5, enclosing documents is an optional move, in this specific sample, “Wozhe changzi youge jianyishu” (We have a suggestion form here). The purpose of this move is to enable the clients to have a more detailed understanding about the insurance policies under promotion later on their own.

Move 6, soliciting response, is an obligatory move, since the successful conclusion of the business usually takes rounds of visits and interactions. It is rather rare that the agent can secure a conclusion

of business by just one visit, thus further communication is vital in their sales performance. Just as one of the agents recalls “*xiang yici chenggong, na jiben butai xianshi, yiban dushi yao pao hao jici, ni buba guanxi gaohao, hai gao ge gui a?*”(It's not likely that you succeed by visiting once, we need to visit multiple times. Without making the relationship reliable, it's impossible).

In the above sample dialogue, “*Zhe changzi youge jianyishu, wo liudao zhe changzi, xiamian youwo shouji, nimen dao shihou shangliang haole geiwo dianhua wojiu dao shihou gan guolai jiu zhongle.*”(I'll leave this suggestion form here, you can have a look, if there is anything in need, call me). Such expressions make due preparations for the next round of visit, and make the visits natural and casual to the prospective clients.

Move 7, using pressure tactics, is an optional move. This move should be employed with caution, because it is very likely that it might invoke antipathy from the part of the client. Nonetheless, sometimes it is also necessary to fasten the client's decision process, as one of agents says “*Youde shihou yao jinliang jiao tamen kuai yidian, biru jiang women youde baoxian you shijian qixian; youde you dongxi song, na dangchang qiandan juyou, wan yidian jiu meide lema*” “*women youde shihou jiang mouxie baoxian zhi zhendui teding kehu, biru jiang lao kehu, huozhe tamen leiji de baoxian maida duoshao a, nazhong*”(Sometimes we also urge them, for example, a time limit; some with presents, but only for those who sign on site; certain policies are only reserved for quality clients” etc). In my observation, it is only used when the prospective client has almost made his/her mind in making the purchase. Specifically in the sample above, “*Xianzai zhege baoxian youge tuiguang qi, zaiyou yige yue jiu meiyou le*” “*Nage XX women jiu tuiguang le jige yue, xianzai jiu meiyou le*” (There is a promotion period for this policy, which lasts for only a month” “this XX has only several months' promotion period”).

Move 8, ending politely, is an obligatory move. Generally they are small talks again, “*Nahao, women jiu zheme jiang, dao shihou zai lianxi*” (OK, let's keep in touch). The topics vary, they could be children, education, decoration, family, life, troubles..., all in all, such ending would make the conversation more like that happens between friends, which will be analyzed in greater detail in the next two chapters.

This move, ending politely, normally centers around such topics as family, children, education, in short, small talks, which serves important function as well. It echoes the beginning move of warming up, serving the purpose of strengthening rapport and laying a solid foundation for future further visits. “Making friends first, doing business later”. To a certain extent, the establishment and maintenance of “ego-centric social network” [61] facilitates the insurance sales in transformational rural China on the one hand, it requires constant, frequent and careful attention as well, which on the other hand illustrates the nature of Guanxi being reciprocal. In this particular context, the conviction, determination and devotion of the insurance sales agent will largely determine the success of the sales efforts.

3.3 Some Discussions

It has been generally accepted that the more modern the society is, the more institutional trust people have. Institutional trust is a kind of trust based on the guarantee of institutions, and therefore, people tend to have greater faith in people's general liability and responsibility. With the reliable and widely acknowledged institutional guarantee, even the behaviors of strangers are completely predictable [61]. Nevertheless, in insurance sales in rural China, due to the fact that it is operated with interpersonal trust, moreover, with the impact of economic tides, there are some irregularities, abuse or even purposeful manipulation of interpersonal trust, which is also one of the concerns of the present study. For example, some people hold that the overuse of trust in local communities tends to compromise the social integrity and thus increases the cost of interpersonal communication. This is especially true when it comes to a society in which interpersonal trust outweighs institutional trust [65,66], which consequently gives rise to Guanxi manipulation or backdoor activities [67]. Nonetheless, based on the data I collected and what I observe, we do not tend to impose value judgment upon such complex phenomenon, what we can do is to present the facts and uncover the dynamics operating under the interactions. A more balanced view of not only trust, but also Guanxi seems to be more appropriate.

As argued by Liang [62], "In the Chinese society, 'Guanxi' is a very local, complex and delicate concept, it is very useful even when dealing with official institutions, the sophistication is far greater than the official formal bureaucratic institutions featured by their complexities."

Due to rapid social change or social transformation, the old social order are under severe impact and challenge, as nicely put by Fei [68]: "A more pressing crisis of mentality order". The most conspicuous manifestation of order crisis is that old system is under constant and comprehensive challenge, while the new one is far from being established to affect people's daily lives. Old system and new plan, old customs and new trends, old concepts and new vocabulary, they all co-exist and interact with each other. Though "the blending of new and old style, modern and traditional, are distinctive characteristics of transitional society" [69]. Apart from the mechanism of market economy, the most successful part of reform and opening up is that it boosts the wisdom and initiative of the whole society through the incentives of personal interest, meanwhile, it generates money-worshipping as well.

With reform and opening-up and forthcoming market economy, tremendous changes have taken place in China's society; while such changes have not only significantly improved people's livelihood, but also made some people's over-reliance on speed. Moreover, the over-emphasis on economic development rate, especially the worship towards GDP, make people nationwide motivated by such concepts as "overtaking other countries" "overtaking other areas" "overtaking others". The worship towards "Shenzhen speed" "High speed rail" and "GDP growth rate" actually reflects the aggregating anxiety and unrest. Simply put, the more we change, the more we are longing for change, the more we long for change, the more slowly we feel changes take place. Such anxiety permeates the whole society, even in the rural areas. As manifested in insurance sales, the sales agents push forward hard their selling efforts into concluding policy sales, and they work at the interface of institutional trust and interpersonal trust.

As has been generally agreed that the Chinese society is a society of familiars, a "differentiated mode of association" [55,70], people tend to categorize different people into different groups characterized by so called "insider" versus "outsider". It is argued that the Chinese culture builds its foundation on the basis of agriculture as its economic foundation. While this kind of self-sufficient lifestyle restricts mobility and constrains that people are "attached to earth" and "depending on land", which consequently also account for some moral qualities of the Chinese people, particularly, the virtue of patience and great importance attached to reputation. On the other hand, industrial world attempts to shorten the period of time needed for production, it requires everything to speed up. In China's rapid process of transforming itself from an agricultural society into an industrial society, diverse and various concepts and ideologies interact and collide with each other. As we have argued, with the old system demolished and the new one yet to be established, there is a growing confusion and not knowing what course to take. It is represented in the mal-practices of some insurance agents' ways of promotion of policies. For example, they solely emphasize the advantages, purposefully ignore the problems or even some hidden clauses not in favor of the clients, or consume on their credibility and integrity established over time. For which, in the author's view, are necessary process and pains we need to undergo and can echo, to a certain extent, the post-modernist view of "commodification of self". The process of growing mature in the agents' socialization process indicates that the ultimate harmony not only between agents and clients, but also how the agents can live with themselves in peace would largely depend on a naturalistic view of "nature does nothing, but everything is done". As the philosophy of Taoism upholds, simplicity and an naturalistic view of life is the way of nature, and should also be the way of man, given the complications of modern life. Associated with the principle of simplicity is the attitude of contentment towards material living. Only one is contented with what he/she has and lives with it, can he/she live in peace deep in their heart. However, this contradicts sharply with the modern view of industrialization, exploitation as much as possible. One may criticize this view of life as a form of asceticism which may not fit the life of a highly developed civilization. However, contentment is not the same as the denial of any enjoyment at all. A life of contentment is a life free from frustration, anxiety, and sense of misery. Once a less extreme and more moderate view is established, most of the conflicts and disputes can and will be resolved.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, the study analyzes the discursive patterns and functions of moves and steps, in the interactions between insurance sales agents and their clients in transformational rural China. Specifically, we have summarized the specific communicative purposes of insurance sales dialogues. With these communicative purposes in mind, the analysis model for the generic structure of insurance sales dialogues is offered and analyzed. Consequently, the underlying cultural sources that account for the features are interpreted according to the functions in the collected data.

Secondly, the study has enriched the socio-cultural study of transformational rural China in examining insurance sales agent-client interactions in terms of exploring the discursive features in such interactions. In other words, money has become more important in rural Guanxi, as manifested in language, more specifically, discursive features. As most of the current studies of transformational rural China, either focus on ethnographic study or logical reasoning. In contrast, this study manages to incorporate macro-analysis of socio-cultural environment with micro-analysis of more detailed discursive features in insurance sales interactions in transformational rural China.

Thirdly, by integrating modern social theories and concepts [55,70,71,72,56,73], we describe and generalize the communication patterns for insurance sales in transformational rural China, in the meantime, come to uncover the hidden agenda of agent-client interactions with some interpretations from the perspective of socio-cultural interpretation with empirical data.

In conclusion, the study aims to investigate the dynamics of insurance sales agent-client interactions in transformational rural China, and it is found that in rural areas, the decision of making the purchase of insurance policy can be summarized as the following:

Firstly, there is an emergence of understanding of the necessity of such a service given the fact of the insufficiency of social security the government offers in such areas as education, medical expenses and pension plans. While at the same time, due to the rising standard of living of local residents, simply put, there is financial feasibility to purchase further services to improve their well-being.

Secondly, in transformational China's rural communities, Guanxi, Renqing, connections are still quite rampant and pervasive in everyday life, from daily life to dealing with others. While currently, insurance sales in rural areas are still mostly conducted through the agents' extensive connections with the local residents, for most of the time, the sales are achieved through the trust of the clients in the agents, which requires almost impeccable credibility and reputation of the agents, that is also why almost all agents who are doing well (having good sales performance) are locally well-respected individuals.

Thirdly, the changing social conditions, or the decentralization of central authority, presupposes a downward responsabilization. Individuals are becoming more and more independent and assumes more responsibility, not only greater freedom in earning, making a living, but also more risks taken by themselves, compared with the state allocation of resources. It's unwise and dangerous to impose a simple moral judgment of which is better, however, it's a general fact and tendency in China's current transformational rural areas.

Fourthly, the selling efforts of the insurance agents' are almost irresistible. In the investigation, there are certain extreme cases that the agents' constant, inexhaustible and repeated visits and talks make the prospective annoyed and thus the whole situation turned into a mess, which could also be one of the reasons that in current transformational China, many people have certain bias or prejudice against insurance sales agents.

Last but not the least, given the fact that people's living standard is getting higher and higher, more and more wealth accumulated through various means, many people just don't have the necessary knowledge or expertise on how to manage their wealth, thus they have to resort to someone who seems to have the relative knowledge and expertise, which thus offers some room for the insurance agents to take advantage of the confusion and make the sales. Moreover, the rapid improvement in

life makes the local residents to be eager to show off, just as an old Chinese saying goes, "If not return home after getting rich, it's just like parade with beautiful dresses at night". The idea of "face" in the Chinese people's minds is deeply ingrained, therefore, the work of agents can, to some extent, satisfy the need and fill this vanity.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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The Decent Life Basket for Families with School-Age Children

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ABSTRACT

GAR-UM-2019-XI-5.5-8 Grant Interim Report: The goal of the first stage of the research project is to achieve a decent living standard for families with school-aged children. Stage I entails actions such as examining official publications from the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), the Research Institute for Quality of Life (RIQL), and other sources (Eurostat, the European Commission, and UNICEF) to clarify the research's objectives, methods, and indicators. All of these activities help to identify indicators that will aid in the development of the next stage of the grant, which includes research methodology, the construction of a questionnaire for families with school-aged children, and the development of an interview guide for the teacher and paediatrician. A questionnaire will be used to interview Bucharest households with school-aged children aged 6 to 14, in order to determine the consumption basket for this family structure. The indicated families will be chosen using the "snowball" technique, which will be applied in stages until the information needed is saturated. The procedure will include an interview guide for teachers (teacher / teacher) to finalise information about the children's school needs, as well as medical staff (paediatrician / family doctor) to update medical needs related to health care and children's hygiene, particularly in the new conditions of the Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19).

Keywords: Research grant; standard of life; minimum consumption basket for a decent living; families with school-age children; methodology; indicators.

1. INTRODUCTION

GAR-UM-2019-XI-5.5-8 Grant Report on Interim Grants: The goal of the first stage of the research project is to achieve a satisfactory living standard for families with school-aged children.

The following sub-activities are included in Stage I:

- Consulting the publications of the National Institute of Statistics;
- Consultation of publications and research within the Quality of Life Research Institute;
- Consultation of publications and research from other official sources (Eurostat, UNICEF etc.) in order to clarify the objectives, methodology and indicators provided in this research [1,2] etc. All these activities allow the identification of indicators, which prepare the development of the next stage of the grant, namely:
 - Research methodology;
 - Elaboration of the questionnaire for families with school-age children;
 - Elaboration of the interview guide for the teacher and pediatrician.

A questionnaire will be used to interview Bucharest families with school children aged 6 to 14 years in order to determine the consumption basket for this family structure. The families specified will be chosen using the "snowball" technique, which will be applied step by step until the searched information is saturated. The results of the survey in Bucharest will be presented in specialized

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publications, but also in national and international scientific communications. The methodology will also include an interview guide for teachers who will complete the information regarding the school needs of the children, but also for medical staff (pediatrician / family doctor) who will update the medical needs related to health care and children's hygiene, especially in the new conditions of the pandemic with the Coronavirus (Covid-19).

2. METHODOLOGY AND PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

From the specialized literature and from the discussions carried out in the field in the exploratory phase of the research, with the families with dependent children aged between 6 and 14 years, several problems have been identified that they face:

- financial problems, respectively insufficient income to support their children;
- related to the registration with the family doctor and the provision of a quality medical assistance;
- lack of housing or insufficient space for families with several children, especially if they are of different sexes;
- increasing the value of the allowance due to children from 150 lei per month which covers a small part of the children's consumption needs;
- the fate of children whose parents go to work abroad and remain in the care of grandparents, other relatives or neighbors.

Based on the identified problems, the working tools were built, in order to carry out the field research, our option being that of a quantitative and qualitative approach. We opted for field research by applying structured interviews, aiming to reveal the perspective of the population, but also of the institutional actors on the mentioned problems.

We chose for the field research the Municipality of Bucharest following, as much as possible, a balanced distribution, both from a socio-economic point of view, and as a manifestation of some of the phenomena identified in the preliminary documentation phase.

The working tools, the questionnaire and the interview guides were necessary, necessary for the investigation of the social and institutional actors. Regarding the social actors, the statistical population from which we chose the working sample was represented by the families with children from Bucharest, sectors 2, 3, 4 and 6.

2.1 Construction and Testing of Working Tools

In order to achieve the objectives of the project were built:

1. a questionnaire that was applied to 166 families with school-age children; The questionnaire included 30 questions that deal with the following aspects of the life of these families: accessibility to children's education, access to a job for parents, the possibility of affirming in life of parents, the extent to which parents' rights are respected, security of at home and at work, social assistance received from the state; the main problems faced by families with children: poverty, lack of money, lack of schooling, misery and infectious diseases, health problems of parents, quality of social assistance received by children, health problems of children, lack of adequate housing, tensions in the family, environmental pollution, finding a job; what are the monthly expenses with the children, by types of expenses; family income; family worries about the problems of daily life; the importance of school in educating your children; children's free time concerns; followed by identification data of the respective family.
2. an interview guide for teachers or leaders who could learn about children's problems, which includes: common children's problems; forms of support for such cases in your school; form of support for such cases in your school; parents' shortcomings in their responsibility to educate their children; the school has the power to alleviate the problems / deficit of family education; if there have been significant changes in the social behavior of children with parents abroad.

3. an interview guide addressed to the doctor with the following issues: what kind of specific health problems do families face with children in the age groups (6-10 years; 11-14 years); diseases of children who have social causes; other concrete ways to improve the quality of children's care.

The assessments of the extent to which income provides them with a decent living were diverse, reflecting the wide social range of the sample investigated. In some cases decent living has been assimilated to subsistence, given that they say they can ensure a decent living and at the same time respond that they manage to buy only for the child everything that is needed, but many of these needs remain unmet, such as leaving somewhere on vacation, a weekend getaway, etc. On the other hand, the state should increase allowances. One problem that some families face is that of the consequences of one or both parents leaving for work abroad. The lack of parents is felt quite acutely by children, they are deprived of their love and protection. Some parents make up for this with the material part they provide. Most of the time this benefit is not enough. Students have a completely different picture of life. Parents make money but those who lose are children.

3. CONSULTATION OF SPECIALIZED PUBLICATIONS

3.1 NIS Publications

In the period 2008-2019, the resident population aged 0-14 years registered a continuous decrease of the share in the total population representing on January 1, 2019, 15.6% (16.4% of the male population and 14.9% of the female population). As can be seen in Table 1, in the 11 years of analysis, the population aged 0-4 years and 5-9 years did not experience significant changes, remaining around 5-5.5%. Changes in the sense of decreasing the share of children are observed in large age groups 10-14 years and 15-19 years. A decrease of 9% and even more registers the last group of 15-19 years. The decreases were significantly higher in the male population than in the female population. In the 10-14 age group, the decrease remains at 5% of the total for the female population and 6% for the male population.

Table 1. Romania, the structure of the resident population aged 0-19 years, on 1.01.2008 and 2019p

Age groups	Total (%)		Male (%)		Female (%)	
	2008	2019	2008	2019	2008	2019
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
0-4 years	5.1	5.1	5.4	5.3	4.9	4.8
5-9 years	5.2	5.1	5.5	5.4	5.0	4.9
10-14 years	6.0	5.5	6.3	5.7	5.7	5.2
15-19 years	6.3	5.4	6.6	5.6	6.0	5.1

Source: NIS, 2019, Social Trends [3]. Note: p - for 2019, the data are provisional

3.2 RIQL Publications and Research

Research Institute for Quality of Life has conducted research to substantiate a minimum consumption basket for a decent standard of living. The results of this research call into question the resources needed for the Romanian population to live, not so much due to the renewal of the older concept of minimum consumption basket, but especially due to the explicit emphasis on the notion of decent living standards and the expenses to be covered, to be able to ensure such a standard of living. The minimum consumption basket for a decent standard is estimated on a monthly basis for the needs of a family of two adults and two children. The family lives in urban areas, adults are both employees with below average incomes and ages between 35 and 45 years. We also assumed that one of the children is between 12 and 14 years old and the other between 8 and 10 years old. The group interviews were attended by between 8-12 employees from several sectors of activity. The topics of discussion included: the definition of decent living, the main categories of expenditure that the families of the participants have, the necessary level of access to goods and services to achieve a decent standard of living, and the necessary quality of these goods and services. During the interviews,

participants were asked to complete questionnaires to estimate the quantitative values for decent consumption in the categories: food, household products and personal hygiene, clothing and apparel, services. The questionnaires proposed lists of preliminary products and services, based on the results of previous RIQL research, but also offered respondents the opportunity to introduce other products and services considered necessary to ensure a decent living. Group interviews were a primary source of information for estimating the content and value of the minimum consumption basket. The results obtained from them were verified with experts (especially in the food and health chapters), corroborated with international standards (in the food chapters, household products and personal hygiene, health), with the results of recent research in Romania (in the chapter education and culture) and, where possible, correlated with the objective needs estimated by the research team (in chapters such as housing, housing, housing expenditure). The structure of the minimum consumption basket for a decent living resulting from the research comprises 11 chapters:

(1) food, (2) clothing and footwear, (3) housing, (4) housing equipment, (5) housing expenditure, (6) products household and personal hygiene, (7) services, (8) education and culture, (9) health, (10) recreation and vacation, (11) family savings fund.

Collecting prices to calculate the value of the minimum consumption basket for a decent living

Prices were collected for the main food, non-food products (clothing, footwear, school supplies for children) and services (housing, health, meaning through these services the costs of medicines and were also taken into account the costs of personal care, haircut girl and boy), in order to establish a decent minimum consumption basket for children: by sex of children, as well as by age groups (7-10, 11-14 years), to see how these family expenditures are differentiated. Food prices were picked from the local markets most frequently visited by respondents. In terms of clothing, footwear and school supplies, the prices from the shops identified by the population as those with the most customers in the respective locality were taken over. Housing and medicine expenditures were set as an average amount spent by these families with children, as they said in the interview. It was found that there are no differences in food and non-food items taken into account between the strict expenses of food, clothing, footwear, housing, medicines, children's supplies between families with children of different ages, in the city and near the city.

