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Editorial

Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru

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Lack of reading leads to the drying up of the human imagination. Certainly, at the end of a day, some people, tired from the hard day, just turn on the TV, but in this way, everything is given ready-made, namely: the way the characters look, the scenario, the places, without giving you the opportunity to imagine these things yourself, without stimulating the imagination, which is so necessary to our nature. The ability to express oneself and to understand is also affected by the lack of reading, contributing to underdeveloped vocabulary. How one expresses oneself is influenced by the extent of one's reading habits. Poor, faulty expression can lead to problems in the social and professional relationships we form with those around us, so that our knowledge is somewhat limited and our general culture is poor. Neglecting to read can also affect one's judgment to some extent, because an uninformed person is easily taken for a ride.

We cannot develop sufficiently, both as individuals and as a people, as long as we lack the habit of reading, the curiosity to find out what is going on around us. Reading has the function of educating, enhancing knowledge and nurturing our intellectual growth. Envision a future without education, and it becomes evident that education is not just reading. Books can contribute to our improvement as individuals, as a country. They bring people together through information and imagination, they inspire many ideas at the same time. Reading leads to greater cognitive activity in which the brain learns new vocabulary, thus developing social perception and emotional intelligence.

Not a few people believe that reading is absolutely necessary for personal development and reading books is a person's most valuable asset. Interestingly, by reading they consider that they are taking care of their mental health. Without books, without education, there can be no talk of a secure, bright future. Examining the reasons behind reading reveals a clear distinction: casual readers may read out of boredom or amusement, while passionate readers will read for pleasure, out of the need to evolve, to know and understand. There are also people who do not have the opportunity to be occasional readers, and in such a situation, how could they have the chance to evolve and become passionate readers? These, unfortunately, are the illiterates, the people who cannot read. Functional illiterates are those who can read but do not understand what they have read and there are also those who can read, understand what they have read, but financial problems or lack of bookshops, libraries, do not allow them to do so. All three situations are unfortunate.

Books do not automatically confer wisdom, but it is hard to be wise without reading them. Lack of reading is a kind of intellectual death. Books go through a rigorous process to get published, and the truly enlightening ones present complex ideas and arguments put together by an author who has done his homework well. Such books teach you how to think. Reading is the best way to cultivate an independent mind, able to see beyond the prejudices and sophisms that circulate in the public space, and such clarity of thought is increasingly rare because most people are too busy to read. A book is not just printed writing, an object, or a work, it is more than a binding of many sheets and has the ability to send you into the mind of someone else, even if that author has been dead for hundreds or thousands of years.

Through the book, a link is created between people from different eras, it is a way of communicating or teaching others, passing on a body of knowledge and developing the reader's intellectual capacities. Books also have the power to form communities, which can bring together people from different walks of life with the same passion for reading. Reading helps you learn about human nature, history, strategies that have worked and strategies that have not, giving you some reference points. For some, reading is even a way of life. Even if reading does not provide all the answers, it illuminates the path, which in some situations is darker. The benefits are many: purchase books, borrow books, give books, read books.

Hate Crimes and Hate Speech: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT: Dignity is a precious asset that not only identifies us as free and equal human beings, but also allows us to live together in society. In fact, human dignity, together with the inviolable rights that are inherent to it, is an essential aspect of human civilization. For this reason, acts based on discrimination on various grounds (race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social category or disadvantaged group, disability, political opinion or any other grounds) have taken on a new approach as hate crimes. The future will decide and demonstrate whether there is a need for separate criminalization, with its own *nomen juris*, of these offences or if the regulation provided by the states to date is sufficient, given that it is eclectic. The paper examines the legal landscape regarding hate crimes and hate speech in the European context, emphasizing the importance of a coordinated effort in hate crime prevention.

KEYWORDS: hate crimes, hate speech, offences, list of acts criminalized by the European Union

Introduction

In recent years it has been observed that offences based on discrimination on various grounds (race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social or disadvantaged group, disability, political opinion or any other grounds) have gained a new approach as hate crimes. Hate speech is also referred to in the doctrine. Thus, theorists have argued that this is a new area of criminal law, that of crimes committed out of feelings of hatred towards other people (Abhjit 2017, 1-9), as well as the special needs of the victim of this category of crime.

At the European level, there are discussions about drafting legislation on the subject, although the procedure is rather laborious. The question arises, however, as to whether it is really necessary to create this category of crime in a somewhat artificial way, given that such offences are criminalized in the legislation of the Member States and in the legislation of all democratic states.

It is undeniable that any type of social relations (in the broad or narrow sense) must be characterized by the principle that every person must have a correct and equitable chance in life, not necessarily equal to the rest of the members of society. This equality of chances is, of course, premised on equal situations of studies, education, intelligence, but it also raises the legitimate questions: What are the barriers imposed by hatred or prejudice? What prevents some people from progressing, and are some of the obstacles represented by these prejudices? Is it necessary to create a new category of offences, or are those that already exist in national legislation sufficient? Can the idea of a specialized court to deal with hate or prejudice crimes be envisaged? Of course, it is not possible to provide answers to all these questions in this scientific approach, as opposed to the extensive answers required and based on a huge amount of research. Still, we will try to draw some conclusions on current trends and the need for a new category of offences.

1. Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 1 December 2022 - inclusion of hate speech and hate crimes in the list of offences criminalized by the European Union

It is an obvious fact that during the SARSCOV-2 pandemic in particular, but also as a result of the exponential increase in the use of the internet and

social media platforms, hatred towards fellow human beings, for whatever reason, has progressively increased, which is a negative and unworthy aspect of human personality. Of course, this increase has been taking place for at least two decades, at least in Europe, but the situation is the same throughout the world. Hate feelings are not only directed at individuals, but also at groups of people who share a certain characteristic - for example, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

In the context of the lockdowns during the pandemic, the sense of frustration experienced by so many people led to the explosion of hatred generated by fear, isolation, frustration, insecurity, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. As the European Union promotes multiple values, including inclusion, it is easy to see that hatred is not one of them, but on the contrary, criminal acts based on feelings of hatred must be vigorously repressed, including at European level and through criminal law. This is the political and social context in which the European Commission, in December 2021, proposed extending the list of offences provided for by EU law and listed in Article 83(2) of the Treaty on European Union. (1) TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) with hate crimes and hate speech (European Commission 2021, COM(2021) 777 final). A year later, the Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 1 December 2022 on the inclusion of hate speech and hate crime in the list of offences criminalized by the European Union was adopted (European Union 2022).

Both the Commission Communication and the Opinion are part of the cumbersome procedure laid down in Article 17(1) TEU (Treaty on European Union) proposed by the Commission to extend the list of offences referred to in Article 83(1) of the TFEU. The explanatory memorandum of the opinion refers to the fact that the way in which these offences are committed differs from one Member State to another and that there is a need for a strengthened response at European level to prevent and combat this type of offence. As in the case of the other offences referred to in Article 83(3), the Commission is proposing to set a minimum standard regarding the requirement of typicality of offences, as well as to impose a minimum or maximum limit on the applicable penalty. This effectively means defining these offences at (at least) a minimum level, by adopting directives for each specific area of regulation.

Thus, this text states: “(1) *The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of directives in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in areas of particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension resulting from the nature or impact of such offences or from a special need to combat them on a common basis. (2) These areas of crime are the following: terrorism, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and children, illicit drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, corruption, counterfeiting of means of payment, computer-related crime and organized crime. (3) Depending on the development of crime, the Council may adopt a decision identifying other areas of crime meeting the criteria set out in this paragraph. The Council shall act unanimously after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.*” (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union 2012).

We note that this category provided for in the Treaty includes offences of a very serious nature and, without disputing the seriousness of hate crimes, we would point out that they are regulated in the legislation of all Member States and in the legislation of all democratic states governed by the rule of law. This is because such offences are premised on discrimination within the meaning of criminal law (Bitanga, Franguloiu, and Sanchez-Hermosilla 2018, 7). In addition, the question arises as to how the impact of criminalizing these offences will be assessed. The assessment is necessary in order to analyze the multiple options available for determining the anti-legality and typicality of the offences and the penalty regime.

Last but not least, the question arises of determining the impact of criminalization on fundamental rights (as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), with particular reference to freedom of expression and freedom of the press and the media, which are the solid foundations of a democratic society, given that the SLAPP Directive (‘Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation’) is in the process of being adopted; the package consists of the Proposal for a Directive on the protection of individuals involved in public mobilization actions against manifestly unfounded or abusive legal proceedings {“Strategic Lawsuits against Public Mobilization”}, accompanied by the Recommendation on the protection of journalists and human rights defenders engaged in public mobilization against manifestly unfounded or abusive legal proceedings, the two documents being complementary. It is true that this legislative package concerns civil law sanctions and the subject matter is slightly different, but we

should note that there are certain common points which cannot be analyzed in this paper, but which will be the subject of a future study by the authors).

2. Brief comparative analysis

2.1. USA

In the USA, there is a regulation of these types of offences in the Code & 249: “(1) OFFENCES INVOLVING RACE, COLOR, RELIGION OR ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED NATIONAL ORIGIN. *Whoever, whether or not acting under color of law, intentionally causes bodily injury to any person or, by the use of fire, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or an explosive or incendiary device, attempts to cause bodily injury to any person because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, or national origin of any person: (A) is punishable by imprisonment for not more than 10 years, a fine under this title, or both; and (B) is punishable by imprisonment for any term of years or for life, a fine under this title, or both, if (i) the offense results in death; or (ii) the offense includes kidnapping or attempted kidnapping, aggravated sexual abuse or attempted aggravated sexual abuse, or attempted murder.*

(2) THE OFFENSE INVOLVES ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, OR DISABILITY.

(A) *In general. Whoever, whether or not acting under color of law, in any circumstance described in subparagraph (B) or paragraph (3), intentionally causes bodily injury to any person, or by the use of fire, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or an explosive or incendiary device, attempts to cause bodily harm to any person because of the actual or perceived religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability of any person (i) shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years, a fine under this title, or both; and (ii) is punishable by imprisonment for any term of years or for life, a fine under this title, or both, if (I) the offense results in death; or*

(II) the offense includes kidnapping or attempted kidnapping, aggravated sexual abuse or attempted aggravated sexual abuse, or attempted murder.

(B) *Circumstances described. For purposes of subparagraph (A), the circumstances described in such subparagraph are as follows*

(i) the conduct described in subparagraph (A) occurs during or as a result of the defendant’s or victim’s travel (I) across a State line or national border; or (II) using a conduit, facility, or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce;

(ii) the defendant uses a conduit, facility, or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce in connection with the conduct described in subparagraph (A);

(iii) in connection with the conduct described in subparagraph (A), the defendant uses a firearm, dangerous weapon, explosive or incendiary device, or other weapon that has traveled in interstate or foreign commerce; or

(iv) the conduct described in subparagraph (A)(I) interferes with the business or other economic activity in which the victim is engaged at the time of the conduct; or (II) otherwise affects interstate or foreign commerce.” (US Department of Justice. 2009. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, 18 U.S. Code § 249).

We note that in the US, hate crimes have been regulated in the federal criminal code for quite some time, with hate motives related to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. The typicality requirements of the offence in either form are precisely described, although the offence can be committed in different forms, and the serious ones require a result, i.e., bodily harm or death of the person/ attempted murder or sexual abuse on these grounds.

2.2. United Kingdom

Similarly, in the UK (Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and section 66 of the Sentencing Act 2020), five types of hate crime are recognized with reference to race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity. For the offence to exist, it is necessary simply to show hostility on the basis of any of these grounds, without the need to produce a result harmful to the person’s physical integrity or health, as in the USA.

2.3. Canada

In Canada, only hate speech is regulated: “Public incitement to hatred: 319 (1) Any person who, by statements made in a public place, incites hatred against an identifiable group, where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of public order, is guilty of:

(a) an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Side note: Intentional promotion of hatred

(2) Any person who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, deliberately promotes hatred against an identifiable group, is guilty of:

(a) an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Side note: Intentionally promoting anti-Semitism

(2.1) Any person who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, deliberately promotes anti-Semitism by condoning, denying or minimising the Holocaust is guilty of:

(a) an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.” (Minister of Justice Canada 2023. Criminal Code (R.S.C. (1985), ch. C-46).

It should be noted that in Canada there is no regulation of hate crimes, only hate speech in the sense noted by the concept “hate speech”.

However, in June 2021, the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General proposed a legislative amendment (from our research it has not yet been adopted) aimed at more effectively and efficiently combating both hate speech and hate crimes. In addition, the legislative amendment also addresses the need to provide more effective remedies for victims and for holding perpetrators criminally liable for the harm they cause by spreading hate. The bill also proposes amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code and introduces related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

We note that in Canada there is no express regulation of hate crimes with their own *nomen juris*, as there is in the USA and the UK.

2.4. The Kingdom of Spain

In the Kingdom of Spain, hate crimes are regulated in Article 510 of the Criminal Code, in Section I, “Crimes committed in the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution,” Chapter IV “On rights relating to the exercise of fundamental rights and public freedoms”.

It is important to note that the Spanish legislation is also quite complex, in the sense that the typical offence describes multiple acts of conduct: “Those who encourage, promote or publicly incite, directly or indirectly, hatred, hostility, discrimination or violence against a group, part of a group or a specific person for reasons of: Group membership, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsyism or other grounds related to ideology, religion or belief, family status, member-

ship of an ethnic group, race or nation, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity or on grounds of gender, aporophobia, disease or disability.

Those who produce, prepare, hold for distribution, give third parties access to, distribute, disseminate or sell writings or any other material or media which, by reason of their content, are likely to encourage, promote or incite, directly or indirectly, hatred, hostility, discrimination or violence against a group, part of a group or a particular person, for the same reasons as in the previous point.

Those who publicly deny, grossly trivialize or glorify crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or crimes against persons and property protected in armed conflict or glorify the perpetrators thereof, when committed against a group or part of a group or against a specific person for the same reasons as above, when doing so promotes or encourages a climate of violence, hostility, hatred or discrimination against them” (Ministerio de Justicia 2016, Criminal Code).

It should be noted that the Spanish system offers a unique, but also comprehensive regulation, in that it includes both hate crimes and hate speech, with a broad tipicity.

2.5. France

In France, hate crime does not have its own *nomen juris*, in the sense that it does not correspond to a certain legal qualification, on the grounds that the presence of a discriminatory motive for the act constitutes a circumstance which aggravates crimes and offences. The idea underlying the French system is based on the fact that the rationale of hate crimes has a special dimension and thus requires a technical legal approach. In criminal law, it is often said that motive is irrelevant, which means that, although it can sometimes shed light on the crime, it is rarely a factor in the legal qualification of the offence.

It is true that in the case of hate crimes the most important thing is to be able to objectify the motive and to establish, through identification and evidence, an intention which is sometimes a matter of feeling, which is quite difficult to prove objectively.

2.6. Romania

In Romania, similarly to the French system, there is not yet a separate regulation, in the sense of a proper *nomen juris* of hate crimes, but acts based on acts of discrimination, prejudice, are found in various incriminations, such as: the crime of torture provided for in Art. 282 para. (1) (d) of the

Criminal Code: “*The act of a public official who performs a function involving the exercise of state authority or of another person acting at the instigation of or with the express or tacit consent of the public official to cause physical or mental suffering to a person...on a ground based on any form of discrimination*”; the offence of abuse in the exercise of official authority provided by Art. 297 para. (2) of the Criminal Code – “*the act of a public official who, in the exercise of his duties, restricts the exercise of a right of a person or creates a situation of inferiority on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation, wealth, age, disability, chronic non-contagious disease or HIV/AIDS infection*”; and the offence of incitement to violence, hatred or discrimination provided for in Article 369 of the Criminal Code. – “*inciting the public, by any means, to violence, hatred or discrimination against a category of persons or a person on the grounds that he or she belongs to a particular category of persons defined on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political opinion or affiliation, property, social origin, age, disability, chronic non-contagious disease or HIV/AIDS infection, considered by the perpetrator as a cause of the person’s inferiority in relation to others*”. Before the amendment of article 369 of the Romanian Criminal Code, it stipulated that only incitement to hatred and discrimination, by any means, against a category of persons are considered crimes. In the current regulation of the Romanian Criminal Code, the legislator considered that the term *incitement* is much broader than that of *instigation* (Hegheş 2023, 82).

Regardless of how they are regulated, it is clear that these offences are committed simply in consideration of who the victim is, regardless of the reason - race, color, nationality, religion, gender or sexual orientation and other such reasons. In fact, these types of crimes are committed in consideration of the person who is injured, with regard to older or newer patterns of discrimination or prejudice against certain persons or communities of persons.

Conclusions

The rights of all persons were enshrined long ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states in Article 1: “*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (...)*” and in Article 2 that “*everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*”

Subsequently, Protocol No 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950 (ECHR) provides in Article 1.1 that “*the enjoyment of all rights recognized by law shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status*”, thus reflecting a description similar to that contained in Article 14 of the said Convention.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2007), which has the same legal value as the Treaties, devotes the first article to stating that: “*Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected*”, while the principle of equality before the law is recognized in Article 20 and in Article 21(1) states that “*any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited*”

This teleological and systematic approach highlights the fundamental nature of dignity, which must be understood as the respect due to and the value to be accorded to every human being for the simple fact of being a human being. We are therefore talking about an inherent quality, which is recognized and protected, but not granted, and which is the premise for the free development of personality. This means, in fact, the free choice that each individual has to opt for a dignified life project, using his or her natural or acquired qualities, regardless of and independently of any other criteria.

Similarly, the Constitutional Court of the Kingdom of Spain has ruled in a judgment relevant to our approach, in which it stated that “*human dignity shapes the framework within which fundamental rights must be exercised*” (JTS No 235/2007).

However, we are obliged to recognize that a proper exegesis of the origin and basis of hate crimes cannot ignore the fact that equality and non-discrimination can only be seen as an expression of human dignity itself.

Seen from another perspective, dignity is a precious asset that not only identifies us as free and equal human beings, but also enables us to live together in society. In fact, human dignity, together with “*the inviolable rights inherent in it, the free development of the personality, respect for the law and for the rights of others*”, according to the Convention, is the basis of human civilization. Therefore, any criminal act motivated by hatred is and must be considered as affecting the whole system of rights and freedoms inherent in a democratic society.

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Ethical Considerations in Artificial Intelligence Development and Deployment

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ABSTRACT: This article addresses the complex web of ethical considerations pertaining to artificial intelligence (AI). The paper provides a preliminary analysis of theoretical frameworks and practical implications deriving from the development and deployment of AI. We explore the ethical challenges posed by AI in domains such as privacy, bias, accountability, transparency, and the impact on employment. Existing ethical guidelines are discussed and a framework for ethical AI development is proposed, thus bringing a contribution to the ongoing discussion on responsible AI implementation. In this way, the paper is also a guide for fostering a more ethically sound and socially responsible integration of artificial intelligence technologies.

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence, technology, privacy, ethical accountability, technological future

Introduction

The much-celebrated launching of ChatGPT on November 30, 2022, marks the birth of a new era, not only technologically, but more generally, in as much as Artificial Intelligence (AI) proves to be a transformative force, revolutionizing industries, societies, and economies at an unprecedented pace. As the capabilities of AI continue to advance, it becomes increasingly imperative to also ponder the ethical dimensions that accompany its development and deployment. The seamless integration of AI into our daily lives raises profound ques-

tions about privacy, bias, accountability, and transparency, prompting a critical examination of the ethical, and therefore legal (Carrillo 2020), landscape surrounding these technologies. It could be argued that the more autonomous AI becomes, the more it ought to be subject to the same ethical considerations as its human creator (Thomsen 2019, 35963).

The historical trajectory of AI development (Floridi 2023, 3–13; Todorova 2023, 1–9) is pushing for a paradigm shift that necessitates a thoughtful and deliberate approach to ethical considerations. Evidently, the potential benefits of AI are immense, ranging from enhanced efficiency and innovation to improvements in healthcare, education, and various other sectors. However, these advancements come with a host of ethical challenges that demand our attention (Siau 2020, 74–87). Thus, the need for careful research in this area, despite the evident challenges of assigning ethical value to a non-human entity (Jameel et al 2020; Burkert 2017, 8–13). Privacy concerns loom large as AI systems process vast amounts of personal data, raising questions about surveillance, consent, and the responsible use of information. The spectre of bias in AI algorithms introduces ethical dilemmas related to fairness, justice, and the perpetuation of societal inequalities. Moreover, issues of accountability and transparency in AI decision-making pose challenges in understanding, interpreting, and challenging the outcomes of automated processes.

This paper aims to provide a preliminary exploration of such ethical considerations by drawing upon established ethical theories and previous discussions on technological ethics (Berg 2018, 151–53; Boddington et al. 2017, 569–74; Dignum 2018, 1–3). By undertaking an examination of privacy, bias, accountability, and transparency, as related to the use of AI, we will not only engage in the ongoing dialogue on responsible AI development, but also will hopefully bring a contribution to this insufficiently explored ethical field. Thus, as we navigate the intricate ethical landscape of AI ethics, we propose a synthesis of existing ethical guidelines and the formulation of a robust framework for guiding the ethical implementation of AI technologies. In doing so, we hope to foster a deeper understanding of the ethical challenges posed by AI, offering insights that extend beyond theoretical discourse to practical applications. The ethical dimensions of AI are not only pertinent to researchers and developers but also crucial for policymakers, businesses, and society at large. This paper, therefore, endeavors to shed light on the multifaceted nature of AI ethics, providing a foundation for responsible AI practices that align with contemporary societal values and expectations.

Ethical Foundations

It is undeniable that the ethics we embrace serve as the compass that guides our moral decision-making, and the development and deployment of artificial intelligence are no exception to this. However, not all ethics is the same! Thus, we will start with a brief overview of three major ethical theories (Stahl, 2021, 20–21; Boddington 2017, 7–24) and show how these underpin discussions surrounding AI ethics.

The first theory we would note is utilitarianism (Scarre 1996). Rooted in consequentialist ethics, utilitarianism posits that the moral worth of an action is determined by its overall utility in maximizing happiness or well-being. In the context of AI, utilitarian perspectives may advocate for the development of systems that maximize societal benefits, such as improved efficiency, accessibility, and resource allocation. However, creating a moral hierarchy based solely on the usefulness of an object, person, or action carries inherent dangers – it can pose a challenge to basic notions of human dignity and equality, especially when such notions are upholding human worth above such rationale as the value of one's participation to the common good (Măcelaru 2021, 596–608; Kanuck 2019, 3–12).

Second, we should note deontological ethics (Tännsjö 2013, 59–77), which emphasizes the inherent nature of actions rather than their consequences. Adherents of deontology argue that certain actions are inherently right or wrong, regardless of the outcomes. In the realm of AI, deontological considerations may center around the ethical development of the technology itself, regardless of the potential benefits or drawbacks it offers.

Third, we note virtue ethics (Tännsjö 2013, 95–112), which focuses on the development of virtuous character traits and emphasizes the importance of moral character in ethical decision-making. Applying virtue ethics to AI involves considering the virtues and values embedded in the design and deployment of AI systems, promoting virtues such as fairness, transparency, and accountability. As we will see shortly below, such notions pose a challenge in the discussion of AI ethics in as much as the technology itself can be used to the detriment of these principles and the practices they entail.

Thus, the application of ethical theories to AI requires a nuanced understanding of how these theories intersect with the unique challenges posed by autonomous systems. Utilitarian perspectives may prompt questions about the overall moral value behind the societal impact of AI, while

deontological considerations may lead to inquiries about the intrinsic morality of specific algorithms. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, encourages the cultivation of virtuous traits within the AI development process itself. It seems, therefore, that finding a balance between utilitarian and deontological perspectives is crucial in addressing the ethical complexities of AI. Striking this balance involves optimizing societal benefits while respecting fundamental ethical principles. Recognizing the dynamic interplay between these ethical theories and their application to the complex landscape of artificial intelligence is the first step in laying the groundwork for a comprehensive ethical framework that harmonizes diverse moral considerations.

Ethical Challenges in Artificial Intelligence

As noted above, the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence has ushered in a new era of technological capabilities, transforming industries and societies worldwide. Yet, the proliferation of AI technologies brings with it a complex web of ethical challenges that necessitate careful consideration (Nath and Sahu 2017, 103–11). The key ethical challenges associated with AI include issues of privacy, bias, accountability, and transparency (Boddington 2017, 27–38). By scrutinizing these challenges below, we aim to shed light on the ethical dimensions that accompany the integration of AI into various aspects of our lives.

Privacy Concerns

One of the foremost ethical challenges in the realm of AI revolves around the extensive surveillance and data collection practices employed by AI systems (Abell 2020, 15–20). As these systems process vast amounts of personal information, concerns arise regarding the potential infringement on individual privacy. The indiscriminate gathering of data for algorithmic analysis raises questions about the boundaries between public interest and personal privacy. In this regard, the ethical implications of AI extend to the concept of informed consent. Individuals may unknowingly become subjects of data collection and analysis, with little understanding of how their information is used. Addressing this challenge involves establishing transparent mechanisms for obtaining informed consent, ensuring that individuals are aware of and agree to the ways in which their data is utilized by AI systems.

Bias and Fairness

Algorithmic bias is a critical ethical concern that permeates AI systems, potentially perpetuating and even exacerbating societal inequalities (Abell, 2020, 21–25; Windsor 2022, 45–59). Biases embedded in algorithms can result in discriminatory outcomes, affecting marginalized communities disproportionately. Recognizing and addressing these biases require constant vigilance and a commitment to fairness throughout the AI development lifecycle. Even more, this quest for fairness in AI extends beyond addressing biases. It encompasses the development of machine learning models that provide equitable outcomes for diverse user groups. Achieving fairness involves implementing strategies to mitigate bias, actively seeking diverse perspectives in model development, and fostering a culture of inclusivity within AI research and application.