The concept of decent living

We defined the minimum decent living as the situation in which the general biological and social needs at a given moment are covered. Decent living can be described as a situation in which a family can afford a balanced, healthy diet without compromising on product quality; he can buy new clothes and shoes from specialty stores and he can renew his wardrobe taking into account wear and tear; has a home that provides shelter and security and that allows a certain degree of privacy and autonomy to family members, is furnished and equipped with quality appliances, in good working order; can easily pay his current bills (maintenance, energy, water, telephone, etc.); can maintain the home and has sufficient means to procure sufficient personal hygiene products for a healthy life, a necessary condition for the psychological comfort and for the social life of the individual; can provide each member with an adequate level of health care, which depends on preventive health services that may or may not be covered by public social security systems; can provide children with good conditions for cognitive, emotional, social and physical development, depending both on the quality of formal education and on participation in extracurricular activities appropriate to their age and expectations; can offer its members the opportunity to recreate and spend their free time together outside the home (going out to the cafe, cinema, museum, etc.), as well as the opportunity to go on vacation at least once a year; can provide its members with the means of mobility and communication necessary for active participation in community life; can enable adults to benefit from lifelong learning, social, cultural, artistic or sporting activities dedicated to them; can set up a savings fund to be able to procure expensive durable goods (for example, the advance on the purchase of housing) or to cover occasional or unforeseen extraordinary expenses, including to be able to help loved ones in case of need.

3.3 Other Publications and Research

The total number of households in the European Union increased in 2017–2018 from 220 to over 222 million. But the number of households with children has fallen, from 65.4 million (about a third of the total number of households) to almost 65.1 million. This attests to the tendency to reduce the number of household members, but also to reduce the birth rate in some countries. Of the EU Member States, Ireland has the highest proportion of households with children (40%) in total households, ahead of Cyprus and Poland (both with 37% each), Slovakia (36%), Portugal and Romania (both by 35% each). The lowest shares of households with children are registered in Germany and Finland (both by 22%), followed by Bulgaria (25%), Austria (26%) and Sweden (27%). In 2018, at EU level, almost half of all households with children (47% ie around 31 million households) had only one child, while 40% (26 million) had two children and 13% (8.5 million) had three or more children (Table 2).

Table 2. Weights of households with children in the European Union in 2018

Year	Households with one child	Households with two children	Households with three children	Of which single parents
2017	47%	40%	13%	15%

Source: Eurostat, 2017, Number of private households by household composition...[4].

In 2018, there were approximately 222.8 million households in the European Union (Table 3). Almost a third (65 million) of them had children in their care.

Table 3. Households with dependent children in the EU28 (thousand), in 2018 (data updated on 05.03.2020)

	Total households	Households with dependent children
EU.28	222 818.7	65 076.0
Belgium	4770.4	1 521.3
Bulgaria	2708.0	715.7
R.Czech	4759.8	1 482.6
Denmark	2402.2	699.3
Germany	40 806.6	8 897.4
Estonia	610.9	188.9
Ireland	1842.0	719.3
Greece	4 383.6	1 186.7
Spain	18 580.6	6 240.0
France	29 778.2	9 142.6
Croatia	1473.6	497.9
Italy	25 925.8	7 603.6
Cyprus	326.8	116.3
Latvia	854.3	252.5
Lithuania	1321.7	373.6
Luxembourg	251.5	85.3
Hungary	4124.8	1 191.9
Malta	192.4	63.4
Netherlands	7834.2	2 182.4
Austria	3915.5	992.9
Poland	14 608.9	5 330.4
Portugal	4144.6	1 407.2
Romania	7494.3	2 594.5
Slovenia	887.1	271.3
Slovakia	1888.4	671.1
Finland	2677.1	584.3
Sweden	5239	1 181.6
Great Britain	29015.8	8 881.9

Source: Eurostat, 2020, Number of private households by household composition...[5]

In 2017, about 16.9% of the total population and about 34.2% of single people with dependent children were at risk of poverty in EU-28 countries [6]. In 2018, the highest share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion was registered in Romania (38.1%), at a European average of 23.4%.

In both 2017 and 2018, in EU-28 countries, the most common situations of social risk were among single people with dependent children. Very high shares of poor families with three or more children were registered in **Romania (61.9% in 2017)** or in **Bulgaria (65% in 2017)** (see Table 4).

Table 4. Poverty rate by types of households, in EU countries.28, in 2017

Country	Total population rate	Single people with dependent children	Two adults with three or more dependent children
EU.28	16.9	34.2	26.2
Belgium	16.0	39.7	19.1
Bulgaria	23.4	35.7	65.0
R. Czech	9.1	31.4	17.4
Denmark	12.4	23.7	8.9
Germany	16.1	33.2	19.5
Estonia	21.9	28.9	19.5
Ireland	15.6	44.1	19.1
Greece	20.2	30.3	24.4
Spain	21.6	40.6	43.9
France	13.1	32.6	26.3
Croatia	20.0	37.2	31.3
Italy	20.3	37.8	37.1
Cyprus	15.7	25.2	17.5
Latvia	22.2	34.3	19.8
Lithuania	22.9	48.4	44.3
Luxembourg	18.7	46.2	26.7
Hungary	13.3	31.2	14.2
Malta	16.7	42.9	35.5
Netherlands	13.2	35.7	16.2
Austria	14.4	31.4	26.8
Poland	14.9	23.3	14.7
Portugal	18.3	33.1	41.4
Romania	23.6	31.2	61.9
Slovenia	13.3	30.0	13.4
Slovakia	12.4	37.3	35.4
Finland	11.5	19.5	12.3
Sweden	15.7	36.0	20.4
M. Britain	17.0	39.8	31.1

Source: Eurostat, 2019, Quality of life indicators...[7].

In 2018, approximately 23.4% of children in the EU-28 were at risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to 22.1% of adults (18–64) and 18.4% of the elderly (65 years and over). The factors influencing the risk of poverty or social exclusion were:

- **type of household:** single parents with dependent children (42.8%), single people (31.7%) and families of two adults with three or more dependent children (27.6%) had the highest poverty rates and social exclusion.
- **monetary poverty:** 73.4% of the population aged between 0 and 59, living in households with very low labor intensity, with dependent children, lived at risk of poverty.
- **level of education:** 51.5% of children whose parents' level of education was low, lived at risk of poverty, compared to 7.4% of children with parents with a high level of education.
- **emigration history:** children with a family emigration environment had a higher risk of poverty than children with native parents (33.7% compared to 16.2%).

- **family structure:** 11.6% of single-parent households were severely deprived of material, compared to 6.2% of all households with dependent children.

In general, in 2018, children (aged 0 to 17) with at least one parent born abroad had a 17.5 percentage point (pp) higher risk of poverty than children with native parents. The largest differences between children with foreign parents versus natives were recorded in Belgium (+ 28.5 pp), Spain (+ 29.5 pp), Sweden (+ 29.9 pp) and France (+ 30.3 pp).). The highest rates of poverty and social exclusion for children with at least one parent born abroad were recorded in Spain (49.2%), France (43.6%) and Italy (40.2%), while the lowest rate was observed in the Czech Republic (10.5%). In some EU Member States, immigrant parents have not experienced higher poverty rates than their native population. Latvia, Portugal and Lithuania (-5.6 pp, -4.2 pp and -1.3 pp) were the only Member States of the European Union, where children with at least one parent born abroad had a more visible level, lower the risk rate of poverty than the children of native parents [8].

4. MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AT THE LEVEL OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN IN THE EU

In 2018, 11.6% of children living in single-parent families with dependent children in the EU were severely deprived of material goods, compared to 6.2% living in households with dependent children [9].

Households of two adults with two dependent children (4.0%) had a slightly lower risk than households of two adults with one dependent child (4.1%). For children living in households of two adults with three or more dependent children, the share was 6.6%.

5. RISK CATEGORIES TARGETING SOME OF THE CHILDREN LIVING IN ROMANIA

Almost 4 million children live in Romania. Although significant progress has been made in the area of social welfare in the last 30 years, a large proportion of children are still affected by poverty, lack of health services at the local level, and lack of quality education (Table 5).

Table 5. Children included in the public services of early education and care, 2017 (%)

	Children between 0 și 3 years		Children over 3 years	
	Romania	EU Media	Romania	EU Media
Full - time children of early education and care	1.7%	17.2%	12.1%	49.9%
Part-time children of early education and care	14%	17%	47.7%	34.9%
Children cared for only by parents	41%	46.1%	12.8%	9.6%

Source: European Commission, 2019, *Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion Country profiles - Romania: Policies and progress towards investing in children*, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1248&langId=en&intPageId=3654> [10]

Half of children in Romania live at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and 1 in 4 suffer from severe material deprivation (Eurostat, 2017). Around 400,000 children are constantly left out of the public education system, thus gaining a low chance of finding a job when they reach adulthood (UNICEF study, 2017). More than 52,000 children become separated from their families as a result of poverty, violence or neglect. Every year, 10,000 children are separated from their parents. One million children are hospitalized each year. Such hospitalizations could be prevented by providing local primary medical services. In 2018, more than 15,000 cases of abused, neglected and exploited children were reported (statistics published by the National Authority for the Rights of the Child and Adoption). The most vulnerable children are those from poor families, Roma communities, rural areas and children with disabilities.

According to a study conducted by UNICEF, each additional year spent on school benches increases the income of the future adult by 8-9%, reduces the risk of unemployment by 8% and the risk of serious health problems by 8.2% (UNICEF, 2020, For each child...) [11]. As of 31 December 2018, of the 109,279,876 children and adolescents living in EU countries, 3,487,701 (4%) were born outside the EU (Table 6). Of the 3,487,701 children born outside the EU, 25% were 5-9 years old, 30% were 10-14 years old, and 46% were 15-19 years old. Most of the school-age children born outside the EU were hosted by Germany (688 669), the United Kingdom (569 308), France (555 192), Spain (492 520), Italy (389 180) and Sweden (215 601).

Table 6. School-age children migrants or refugees seeking asylum in European countries (data for the period 2015-2018)

Country	Number of refugees and migrants of school age	Share of the total number of children in that country
Germany	688 669	5%
Great Britain	569 308	4%
France	555 192	4%
Spain	492 520	5%
Italy	389 180	4%
Sweden	215 601	9%
Netherlands	143 170	4%
Belgium	105 252	4%
Austria	99 237	6%
Switzerland	90 012	5%
Greece	83 567	4%
Norway	73 747	6%
Poland	67 109	1%
Romania	63 086	2%
Denmark	54 511	4%
Portugal	47 661	2%
Ireland	39 215	3%
Finland	33 492	3%
Hungary	28 848	2%
R.Czech	24 671	1%
Bulgaria	18 593	2%
Slovenia	15 006	4%
Luxembourg	7 913	6%
Cyprus	7 840	4%
Croatia	7 442	1%
Slovakia	5 251	0.40%
Lithuania	5 094	1%
Malta	4 470	5%
Estonia	3 964	1%
Liechtenstein	3 551	5%
Latvia	3 313	0.80%
Iceland	2 801	3%

Source: UNHCR-UNICEF-IOM, 2019, *Access to education for refugee and migrant children in Europe, September* [12].

6. EDUCATION

It is a key element for the social inclusion of refugee or immigrant children in host communities. European countries affected by the refugee and immigrant crisis of 2015- 2016 have made efforts to ensure that children have access to school as much as possible. In Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, for example, between 50% and 62% of school-age refugee children and immigrant children have been integrated into the formal education system since December 2018.

7. LIVING CONDITIONS

Low quality housing is usually associated with a low level of material well-being. There are several objective aspects that can be a basis for assessing living conditions in the EU, for example, housing deficiencies (damp walls or roof leaks), overcrowding or lack of basic facilities (a toilet, shower or bathtub). . The share of the European population living in overcrowded housing in 2017 was the highest in Romania, where the lowest share of the population living in underoccupied housing was also recorded. In 2017, 15.7% of the EU population lived in overcrowded housing, while about two-fifths (36.4%) lived in underoccupied housing (Eurostat, 2019, Quality of life indicators ...) [13].

Some of these differences between EU Member States reflect social habits and changes, in particular related to the importance of family ties and the growing percentage of people living alone; between 2007 and 2017, the share of EU-28 households consisting of one or two people increased from 58% to 62%. In rural areas of southern and eastern Europe, larger families continue to live together under the same roof. In thirteen EU Member States, less than a tenth of the population lived in an overcrowded household in 2017, with a share of less than 4.0% in Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and the United Kingdom. At the other end of the range, overcrowding affects over 40.0% of the population in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Latvia reaching a maximum of 47.0% in Romania.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Study on Exploring Family Multi-Type Maltreatment, Social Support, and Externalizing and Internalizing Problems among Asian and Asian American College Students

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ABSTRACT

Exposure to family violence as a child has a detrimental long-term impact on one's life. This relationship is under-researched in Asian populations in the United States or in Asian countries. The objectives of this research are to examine long-term effects of maltreatment, including interparental violence and child maltreatment on externalizing and internalizing problems experienced by Asian and Asian American college students and explore protective effects of social support against the negative consequences of family maltreatment. Surveying 542 college students in Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and the United States, we measured effects of family maltreatment on problem outcomes and examined the role of social support. Exposure to dual harm of family maltreatment (i.e., intraparental violence and child maltreatment) increased students' externalizing problems compared to exposure to one type of family maltreatment, but no differences in internalizing behaviors were found. Effects of social support from parents and peers on externalizing and internalizing problems were neither moderating nor mediating, but direct. Those who received parental support had fewer externalizing behaviors, but effects of peer support were not significant. In contrast, those who obtained parental *and* peer support showed lower levels of internalizing mental health concerns. Surprisingly, men exhibited more mental health issues than women. Exposure to dual harm increases behavioral problems, but family support can help repair damage among Asian and Asian American college students. The relationship between abuse and problem outcomes was similar across countries, indicating common psychological processes.

Keywords: Multi-type maltreatment; externalizing behavior; internalizing behavior; social support; Asian college students; Asian American college students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family multi-type maltreatment—experiences of multiple forms of child abuse and neglect [1]—including interparental violence and child maltreatment, exists in all countries, representing a major human rights and public health problem [2,3]. Family violence is the leading cause of injury among women and children internationally, including in Asian countries [4,5]. Research conducted in the United States showed that exposure to family violence as a child had a significant detrimental long-term impact on one's life [6]. Children exposed to both intimate partner violence and child maltreatment exhibited more difficulties in areas of social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning than non-exposed peers [6,7].

Those from abusive families experience physical health problems (e.g., injuries, heart problems, and migraine headaches), mental health problems (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD],

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depression, and anxiety), and even premature death (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2018). Community well-being is also reduced through perpetration of further violence, trauma, fear of crime, and increased spending on criminal justice and social welfare [8]. Many survivors of family violence and maltreatment either quit or are forced to leave their jobs, resulting in lifetime income losses of nearly \$250,000 per person (USDHHS, 2018). Some abused women and children are also forced to leave their homes and become homeless [9] (USDHHS, 2018).

Early studies of mental health problems (i.e., internalizing problems) of children who have been exposed to family violence and maltreatment were mostly carried out with Western populations [10]. Recently, a limited number of studies have been conducted in non-Western societies among Asians, showing similar patterns to those in the United States.

In Hong Kong, intimate partner violence is strongly associated with child physical maltreatment, and this dual family harm leads to higher rates of feeling threatened, lower self-esteem (internalizing), and aggression and violence (externalizing; Chan, [11]). In Taiwan, those experiencing multi-type family maltreatment demonstrated more internalizing and externalizing problems than those experiencing only one type of maltreatment [12]. However, among South Korean young adults, exposure to a single type of maltreatment resulted in equally high levels of internalizing and externalizing problems as those who experienced dual family harm [13].

As past studies show, those who experienced dual harm of family maltreatment exhibited both externalizing and internalizing problems. McConaughy and Skiba [14] note that the coexistence of distinct disorders or syndromes (i.e., externalizing and internalizing), called comorbidity, occurs in the same individuals. For example, based on parent reports of children aged 4 to 18, McConaughy and Skiba indicated moderate to high overlap between externalizing and internalizing syndromes.

Family maltreatment strains the fundamental human need to belong [15], but social support eases distress and promotes prosocial engagement [16]. Cultural differences also complicate understanding the effects of these dynamics across Eastern and Western cultures. For example, fidelity to family for support may allow greater social competitiveness among Asian students, and seeking belonging among friends may hinder individuation among Western students. Characterized by collectivism and interdependence, Asian societies may encourage the sharing of stressful problems. However, adherence to group or family harmony may discourage the use of a social support network in coping with stress because personal beliefs and needs are secondary to social norms and relationships [17,12].

Kim, Sherman, and Taylor [18] observed that even though Asian and Asian Americans are distinctive cultural groups, they share some cultural heritage; the shared cultural experiences underlie a tendency to not seek social support. In contrast, in Western cultures, such as the United States, individuals are viewed as independent and encouraged to act according to their own interests. Thus, Westerners are more likely to seek assistance from their social networks to deal with family problems.

Social support has been found to mitigate effects of stress on psychological and behavioral problems, but evidence of that relationship is inconclusive, and more research is needed on that topic [19,20,21]. Social support may disrupt the cycle of violence. Ironically, parents who abused their children, via social support, may play a role in reducing the likelihood of subsequent violence by their abused children.

To address the need for more research among Asian and Asian American college students on this topic, and more through a comparative lens, we examine the long-term impacts of family multi-type maltreatment (i.e., interparental violence and child maltreatment) on externalizing and internalizing problems of Asian college students in Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan and Asian American college students. Furthermore, our investigation also includes the role of social support in the effects of externalizing and internalizing problems. This approach may advance our understanding of cultural variations in outcomes stemming from family multi-type maltreatment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Family Violence and Maltreatment

Children in violent homes are at a higher risk for being abused than children in non-violent homes. More than 60% of children are exposed to direct or indirect abuse each year in the United States [22]. Children indirectly exposed to intimate partner violence are often direct victims of other kinds of maltreatment in their homes, and this dual harm is experienced in as many as 40% of families [23]. This percentage closely corresponds with those of Hong Kong [11].

Children who were exposed to multi-type maltreatment are more likely to be disobedient at home and school and more likely to show less social competence, including lower relationship quality and school performance when compared to non-exposed children [24]. Additional outcomes include aggressive and antisocial behaviors (i.e., externalizing behaviors), fearful and inhibited behaviors (i.e., internalizing behaviors), drinking problems [25,26], depression and delinquency [27], and problems at school [28].

Research comparing outcomes of children who have witnessed interparental violence and those who experienced direct child abuse is unsettled. Effects on antisocial behavior in childhood appear to be greater for those directly abused than for those who witness interparental violence [29]. Abused children also experience severe negative emotions, which account for their increased risk of internalizing behavior problems [30]. However, exposure to both types of family maltreatment—or dual harm—in childhood might have a greater adverse effect on children than either single type alone [31]. Additionally, children exposed to dual harm have a much higher risk of negative psychosocial (i.e., internalizing) and behavioral (i.e., externalizing) problems compared to those not exposed to maltreatment [32]. Dual harm not only has an immediate negative effect on children, but also a long-term detrimental impact on adult adjustment [6]. Among Taiwanese college students, dual harm had a more lasting adverse impact on self-esteem than the impact of one type of maltreatment or none at all [12].

Cho [33] notes the few comparative studies on multi-type maltreatment experienced by Asian and Asian American adolescents. Most were conducted to study intimate partner violence among Chinese Americans [34,35], South Korean Americans [36,37], and Japanese immigrants [38]. As such, long-term effects of family maltreatment and dual harm among Asian and Asian American adolescents need more attention [12] (Chen et al., 2002).

2.2 Intergenerational Transmission of Violence

The intergenerational transmission of violence perspective [39], is useful for explaining the relationship between children's exposure to familial violence and maltreatment (whether indirect, direct, or both), and behavioral outcomes. With roots in social learning theory [40], the perspective asserts that violence is transmitted through vicarious observations and direct experiences [31], resulting in rewards and punishments for violent thoughts and behaviors. Survivors' cognitive and behavioral norms are infused with violent schemas that may play out in other contexts well into adulthood [41,39]. Reinforcement of witnessing or experiencing violence in the family varies with situational family dynamics and social roles, making specific outcomes difficult to predict [31,29]. However, unless disrupted, violent social patterns and behaviors learned in childhood remain central in survivors' lives.

Children who witness intimate partner violence sometimes model parental behavior in interactions with other people, increasing risk of externalizing behavior problems [30], including violent perpetration in dating relationships [42]. Furthermore, child maltreatment (being an abuse survivor) profoundly increases antisocial behavior in adolescence [29]. Finally, child survivors with severe negative emotions experience anger in interactions with other people and have higher risk for internalizing behavior problems [30].