Accountability and Transparency

The increasing autonomy of AI systems raises challenging questions regarding accountability. When AI systems make decisions or take actions that impact individuals or society, attributing responsibility becomes intricate. Establishing mechanisms to hold AI systems accountable for their actions is a pivotal ethical consideration, necessitating clear guidelines and frameworks that assign responsibility in a coherent manner. In this regard, ensuring transparency in AI decision-making processes can be the cornerstone of ethical AI development. Understanding how AI systems arrive at decisions is crucial for users, regulators, and stakeholders. Lack of transparency not only erodes trust but also hinders the ability to identify and rectify biases or ethical lapses. Ethical AI demands transparency in the decision-making processes, enabling users to comprehend, challenge, and trust the outcomes produced by AI systems.

Ethical Challenges and Their Solutions

To contextualize these and other ethical challenges, it is necessary that the researcher examines real-world instances where AI has presented ethical dilemmas (Stahl et al. 2023). For instance, one such case involves the deployment of facial recognition technology in law enforcement. The widespread use of this technology raises concerns about individual privacy, potential bias against certain demographic groups, and the lack of consent in many instances.

These, and similar challenges are indicative of the profound ethical implications AI development and deployment has on individuals and the society at large. Privacy infringements can erode the trust individuals place in technology, leading to a reluctance to engage with AI systems. Algorithmic bias not only perpetuates societal inequalities but also undermines the goal of creating fair and just technologies. Lack of accountability and transparency can result in a loss of agency for individuals affected by AI decisions, creating a sense of powerlessness and frustration.

All these directly underscore the urgency of developing robust ethical frameworks. Examining ethical challenges provides an opportunity to derive lessons and explore potential solutions. Ethical guidelines and frameworks must evolve alongside technological advancements, incorporating principles that address emerging challenges. Collaboration among researchers, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and the public is essential to create and implement effective solutions. Additionally, integrating ethics education into AI research and development can foster a culture of ethical responsibility among practitioners.

In conclusion, the ethical challenges in artificial intelligence are multifaceted and require a comprehensive approach. Privacy concerns, bias, accountability, and transparency represent critical dimensions that demand ongoing attention and scrutiny. As AI continues to shape our future, a commitment to addressing these challenges ethically is paramount to ensuring the responsible and beneficial integration of artificial intelligence into our societies.

Ethical Guidelines for AI Development

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly intertwined with our daily lives, the importance of establishing ethical guidelines for its development and deployment cannot be overstated. Although such guidelines may seem superfluous due to the technological nature of their subjects (Etzioni and Etzioni 2017, 403–18), we argue that the opposite is the case. Thus, this section delves into the existing landscape of ethical guidelines, frameworks, and principles in the field of AI. By reviewing current initiatives and proposing a comprehensive ethical framework, we aim to provide guidance for stakeholders involved in the creation and implementation of AI technologies.

A multitude of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, have recognized the need for ethical considerations in AI. The various overviews of existing ethical guidelines that are available to the researcher (Boddington 2017, 39–58), and studies on these issues coming out of such bodies as the European Commission (Smuha 2019, 97–106), and other international initiatives (Daly et al 2019) allow for an understanding of the diverse perspectives and priorities that inform ethical considerations in AI development. We argue that in developing an ethical framework for AI each of these approaches are relevant. Each offers a unique set of ethical guidelines – for instance, some emphasize transparency, while others prioritize accountability or fairness – and each has strengths and limitations. We posit however that the areas of convergence between these sets of ethical guidelines provide a solid foundation for proposing a comprehensive ethical framework, one that synthesizes the best aspects of existing guidelines. Thus, taking key ethical principles such as transparency, fairness, accountability, and user empowerment as our foundation, we propose a threefold holistic approach to the issue, one that seeks to address the multifaceted nature of ethical considerations in AI.

Firstly, a suitable ethical framework will recognize the evolving nature of technology, emphasizing its dynamic and adaptive character. Such knowledge would necessarily lead to the incorporation of mechanisms for regular updates, ensuring that the ethical framework used remains relevant in the face of emerging issues. The ability to adapt to new ethical considerations and technological advancements is essential for maintaining the effectiveness of ethical guidelines over time (Boddington 2017, 67–84).

Secondly, ethical considerations should be an integral part of the lifecycle of any further AI development. Ethical guidelines cannot be left out or considered to be issues of secondary importance – they are not an afterthought. Therefore, practical strategies should be devised for incorporating ethical considerations at each stage, from the initial design phase to deployment and ongoing monitoring of AI systems. Only by embedding ethics into the development process, a culture of responsible AI development can be created.

Thirdly, since ethical development cannot occur in isolation, the collaboration of the diverse stakeholders – researchers, developers, policymakers, ethicists, and end-users – is crucial (Iphofen and Kritikos 2021,

170–84). The practical implementation of ethical guidelines ought to engage a variety of perspectives, ensuring in this way that the ethical framework used is robust, but also appropriately nuanced, and reflective of diverse societal values. Only in this way the ethical guidelines propose can serve as a compass, guiding the development of AI technologies that align with such values, foster trust, and maximize positive impact while minimizing ethical risks.

Social Impact of Ethical AI

The ethical considerations surrounding artificial intelligence extend beyond individual principles and guidelines to encompass broader societal impacts (Baum 2020, 165–76). Undeniably, there are far-reaching consequences of AI ethical practices on individuals, communities, and the society at large. Such social implications underscore the importance of integrating ethical considerations into AI development for the betterment of society (Liao 2020, 1–42).

There are first positive social contributions of ethical AI to be considered. From improving healthcare outcomes and enhancing educational experiences to optimizing resource allocation and aiding in disaster response, the social benefits of ethical AI are already significant and have the potential to grow in significance, impact, and diversity. The evaluation of such contributions as positive is governed by an assessment of the extent to which ethical AI practices can address constructively societal challenges and improve the overall well-being of humans.

There are also negative consequences of AI implementation, which must be mitigated. Starting with acknowledging that AI technologies can have unintended negative consequences, a holistic ethical framework will take into consideration strategies for mitigating such negative impacts. This may include addressing biases, ensuring privacy protection, and preventing the misuse of AI for malicious purposes – all ethical practices that would play a crucial role in averting harm and minimizing negative societal consequences.

In regard with the above, AI developers and researchers have a significant responsibility in shaping the ethical landscape, from design to deployment, throughout the lifecycle of ethical AI. By prioritizing ethical decision-making, developers and researchers can contribute to the creation of AI technologies that align with societal values and priorities. In this regard, policymakers and regulatory bodies play a pivotal role in shaping the

social impact of AI through the establishment and enforcement of ethical guidelines. Robust policy frameworks that provide a regulatory foundation for ethical AI practices are important, for well-crafted regulations can incentivize responsible behaviour, create accountability, and ensure that AI technologies are developed and deployed in the public interest.

The regulatory action proposed above could be described as mitigating negative social consequences while also maximizing positive impacts. Within this objective, one ought to promote public awareness and engagement. Informed and engaged citizens are critical in holding AI developers, policymakers, and businesses accountable for ethical practices. This may include, but is not limited to, transparent communication, education (Rotaru 2021a, 87-92), and inclusive public dialogue. In this way the public can become involved in decision-making processes, which would ensure that the social impacts of AI become more closely aligned with societal values.

Moreover, businesses, which are key actors in the deployment of technologies, are responsible for meeting specific ethical standards in the development and use of AI. Beyond compliance with regulations, businesses should adopt ethical practices that prioritize the well-being of individuals and communities. This means that ethical considerations are integrated into business strategies, decision-making processes, and corporate cultures.

In conclusion, the social impact of ethical AI practices is profound and far-reaching. Since positive contributions of AI may be overshadowed by negative consequences, a collective commitment to ethical AI development is needed. The engagement of stakeholders, including developers, researchers, policymakers, and the public, is essential in shaping the ethical landscape of AI for the benefit of society. Ethical AI practices are not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in creating technologies that contribute positively to the social fabric and uphold the values we hold dear.

Future Directions

As the field of artificial intelligence continues to evolve, so do the ethical concerns that accompany its development and deployment. Before concluding this paper, given the emerging challenges, advancements in technology, and the evolving role of ethics in shaping the trajectory of artificial intelligence, we ought to raise three points pertaining to future research on AI ethics.

Firstly, it is incumbent that research on AI ethics is preoccupied with identifying the moral challenges brought about by emerging technologies – given the relentless pace of technological innovation it is likely that the raise of novel issues that demand ethical scrutiny becomes a common occurrence. We ought to include in this discussion such technologies as quantum computing, advanced robotics, and neuro-inspired AI. Understanding and addressing proactively the ethical issues spanning from the appearance of such technologies is crucial in ensuring that ethical AI practices grow hand in hand with technological advancements. In this regard, it is important that religious scholars also become involved in researching the field of AI ethics (Adriansyah 2023; Coghil 2023, 604–19; Brittain 2020, 84–86; Cormie 2020, 75–77).

Moreover, since AI is a global phenomenon, ethical considerations must be sensitive to diverse cultural norms and values. As such, as AI technologies proliferate worldwide, research ought to acknowledge and address cultural variations in ethical frameworks (Bostrom 2014, 316–34). Nevertheless, this does not minimize the importance of collaborative efforts to develop globally inclusive ethical guidelines if we are to achieve responsible AI development on a global scale.

Secondly, new areas of research and development are strongly coming into view. For instance, enhancing the explainability and interpretability of AI systems is a frontier that demands further research. It is paramount that AI decisions become more understandable to end-users, regulators, and other stakeholders (Harris 2018, 599–609). Thus, advancements in explainable AI contribute not only to transparency but also to user trust and accountability. Also, the intersection of AI and human augmentation presents ethical challenges and opportunities. Further ethical research will necessarily examine the implications of using AI to enhance human capabilities, considering issues related to autonomy, identity, and societal impact. As human-AI integration becomes more prevalent, ethical frameworks must evolve to address the complexities of this transformative relationship.

Thirdly, future research must consider the evolving role of ethics in shaping the future of AI. Here we are dealing with issues of governance and regulation, which are critical components in the shaping of an AI ethical landscape (Altenburger 2023, 1–8). Ethical research ought to inform governance structures and regulatory frameworks. The integration of ethical

principles into policies and laws ensures that AI development aligns with societal values and prioritizes the well-being of individuals and communities. In this regard, fostering a culture of ethical responsibility requires a strong emphasis on education. Therefore, we advocate for the integration of ethics education in AI research and development by instilling ethical considerations early in the training of AI practitioners, academia, and industry. In this way the future generation of professionals will be a generation who prioritizes ethical practices.

In conclusion, the future directions of AI ethics are dynamic and multifaceted. We have identified emerging challenges, suggested areas for further research, and emphasized the evolving role of ethics in governance and education. These provide a guideline along the future trajectory of ethical considerations in the field of artificial intelligence. As AI continues to reshape the world, a commitment to ethical development is essential to harness its potential for positive societal impact while minimizing risks and ensuring the well-being of humanity.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is not merely a technological advancement; it is a transformative force that permeates every aspect of our lives. This paper has journeyed through the intricate landscape of AI ethics, exploring ethical foundations, dissecting challenges, proposing guidelines, and contemplating the social and future implications of ethical AI development.

From the vantage point of ethical theories – utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics – we have sought a nuanced understanding of the moral fabric guiding AI. Ethical challenges, spanning privacy, bias, accountability, and transparency, have been dissected to illuminate the potential pitfalls and demand a principled approach to AI development. It is evident that there are tangible consequences of ethical lapses when it comes to technological development and therefore it is imperative to become proactive in developing specific ethical frameworks.

The proposal we offer, of a comprehensive ethical framework for AI development, provides a roadmap – a synthesis of existing guidelines, dynamic and adaptive, emphasizing transparency, fairness, accountability, and user empowerment. This framework, we contend, is essential to guide developers, policymakers, and stakeholders in navigating the complex ethical

considerations inherent in AI. Moreover, the examination of the social impact of ethical AI practices reinforces the idea that responsible development is not merely a technical matter but a societal imperative. Positive contributions and the mitigation of negative consequences rest on the shoulders of stakeholders – developers, policymakers, businesses, and an informed public. The engagement of diverse perspectives is crucial in crafting ethical guidelines that are robust, fair, and inclusive.

As we look to the future, we identified emerging challenges, from the ethical implications of nascent technologies to the global and cultural dimensions of AI ethics. Areas for further research, such as explainability and the intersection of AI with human augmentation, beckon scholars and practitioners to delve deeper into uncharted ethical territories. The evolving role of ethics in shaping AI governance and the call for ethics education signal a paradigm shift. Governance must not only be regulatory but imbued with ethical principles that reflect societal values. Education, too, is foundational (Rotaru 2021b,190-196), shaping a generation of AI practitioners who are not only technically adept but ethically responsible. In closing, the ethical considerations in AI are not static; they evolve with technology, societal needs, and our collective understanding of morality. As we embark on this journey into the future, the compass guiding us must be principled, adaptable, and aligned with the values we hold dear. A commitment to ethical AI is not a constraint; it is the key to unlocking the true potential of artificial intelligence for the betterment of humanity (Rotaru 2016, 29-43).

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A Study of the Effectiveness of the Class News and Announcement Forum as a Medium of Communication on a Course Moodle Page in a Pre-Degree Course

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the effectiveness of the Class News and Announcement forum on the LLFXX Moodle page to make announcements and give general instructions to students. It also investigates whether there is a correlation between students' Moodle logs on the Class News and Announcement forum and the different components on the Moodle page featuring the announcements. These Moodle components were classified as different forms of engagement (student to content, student to instructor, student to other students, student with the learning environments, student with assessments, and student with feedback). The association between the correlations was also examined. This research involved 80 Blended mode students from the LLFXX course (pre-degree course). Their Moodle logs were correlated (p-value) with the different components on the LLFXX Moodle page (forms of engagement) using Pearson's Product Mean Correlation Coefficient test in SPSS. Those engagements that correlated were further studied for the degree of association (r-value). Most of the engagements correlated with the Class News and Announcement forums and the related components on the Moodle page. As a result, it can be concluded that the Class News and Announcements on the LLFXX Moodle page are effective.

KEYWORDS: class news and announcement, eLearning, instruction, interaction, Moodle

Introduction

Communication is essential in the teaching-learning process. Teachers need to communicate with students to teach them the content, to instruct them about any assessment that would be conducted, to inform them about any extracurricular activities that would be happening, to make announcements, and for many more reasons. For all these reasons, teachers and students need to communicate with each other and among themselves.

In a traditional setting, this is much easier as in a traditional classroom, teachers and students meet face-to-face; thus, communication can occur when needed. However, this becomes challenging in a virtual environment. Students and teachers are isolated and come online at their convenience. Consequently, how to appropriately use technology to serve an instructional purpose tends to be another challenge for online education instructors (Yang and Cornelious 2004).

As a result, a space on Moodle must be chosen for this purpose. Many times this is conducted on the Class News and Announcement forum.

Background

At the University of the South Pacific (a regional institute), Moodle is a crucial component for all courses for all modes of teaching (Face-to-face, Blended, Online, and Print modes). It connects all 12 campuses (Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) through satellite. The Flexible Learning Policy outlines a few categories of communication for students. These are learner to content, learner to instructor, learner to other learners, learner with the learning environment, learner with assessments, and learner with feedback (Flexible Learning Policy).

Most of the courses have Class news and announcement forums to communicate with the students. As the name suggests, this is used to make announcements to students. LFX Moodle page has this component on its Moodle page and is used by the Course Coordinator to make announcements to students at the main and regional campuses.

A Rationale of the Study

The Class News and Announcement forum is used across many institutes for communication with students, however, no study has been carried out in the Pacific, to find how effectively this forum fulfills this purpose. A teacher may post announcements in this forum regularly or when the need arises, but it is crucial to investigate if students respond accordingly.

Therefore, two research questions were formulated for this research:

1. Is there a correlation between the topics in the Class News and Announcement forum and the forms of engagement?
2. How closely are these Class News and Announcement and engagements associated?

Literature Review

Instructors need to communicate with the students in both, a traditional and a virtual classroom. Apart from communicating for imparting knowledge, they need to communicate to make announcements and give general instructions. It is easier in a traditional classroom as the instructor and students are in a face-to-face setting and thus communication is easier. The transition from the traditional face-to-face classroom to online learning can be successfully achieved and quality can be ensured if several key factors are closely examined (Yang and Cornelious 2004). In a virtual setting, a forum is used to post announcements and instructions. Many students prefer to use the Class News and Announcement Forum on Moodle.

Strategies such as the strategic use of discussion boards, collaborative assignments, and class announcements are employed to improve student learning without significantly increasing the workload of faculty (Joyce 2022). The use of video has been highlighted as one method to improve instructor presence and student engagement; however, research is limited on the most efficient ways for instructors to incorporate video into their courses (Hilton 2022).

Instructions need to be given to students on time and at the appropriate time. Students should be able to receive instructions without delay and act upon them promptly (Rosenshine 2012). Such components assisted instructors in improving their classroom instruction (Stringfield, Schaffer and Devlin-Scherer 1986, Bush 1984, Waxman 1986).

Students' feedback on these instructions and appropriate actions from these instructions is crucial (Zhao and Zhang 2020) as it shows the instructor how effective their instructions were and if students are accessing and receiving instructions from the forums. Within the context of the academic setting, following instructions or failure to do so can impede general learning and the development of desired proficiencies (Dunham, Lee and Persky 2020). Thus, it is crucial to choose the most effective forum on Moodle to make announcements and give general instructions.

Method

A quantitative research method was used to investigate the effectiveness of the announcements on the class news and announcement forum. 80 Blended mode students from the main campus (Laucala campus) were investigated for this study. These students were given the information sheet for this study. 80 Blended mode students showed interest in participating in this study. They were given consent forms to fill out as this gave their approval to use their data from the LLFXX Moodle page for the research.

At the end of the semester, students' Moodle logs from the LLFXX Moodle page were extracted and analyzed. The Class News and Announcements topics were correlated with the forms of engagement outlined in the USP's Flexible Learning Policy using Pearson's Chi-Square Test in SPSS. The extent of association between the correlations was analyzed using Pearson's Product Mean Correlation Coefficient Test in SPSS.

Results

The study results from the LLFXX Moodle page are analyzed and presented below. These results are classified into six forms of engagement as per USP's Flexible Learning Policy. These six forms of engagement are: students to content, students to instructor, students to other students, students to the learning environment, students to assessments, and students to feedback (The University of the South Pacific 2017).

Topics/Subjects in the Class News and Announcement Forum

Table 1. Topics/Subjects in Class News and Announcements and their forms of engagement

Discussion	Engagement
28. LLFXX Special Exam	Assessment
27. LLFXX Special Exam	Assessment
26. Special Exam	Assessment
25. 2020 Semester 2 Grades	Feedback
24. Grades Information Semester 2, 2020	Feedback
23. Special Final Exam	Assessment
22. Foundation and Preliminary Studies- Completion of Programme	Environment
21. LLFXX Final Exam	Assessment
20. LLFXX Final Exam Date & Format	Assessment
19. Submission of Late Submissions	Assessment
18. Test 2	Assessment
17. Assessment 2 Due Date	Assessment
16. 2020 Student Fees	Environment
15. Special Test 1 Date	Assessment
14. LLFXX Coordinator: Ms. X	Learner
13. Special Test 1	Assessment
12. Assessment 1 Due Date	Assessment
11. LLFXX Test 1 Online	Assessment
10. LLFXX Test 1	Assessment
9. Test 1 is Open	Assessment
8. Test 1 Format	Assessment
7. BBB Session	Instructor/ Learner
6. Climate-Science Fiji Debate Registrations	Environment
5. BBB Sessions	Instructor/ Learner
4. LLFXX Semester 2 Study Schedule	Content
3. Introduce Yourself Please	Instructor/ Learner
2. Week 1 Lecture in Laucala	Content
1. Welcome to LLFXX in Semester 2, 2020	Environment

Table 1 shows that a total of 28 announcements were made to the students in the semester using the Class News and Announcement forum on the LLFXX Moodle page. The first announcement was a welcome note to all LLFXX students. This was classified as a student engagement with the learning environment. The second announcement was about the week one lecture on the Laucala campus. This was classified as a student-to-content engagement. The third announcement instructed students to introduce themselves on the Discussion Forum on the LLFXX Moodle page. This was classified as both, student to instructor and student to other students' engagement. The fourth announcement was about the semester study schedule and this was classified as the student-to-content engagement.

The fifth and seventh announcements were informing the students about the BBB sessions and thus were classified as student-to-instructor and student-to-other students engagement. The sixth announcement was informing the students about the Climate – Science Fiji Debate Registration and thus was classified as a student to the learning environment engagement.

The eighth announcement informed students about the Test 1 format. The ninth announcement informed students that Test 1 was open. The tenth and eleventh announcements also reminded students that test 1 was open. The twelfth announcement was about Assessment 1 (Assignment 1) due date and the thirteenth announcement was informing students about Special Test 1. All these announcements were classified as student-to-assessment engagements.

The fourteenth announcement was a reminder for students about the LLFFXX Course Coordinator and for them to direct all LLFXX-related queries to the assigned coordinator. This was classified as an engagement for the learners. The sixteenth announcement was a reminder to pay the semester's tuition fees. This was classified as a student-to-the-learning environment engagement.

The fifteenth announcement reminded students about Special Test 1. The seventeenth announcement was about Assessment 2 (Assignment 2) due date. The eighteenth announcement informed students about Test 2. The nineteenth announcement informed students about the submission of late assessments. The twentieth announcement was about the LLFXX Final Exam Date and Format. Announcement twenty-one was again informing students about the Final Exam. All these were classified as student and assessment engagements.

Announcement number twenty-two was classified as a student to the learning environment engagement as it reminded them to fill in the Programme Completion form. Announcement twenty-three informed students about the Special Exam and thus was classified as student-to-assessment engagement.

Announcements twenty-four and twenty-five were informing students about the grades (results) released. As a result, these two were classified as student-to-feedback engagements.

Announcements twenty-six, twenty-seven, and twenty-eight were reminding students about the Special Exam as this was the final opportunity for them to be assessed for LLFXX in that semester. Therefore, these three announcements were classified as a student to assessment engagements.

Forms of Engagement

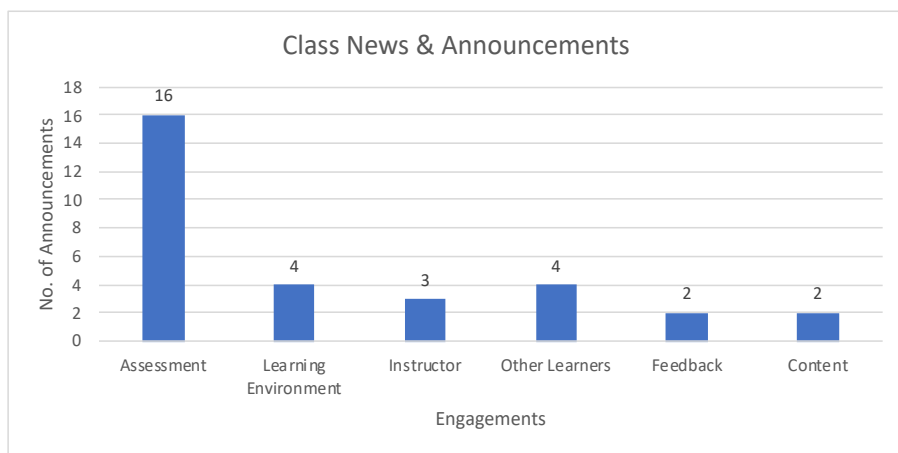


Figure 1. Forms of engagement for the class news and announcement content

Figure 1 shows the Class News and Announcements categorized according to the various forms of engagement (content, instructor, other learners, learning environment, assessment, and feedback) (The University of the South Pacific 2017). The highest number of Class News and Announcements (16) were about assessments. There were 4 Class News and Announcements that could be categorized as engagement with the learning environment and other learners respectively. 3 Class News and Announcements could

be categorized as engagement with the instructor. Engagements with the feedback and with the content were the lowest. There were 2 Class News and Announcements for feedback and content respectively. The Class News and Announcements for the learning environment, instructor, other learners, feedback, and content range from 2 to 4. They are close, however, the Class News and Announcements for assessment is 16. It is quite high compared to the other 5 forms of engagement.

Correlation using Pearson's Product Mean Correlation Coefficient Test

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test is used when there are two quantitative variables and to check for a linear relationship between those variables.

This test looks at two things. Firstly, it shows Pearson's correlation which shows the association the two variables have with each other. If the variable on the Y axis increases, so should the variable on the X axis. This correlation is signified by the use of r .

The r in linear relationship shows the following:

If r is:

$0.7 < 1$ then the linear is a very high/very strong correlation,

$0.5 < 0.7$ then there is a high/strong correlation,

$0.3 < 0.5$ then there is a medium correlation,

$0.1 < 0.3$ then there is a low/weak correlation, and

$0 < 0.1$, then there is no apparent correlation.

Secondly, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient shows the p -value of the two-tailed test. If the p -value is < 0.05 , then there is evidence of a statistically significant bivariate association between the two continuous variables

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test in SPSS is used to analyze the correlation between the statistical data. Before using SPSS to carry out the test, it was formulated that:

H₀: there is no correlation between students' Moodle logs on content and other forms of engagement on the LLFXX Moodle page.

H₁: there is a correlation between students' Moodle logs on content and other forms of engagement on the LLFXX Moodle page.

Using a two-tailed test, the test variable (p) was calculated.

If,
 $p < \alpha$ - result is statistically significant (correlation),
 meaning there is a correlation (alternative hypothesis) between two variables.
 However, if,
 $p > \alpha$ - result is statistically insignificant (no correlation)
 and shows that there is no correlation (null hypothesis) between the two variables.