2.3 Role of Social Support

Social support is information from others that one is cared for, loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations [43]. Research in the United States found that social support helps individuals reduce and cope with physical and mental stress [44,45]. The absence of social support leads to emotional, academic, and financial stress [45]. In the United States, family often serves as a model for coping behavior and provides a sense of safety, while friends reduce isolation and assist coping efforts [46]. However, it is unclear whether social support functions the same way in non-Western societies [47]. Shen [12] found that parental and peer social support mediated between childhood dual harm and low self-esteem among Taiwanese college students. There is a “double whammy” effect of maltreatment and poor relationship quality (p. 787).

2.4 Cultural Values and Social Support

The salience and value of sources of social support vary according to both cultural values and age. Asian cultural values such as collectivism emphasize the maintenance of group relations, stress conformity and the well-being of others, and suppress deviance and mental concerns [48,49,21]. As such, seeking out social support is discouraged because personal beliefs and needs are secondary to social norms and relationships [21]. Another value, “saving face” also discourages maltreated family members from seeking help from friends and family [50] and urges the family unit to remain intact [51,49]. Therefore, families and friends may be viewed as the source of strain rather than support in Asian cultures.

Yoshihama and Dabby [52] showed that Japanese immigrant women born in Japan, compared with Japanese American women, were less likely to seek help from friends and confront their partners. This suggests that those who are born in Japan were more constrained by the cultural expectations and traditions of their ethnic background than those born in the U.S., thereby making them more vulnerable and intensifying negative impacts on their lives [52]. Lee and Hadeed [53] demonstrated that in South Korean immigrant communities, positive support from families, relatives, and friends was more likely to reduce life stress, distress symptoms, and spousal violence. Han et al. [13] found that, for South Korean college students who experienced family violence, social support from parents, close friends, teachers, and classmates reduced internalizing mental health outcomes, helping “them rebuild their sense of self” (p. 831). However, they did not find the effect of social support on externalizing behavior. This was consistent with research from the United States showing a lack of impact of social support from peers and teachers on externalizing behavior which was instead more related to poor relationships with parents [54].

2.5 Age and Social Support

The influence of social support on outcomes of family maltreatment may also vary with age. At a younger age, parental support takes a primary role, while in the case of college students, peer support comes to the fore [55]. Children are more likely than adolescents to get support from adults and were more satisfied with support received from adults. Ezzell, Swenson, Cupit, and Brondino [56] reported that among physically abused children in the United States, both parental and peer support reduced internalizing problems, but not externalization. Parents assume a nurturing role, providing children with a sense of security and protection, while peer relationships decreased feelings of loneliness, increased sense of belonging, and validated self-worth [57]. Although family and peer support is important to children undergoing stress, more support is needed to prevent aggression.

In contrast, adolescents are less likely to feel supported by parents, but more likely to view friends as support resources [58]. They spend less time with their parents and rely less on them for companionship and emotional support. Support from parents did not always facilitate healthier functioning following abuse discovery. Instead, adolescents spend more unsupervised time with peers, which may not protect against psychological distress, but rather it can be a risk factor. Victimized youths who perceived friends as their major source of support were particularly at risk for poor adjustment, including internalizing behaviors such as shame and self-blame [58]. It is because when they have suffered stress, the comfort of peer support is not enough to avoid internalizing and

externalizing problems [59]. Feiring et al. [58] noted if the supportive peer group engaged in aggressive behavior, then the youth, although feeling supported, might also be more likely to engage in aggression. Thus, social support may not mitigate effects of stressful events and coping among adolescents.

However, adolescents who do feel supported by their parents have less psychological distress. They show reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger, and hostility, regardless of the severity of child abuse experienced [60,61].

2.6 Ways Social Support May Affect Behavior

Although past research confirmed that social support plays an important role in the reduction of psychological and behavioral problems, it is inconclusive about whether social support serves as a mediator or moderator [19,20,21]. Few studies examine whether social support mediates or moderates the relationship between child abuse and adult mental and physical health [62].

2.6.1 Mediating effect of social support

Social support may mediate the relationship between family violence, maltreatment, and positive coping [62,63,64]. Herrenkohl et al. found that social support mitigates the relationship between child abuse and adult mental and physical outcomes. Owen et al.'s examination of 8 –12 year-old African American children showed that both family and peer support mediates the effect of intimate partner conflict on their social functioning. James and Mennen also found that for a sample of mostly Latino and African American youth and young adults between 14 and 22 years old, social support (measured as positive interaction with friends) mediates the relationship between maltreatment and internalizing problems. Social support from peers has a negative association with emotional problems among youth and young adults who experienced child abuse.

2.6.2 Moderating (buffering) effect of social support

Findings from research exploring social support as a moderating or protective factor have been mixed [60]. Some studies found that social support buffers against negative outcomes abuse survivors [65]. Davidson and Demaray [66] showed that social support played a buffering role between middle school students' victimization and internalization problems from bullying. Social support from teachers and classmates for boys, and parental support for girls moderated the relationship between bullying victimization and internalizing problems.

However, other studies that had the ability to do so found no moderating effects [62]. Bal et al. [59] also showed that, for adolescents, social support did not moderate between a stressful event and coping. Likewise, Folger and Wrights [60] did not find moderating effects when abuse experiences were more severe and repeated. Internalizing problems persisted despite social support from families, partly because support from families exhibiting high levels of aggression might not be beneficial to children and because they were more likely to suffer from high levels of stress, which outweighed positive support [67].

Few studies examine social support as a mediating or moderating influence for Asian and Asian American adolescents. A rare example, Yoshihama and Horrocks' [68] study of women abuse survivors of Japanese descent, found no interaction effects between abuse and social support on PTSD symptoms.

3. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research aims to understand the effects of family maltreatment on Asian and Asian American college students' externalizing and internalizing behaviors, as well determine the role of social support (directly, mediating, or moderating) in that process. We also explore if those who receive higher levels of parental and peer support experience lower levels of externalizing and internalizing problems.

Furthermore, we examine if cross-cultural differences in externalizing and internalizing problems exist. We formulated the following 2 hypotheses and 3 research questions:

3.1 Hypothesis 1

College students who were exposed to some kind of family maltreatment (interparental violence, child maltreatment, or dual harm) will have higher levels of a) externalizing problems and b) internalizing mental health concerns than those not exposed to maltreatment, controlling for social support, country of origin, and gender.

3.2 Hypothesis 2

College students who had dual harm will have higher levels of externalizing and internalizing problems than those who experienced any single form of family maltreatment, controlling for social support, country of origin, and gender.

3.3 Research Question 1

Does social support play a direct, mediating, or moderating role in the relationship between family maltreatment and externalizing and internalizing problems?

3.4 Research Question 2

Do Asian and Asian American college students who receive higher levels of parental and peer support experience lower levels of externalizing and internalizing problems, controlling for family maltreatment, country of origin, and gender?

3.5 Research Question 3

Do cross-cultural differences in externalizing and internalizing problems exist, controlling for family maltreatment, social support, and gender?

4. METHODS

After receiving approval from the university's institutional review board, we conducted the present study using a survey questionnaire. To have culturally sensitive, reliable, and valid measurements, we modified all survey instruments by incorporating the suggestions made by colleagues¹ in the respective countries. We also employed a pilot study in each country, which had internally consistent results. Because of known cultural differences among Asian countries, we did not intend to generalize our findings to college students in all Asian countries and Asian American college students.

4.1 Participants

The sample consists of 542 college students, comprising 155 (28.6%) at a Hong Kong university, 96 (17.7%) at one of three South Korean universities, 172 (31.7%) at one of three Japanese universities, and 119 (22.0%) at a U.S. university. In total, the sample was drawn from eight universities across four countries. Of the total participants, 156 (28.8%) were men and 386 (71.2%) women.

4.1.1 Hong Kong, South Korean, and Japanese students

In Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan, each professor distributed hard copies of the survey questionnaires to their students during class time and asked them to return it after the class or during the next class.

4.1.2 Asian American students

Asian American students in general psychology classes were recruited at a large Western university, using the SONA online system, which allowed researchers to manage their research in a cloud-based

environment (<http://www/soma-systems.com/about.aspx>). To participate in the study, Asian American students had to be (a) 18 or older, (b) undergraduate students at the university, (c) American-born or foreign-born (born Chinese, Korean, Japanese or Vietnamese). If foreign-born, participants had to have arrived in the United States before the age of 12, which suggested they were assimilated into the local and national American culture and society.

4.2 Survey Instrument and Data Collection

All instruments were originally written in English and then professionally translated between October and December 2012. Data were collected early March to mid-March 2013.

4.3 Measures

Variables included externalizing and internalizing problems, family maltreatment, social support, country of origin, and gender.

4.3.1 Dependent variables

4.3.1.1 Externalizing and internalizing problems

To measure externalizing and internalizing problems, Achenbach's [69] Child Behavior Check List was used. Externalizing problems included twenty-two items, such as "argue a lot," "get along badly with my family," "physically attack people," and "threaten to hurt people." Internalizing problems included twenty-one items, such as "lonely," "worthless or inferior," "nervous or tense," and "unhappy, sad, or depressed." For each question, participants were asked to rate the frequency with which they experienced each behavior problem over the past six months using the following answer format: 0=not true, 1=somewhat or sometimes true, and 2=very true or often true. A higher number indicates more externalizing and internalizing problems. Among the four countries combined, Cronbach's alpha was .88 for *externalizing problems* and .91 for *internalizing problems*.

4.3.2 Independent variables

4.3.2.1 Family maltreatment

Family maltreatment consists of a) interparental violence and b) child maltreatment. The questions used the problematic parental terms of "mother" and "father," but instructed participants to include stepparents when recounting these experiences.

a) Interparental violence. Interparental violence was measured by the Conflict Tactics Scale for parental violence [70]. Participants answered how often they were exposed to various violent acts between their parents, such as mental or physical abuse, before they turned 18 years old.

Witness of father abusing mother and witness of mother abusing father. These two variables each consisted of two types of abuse (i.e., mental and physical abuse), which comprised a single scale, 1) *witness father*, and 2) *witness mother* for each country.

Witness of father (or mother) abusing mother (or father) mentally and physically. Six questions from the mental abuse scale for father (or mother) and eight questions from the physical abuse scale for father (or mother) were included. Participants were asked to indicate how many times their father (or mother) committed mental and physical abuse upon their mother (or father) when participants were in elementary through high school. The response options were 1 (almost daily) to 7 (never). Response categories were reverse coded, so higher numbers indicate higher frequencies. Among the four countries combined, Cronbach's alpha was: for mental abuse, .89 for father and .85 for mother; and for physical abuse, .97 for father and .95 for mother.

The correlation between witnessing father abusing mother and mother abusing father (mental and physical) (combined four countries) was strong and positive, $r(490) = .76, p < .001$. For each country, the

correlation between witnessing father abusing mother and mother abusing father was strong (except in the United States, which was moderate) and positive ($p < .001$): $r(140) = .81$ for Hong Kong, $r(82) = .88$ for South Korea, $r(155) = .84$ for Japan, and $r(107) = .54$ for the United States.

b) Child maltreatment. Child maltreatment was measured by the Parent-Child version of Contact Tactics Scales for child maltreatment history [71]. Respondents reported the frequency of mental and physical maltreatment by their father and mother before they turned 18 years old.

Child maltreatment by father and child maltreatment by mother. These two variables each consisted of two types of maltreatment (i.e., mental and physical maltreatment), which comprised a single scale, 1) *child maltreatment by father*, and 2) *child maltreatment by mother* for each country.

Mental and physical maltreatment by father (or mother). Five questions from the mental maltreatment scale and six questions from the physical maltreatment scale were included. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they were mentally and physically maltreated by the parent when they were in elementary through high school. The answer category was 1 (almost daily) to 7 (never). Response categories were reverse coded, so higher numbers indicate higher frequencies. Among the four countries combined, Cronbach's alpha was: for mental maltreatment, .88 for father and .82 for mother; and for physical maltreatment, .87 for father and .86 for mother.

The correlation between child maltreatment (mental and physical) by the father and by the mother (combined four countries) was moderate and positive, $r(473) = .55$, $p < .001$, indicating common co-occurrence of parents being abusive. For each country, the correlation between child maltreatment by the father and by the mother was positive, but ranged from weak (the United States), to moderate (Hong Kong and Japan), to strong (South Korea): $r(134) = .59$ for Hong Kong, $r(82) = .75$ for South Korea, $r(149) = .69$ for Japan, and $r(102) = .26$ for the United States.

Four groups of family maltreatment exposure. To test whether dual exposure to interparental violence and child maltreatment has a greater association with externalizing and internalizing problems than single exposure to either interparental violence or child maltreatment, the sample was divided into four mutually exclusive groups (see Moylan et al., [27]): 1) no violence exposure group ($n = 11$, 2.0% of sample); 2) witness of interparental violence only group which includes domestic violence by father only, mother only, and both father and mother ($n = 25$, 4.6%); 3) child maltreatment only group, which includes child abuse by father only, mother only, and both father and mother ($n = 193$, 34.1%); and 4) dual harm group, which includes interparental violence and child maltreatment by father only, mother only, and both father and mother ($n = 320$, 58.3%). Moylan et al. (2010) found that 68% of their sample (adolescents) experienced some type of maltreatment, while 88.8% of our Asian and Asian American respondents (college students) experienced either exposure to interparental violence, child maltreatment, or dual harm. We created three dummy variables, which are shown in statistical analyses later in the paper: *interparental violence*; *child maltreatment*; and *dual harm*. *No maltreatment* is the omitted category.

4.3.2.2 Social support

The primary instrument for social support was the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale [CASSS], which is a multi-dimensional scale measuring perceived social support from four sources: parents, teachers, classmates, and friends [72]. Past research indicated that classmate support was stable over time, but teacher support decreases with age [19]. Our sample consisted of college students, so we included parental and peer support only.

Social support from parents and close friends. The questions asked participants' current experience with their parents in seven items and their close friends in eight items using a 6-point scale: 1=never, 2=very rarely, 3=rarely, 4=occasionally, 5=very frequently, and 6=always. Among the four countries combined, Cronbach's alpha was: .90 for social support from parents and .96 for social support from close friends.

4.3.3 Additional variables

4.3.3.1 Gender

This question asked whether participants were men (coded as 1) or women (coded as 0).

4.3.3.2 Country of origin

This indicated the country in which participants attended university. Response categories were 1 for Hong Kong, 2 for South Korea, 3 for Japan, and 4 for the United States. We created three dummy variables: *Hong Kong*; *South Korea*; and *Japan*.

5. RESULTS

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to show if variables explain a statistically significant amount of variance in the dependent variable [73]. This analysis allows us to build several regression models by adding variables to a previous model at each step and to determine whether newly added variables show an improvement.

Table 1 presents family maltreatment by gender. Women experienced more dual harm and child maltreatment than men. Contrastingly, men witnessed more interparental violence than women and more men than women were not exposed to any maltreatment.

Table 1. Number and percentage of cases for family maltreatment by gender

	No maltreatment	Interparental violence ^a	Child maltreatment ^b	Dual Harm ^c	Total
Men	7 (64%)	19 (76%)	50 (27%)	93 (29%)	169 (31%)
Women	4 (36%)	6 (24%)	138 (73%)	225 (71%)	373 (69%)
Total	11 (2%)	25 (5%)	188 (35%)	318 (55%)	542 (100%)

^a Interparental violence includes father only, mother only, and father and mother

^b Child maltreatment includes father only, mother only, and father and mother

^c Dual harm consists of interparental violence and child maltreatment

Table 2 presents family maltreatment by externalizing and internalizing variables. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the differences in externalizing and internalizing problems among the family maltreatment exposure groups. Externalizing problems significantly differed among the family maltreatment exposure groups ($F=5.12, p=.002$). Those who experienced dual harm had higher levels of physical violence and aggression than those exposed to child maltreatment and interparental violence. Based on post-hoc t-tests between the groups (not shown), the only statistically significant results were between dual harm and interparental violence ($p=.042$), and dual harm and no maltreatment ($p=.020$). Differences between child maltreatment and no maltreatment approached statistical significance ($p=.056$). Internalizing problems also differed by family maltreatment ($F=3.02, p=.030$) (not shown); that is, those who experienced dual harm had more internalizing problems than those only exposed to child maltreatment or interparental violence.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation for family maltreatment by externalizing and internalizing behavior

	No maltreatment	Interparental violence	Child maltreatment	Dual Harm
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
Externalizing behavior	1.09(2.02)	2.92(4.82)	5.58(5.75)	6.09(5.54)
Internalizing behavior	6.18(6.43)	9.26(8.32)	12.12(8.64)	12.57(8.36)

5.1 Examination of the Role of Social Support

Two sets of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test effects of family maltreatment on college students' externalizing and internalizing problems and examine the role that social support from parents and close friends played in coping after family maltreatment. First, using the model by Aiken and West [74], moderation analyses were conducted to see whether social support would interact with each predictor (i.e., the family maltreatment exposure group) to predict externalizing and internalizing problems. Moderating effects of social support were not significant for parents and friends (analysis not shown). Next, the mediating effects of social support were examined by following Baron and Kenny's [75] method. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the relation between each predictor and mental health and behavioral problems with social support as a mediator. Mediating effects were not significant (analysis not shown). Effects of social support from parents and peers on externalizing and internalizing problems were neither moderating nor mediating, but direct (Research Question 1).

Table 3 presents hierarchical regression analyses where *externalizing* behavior is the dependent variable. Model 1 included dummy variables for country (*Hon Kong*, *South Korea*, and *Japan*) and gender (*man* = 1). These did not significantly predict externalizing behavior, $R^2 = .01$, $F(4, 488) = 1.04$, $p > .05$.

Table 3. Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for predicting externalizing behaviors

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B(SE)	β	t	B(SE)	β	t	B(SE)	β	T
Hong Kong	.18(.69)	.02	.26	.25(.69)	.02	.36	.01(.68)	.001	.02
South Korea	.21(.79)	.02	.27	.44(.79)	.03	.56	.74(.79)	.05	.93
Japan	-.42(.71)	-.03	-.59	.21(.72)	.02	.29	.17(.72)	.01	.24
Men	-.93(.57)	-.08	-1.63	-1.02(.57)	-.08+	-1.79	-.73(.57)	-.06	-1.27
IV				1.17(2.17)	.04	.54	1.15(2.15)	.04	.54
CM				4.31(1.91)	.36*	2.26	3.71(1.89)	.31+	1.96
Dual Harm				4.97(1.88)	.44**	2.65	4.40(1.86)	.39*	2.37
SS Parents							-.10(.04)	-.14**	-2.73
SS Friends							-.03(.04)	-.04	-.86
R ²		.01			.04			.07	
ΔR ²		.01			.03			.03	

(IV=Interparental Violence; CM=Child maltreatment)

Note. The United States is the omitted category. 1=men and 0=women.

+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Model 2 added *interparental violence*, *child maltreatment*, and *dual harm* to Model 1. This model significantly predicted *externalizing* behavior, $R^2 = .04$, $F(7, 485) = 2.87$, $p < .01$. When compared to those not exposed, *dual harm* was the stronger predictor of externalizing behavior ($\beta = .44$, $p = .008$), followed by *child maltreatment* ($\beta = .36$, $p = .024$). *Interparental violence* was not statistically significant ($\beta = .04$, $p = .59$). There were no differences in externalizing behavior problems across countries or between men and women.

Model 3 added *social support from parents* and *close friends* to Model 2. This model significantly predicted *externalizing* behavior, $R^2 = .07$, $F(9, 483) = 3.72$, $p < .001$. *Dual harm* was statistically significant, controlling for child maltreatment, interparental violence, parental and peer support, country of origin, and gender ($\beta = .39$, $p = .018$). *Social support from parents* was also statistically significant ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .007$). *Child maltreatment* was almost significant ($\beta = .31$, $p = .051$), while *social support from close friends* was an insignificant predictor ($\beta = -.04$, $p = .39$).

Our findings indicate that those who experienced family violence reported higher levels of externalizing problems than those not exposed to any violence (Hypothesis 1). In addition, those who experienced dual harm were more likely to have externalizing problems than those exposed to any single form of violence (Hypothesis 2). Moreover, those who received higher levels of parental support

experienced lower levels of external behavior problems (Research Question 2). Asian and Asian American college students benefitted from support from parents in reducing externalizing behavior problems, although effects of dual harm remained significant. Unlike parental support, peer supports did not contribute to reducing externalizing behavior. There were no significant differences in externalizing behavior among country of origin (Research Question 3).