Table 2. Correlation between class news and announcements subjects and the forms of engagement

Correlation	p-value	r-value
Class News and Announcements and content	<0.001	0.404
Class News and announcements and instructor	<0.001	0.861
Class News and announcements and other learners	0.012	0.280
Class News and Announcements and learning environment	0.291	-0.064
Class News and Announcements and assessments	0.022	0.204
Class News and Announcements and feedback	0.026	0.202

Table 2 shows the correlation and association between the subjects of Class News and Announcements posts and the different forms of engagement using Pearson’s Product Mean Correlation Coefficient Test. The test showed that the p-value for the correlation between Class News and Announcements and the content was <0.001 (alternate hypothesis) and the r-value was 0.404. This shows that the association between the Class News and Announcements and the content is of medium strength. Similarly, the p-value for the correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the instructor is <0.001 (alternate hypothesis). The r-value is 0.861 showing that there is a strong association between this correlation. The p-value (0.012) accepts the alternate hypothesis emphasising that there is a correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the other learners. The r-value (0.280) shows a weak association between this correlation. A 0.291 p-value shows that there is no correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the learning environment. P-value = 0.022 for the correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the assessments. A 0.204 r-value shows that this is a weak association for the correlation between the Class News and Announcements and assessments. P-value = 0.026 for the correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the feedback and a 0.202

r-value shows a weak association for this correlation. Apart from the learning environment, the other five forms of engagement (content, instructor, other learners, assessment, and feedback) have a positive association with the correlations. The only engagement with no correlation is between the Class News and Announcements and the learning environment.

Discussion

The research used Pearson's Product Mean Correlation Coefficient Test in SPSS to answer the two research questions.

The first research question investigated if there was a correlation between the topics in the Class News and Announcements posts and the forms of engagement. Apart from the learning environment, the other five forms of engagement (content, instructor, other learners, assessment, and feedback) correlated ($\alpha < 0.05$) thus accepting the alternate hypothesis. The p-value was the same for the two engagements: content and instructor. $\alpha < 0.001$ (alternate hypothesis) for these two forms of engagement. $\alpha = 0.012$ for the other learners and Class News and Announcements, accepting the alternate hypothesis (correlation). There is a correlation between Class News and Announcements and the assessments ($\alpha = 0.022$). $\alpha = 0.026$, thus proving a correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the feedback.

However, there is no correlation between the Class News and Announcements and the learning environment. $\alpha = 0.291$ thus accepting the null hypothesis. From the six forms of engagement (content, instructor, other learners, learning environment, assessments, and feedback), only the learning environment did not correlate with the Class News and Announcements. The remaining five forms of engagement (content, instructor, other learners, assessments, and feedback) showed a correlation with the Class News and Announcements as their p-value was < 0.05 . This shows that the students read the Class News and Announcements and act as instructed by engaging with the assessments, feedback, content, instructor, and other learners. This proves that posting instructions on the Class News and Announcements is very effective for the students at the pre-degree level, more specifically for LLFXX.

With a very favourable result for correlation (alternate hypothesis) between the Class News and Announcements and forms of engagement; it was crucial to study the strength of association between these forms of engagement and the Class News and Announcements. A strong association

was proved between the instructor and the Class News and Announcements ($r = 0.861$). A medium strength of association ($r = 0.404$) was recorded for the Class News and Announcements and content.

In contrast, the strength of association is weak between the remaining three engagements (other students, assessments, and feedback) and the Class news and Announcements. The strength of association between the Class News and Announcements and the other students is weak, as $r = 0.280$, and the r value for Class News and Announcement and assessments is 0.204 (weak). The r value for Class News and Announcements and feedback is 0.202 , thus the strength of association is weak.

These results show that at the pre-degree level, the students are utilizing the Class News and Announcements quite effectively. It means that they read the announcements and participate with the relevant form of engagement (content, instructor, other students, assessment, and feedback) as classified in the USP's Flexible Learning Policy (The University of the South Pacific 2017). There is a positive association between the Moodle logs of these forms of engagement and that of the Class News and Announcements.

The only form of engagement which did not get a statistically significant correlation was the learning environment. The announcements that were classified as learning environment engagement were not important or needed immediate attention and thus students may not have been interested in responding to them.

Conclusion

The study has shown that the Class News and Announcement forum is effectively used and adhered to by the students at the pre-degree level (LLFXX). The twenty-eight announcements were categorized and tested with the various forms of engagements using Pearson's Product Mean Correlation Coefficient Test in SPSS. Except for one form of engagement (the learning environment), the other five forms of engagement (content, instructor, other students, assessments, and feedback) have a statistically significant correlation and a positive strength of association with the Class News and Announcement.

A limitation of this study is that it should have looked at students from the twelve regional campuses rather than the main campus (Laucala) only. Studying the twelve regional campuses could have given more enriching data and a more concrete foundation for this study.

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Freedom - Real Property of the Will or Presupposition of Practical Reason

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ABSTRACT: There is no freedom, in absolute value, in the sense of unconditional possibility, without reality and reality without causality. Nature does not present itself as a realm of freedom, but as a vast melting pot of causality, operating on the principle of continuous endogenous and exogenous conditioning. Every phenomenon derives from another phenomenon and not from a noumenon. In this immense chain of causalities, it seems that there is no place for freedom either as a thing in itself or as a phenomenon. The phenomenon exists in nature, it is part of the nature of things and its laws, as well as of human sensibility, the noumenon is part of reason, of the thing itself, of divinity and even of the immortality of the soul, an idea so dear to man, who lives both in the *empirical*, that is, in the sensible, in the universe of things, of phenomena, that is, in the law of nature, of causality, and in the *rational*, that is, in the world of thought, of faith, of reason, of the thing itself, of the noumenon. In vain shall we seek the sources of freedom in the laws of nature. Nature does not operate according to the principles of freedom, but according to those of causality. This issue has been - and still is - debated at length in the human world. So entrenched and, at the same time, so fluid, so uncertain, has this debate been implemented in the science and art of thought, which may be a possible fragment of the ongoing definition of philosophy and its place in the world, that no one today is bothering with it anymore. There are other more pressing and handier things to do on planet Earth and in the Universe. And yet, man lives not only in the empirical universe, in the sensitive universe, but also in the universe of thought, of reason, of will, not only in the real, identifiable, cognizable universe but also

in the rational, virtual, transcendental universe, in the universe of knowledge, of desire and of the capacity to create, to produce cognition. Here, in this rational and voluntary *modus vivendi* of human beings, which has, in its essence, as a necessary determination, research, discovery, the world of concepts, reflection and thought finds its sources of freedom. It follows that it too is conditioned.

KEYWORDS: freedom, thought, reason, law, will

Another perspective on the concept of freedom

From the outset, it must be said that freedom does not belong to nature, which is dominated by causal determinism, by the cause-effect binomial. So freedom, in the sense of unconditioned, of disobedience to law, cannot exist in nature, i.e., in the causal chain, in the chain of becoming, change and transformation of objects. We do not know whether there is a boundary between the sensible and the intelligible, but a consonance certainly exists. Certainly in the space of knowledge. Hegel understands by intelligible something that in an object is not phenomenon. That something which, in the sensible world, is a phenomenon also contains, in its interiority, a quality which is not an element of sensible intuition, but can nevertheless be the cause of phenomena. We can therefore regard causality in at least two respects: as intelligible from the point of view of its action as a thing in itself and as sensible from the point of view of its effects as a phenomenon in the sensible world.

About the faculty of such a subject we can have an *empirical concept* of its reality and an *intellectual concept* of its causality. They are, however, components of the same effect.

The quality of an object to have two sides (an empirical, i.e., sensible, side and an intellectual side) does not contradict any of the concepts we have to make about phenomena and possible experience. Phenomena are dynamic and complex. Not being things in themselves, i.e., objects of sensible intuition, they must be based on a transcendental object which determines them as mere representations. Therefore, in Hegel's conception, we can attribute to this transcendental object, apart from the property by which it appears as a phenomenon, a causality which is not a phenomenon, although its effect is found in the phenomenon. But, "if we are to succumb to the illusion of transcendental realism, there remains neither nature nor freedom." (Kant 1969, 447)

There is a natural, empirical causality that underlies the transformation and becoming of things, as a simple natural effect, on the one hand, but on the other hand an effect of freedom. But for natural causes from phenomenon there cannot be something that begins absolutely and of itself demands it, since, from nothing, nothing is made. Any action that produces an event is itself an event.

The law of nature according to which everything that happens has a cause, and the causality of this cause i.e., action cannot have always existed. And it has its cause among the phenomena by which it is determined, and therefore all happenings are empirically determined in a natural order. (Kant 1969, 446-447). Although he was dealing with a chain of causes, which does not allow for absolute totality in regressing to their conditions, yet this difficulty was removed in the *general appreciation of the antinomy of reason*, when it tends towards the unconditioned in the series of phenomena. If we are to yield to transcendental realism, writes Hegel in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, there remains neither nature nor freedom. If we know the whole series of all events only as a necessity of nature, it is nevertheless possible to consider this necessity which, on the one hand, is only a simple natural effect, it is nevertheless, and on the other hand, an effect of freedom, if there is a direct contradiction between these two species of causality.

The causal chain is complicated, ramified, impossible to put under the control of reason - much less subjective will - but it does not follow from this that there is absolute freedom within such a rigorous determinism. The lion's freedom to roam unhindered through the jungle is relative, since, however powerful he may be, there are powers even greater than his own that make him fearful. The fact that one event follows on from another, and in this whole series, there is no freedom, only predictability and even unpredictability, in the sense that at some point external conditions may intervene and change its course. But these do not contradict or cancel out the causal chain, they only amplify it.

In treating the concept of freedom and freedom as such from a rational or voluntarist perspective, there is a detachment from the empirical, from sensibility. In the interiority of phenomenological causality, there cannot be something that can absolutely and by itself generate an action as a phenomenon. Everything that happens does not come from the absolute, but is merely a continuation of the series of events chained in the interiority of the

phenomenal. What happens is only a continuation of the series, and in it no beginning is possible that can produce itself. Thus all actions have their own natural causes and are, in turn, effects which in turn have their own causes.

The intellect sees in all phenomena only natural causes. But it is no impediment for him to consider that, among natural causes, there may also be some which have an intelligible faculty, his determination towards action never being based on empirical conditions, but on principles of the intellect. But these too are integrated into the phenomenon, according to all the laws of empirical causation, by an indissoluble dependence. If we want to ascend from the empirical to the transcendental object they should be regarded as purely intelligible (Kant 1969, 448).

Freedom does not refer to the causal chain of things, to phenomena, but to noumenon, to will, to reason. Man lives not only in physical nature, in Mother Nature, but also in human nature. The concept of freedom is both a product of will and reason. Of the subjective will, since it is very important for the interiority of the human being not only to accept, but also to will. Schopenhauer's assertion that the sun would not be in the sky if he did not see it, is about freedom of will and a certain kind of acceptance, of freedom between Yes and No, therefore conditional, even if the space between Yes and No is infinite.

Kant confined the science of all that is, the science of nature, to the space of experience, of causality. But neither the senses nor the intellect give knowledge, he says, but knowledge - which is an expression of freedom - results, in Kant's view, from the application of the concepts of the intellect to the intuitions given by the senses, to sensible intuitions.

Reason, as a principle of determining the will, more precisely of controlling it, places us above the world of natural phenomena, in noumenon, a world in which we make the law. But reason is not the producer of cognition, nor of action, but only their means, impartial judge and horizon-opener, wise guardian, filter of wisdom. Here, at this point, it becomes, especially in its practical dimension, a generator of freedom.

The reason for freedom in the human world derives from man's creative capacity, his exploratory, innovative and inventive function. Man's intellect is the only non-degradable potential in this world. Man creates cognition. And even though the act of creation is an extremely rigorous process, its motivation, its start and its horizons are an expression of the freedom of the intellect and man's power to see into the future.

The reason of freedom results from the freedom of reason to see beyond what is seen, supported by a solid culture and a huge cognitive heritage. Reason does not produce, but generates, justifies, sustains and maintains the work of the intellect and its freedom in the horizons of effective human action. In this vision, freedom is not only the essential condition for knowledge, discovery, the generation of the project and then its delivery to the rigorous level of implementation. Freedom is the supporting framework and the horizon opened by reason to the algorithm of creation and realization in all the horizons of man and his condition.

Freedom is not unrestricted in any way, an exit from principles, from any law, from any order, from any architecture, from any concept, etc., but only rational openness in cognitive space, openness generated and controlled by reason. Of course, this freedom is not a given, it is not a rule of law, even if it is part of natural law, as an imprescriptible right, but it is, as Plato and Hegel said, an *understood necessity*. Freedom as understood necessity and necessity as assumed freedom are two extremely important, complementary and quite precise notions.

In the human world, freedom is a necessity, even if there is nowhere an absolute freedom, understood as total freedom from all constraints, especially moral norms. Man's intellect, his ability to produce, create, etc., needs both an open working front and, at the same time, a concept of safety, of security. If you are not free to think (although the right to think can neither be controlled nor restricted, but only influenced through the education system), you cannot think, find solutions to the problems you face, create, work, exist and live.

Freedom does not mean slaloming through laws, but cognitive and creative arena supported by them. In human society, laws, including moral laws, must be pillars supporting freedom and not barbed wire fences. From this, it seems that freedom, as an understood necessity, can be taken (as is often the case in society) as a concept at the disposal of the rulers, who are careful to restrict its limits as much as possible. But freedom, in its essence, has no limits, only some possible constraints imposed by the natural right of humans to live and live together on planet Earth.

Without freedom, there is no man, no society, no way of life, no knowledge, no creation, no nothing. From this perspective, the need for freedom seems a pleonasm. Automatically, where there are people and society, there must also be freedom. It, freedom, is a concept of sufficient reason, more precisely, of necessary reason. But, as we know, man is an imperfect

being. He does not act according to the principles of reason and therefore the moral law must oblige him to respect the rules. In this respect, Kant introduces a key concept in the morality of human society: the categorical, *solemn* imperative. How such a concept reconciles with the rationale of freedom is hard to say. But then again, nothing is perfect in this world. Least of all freedom.

Conclusion

Freedom is both a product of practical reason, since it is a formal and conceptual architecture of the intellect controlled by reason, made up of interdependent levels that enable the human being to know the world in all its components, to generate concepts and actions and, at the same time, a real property of the will, since man is and remains the measure of all things, and in order to be and remain so, it is necessary to always create a horizon of necessary freedom.

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Equality in Education

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the multifaceted concept of equality in education, tracing its roots to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The discussion delves into the complexities of implementing equality, considering access, learning processes, educational outcomes, and external results. Four distinct areas of applicability are identified, with a particular focus on the Eastern-European context. The article critically examines the potential tension between achieving equality and maintaining the quality of education, as suggested in the UNICEF paper. Additionally, it proposes an alternative model of implementation grounded in a relational approach at the personal, communal, and societal levels. This relational endeavor emphasizes recognizing biases, opposing unequal treatment, and challenging discriminatory traditions, offering a nuanced perspective on the practical implementation of equality in education.

KEYWORDS: Equality, education, human rights, learning processes, discrimination, societal change

Introduction

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations took a historic step by adopting the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, a landmark document that consecrates “equality” as the foundational principle in the modern understanding of human liberties and entitlements. While affirming the “inherent dignity” and the “equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” (United Nations 1998, 471), the declaration was intended to set a course for what was hoped to become an era of improved humanity, characterized by

freedom, justice, and peace worldwide. Little did the original signatories of this declaration anticipate that more than half a century later, discussions about equality and freedom would not only persist but become increasingly pertinent. We find ourselves in a world where the lofty ideals outlined in the declaration have yet to witness widespread and felicitous implementation (Maples 2014, 13–28). One of the dimensions of contemporary life where this disparity is evident is the realm of education, a sector explicitly addressed in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Hongzhi et al. 2014, 1–8). While the declaration mandates equal access to education, laws translating and regulating this principle within the Eastern-European arena have emerged only in recent decades and are far from being thoroughly implemented (Bowl 2018, 21–50). Indeed, the continued interest in this topic underscores the fact that the pursuit of equality in education remains far from settled (Miller 2023, 1–2; Cin 2017, 1–18). This article aims to add to the discussion on equality in education, specifically focusing on possibilities for practical implementation in our society.

Definitions

Before engaging in a discussion on “equality in education”, a basic understanding of the terms “equality” and “education” as used in this paper is necessary. As argued below, the definitions we will provide set the stage for a nuanced exploration of “equality in education”, recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of both terms in the context of our discussion.

The term “equality” has its origins in the realm of mathematics, where it denotes complete equivalence between quantifiable variables. In a mathematical context, equality implies a perfect correspondence between measurable entities such as weight, amount, length, or quantity. However, we suggest that within the context of human rights, the concept of equality extends beyond the realm of quantifiable variables; it also refers to comparisons between variables of ordinal nature. Thus, equality may also refer to non-measurable characteristics like beauty, ability, or smartness.

When applied to education, however, the concept of “equality” transcends both quantifiable and non-measurable domains (see McCaig et al. 2018, 195–210). No doubt, at a basic level, equality will involve considerations of age, funding, or resources – elements easily quantified. As we delve deeper into addressing intelligence, talent, preferences, or family

context, we encounter characteristics that make individuals unique. In this regard, equality in education demands fostering an environment where one's uniqueness is not a hindrance but an enrichment. In other words, equality demands that gender, race, class, nationality/ethnicity, social status, disability, and other such factors do not impede one's educational pursuits. The ensuing discussion will reflect this nuanced understanding.

The term "education" is conceptualized in this paper as a process, a cycle, comprising three sequential and repetitive steps, each integral to achieving a sense of educational completeness (see Allen 2014, 3–26). First, education serves the purpose of informing. It starts as acquisition of information, achieved through various formal and informal means. This is often a mnemonic activity, and the successful completion of this stage results in the learner's ability to accurately repeat the acquired information. Second, education is also formative, for it involves the process of interpreting information. True learning is not limited to reciting information accurately, but it must also demonstrate the ability to reproduce information using new language and structures. This step culminates in insightful correlations between the information being interpreted and existing knowledge, leading to a more comprehensive understanding. Third, the educational cycle is completed when transformation is achieved. This final step centers on applying the acquired information creatively, in new contexts and at different levels. This is the step in which education transcends simple intellectual growth. It is here that the information acquired and understood impacts one's entire existence. Such transformation signifies the full realization of education – its permanent effects upon individual and societal contexts.

Equality in Education – What It Entails

Equality in education is a multifaceted endeavor, entailing nuanced considerations across four key areas of applicability (Gale 2014, 9–22). First, it is about equality of access. We argue that access is a foundational pillar of equality, especially within the context of education. It demands the fulfillment of conditions to make basic education universally available. Practical measures include the establishment of new schools, provision of additional funding for families facing economic barriers, informative programs aimed at heightening parental awareness of the importance of education, and the formulation and enforcement of laws mandating basic education for all (cf. Lynch and Baker 2005, 131–64).

Second, it is about equality throughout the learning process. This dimension of equality zeroes in on the practices of educators, emphasizing the equal attention and treatment of learners. Concrete manifestations include exposure to the same curriculum, access to identical educational materials, and the availability of educational programs of equal length and quality for all students.

Third, it stipulates equality of educational outcomes. This would mean that all learners are given the opportunity to realize their full potential (Lin 2018, 399–403). Different outcomes should result from varying levels of effort, not external factors. Practical implementation requires the elimination of any form of academic, gender, or ethnic screening, ensuring that different physical characteristics do not unfairly influence examination results.

Fourth, it aims to realize equality in terms of external results. Beyond the educational sphere, concern with equality extends to the external results of education. This dimension underscores the necessity of equal opportunities post-education, ensuring equal access to social, cultural, political, and economic benefits. It encompasses equal career opportunities, job prospects, and pay rates, fostering a society where the benefits of education are equitably distributed.

The practical application of equality in these four areas presents complex challenges. While the intent is to level the playing field, it is crucial to critically examine potential consequences and tensions, particularly concerning the quality of education, as explored in the subsequent section.

Equality in Education vs. Quality of Education

The intersection of equality and quality in education raises intricate questions regarding the potential impact of one on the other (see Pfeffer 2015, 350–68). A UNICEF (2000) paper, presented at the International Working Group on Education in Florence, Italy, defines quality in education in terms of care for learners, provision of appropriate learning environments, design of relevant and qualitative curricula, well-managed pupil-centred learning processes, and outcomes involving positive societal participation.

The elements of this definition closely align with the four domains where equality is, or should be, applied, as described in the previous section. Therefore, a legitimate question we should also ponder is: does the implementation of equality jeopardize the quality of education, or can it, in fact, enhance it? We argue that the answer lies in the nuances of how equality

is implemented (cf. Thompson 2003, 218–36). Within the European context, the implementation of equality in education is done from up down. It typically starts at the governmental level, where laws and policies are designed, and extends to practitioners who put these laws and policies into practice. While this model emphasizes the laudable concept of equal treatment under the law, it may inadvertently lead to an emphasis on equal opportunities – making the same provisions for all learners, without in fact considering their unique needs, abilities, and circumstances. We argue, however, that this model can result in a lowering of learning requirements and standards to the point where all learners achieve the minimum necessary for a passing grade. As such, the quality of the educational process overall would be lowered.

Alternatively, the implementation of equality should be done in harmony with the pursuit of the highest quality, which may mean the personalization of equality implementation. For example, physical differences between individuals, such as those between boys and girls, do present a challenge (cf. Sadker and Sadker 1995); thus, provisions for the personalization of access, requirements, and assessment ought to be made to accommodate such disparities. Thus, we contend that there is a potential for tension between achieving equality and maintaining quality and that this risk can be mitigated by changing the way in which equality is implemented. The challenge is to strike a balance that ensures equal opportunities (cf. Lazenby 2016, 65–76) while respecting the individuality of learners and maintaining the highest standards of education (Boyle and Heimans 2014, 51–60). The ensuing section proposes an alternative model that posits equality as a relational endeavor, thus challenging the traditional top-down approach and fostering a more nuanced and inclusive perspective.

Equality as a Relational Endeavour

We propose that if we are to achieve equality while maintaining quality in education, an alternative implementation paradigm is necessary – one that positions equality not as a bureaucratic mandate but as a relational endeavor, deeply embedded in personal, communal, and societal spheres (Boyle et al. 2014, 217–22). This alternative paradigm challenges the conventional model, where the implementation of equality commences with legislative actions and policies at the governmental level, and instead, proposes a model where equality becomes a shared responsibility at various levels of human interaction.

Firstly, at its core, the practice of equality is a relational endeavor that starts with individuals. On a personal level, it involves a conscientious effort to identify and eliminate biases and prejudices. This calls for a self-reflective process, challenging ingrained discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Recognizing and rectifying personal biases become integral to fostering an environment conducive to equality.

Secondly, moving beyond the individual, the practice of equality extends to the immediate community level. Here, equality is not merely a personal commitment but an active opposition to any idea or action promoting unequal treatment. It entails standing against discrimination, whether directed at oneself or another member of the community. This communal stance fosters a culture where everyone actively contributes to upholding principles of equality.

Thirdly, there is the societal dimension of equality as a way of life, which challenges traditions, laws, and ideologies that perpetuate discrimination. It involves a collective rejection of any societal norms that justify unequal treatment based on specific individual characteristics or group affiliations. Embracing equality at the societal level necessitates a shared commitment to creating an inclusive and just social fabric.

Thus, we argue for the necessity of a model that challenges the conventional approach by decentralizing the responsibility of implementing equality. Rather than relying solely on legislative measures, our proposal emphasizes a relational approach (see Malone et al. 2023, 479–91) where each individual, community, and society as a whole actively participates in creating an environment where equality thrives. In the context of education, this relational practice transcends the notion of equal opportunities for all learners. Instead, it calls for understanding each individual's unique circumstances, needs, and abilities, empowering learners to reach their full potential. This alternative model advocates for a holistic and inclusive perspective, emphasizing that equality in education is not achieved through uniform provisions but through a dynamic recognition of individual specifics.

Conclusion

In the present article, we have endeavored to address the complex question of equality in education by evaluating what is being done, by exploring equality as a multifaceted concept and by identifying challenges and the potential im-

pact on the quality of education. As we conclude, it is evident that the pursuit of equality in education necessitates a delicate balance. The traditional model, centered on governmental legislation, while commendable in ensuring equal treatment under the law, poses risks to the quality of education if not executed with nuance. The potential tension between equality and quality underscores the need for thoughtful implementation strategies.

The proposed alternative – a relational endeavor at the personal, communal, and societal levels – presents an inclusive vision where equality becomes a shared responsibility. This model challenges the status quo by empowering individuals and communities to actively contribute to a culture of equality. In the realm of education, it advocates for an approach that transcends uniform provisions, recognizing and accommodating the uniqueness of each learner. In embracing equality as a way of life, we advocate not for a compromise between equality and quality but for a harmonious integration. This alternative model encourages us to move beyond the dichotomy, fostering an environment where equality enriches the quality of education. As we look toward the future, the call to action is clear: a collective commitment to equality, not just as a legal mandate but as an integral part of our societal fabric, ensuring that education truly becomes a transformative force for all.

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The 21st Century: Bi-, Cross-, Inter-, Mono-, Multi-, Pluri-, Poly-, or Trans-Cultural Education?

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ABSTRACT: The deployment of globalization, information explosion, and mass culture have brought about terms such as *bicultural education*, *cross-cultural education*, *intercultural education*, *monocultural education*, *multicultural education*, *pluricultural education*, *polycultural education*, and *transcultural education* in both English language dictionaries and literature on education. These terms are frequently and/or interchangeably used, leading to confusion. This article investigates and defines these terms, comparing them to see if their interchangeable usage is justified or not. The importance of this issue resides in the fact that educators need to know which type of cultural education best prepares for “life, work, and citizenship.” Three conclusions are drawn: the authors cited in references have failed to provide a clear semantic definition or a distinct epistemological foundation for these concepts; there are two main types of *cultural education* – *passive* and *active*; and using only the terms *multicultural education* and *intercultural education* could be a suitable solution to the issue.