The most important predictor of externalizing behavior problems was parental support, which uniquely explained 1.5% (sr^2) of the variation in externalizing problems. Together, the nine independent variables accounted for 6.5% of the variance in externalizing problems. The proportion of the variance in externalizing behavior explained by the set of independent variables in Model 3 ($R^2 = 6.5%$) increased by 2.5% (Model 2), and by 5.7% (Model 1).

Table 4 shows the second set of hierarchical regression analyses with *internalizing* problems as the dependent variable. Model 1 included three sets of dummy variables for country of origin (*Hong Kong*, *South Korea*, and *Japan*) and gender ($man = 1$). Model 1 did not significantly predict internalizing behavior, $R^2 = .01$, $F(4, 487) = 1.09$, $p > .05$.

Table 4. Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for predicting internalizing behaviors

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B(SE)	β	T	B(SE)	β	t	B	β	t
Hong Kong	-.96(1.06)	-.05	-.90	-.86(1.06)	-.05	-.82	-1.38(1.03)	-.08	-1.34
South Korea	.89(1.21)	.04	.73	1.21(1.21)	.06	.99	1.61(1.19)	.08	1.36
Japan	-.19(1.08)	-.01	-.17	.54(1.10)	.03	.49	.03(1.08)	.002	.03
Men	.84(.87)	.05	.97	.72(.87)	.04	.83	1.71(.86)	.09*	2.00
IV				.90(3.35)	.02	.27	.56(3.24)	.01	.17
CM				4.71(2.93)	.26	1.61	3.03(2.84)	.17	1.07
Dual Harm				5.64(2.88)	.32+	1.96	4.15(2.79)	.24	1.49
SS Parents							-.157(.06)	-.15**	-2.88
SS Friends							-.201(.06)	-.18***	-3.53
R ²		.01			.03			.10	
ΔR^2		.01			.02			.07	

(IV=Interparental Violence; CM=Child maltreatment)

Note. The United States is the omitted category. 1=men and 0=women.
 $p < .10+$; $p < .05*$; $p < .01**$; $p < .001***$

Model 2 added *interparental violence*, *child maltreatment*, and *dual harm* to Model 1, $R^2 = .03$, $F(7, 484) = 2.00$, $p > .05$, which almost significantly predicted *internalizing* problems. *Dual harm* was almost statistically significant ($\beta = .32$, $p = .051$), but no other variables were significant. That is, students who had dual harm were slightly more likely to experience internalizing problems than those not exposed to any maltreatment.

Model 3 added *social support from parents* and *close friends* to Model 2, which significantly predicted *internalizing* problems, $R^2 = .10$, $F(9, 482) = 5.85$, $p < .001$. By adding social support variables, the effects of dual harm on internalizing problems disappeared (Hypotheses 1 and 2.). Both social support from close friends ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$) and social support from parents ($\beta = -.15$, $p = .004$) contributed to the reduction of internalizing problems, controlling for family maltreatment, country of origin, and gender (Research Question 2). Asian and Asian American college students benefitted from parental and peer support in internalizing problems. However, there were no cross-cultural differences in externalizing and internalizing problems (Research Question 3).

The most important predictor of internalizing mental health concerns was social support from close friends, which uniquely explained 2.3% (sr^2) of the variation in internalizing problems. Together, the nine independent variables accounted for 9.9% of the variance in internalizing problems. The proportion of variance in internalizing problems explained by a set of independent variables in Model 3 ($R^2 = 9.9%$) increased by 7.1% (Model 2), and by 9.0% (Model 1).

5.2 Gender Differences in Internalizing Problems

As demonstrated in Model 3 for Table 4, when the social support variable was added to Model 2 in the hierarchical regression model, gender was statistically significant for internalizing problems ($\beta=.09$, $p=.05$). That is, men exhibited higher levels of internalizing mental health concerns than women. However, this conflicts with past findings that men cope with stress through externalizing behavior (e.g., anger and aggression) and that women internalize their behavior (e.g., feelings of guilt, depression, and anxiety; Stiles, Liu, & Kaplan, [76]; Eschenbeck, Kohlman, & Lohaus, 2008; Maschi, Morgen, Bradley, & Hatcher, [77]). Likewise, Korean American adolescent men demonstrated more rule-breaking behavior [78,79].

To explore this further, we conducted simple regression analyses between social support and internalizing problems by gender. We found that Asian and Asian American men received lower levels of parental support ($\beta=-.14$, $p=.001$) and peer support ($\beta=-.19$, $p=.001$) (results not shown) than their women counterparts. Social support is expected to help college students cope with physical and mental stress and stressful life situations [45]. Less parental and peer support experienced by Asian and Asian American men increased mental stress and minimized the role of a protective factor for psychological distress. Iwamoto, Liao, and Liu [80] explained higher levels of internalizing problems among men. Specifically, Asian American men who endorse *dominance* for masculine scripts (unlike *winning* norms, a protective factor) reported more depression symptoms. Adhering to *dominance* masculine norms may create distress in relationships.

6. DISCUSSION

As expected, Asian and Asian American college students exposed to dual harm, compared with those with no maltreatment, showed more externalizing behavior, but no difference in internalizing problems for these comparisons. Participants exposed to dual harm showed more externalizing behavior than those exposed to one type of maltreatment. However, dual harm and any single type of maltreatment had no differences in internalizing problems. This result was similar to Han et al.'s [13] outcomes, which found that South Korean college students who were exposed to a single form of violence showed equally high levels of internalizing problems as those exposed to dual harm.

Initially, effects of dual harm on externalizing problems were stronger than for any other group. However, when social support was entered in the regression model, the effect of dual harm weakened, but remained significant. The effect of parental support was strong, but peer support was not significant, indicating that Asian and Asian American college students' behavioral problems were reduced mainly from the inclusion of parental support. Although past studies showed that adolescents spend less time with parents and rely on their peers for support [58], and minimize help-seeking from family members [51], Folger and Wright [60] noted that among college students, social support from family helps reduce anger and hostility.

Additional findings here were that both parental and peer support helped reduce internalizing problems, and that peer support was a stronger effect than that of parental support. The effect of dual harm disappeared when the social support variable entered in the regression model. Although Asian cultural values discourage maltreated individuals from seeking support from parents and friends, our findings imply that our college participants received and benefited from their support.

Our findings concur with Folger and Wright's [60] work on college aged men and women and Lee and Hadeed's [53] examination of South Korean immigrants, which showed those who received social support from families and friends coped better with life stress and distress symptoms. Holahan et al. (1995) found a negative relationship between parental support and psychological problems, while Bal et al. [59] suggested that the comfort of peer support was not enough to avoid internalizing problems.

There were no cross-cultural differences in externalizing and internalizing problems, which indicated levels of both problems were similar among four countries. Although within-group differences are known to exist among Asian countries, researchers like Anderson and Mayes [48], Kim, Atkinson, and Yang [81], and Okumura et al. [82] maintained there are a number of cultural similarities among Asian

ethnic groups (see Literature Review). Further, there are no differences in levels of anxiety and depression between Chinese and Japanese Americans [82]. However, due to the limited number of studies on similarities in the effects of family violence and maltreatment, we found it difficult to make cross-cultural comparisons for externalizing and internalizing problems.

7. STUDY LIMITATIONS

We carefully collected data from four countries; however, issues with cross-cultural data collection might have affected the findings. For example, there were differences in timing and procedures of data collection. In Asian countries, collaborators collected data during class time using hard copies of the survey, while in the United States, Asian American students completed the survey online. Also, although key concepts used in the survey instrument were carefully examined and chosen, the assumption of conceptual equivalence—defined as a construct having the same meaning across cross-cultural groups—may be problematic when comparisons are made across less similar contexts (i.e., Asian countries and the United States; Harachi, Choi, Abbott, Catalano, & Bliesner, [83]).

Moreover, selection of the universities and countries included in the study was somewhat biased, since the universities were not chosen randomly and the selected countries do not represent all Asian countries. The participants were drawn using a convenience sample and may not represent all college students in each country. Further, Asian American student immigration status, ethnic backgrounds, and length of stay in the United States were not collected, impeding comparisons.

Our hierarchical regression analyses accounted for small amounts of variance in externalizing problems and internalizing problems, indicating that the set of independent variables included in our study did not have stronger explanatory power. Perhaps other variables are better predictors of externalizing and internalizing problems, such as childhood temperament, family environment [84], and parenting styles [85]. Chengliang [86] showed that Chinese parents are more authoritarian than American parents based on Confucian ideas, although he did not suggest that Chinese parenting styles increased internalizing and externalizing problems.

As Chan [87] and Gewirtz and Edleson [6] maintained, a cross-sectional study does not provide causality, it only shows a correlation among variables. As our study was cross-sectional and participants were not asked which problems they encountered first (exposure to interparental violence or child maltreatment), we were not able to explore the temporal order. Further, we could not assess exactly how college students have been affected by family violence at each developmental stage and how protective factors served to help participants cope with externalizing and internalizing problems despite exposure to risks. As per social learning theory, it is possible that college students have learned cultural traditions, beliefs, and norms—including violent ideas—from their families and peers in childhood, which remained until adulthood. Therefore, longitudinal studies are required to understand the differences between exposed between exposed and non-exposed groups.

Furthermore, with respect to longitudinal studies, Loeber and Burke [88] questioned whether some externalizing behaviors (e.g., delinquent behavior, persistent disobedience, and aggression) are precursors to internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression or anxiety). That is, some children with externalizing problems in childhood may develop internalizing problems in adolescence or adulthood [88]. As they noted, “less attention has been given to developmental pathways from early behavioral problems to other dysfunctional outcomes that are themselves impairing and harmful” (p.40). Thus the future study needs to explore whether externalizing and internalizing behaviors co-occur [14] or externalizing behaviors occur prior to internalizing behaviors [88,89].

8. CONCLUSION

The present study provided new insights into family violence and maltreatment and its long-term effects on Asian and Asian American college students’ externalizing and internalizing problems and the role of social support in dealing with stress events. Our findings indicated that exposure to dual

harm was more detrimental than effects of a single type of maltreatment to college students' behavioral functioning.

Further, the role of social support was directly related to externalizing and internalizing behavior. Both support from parents and close friends are found to be key elements in reducing internalizing mental health problems in response to family violence, while support from parents only was found to reduce externalizing behavior. Because of cultural constraints, Asian and Asian American families and friends are viewed as strain rather than support. In our study, social support was the source of support. Indeed, social support appeared to have lasted until our participants became college students.

The Asian American and Asian immigrant populations in the United States have grown over the past few decades ("U. S. Census Bureau," n.d.; Zong & Batalova, 2016). Despite this growth, this area of research among Asian Americans is still limited, and further investigation of family maltreatment associated with various circumstances, such as family immigration backgrounds, is needed.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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School Factors and Support System for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

According to the World Health Organisation [1]: Mental Health is the foundation for the well-being and effective functioning of individuals. Mental Health is a state of balance both within and with the environment. The entire gamete of a person that is the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and, all other factors of the environment affect the 'Mental Health of the person. Teaching is one of the most stressful professions, and 'Mental health' for teachers is of utmost importance. Most teachers deal with this issue in their ways. This article focuses on the factors within the institution which could be a source of 'Mental health issues and lack of well-being of teachers. Teachers enjoying good 'Mental health' and 'Physical health' will contribute to the well-being of the students and the school. The article will make the school authorities aware of the different factors which affect the teachers' 'Mental Health', and how the teachers/school can change the situation for achieving well-being in teachers. Teachers are also human beings who have their own needs, so as they encourage the students and parents, teachers themselves would require motivational support from the counselors. A Psychological assessment conducted can objectively assess the 'Mental Health' issues and establish the well-being standards for the institution. Teachers must work towards 'Mental Health well-being' which can infuse in them fresh energy to move forward towards their professional growth and also work towards the all-around development of the students under their care.

Keywords: Factors affecting mental health; well-being assessment; reinforcement; scaffolding; stress; reporting.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tchiki, D. explains well-being as an experience of good mental health, happiness, and prosperity. This is accompanied by high job satisfaction and high meaning and purpose in life and occupation and the ability to manage stress. She explains 5 types of well-being: Emotional well-being, Social well-being, Workplace well-being, Societal well-being. Tchiki [2] also explains different skills to be developed under each type of well-being. Mental health is an assessment of well-being. All components of well-being will lead to positive mental health.

Mental health has been an important component of effectiveness. Teacher's Mental health is not the main concern in educational institutions. In most institutions the practice is that the teachers are assigned work without being asked how they would manage to fulfill it. The product of work is given more importance than the process. Teacher's well-being [3] can be looked at from the systems approach. Teaching work needs physical and emotional involvement, and it drains out an enormous amount of energy. Mental health management requires a concerted effort on the part of the institution.

The factors in educational institutions affecting the mental health of teachers are present in the work environment. Dr. Jane White in the paper on "Supporting teachers mental health and well - being. Evidence review" states that the effect of mental health in different parts of the U.K. where teachers suffer from work-related stress, depression, or anxiety accounted for more than half of the working

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days lost in the academic year 2018/19. Mental health is also related to poor physical health and Jane reiterates by stating that long-term exposure to work-related stress leads to burnout, exhaustion, depersonalization, cynical attitudes towards an individual's job. The relation between mental health and physical health has been established by several authors and physicians.

Objectives of the study: The work environment has embedded features in it which affect the teachers' mental health. Some of the factors that cause mental health issues in teachers are identified after discussing with a few teachers in secondary schools. They were:

- i. Work-related factors
- ii. Lack of Facilities provided
- iii. Varying degrees of Reinforcement
- iv. Extent of Scaffolding
- v. Process of Networking and Collaborating
- vi. Reporting mechanisms

Although all the factors listed here are components of the work required by teachers, a correct procedure and required composition of the said factor is essential. These factors can lead to mental health issues if the teachers do not perceive it for their development. On many occasions, it was seen that a congruence of the institutional and personal goals is lacking and that creates mental health issues.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is was conducted to understand the 'Mental health factors' affecting teachers. The teachers were interviewed in the process of the study and the following are the results of the implications of the study.

Implications of the study: Work-related factors [4] also mentioned by Davis et al, include the workload given to each teacher, the nature of work, and whether the work is target-driven. Teachers in SSC have complained of high mental health issues due to a large number of students in classes. In a study conducted by Gasper & Vini (2021) titled 'A comparative study of the mental health of secondary school teachers with the positive factors and potential risk factors of mental health in selected S.S.C and I.C.S.E. schools of Greater Mumbai', it was found that there was a significant difference in the mental health of SSC and ICSE teachers, the SSC teachers showing poor 'Mental Health' as compared to ICSE teachers, there was also a significant difference in the self-esteem (ICSE more than SSC) and stress (SSC more than ICSE). This difference could be in the difference of the work-related factors, that is workload of teachers, too many students to cater to, increase in assessment work and thus causing an overall increase in physical and mental attention. This continuous and strenuous and intensive attention to be paid to each student takes away the teacher's physical and emotional energy. When it goes beyond the optimum level then it leads to burnout and stress and affects mental health [5,6]

The work allotted to teachers requires a formal induction, clarity, transparency, which is required for effective work. Teachers have to work under high levels of stress if the work assigned is target-driven, if the time available is less the stress level is more. Teaching as we know is a multifarious activity – the completion of the syllabus is the main activity of teachers, which is the expectation of the school and the parents. The parent-teacher meetings always stress the completion of the syllabus and conducting of examinations. This target-driven activity makes the teachers more stressed.

Psychologists say that a classroom is not a group it is made up of individuals of different kinds. Each child requires special attention. Teachers have to therefore provide attention to each child while they complete their syllabus, and measure the learning outcomes. Most teachers consider this as an unachievable task and carry on teaching the entire class as a group, and this beats the purpose of education itself. Teachers who consider their jobs as "one-sided" are not much affected by student engagement, they finish their job in the class and blame the students for not paying attention. These teachers often identify few students as role models for completing their tasks effectively and consider

them as 'samples' for their task completion. Such teachers are not worried about individual students but of the group representatives namely the few students who were able to cope with the "one-sided teaching". Student engagement and measurement of learning outcomes must be appropriately done by each teacher, but due to the large numbers, this is a cause for mental health issues. Work for a teacher is not restricted to completing the syllabus but involving herself in conducting different curricular enrichment programs, co-curricular activities, academic activities, sometimes maintenance activities.

In addition to this, the assessment work causes mental fatigue as it requires an individual rating of responses which requires a consistent flow of intellectual energy towards students' work. The assessment work is the most stressful work for all teachers and leads to mental health issues. The assessment is complete only when teachers provide constructive feedback to each student. This is not achieved by all teachers and most of the time it is seen that the teachers duplicate their written feedback for all students and thus students do not get a clear idea of where they stand and how they are supposed to improve. The assessment is always followed by the "Open house" which is attended by parents. Teachers have to justify to the parents about their ward's behavior and also provide each parent with tips on how their child could improve academic achievement. This customized feedback requires a lot of effort. Parents have different personalities and teachers also have their personality types, this causes a lot of conflicts while communicating. The open house activity is the day when answer papers are distributed for examination by parents and students. Teachers provide oral feedback on the child's marks and classroom behavior. The interaction with parents and students if not taken positively could affect the teachers' mental health and lead to decreased morale and motivation.

Teachers can work effectively if the facilities provided to them are suited to the teaching-learning situation. The facilities given to the teachers are sometimes provided without any training and assessment. For eg: Some schools have a smartboard but untouched by teachers due to lack of training and lack of awareness of student engagement strategies.

Schools differ in terms of physical facilities. Ekpoh, U.I., conducted a study on "Teachers' Satisfaction with Physical Working Environment: Imperative for Effective Service Delivery". The hypothesis formulated stated that – There is no significant relationship between teachers' satisfaction with the physical working environment and their service delivery, 52.9% were not satisfied with the physical work environment and service delivery. The level of satisfaction could be an indicator of the teachers' mental health. Research studies on job satisfaction have been conducted on various work environments and education systems have been the main research areas in terms of teacher satisfaction levels. Most studies do indicate several factors of dissatisfaction among teachers. In general, female teachers experienced more job satisfaction than male teachers, in most studies but when we look at teachers' mental health issues there are common factors across genders.

Teachers, like all other workers, need to be reinforced for their work. Some schools have extrinsic rewards for good work, some have subtle rewards. Teachers who are reinforced are motivated to give their best. This can create a good feeling and cause positive energy flow which can flush in good thoughts and thus could be a trigger for inducing good mental health. Reinforcement must be need-based, the institution must recognize the needs of employees at different stages of their employment and study the pattern of their motivation. This will help the institution to maintain the level of output of the employees.

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development explains the zone of proximal development. The process of 'Scaffolding' helps the teachers to develop according to the talents they possess to the optimum level. If teachers are provided scaffolds in their profession then it will reduce a lot of stress, it will give them proper direction and knowledge of their goal. Scaffolds could be in the form of senior teachers, parents, administrators. These scaffolds can have a long-lasting impact on teachers who can then achieve much better. Scaffolding can happen in institutions having an open culture, where there are learning communities. In institutions where the atmosphere is tense and the culture is competitive 'scaffolding' cannot happen. Communication among peers must be encouraged and openness and

transparency must be the key to this kind of communication. The focus must be on individual and institutional growth.

Networking is another main function of a teacher. Teachers cannot function on their own, they need to network and collaborate with others for task completion. Those who avoid networking are not open to learning and feedback. They don't interfere in other's work and they do not want other's comments on their work. This will lead to animosity and less sharing among colleagues. The atmosphere of institutions if less open and less communicative could lead to mental health issues. Therefore institutions must strive to see that teachers communicate formally and informally within and outside the institution. School teachers hardly engage in research or publishing, if encouraged would lead to catharsis and flush of ideas to improve the school system from the grassroots workers i.e. the teachers. Teachers [7] are professionals and their intellectual satisfaction will come only if they engage in reading and writing on educational topics. So, making a teacher tied down to routine work and not drawing out their creative potential could be hazardous not only for the teacher but also for the institution and to the students under their care. Collaboration is the key to the success of teaching and we are living in the age of technology which helps in easy collaboration and networking with anyone in the world. Teachers engaging in collaboration grow intellectually and develop skills that could be used for improving classroom practices and communication.

Promotional avenues of the teacher instill motivation and interest in carrying out tasks in a professional manner and also to sustain one's energies towards task completion although one is faced with stress. The ultimate goal motivates a person to push oneself further to achieving the goal. This can be beneficial to all teachers, but it is seen that secondary teachers do not have many levels of upward promotion, and have to remain at the same level for a long time unless they are appointed for administrative posts. This is another factor that leads to high levels of stress and mental health issues. Internal promotions such as being a supervisor, academic coordinator, activities coordinator which institutions require the teachers to undertake for the smooth functioning of the institutions' activities leads to temporary extrinsic motivation.

Counseling services are provided for students, in schools. Teachers work in close coordination with counselors and work on problems beyond their realm of expertise. Learning difficulties, emotional problems, etc. cause a disturbance in the child's learning process. This can with the help of counselors ease the problem that the child is facing and help the child in achieving better progress. Teachers also need counseling services. This is hardly provided in schools. Employee counseling services can ease the burden of the person concerning mental health. Schools must provide these counseling services to teachers who can discuss their problems regarding work pressure and relate with students. The job of the teacher goes beyond correcting manuscripts of students to getting into the students' context to understand the learning behavior. Learning behavior is entangled within all the external and internal experiences that students face in their lives. To understand the complexity of the behavior of each child the teacher must be trained and this exercise will also lead to the expense of emotional energy of the teacher. Therefore teachers need help in tackling emotional upheavals and getting into their normal planes after intervention with the children.

Reporting is an important duty of all teachers. It is perceived by most teachers that reporting is the most strenuous job that the teacher needs to fulfill among the duties of the teacher. Reporting of the teachers is at different levels and they can be considered as the following:

1. Reporting to students about students' achievement
2. Reporting to parents about students' achievement
3. Reporting to authorities about the work done through logbook and other reports
4. Individual reports of activities carried out
5. Reports to the office for performance appraisal for promotion or routine office inquiry
6. Reporting to a counselor
7. Reports for school magazines or annual reports
8. Reports of administrative tasks assigned as and when
9. Reports of interschool participation
10. Reports of special students

3. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

The above list can vary as the tasks assigned to teachers, the kind of work given, and the responsibilities entrusted. Reporting is an integral part of the process of teaching, it is the evidence of the work done and the outcomes achieved. Most of the teachers are not informed about the format of reporting and devise their mechanisms to report their work. The time taken for reporting is almost equal to the time taken for preparation of lessons, so if the teachers' work is divided into 3 main categories it would be: Planning of lessons, Teaching & Evaluation, and Reporting. Several reports made for evidence also burdens the teacher and lead to an enormous amount of stress. So reports could be formalized structures, well-formulated, short, and crisp for implementation so that it is well designed to present the information and assess the outcomes. With the age of technology, these reports are computerized and made available so that they can be compiled within minutes to understand the school performance. The schools are also assessed and accredited and ranked for their performance and this will attract a good clientele for the school. The prestige of the school and the quality of instruction offered in the institution is depicted in the rank of the school. So schools are very careful when it comes to reporting.

Suggestions from the study: Educational institutions must work towards the well-being of their teachers. Layous K, Lyubomirsky S, suggests mechanisms underlying the success of positive activity interventions. The positive mental health of teachers is very much required for the development of student's personalities, which suggests ways to happiness. A proper 'Mental Health impact assessment' is required in educational institutions. A mental health assessment would be an assessment of the intellectual and emotional condition of a person and the coping mechanisms which the person has inbuilt in him/her. A 'Mental Well-Being Assessment' would be the measurement to check how far the conditions provided in the organization impact the positive well-being of the person. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) to measure well-being, gives a quick measure of the well-being of a teacher. The components used for well-being are confidence in oneself, healthy interpersonal relationships, work orientation and excitement, feeling satisfied in one's job, extending self to other co-curricular and community-oriented programs, feeling of being a part of the institutional vision and mission, using participatory methods for conflict resolution. These criteria must be considered while assessing the mental well-being assessment which will ensure that teachers enjoy good mental health. Schools could appoint human resource managers who can undertake this work and provide appropriate advice to teachers for developing positive well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teachers' well-being must be given utmost importance if children's well-being is expected. An assessment of the Mental Health Well-Being assessment must be made mandatory for all teachers. Schools must provide appropriate facilities for emotional and professional growth. Teachers need to communicate well, in institutions sometimes it is seen that there is a communication breakdown between colleagues and administrators. It is seen that teachers have been doing the same work and teaching the same subjects year after year, this brings in routineness in the life of the teacher. Institutions must exhibit values of openness and transparency which can help employees to come forth freely with their problems and innovative ideas, and grow to their full potential. Openness to new ideas by institutions can infuse fresh ways of working and thus make teachers look forward to new things. Teachers can engage in research and publications and contribute to knowledge generation. Teachers have always been recipients but now the role can be reversed where they can become producers of knowledge. A change in attitude towards knowledge will bring in changes in the teaching-learning process, where teachers can respect students for their experience and entry-level knowledge which can enrich classroom teaching. Teachers can be more professionally oriented by associating themselves with professional organizations, where research is the key, this will help teachers give secondary importance to the textbook and give more importance to current knowledge, and keep themselves updated. Lastly, all the policies in education must give special attention to the teachers' mental health and well-being, and make provisions in the school for the same.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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The Role of Traditional Musical Instruments During Bapedi People's Religious and Cultural Practices: The Case of Selected Membranophones and Aerophones

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to investigate the use of three Bapedi traditional musical instruments in religious and cultural practices. The instruments are *meropa* (drums), *dinaka* (whistles and reed pipes) and *phalafala* (sable antelope horn). Bapedi musical instruments are frequently employed in both vocal and instrumental dance ensembles, as well as in festivals, religious rites, and funeral processions. In traditional Bapedi civilization, there are a variety of rites. Some are associated with human life cycles and are referred to as rites of passage. Others are conducted at times of adversity, such as sickness or drought. Others are seasonal and have anything to do with crop planting or harvesting. The purpose of these rites is to keep the cosmic power in balance. Oral interviews were the primary source of information. Publications and records are examples of secondary sources. Photographing various instruments, seeing videos of performances, and conducting semi-structured interviews with nine (9) traditional musicians were among the other approaches used. The following research question therefore guided this study: what are the religious and cultural functions of *meropa* (drums), *dinaka* (whistles and reed pipes) and *phalafala* (sable antelope horn) during religious and cultural practices of Bapedi people? The purpose of this contribution is to show that Bapedi religious and cultural practices need not to be seen as superstitious, magic, pagan or as evil. The findings revealed that the three traditional musical instruments studied have varying effects on Bapedi society's social, religious, and cultural activities. Although it was concluded that all three play a role, it was found that drums play the most important part in both religious and cultural practices.

Keywords: Traditional instruments; Bapedi people; religious and cultural practices; music; meropa; dinaka, phalafala.

1. INTRODUCTION

Still relatively little is known about the relationship between Bapedi religious and cultural practices, and their traditional musical instruments. The principal language of indigenous Bapedi music is Sepedi. Music is important in the life of Bapedi people. In Bapedi culture, drums are the basic instrument for almost all music genres and have many uses. Predominantly, membranophones and aerophones played and still play a significant role in different religious and cultural activities. Like in other music traditions in the continent and elsewhere, Bapedi music tradition possesses its own rules and concepts that will enable traditional musicians to perform music accordingly. This observation is endorsed by Fiagbedzi [1] who argues that it is unlikely that there can be any tradition of music without rules and procedures by which the music is organized. Merriam [2] adds further insight to the understanding of communal music-making. He asserts that music is a human phenomenon produced by people existing and functioning in a social situation (1964:187). Nanyonnga [3] agrees with

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Merriam's postulation when he states that music does not exist in isolation from the people who produce it. He further mentions that to understand music of a given people, the basic knowledge of the cultural factors behind the production of sound structure is important (1959:9).

In the Bapedi society, music is an important part of all aspects of life, including various activities such as social, religious, recreational and cultural¹ occasions. Many people spend a considerable amount of time daily listening to music, singing or playing musical instruments. Ensemble musicians' understanding of the ways in which physical gestures are used when interacting with fellow musicians helps to increase musical communication abilities in all music genres found in the Bapedi society. The quality of public performances is enhanced by a deeper understanding of the ways in which traditional Bapedi music practitioners communicate with the audience. Corroborating the above views, Bates [4,5] writes that in African context, musical instruments are intertwined in myriad forms of social relations, and instrumentalists and audiences often have distinctively intimate affective relations with them.

For the purpose of this study, however, it is necessary to state a few experiences as evidence of field research. Traditional Bapedi music is essentially indigenous music developed and maintained by oral tradition by each tribe or clan within Bapedi society, and organized and practiced as an integral part of everyday life. While the Bapedi music tradition recognizes the importance of vocal/choral music, it also provides the development of instrumental resources. A variety of traditional musical instruments are found in the Bapedi society. They can be scientifically classed into two groups, according to the means used to produce the sound. They include membranophones (drums) with a stretched membrane (see photo 1) and aerophones (flutes, pipes, whistles and horns) in which vibrating air produces the sound. Instruments of both classes are widely used in cultural and religious practices. Instruments are often played in groups or ensembles. Aerophones and membranophones are the most common instruments found in the Bapedi society. Drums or membranophones are found in a variety of sizes and shapes (see photo 1). They may be played by both hands (or sticks) technique. For the purpose of this study *meropa* (drums), *dinaka* (whistles and reed pipes) and *phalafala* (sable antelope horn) have been selected.



Photo 1.

¹ Attesting to this viewpoint, Idang [5] observes that a totality of traits and characters are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other peoples or societies.

Drums with a stretched membrane; (Ga-Marodi village; Sekhukhune district, 28.07.2017), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

In almost all the clans in the Bapedi society, a variety of music genres are found which are distinguished from one another in a number of ways, for example, the centers of motion, traditional costumes or 'traditional' outfit, type of instruments or instrumental combinations used. These music genres are contextually classified and performed in terms of either religious or cultural rituals. The allocation and classification of music genres for use on specific rituals generally suggest that each music genre is more appropriate and relevant for use in the specific context than others, on account of its religious and cultural significance. For example, the music genre of circumcision or initiation school would be irrelevant for ancestor veneration. The above observations are supported by Christian [6] who asserts that African traditional religion is the indigenous religion of Africans whose origin is lost in antiquity. He further remarks that it is believed to have been practiced by African fore-bears who handed it down from one generation to another (2014:1). Christian further mentions that music is an integral part of African traditional religion (2014:4). In his view, in African traditional setting, music is not a mere production of sounds that are pleasurable to the ear, but a conscious explanation or expression of religio-cultural realities in rhythmic forms (2014:4). Christian is convinced that in African context, songs and music often accompany different traditional activities, events or occasions such as burial ceremonies, coronations, etc. (2014:4).

2. PREVIOUS RELATED RESEARCH

In Bapedi culture, like in many cultures in Africa, traditional musical instruments have many functions and significances besides that of making music. This observation is supported by McGaffey [7] who reports that:

"Kongo musical instruments have many functions and significances besides that of making music. Music itself was and is thought to enable communication with the dead, often inducing spirit possession, "causing the spirit to descend". The presence of the spirit is recognized when everybody is carried away, having a good time. Parties and ritual events, which are often much the same thing, are enlivened by music, dancing, alcohol, ululation, and explosions of gun powder" [7].

In approximation to the present study, Chernoff [8] writes that African music is an art form that results from a spontaneous and emotional creation [of African origin] that is an uninhibited dynamic expression of vitality. Amoaku [9] re-deriving from Mbiti [10] discusses African music as principally a collective art and communal property, whose spiritual qualities are shared and experienced by all, as well as it is that aspect of tradition which provides the repertoires of its belief, ideas, wisdom and feelings in musical forms. Söderberg [11] remarks that there is a close link between musical instruments and art, including painting, sculpture, and pyrography. On a similar note, Blacking [12] believes that music making is an expressly human activity. In his opinion, it should bind all humans together, bearing in mind the factors that make cultural and musical inter-mingling more common at the turn of the new century. Scholars such as Merriam [2], Nannyonga [3] and Ekweme [13] have argued that "music does not exist in isolation from the people who produce it". They further mention that "to understand music of a given people, the basic knowledge of the cultural factors behind the production of sound structure is important". Similar sentiments are expressed by Dargie [14] on the music of the Xhosa:

"There is no word for music, but there are many categories of songs and dances, which are living expressions of music. In Xhosa music, instruments have a quasi-human role...the instrument is not playing an abstract melody but is in fact performing a version of the living text" (Lebaka 2017:62).

Attesting to the opinion above, Chernoff [8] shares his research experiences in Ghana and argues that "music helps to objectify the philosophical, religious and moral systems of the society". With regard to the ritualistic use of music in Bapedi culture, James [15], discussing the oral performance of secular or ritual texts argues that "music defined by Bapedi people, is embedded within a broader socio-cultural history that mandates the settings in which it is performed today". Ethnomusicologist Gbeho [16], cited by Merriam [2] cautions that "may I make it clear that when I talk about music, I am

referring to drumming, dancing and singing. They are all one thing and must not be separated" (Lebaka 2017:62).

Others such as Nelson [17], Scott [18] and Triebel [19] for example, provide convincing evidence of a relationship between music and culture. They examine the role of 'ethnomusicological' research in musicology, herein stressing the importance of the bonds between music and culture. They argue that, "accepting that music is part of the experience of every human culture group we can say that it is an inherent gift given by a wise Creator for the benefit and enjoyment for us all". Scholars such as Fabella [20], Mans [21] and Nzewi [22] have pursued a research about traditional healing in South Africa and/or Africa. Fabella [20] for example, maintains that in Africa emphasis is given to cultural values such as relationship with ancestors, rites of passage and traditional healing services. In his view, music plays a prominent role in the daily lives of the African people, especially in religious, cultural and social rituals.

3. AIMS

It has become evident from a thorough review of the literature that there is little known about the use of traditional musical instruments during Bapedi people's cultural and religious practices. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of three traditional Bapedi musical instruments during cultural and religious practices, thereby contribute to the growing knowledge of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, African Musical Arts, African religion and spirituality in South Africa, Africa and entire world. The instruments are *meropa* (drums), *dinaka* (whistles and reed pipes) and *phalafala* (sable antelope horn).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized anthropological research methods of in-depth ethnographic² social scientific inquiry to address the key research questions, whilst maintaining sociological concern with obtaining data relevant and related to the sociological and cultural theories in use. A triangulated approach was taken to the collection of data, which consists of (i) ethnographic observational data, (ii) interview data, and (iii) literature searches. Firstly, *ethnographic observational data* was obtained from five (5) villages. Secondly, *interview data*, was obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with at least nine (9) traditional Bapedi musicians across the five (5) villages, who were currently performing indigenous Bapedi music with conversations focused on addressing the study's/project's key research questions. Both oral interviews and observations were employed to gather data. Most of these interviews were informal and spontaneous. However, I also carried out other interviews that were longer, more formal, and in some instances taped. Virtually, all the interviewing, formal and informal, revolved around questions emerging from my observations. Thirdly, I visited the Libraries of the University of South Africa (UNISA), and University of Pretoria, Pretoria, in South Africa to review existing literature around the topic from books, journals, newspapers, magazines, reports and theses, while analysis and discussion of results were in progress. Of the visits to Sekhukhune district that I have made during the past ten (10) months (April 2017 – January 2018), the one that took place from 10-14 August 2017 has been the most memorable. The reason for this is that on three occasions, I had the opportunity to spend the entire afternoon with the subjects of this study (see photo 2)³.

Names of subjects from left to right: 1)Tšhupša Matšomane; 2) Mashianoke Senatadi Phogole; 3) Sophia Masalesa; 4) Hlupi Nkwana Makgoga; 5) Mmashele Molangwana and others⁴; (Dingwane village; Schoonoord; Sekhukhune district, 10.08.2017), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

By the end of the second visit, I was convinced that the interviews (narratives) and observations needed to be published. Through these interviews, I was able to gather a considerable amount of

²Martin and Nakayama [23] define ethnography as "a discipline that examines the patterned interactions and significant symbols of specific cultural groups to identify the cultural norms that guide their behaviours".

³I would like to express my sincere thanks to these subjects for their kindness and their time spent in sharing with me the information about the relationship between Bapedi religious and cultural practices and their traditional musical instruments.

⁴Madikedike Simon Sete; Manare Anna Lekwana; Tswaledi Stephen Mashegoane and Matshetla Sarah Mmotla.

information about the relationship between Bapedi people's religious and cultural practices and their traditional musical instruments that has never been documented.



Photo 2.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 The Context of Performances

5.1.1 Cultural and religious functions of the drums

The drum (*moropa*) is the instrument without which no Bapedi social or religious ritual is complete [24]. Huskisson mentions that there was no sound that she appreciated more than listening to the steady throb of *meropa* (drums), accompanying the rising and falling of voices, some near, some far from the kraals spread throughout the length and breath of some vast Sekhukhune land valleys. Bapedi drum (*moropa*) is reported to have played very important roles in the lives of Bapedi in communication and celebration. Kirby [25] concurs with Huskisson by commenting that “the drum of Bapedi known as *moropa* has certain ceremonies connected with its construction as well as taboos, relating to its use which were communicated to him by Barnard of Sekhukhune land”. One example of such a taboo is that drumming is strictly prohibited for the duration of six months if the chief or any member of the royal family passes-on. Drumming is also prohibited for three months when the initiation school for both boys and girls is in process. The above observation is confirmed by Löytty [26], when he writes that “in many African cultures the use of instruments is practice-specific”. According to Löytty their playing is regulated according to the particular cultural tradition and context in where they appear. Löytty further states that this can involve meanings, taboos and unwritten rules determining the performance of an instrument.

Among Bapedi people, music making on ceremonial and ritual occasions may be integrated with the event characterized by symbolic actions which are dramatic in character. In the context of music making, music practitioners participate in communion to mourn or to celebrate. From the observations and interviews, it was established that in Bapedi culture when the chief dies, some stages in the

funeral are marked by music designed to perform various dramatic functions. For example, the funeral announcements include drumming, for the drums associated with the office of a chief can convey this message in a more forceful and dramatic manner to the community. According to Matshetla Sarah Mmotla (personal communication, 12 August 2017), while the corpse of the dead chief is being carried into the grave, the drum is beaten and all those who hear the sound of the drum understand. The word spreads, *mabu a utswitšwe*, meaning the chief has passed-on. The drum has burst, that is, the chief has passed-on. Matshetla further mentions that for the installation of the new chief who succeeds a dead *kgoshi* (chief), a different kind of music is performed, and different stages of the ceremony are again marked by music.

During my personal interview with Manare Anna Lekwana on the 11th of August 2017 at Dingwane village, Greater Sekhukhune district Municipality in Limpopo Province, she pointed out that “in the Bapedi society, traditional Bapedi music practitioners believe that the only instruments which are effective in conveying messages to the community or audience are drums (*meropa*) and sable antelope horns (*phalafala*)”. In her view, not everyone is able to interpret the messages they convey. She observes that drums and sable antelope horns are played in dialogue with oral performers who understand their language and challenge them to at times go on praising. In consonance with the above view, Nketia [27] writes that “in many Ghanaian societies, African practice of exploiting the sounds of musical instruments for the purpose of giving signals or for conveying messages is found”.

Ethnographic data from the field informs us that although a wide variety of drums exists in the Bapedi society, each clan and/or traditional dance group usually specializes in a small number of drum types (see photo 3). This observation is vividly corroborated by Nketia (1982:111) who states that “mixed ensembles of drums may be composed of a set of varying sonorities that may include a high-pitched drum, a medium-pitched drum, a tenor-pitched drum, and a low-pitched drum”. He observes that, it is the lowest sounding drum that dominates the others as the principal instrument.



Photo 3.

Small number of drum types found in Bapedi society; (Ga-Moloi village; Sekhukhune district, 28.07.2017), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

It is also noticeable that in Bapedi religious rituals, such as *malopo* ritual, drumming in conjunction with leg rattles, horns, hand-clapping, whistles and ululation, form the accompaniment for the singing and dancing of both traditional healers and their trainees. The above view is in consonant with Kubik's [28] observation on music and movement. In his view, "all music in Africa is almost naturally associated with movement and action, such as playing percussion instruments, ululating, hand clapping and dancing". These observations are supported by Lebaka (2017:192) who observes that Bapedi traditional healers perform *malopo* songs with drumming accompaniment to communicate with ancestors and at times to summon the ancestors when problems seem particularly difficult to surmount: to urge the spirits to leave or enter the body as well as to reinforce or strengthen both the traditional healers and their trainees and relate them more closely to their ancestors. All these instruments are contextual to the type of a ritual they accompany, namely, ancestor veneration.