KEYWORDS: 21st century education, bicultural, cross-cultural, intercultural, monocultural, multicultural, pluricultural, polycultural, transcultural

Introduction

Back in 1916, American educational reformer John Dewey argued that “cultural education is tantamount to social efficiency” (Mintz 2017, 12) and that “social efficiency and personal culture are synonyms instead of antagonists”

(Dewey 1916, 130, in Mintz 2017, 12). The purpose of education in the 21st century is to “prepare young people for life, work *and* citizenship” (Camins 2015), a “multiple-purpose perspective [that] has practical implications for both day-to-day instruction as well as education policy” and that implies a “significant cultural change” (Camins 2015). According to Chan (2016, 1, 7), the purpose of higher education is double – *public (advanced knowledge and higher cognitive skills, decreased reliance on governmental financial support, **greater appreciation for diversity**, greater productivity and higher tax payments, greater social cohesion, increased charitable giving, increased community service, increased quality of civic life, less likeliness to smoke, more likeliness to donate blood, more likeliness to vote, and reduced crime rates)* and *private (advanced knowledge, better consumer decision-making, greater rates of employment, higher salaries and work benefits, improved ability to adapt to new technologies, improved health and life expectancy, improved working conditions, increased personal status, less likeliness to experience poverty, more likeliness to attend graduate school, more likeliness to raise children with higher IQ, and personal and professional mobility)*. Kiziltepe (2010 in Chan 2016, 9) distinguished between *economic/social benefits* and *non-economic benefits* (a sense of purpose, *interpersonal competence, **multicultural understanding**, skills in problem identification and problem solving, and the confidence to act in ways that make a difference*).

Education types (Rotaru 2021b, 190-196) are determined by a multiplicity of factors among which **culture**, gender, geographic location, race, regional ideologies, religion, social influences, and wealth (Macur 2020, 983). The question arising in a world defined by the deployment of globalization (Rotaru 2014, 532-541), information explosion, and mass culture is which type of cultural education (Rotaru 2021a, 87-92) best prepares for “life, work, and citizenship”? *Bi-, cross-, inter-, mono-, multi-, pluri-, poly-, or trans-cultural education?* Rață (2013, 3) pointed out that some of these concepts have been used frequently and/or interchangeably all over the world. Therefore, to answer the question in the title of this paper, one needs to first define the concepts and then compare them to see if they fully overlap or not. To paraphrase Eliot (2013, 3), “the naming of these concepts is a difficult matter” because both language dictionaries and literature use them in an improper and/or unclear manner, which becomes “a source of reinforcement of prejudice and stereotypes in education.”

Results and discussions

1.1. Bicultural education

Bicultural (first used in 1940) means “having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups” (*Oxford Languages*).

From a *strategic perspective*, **bicultural education** is “a strategy for providing instruction in two cultures” and “an approach to formal instruction [...] adapted from the methods and techniques of bilingual education”; from an *outcome perspective*, bicultural education enhances “a student’s ability to function in both the native culture and the mainstream culture (or mainstream and a second culture for the mainstream child)” and leads “to full participation for nonmainstream and mainstream youth alike in the socioeconomic opportunities that [a] nation offers”; from a *target population perspective*, bicultural education is “a reciprocal process [...] aimed, at least ideally, at all students [who] benefit from competencies in two cultures.” (*Oxford Languages*)

The *purpose* of **bicultural education** is, according to Gibson (1984, 95), “to produce learners who have competencies in and can operate successfully in two different cultures” and according to Jenkin (2016, 18), who focused on teacher education delivery of **bicultural education**, it consists in “developing student teachers’ cultural understanding and commitment.” **Bicultural education** is a partial synonym of *multicultural education*.

1.2. Cross-cultural education

Cross-cultural (first used in 1942) means “relating to different cultures or comparison between them” (*Oxford Languages*). The term “deals with the comparison of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, differences are understood and acknowledged, and can bring about individual change, but not collective transformations. In cross-cultural societies, one culture is often considered “the norm” and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture.” (Schiefer 2016)

Fries (2002) distinguishes between **cross-cultural** “something which covers more than one culture [in a non-interactive way]” (e.g., a cross-cultural study of education in Western Europe, which compares aspects of education in various countries separately, without any interaction between the various educational systems) and **intercultural** “something which covers

more than one culture [in an interactional way]" (e.g., a cross-cultural study of the experiences of students/teachers who move from one educational system to another).

For Smith (1956, in Métraux 1956, 578), **cross-cultural education** is "the reciprocal process of learning and adjustment that occurs when individuals sojourn for educational purposes in a society that is culturally foreign to them, normally returning to their own society after a limited period. At the societal level, it is a process of cultural diffusion and change, involving temporary 'exchange of persons' for training and experience;" for Métraux (1956, 583), it is "a social institution [...] highly responsive to changing climates of opinion" of a "very complex nature."

Cross-cultural education is a synonym for *educational travel* (Bodger, Bodger & Frost 2010, in Rață 2013, 6) and for *transcultural education*.

Cross-cultural education, *intercultural education*, *multicultural education*, and *polycultural education* are used interchangeably (Chaika 2022, 3615).

1.3. Intercultural education

Intercultural (first used in the middle of the 1930s) means "taking place between cultures, or derived from different cultures" (*Oxford Languages*). The term "describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships. In an intercultural society, no one is left unchanged because everyone learns from one another and grows together." (Schriefer 2016).

The Council of Europe has defined **intercultural education** in terms of "reciprocity" (Rey 2006, in Portera 2008, 483).

Portera (2008, 481) distinguished it from *multicultural education* and *transcultural education*; he also pointed out (Portera 2008, 487) the *benefits of intercultural education* – innovative educational strategies, interesting projects, noticeable and significant changes in textbooks, programmes, curricula and in school legislation, and revolutionary ideas. Portera (2008, 488) concluded that it represents "the most appropriate response to the challenges of globalisation and complexity", that it helps "to identify the risks of globalisation and multicultural communities; of economically motivated rules and regulations, without any intervention by governments and/or

politics”, that it can “identify new opportunities (e.g. fruitful exchanges between different people; new interactive/paritetic forms of communication and relationship)”, that “it takes into consideration both the common objectives of all human beings and specific peculiarities, it transcends the mere acknowledgment of equal dignity of all people of the world, regardless of skin colour, language and religion (basic principles of transcultural education), respect for differences (right to have the same opportunities though being different), or peaceful coexistence (basic principles of multicultural education, which is a desirable goal when we consider wars and injustices in many parts of the world)”, that it “offers the opportunity to ‘show’ real cultural differences, to compare and exchange them, in a word, to interact: action in the activity; a compulsory principle in every educational relationship”, that it “provides the immigrant with skills and abilities to manage activities with common norms and regulations”, that it involves “a game, an ‘interaction’ between people with different ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds in which the aim is not assimilation or fusion, but encounter, communication, dialogue, contact, in which roles and limits are clear, but the end is open.”

Intercultural education is identified with **bicultural education** in many areas of the world (e.g., Peru) (Gashe 1998, in Akkari 1998, 106).

Cross-cultural education, intercultural education, multicultural education, and polycultural education are used interchangeably (Chaika 2022, 3615).

1.4. *Monocultural education*

Monocultural refers to “a single, homogeneous culture without diversity or dissension” (*The Free Dictionary*).

Monocultural education refers to education in which students come to school with diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences that are not part of the official school knowledge, attain literacy in languages that are not their home languages, and have their cultural linguistic diversity mentioned in the curriculum and other policy documents, but teacher preparation does not seem to address issues of multiculturalism (Molosiwa 2009, 2).

1.5. *Multicultural education*

Multicultural (first used in 1941) means “relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a society” (*Oxford Languages*) It “refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups [where] people live

alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other.” (Schriefer 2016)

For Gibson (1984, 111), **multicultural education** is “a normal human experience”; for Gay (1994, 3), “learning about, preparing for, and celebrating cultural diversity, or learning to be bicultural”; for Meier (2007, 2), “a vehicle for people who have different value systems, customs, and communication styles to discover ways to respectfully and effectively share resources, talents and ideas”; for Portera (2008, 485), a synonym for multiculturalism: “Educational intervention, defined as multiculturalism, multicultural education or multicultural pedagogy, works from the de facto situation of the presence of two or more cultures, and aims at the recognition of commonalities and differences”; for Banks (2010, 3 and 20), “at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process” and “a broad concept with several different and important dimensions [...]: (1) content integration, (2) the knowledge construction process, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) an equity pedagogy, and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure”; for Gorski (2010), “a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and responds to discriminatory policies and practices in education.” According to Bulankina and Polyankina (2011, 284), “the meaning of the Russian term **multicultural education** (as it was in the beginning of its conceptualization in the USA) corresponds to its prevalent interpretation as an education in the context of ethnic diversity with the domination of culture of the titular ethnic group – Russian.”

The *purpose* of **multicultural education** is, according to Gibson (1984, 95), multiple: “to equalize educational opportunities for culturally different students,” “to teach students to value cultural differences, to understand the meaning of the culture concept, and to accept others’ right to be different,” “to preserve and to extend cultural pluralism in American society,” and “to produce learners who have competencies in and can operate successfully in two different cultures.”

Multicultural education is a synonym for *polycultural education* (Absatova *et al. op.cit*, 1361) and a partial synonym for *bicultural education*.

Cross-cultural education, *intercultural education*, **multicultural education**, and *polycultural education* are used interchangeably (Chaika 2022, 3615).

1.6. *Pluricultural education*

Pluricultural means “of or pertaining to several cultures” (*Definitions*). For Portera (2008, 485), **pluricultural education** is a synonym for **multicultural education**.

1.7. *Polycultural education*

Polycultural (first used in 1941) means “relating to many interacting cultures” (*Wiktionary*). **Polycultural education** is “a process of studying by the younger generation of ethnic, national and world culture aiming the spiritual enrichment, the development of globalization and global consciousness, the formation of readiness and ability to live in a multicultural polyethnic medium presented by the system of cultural values, differing from the own ones” (Absatova *et al.* 2013, 1360).

According to Bulankina and Polyankina (2011, 284), the meaning of **polycultural education** “is close to the contemporary Western concept of multicultural education taking into account gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, exceptionality, language, religion, geography, and age as well as race, nation and ethnicity,” while its main goals are “To create conditions for effective personal self-determination in culture, becoming apparent in actualization of students’ national self-consciousness, social identity and choice of occupation. [...] To enrich students’ individual thesauruses with concepts that describe contemporary sociocultural situation, and familiarize students with speech strategies to discuss cultural phenomena [...]. To cultivate a positive attitude and respect towards all ‘alien’ values of other cultures. [...] To form the skills of intercultural communication, show students the ways to behave in polycultural society, and to provide an opportunity to gain experience of intercultural interaction.” **Polycultural education** is often presented as an umbrella term in post-Soviet countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, etc.) (Chaika 2022, 3615).

Polycultural education contributes “to the constructive, creative mediation of differences and lead to the personal and intellectual growth of participants in inter-ethnic dialogue” (Fahrutdinova 2016, 1187).

Polycultural education is a synonym for **multicultural education** (Absatova *et al. op.cit.*, 1361). **Cross-cultural education**, **intercultural education**, **multicultural education**, and **polycultural education** are used interchangeably (Chaika 2022, 3615).

1.8. Transcultural education

Transcultural (first used in 1951) means “relating to or involving more than one culture; cross-cultural” (*Oxford Languages*).

For Portera (2008, 484), the concept of **transcultural education** “refers to something that pervades culture (as in the fields of cross-cultural psychology or transcultural psychiatry).”

Transcultural is a synonym for **cross-cultural**.

Conclusions

The authors cited above have failed to provide a clear semantic definition or a distinct epistemological foundation for these concepts given that the eight types of **cultural education** investigated have been defined as a *concept* (**multicultural education**), a *human experience* (**multicultural education**), a *process* (**bicultural education, cross-cultural education, multicultural education, polycultural education**), a *social institution* (**cross-cultural education**), a *strategy* (**bicultural education**), a *type of education* (**monocultural education, multicultural education**), a *vehicle* (**multicultural education**), an *approach* (**bicultural education, multicultural education**), an *educational reform movement* (**multicultural education**), an *idea* (**multicultural education**), *multiculturalism* (**multicultural education, pluricultural education, polycultural education**), and *reciprocity* (**intercultural education**), while there is no definition proper for **transcultural education**.

Since, according to UNESCO (2006, 18), “There have traditionally been two approaches: Multicultural Education and Intercultural Education. Multicultural education uses learning about other cultures [...] to produce acceptance, or at least tolerance, of these cultures. Intercultural Education aims to go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups,” the **types of cultural education** investigated above should be grouped into **passive** (**bicultural education, cross-cultural education, monocultural education, multicultural education, pluricultural education, polycultural education, transcultural education**) (Figure 1) and **active** (**intercultural education**) (Figure 2) types.



Figure 1. Graphical representation of multiculturalism

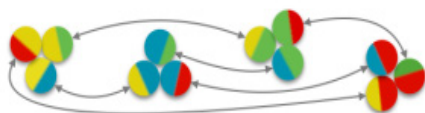


Figure 2. Graphical representation of interculturalism

In literature, however, despite the obvious difference between the two groups, **bicultural education**, **cross-cultural education**, **intercultural education**, **monocultural education**, **multicultural education**, **pluricultural education**, **polycultural education**, and **transcultural education** are used interchangeably thus creating confusion. Therefore, using only the terms **multicultural education** and **intercultural education** could be a suitable solution.

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Women in the Military Negotiating Work and Family Conflicts While Reproducing Gender Inequality

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ABSTRACT: Through a qualitative study of military women who are mothers, this article examines decision-making processes mothers undergo while negotiating the competing devotions of work and family. Subjective experience and the women's individual life worlds are often overlooked in research on juggling work and family. The military and family are competing institutions (Segal 1986) and consequently, women confront contradictory expectations of the roles they play. This article addresses the following questions: What is the lived experience of the women interviewed in this study as mothers and soldiers? How do they negotiate the competing demands of work and family, and how do they justify not meeting the demands when compromise is necessary? These questions are important as this segment of the population is both growing and ignored. Research on women in the military as mothers is virtually nonexistent. The limited literature that does exist focuses on gender discrimination (Harris 2009) and ignores mothers all together.

KEYWORDS: Gender Inequality, work, family, women, mothers

Introduction

The change in the military over the last few decades has been to an all-volunteer force, with the inclusion of women who are mothers. Currently, the Department of Defense is debating whether to lift the ban on women in combat jobs, opening up new opportunities for women who serve. As more

and more women enter this male-dominated career field, it is important to begin to examine how they are negotiating these new roles and what their experiences are. The importance of this speaks to the changes in women's employment over the last forty years. The barriers women experience in employment are being broken down, however, there is still much to do. Many occupations are difficult, if not impossible, for women to break through the barriers. The military is not the only place that bars women from certain positions, either legally or socially. Further, the intense work-family conflicts military employment creates are not unique.

The military and the family are greedy institutions (Segal 1986). They elicit competing devotions and demand complete dedication. While this phenomenon is not unique to military personnel, the intensity and complexity of the demands strongly encompass the lives of female soldiers. Little research exists in the area of how women in the army negotiate the competing demands of work and family. While women in the military comprise only 15% of the services, their navigation between two greedy institutions is similar to many working women today. Furthermore, in the military, there are more men who are single parents than women, women are ten times as likely to be single parents as men (MacDermid and Southwell (2010).

Literature Review

Reproducing Gender Inequality

Literature on women in the military as mothers is virtually nonexistent. The thin literature that does exist focuses on gender discrimination (Harris 2009) and when work and family conflict are taken into consideration, it ignores military mothers all together. However, the military does not operate in a vacuum. Military changes have been brought about by changes in the larger society. Work-family conflict (WFC) is defined as internal conflict resulting from the demands of competing roles that are incompatible (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Role theory posits that conflict occurs when an individual is engaged in multiple clashing roles (Katz and Kahn 1978). These roles are constructed by expectations of others in what is the normative behavior of the role. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) WFC can be time-based, strain-based, or behavior-based. Time-based conflict is a result of the conflicting roles making competing demands on the individual's time. Strain-based conflict arises when strain from one role hinders the effective performance

of the other role. Behavior-based conflict occurs when there are expectations of behavior in one role that is not appropriate in another. Time-based conflict is the most common and based on the scarcity hypothesis (Goode 1960). Blair-Loy (2003) strikes at the heart of the WFC when she defines it as the creation of the devotions dilemma.

Williams (2001) defined the ideal worker as unencumbered and committed to long arduous hours of work, with no outside limitations. As men and women make the choice to have children, while pursuing a career, they face different repercussions for their choices. When becoming a father, men gain in the appearance of warmth while keeping the perception of competence, however women gain in perceptions of warmth but lose competence (Harris 2009, Stevens et al. 2007). Further, the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers is greater than the wage gap between men and women, with women face a penalty of 5% per child in wages (Correll et al. Waldfogel 1997, 1998). When a woman becomes pregnant, her perceived commitment decreases (Harris 2009, Halpert, Wilson and Hickman 1993).

Nomaguchi (2009), in examining the changes in WFC over time, found several factors that increase WFC. Overall, from 1977-1997, parents felt more WFC while spending the same amount of time on childcare. She also found that increases in work hours, as well as education, increase WFC. However, older workers reported less WFC than younger. This is related to the findings of Stevens et. al (2007), that the younger the child, the more conflict produced for the mother. Further adding to the stress, economic restructuring has occurred, the results of which are longer work weeks and decreased real wages (Stevens et. al 2007). The breadwinner-homemaker family has given way to the dual-earner, finding more spouses juggling the demands of work and family.

Women working outside the home for pay have increased from 45% to 78% since the 1960s (Bianchi and Raley 2005). Since 1965, the hours women devote to housework have been cut in half, while the same time period has seen men's double (Bianchi et al. 2000, Bianchi 2006). Men do not exhibit a difference in the amount of housework they do whether they are employed or not, however the difference for women is dramatic. If a man works more hours, he does less housework, and normally holds more traditional gender role ideology (Bianchi et al. 2000). Women who are married tend to do more housework than unmarried women, where as there is little difference between married and unmarried men (Bianchi et al. 2000). When it comes to core household chores, cooking, cleaning, dishes, men do approximately a quarter

of the chores. Children increase housework for both men and women, but more so for women (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003, Bianchi et al., 2000). Bianchi et al. (2000) attribute women's decrease in housework hours to a decrease in cleaning standards. While women do twice as much housework as men, women do 3.6 times more childcare (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003, Bianchi et al. 2000). Increases in outside paid employment changed little of household responsibilities. Hochschild (1989) called this the "second shift." In her study, she found women did an extra month of work in a year as compared to men. In reexamining the second shift, Milkie, Raley and Bianchi (2009) found a decrease in the second shift for women of approximately a week and a half more per year than men. However, work in the home tends to be constructed along gendered lines with women responsible for core chores, where as men are responsible more flexible duties (Bianchi and Raley 2005; Milkie and Peltola 1999). Moreover, the largest percentage increase in men's work in the home is concentrated in more childcare involvement (Bianchi et al. 2006; Juster and Stafford 1985).

While the second shift of household labor is a big concern for working women, the United States, in recent decades, has seen a cultural shift in increasing of intensive parenting as a practiced ideology. At the same time, more women have entered the workforce, and expectations of parenting has also increased (Hayes 1996). This is the cultural contradiction of mothering. The shift to the ideology of the sacred child leads mothers to devote large amounts of time and energy to providing for the well-being of their children. Complicating this is the societal norm of the ideal worker that women are expected to exhibited, leading to greater involvement for women in both family and work devotions. What has evolved from the ideology of intensive parenting is what Lareau (2003) classifies as concerted cultivation, a predominately middle class phenomenon. This is almost an obsessive compulsion on the part of the parents, mainly mothers, to work to construct environments that will cultivate a child's cultural and human capital for later life successes. Parents who practice intensive parenting highly schedulize children's days with extra-curricular activities meant to make them more well-rounded, productive individuals (Sayer 2006). Because of the two concepts, that of ideal worker, and concerted cultivation work and family conflicted is exacerbated for both parents, however mothers seem to suffer more. The diametrically opposed requirements of work devotion and family devotion create a time divide for women.

Much of the research on WFC focuses on individual choices and does not acknowledge that options may be structured by social institutions and cultural definitions (Blair Loy 2003). Furthermore, research has focused on work and family demands as being external to the actor, however there is a “deep seated, taken for granted powerfully compelling cultural schema that shapes constraints and people’s interpretations of them” (Blair Loy 2003). Cultural schemas become institutionalized and internalized. The individual feels a powerful moral compulsion to present one’s self as male or female. Schemas of devotion give one orientation in the allegiance of time, energy and passion, connecting one to something outside of themselves. WFC conflict becomes much larger than the individual making cost-benefit decisions. The schemas dictate a moral definition of what it is to be a good mother or a good worker.

Devotion schemas demand complete dedication, and the ideal worker is one who is unencumbered, fully committed and a man (Blair Loy 2003). his leads to the conflict between work and family. Blair Loy’s (2003) research reveals three ways of handling competing devotions. There were the conformers who obeyed both schemas, the innovators who combined the two in some form, and the mavericks who challenged the system. These were the ones who found new ways of combining work and family. There was a distinct difference between cohorts, with the youngest cohort having “successfully transposed the egalitarian schema from the workplace onto their families’ definitions of marriage and motherhood.” Her study demonstrated that cultural schemas can constrain even the more affluent women in our society, proving how powerful they truly are. The two schemas, work and family, are seen as callings, becoming one’s life. A woman can choose work devotion or family devotion, or she can become the maverick and forge a balance between the two. The career women in the study strove to justify their worth as a mother while acknowledging regret over the lack of time with their children.

Othering Women

What women say about other women tells a lot, as “talk is action” (Kleinman 2007,12). In “othering”, the other is dehumanized and in turn, reinforces inequalities (Kleinman 2007). For women in particular, being one of the guys in a male-dominated work environment is important (Hayes 2009). However, in becoming one of the guys woman worker may feel a “raise in stature (Kleinman 2007, 13), however, she may be erasing females characteristics. The

phenomena of becoming one of the guys may involve cussing more or making disparaging comments about other women in an effort to distance the female worker from other women. This “othering” of women is divisive (Burns 1999) and feeds into the competition of masculine versus feminine between women. In particular, the discourse on sexual infidelity works to implicate the woman as predator and men as responding normally to a highly sexualized trope (Burns 1999). The discourse that the “other woman” is bad is simply an excuse for male infidelity and alienates women from each other.

This “othering” of women is reflective of power and the way women use discourse to wield this power. In this, women experience horizontal violence (Odermann Mougey 2004) with the wielding of power laterally working to reproduce their inequality to male counter-parts. While a woman is succeeding in her career, she garners the envy of other women, while at the same time feeling threatened by them rather than exercising collective action and empowerment (Beckwith 1999). Power between women functions within the structure of gendered power, power and power is associated with masculinity. Women’s collusion against “others” fortifies her oppression (Beckwith 1999).

Privileging Male Jobs

In the civilian world, women who become mothers may have options of reducing work hours, moving to less demanding work, or leaving the job. These options are not available to military women (Sinclair 2004). Because the military requires unwavering commitment, women with families feel pulled in disparate directions, with career and social mothering incongruent (Blair-Loy 2003). Women in the military experience more conflict in the two loyalties because of the competing devotions of demanding work and families (Harris 2009; Sinclair 2004).

Williams (2001) defined the ideal worker as unencumbered and committed to long, arduous hours of work, with no outside limitations. As men and women make the choice to have children while pursuing a career, they face different repercussions for their choices. When becoming a father, men gain the appearance of warmth while keeping the perception of competence. Women gain in perceptions of warmth but lose in perceptions of competence (Harris 2009, Stevens et al., 2007). Further, the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers is greater than the wage gap between men and women, with women facing a penalty of 5% per child in wages (Correll et al., 2007; Waldfogel

1997, 1998). When a woman becomes pregnant, her employers perceive her commitment as decreased (Harris 2009; Halpert et al. 1993).

Women who are mothers are seen as less capable workers, whereas men are not (Correll et al. 2007; Harris 2009; Hodges and Budig 2010). In their study, Correll et al. (2007) found mothers perceived by employers as less competent and committed, deserving of less salary and leniency, as well as less upwardly mobile. Fathers, conversely, were perceived as more competent, committed, deserved larger salaries and leniency, and more upwardly mobile by employers. Aisenbrey et al. (2009) support these findings and add to them in a cross national study where they found that mothers in the United States suffered greater penalties for taking time out for children than women in Germany and Sweden.

The Second Shift

For women who do not choose to stay home, or do not have the resources to make the choice or choose a career path, the workday does not end with leaving the job. The concept of the “Second Shift”, made famous by Arlie Hochschild (1989), has been built upon by many researchers. Sayer et al. (2005) defines the second shift as “time that employed women put into unpaid household work on top of their paid job.” Men have increased their housework hours while women have decreased theirs, however, women continue to do more unpaid work and less paid work than men, creating a thirty-minute free time gap between the two (Sayer et al. 2004, Sayer et al. 2005, Mattingly and Bianchi 2003). Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) support and extend Sayer, finding that men have more pure free time, have more adult free time than women, and women’s free time was more often “contaminated” by other responsibilities than men’s free time. Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) found that one-third of the women in their study always felt rushed whereas one-fourth of men did.

Meaning of Mothering

Greedy Institutions

Institutions place demands on individuals for their time, energy and devotion. Segal (1986) drew on Coser (1974) in terming both the family and the military as greedy institutions. These institutions compete with each other for loyalty and commitment. “Greedy institutions are characterized by the fact that they exercise pressures on component individuals to weaken their ties, or not to

form any ties, with other institutions or persons that might make claims that conflict with their own demands” (Coser 1974). Segal (1986) found that the military assumes adaptation by the family; however, the family is becoming more of a greedy institution, especially for women. While many aspects of military demands are found in the civilian sector, Segal (1986) argues that it is unique in the constellation of demands placed on the soldier.

The demands placed on the soldier also affect the family, and in turn, the demands made by the family affect the job a soldier performs. MacDermid and Southwell (2010) found competing demands from the family and military for loyalty and commitment. Four factors influence the interplay of the work and family conflict, referred to in this paper as WFC, dynamic. First, military work demands frequent and long separations. Second, there is a great degree of exposure to danger. Third, heavy work demands create a situation where a soldier may be called to work at any time and must stay until the job is done, with no overtime pay. Finally, the spouse faces difficulty in obtaining and maintaining a career. Exacerbating the WFC in the military are the tight interconnections of personal and professional life, with high demands and low control for the worker (MacDermid and Southwell 2010, Kelley et al. 2008). Furthermore, research on WFC and family work conflict by Durand et al. (2003) found that soldiers experience high levels of WFC, but low levels of family work conflict. Female soldiers in particular feel they do not have enough time to meet all their obligations (Harris 2009).

Competing Devotions

Blair-Loy (2003) stated that much research on WFC focuses on individual choices and does not acknowledge that social institutions and cultural definitions may structure options. She further argues that research has focused on work and family demands as being external to the actor. There is a “deep seated, taken for granted powerfully compelling cultural schema that shapes constraints and people’s interpretations of them (Blair-Loy 2003, 7). Cultural schemas become institutionalized and internalized. Schemas of devotion give one orientation in the allegiance of time, energy and passion, connecting one to something outside of themselves. WFC conflict becomes much larger than the individual making cost-benefit decisions. The schemas dictate a moral definition of what a good mother or a good worker is.

Devotion schemas demand complete dedication, and the ideal worker is one who is an unencumbered, fully committed man (Blair-Loy 2003). This leads to the conflict between work and family. Blair-Loy's (2003) research, she found three ways of handling competing devotions. The conformers obeyed schemas, the innovators who combined the two in some form, and the mavericks who challenged the system. The mavericks found new ways of combining work and family. A distinct difference arose between cohorts, with the youngest cohort having "successfully transposed the egalitarian schema from the workplace onto their families' definitions of marriage and motherhood" (Blair-Loy 2003, 183). Her study demonstrated that cultural schemas could constrain even affluent women in our society, proving how powerful they truly are. The two schemas, work and family, are seen as callings, becoming one's life. The professionals in the study strove to justify their worth as a mother while acknowledging regret over lack of time with their children.

Background/Context 1-2

For this study, I interviewed six women from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, five of whom were getting ready to deploy in August, 2011, for twelve months, while one would deploy in September. All six were mothers and soldiers. Fort Bragg is a major United States Army installation, in Cumberland, Harnett, Moore and Hoke counties, mostly in Fayetteville but also partly in the town of Spring Lake. Fort Bragg is a census-designated place in the 2010 census and had a population of 39,457 (US Census 2010). The fort is named for Confederate General Braxton Bragg. It covers over 251 square miles. It is home to the US Army Airborne Forces, Special Forces, US Army Forces Command and US Army Reserve Command. The women in the study were all from the same tenant battalion on Fort Bragg. The area of Fort Bragg where the unit is located on is the Combined Armed Services command, on the east edge of the post (Fort Bragg 2011). Interviews were conducted in a secured building where I had to wait to be escorted into the conference room. The conference room was also secured with a combination lock. Everyone working in this building has to have a security clearance, with some areas restricted to top secret clearance only. The women in this study all had the basic clearance. Five of the soldiers are enlisted, meaning their job does not require college, while one is a chief warrant officer, which is a more technical job, but again no college. All women were married with three being dual military, meaning that both spouses were in the army.

Women in the military exist in a hyper-masculine world with a warrior ethos of “I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit and I will never leave a fallen comrade” (US Army 2011). Within the military there exists the Explosive Ordnance Disposal corps (EOD 2010) who’s motto is “initial success or total failure.” It is an even more segregated part of the military than the army as a whole. Within the army, women comprise over 15% of volunteers, however EOD has less than 4% (US Army 2011). It is within this environment that my interviews derived.

Data and Methods

Methods

Through a qualitative study of military women who are mothers, I examine decision-making processes mothers undergo while negotiating the competing devotions of work and family. Subjective experience and the women’s individual life worlds are often not considered in research on juggling work and family (Lofland et al. 2006). The military and family are competing institutions (Segal 1986) and as such, women confront contradictory expectations of the roles they play.

I chose face-to-face interviews as the primary means of data collection because of the potentiality of the richness and depth of data (Lofland et al. 2006). Furthermore, face-to-face interviews are collaborative processes between researcher and interviewee, while also allowing for the collection of non-verbal data (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Interviews aid in discovering the complex interconnections in social relationships as well as the subjective side of the participants’ experiences (Odermann Mougey 2004; Lofland et al. 2006). Moreover, where there is no ability to probe further an answer to a questionnaire, intensive interviewing allows for immediate follow-up on data collection for clarification (Lofland et al. 2006; Williams 1991). Intensive interviewing also facilitates analysis and coupled with other forms of fieldwork, such as participant observations, adds for validity checks and triangulation (Ragin et al. 2004). This was further developed by monitoring the participants’ facebook pages to bring in more depth in the data analysis. I currently reside on Fort Bragg with my husband and two of our four children. Since we married in 1995, we have lived on military posts and Fort Bragg is very similar to most of the posts we have been to. Housing is segregated by rank and because of this, schools are also segregated by rank. The segregation is along two lines:

officer and enlisted as well as junior and senior of both. I am older than most people who reside on Fort Bragg as my husband has seventeen years of service, putting him near retirement before he turns thirty-nine.

For this study, I conducted six in-depth interviews between October 2010 and September 2011, along with entering the field for battalion events on four occasions: December 2010, June 2011, August 2011, and September 2011. These are “quasi-private” settings where I am a known researcher (Lofthland et al. 2006). All soldiers are stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Also, I attended three social events that I immediately memoed about for future integration into the research (Emerson et al. 1995). Five of the interviews were conducted at the 192nd Ordnance Battalion, using various conference rooms reserved for family use. One interview took place at a restaurant in Fayetteville, North Carolina. A combination of convenience and theoretical sampling was used (Charmaz 2006), followed by snowball sampling. The first participant, Lisa, was known to me, and I did an in-depth interview with her [three hours]. I knew I wanted to interview women in the military, but it was through focused coding and Memoing that categories emerged (Elman 2005). These categories led to the theoretical sampling of mothers who are soldiers and are negotiating work and family conflict (Charmaz 2006). I used snowball sampling to obtain the names of other mothers in the military from Lisa. The interviews were recorded, and the duration was from 1 ½ -3 hours. After the session, I reflect on the experience to scrutinize my feelings and thoughts, trying to make this as reflexive as possible (Charmaz 2006). The participants were aware that additional interviews might be conducted for further probing as concepts emerged in my analysis (Charmaz 2005). This is the case in that I am corresponding with the deployed soldiers [six] during their year in Afghanistan to better understand mothering from afar.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and all participants were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Each interview began by asking the women basic demographic information on themselves and their families. Open-ended questions were used for the remainder of the interview, with questions on joining the military, challenges in balancing work and family, support networks, household chores, being female in the military, what it is to be a good soldier, and childcare concerns. Not all questions were asked of all participants because not all stories are the same.

Table 1. Basic demographic information of participants

Name	Lisa	Yvonne	Tammy	Sara	Kara	Chantelle
Age	34	37	33	26	22	22
Years in service	14	17	11	2	4	3
Rank	E6	CW2	E6	E4	E4	E4
MOS	88N	92A	42A	42A	42A	92Y
Marriage	Dual	Dual	Dual	Civilian	Civilian	Civilian
Race/ethnicity	White	African American	White	Hispanic	White	African American
Children	3	1	3	2	1	1
#Marriages	2	2	2	1	1	1

For rank, E6 is considered senior, whereas CW2 and E4 are junior ranks. MOS is a military occupation specialty: 88N transportation coordinator, 92A supply, 42A human resources, 92Y supply. Marriages were categorized as either dual military, both spouses serving or the husband was not in the military.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data are analyzed in a reflexive manner, with emergent themes coming out and more analysis occurring over the concepts (Burroway 1998). Using a constructed grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006), my data forms the foundation for my theory with analysis generating concepts I construct. Through this process, I kept vigilant in my reflexivity (Burroway 1998) so that the data could inform my theory-building. I spent time reflecting on the data to be able to understand the participants’ emotions, perceptions, experiences and attitudes (Burroway 1998).

The transcribed interviews were read repeatedly, and a general coding of themes emerged (Charmaz 2006). I then applied focused coding to refine and interpret links between key themes and categories identified in the open coding process (Charmaz 2006). I would follow these processes with free writing to try to focus my grasp on the data (Young 2004). Reliance on a review of the literature helped key themes that are universal in work and family conflict come to the forefront; however, another overarching theme, that of reproducing gender inequality, emerged. Initial analysis was directed at understanding each participant’s experience of being a female

in the military, what that entails, and her unique circumstances that make up the work-family conflict. Further analysis looked at commonalities and differences between participants. The study involved decontextualizing data by breaking it into chunks with unique qualities (Charmaz 2006). Once this was done, patterns emerged around “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1969) such as reproducing gender inequality and what mothering meant to them. With primary themes identified, I returned to the interview transcripts to understand these two primary themes more deeply (Charmaz 2006). In reproducing gender I found the categories of othering and privileging of male jobs. In what mothering meant to my participants, categories time, guilt and the need to intensively parent, even from afar, emerged.

Findings

Reproducing Gender Inequality

Othering: Just one of the guys

A concept that became salient throughout all six interviews was that of being a good soldier and one of the guys. These women described other women in the military in derogatory terms, such as lazy, girlie, flirtatious, sluts, whores and incompetent. When referring to other women, they called them female soldiers, but when referring to men it was simply soldiers, as if the term soldier, when meaning competent, was masculine itself.

Tammy: “I am a big team player and I can dish it out and I can take it. I’m one of the guys and more sensitive females don’t stay around [the military] because they can’t take it.”

Lisa: “I don’t look at myself, especially as a private, as a male or female. I just feel like I am one of everybody. I guess just more one of the guys than a female... To be honest, I am cruder than the guys, I cuss more and I love to make the blush.”

Kara: “I don’t think people know how to take me, because I am at work, it’s all work, I don’t come to work to find a man, I have one. But there are females that do, and they don’t care whose man he is.”

While repeatedly reading these women’s words, and reflecting on my own feelings about them, what they had to say, and how they said it, a sub-concept of othering emerged: horizontal violence. Horizontal violence is hostile and aggressive behavior by individual or groups members towards another

member or groups of members of the larger groups (Odermann Mougey 2004). All six women, in a negative context, spoke of the term Queen for a Year. Queen for a year is the term used by these women and others in the military to describe a woman's tour to a remote duty station, such as Korea, Afghanistan, or Iraq. She is "queen for a year" because there are so few females that the males vie for her attention. Again, all the women in my study reported never having participated in queen for a year, however knew many women who had. While queen for a year is premised on the inflated value of these women, it is catering to the male gaze. A queen's value is derived from men's desire. She has no control over her own personal value; she is only as valuable as the men who desire her sexually deem her to be. Where the queen could be taken as an empowering experience for these women, owning their sexuality, commanding their audience, more often than not these women leave Iraq, Afghanistan or Korea with a reputation that plagues their military career. The men, however, do not experience this phenomenon.

Yvonne: "Yeah, I've seen it [queen for a year]. But I'm like, I don't know what you are doing that for cuz it will only carry you so far. You're being used and it just follows you back to your life in the real world."

Lisa: "Females get away with a little more stuff by batting their eyes. I try not to fall into that stereotype, but a lot of them do. Like the female private my husband was TDY [temporary divorce for a year]. She thought she was special, but it was just sex. He and I, we have something, she was just a piece."

These women are quick to point out that they do not participate in "queen for a year," however, they point to multiple examples of other women who are most willing to allow themselves to be exploited in this way. In doing so, my participants are contributing to the marginalization of women and their own oppression (Beckwith 1999).

Privileging of male jobs: Good Soldiering

The military requires these women to be good soldiers first and foremost and places strict requirements on how gender is done. Women must either have short hair or wear it up, and make-up is to be kept to a minimum. The only difference between men's and women's uniforms is during pregnancy, when a woman is authorized to wear sneakers in her last trimester. These women articulated that good soldiers are strong, put the mission first, and are male.

Tammy: “Well, he’s [spouse] gone a lot more than me. I mean, he has been deployed four times and me, only once. But I’m a pac clerk [human resource management] and he’s a truck driver, so his job, you know, he’s in harm’s way and stuff. It’s a lot more stressful.”

Lisa: “My chain of command is like ‘why can’t your spouse do it?’ [when children are ill and need to go to the doctor] And I’m like really? His job is a little more important than mine. I mean, I am transportation and he is SF [special forces], he’s the bad ass, not me.”

As Lisa, Tammy and Yvonne, all dual military families, describe their relationships, they privilege what their husbands do in the military over their own careers. With the military ethos of “mission first” they have internalized the ideology that those that support the mission are inferior to those that execute the mission. In Lisa’s description of her husband as “bad ass,” Tammy’s husband being important because he drives on dangerous roads in war zones, or Yvonne’s assessment that because her husband is in charge of troops while she is in only in charge of millions of dollars, the culture of violence, of which the military is so permeated by, comes through. The mission, war, is more important than the support of human beings. This ethos serves to denigrate those in positions of support, primarily women, and the participants in my research reaffirm this denigration, thus contributing to the reproduction of gender inequality.

The Meaning of Mothering

Not Enough Time

All the women in the study complained about not having enough time for family, let alone themselves. While the younger cohort was quicker to separate home and work, counting off time as family time, the older cohort told stories of late nights and weekends when their personal time was interrupted by work disruptions. In discussing the balancing of these two greedy institutions, family and the military, a pattern emerged between the two cohorts. Sayer et al. (2005) found, and Yvonne’s words demonstrate, that these career soldiers repeatedly express the burden of the second shift.

Yvonne: “Sometimes when I get off work, I’m starting the second job cuz I’ve got to jet home and get her [daughter] and get ready for the next day.”

The women of the older cohort repeatedly told stories of workdays that did not end when they left work. When asked about housework, Tammy

reported that she and her spouse split housework 50-50; however, the evidence demonstrates something else.

Tammy: "You would think I am a stay-at-home with some of the ideas he has. Like I should have dinner ready for him when he comes home and I should have the house cleaned up, laundry done and put away as well. That's not reality, because I get home maybe an hour before him if I am lucky."

Further, all three women in the older cohort stated that childcare and sick children were their sole responsibility. Yvonne and Lisa both had experienced some time in the military as single mothers, and both felt that the challenges of single parenting were, at times, easier than juggling two military careers. All three women with military spouses stated that it was their job to ensure everyone's schedules lined up regarding deployments, training, etc. While these women described themselves as good soldiers, meaning one of the guys, the sense of equality at home was sorely lacking. The participants' responsibility for domesticity, coupled with their privileging their spouses' careers over theirs, serves to reinforce the normative aspects of gender inequality found in the military.

Lisa: "*Dual military (in some ways) is worse than being a single parent, because I have to worry about my schedule for deployments and stuff and now I have to worry about his.... His chain of command feels that doctors' appointments and stuff are a woman's job because his job is more important than mine, [as part of special forces] and sorry, I am the mom, so I am gonna make sure my kids are ok.*"

The culture of the last male bastion in the military, Special Forces, expects, as Lisa told, a stay-at-home wife-breadwinner husband model of the family. They are not equipped to deal with models that challenge this assumption. All three women in the older cohort expressed that household chores and childcare were predominately their responsibilities. Core housework duties were done by these women and the jobs their spouses performed fell into a highly gendered specific category, such as taking out the trash, yard work, or fixing things when they needed to be fixed. When Lisa spoke of other wives in her husband's unit, she generalized them as stay-at-home mothers who looked like beauty queens.

Lisa: "Not only are most of the guys' wives stay-at-home-moms, they all look like beauty queens. Well, some of them do, really, but if you look, some of them look so fake, you're like really? Where did you get all that collagen?"

She is denigrating stay-at-home moms, all the while espousing the “super mom” mentality that she can give her all to both work and home. Lisa is distancing herself from these women, in an attempt to create a narrative of herself as a good soldier [male]. In contrast to the older cohort, and following what Nomaguchi (2009) found in the study of change in work family conflict, the younger cohort took a more egalitarian approach. The younger cohort has worked out more equal arrangements of childcare and housework.

Chantelle: “Since he works part-time, he does the majority of the cleaning and cooking. If he doesn’t do it, we generally share, like doing the laundry, or grocery shopping.”

Kara and Sara, both with stay-at-home spouses, clearly stated that they had no household responsibilities. Their spouses made sure that their off time was reserved for family time rather than maintenance. Both women affirmed that time at home was time they spent enjoying their children and spouses. Their spouses respected the long hard workdays they put in and wanted them to have time to relax with the children. Kara’s statement speaks for both she and Sara:

“When I go home I don’t have to do anything, he does the cooking, cleaning so I don’t have to do anything around the house.”

While the care of sick children fell squarely on the shoulders of the women in the older cohort, this new cohort relied on their spouses for all but the most serious of conditions. All of the women deployed in August or September of this year and when asked about childcare arrangements both Kara and Chantelle stated that they would be relying on their mothers to provide supervision of their spouses caring for the children. Both families will move back home to be near the mother’s mother during her absence. Sara was the only one who felt her husband was competent enough to manage alone for the year she would be gone; however, this was not her first deployment, and her children were older than the others. The older cohort, being dual military families, made arrangements for their children to go to relatives, as spouses would be deployed around the same time or were unavailable to take on the role of single parent. However, when the situation is reversed, there is no discussion as to who will take care of the children. It is expected that Lisa, Tammy, and Yvonne will continue to be the primary parents in the absence of their husbands. These women, while having careers in a traditionally male field, are reproducing the gendered norms and stereotypes that foster inequality.

Too Much Guilt

The soldiers in this study represent a slice of women in the army. Collectively they have fourteen deployments for a total time away from family of 12 years in deployments alone. This does not take into consider the frequent absences for training. Guilt was a theme that emerged in the data. Missed birthdays and milestones were scattered throughout our talks. While Chantelle, Sara and Kara have supportive spouses at home, all three of them voiced the same thing underlying desire:

Sara: *"Sometimes I wish I could be the one at home."*

Kara: *"Yeah, I am jealous of him" [spouse]. He doesn't miss anything."*

Chantelle: *"Yeah, I don't want my baby loving her daddy more than me."*

Tammy, whose six-year-old son is special needs, expressed the most poignant guilt. During her last deployment, he developed oppositional defiance disorder and depression. He suffers night terrors, and her biggest concern was that she got him stable before she deployed in September for another year because her husband deployed before her. It is her job to ensure the stability of her son, as her husband's primary focus is mission readiness. Here again, is the primacy of the male career and the dominance of gendered caregiving expectations.

Tammy: *"Telling my kids goodbye is horrible. [Her middle child] He doesn't want to go to school, because he is afraid I will leave. It rips my heart out."*

But even in discussing this, she notes that who she feels really sorry for are his care givers.

Tammy: *"It's gonna be hard for me, but it's gonna be harder on the people taking care of him. He's in an LD [learning disabled] class and his teacher, she's real sensitive, and it rips her heart out and cries along with him and it breaks her heart that she can't make it go away."*

Even as she acknowledges that it will be difficult for her, Tammy seems to be "othering" her son's teacher as feminine, sensitive, weak, not like the soldier Tammy is. She has guilt over leaving, but she is tough and can handle it. Furthermore, Tammy reaffirms the notion that she is doing mothering correctly by attending to her children's needs with countless doctors, psychiatrists, and counseling appointments.

Intensely Mothering

Deployed female soldiers work very hard to keep in contact with their children. Their experiences differ due to their commands' rules. Some

mothers were limited to one ten-fifteen minute call a week, while others talked to their children twice a day. Two of the mothers bought cell phones for their preschoolers to have with them at all times so that when they could call the children they would get the call. Mothers of older children had given them phones well before deployments, so as to be able to be connected constantly. Much like Blair Loy (2003) found in her work-devoted mothers, the mothers in my sample worked to construct narratives that justified their worth as mothers while being deeply dedicated to their careers. While Lisa admits she limits her children's extracurricular activities she also is very proud of how she stays in touch with them when she is gone.

Lisa: *"I talk to the kids all the time, even when I don't have internet, I guarantee that all my kids will get cards from me and a letter from me every day. Plus they will get emails from me, even when I am not there they are still my priority."*

All the women in the study expressed justification of their good mothering. Sara, who was deployed when her daughters were three and one, missed many milestones.

Sara: *"My youngest daughter started walking while I was away, and started talking. I was afraid she wouldn't know me when I came home. But I made recordings of me reading to her and videos of me playing with her. And when I got home I took thirty days leave and just spent it with the girls, spoiling them."*

While duty pulls these mothers away from their children quite frequently, they strive to make a congruent picture of good mothering and how it applies to them. All six women, when asked about joining the military, conveyed that they wanted to be part of something bigger, something important. Three of the women had grown up with fathers in the military and were intimately acquainted with the culture and could not picture themselves doing anything else. Five of the women felt called to the military as a higher purpose, while the remaining one looked at the military as a way out of a "bad neighborhood" and into a better life. It is this justification of the military being a higher purpose, as something other than just working, that aids these women in my study in constructing a coherent narrative of being good mothers while working intensely demanding jobs. This discourse also furthers the distinction of "othering" women in that the participants, being called for a higher purpose, buffer themselves from some of the guilt working mothers deal with.

Yvonne, the oldest soldier in the study, indicated she delayed having a child to focus on her career. She originally entered the military as an enlisted soldier, however, she soon decided this was a career for her and sought additional, technical training to become a warrant officer. She has one child and affirms this was by design.

Yvonne: "Most people, when they be parents, it is more than one kid. And quite honestly, I don't know how they do it. It is hard enough to have one child and fulfill the mission. The army takes everything you got."

While the rest of the women were in their teens or very early twenties when they had their first child, Yvonne was in her early thirties and well into her military career. She made this conscious decision to establish herself in her career before she undertook parenting. Her dedication to the army is apparent in her attitude toward being separated from her young daughter so much. Since the child's birth she has been deployed to combat zones twice and has done a year tour in Korea, while her child stayed with either her father or Yvette's mother. While she misses her daughter when they are not together, she looks at the separations as part of the job, something she knew full well when she became a mother post 9/11.

The older cohort has experienced the most change in military policy regarding families. Soldiers were expected to be soldiers first and a family was not to interfere. Family interference in soldiering indicated either a lack of commitment to the military, or the inability of a soldier to handle her life competently.

Lisa: "To be honest with you, I always put the army first. It is army, army, army and I don't let the kids do certain extra-curricular activities because I don't have time to run them here or there...I'm the first one at work and usually stay until seven or eight, sometimes later."

Here Lisa conveys her complete dedication to the military in her extraordinarily long hours and the restriction on her children's participation in activities. However, she later contradicts herself when the topic is directly focused on parenting.

Lisa: "I have the girls in cheer and dance and peanut plays football, baseball and soccer."

Tammy, eleven years in to her army career, is enthusiastic about her job and got very excited when she talked about her initial enlistment.

Tammy: “When I signed on the dotted line and was sworn in I wanted to sign for twenty right then and there, I wanted it to be my life. I’m from a military life and I knew this was for me, it was a way of life, it’s in the blood, and it’s an honor.”

In expressing her desire to do twenty, meaning the twenty years a soldier must serve in order to retire, Tammy communicated that from the very beginning of her career, she was committed to the army. For Tammy, the military is a calling, something bigger than herself and that to which she is devoted. She, too, puts in long hours and restricts her children’s participation in extracurricular activities so that they do not infringe on her service. As Tammy expressed, the military is a way of life with its own culture and norms. These women have internalized those norms of “good soldiering” the institution has scripted for them. They devote themselves to this way of life. The younger cohort is made up of dedicated soldiers, and all have voiced their commitment during work hours. However, these women were much less likely to report exceptionally long hours or off-time interruptions.

Sara: “When I am at work, I put my family in the back of my head, but when I am home, I don’t let myself think about work.”

Sara, twenty-six, echoes what the other two women in the younger cohort also expressed. A clear line of demarcation exists between work and family.

Discussion and Conclusion

Much as Blair-Loy (2003) found mavericks in her study, the younger cohort consists of the innovators of my study. They defy the military’s ethos of complete dedication and sacrifice in order to have the career they want and a family as well. To be fair to the women in this study, the younger cohort has experienced a slightly different military policy toward families than the older. They entered at a time when the military, fighting two wars, needed to retain people in great numbers. Because of this, the old adage of ‘if the military wanted you to have a family they would have issued you one,’ has been replaced with an army that is trying to accommodate families as a way to keep soldiers.

Like all women who juggle work and family, these women strive to achieve balance. As Nomaguchi (2009) found, it was more common for the newer cohort to report that they clearly differentiate work time and home time, not allowing work to creep in on family time as much as the older cohort. However, all women in my study do work extremely long hours and have to

leave their families for a year at a time, making their jobs especially demanding of time. In looking at these particular women, theories of work and family conflict have been extended to start the conversation on a unique group of workers who, until now, have been ignored. Furthermore, the ongoing study of mothering from afar may further the discussion on the cultural constraints of mothering.

The idea of reproducing gender inequality is not new, however, listening to the lived experiences of these women in this study, it is hard not to see how the “othering” of the generic female soldier is only a form of taking part in one’s own oppression. They at once espouse the ethos of the male soldier while at the same time demeaning the contribution women make to the army. The social expectation of the ideal worker being unencumbered, committed to long arduous hours of work, and having no outside limitation (Williams 2001) is the embodiment of the good soldier and what these women strive for. However, they have the competing social expectation of good mothering to negotiate while trying to “soldier like a man” [Tammy]. How they construct their narratives adds to the literature on how women negotiate work and family conflict while doing gender in a hyper-masculine environment. The military is a violent culture and these women are part of it, but they are also deeply embedded in their families, which is contradictory to the violence of the military.