Drums are frequently seen in indigenous Bapedi music [29]. They are also used for communication purposes. The impression created during interviews and observations was that drums are the most common instruments employed in Bapedi culture to accompany traditional Bapedi songs. This is in line with the finding of Nketia [27] who confirms that:

"In spite of the popularity of the drum as a musical instrument, it is more of a 'social' instrument than a domestic one, and single drums are rarely played for purely musical purpose in organized social life without the addition of other instruments or voices".

Comments by Nketia are noteworthy because during a personal interview with Madikedike Simon Sete (28th of July 2017) at Dingwane village, Sekhukhune district, he pointed out that:

"According to Bapedi music tradition, the qualification for leadership/soloist rests on three factors: *First*, the leader should be creative; *second*, it is expected that he/she should have a sweet voice, since he/she has to sing, however, this is not as important as the first qualification; finally, the soloist should have a subtle wrist. That is, he/she must have executant ability and the skill to produce the right kinds of tones and dynamics on the drum. When the performer has all three qualities, he is highly respected" (Lebaka 2017:94-95).

According to Simon, traditionally, each performance begins with the lead drum establishing the dance pattern as a way to regulate the tempo and rhythm of the dance (Lebaka 2017:139). The above observation is in line with the opinion of Mashianoke Senatadi Phogole (personal communication, 13 August 2017) who states that "the drum (*moropa*) is the most commonly used of all traditional musical instruments found in the Bapedi society". In her view, the drum plays a significant role in the Bapedi society and culture and is regarded as having more ritual importance than other instruments.

5.1.2 Cultural and religious functions of dinaka (whistles & reed-pipes)

Whistles

Mönnig [30] observes that Bapedi traditional healers use various magical whistles or flutes. He explains that the most important one is a whistle fashioned from the quills of a porcupine (Bapedi totem) and other whistles are made from wood or bone and covered with copper wire or snake-skin. According to him, this whistle is used to ward off hail, lightning and storms, but a flute can also be blown against a powerful enemy warrior. The observations of Mönnig bring to the fore the use of traditional whistle (*mokuduetane*) in the Bapedi culture. For example, during the study, it was observed that *mokuduetane* (see photo 4) is played for amusement only, while Bapedi boys are herding goats and cows, but not for calling either the goats or cows. From the interviews, it was also established that sometimes, *mekuduetane* are blown at village merry-makings and on occasions of general rejoicing. My investigation has led me to conclude that although used singly, they are sometimes played antiphonally, especially in the curious mimic warfare in which the boys indulge prior to circumcision, as well as proving their fitness for man's estate.



Photo 4.

Traditional Bapedi whistle (*mokuduetane*); (Kotsiri village; Schoonoord; Sekhukhune district, 13.08.2017), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

During my field investigation at Kotsiri village in Greater Sekhukhune district municipality, it was interesting to observe that during Bapedi reed pipes' music ensemble performance, whistles and other traditional musical instruments may be included. As musical instruments, they are fundamentally employed for performance – composition of melodies as well as simulation of texts in music and dance performance situations. They provide lyrical melodies that contribute immensely to the overall timbre and aesthetics of Bapedi music tradition. In some musical performances too, it was observed that whistles are effectively employed for non-verbal communication with ensemble members as well as with audience. This could be in the form of cues, musical signals or mere urging of dancers and players for more creative performance. In some instances too, whistles are employed as master instruments that conduct and determine an event. This is found in some ceremonial performances such as *kiba*, *makgakgasa*, *dipepetlwane* and *lebowa*. The above views are supported by Mmashele Molangwana (personal communication, 12 August 2017), who states that “in the Bapedi culture, whistle playing is largely dependent on improvisation, variation and gestures to make the rendition impressive”.

5.2 Reed-pipes

Bapedi reed-pipes' music⁵, as a form of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, has been the repository of Bapedi's beliefs and practices. In my fieldwork in Greater Sekhukhune district municipality, Limpopo

⁵The instruments involved are *tsošane*, *phalolane*, *tatedi*, *sereku*, *serekwane*, *maletelela*, *phalola*, *lempu*, *kgomo*, *gomang* (pipes) and *matikwane*, *phousele* and *sekgokolo* (drums).

Province, it was interesting and encouraging to observe that through Bapedi reed pipes' music, that allocates songs and dances to each age group in the community, young people have been socialized (Lebaka 2017:141). Using videos, it was recorded that Bapedi reed pipes' music (*kiba*) reflects the values of Bapedi society. This observation is supported by Tshupša Matšomane (personal communication, 12 August 2017) who explains that Bapedi reed-pipes' music mirrors the culture and values of Bapedi people who perform it. She observes that Bapedi people use reed pipes' music to subdue their environment and turn it to a pleasant world. These observations support Lebaka's (2017:146) assertion of the relationship between music and culture. He states that "some songs performed by Bapedi reed-pipes' music ensemble address issues of societal concern and ethical values". According to him, even when the song appears to be for entertainment (as opposed to ritual), a lesson or two will be found tucked in somewhere.

An interesting observation on the construction of reed pipes should be mentioned. It appears that the shorter the pipe, the higher the pitch/tone, and the longer the pipe, the lower the pitch/tone. Informal interviews indicated that originally the reed pipes were carved from the actual 'reeds', mainly found in the river. According to Tswaledi Stephen Mashegoane (personal communication, 12 August 2017), "that's where the name originated". Tswaledi adds further insight to the understanding of Bapedi reed pipes. He points out that:

"taking into consideration the increasing number of reed pipes' music ensembles in Sekhukhune district and across Limpopo Province, it seems as if the actual 'reeds' are gradually proving unavailable due to high demand, and as such players of different reed pipes' music ensembles from different cardinal points within Bapedi society substitute the actual 'reed pipes' with durable aluminium tubes which are inexpensive and widely available" (see photo 5).

Tswaledi further mentions that "these aluminium tubes produce a tone that is gentler still and similar to original reed pipes".



Photo 5.

Bapedi reed pipes (Ga-Marodi village; Sekhukhune district, 28.07.2017), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

5.2.1 Cultural and religious functions of *phalafala* (sable antelope horn)

Bapedi traditional healers possess a number of pipes which they blow during *malopo* ritual, either to lend a dramatic touch to proceedings and to create a spine-chilling atmosphere with shrill blasts, or

whose powers of persuasion they wish added to their magical incantations and entreaties. These usually consist of small natural horns (e.g. *phalafala*), slung round the neck. In the Bapedi society, horns such as *phalafala* (see photo 6) are constructed to be a vital and continuously contemporary means of expression and communication. *Phalafala* (sable antelope horn) is normally used to announce messages in the Bapedi community. It is the instrument that has more freedom to develop its motive extensively without any limitations. Kirby [25] supports the above observations by mentioning that among Bapedi people, the sable antelope horn is called *phalafala*, as in Bavenda land. Further, Kirby elaborates that *phalafala* is used in religious ceremonies for conveying signals and verbal messages, as well as for playing music.



Photo 6.

Sable antelope horn (*phalafala*); (Kotsiri village; Schoonoord; Sekhukhune district, 13.08.2017), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

Nkwana Hlupi Makgoga (personal communication, 13 August 2017), endorses these observations and asserts that “the sable antelope horn (*phalafala*) is used as a carriage that embodies relevant messages to Bapedi community”. In her view, *phalafala* remains an effective Bapedi traditional musical instrument for the preservation of the musical tradition and heritage of Bapedi.

6. DISCUSSION

The relationship between Bapedi people's religious and cultural practices and their traditional musical instruments.

The impression one gets from the research findings about the use of traditional musical instruments in the Bapedi culture is that Bapedi religious and cultural music is based exclusively on songs and dances associated with traditional beliefs and instruments such as drums, whistles, reed pipes, rattles

and horns (Lebaka 2017:157). Results of the study showed that the nature and scope of music making in the Bapedi culture is generally related to the aims and purposes of a specific social event or to the needs of the performers.

Based on the findings of this study, it will not be presumptuous to state without fear of contradiction that despite fundamental and multi-consequential changes Christianity, modern civilization, British and Dutch colonial activities and the government neglect of indigenous music brought about in the Bapedi society, a large percentage of Bapedi people refused to forsake their musical tradition and were thus able to preserve some characteristic features of Bapedi culture and heritage, like observing certain rituals and initiation rites, as well as playing their traditional musical instruments. On the question of the relationship between Bapedi people's religious and cultural practices, and their traditional musical instruments, Sophia Masalesa (personal communication, 11 August 2017) commented, "The use of traditional musical instruments during religious and cultural practices reinforces Bapedi people's musical tradition and heritage as a way in which to protect, support, perpetuate and preserve Bapedi cultural identity". Her viewpoint is valid in Sepedi context, for Bapedi music exists in performance. It is indigenous oral memory based and realized by means of social manipulation.

It is evident therefore, from these research findings that music appears to be an expression of the most basic values and feelings of Bapedi people. These findings suggest that Bapedi society deserves respect for what it has achieved in the past in terms of the preservation of Bapedi cultural heritage, identity and religion. The above evidence leads to the assumption that traditional Bapedi musical instruments indeed play a lot of roles in objectifying and unifying the philosophy and religious tenets of Bapedi people. Informal interviews indicated that both cultural and religious practices have music as part of their musical heritage and tradition.

The research findings which have been presented in this study help us to understand the relevance of indigenous Bapedi music in contemporary Bapedi society. These findings further indicate that in the Bapedi culture, music takes place in many contexts and every instrument has a particular role to fulfil. Noteworthy is the fact that Bapedi people create music to accompany religious, cultural and social rituals, as well as to reflect on human experiences (Lebaka 2017:75). We observe in the present study that in the Bapedi culture, there is a variety of musical instruments. Some instruments are closely associated with particular functions and occasions that they give their names to these events. The tradition of music extends as far back in time in Africa. Hence Africa has a body of indigenous musical knowledge which embodies the life experiences, interaction and natural settings of the masses of African people and a system for preserving and renewing it.

The study has revealed that believing in the concept of African religion and spirituality, the essential values of the Bapedi culture are embedded in the Bapedi culture's music, its content, religion, processes and roles. We find in these findings evidence of the belief system and practices of Bapedi people. Reviewing the results yielded thus far, it is clear that indigenous Bapedi music and the use of traditional musical instruments have not been lost and still exist, however, South Africa is changing rapidly. Generally, in the Bapedi culture as is also evident in several other African cultures, the drums are considered sacred.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This book chapter has attempted to demonstrate the value of selected traditional musical instruments in the Bapedi community and their usefulness as a medium of enlightenment and communication. The study has revealed that music is an integral part of the Bapedi culture and heritage. It is a window through which the outside world can glimpse the riches of the Bapedi tradition and cultural heritage. On the basis of research findings and discussions, it is arguable that within Bapedi traditional music making, every instrument has a particular role to play. Indications from the investigation suggest that traditional Bapedi musical instruments cannot be separated totally from the cultural and religious practices of Bapedi people. It is recommended that a research study of this kind should be taken seriously in South Africa for an exploration of indigenous values influencing Indigenous Knowledge Systems, African Musical Arts, African religion and spirituality. It is concluded that although the selected traditional musical instruments play a role, drums are the most frequently used musical

instruments in both cultural and religious practices. Finally, it is hoped that traditional Bapedi music practitioners will keep and perpetuate their valuable heritage, which is still needed for survival and for the welfare of the next generation.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The ethical integrity of the research was ensured by several means. The purpose of the study was explained to each participant and his/her permission for recording a conversation was asked in every case. The researcher made it clear to the participants that participation in the study is voluntary, and that should they for some reason want to withdraw from interviews, they have the right to do so at any time. All participants were assured that the information they share will be treated as confidential during interviews.

The data collection was based on the idea of not simply extracting information from the subjects of the study but exchanging it with them. Eventually, the research publications will be made available to all those who have participated in the research and who are interested in the results. My approach to the conduct and reporting of my research was informed by a desire to articulate, to the best of my knowledge, the interests of my research participants, being mindful of the contexts I am working in and respecting their capacity as agents.

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I am grateful to the subjects of this study for their patience, support and insightful discussions. I would like to express my sincere thanks to them for their kindness and the time spent in sharing with me the information about the relationship between Bapedi religious and cultural practices and their traditional musical instruments.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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He is an African Musical Arts Researcher, Adjudicator, Choir Conductor, Band Master, Trumpeter, Workshops' Clinician, Multi-instrumentalist, World-Traveler, Music Educator, Ethnomusicologist and Old Testament Scholar (Theologian). Music was a constant presence in his life from childhood. He has also turned his hobby into a career. He is academically and professionally very well equipped. He obtained his BA (Music), Classical trumpet as principal instrument; BMus (Hons) with distinctions in Music Education and Ethnomusicology; BA (Hons), *cum laude*; Master of Arts (MA), *cum laude* and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees from the University of Pretoria; Secondary Education Diploma (SED) and Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) from Vista University; as well as Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) from Dr C. N. Phatudi College of Education. He has also received his second Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Music Education, Musicology & Ethnomusicology from the University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, in Finland. He is currently Associate Professor (Music), Department of Creative Arts at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), Faculty of Arts, KwaDlangezwa Campus, South Africa. He is a recipient of numerous scholarships and awards. Over the years, he has undertaken a number of research studies within and outside South Africa. He has a vast research experience and has published five books; twenty-five academic and professional articles in reputable national and international peer-reviewed journals and seven chapters in books. His works have significantly influenced the thinking about musical learning and pedagogy, particularly how the learning practices of indigenous musical arts can inform and change formal learning (e.g. music, informal learning and the school, the cultural transmission processes of traditional African music and dance). Although the Bapedi culture remains his primary research base, his academic voice extends to different societies and various ramifications of African music. His research career has been diverse in focus and influenced by prolific international figures and a diversity of contacts. Investigating indigenous music of all South African cultures, he travelled through all the provinces and was exposed to a myriad of people and kaleidoscope of thinking.

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Studies of Social Media Addiction, Cult Indoctrination, and the Coronavirus Pandemic; All In Relation to the Trump Presidency

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ABSTRACT

In this book chapter the author discusses the interconnections between social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic, all in relation to the United States presidency of Donald Trump. The relationship of the Trump presidency to each of these three phenomena: social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic, is initially examined separately. Subsequently the author ties things together by exploring the interconnections of these three different phenomena with each other, in the context of the Trump presidency. The author concludes with his own belief about how we can avoid the most detrimental consequences of all these interconnections. However, the author believes that the current very real and understandable human phenomenon of pandemic caution fatigue has been tremendously amplified by President Trump's use of cult indoctrination techniques in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic devastation.

Keywords: Social media addiction; cult indoctrination; coronavirus pandemic; Trump presidency; social distancing; cell phone addiction

1. INTRODUCTION

As of June, 2020, the United States was nowhere near being in control of the coronavirus pandemic, as the number of coronavirus cases and deaths had been sharply increasing in a number of states in the country since they had opened up their economies [1, 2, 3, 4]. Every state in the country at least partially reopened their economy in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic continuing to be a deadly threat [5]. Together with the mass demonstrations over the racial murder of George Floyd, the Trump MAGA (Make America Great Again) rallies that had started to happen, with most people attending the rallies not practicing social distancing and modeling President Trump in not wearing masks, and many people believe that the consequential very real possibility of an even worse second coronavirus surge in the fall, this was all likely to result in a significantly greater increase in both coronavirus cases and deaths compared to what we were currently living through [6, 7, 8, 3, 9].

In this article I will explore some possible interconnections between the coronavirus pandemic, social media addiction, and cult indoctrination, all in relation to the United States presidency of Donald Trump. To examine these interconnections and relationships I will first briefly discuss the possible relationships between social media addiction and the Trump presidency, cult indoctrination and the Trump presidency, and the Coronavirus pandemic and the Trump presidency. I will then follow this up with an overall synthesis of these possible relationships to arrive at a plausible picture to at least partially explain the occurrence of much of the United States proceeding to go back to "business as normal," in June, 2020, in spite of the facts that the United States was still in the midst of a deadly pandemic and that the opening up of the country's economy was likely to significantly increase the number of coronavirus cases and deaths.

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2. SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

In recent years a number of research studies and reports have raised serious concerns about internet addiction, and more specifically about social media addiction [10, 11,12,13, 14,15,16, 17, 18, 19]. In regard to the relationship of social media addiction to the United States presidency of Donald Trump, I initially conveyed my concerns about this relationship during Trump's first presidential campaign in 2016 [20], and this relationship has now been described as a key ingredient and tactic that Trump constantly makes use of to keep his base in his control and increase his chances of obtaining a second presidential term [21]. George Skelton, a reporter for Capitol Journal, explained the impactful effect of social media addiction on the phenomenon of Trump becoming the United States Republican presidential nominee in 2016, as follows:

It [social media] nurtures short attention spans, the craving for instant gratification and impersonal barbaric behavior. No time for serious thinking or boning up on substance. A quick stimulating hit of social recognition will suffice. And no need for civility when you're not looking someone in the eye. . . . 50% of teens "feel addicted" to mobile devices and 59% of parents agree that their kids, indeed, are addicted. . . . They can't put [a smartphone] down. . . . What's the harm? A lack of empathy, lack of quality human relationships, an inability to pay attention. . . . Trump understands reality TV. This election is a reality TV show. Trump is addicted to tweeting. . . . In a world where everyone is addicted to cellphones, there's less reflection. This provides the ability for people like Donald Trump to bully everyone on Twitter. . . . so many voters no longer consider obnoxious behavior shameful. (Shelton, 2016, pp. 3-4)

In regard to social media addiction during the first 2 years of Trump's presidency, Steve Hassan (2019) conveyed the following:

Through his barrage of daily tweets, Trump sows confusion and distorts reality, and has ultimately called into question the foundations of national institutions. . . . "Repeat your message over and over and over again. Repetition makes the heart grow fonder and fiction, if heard frequently enough, can come to sound like fact." Trump appears to have taken this advice to heart, not just in the way he states and restates fabrications and falsehoods, but also in the way he tells, over and over again, self-serving, often inaccurate versions of his own life story—stories that blur the line between myth and reality. . . . The 24/7 digital age has made us wired for manipulation—literally. . . . With the internet and 24/7 streaming of images and messages from anonymous, often ill-meaning sources, the opportunity for harm has greatly increased. The Russians who manipulated social media during the 2016 presidential elections clearly knew how to use hypnotic techniques and other methods of persuasion. Almost all politicians use persuasion techniques but Trump has used them in a way that is both brazen and insidious. Clearly they have been effective—he was elected president. (pp. xviii, 21, 87, 119).

President Trump apparently made masterful use of social media addiction to help him win the 2016 presidential election, and he is making every effort to utilize social media addiction to try to obtain a second presidential term in the 2020 election. Furthermore, Trump's tactic of bombarding millions of people with his daily tweets, utilizing extensive repetition and catchy nicknames to denigrate anyone who opposes him or who he sees as a threat, is directly related to his use of cult indoctrination techniques (see below) and was an important part of his game plan to try to win the presidential election in November, 2020. It is likely that the phenomenon of social media addiction in Trump's service was significantly amplified by his skillfully employing cult indoctrination techniques to his benefit, as discussed in the next section.

3. CULT INDOCTRINATION AND THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

The phenomenon of cult indoctrination has been investigated over the past few decades by a number of authors, with an emphasis upon religious cults though also inclusive of political and philosophical cults, psychotherapy/education cults, commercial cults, and personality cults [21, 22, 23, 24, 25,26]. However, in regard to the association of cult indoctrination with the United States presidency of

Donald Trump, this has been a recent area of investigation and concern as the mass influence of Trump appears to be taking on increasing levels of danger and destruction [27,28,22,29, 30, 31, 21, 32, 33]. The following descriptions illustrate some of the reasons why various authors believe that the association of cult indoctrination to the Trump presidency is warranted.