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Leadership and Management in Educational Intrapreneurship in Romania

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ABSTRACT: Through its dimensions, leadership is considered a dynamic process of organizing and coordinating a group of people, building and developing relationships at the group level, which mobilizes the members of the organization and determines them for a standard, shared vision of the organization, increasing the institution’s performance, quality, but also the facilitation of change at the level of the respective organization (Stegăroiu et al. 2019). Practical aspects, experiences, and theoretical approaches in the field of education have highlighted the existence of mutual determinations and correlations between educational leadership and positive changes made at the level of the school organization, embodied in the flexibility of teaching staff, their enthusiasm and openness to new things, to innovation. This approach aims to identify, synthesize, complete, and explain leadership in educational intrapreneurship - increasing the academic quality within the organization as a result of capitalizing on the intrapreneurial skills of the leader in the context of making changes permanent. Through the theoretical-methodological approach, the author proposed to make a valuable and relevant contribution to the existing practice, considering the investigative approach as representing the beginning of a process and not its end. The article emphasizes the importance of embracing change and developing intrapreneurial leadership in school organizations to adapt to the evolving socio-economic, cultural, and political landscape.

KEYWORDS: education, leadership, innovation, intrapreneurial skills

Introduction

The social dimension of the school organization, the centering of education on the learner, the development of the educational process from the perspective of a competence-centered curriculum, and the major, often contradictory, changes in pre-university education are some aspects that underline the imperative of educational leadership, found in the specialized literature, as an „innovative leadership paradigm” (Stegăroiu et al. 2019, 9). Both education and other social fields, such as health, national security, and politics, are directly interested in the complex issue of leadership. Leadership involves a process of social influence, including the intentional dimension, to achieve results. On a theoretical level, we pursued the scientific foundation of educational leadership and intrapreneurship at the level of the school organization by systematizing and outlining the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological aspects from the specialized literature, and on an investigative level, we pursued the understanding and identification of leadership and intrapreneurship practices in the system of Romanian education.

Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Concept of Leadership

Humanity, throughout time, has been preoccupied with the activity of leadership and the person who carries out the leadership, the leader. Leadership is an active profession aiming to maintain order and effectively manage an activity. The term “leadership” is a frequently used one, both in the specialized literature, in the field of educational management, and other fields of activity; the concept itself is considered a set of values, attitudes, and ideal managerial skills that must be implemented in the management of each field of human activity.

Etymologically, the terms “leadership” and “leader”, found in many theoretical approaches, came from the English language in the 13th century but were used in written documents only in the 19th century, in English, German old, and Saxon. The Anglo-Saxon etymological root of the words “lead” means way, road. Along the way, these meanings have transformed into the term leadership. Since “leadership” is polysemantic, it cannot be translated into Romanian by a single word expressing its true meaning. The first representations about leaders and leadership were identified in the Old Testament, where references are made to capable leaders and just laws, where they spoke of the cult of strong, courageous people and a strong government.

The art of leadership has been a subject of significant interest since ancient times. The interest in this concept and its approach since ancient times denotes the importance of leadership, including identifying individual qualities and the skills necessary to be a good leader.

The earliest ideas about leaders and leadership also contain texts from Chinese philosophy, where the respective terms denote power and influence over nature and people. Tribal chiefs or priests have acquired their position primarily due to their persuasive attitude to impose themselves, including socio-emotionally. Throughout history, in all cultures, the leader of any human group has always been the one to provide safety and clarity to others in situations of threat or in times of vital activity.

The studies related to the concept of leadership, somewhat timid, even latent in the 1970s, focused mainly on the “production of typologies of attitudes” (Stegăroiu et al. 2019, 16) experienced a development during the 1990s, through the theorists’ particular interest in explaining the nature of leaders’ behaviors and intuiting the particularities of leadership models.

Over the years, there have been many attempts to define leadership. As Stogdill (1948) suggested in *Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: a Survey of the Literature*, there are almost as many attempts to define leadership as people trying to explain it. According to Stogdill, a person does not become an effective leader simply because he has certain traits. He advocated the idea that the characteristics of a successful leader should be sufficiently relevant to the demands of the leadership position - that is, the specific challenges faced and the necessary skills, moral values, and vision. Leadership is considered a vast, complex field, so it is challenging to identify a unanimously accepted definition. It isn’t easy to find a recipe or a universal leadership development model within an institutional entity or a professional community but of the leader as a person with appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Over time, the approach to leadership has changed fundamentally. In the first half of the 20th century, it was believed that only people born with such skills could be authentic, successful, effective leaders. Leadership was associated with great personalities during this period, bringing relevant examples. The pragmatic conclusion was discouraging enough: “If you are not born with leadership talent, you have no chance of becoming a leader” (Stogdill 1948).

Since the 1950s, many of the theoretical, pragmatic approaches to leadership have changed, in the sense that studies have focused on the individual traits of the leader, on the relationships between him and the group

members, reaching certain studies on transformational skills of the group leader. One of the most interesting approaches to the definition of leadership highlights its emphasis on group processes. From this perspective, “leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group of people in their efforts to establish and achieve the objective” (Stegăroiu et al. 2019, 18).

There are some controversies on the general aspects of leadership: it is seen as a process defined through the prism of the individual actions of the leader or a process described by the exercise of influence over a group (Pânișoară and Pânișoară 2016, 65)

Today, although the idea that leadership presupposes certain native qualities is promoted and supported, competent leadership can be ensured through adequate training. Leadership is an attribute desired and required by organizations by their managers. Leaders have confidence in their strengths and generate confidence in others. Around true leaders, employees feel more competent and find work more interesting. Leadership is directly related to the ability to influence people’s behavior.

Leadership is a concept researched from a managerial, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical perspective. Cuban (1988, 154) provides one of the most explicit distinctions, associating leadership with change and management with maintenance. The author points out the importance of both dimensions of organizational activity. Administration is considered a dynamic process of organizing and coordinating the activity of a group; it is an executive activity placed under the sign of command, emphasizing procedures and avoiding risks.

Management is a process through which it is possible to achieve the organization’s objectives through planning, organization, the efficiency of the use of resources, and employee motivation. Management focuses on administrative aspects of a manager’s activity. Leadership aims at the existence of an influence process to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization (York-Barr and Duke, 2004, 67).

Different conceptualizations of leadership led to argue that „leadership is a phenomenon that is important for organizational effectiveness” (Yukl 2002, 3). Some definitions of leadership are more valuable than others, but it cannot be claimed that this term has a clear, concrete definition. Thus, three dimensions of leadership can be identified as a basis for developing a functional definition: leadership as influence, leadership and values, and leadership and vision (Bush 2015, 34).

The central element, in many definitions of leadership, aims at the existence of a process of social influence - this process of influence being oriented towards obtaining specific results: "Leadership, therefore, assumes that the motivation and actions of some people are directed by other people to achieve goals" (Cuban 1988, 193). As Greenfield observes (Bush 2015, 18), leadership begins with the character of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capacity.

Vision, another critical dimension of effective leadership, suggests that motivation to work in an organization is pursuing an individual vision. In the last two decades, researchers in the field have defined the concept of leadership from a broad psychological perspective with strong social nuances; a generally human action, leadership traces the actions of an organization, also highlighting the volitional content of the human psyche. Despite all these differences, one thing is sure effective leadership ensures the change of the organization and, implicitly, its performance.

The Training of Intrapreneurial Skills in Education

According to the definition, intrapreneurship is a way of organizing an organization that allows employees to express their creative potential, establish professional working relationships, and how they can implement their projects, managing to satisfy their personal needs and those of the organization. Practically, intrapreneurship represents the implementation of innovative practices by the organization's staff under the coordination of a leader who assumes the role of an intrapreneur to improve the organization's performance through the efficient use of human resources. Intrapreneurship emerged due to significant changes, mainly from an economic and organizational point of view, both at the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels. In the multitude of organizational development strategies and tools that appeared and developed between the 1980s and 1990s, intended to support the management of organizations, intrapreneurship seems a new, interesting, and attractive concept for some specialists but enigmatic for others (Hartley and Benington 2010, 55).

The premises that imposed the development of intrapreneurial activities in the European Union and the United States of America are mainly generated by: "the existence of a large number of large and medium-sized companies, difficult to manage, inflexible, even rigid, with various problems generated by

their relationship with the often unfavorable environment... the existence in these companies of an important number of specialists with intrapreneurial potential and who could have intrapreneurial initiative". (Niculescu 2001, 33).

In the doctoral work *Entrepreneurial Dynamics and the Organization of Firms: From Entrepreneur to Intrapreneur* by Wanscoor (1992), the most exciting and current intrapreneurial approaches helpful to organizations, especially firms, are presented. The first category of intrapreneurial approaches values the individual by emphasizing individual intrapreneurial action; thus, within the organization, it is intended to create an organizational climate and practices that favor the emergence of innovative people able to implement their intrapreneurial ideas (Gherguț 2007, 54).

The second approach emphasizes the intrapreneurship team, formed by people who want to take on responsibilities and risks and who promote intrapreneurship together. The third approach focuses on the intrapreneurial organization, an organization with highly qualified personnel and professional expertise, where the managerial spirit can determine success.

The goal of the intrapreneurial activity within the organization is to create an entrepreneurial culture in which each employee is responsible for their actions, increasing performance and quality, has initiatives, and assumes responsibility for putting them into practice. In this culture, experimentation is encouraged, and mistakes are tolerated and accepted, unlike the organizational culture based on hierarchy and control (Levine 2005, 24). The intrapreneurship represents the employees with an entrepreneurial spirit within the organization; they are those people with initiative, who propose innovative ideas, who know how to take on projects, are dedicated, passionate, have decision-making capacity, are creative, like change, and take it on. The intrapreneur is motivated and efficient, proposes solutions, and can transform an organization; he must innovate, express himself, and develop new ideas and projects.

Intrapreneurial behaviors are characterized by **strategic thinking** – intrapreneurs think about the next step what to achieve, are considered agents of change, engaged in their work, and coherent in their activities and interactions; **visual thinking** represents another characteristic of intrapreneurial behaviors – that is, the ability of intrapreneurs to visualize solutions, not to act impulsively on a solution, but to give it time, space for crystallization and development; **authenticity**, another behavioral typology specific to intrapreneurs, aims at trust and modesty, as values promoted by them.

At the level of the school organization, in terms of education, intrapreneurship consists of the development of autonomous intrapreneurial actions using existing resources, which, most of the time, are insufficiently used. Intrapreneurial organizations have a well-defined institutional development strategy, aiming to identify opportunities in the community by initiating changes and implementing ideas (Dyer 2016, 74).

Intrapreneurship refers to those members of the school organization who, on their initiative, implement and apply educational projects to increase school performance and the quality of the educational act at the organizational level. At the school organization level, intrapreneurship is evidenced by educational projects (Hartley and Benington 2010, 67). Extrapolating, educational intrapreneurship improves performance by efficiently using available resources and increasing academic quality using an appropriate motivational system (Hegheş 2020, 140).

In every school institution that wants to be effective, an actor must assume the role of change manager, overturning proven ineffective systems, changing mentalities, and determining new institutional behaviors. The managerial spirit can evaluate the success of the school organization, turning it into an **intrapreneurial unit**. The decisive role for the success of these initiatives for the implementation of change at the organizational level rests with the leader of the organization, who has intuition and long-term vision.

The intrapreneur is the person in an organization who assumes full responsibility for transforming ideas into projects through innovation and an assertive approach to risks and opportunities (Elmore 2004, 105). In promoting intrapreneurial leadership, an important role is the intellectual capital – the professional expertise of the leader, his potential to implement policies of innovation and change, and his relational capacity, which brings added value to the organization.

Conclusion

A school organization develops rapidly and achieves performance if the entire staff accepts the organizational change and if this change also motivates them adequately for the effort proposed for the intrapreneurial unit. Change can be defined as a transformation, which can be observed in time, that influences the structure and behavior of an individual, as well as the structure and functioning of the social organization of a given collectivity, and that modifies the entire

course of its history. All humans can generate solutions, new products, original ideas, cleverness, or ingenuity if that ability is fostered and developed.

To change does not automatically mean that we have to undo what existed in a system at a given time. The object of change should not be perceived and treated as poorly constructed or ineffective. Changing the organization is a mandatory way of adapting it to the needs of society and those involved. According to the opinion expressed by Senge (2016, 76), school organizations are seen “as living organisms, whose survival depends on how educators, students, parents and also the local administration manage to adapt to socio-economic transformations.”

In the multitude of institutional development strategies and tools that aim to support educational leadership to innovate, intrapreneurship is a new concept that meets the requirements of the current socio-economic, cultural, and political context.

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Conceptualizing Religion and Globalization in the Sociology of Religion

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ABSTRACT: What is new and specific to contemporary global forms is the extent to which religions globalize, the way in which they adapt to global conditions or the new morphologies they adopt. The global, however, does not only represent a range of social, political, economic or technological conditions, but also symbolizes a theoretical paradigm that requires a shift in focus and urges the sociology of religion to think beyond national contexts and in a comparative manner. Consequently, by adopting a global point of view, the deepening of religion has changed nowadays where the world thinks globally rather than nationally or regionally. The article explores how world religions have shaped civilizational transformations and their interaction with globalization, and analyzes how they contribute to the global landscape from both a historical and contemporary perspective.

KEYWORDS: globalization, sociology of religions, conceptualization

The analysis of the role of religion in the path to globalization is not consensual, but religion is regularly mentioned as a parameter or as one of the main historical forces in the achievement of globalization. In Martin Albrow's view, globalization is indeed considered a "New Age" (Albrow, 1996). Albrow's position argues for dominant patterns of history, cut into substitute sequences: in this model, the age of modernity is followed by either an age of postmodernity or an age of globalization. Since Karl Jaspers' 'axial age' theory, it is frequently assumed that the world's great religions play a

key role in 'civilizational' transformations (Rotaru 2023, 62-79), whether they occur before or with globalization, although this is not always explicitly stated. Some authors have attempted to identify this role of globalization, at least historically. Göran Therborn, for example, has introduced a model comprising six 'waves' of globalization, one of the first being characterized by the emergence and spread of world religions (around the 4th century) and the impetus they gave to the geographical expansion of cultures and societies by virtue of their missionary expansionism (Therborn 2000, 151-179). Are religions, therefore, the subjugators of globalization, or did they generate it? Scholars' opinions on this question are rather mixed, and the exact nature of the relationship between religion and globalization in ancient history remains unclear. Others have tried to construct a more complex model, investigating the roles of religions in each sequence of globalization. In all cases, however, religions (especially world religions) have always crossed the boundaries of political units and have therefore long been deeply involved in what is now called 'globalization' (Juergensmeyer 2003, 5).

Consequently, globalization (as modernisation did in its time) helps to define a firm theoretical framework through which the transformations of religion or religions are presented to us. On the other hand, the global approach to religion does not refer to a theoretical unit, nor does it set out to study religions. Nevertheless, many authors - whether or not their research falls under 'religious studies' - cautiously explore the complex relationships between religion and globalization. Malcolm Waters, for example, laments the lack of *sacriscapes* in global landscape theory (Waters 2001, 187), which is why the term has subsequently managed to be defined (as „religioscapes“) and is now widespread.

However, studies of globalization do not provide a unified picture of contemporary global conditions, nor do they agree on their impact on religions. At opposite poles of the narratives of a world committed to a 'global' path are two contrasting portraits of 'globalization.' On the one hand, globality is portrayed as a 'multiverse of cultures' living in a 'genuine interculturality' (Van Barloewen 2003, 28), while on the other, globalization is seen as offering a 'chance' for the spiritual traditions of humanity to live in harmony. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the extremely visible fact of the violence produced by globalization, which has left its bloody mark in every region of the world.

So far, the tension between religion and globalization, which is a tension between particularism and universalism, is not only embodied in the prosaic forms of the negotiated borders between globalization and religions. Globalization is also flooding into our lives in more spectacular (much more mediatised) forms of conflict and violence, which have crystallised fundamentalism across the globe and thus called into question the two faces of globalization: contemporary violence and the precise role that religions play in this space, either as an aggravating factor or, conversely, as an actor in preventing or resolving political and ethnic conflicts. This modern tendency towards conflict would be, firstly, the responsibility of large socio-political units, such as the ‚civilisations‘ (Huntington 1996) highlighted by Samuel Huntington, or, secondly, the responsibility of smaller entities or communities. Thus it has been suggested that, on the one hand, globalization is dependent on the tension between contemporary ethnic conflict, and thus driven to manifest itself by the forces of ‚cultural hegemony‘, those which press certain sections of globalized societies towards homogenization, and, on the other, it is the defiance of ‚ethnic heterogeneity‘. In other words, there is a tension between the processes of integration of groups and societies into a world-system, and the resistances of these groups and societies against the civilizational project that comes with the expansion of the global system (Dunaway 2003, 7).

Firmly embedded in a sociological perspective inspired by Émile Durkheim, who admits that „society” is the conceptual matrix for understanding religion, and by Niklas Luhmann, from whom he borrows the claim that society is characterized by modes and forms of communication, Peter Beyer has repeatedly argued that the study of a „global religion” must first be grounded in a theory of „global society”. The „global religious system” he pioneered is not, in Beyer’s terms, a religious tradition that has become „global”, i.e., whose doctrines and practices have spread throughout the world. This „global religion” involves a diversity of forms and expressions and represents one of the subsystems of a global society, „not a mere agglomeration of religious ‚things’, but rather the social differentiation and social construction of a category of recognized religious actions or a mode of communication that manifests itself primarily through numerous social institutions” (Beyer 1998, 8–9). In Beyer’s view, globalization is a religiously and socially differentiated system, like those seen in the monotheistic and Western context, but with a global extension that transcends the distinctiveness of traditions. But if Beyer then opts for

a structural and systemic picture of an ordered world, the hypothetical new „order” of the religious world also corresponds inversely to a chaotic clash of civilizations, as Huntington showed, for whom in the perspective of this civilizational paradigm, he saw the world „order” of political units and religious entities in the international context as a dynamic and constantly changing continuous adjustment and, consequently, disorder.

A global world of religions

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida subscribes to the idea of the global expansion of a „Latin”, i.e., Western and Christian, model, in his own words, a „mondatinization” - a kind of contraction between globalization - globalization - and Latinization (Derrida 1998, 48). More recent research has enhanced this one-sided perspective and added to the analysis the complexity of the forms of religious traditions in globalization.

In Beyer’s systemic paradigm, however, Western monotheisms, and Christianity in particular, have shaped the form of a „global religious system” much more structurally than culturally. According to Beyer (1998, 4), indeed, „the global religious system bears the marks of its origins and early developments in Christian society” and „the contemporary global religious system thus seems somehow Christian, not in a religious sense, but only in a sense parallel to the way globalization looks like Westernization.

The religious traditions of the contemporary world have thus undertaken a process of shaping, on the structural and functional criteria of Christianity, a tradition that has unravelled the sacred and the profane, that has brought about the distinctive autonomy of the religious, sphere’ from the other, spheres’ of human life, and that has finally redefined its social and cultural spatiality as a result of its recent confrontation with secularist ideologies. As a result, the global religious system is socially differentiated due to the alignment of non-Christian and non-Western traditions with the standard model of Christianity.

Religious reactions critical of globalization are, according to Mott (2004, 184-187), as diverse as those against modernization, varying according to their unique trajectory in modern and global environments. Judaism, as a diaspora religion, first accompanied it from earliest times but transforms into ethnicity and eventually nationality with the rise of Zionism. Christianity first, politicizes’ under a territorial entity - kingdoms and empires in the Middle East, and southern and northern Europe - then universalises and finally, humanizes’ with

the age of enlightenment. Islam initially takes on a universal and supra-cultural form before being marginalized by Euro-centred globalization and eventually becoming hostile to the 'Westernization' of the world (Mott 2004, 184-187). According to this political scientist, the options of religious traditions are limited to a community defence or an alliance with fundamentalism on the one hand, or a „social secularisation” (Rotaru 2006, 251-266) on the other (Mott 2004, 188 – 193). As far as theologians are concerned, the consequences of globalization are also to be imagined as bringing about a „global and diverse ecumenical community” (Küng 1991). In fact, religious responses to globalization processes are much more complex and locally determined than these broad-spectrum theorizations.

Much more than the world religions, which manifest a broad lexical surface in this study, the „new religions” exemplified primarily the most authentic and typical religious forms of modernity, initially, and of globalization more recently. It is assumed that their growth in number and worldwide spread have captured the attention of scholars far more than the world religions (Rothstein 1996, 195). However, some authors argue that the scientific literature on the subject remains relatively small (Arweck 2007, 276). Nevertheless, sociology's focus on the New Religious Movements is based on a certain perspective of the New Religious Movements that does not exclude a broader approach to ‚religion’ as a whole. But their rise and spread have given sociology a new place to confront its theoretical models with religious change. Some religious movements globalize, others adapt to global settings, and in these ebbs and flows, the New Age movement (Rotaru 2005, 193-216), torn between unity and diversity, comes to embody a new global religiosity. Because of their doctrinal and practical authenticity, but also because of their expanding dynamics, the new religious movements should indeed represent the kind of ‚exemplary’ or ‚paradigmatic’ cases of religious globalization, such as Protestant evangelization or Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Thus, it is argued, unlike world religions that remain anchored in their national contexts, the new religious movements tend to be supra-national and therefore favor their link to globalization.

The magnitude of the new configuration of religions and religious landscapes implies an adjustment of pre-existing theoretical models of religious change, overlooked by all the theorists of modernity but not of globalization. Therefore, a major problem is not only trying to highlight the dynamics of religious change but also explaining what and how religions adapt to globality.

Acculturation and social change

As a result, religions, whether traditional or new, are subject to the dialectic of „universalization” and „particularization,” following the pattern of societies and cultures in a global context. The contemporary tension between religion and globalization is to be found in the mismatch between, on the one hand, religious differentiation and antagonism on a national or local scale and, on the other, the homogenizing convergence of traditions in the structural standardization mentioned above. It is a tension that Friedman describes as a „cannibalizing dialectic between tendencies towards homogeneity and tendencies towards heterogeneity” (Friedman 1994, 210). But religions also depend on processes of transformation that are not necessarily associated with modernity or globalization. Moreover, another question arises: which religious traditions are acculturated to global settings, since their contemporary metamorphoses are labelled in terms of ‚adjustments’ or ‚adaptations’ to globalization?

Finally, several recent models have attempted to bring together, in a single framework of analysis, the various matrices of religious reconfiguration in globalization. Thus, for Neil J. Smelser, four main trends delineate the morphology and dynamics of the global religious landscape: sectarian conflict, mutual tolerance, new cleavages in the boundaries of religion and the emergence of a religion of globality. These seem to embody the parallel processes of fragmentation and „conflictuality” on the one hand, and adaptation and convergence on the other, but in a comprehensive global movement (Smelser 2003, 110-111).

As for Csordas (2007, 262-265), he sees globalization as the theatre where the religious imagination becomes embedded in the global economy and technology, where new pan-Indian spiritual movements emerge and where global flows now turn back to the West and where global culture becomes sacred. In the same way that ‚culture matters for globalization’ (Tomlinson 1999, 12), it can also be argued that ‚religion matters for globalization. But as far as culture is concerned, religion symbolizes an ‚ideological battleground of the modern world system’ (Wallerstein 1990, 31-55). According to Csordas (2007, 266), „surely the time has come for a serious theorization of religion and globalization and the globalization of religion.”

While the global perspective calls for a profound, but by no means complete, regeneration of the trends and scope of the sociology of religion,

it does not seem to be participating in a radical transformation in all areas of knowledge. The reference to globalization does not imply that the concept has to be established on empirical grounds. Globalization (Rotaru 2014, 532-541) therefore refers to a set of conditions and processes whose originality lies more in their configuration and intensity than in their nature or form. Moreover, attributing 'global' to the very *raison d'être* of religious transformation is as inaccurate as modernity, when it was considered the first and main, 'cause' of the morphological metamorphosis observed in the religious domain of

Several studies now show that the dynamics of religious transformation and resistance to economic change, for example, of a political and ethnic nature, are pre-dating globalization, but identical to those usually attributed to it. The discussion of how religions are globalizing, or are affected by global processes, or are themselves becoming vectors of globalization is not new, which is why globalization does not only generate new religious forms. Global changes in religions could be seen as adaptations of ancient religious forms rather than as the production of original ones (Smelser 2003, 102), or, as Csordas says: „Perhaps we are simply beginning to recognize, what we have known since ancient times, that the waters of religion fill the newly constructed channels that flow between the local and the global” (Csordas 2007, 265). Moreover, the very historical and ontological identity of a religious globalization is in question, paralleling globalization as a whole. In this sense both then go „hand in hand” (Kale 2004, 96), or each is a part of the other or, not least, apart from the other.

Conclusions

What is new and peculiar to contemporary global forms is the extent to which religions globalize, the way they adapt to global conditions, or the new morphologies they adopt. The global, however, is not only a set of social, political, economic, or technological conditions but also symbolizes a theoretical paradigm that requires a shift in focus and urges the sociology of religion to think beyond national contexts and in a comparative manner. Consequently, by adopting a global point of view, the deepening of religion has changed nowadays where the world thinks globally rather than nationally or regionally, which is why: “the impact of the phenomenon, to be fully appreciated, must also be seen for what it is, a religious reform on a global scale and, as such, can only be fully understood in the context of global society” (Clarke 2006, xiii).

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Students' Suggestions for Improvements on a Pre-Degree Language Course Moodle Page at the University of the South Pacific

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ABSTRACT: This study explores students' responses in the form of suggestions on what could be done to enhance the learning process and increase interaction on their course Moodle page. The study involved 109 pre-degree students enrolled in LLFXX, a compulsory English course for the Foundation program. A questionnaire was designed on Moodle and 80 Blended and 29 Print mode students were enrolled on this Moodle page to answer this questionnaire. Students' responses were classified according to their mode of study (Blended and Print) under two themes: enhance the learning process and increase interaction on Moodle. Their response identified changes that could enhance their learning and increase their interaction on the LLFXX Moodle page.

KEYWORDS: eLearning, interaction, LMS, Moodle

Introduction

The expectations of all education system stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, and management) are always on the students and their performance in school. Their priority has always been for the better performance of students and their continued participation in class. A lot of resources, in the form of finance, time, staff, physical assets, and virtual resources, are employed in the delivery of classes to enhance students' performance. Since the methods of deliverance have never been stagnant, there has always been a need to change the teaching-learning environment according to the demands of that period. Facilities in schools and campuses are renovated to accommodate the growing number of students. It is also mandatory for the education sector to be Occupational and Health Security compliant. The requirements of special needs students are also facilitated. In the process of changing with the opportunities around, blackboards have been changed to whiteboards. Some classrooms also have smartboards to boost the learning and teaching practice.

Moreover, with the advancement of technology in the teaching-learning process, a lot of resources are deployed toward the technological development of schools and campuses. The way classes used to be taught has been modified, if not fully changed, with the introduction of eLearning. This ubiquitous teaching and learning method has brought a lot of flexibility in the delivery of classes. Moodle is not only used as a Learning Management System (LMS) at tertiary levels but also in high schools in Fiji. Thus, stakeholders have invested a lot in upgrading the resources to ensure a smooth transition from traditional classes to a blended form of learning. At tertiary levels, classes are taken in four modes: Face-to-Face, Print, Blended, and Online. This requires more resources and more facilities, be it physical or virtual.

Many times, the stakeholders are so engrossed in trying to facilitate and accommodate all these needs that they overlook a key factor. The question of 'what do the students need?'. Seldom are students given the opportunity to express their views on their needs and thus the facilities that are provided are what the providers assume students will need. This includes all physical, financial, and virtual resources.

Background

University of the South Pacific (USP) is a regional university in the South Pacific. It is a university-owned by 12 countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga,

Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The USP has students from its 12 member countries and from countries outside the region. Pre-degree to post-graduate courses are taught via Face-to-Face, Print, Blended, and Online modes. Initially, courses were taught either Face-to-Face or Print mode. With the introduction of virtual learning and Moodle at the USP, Blended and Online modes were introduced. However, the university did not give appropriate instructions on changing courses to Blended mode (Racule and Buadromo 2020).

To facilitate classes, Moodle was introduced as an LMS in 2006 on trial in the School of Computing, Information Systems and Mathematical Sciences and in 2008 Moodle was implemented across the USP (Whelan and Bhartu 2007). Moodle has undergone a tremendous transformation (Bhartu and Koroivulaono 2014) since 2008, with the latest version introduced in the USP in 2023. With the use of satellite, Moodle is connected from the main campus to the other campuses across the region (figure 1).

Moodle page is provided for all courses despite their varied modes. The Pre-degree courses are taught either using Print or Blended modes across the region. All the courses at the Pre-degree level have a Moodle page where resources are uploaded. The template is provided by the Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL) department. The course coordinators design it to suit the needs of their students. It is assumed that whatever material is provided will enhance students' learning and increase their interaction on Moodle.

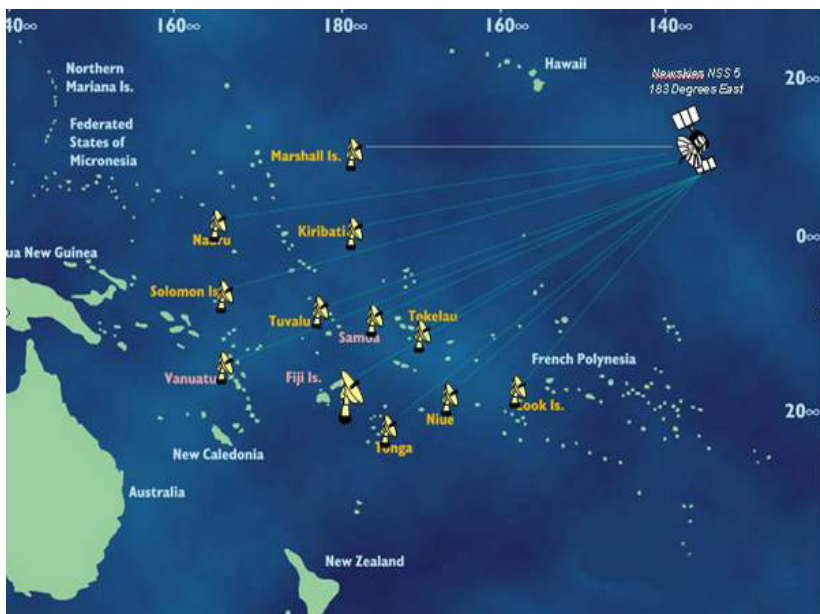


Figure 1. USP connectivity: Moodle (University of the South Pacific 2015)

However, at times, what appears on the Moodle page is very monotonous, as per requirements of the CFL departments or as instructed or guided by the education technologists. Many times, it is what the instructors feel is mandatory or crucial for the students that are placed on the Moodle page regardless of their modes of study. It is always assumed that this is what students would need for their studies and on this assumption learning materials are placed. Learners are not consulted on what they would prefer to find on Moodle or how much of each resource (activities, revision materials, or past exam questions with model answers) would they desire to access on Moodle. It is crucial to take students' views on the usability of the Moodle page for better performance and engagement. More specifically, for pre-degree students who are experiencing their first year in the USP Foundation studies are a bridge between secondary schooling and the university experience. Their experience, dilemmas, challenges, and positive responses towards Moodle can assist future students and the deliverance of the course on Moodle.

Therefore, the following research questions framed this study:

Q1 Learners need changes on their course Moodle page to enhance their learning.

Q2 Learners need improvements in the Moodle page and a change in their approach when they deal with the Moodle page to increase their interaction on the course Moodle page.

Literature Review

Learners have their own preferences for learning regardless of whether the classroom has a traditional setup or is facilitated virtually. From designing the course material to facilitating these in classrooms, students' learning capacity, proficiency, and readability to accept the teaching method have been investigated for all forms of classroom setup. Students' perceptions of these have also been studied to enhance its usability.

Moodle is used widely as a LMS, and many studies have been conducted on it. Its usability (Ifinedo, Pyke and Anwar 2018, Aikina and Bolsunovskaya 2020, Delone and McLean 2003, Sabah 2020), effectiveness, and limitations have been explored from the learner and instructor perspective. For Moodle to meet the expectation of the educational stakeholders, it is crucial to assimilate students' views on what Moodle should contain and how it should be organized or designed to assist students in their learning and address their learning needs (Tsai, Shen and Tsai 2011; Zengin 2012).

It is important to consider the factors that affect the effectiveness of Moodle from students' perspective (Damnjanovic, Jednal and Mijatovic 2015). The use of Moodle can optimize the teaching-learning process and provide an effective and flexible learning environment (Damnjanovic, Jednal and Mijatovic 2015). While designing the course Moodle page, it is crucial to ensure that there is minimal scrolling and fewer clicks as multiple resources can be embedded in one link (Moore 2012; Zengin 2012). Furthermore, learning can be made friendlier and more exciting by incorporating appealing activities on Moodle (Martin-Blas and Serrano-Fernandez 2009). Activities that are attractive to students can be designed on the Moodle page. It can vary from the paper-based activities given in traditional classrooms to gamed-based activities (Zengin 2012).

With the benefits of Moodle and its effectiveness in the teaching-learning process, there are also challenges of using Moodle. The benefits of using Moodle can be weakened or rejected due to a lack of capabilities, expertise, intelligence, and skills to use it (Damnjanovic, Jednal and Mijatovic 2015; Paragia et al. 2011). Moreover, if the content on Moodle does not to students' expectations or interests, then they lose motivation to use it (Ayan 2015; Aikina and Bolsunovskaya 2020). Therefore, it is vital that students' views and needs should be incorporated on the Moodle page to ensure increased student interaction and improved student performance.

Methodology

For this research, data was collected using the qualitative research method. This research investigated students enrolled in a compulsory English course (LLFXX) at the University of the South Pacific. Data was collected during the semester of their enrolment.

Participants

For this research, 109 students enrolled in LLFXX were studied. These students were enrolled at the Laucala Campus (main campus) of the USP. 80 of these students were enrolled in Blended mode and 29 were enrolled in Print mode. The 80 Blended-mode students were based at the main campus. All 80 students were born after 1980 and thus were categorized as digital natives (Prensky 2001). The 29 Print-mode students, on the other hand, were based at a secondary school in the Suva area. They were enrolled as Print-mode

students due to their school being a franchise of the Pre-degree program of the USP. These Print-mode students were also digital natives (Prensky 2001).

Study Program

The Pre-degree program at the USP offers Preliminary (equivalent to Year 12) and Foundation (equivalent to Year 13) studies. LLFXX is a compulsory Pre-degree English course for the students enrolled in the Foundation program. It is offered via Blended and Print mode across the region.

Data

All the Laucala students enrolled in LLFXX were given an information sheet on this research and were informed about the study. Those who decided to participate were given a consent form to sign for their approval. These students were enrolled on the researcher's Sandbox Moodle page. Data was collected using the qualitative method as students filled in a questionnaire on the researcher's Sandbox Moodle page that the students were enrolled in.

Instruments

In this qualitative study, students answered a questionnaire, and data was collected from it. The questionnaire was designed on the researcher's Sandbox Moodle page and 109 students were enrolled in it. Options to the questions were given for students to choose from. A "other" option was also given in which students could type in any factor or option other than the ones mentioned that they would prefer. The data on the 109 students' responses was extracted from this Moodle page.

Data Analysis

Data was collected from students' responses to the questionnaire. These were divided into two themes from the research questions. Theme one was 'enhancing learning' and theme two was 'increasing interaction on Moodle'. The responses were further categorized into two modes of study: Blended and Print modes. The students' responses were portrayed using bar graphs.

Results

The results show students' suggestions for the changes that could be made to the LLFXX Moodle page to improve their engagement with the Moodle page.

Enhancing learning process

As shown in Figure 2, Blended mode students suggested including or improving on four elements of the LLFXX Moodle page to enhance the learning process. Most of the students (38%) opted for more resources for revision. 31% of Blended mode students also suggested changing the layout of the page. While 16% of students needed more activities and 15% of students needed more audio and video resources to be included on the course Moodle page.

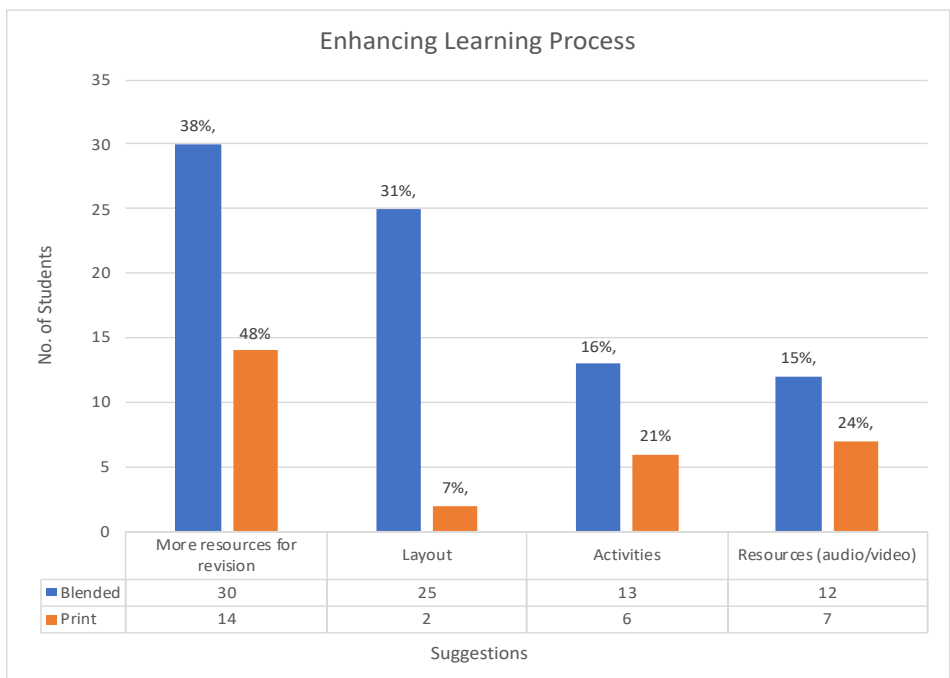


Figure 2. Suggestions for LLFXX Moodle page to enhance the learning process for students

Like Blended mode students, most of the Print students (48%) suggested that more resources for revision should be included on the course Moodle page. However, only 7%, the least number of students (2 students) wanted a change in the layout of the course Moodle page. This was the second highest suggestion for the Blended mode students. 24% of Print students wanted

more audio and video resources on the LLFXX Moodle page while 21% of students wanted more activities.

Increasing Student interaction on Moodle

Figure 3 depicts students' responses on increasing student interaction on Moodle. 59% of Blended mode students wanted access to resources on the Moodle page with fewer clicks. The remaining 49% of Blended mode students chose rewards for the highest number of interactions to boost students' Moodle interaction. On the other hand, most Print-mode students (55%) would like rewards for the highest number of interactions on the LLFXX Moodle page. While 41% of students preferred to have access to resources on the course Moodle page with fewer clicks. One student (4%) thought that focusing and managing student time would increase students' interaction on the LLFXX Moodle page.

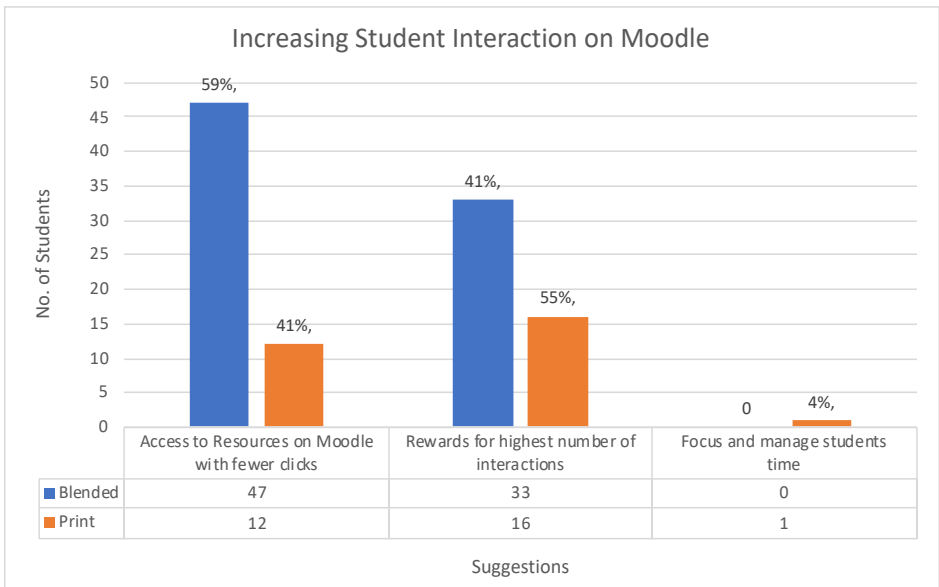


Figure 3. Suggestions for LLFXX Moodle page to increase student interaction

Discussion

This study explored Laucala campus students (both Blended and Print mode) preference for their LLFXX Moodle page. One of the first research

at the USP where Pre-degree students were asked for their suggestions on what changes on the Moodle page would boost their learning and increase their interaction on the course Moodle page. The first research question investigates if learners needed changes on their course Moodle page to enhance their learning (figure 2). Results show that students wanted a few changes on their Moodle page to improve their learning process.

Both Blended and Print mode students suggested that there was a need to increase resources (content) on the course Moodle page. The majority of the Blended (30) and Print (14) students needed more resources for revision on the LLFXX Moodle page. Revision materials in the form of past semester tests and exam papers are placed on the LLFXX Moodle page. Students need more topic or unit revision activities. They also need revision materials that can guide them in their assignments.

Similarly, a total of 37% of students (both Blended and Print modes) needed more activities and more audio and visual resources ((39%) (Ayan 2015, Aikina and Bolsunovskaya 2020, Zengin 2012). The Moodle page had tutorial activities for each unit with few audio and visual resources. Some audio and visual resources are guidelines for assignments. There is a need for instructors to provide links to resources rather than students looking for them. More educational videos on the topic of the units can be added to the resources. Grammar games rather than grammar activities would be more attention-seeking and would not only enhance student's learning but also increase their interaction on the Moodle page.

Furthermore, while a change in the layout of the course Moodle page (Moore 2012) was chosen by 31% of Blended mode students, being the second highest choice, only 7% of Print mode students wanted a change in the layout of their course Moodle page. It was the least option preferred by Print mode students. The layout of the page is a little confusing. It is essential to organise the resources properly so that students can locate and access them effortlessly.

The introduction and organizational resources need to be placed one after the other. The LLFXX Moodle page had the lectures and Unit 1 (weeks 1 & 2) resources in between the introduction and course overview. The page is organized according to the weeks. Basically, it outlines in which week(s) which unit needs to be taught. Unit 3 is taught in weeks 5 and 6. The tutorial activities are designed according to the unit. It does not differentiate which materials would be used in which weeks. Students need to know their resources

according to the weeks so that it is easy for them to organize themselves while attempting them. Each unit should have a small introduction to brief students on the learning outcomes and introductory notes. Then, in each unit, the different weeks can be mentioned as a folder. By clicking on that folder, the students can be directed to the resources and activities of that week. Such a layout would reduce confusion among students and enable them to access resources and activities swiftly and easily.

The second research question explores if learners need improvements in the Moodle page and a change in their approach when they deal with the Moodle page to increase their interaction on the course Moodle page (figure 3). It was discovered that learners confirm that changes in the Moodle page can lead to increased student interaction on Moodle.

Firstly, students prefer to access their learning resources easily and quickly. In simple terms, they need to access their resources with a few clicks on the course Moodle page (Moore 2012). Having to go through many sections or many clicks to reach the desired material is discouraging. Hence, students would not prefer to access these at all unless needed for assessment purposes. Thus, decreasing their interaction on Moodle.

Furthermore, motivation in the form of marks for the highest interaction can improve student interaction on Moodle. Receiving marks for interacting on Moodle will be an incentive for students. This can be assessed by the frequency of their engagement on discussion forums, chats, and other communicative sections. These engagements will generate communication and interest amongst students, resulting in increased interaction on the course Moodle page.

Finally, the appropriate attitude of students (Ifinedo, Pyke and Anwar 2018, Waheed et al. 2016) towards their study and educational platform is needed to ensure that they interact on their course Moodle page (LLFXX). It was acknowledged by a Print mode student that 'students need to be focused and manage their time wisely to increase their interaction' on the course page.

This research has acted as a mirror where students can reflect and report on their expectations of their course Moodle page. It should be mandatory for instructors to receive such student feedback regularly to provide to students with what they need and not what instructors assume students need. Thus, incorporating these suggestions from students on the Moodle page may improve students' interaction on the LLFXX Moodle page and may boost their learning and results.

Limitations

The limitation of this study was that only Laucala-based Blended and Print-mode students were studied. The research may have gathered more suggestions and would have been more informative had the students across the region been investigated.

Conclusion

This study concludes that students' responses in the form of suggestions should always be incorporated when designing or incorporating resource materials. Their suggestions give a clue as to what they prefer and, thus, what they may enjoy as their study resource.

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Elements of Energy Geopolitics

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ABSTRACT: This article delves into energy geopolitics as a complex field involving the analysis of how states and international actors interact to ensure access, control and efficient use of energy resources - oil, natural gas, coal and nuclear power. Collaboration in joint projects such as gas pipelines or renewable energy projects can be a key element in establishing strategic relationships. A crucial aspect of energy geopolitics is the degree of dependence of some countries on energy resources and, in this sense, states that hold significant resources often have a strategic advantage, being able to influence geopolitical relations by providing or restricting access to these resources. This article also explores the transportation routes whose control gives states significant influence in geopolitical dynamics, vulnerabilities and energy security, the transition to cleaner and renewable energy sources, and the extraordinary impact of technological advances.

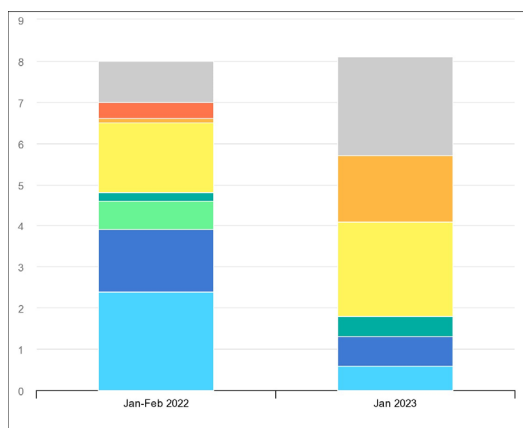
KEYWORDS: energy power, energy geopolitics, gas dependence, large energy routes, European cooperation in the energy field

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the global energy landscape changed dramatically. Regions around the world have experienced major price increases with strong impacts on economies and consumers, all against a geopolitical backdrop that has energy security at its core. The economic disruption caused by the war in Ukraine has amplified concerns for an accelerated energy transition, a shift that would not only move countries away from highly polluting fuels but also bring with it varying degrees of measured energy independence.

1. Elements of energy geopolitical analysis in Europe

In the context of today’s Europe, energy dependence and power are essential aspects of energy geopolitics, having significant consequences for security and stability in the region. Current issues are complex and heavily influenced by interactions with external suppliers, particularly Russia. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has profoundly transformed European and global gas markets. While the immediate effects of the initial shock have subsided in early 2023, the structural changes emerging in 2022 will persist for years and should be carefully assessed by policymakers and market players. However, according to the data presented in the IEA World Energy Investment Report (IEA 2023), the European Union (EU) faces a potential shortfall of almost 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas this year. However, the gap can be reduced by greater efforts to improve energy efficiency, implement renewable sources suitable for each area, install heat pumps, promote energy savings and increase gas reserves.

At the beginning of the year, Russia reduced the country’s oil production and thus replaced the sale to countries that respected the G7 price. Even though supply has fallen sharply, it appears that, despite the sanctions, Russia will continue to play a major role in global oil markets, ranking as the world’s third largest producer after the United States and Saudi Arabia. The same Report shows that in January of this year, total oil production was 11.2 mb/day. By comparison, total US oil production was 18.3 mb/d, while Saudi Arabia pumped 12.4 mb/d. We note, however, that the structure of exports is different from how it was at the beginning of 2022.



Sources: IEA, Argus, Kpler

The European Union's March 2022 commitments to phase out fossil fuel imports from Russia are having a major and rapid impact on the continent's energy and gas markets, visible for years to come and with major implications for global trade dynamics. The IEA World Energy Investment Report 2023 shows that the EU's dependence on Russian gas has steadily increased over the past decade. Russia's share of total EU gas demand has risen from 26% in 2010 to an average of over 40% in 2018-2021 and the IEA was among the first to raise concerns about this growing dependence. It is expected that China's role played in the global gas market will increase in the medium term and in this context, the architecture of global energy geopolitics embodied especially in gas supply and flexibility mechanisms will be changing.

Currently, the European natural gas markets are not out of the danger created by the supply reductions made by Russia. European countries still face the risk of a gas supply shortage in 2023 depending on the energy market movements of Russia and China. Other key factors are added and here we are thinking that Russian gas reserves could decrease and also the EU's supply of liquefied natural gas. We can also add the weather factor in that the unusually mild early winter temperatures could change.

Of course, measures have also been taken at the level of the governments of European countries to reduce this risk, and the efforts regarding energy efficiency, renewable sources and heat pumps, measures to recover nuclear and hydropower production in 2022, from the very low levels of the last decade, in order to reduce the potential gap between the demand and supply of natural gas.

The fact that the supply shock induced by Russia has driven natural gas prices to record highs in European hubs cannot be overlooked in the analysis of energy geopolitics. Monthly forward prices at TTF (Dutch TTF Natural Gas Futures Pricing) – Europe's main gas hub – averaged more than seven times the average between 2016 and 2020 (IEA 2023, *How to Avoid Gas Shortages in the European Union in 2023*).

In this context, some key actions can be deduced in order to reduce market demand and, according to the recommendations of the International Energy Agency Report - *How to Avoid Gas Shortages in the European Union in 2023*, they consist in stimulating faster improvements in energy efficiency, a faster implementation of renewable sources, accelerating the electrification of heat doubled by encouraging behavioral changes among consumers. There have also been major initiatives by EU member states as

well as infrastructure projects that aim to increase the resilience of European gas markets, strengthen solidarity and limit excessive price increases. Here we recall the Storage Regulation adopted by the European Union in June 2022, introducing minimum gas storage obligations, according to which storage sites must be filled to at least 80% of their capacity before the winter of 2022-2023 and with 90% before all next winter periods so as to ensure an adequate supply buffer until the end of the first quarter of 2024.

The joint task force announced by the EU and the United States in March 2022 to strengthen European energy security represents a success in the field of energy diplomacy alongside the June 2022 memorandum of understanding on a strategic partnership in the field of energy concluded by the European Union with Azerbaijan.

We believe that in an era of heightened geopolitical uncertainty, global security of gas supply will remain at the forefront of energy policymaking, with increasing complexity in both the short and long term.

2. Elements of energy geopolitical analysis in Romania

Romania has a significant dependence on fossil resources, especially coal and natural gas. This dependence can influence geopolitical relations, given the importance of these resources in the country's energy mix. However, Romania's economy has withstood the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine well. From the Commission Staff Working Document, 2023 Country Report – Romania, it follows that Romania's real GDP increased by 4.7% in 2022 despite high inflation. However, imports increased more than exports and the current account deficit widened to 9.3% of GDP. The impact of rising energy prices has been mitigated by various measures taken at the government level in 2022 even if most are short-term measures. Romania also applies the EU solidarity contribution in the application of Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1854.

From the point of view of dependence on Russian natural gas, Romania is in a positive situation due to the domestic production of natural gas and a balanced, reasonable energy mix. Measures taken to reduce gas consumption, the temporary restart of previously shut-down coal-fired power plants and a 60% solidarity tax imposed on the additional revenue generated by power producers that goes directly to the energy transition fund have further contributed to reducing this dependence. However, it is highly dependent on

fossil fuels in general, particularly for oil, and the economy has been severely affected by energy price developments, requiring Romania to step up its energy transition efforts and protect vulnerable consumers. Of course, a geopolitical analysis of the energy sector in Romania must take into account several essential elements, highlighting the complex interactions between internal and external factors that shape the country's energy landscape.