Followers report that they were taught the world is a dangerous place much more strenuously than most people are taught. . . . Accordingly Donald Trump was well-placed to gain the support of authoritarian followers as he was a large and seemingly fearless, powerful man. All he had to do was say he saw the dangers the followers felt and he would fight to protect them. . . . Their brains shut down rather than accept anything that challenges what they have internalized. . . . Trump tells them what they want to hear—that they're right—and in return they accept everything that he and those who repeat his messaging tell them [33, pp. 2-4]

Like other authoritarian cultural movements Trumpism promises a national-cultural transformation, psychological uplift, group superiority, personal salvation, and a sense of membership and belonging in an exclusive community for its members and other supporters. . . . Like any cult leader, Trump demands complete loyalty and creates an alternate reality for his followers. His followers exhibit a deep, mindless, uncritical, loyal, emotional attachment to him. His pronouncements generate hostility toward anyone Trump brands "the enemy," and he consistently provokes his supporters toward violence. [30, pp. 1-2]

It is not unusual to hear that the base of Trump supporters displays cult-like activity in their adoring dedication to Trump, as they continue to ignore the enormous and continuous amount of ethically and legally disturbing accounts of Trump's behavior. This includes Trump's alleged numerous sexual affairs punctuated by his paying off a porn star and Playboy centerfold to keep them silent, ripping immigrant children from their parents and using teargas against immigrant babies, believing Putin over the United States Intelligence reports in regard to Russia tampering with our election, and the list goes on and on. [28, pp. 1-2]

He used all the influence techniques in his arsenal—inflaming resentments and anger, drumming up fear, exaggerating his accomplishments, insulting and demonizing the "other." . . . White supremacist and nationalistic thinking has existed for centuries in the United States but Trump's words and deeds—his America First sloganeering; his apparent excusing of, or failure to acknowledge, the violence; his racist remarks; his own bullying—have given it a legitimacy that hadn't existed before. . . . Trump would both soothe and incite his audience's fears with his repetition of the word "siege"--it's all part of his influence formula: repetition, us versus them, and fearmongering. [21, pp. 182, 189, 192].

The relationship of the Trump presidency to cult indoctrination is indeed alarming, even more so as it is coupled with the phenomenon of social media addiction. However, it is especially important to also address the relationship of the Trump presidency to what is destroying the lives of numerous people all over the world, which is the coronavirus pandemic.

4. THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

During the first few months of the pandemic, many authors conveyed very disturbing reports regarding the relationship of the Trump presidency to the coronavirus pandemic, related to the various actions and non-actions of President Trump that have apparently resulted in thousands of coronavirus cases and deaths that could have been prevented [34,36,37, 6, 7, 38, 39,40,41, 42, 43, 44]. The following excerpts from two of my own articles illustrate the crux of these concerns:

Trump was not prepared for the Coronavirus crisis, due to his shutting down crucial disease research activities, not taking the advice of medical experts, minimizing the expected growth of the pandemic, and rejecting the offer of World Health Organization coronavirus tests. . . . Trump is now promoting his success as measured by hopefully "only" between 100,000 and 240,000 Americans dead [at the time of this writing there have been over 120,000 United States coronavirus deaths], as opposed to 2 million, whereas the reality is that many

Americans have died and many more will die because of Trump's negligence in dealing with the pandemic to begin with. [35, p. 2]

It is likely that there will be a second big wave of coronavirus infections this coming fall or winter, and that the virus will keep spreading at least for another 18 months to 2 years, until herd immunity develops to a sufficient extent by infecting 60 to 70 percent of the world's population. . . . Now put this together with a number of the states in the United States currently starting their process of "opening up for business" while their number of coronavirus cases and deaths have not been decreasing. . . . Donald Trump. . . encouraged civilians insurrections by Americans against their governor's stay-at-home orders. . . . The devastation that I am afraid is going to accelerate from Trump's actions and non-actions is very palpable, as the Trump administration recently rejected the Center for Disease Control guidance on reopening the United States amidst the coronavirus crisis. . . . And after Trump's infamous "disinfectant" ingestion suggestion to treat the coronavirus, a number of states reported an increase in calls to poison control centers. [37, pp. 3, 5]

At the time of this writing, June, 2020, a number of states in the United States were seeing a recent surge of new coronavirus cases:

Inside the U.S., states that were quick to shrug off social distancing guidelines—and those that ever really implemented them in the first place—are seeing a surge of new cases. More than a dozen states have reported their peak number of cases, not in March or April, but in the last week. And in some states, like Arizona and Texas, the growing number of cases is leading to a surge in hospitalizations that is threatening to crack apart health care systems just when many people were beginning to relax. [4, p. 2]

However, President Trump resumed his MAGA rallies to campaign for his second presidential term, which was likely to result in a devastating further increase in coronavirus cases and deaths¹⁵:

The rallies are returning before COVID-19 has left the building. . . . He's planning to use the events to drive home what is expected to be a major theme of his campaign: that he is the leader of the country's reopening and economic rebound. . . . Of course, this is a bad idea for a lot of reasons—not least of which is the continued prevalence and virulence of the novel coronavirus. . . . the MAGA crowd almost certainly won't be social distancing or wearing masks. . . . Trump thinks masks are for losers and nerds, and Trump's fans think whatever Trump thinks. . . . The coronavirus hasn't disappeared, after all. The only thing that's really changed is our focus on it. And again, Trump is showing that his desperate need to be acknowledged and to win reelection supersedes the health and very lives of his own followers. [9, pp. 2-3]

The relationship of the Trump presidency to the coronavirus pandemic is deeply disturbing, to say the least. And in the following section I will tie the threads of social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic together in the context of the Trump presidency, to gain a wider perspective on what we are currently witnessing regarding the United States opening up for business in spite of the continued deadly threat of the coronavirus pandemic.

5. THE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION, CULT INDOCTRINATION, AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN RELATION TO THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

Social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic have interconnections with each other in relation to the Trump presidency, as I will now describe utilizing the work of Steve Hassan [21].

¹ *Trump's first two presidential campaign rallies since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Phoenix, Arizona, in June, 2020. Although as expected, most people did not practice social distancing or wear masks at either one of these rallies, the crowd size at the Tulsa, Oklahoma rally was much smaller than anticipated [60, 61, 62, 63].*

5.1 Social Media Addiction and Cult Indoctrination In Relation to the Trump Presidency

To begin with, people who are addicted to social media may be particularly susceptible to unethical manipulation by cult leaders:

They [cult leaders] understand that human beings are social creatures who, at some level, are wired to follow leaders and powerful members of their group. They know that they can confuse people with false information and lies, and then sow doubt by claiming that they never said what they said in the first place. . . . People can also be recruited and indoctrinated online. [21, pp. Xv, 13]

Hassan is describing the phenomenon of “gaslighting” here, and gaslighting is likely to be particularly effective when people are addicted to social media, as it makes it easier for cult leaders to exert enormous damaging influence on multitudes of people. Hassan [21] has also described some of the particular ways that cults utilize social media to promote their agenda and indoctrinate people into their group, and he includes in his description what he views as the “cult of Trump”:

Cults flood their members with cult-generated information and propaganda—videos and podcasts distributed by YouTube and social media. They take “outsider” statements out of context or misquote them. Of course, Trump could not have done this without the propaganda machine of right-wing TV shows like Fox and Breitbart News, as well as right-wing talk radio. (p. 14)

Hassan utilized the work of Pratkanis and Aronson [25] in regard to “how to become a cult leader” that illustrates the following cult leader tactic, which I believe is particularly susceptible to social media addiction and is flagrantly representative of the continuous tactics of Donald Trump: “Prevent members from thinking undesirable thoughts by continually distracting them (with outrageous tweets or by manufacturing your own fake news)” [21, p. 20].

Using social media to persuade people is effectively and systematically practiced by Trump:

Changing consists of creating a new personal identity—a new set of behaviors, thoughts, and emotions—often through the use of role models. Indoctrination of this new identity takes place both formally—through meetings, seminars, and rituals (or at Trump rallies)--and informally—by spending time with members, recruiting, studying, and self-indoctrination through the internet (watching Trump videos, communicating on social media with Trump supporters). (Hassan, pp. 75-76)

This kind of cult influence is especially effective in our current technological age, as critical thinking is being seriously undermined:

With TV shows streaming at all hours and with internet access at our fingertips; with our smartphones practically an extension of our arms, we are being bombarded and manipulated, often wittingly, by people and organizations who want to influence how we think, feel—and buy. . . . Consider the ease with which Facebook, Google, Apple, Amazon, and other technology companies are affecting our behaviors not just as a society but at a very personal level: people are addicted to their devices. . . . The average American spends eleven hours a day looking at screens. . . . Facebook addiction is a well-studied phenomenon. . . . “the knowledge economy is systematically undervaluing uninterrupted concentration and overvaluing the convenience and flexibility offered by new technologies. . . [If people are bombarded] with email and meeting invitations, their cognitive capacity will be significantly impeded.” ([21 p. 86]

Hassan [21] summed up the very powerful and alarming way that social media is being used by cults, as follows:

I cannot overstate the impact of the digital world on the whole area of undue influence and mind control. People no longer need to be physically isolated to be indoctrinated by destructive cults. Digital technology has provided access and a powerful set of tools for destructive groups and individuals to indoctrinate, control, and monitor believers day and night. When cult members go home for family visits, they are often receiving multiple texts every hour to keep them connected and faithful. (p. 197)

5.2 Social Media Addiction and the Coronavirus Pandemic In Relation to the Trump Presidency

In regard to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, an important question to ask is the following: Why is it that people choose to act in ways that threaten their very existence, inclusive of refusing to get vaccinated against the coronavirus [45]? As stated in the Introduction, in June, 2020 the number of coronavirus cases and deaths were sharply increasing in several states in the United States since they opened up their economies, and together with the mass demonstrations over the racial murder of George Floyd, the Trump MAGA presidential rallies that had begun, and the consequential very real possibility of an even worse second coronavirus surge in the fall, which is exactly what happened [45], many people believed that this was all likely to result in a significantly greater increase in both coronavirus cases and deaths compared to what we were currently living through at that time. Of course one primary answer to this question involves the reality of the stringent economic conditions in which many people were forced to choose between their safety as well as the safety of others they came into contact with, vs. their economic survival needs in terms of deciding to go back to work [46]. However, to explore an additional answer this question, it may be instructive to examine how social media addiction interfaced with the anti-lockdown protests that were instrumental in the occurrence of every state in the United States partially reopening their economy in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic continuing to be a deadly threat [36,37, 3, 5]. In this regard, it appears that the impact of the anti-lockdown protesters was significantly increased by external hostile forces in terms of “bots” in a similar way to the undermining by Russian bots of the 2016 United States presidential election [47, 36]:

There were targeted ads that leveraged online tools to plant false stories directly into critical districts, and direct intrusion into voter databases that did. . . who knows what. But one key component of the 2016 campaign was a vast army of “bot” accounts, managed by a team of Russian military hackers. That effort filled Twitter, Facebook, and other sites—and in the process became some of the most influential accounts in social media. Now it appears that it’s happened again. A new study shows that when it comes to forcing workers to go back into offices, stores, and factories, almost half the online voices shouting for the “reopening of America” were, and are, bot accounts. Of the accounts that have tweeted most on this topic, more than half are bots. Of the most influential, *almost all are bots*. And behind the bots. . . is someone still unknown . . . The bots are both originating and repeating more than 100 different categories of false stories about COVID-19, the pandemic, and the steps needed to fight the disease. These conspiracy theories are designed to both increase anger and generate distrust of medical authorities. They’ve also played a role in driving in-person protests in cities across the country. . . . The scale of this effort is huge, the messages are coordinated, and the impact has already been felt nationwide. . . . “It looks like it’s a propaganda machine, and it definitely matches the Russian and Chinese playbooks.”. . . It is a plot; one that has been eagerly supported by a network of conservative organizations who definitely learned a lesson from 2016. What they learned is that America is hugely vulnerable to a coordinated propaganda campaign, that a small number [of] gun-waving protesters can be made to seem like a mass movement, and that they can get their way even if a majority of Americans disagree. [48, pp. 2-3]

This very disturbing scenario of external hostile forces using social media to significantly increase the impact of anti-lockdown protestations goes hand-in-hand with the very real susceptibility of multitudes of people to social media addiction, as discussed above. However, in addition to the primary economic survival answer, this is just a glimpse into one additional partial answer to the question of how people could have been persuaded to take actions in the midst of the coronavirus deadly

destruction that were antithetical to their very survival. For another glimpse into an additional partial answer to this question, it is also instructive to examine the relationship of the coronavirus pandemic to cult indoctrination, once again in relation to the presidency of Donald Trump.

6. CULT INDOCTRINATION AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN RELATION TO THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

Before embarking on a preliminary exploration of the relationship of cult indoctrination to the coronavirus pandemic in relation to the Trump presidency, it is important to acknowledge the enormous challenge and difficulty for people to maintain safety precautions as the coronavirus continued to be a dangerous threat after the first 3 months of the pandemic, which has been described in the context of “caution fatigue”:

You were likely vigilant at the pandemic’s outset, consistently keeping up with ways to ensure you didn’t get infected with the coronavirus or infect others. The threat was new and urgent to your brain. And driven by the human instinct for self-preservation, fresh fear motivated you to eagerly adhere to recommended safety precautions. Fast-forward three months, and that sense of immediacy may have faded. Caution fatigue “occurs when people show low motivation or energy to comply with safety guidelines. . . . It’s reflected when we become impatient with warnings, or we don’t believe the warnings to be real or relevant, or we de-emphasize the actual risk. . . . And in doing that, we then bend rules or stop safety behavior like washing hands, wearing masks and social distancing.” ([49, pp. 1-2]

However, I believe that the very real and understandable human phenomenon of caution fatigue has been tremendously amplified by President Trump’s use of cult indoctrination techniques in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic devastation.

As described by many of the authors cited above, President Trump continuously bombarded the American public with daily tweets containing false information and downright lies in regard to the severity of the coronavirus pandemic, as his priority is getting reelected, no matter what the consequences. With this goal in mind, he utilized a vast array of techniques straight out of the cult indoctrination playbook, inclusive of extensive gaslighting and denigrating anyone who disagreed with him, in particular the media [32], and governors who did not think that it was justified to open up their states based upon the number of coronavirus cases and deaths they were seeing in their states [40]. However, as described above, all states as of June, 2020 opened up their economies at least partially, spurred on by the anti-lockdown demonstrations, the effective cult indoctrination techniques that Trump has utilized, and also by the very real and understandable phenomenon of caution fatigue. Nevertheless, the reality of multitudes of people getting sick and dying from the coronavirus was going against Trump, as his Democratic contender in the November, 2020 election (and current United States president in July, 2021), former Vice President Joe Biden, was significantly ahead of Trump in virtually all polls, including the battleground states polls [50,51]. I think that this is much of the reason why Trump was moving forward with his presidential rallies in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic surging in many states, being willing to jeopardize the lives of numerous Americans for his goal of getting reelected.

6. CONCLUSION

As I have offered a glimpse into, in this book chapter that was initially written as an article in June, 2020², there were a number of very challenging obstacles that needed to be overcome to avoid the worst of the possible devastating scenarios that could have arisen from the current coronavirus pandemic. I have described these obstacles in terms of the interplay of social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic, all in relation to the presidency of Donald Trump. In June, 2020 I chose to remain optimistic that the United States would be able to overcome these

²See Benjamin, 2021a [52] for the initial article upon which this book chapter is based.

obstacles and gain control of the coronavirus, once the deadly interplay of President Trump's use of social media addiction and cult indoctrination in regard to the coronavirus pandemic was significantly minimized. Thankfully this took place to a large extent (at least initially) through the defeat of Trump in November, 2020 with the election of Joe Biden as the president of the United States [53, 54, 45]. However, the danger of Trump or someone worse becoming the president of the United States in 2024 is very real [56, 57, 58], and consequently I believe that the relationships that I have written about in my initial article about social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic in relation to the Trump presidency are still very relevant today.

NOTE: This book chapter was initially published as an article in July, 2020, relatively early on in the coronavirus pandemic, and in the midst of the devastating effects of the Trump presidency.³¹ It is now over a year later and President Biden has been the United States president for more than 6 months and through his tremendous impetus of providing vaccinations against the coronavirus to many millions of Americans, the U.S. has turned a corner on the coronavirus pandemic, although the situation is still very precarious [55,45] Much of what I optimistically wrote in the Conclusion section of this article has thankfully taken place at least to some extent, as a result of Trump being defeated in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. However, I think that the dangers I described in my article related to social media addiction, cult indoctrination, and the coronavirus pandemic are still very relevant today, as it is entirely possible that either Trump, or someone with a similar, or even worse, destructive personality and agenda could become the U.S. president in 2024. These dangers were on stark display during the January, 2021 capitol insurrection riot and have by no means disappeared since then^{4,3}. In regard to the hundreds of laws in the process of being passed in many states regarding the placement of restrictions on voting rights that seriously impinge upon minorities voting, a number of political commentators have warned us about the dangers of the United States betraying democracy and soon becoming a fascist authoritarian country if these dangers are not overcome^{5,4}. And I think it is exceedingly dangerous and ill-foreboding that in the first Supreme Court challenge to these voting restriction laws, in the state of Arizona, the Supreme Court upheld the right of Arizona to pass these voting restriction laws [59]. I therefore believe that this book chapter that is essentially based upon my July, 2020 article is both timely and relevant to be published at this time.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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³See Benjamin, 2021a [52] for the initial article upon which this book chapter is based.

⁴See Nedelman & Kounang [58] for a description of the current danger of a surge in the coronavirus pandemic within the next few months through the Delta variant.

⁵See Dyer, [53]; Haque, [54], and Lott, [55] 2021 for descriptions of the dangers of the United States betraying democracy and becoming a fascist authoritarian country.

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Study on the Constitution of the Subject in the Work of Franz Kafka: A Psychoanalytic View

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines Franz Kafka's novel *Letter to My Father* from a psychoanalytic standpoint. Kafka presents a brave exposition of himself in the relationship he had with his father and the interference in his psychological development, with a significant self-biographical content. Some sections of this novel clearly address topics such as the Freudian theory of narcissism, the process of identification with parental figures, Oedipal characteristics, the formation of the Ego and its aspirations, and the significance of the Super Ego in the subject's formation. Sigmund Freud felt that we might approach the concerns of the human soul through literary texts. Freud makes numerous references to authors such as Goethe, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Sophocles throughout his extensive oeuvre. Human emotions and suffering are expressed via literary texts. The relationship between Franz Kafka's words and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis is quite evident in the text *Letter to My Father*, which is the subject of this study.

Keywords: Franz Kafka; Freud; psychoanalysis; german jewish" language.

"Dearest Father: Once you asked me for what reason I used to say that I was afraid of you. As usual, I was unable to think of what should I answer to you, partly for the fear that you bring to me... the fear itself and its consequences do hamper me when I am in front of you... my appreciation of myself depended much more on you than any other factor..." (Letter to My Father, Franz Kafka).

"I would cry for having said too many things about the things that are usually said, and not enough of those that are not. In the end, there is a way out for everything, except for the difficulty of being, which never settles" (Jean Cocteau).

1. A FLIGHTLESS JACKDAW

The so-called Thirty Years War was a series of wars in Europe throughout the seventeenth century that were fueled by religious, territorial, and dynastic rivalry, resulting in economic and demographic hardships for the region and its people. In Bohemia, like in other parts of Europe, there was a true desertification of rural areas during this time, prompting Jews to come from adjacent countries due to their acknowledged experience in business development. Jewish immigrants spoke a "German Jewish" language, which could be described as German with several expressions in Yiddish and, once a new statute for the Jews was created in the late nineteenth century, they moved to urban centers where they sought assimilation through socio-cultural ambience at big cities. The story of Franz Kafka's family is the story of most Jewish families who settled there at that time. Josef Kafka, who was the first to adopt this surname, which means "jackdaw" in Czech, married in 1802 and one of his sons, Jacob Kafka, became the father of Hermann Kafka. Hermann settled down with few financial resources, and shortly after marrying Julie Löwy in 1882 he opened a fabric store that thrived thanks to his hard dedication to work. Shortly after, Hermann successfully expanded his business. Hermann established himself thanks to his commitment, sacrifice and perseverance. Franz was the first child born of this marriage, in Prague, in 1883. Two more boys who died young and three daughters who

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died later during the Nazi holocaust were also born of this marriage. Hermann is described as an energetic man with strong temperament and Julie as a sweet and serene woman, always willing to mitigate her husband's strong temperament. In addition to Yiddish, Hermann's children spoke German, which was his family's native tongue in South Bohemia. Besides German and Yiddish, Franz also spoke Czech in an attempt to broaden his local communication. Based on the fact that they were Jews and having the habit of speaking German, Franz and his family were seen as the minority of minorities, making it difficult for Franz to connect with other inhabitants of Prague. In this context, Franz was exposed to the nationalistic feelings of Prague residents which, when combined with anti-Semitic prejudices, eventually led to street demonstrations against the Jews. Curiously, although he belonged to a family of Jews, Franz did not attend to the synagogue because he did not see himself to be sufficiently involved in the Jewish religion [1,2]. *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* is committed to publishing high quality, anonymously peer reviewed articles written in English on post-1900 literature, film, and media in French, German, and Spanish. The journal is devoted to theory and criticism in the modern languages, and encourages interdisciplinary and collaborative submissions [3].

Franz Kafka died in 1924. Six years later, Freud published *Civilization and its Discontents*, a text in which he points out the relevance of cultural conditions in the production of happiness and curiously also makes reference to the figure of the peasants in the Thirty Years War as an example of the gradual numbness of expectations and a process of narcotization affecting the susceptibility to sensations of pleasure as well as displeasure. He also comments that it is very important to consider the way in which social relations between human beings are regulated in the process of civilization, whether as neighbors, as a source of support, as a sexual object and as a member of a family and then, he concludes that the cultural element would be the first attempt to regulate these relations.³ The work of Franz Kafka cannot be reduced to a political doctrine of any kind. Kafka did not give speeches but fashioned individuals and situations. In his work, he expressed a *Stimmung* or sense of feelings and attitudes. The symbolic world of literature cannot be reduced to the discursive world of ideologies. Literary work is not an *abstract conceptual system* similar to philosophical or political doctrines but rather the creation of a concrete imaginary universe of individuals and things [4].

The constitution of the subject occurs in the land of otherness, and this is a process in which the language plays an important role, both in the objectivity of communication and in the symbolism of what is said as well as in the silence that sometimes is adopted as the only possibility for communication. Language is one of the possibilities that the unconscious has to manifest itself. Therefore, interpersonal relationship is not limited to the field of objectivity. The influence of other's gaze on us is a relevant constituent of our subjectivity and it is controlled by the unconscious, which receives external information and determines the form in which it is possible to respond. Therefore, language itself should not be taken as the only and absolute reference for social communication. All symbols associated with language are quite important in this process.

We know language is strongly influenced by historical circumstances in which it is inserted. History, both that related to society and that concerning family environment, is important in the constitution of the subject since it exists even before its birth and does influence its constitution from the very beginning. Franz comes from a family exposed to migratory movements resulting from mainly economic needs and, although born in Prague, Franz expressed himself in three languages, probably not only because of cultural versatility but also because of the connection he had with his origins coupled with the need to adapt to the environment, which lead us to speculate about a possible relationship of the dilution of the spoken language with the dilution of Franz's own subjectivity. Obscure is the word Franz used when referring to himself in relation to his father in the *Letter to my Father*, which is the object of this essay:

"Let's compare the two of us: I am a shy and obscure person totally interrupting myself quite often. You, on the other hand, is a true Kafka in strength, health, appetite, loudness of voice, eloquence, self-satisfaction, worldly dominance, endurance, presence of spirit, experience, knowledge of human nature, a certain way of doing things on a grand scale, and, of course, also with all the defects and weaknesses that go with these advantages and into which your temperament and sometimes your hot temper do drive you" [5].

Franz's speech is created in the context of social and cultural circumstances in which both he and Hermann were inserted and responded to in opposite ways on the basis of their unequal singularities,

making it difficult to find a true connection between them. Hermann was a migrant who responded to adversity with perseverance, seeking to overcome obstacles, aiming at a material well-being for himself and his family what made him to become a migrant of himself, without giving much value to non-pragmatic issues of daily life and without paying attention to those who were used to surround him. In contrast, Franz presents himself as a fragile subject at the mercy of a tyrant father. He also considered not having many points in common with the Jews aside from having little affinity with himself as he used to say [2].

As previously mentioned, language is one of the ways for the unconscious to manifest itself, then, its relation to the external world is not exclusively based on the field of objectivity. The speech of the speaker produces a much broader and hidden discourse than the text that is spoken. The subject of the discourse unconsciously refers to historical, social, cultural, ideological and emotional components, all of which exposed to the interference of external references that act by impregnating the discourse that is spoken which, in the end, expresses the uniqueness of human experience.

In *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* [6] Freud comments on the mental phenomena determined by the sociocultural context and highlights some components of this process, for example, the sociocultural construction of these phenomena that occurs through the language, both in its occurrence as in the apprehension process by the individual. In the same way, he makes some reflections on the passage from the unconscious to the conscious and questions how consciousness may have access to the content that is in the unconscious being this is a process in which, again, language plays a relevant role. In *Civilization and its Discontents* [7], we see Freud saying that culture is a process that is developed in humanity at the service of Eros seeking to bring together individuals, families, and then ethnicities, people and nations into the great unity of humanity, concluding that these human groups should be linked libidinally with each other. Franz was born in Prague in a time of social discomfort that would lead to the first of two world wars thirty years after his birth. Franz experienced this environment of progressive social tension and discontent. Franz was a Jewish man who was fluent in three languages and did not go to the synagogue as expected, becoming a minority among minorities and being exposed to anti-Semitic prejudices, as already mentioned. In addition he had particular and specific difficulties in the relationship with his father.

It is accepted that sociocultural context in which the subject is inserted has a unique importance in his/her development, mainly because of the way in which it captures and translates the elements of this context and the resulting mental phenomena through language. The scenario where Franz established himself did not seem to be sufficiently provided with symbols that could be positively structuring his subjectivity and existence. Similarly, in his family universe, Franz was unable to find the appropriate structure to establish a reasonable relationship with his father, as he writes in the *Letter to my Father*:

“I remember, for example, how we often undressed together in a changing room. I meager, weak, small. You – strong, great, broad and I used to feel myself miserable, not just in front of you, but in front of everybody...” [5].

The representation contained in Franz's words portrays his perception of himself and expresses the emotional consequences that those words bring to him. His narrative may suggest that we are in front of a jackdaw outside the nest without the necessary drive to fly, with shortage of investment in its own desire.

2. HE IS THE ROCK, HIS WORK IS PERFECT AND HIS WAY IS RIGHT. (DEUTERONOMY 32:4)

“From your armchair you ruled the world. Your opinion was correct, every other one was absurd and abnormal...Your self-confidence was so great... You seemed to have the mystery that all tyrants have in whom the reason is based on their appearance and not on their thoughts... everything you called out to me seemed to be a heavenly commandment, never forgotten, and it usually remained for me as the most important way to judge the world...I could not satisfy you because I did not have your strength, your appetite and your skills and this was the greatest disgrace of all” [5].

In the text *The Task of the Translator* [8] Walter Benjamin comments that the translation process implies a return to the original, since it is there where the law of its format lies. Then he raises the question whether translations may be valid for the readers who have not read the original words. Therefore, we may ask to what extent any translation would be able to aspire to be similar to the original. Benjamin goes on discussing the need to integrate various languages into a true language in order that sentences, poems and judgments may harmonize each other. However it is true that languages may harmonize each other, complete one another and reconcile each other through the way they are expressed. We can then speculate on what Franz wanted to express by writing the *Letter to my Father*.⁴ In other words, we may think about how many languages of affection Franz was putting together, translating and integrating each other in his discourse. The text of the *Letter to my Father* is Franz's perception about himself and his father, a clear emotional translation that he provides about his father and himself, with all the symbols pictured in his experience. As expressed in his words:

“My writing was all about you; in my words I was able to regret what I could no regret upon your breast...the way you smile is extraordinarily beautiful and exquisite...you had magnificent commercial talents... when facing any uncertainty or doubt you immediately knew how to find the solution...a spectacle worthy to be watched...” [5].

When speaking about his father, Franz speaks of himself, translating the force of Hermann's image on himself. When he speaks of himself, Franz also speaks about his father when he writes: “the feeling of nullity that masters me was imposed to me in a large extent by your influence... you were used to censor me since the very beginning, blocking my way...Your verbal communication process contained abuse, threats, irony, spiteful laughter...I was used to go on living as a not deserved gift...I lost confidence in my own actions...the older I became, more material was there for you to bring up against me as an evidence of my worthlessness” [5].

But, after all, who is Hermann Kafka? The description presented by Franz does not necessarily coincide with the testimony of others who lived with Hermann. For example, Max Brod, a friend of Franz from his youth, brings up a different perspective about Hermann saying that he was a Jew who came from an environment of material scarcity and opened a profitable business in Prague, promoting stability for him and his family and, in addition, that he was a very nice and generous person with his children, enabling Franz to get a good education, even by giving him a trip at the end of his studies. Another example can be seen in the recent edition of *Letter to my Father* in German [9], on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Franz's death, which included recollections of Frantisek Basik, a Czech apprentice who worked two and a half years in Hermann's shop in Prague. Basik describes Hermann as a man with a good sense of humor who played with Frantisek during his working hours and even taking him to spend a vacation with the Kafka family. In his account, Frantisek confirms that the work was hard, and the boss was strict, but, in some way sympathetic, calm, almost affectionate. The early years of Franz's life were not referred at Franz's letter to his father making it difficult to reflect on the representations and associations that may have been experienced by him in his childhood. The perspective we highlight at this essay is the way by which Franz refers to his father in this text⁴ and also the strong and assertive way he exposes his feelings in regards to the sensation of failure attributed to his father in regards to parental role in his development.

In available biographies [1,2], we read that Franz had some professional occupations, starting at his father's store, where he stayed for a period of time to attend to repeated requests from his father to help him in business without considering that this activity drew no interest from Franz who, from an early age, was already attracted to literature. In 1901, at the age of 18, Franz began his studies in chemistry and, in 1902, he began to study literature and history of art. In that same year, Franz entered law school, obtaining his doctorate in 1906. Literary activity initiated in 1904 during his university course. After graduating from university in 1907, Franz joined the private insurance company Assicurazioni Generali. This activity kept him busy all day and he did not have much time left to write. As a consequence, he decided to move to the Workers' Compensation Institute, which allowed him more time flexibility for dedicating himself to writing. Literature was what fascinated him. However, his father did not approve this activity.

In the *Letter to my Father* he says:

“...you used to address your aversion to my writing and to everything that, unknown to you, was connected with that... my vanity and my self-esteem did suffer under your proverbial way of hailing the arrival of my books: “Put it on my bedside table”... This was the environment in which I was given the freedom to embrace a career. But was I still capable of making any use of such freedom? Had I still any confidence in my own capacity to pursue a real career? The valuation of myself was much more dependent on you than on anything else... So I was not truly free to choose my career” [5].

3. MEN CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT HAVING THE CONFIDENCE OF SOMETHING INDESTRUCTIBLE WITHIN HIMSELF (APHORISMS, FRANZ KAFKA)

In the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, originally published in 1905 [10]. Freud refers to autoerotism as an anarchic state of infantile sexuality in which sexual drive finds satisfaction in one's own body without resorting to an external object. It is a pure local satisfaction, not organized and disjointed in relation to other partial satisfactions, i.e., the so-called pleasure of the organ in a fragmented body. A few years later, Freud investigates the relationship between self-eroticism and narcissism in the publication *On Narcissism: An Introduction* that was released in 1914 [11] in which he states that at early stages of life there is not a unit that is comparable to the “Ego”. As drives are present since the beginning of life, something should be added to self-eroticism as a new psychic action for narcissism to be constituted. In this same text, Freud tells us that narcissism is necessary for the constitution of subjectivity, i.e., for the development of the “Ego”, which is considered the great reservoir of all libido available. Freud calls this stage of development as primary narcissism. The constitution of the “Ego” is affected by the revival of the narcissism of parents who ascribe to their child all perfections in the world and grant him/her the privileges which they were forced to leave behind. The “Ego” that emerges from the unified image that the child makes of his own body and from this revival of the parents' narcissism is the “ideal Ego”, which corresponds to primary narcissism and gives the subject a feeling of omnipotence, leading him/her to love himself. Later, the libido is redirected to objects (representations-object) leading to the transformation of the narcissistic libido into object libido but emphasizing that, throughout the life of the subject, the “Ego” continues being the great reservoir of the libido from which libidinal investments are sent to objects and collected from them, such as an amoeba that extends and then collects its pseudopods. The return of libidinal investment to the “Ego” after investing on external objects is considered by Freud to be the secondary narcissism. It is worth emphasizing that he believes that these modes of libidinal investment should not be considered as successive stages, i.e., there is no complete abandonment of the “Ego” in exchange for the object, nor afterwards a complete abandonment of the object investment in favor of the “Ego”. Both forms of investment may coexist even with the predominance of one of them.

In *On Narcissism: An Introduction* [11], Freud introduces the concepts “ideal Ego” and “ideal of Ego” and says that the self-love feeling that is enjoyed in childhood through the real “Ego” lies on this “ideal Ego” and that this narcissism is displaced into this “ideal Ego”, which, like the infantile Ego, finds itself in possession of all valuable perfections. Like everything that occurs under the domain of the libido, Freud says that during their psychic development, human beings demonstrate to be unable to renounce the satisfaction that was once enjoyed at early times. They do not want to deprive themselves of the narcissistic perfection that is characteristic of childhood. This sensation, however, cannot be maintained when they grow up and this state of mind is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of their own judgment about life. Consequently, this leads them to seek for recovering of this state through the new psychic instance named “Ideal of Ego”.

The “Ideal of Ego” is a psychic instance resulting from the reconciliation of narcissism and idealization of the “Ego” with the process of identification with the parents, their demands and/or also with their substitutes in society defining rules and laws to be followed. The “Ideal of Ego” turns to be a standard in relation to which the subjects measure themselves and commit to fulfilling the demands that are presented to them in order to be loved and recognized being this a process that generates conflict and psychic suffering. The “Ideal of the Ego” actually represents the identification built up on the figure of the father who is what we would like to be, as clearly indicated by Franz several times in *Letter to the Father*,⁴ whenever his words reveal relevant signs of praise related to Hermann.

In *The Future of an Illusion*, published in 1927 [12], Freud draws attention to the ambivalence of the father-child relationship in which there are strong feelings of affection but also of severity: "We found ourselves in a similar state of helplessness as young children in relation to our parents. We had reasons to fear them, especially our father; yet we were certain of his protection against the dangers of life" [12].

In Jewish families, paternal authority is unquestionable, and children are instructed to honor and fear this image of authority. In Jewish families, the father is the center of everything, the lord who has the control of everyone and whose power rests on images as ancient and irrefutable as presented in the biblical passage found in Isaiah 64-7 which says "O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand". The father is the first "other" the child discovers after the mother. The presence of the father is what defines the rules as well as the limits for living and then allows the transition of the child from family world to society and the consequent entrance into the culture. In this way, it is guaranteed the state of security that is necessary for the child to make his/her own decisions in life, allowing him/her to explore the world and then return to the family with the assurance of be welcomed. The father is the one who brings the perspective of "otherness" which is a critical experience in the process of subject's psychic development. It is due to this experience that the child is presented to the feeling of belonging to a group which do facilitate the process required for human development. Franz goes on in his life without being able to authorize himself in taking decisions that would make him able to support his own choices. In order to be able to grant permission to life, it is necessary for the subject to have the "praxis" of his own and, not, be a faithful copy of his master however without losing the perspective about the relevance of this master. Getting married is one of the steps that Franz wanted to accomplish but never succeeded. It was after his unsuccessful third attempt that he wrote the letter [5] to his father.

Franz had several love experiences [1,2]. Some were short and some were deeper and longer, capable of influencing the course of his life. One of his main relationships was with Felicia Bauer, who fascinated him to such extent that he decided to propose to her. They were engaged between 1912 and 1914 and, during this period, Franz could not decide between getting married and overcoming his isolation, or preserving his independence and personal freedom even paying the price of his solitude. Despite this hesitation, Franz did not take the initiative to break the engagement with his fiancée what was then decided by Felicia herself. Two years later, in 1916, Franz finds her again and resumes the relationship. In 1917, Franz had his first episode of hemoptysis due to tuberculosis what made it difficult for him to marry her. Then, in the end of 1917 they terminated the engagement. In 1919, at the age of 36, Franz met Julie Wohryzek, to whom he became engaged, but soon after he got to know Milena Jesenska-Pollakova and established an intense relationship with her, despite the fact he was still engaged to Julie and Milena was married. By Milena's demand, Franz broke up the engagement with Julie but he never got to be married to Milena, since she refused to leave her husband.

In the end of 1919, feeling disappointed by the cold reception granted by his father in regards to the announcement he made about his engagement to Julie, Franz wrote the *Letter to my Father* where he comments about the interaction with his father in relation to his loving experiences: "...first of all you rank the failure of the marriages at the same level you do with the rest of my failures... you underrate the importance of this matter... getting married, raising a family with children, supporting them in this insecure world and perhaps even guiding them for a while until the limit that a man can reach...our needs are quite different; what is important to me is just superficial for you ... soon after I told you about my project in regards to getting married to Julie you told me that she probably got dressed with a fancy blouse, like those Jew girls are used to do Prague, and that this may have influenced my decision in regards to getting married to her" [5].

The suffering that Franz exposes in this auto-biographical *Letter to my Father*⁴ points out the failure of his father in exercising his parental role, a relevant step that is needed in the process for constitution of someone's subjectivity. The failure of Franz's attempts to establish lasting love bonds could indicate some degree of frustration related to such initiatives that he was not able to sustain, experiencing the sour taste of failure in many situations. Marriage would be such a new literature to be written in his life, a guarantee of self-liberation and independence that maybe would allow him to write a letter to his

father with a different content. Franz also considered that, through marriage, he could live up to the image of his father, but in order to reach this, Hermann should have been the father who grants his son the recognition of power, something that never occurred as Franz says: "You could have never humiliated me more deeply with words in addition to showing me very clearly the contempt you had towards me... My choice of a girl to be engaged meant nothing at all to you... You have always smashed (unconsciously) my power of decision... Again as a sign of your complete misunderstanding was the fact that you believed that I—timid, hesitant, suspicious—would be able to quickly decide about marriage seduced by a blouse. Neither of the girls has disappointed me, only I disappointed both of them. It is the overwhelming pressure of anxiety, weakness and self-contempt" [5].

There is no sufficient investment from Franz in his subjectivity to make it possible for him to sustain his own desire and, in this process, he compares his "Ego" to his "Ideal of Ego" represented by his father when he says:

"Marriage certainly is the more explicit guarantee for me in order to reach self-liberation and independence. I would have a family that, in my opinion, is the highest status one can achieve... I would be at the same position that you are and all previous and even new shame and tyranny episodes would just be mere history...I could picture myself in this situation of equality which would then arise between ourselves... But the way we are now, marriage is barred to me because this is exactly your most private domain" [5].

The novel *Letter to my Father* [5] denounces the issues that plagued Franz at an early age. Paternal law, profession and marriage are central themes for him. However, to me, what seems to be in question is not the truthfulness of the narrative but, rather, the burden of affections destined by Franz to the facts. Not only the feeling of emptiness that he addresses to his father, but also the torture he sets upon himself in an unmistakable self-condemnatory attitude that evolves into a tragic outcome.

4. THE FINAL SILENCE

In 1917 Franz, then aged 34, was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis. At this point, Franz had already been admitted into some health institutions until 1924, when he was last hospitalized. This time, there was an aggravation of the tuberculosis that had affected his larynx leading to respiratory difficulties. For this reason, feeding also became a painful activity for him. On June 3rd, 1924, Franz's conditions got worse. He asked for morphine and, a few hours later, he died. In *Letter to my Father*, written in 1919, thus after the diagnosis of tuberculosis but five years before his death, Franz wrote: "The impossibility of a serene relationship brought me a different outcome: I unlearned to speak... since very early the word was forbidden to me...and, at last, I shut up.." [5].

The process of subjectivation is a painful process for anyone that requires stamina. For this, feeding the soul, investing in the psychic development and interacting with the "other" in a way that guarantees the constitution of own subjectivity is quite important components in this process. At the end of his life, Franz got ill with a disease that affected his ability to breathe, to speak and to eat, an outcome he himself had predicted a few years earlier, as if it was his inexorable fate from which he was not able to run away. Between 1917 and 1918, Franz was admitted into a sanitarium in Zürau where he wrote more than one hundred aphorisms¹¹ about good and evil, true and false, alienation and redemption, death and paradise. One of them says: "From a certain point there is no return. This point has to be reached".

5. CONCLUSION

This essay intended to provide a psychoanalytic perspective for the novel *Letter to My Father* by Franz Kafka where the author makes a courageous exposition of himself regarding the relationship he had with his father. Kafka clearly indicates in this novel the interference of this difficulty in his psychological development also affecting his literature writing. At this essay we speculate that some aspects of such familiar issues are articulated to the Freudian theory of narcissism, in which the process of identification with parental figure is key, Oedipal aspects, the constitution of the Ego and its ideal as well as the importance of the SuperEgo in the constitution of the subject can also be suspected at the pages of that *Letter*. Freud believed that through literary texts we can approach the concerns of the human soul. In his vast work, Freud's references to literary authors such as Goethe,

Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Sophocles are numerous. This is also very clear in Kafka's *Letter to My Father*. In that sense we propose the relationship between Franz Kafka's work and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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