In the context of climate change and the diversification of energy sources, Romania is turning its attention to renewable sources. Investments in wind, solar and hydropower can change geopolitical dynamics and contribute to the country's energy security. So, Romania has wind farms located in different regions of the country, which are modern and have incorporated new, developed technologies that have increased production capacity and reduced costs. Also, photovoltaic solar parks with a significant capacity have been developed in Romania, solar installations on the roofs of industrial and commercial buildings and investments have been made in the modernization and expansion of hydroelectric plants. It should be noted that Romania's ecological transition requires continuous action in several main directions of action, including renewable sources, sustainable transport, air quality and adaptation to climate change.

Statistical data from the country report show that the deployment of renewable energy in Romania reached a total of 11,138 MW in 2021, increasing by 0.15% compared to 2020 (48). Most of this growth was in solar (+1% in 2021). Romania currently has no offshore wind power. Major challenges remain in decarbonisation and energy efficiency, and lower greenhouse gas emissions in the construction and transport sectors are needed to achieve national targets.

We also see the retraining of workers from declining sectors as a challenge, and this essential transformation is growing strongly in Romania. The considerable share of jobs in the energy-consuming sectors in the total employment in Romania highlights the need for continuous investments in skills specific to the transition to an economy that operates mostly with green energy. Skills are essential for smooth labor market transitions and job retention in transforming sectors. In this sense, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) contributes to the development of ecological skills and jobs by investing in education and training. We believe that the general trends presented contributed to the diversification of Romania's energy mix, led to the reduction of dependence on fossil resources, reflect concerns for

sustainability and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and also have a positive economic impact.

Romania is the second largest producer of natural gas in the EU after the Netherlands, able to generate up to 80% of the natural gas it needs and imports the difference during peak demand periods in the winter, mainly from Russia. Gas production fell from 2017 to 8.8 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2021 (-4.5%/y) but the downward trend reversed in 2022 (+2.5% vs. 2021), with a contribution from tapping offshore reserves (Romania 2023 Country Report). From the fact that production covered 76% of consumption in 2021, while imports increased to 3.6 billion cubic meters, it follows that, especially in the winter season, Romania depends on Russian gas.

We can also state that Romania has a well-developed natural gas transport and storage infrastructure, with good cross-border connections, but it does not have a liquefied natural gas terminal for storage or regasification. So, by 2029, its gas storage capacity is expected to increase by 1.6 billion cubic meters. Moreover, there are several pending gas projects involving Romania in the list of Projects of Common Interest aimed at increasing underground gas storage, expanding internal transport capacity to Hungary as well as taking over gas from the Black Sea.

Seen from the perspective of energy diplomacy, foreign policy in the field of energy security has a series of well-established objectives which, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consist in the major use of domestic production, in the diversification of imports and transport routes for hydrocarbons on Romanian territory. So, it is taken into account that the Black Sea Region is an area of increased interest for its offshore hydrocarbon potential and the interconnection of the national natural gas transportation system with those of neighboring countries along the BRUA corridor (Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria), creates the necessary conditions for regional diversification. Romania completed, in 2020, all 3 new compressor stations needed to put into operation the first phase of the BRUA project, in accordance with the schedule that will ensure a transport capacity of 1.75 bcm/year, in reverse flow, at interconnection on the Romanian-Hungarian border line, and 1.5 bcm/year at the interconnection point between Romania and Bulgaria (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021).

The EU adopted the REPowerEU Plan to save energy, produce clean energy and diversify energy supply in response to energy disruptions following

the attack on Ukraine. In addition to these measures, the Commission launched the EU Energy Platform in April 2022 which has three major objectives: the aggregation of energy demand and the joint purchase of gas, the much more efficient use of existing energy infrastructure and international expansion (European Commission 2022). In 2022, the EU Energy Platform has been central to the EU's diversification efforts, facilitating the signing of MoUs with key gas exporting partner countries such as the US, Azerbaijan, Egypt and Norway, and increasing international outreach to support the REPowerEU Plan.

Romania remains engaged in joint European efforts to implement actions related to the Energy Union and the measures to strengthen Europe's energy security, to achieve long-term objectives in the field of energy and climate change and the measures to achieve an integrated and functional energy market remain priority. In achieving this goal, a technologically up-to-date infrastructure with adequate interconnections and reliable networks is very important for achieving an integrated energy market. The Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E), which are actually a policy that focuses on connecting the energy infrastructure of EU countries, also fall under the same guidelines. In this regard, eleven priority corridors and three priority thematic areas have been identified and the EU is helping countries in these areas to work together to develop better connected energy networks.

3. Conclusions

It is evident that energy transition efforts have intensified over the past decade, but have been tempered by macroeconomic, geopolitical challenges and the global medical pandemic. However, governments around the world are paying more attention to the development of renewable energy technologies and the resulting economic and social transformations. But let's not forget that amid an uncertain economic outlook, energy and mining companies face a multitude of challenges in the coming years. Even though energy policy developments in recent years have been favorable and have provided considerable short- and medium-term opportunities for the energy and mining sectors, it portends that interest rates will remain high and economic growth is slowing, which poses a challenge for energy market participants.

There is also emerging interest from major mining companies in critical minerals, energy transition, climate strategy and decarbonization of

operations in future investment plans, leading us to believe that the medium-term outlook for the mining sector remains strong, particularly after the global economy finds a solid footing as energy transition efforts continue to grow at a sustained and predictable pace. I would add that there are also near-term challenges to the roll-out of renewable and traditional energy infrastructure which leads us to believe that the industry will take a cautious and rigorous approach to project development efforts in the near term, trying to avoid challenges with that have faced so far.

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The Implementation of E-learning in Algeria during the COVID-19 Time: Case Study of Relizane Second-Year English Department Students of Master Degree

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the use of e-learning, primarily focusing on the Moodle platform, at the University of Relizane in Algeria during the three years of the pandemic. The participants in this study were second-year master's students of English in the Department of English at Relizane University. Forty second-year master's students were invited to answer a questionnaire of three open questions and one open-ended question. The responses were analyzed quantitatively. One of the most interesting findings of this study is that the unexpected and surprising lockdown that imposed this electronic type of learning has been difficult for both students and the governing body to cope with. One conclusion of this study is that the Algerian University and its students are still unready to embrace the use of e-learning, preferring the old traditional type of learning.

KEYWORDS: e-learning, COVID-19, traditional classroom learning

Introduction

E-learning is defined as the use of information and communication technologies to enable access to online learning/teaching resources. A narrow definition of

e-learning may be that of any internet-based or web-based learning (LaRose et al. 1998; Keller and Cernerud, 2002). Abbad et al. (2009) defined e-learning as any learning that is enabled electronically. According to OECD (2005), is defined as the use of information and communication technologies in diverse processes of education to support and enhance learning in institutions of higher education, including the usage of information and communication technology as a complement to traditional classrooms, online learning or mixing the two modes. According to Tao et al. (2006), this new kind of learning environment has enabled learners in universities to receive support at an individual level and gave them access also to more suitable learning schedules as well as separate from other learners. This also led to facilitating a higher interaction between teachers and peers than those in traditional environments of learning. E-learning in academic settings made the process of learning more interesting, active, and enjoyable (Liaw et al. 2007). According to Hammer and Champy (2001) and Liaw et al. (2007), the main features that have made e-learning promising in education include service, cost, quality, and speed. It is apparent that e-learning can empower students at higher educational levels to acquire their education while at the same time pursuing their personal objectives and maintaining their own careers, with no need to adhere to a rigid schedule (Borstorff and Lowe 2007). Kartha (2006), in support of this thought, reported that the number of courses online has vividly increased as a result of the attained benefits for both learners and universities.

However, all the above-mentioned examples of the success of electronic learning have been done mostly in the Western world, where technology is a very significant trait of a welfare society and where people generally do have access to all sorts of highly developed equipments and devices. In this respect, one would inquire about if this can give the same results in the third world countries. So the question that should be asked is: if we make a projection of these findings on the under-developed world and, more specifically Algeria, then would e-learning be the right choice for Algeria especially in its current situation? Another question that must be asked is: to what extent has e-learning been (during COVID-19) beneficial to our students in general and to our department students in specific? This study is going to focus on the usefulness of distance learning during the pandemic, where the government was obliged to impose a total lockdown, especially for the students who lived in the situation in Algeria.

This study is organized as follows. The first chapter focuses on the theoretical side and previous literature. The second chapter covers the study and its findings. The last chapter concludes all that was done in the study.

Literature review

The development in social theorisation that led to the appearance of some perspectives like constructivism and socio-cultural theory has proved the necessity of society for the creation of healthy social individuals. One of the most important and current facts that the individual is living in is the online learning tools provided by technology. This made it necessary for today's individuals to be integrated into this new technological world. The use of social networks, collaborative learning and social integration are the logical results that all today's individuals are witnessing. It is argued that children show better learning results in a social environment, and are able to create meaning using engagement with others. Collaboration, direction and support have been proven to help a child make better performances and solve more complicated problems. This type of teaching and learning environment allows children and students to independently and inductively provide conclusions, develop more intellectual abilities, and increase the quality of durability and knowledge.

Electronic learning

E-learning is a new technological tool that is used to offer instructional programs to distant learners (Arkorful and Abaidoo 2015). It is an online learning platform (such as the one in Algeria named Moodle) that emerges in a more formal context, making use of a variety of multimedia technologies. Hardware and software electronics support this system, whether online or offline. It is made via personal computers that are usually used for delivering training or computer-enhanced learning related to e-learning. Other communicative technologies furnish learning based on learning support systems, tutorials, and online lectures (Kattoua, Al-Lozi and Alrowwad 2016). Classroom engagement is improved here by technological tools that provide positive environments where students can deliberately engage in online tutorials to complete tasks assigned to them.

In e-learning, the learning process takes place through texts, videos, interactive graphics and collaborative sharing in which students are involved.

This would normally lead to an enhancement of teaching and learning quality. Also, it reports the need for higher institutions for the maintenance of competitive advantage as well as access to education and training. This led to the reduction of student's costs pertaining to their studies while improving the quality of learning and teaching (Songkram 2015). This can prove that electronic learning can be economical for students as they can do other useful activities in their spare time (Aparicio, Bacao and Oliveira 2016). In addition to being economical, e-learning is also flexible. This is due to the fact that it provides its users the possibility of using it and having classes anytime and anywhere. Also, it gives a variety of learning approaches by making use of much interactive content available on the internet (Songkram et al. 2015). Distance learning is an increasingly expanding midst, enabling its users the possibility of operating outside the barriers of time and place. In university education, Gilbert (2015) says that online learning is defined as that kind of learning taking place completely or partially over the internet.

Advantages of e-learning

Previous studies have shown a number of advantages pertaining to the implementation of electronic learning technologies into university education (Raspopovic et al. 2017). E-learning is more likely to be learner-centered because it can effectively deliver knowledge if compared to traditional educational institutions (Huang and Chiu 2015). This fact is so because objectives can be achieved in a shorter time and with the least effort. The effects of e-learning on education are found to provide equal access to information regardless of the users' locations, ethnicity, race, age, etc. The electronic learning environment helps students rely more on themselves in knowledge and this makes instructors serve as guides and advisors (Joshua et al. 2016).

A variety of studies have shown the advantages of e-learning from the perspectives of learners (Gautam and Tiwari, 2016; Martínez-Caro, Cegarra-Navarro and Cepeda-Carrión, 2015; Chang, 2016). For example, electronic learning reduces the need for travelling as classes can be taken online. Interactive videos facilitate the way for learners in the sense of giving them opportunities to get deeper insights of the information (Ibid). This allows online learners to respond instantly to the activities.

Also, one of the benefits of e-learning is that it enhances communication between students and instructors. E-learning allows part-time students, as

well as full-time ones, to participate in online degree courses from any location (Radu, Radu and Croitoru 2015). Not only that, but e-learning enables even disabled people to pursue their education from any place in the world. The most common types of e-learning are: Learning Content Management System (LCMS), Learning Support System (LSS), Learning Design System (LDS), and Learning Management System (LMS).

For instance, LMS has been adopted by many educational institutions. In general, LMS has the ability to perform three common functions. These functions include presentation and systematization of training content. The second is the creation of assignments for the sake of testing knowledge. The third is that of evaluation progress. Furthermore, the LMS software can be used to publish, plan, and deliver online courses. So as to see the effectiveness of this software system in education, Muruthy and Yamin (2017) outlined a number of advantages. The first is flexibility in relation to an increased collaboration between students and faculty members. In addition to this, it has been determined as very useful in enhancing the institutional practices that need learner involvement. According to Muruthy & Yamin (2017), LMS has also been found to be effective in promoting centralized learning in relation to simplified learning process and low cost.

Al-Handhali et al. (2020) highlighted many other benefits of this software system. They claimed it as user-friendly, time managing, and course managing. Furthermore, it has the ability to provide reminders to users, including delivery dates, test dates, and answering questions.

In addition to LMS, Moodle has also been determined as one of the most effective platforms of e-learning. Aydin & Tirkes (2010) aligned this with its flexibility in showing the modules employed and its help in using any teaching style or environment mode. In considering the learning environment, Moodle has been determined as easy to use because it offers a variety of options.

Disadvantages of e-learning

Although e-learning has been highlighted as very useful along with the advantages that it has in education, it has also been found to show a lot of disadvantages (Collins et al. 1997; Klein and Ware 2003; Hameed et al. 2008; Almosa 2002; Akkoyuklu and Soylu 2006; Lewis 2000; Scott et al. 1999; Marc 2002; Dowling et al. 2003; Mayes 2002). For example, Dowling et al.

(2003) argue that access to learning materials online improves learning only for specific forms of collective assessment. Not only that, but Mayes (2002) questions the usability of e-learning and inquires whether it is only a support device for existing methods of learning. The most noticeable drawback of e-learning is isolation and the complete absence of real personal interactions. This is not only at the level of that between learners and instructors, but also at the level of colleague learners (Young, 1997; Burdman, 1998). Also, the e-learning method in education might be regarded as less effective than the traditional method of learning. It is shown that the process of learning is much easier in comparison with the use of face-to-face interaction with instructors.

It is claimed e-learning has a negative effect when it comes to improving the communicative skills of learners. The learners might acquire excellent knowledge in academics, but they may not be able to share it with others.

Also, it is impossible for some fields of study to rely on e-learning such as those which need practical courses. For instance, medical sciences, pharmacy, technical sciences, etc., cannot employ e-learning. Researchers have argued that e-learning can prove its effectiveness in social science and humanities rather than those fields where there is the need to develop practical skills.

A number of other related problems exist, such as the difficulty, if not impossibility, of controlling cheating. This is in addition to facts like piracy and plagiarism as well as the ease of copy and paste. E-learning may also lead to overcrowding or heavy use of some websites. This may bring about unexpected and unanticipated costs both in time and money disadvantages (Collins et al. 1997; Klein and Ware 2003; Hameed et al. 2008; Almosa 2002; Akkoyuklu & Soylyu 2006; Lewis 2000; Scott et al. 1999; Marc 2002).

Methods and materials

Population and Sampling

University students in Algeria have been considered as the population for this study, and thus, students enrolled in Relizane University during the three academic years of COVID-19 were included in the study population. Based on the sample size calculation and number of students studying in the second semester, 40 students were randomly selected as a sample for this study, with an equal male and female ratio.

Procedure

Before the data collection, permission was required from the University of Relizane. After obtaining permission from the university staff, consent from students who wish to participate in the study was also required. All the students were ensured that their participation and personal information will be kept confidential. A close-ended structured questionnaire was constructed to collect data from students.

Instrument

The questionnaire comprised two sections; the first section presents information about name, age and gender. The second part comprised open questions. The first question was to what extent they have used e-learning in studying for their exam. The second question was about the differences between e-learning and traditional classroom learning and if e-learning was more enjoyable to them. The third question was about the obstacles they have found during the use of e-learning. The fourth question was to cite some advantages and disadvantages of e-learning. The fifth question was if they thought they could rely completely on e-electronic learning and if not they were asked to choose between 100%, 50% and 25%. The questionnaire was in the English language.

Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire was evaluated by experts from the English department academics who specialized in didactics before using it for data collection. This led to some corrections in the questionnaire and interviews, considering the suggestions of experts to ensure its validity and reliability.

Results and discussion

A total of 40 students participated in the questionnaire. The first question, which was on the extent to which my students relied on the e-learning platform provided by the Ministry for studying for their exams, was answered by saying *almost always*. Most of the students in question said they relied on studying from the platform approximately with a rate of 90%; the remaining 10% said they *sometimes* used it. The second question was about giving some differences between traditional classroom learning and e-learning and whether they found

e-learning more enjoyable than that taking place in classrooms. The informants, with a percentage of 57%, said *they preferred traditional classroom learning to that of distance learning*. The remaining of the students' opinions were split between those who preferred e-learning with a rate of 17.5%, while the others 25% did not show any preference for any of the modes of learning. Perhaps the most important question in this study is the third one which was about the obstacles that they faced during their learning process while using the platform provided by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. A total of 90% of informants said they faced a problem with internet access and lack of materials. The remaining 10% of them said they sometimes found problems with internet connection. The last question was about the possibility of relying on e-learning in their studies. The question was open-ended with answers of three percentages of (100%, 50%, 25%). The informants with a rate of 90% chose 50%, in the sense they said they would rely on distance learning just partly or they would like only half of their studies to be online. The remaining 10% chose 25%. None of informants, surprisingly enough, choose to rely on e-learning at a 100% of rate.

Table 1: The use of e-learning in exams

	Always	Sometimes
The use of e-learning in exams	90%	10%

Table 2: The difference between traditional learning and e-learning

	Traditional learning	E-learning	No difference
Students' rates	57.5%	17.5%	25%

Table 3: Obstacles of e-learning

Internet access	Lack of materials	Lack of experience
90%	95%	85%
10%	05%	15%

Table 4: Students' reliance on e-learning

	100%	50%	25%
Students' reliance on e-learning	00%	90%	10%

As mentioned earlier, this study is an elicitation of using e-learning by second-year master students of English at the Algerian University of Relizane. The informants were asked to show the reality of distance learning because they faced it and lived with the situation at full. Concerning the first question, the answers of relying on e-learning to prepare for their exams were legitimately positive in the sense that they really used the platform to revise for their exams. Most, if not all, of the students did use the platform for their studies. This is because they had no other choice but the platform to help them prepare for their examination tests. The second question, which tackled the differences between traditional classroom learning and electronic learning, was simply answered in a way that favored traditional learning (57.5%) to that of e-learning. The students explained this with focusing on the importance of the teacher in their learning process. According to the results, the students in question felt more secure when they were in classrooms and with their teachers in face-to-face. This really has to be considered because it adds to the valuable position of the teacher as a real guidance of the learning process and it is almost impossible to accomplish any kind of study without their presence. The third question, which is almost the most important since it is my motivation to make this study, was answered with a lot of complaints on the part of the students in question. A total of 90% of the students said they had problems with internet connection, lack of materials and electronic devices in the accomplishment of their learning process in general. They complained about the weak and slow flow of internet while using it, and disconnection most of the time. So, most of the students said they sometimes could never get access to the platform when trying to reach it. Not only this, but most of the students said they were not used to such kind of studying and hence failed in using it as a source of learning. Also, others said it was expensive for them to pay for internet connection. The last question was about whether they could rely solely on internet-based studying; all of them did not want to rely on it but rather wanted half of their studies to be online. This might give us a general idea about the consideration of distance learning in Algeria.

Conclusion

The unexpected and surprising turn into distance learning was difficult for students and teachers to cope with. Suddenly, Algeria found itself

in a problem of lockdown where traditional learning could no longer be applied and found itself lost between either stopping studies because of the known reason of COVID-19 or using distance learning as an alternative and accepting the results would not be fruitful because the already known situation of Algeria. Before COVID-19, internet access in Algeria was only used for fun and entertainment for most of the students in the sense it was used mostly for Facebook, gaming, and spending time on Messenger for fun and entertainment. COVID-19, which imposed a total lockdown, can be seen as a collective shock to the Algerian people in general and the university education in special. In an overnight, the government found itself in front of a new situation that had never been dealt with before and had to find quick solutions to cope with the new situation. The Algerian government was lost and found it difficult to implement e-learning in higher education. What can be concluded is that the Algerian government and the students are not yet ready to adopt e-learning in education which means this would take some more time in the future to be accomplished. Perhaps, the government has to spend more expenses on technological equipments such as ICT availability and improve internet flow at the university and elsewhere in isolated parts of the country, in addition to forming both teachers and students to make it easy for them to adapt to this new type of learning.

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The Social Worker and the Religious Education Teacher in the Context of the Romanian School

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ABSTRACT: The challenges that students in Romanian schools face are increasing day by day, from learning difficulties to different challenges in adapting to the school context. Peer pressure and contemporary temptations that put pressure on students are often impossible to overcome. Therefore, there is a need for the support for those students who are in vulnerable situations, support offered by the school's social worker and the religious education teacher in order to overcome the moments that can have a negative impact on the educational evolution and also on the harmonious development of the student.

KEYWORDS: social work, school community, school success, challenges, belonging, volunteering, religious education teacher

Introduction

The school, as an institution, has always sought to prepare children for life by providing them with the necessary information and skills to be successful. In the school context, in addition to the instructive aspect, a great emphasis is placed on the formative aspect, which involves the moral and spiritual dimension.

On the other hand, the involvement of students in social activities has a major impact on their development as mature people and responsible individuals in the community. It will lead them to contribute what they

can to the well-being of their living place. The social activities in which students can get involved voluntarily also aim to help them discover their abilities, understand themselves, and identify their aspirations for the future. Volunteering helps, at the same time, to create healthy relationships between students and develop a strong sense of belonging.

1. The Religious Education teacher as the person who implements social work in the school in favor of the students

In the conditions of a hypercognitized education, the school must offer students the elements of support for overcoming difficulties, which can influence the formation and structuring of the character. In this sense, the interdisciplinary approach of some contents, viewed from the point of view of moral and religious education, can contribute to the improvement of a situation, which, for the time being, seems to have no way out, given that consistent efforts are still needed in the direction emphasizing the formative-educational dimension of education.

Throughout the centuries, education aimed to prepare subjects for their integration into the respective social context (Rotaru 2021a, 87-92). This goal is pursued and fulfilled both through the instructive and the formative aspects of education. An education that takes into account the academic (cognitive) part and the civic part, can be a good education, even chosen, but incomplete, because the student also has an immortal soul.

Thus, religious education aims to prepare the subject for this life, with all its problems and difficulties, but also for the next one. That is why in the school context, in addition to the instructive aspect, which is intended to be of the best academic dress, great emphasis is placed on the formative aspect, which involves the moral and spiritual dimension. In school, spiritual formation constitutes „the aura or adornment of the formation of the person as a whole: body, soul, intellect, manners.” (Opriș and Bacoș 2004, 287).

In the educational system in Romania, the presence of a social worker in schools is not yet foreseen, but the need for social workers in schools is supported, along with the obvious reality of the multiplication of medical, psychological and socio-cultural problems in educational systems, and the results of investigations; thus, a study conducted in the USA by the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher found that, when asked to list services for which they would like to see increased funding in their school,

approximately 40% of American teachers nominate first of all “social work and services for families.” (Metropolitan Life Survey of American Teacher 1989, 27).

The reality in which we live in our Romanian context shows us that there is a need for people to sensitize students to put into practice the social work values and their implementation in everyday life. This very valuable approach is easy to implement through Religious Education classes in school. When it comes to religious education, the educator needs a correct point of reference to know where he is guiding the subject entrusted to him. The Religious Education teacher is specifically mandated to teach this principle and explain how this truth can be applied. They must be taught to put it into practice because, “only then will the teaching be effective when it correlates the truth of the lesson with the life, needs and experience of those who listen.” (Doherty 1998, 67).

The objectives of education aim at learning, internalizing, mastering cognitive, affective and volitional capacities (Rotaru 2021b, 190-196). Religious education is a complex action that aims to inform and train students in order to achieve the ideal of life. The main purpose of education is an informative one, which aims at assimilating knowledge from the teachings of the Holy Scripture that students will use and apply in everyday life. Another purpose of education is the formative one, which aims at the moral and spiritual preparation of students by developing their will, feelings and reason. The formative aspect of education is based on the quality of the human soul to be influenced and formed by external factors. Since the content of religious education derives from revealed teaching, in order to be understood, students must be more sensitive and receptive.

Through religious education, the formation of the religious-moral character is aimed at, but this cannot be achieved without a volume of religious knowledge. A balance must be struck between informative and formative without diminishing the role of either of these purposes (Opriș 2000, 43). When children realize that life is a maze of roads and intersections and that they have choices to make every day, they will look for a good map to help them find their way. This map is called the worldview, and everyone has one. Our children today have to choose between many worldviews, but only one can give them the real answers and good direction (White and Weidmann 2001, 315). Applying the principles of social work within the educational system, through school’ social work,, aims to facilitate the achievement of the major objective of education, namely to provide an appropriate context for learning and development, in which all children are prepared to understand

the world in which they live and in which they will become active in the future (Costin 1987, 538).

The fundamental purpose of the social work services in school is subordinated to the goals of education, aiming to create the necessary conditions for students to satisfy their basic educational needs, develop their ability to make decisions and solve problems, develop their ability to adapt to change and be prepared to take responsibility for their own conduct. Students who are supported to find satisfaction, practical or intellectual, in the process of learning and training their own skills develop a sense of personal and social autonomy defining for effective integration in the community. That is why the general objective of social work in school aims primarily at identifying barriers to learning and removing them. Given the coincidence of the objectives pursued by school education and the school' social work, it follows that all significant changes within the educational system, as a result of the pressures exercised by other subsystems of the social system, influence the content and specifics of the social work activity in the school.

Educational social work refers to practical social work directed towards the education sector and aimed at school-age children. Its aim is to ensure that all children can benefit optimally from a meaningful educational experience. The practice of contemporary educational social work is influenced by increasing knowledge about the value of education. Examining how schools influenced children's behavior and life experiences encouraged the development of the whole school concept - which ensures that responsibility for solving problems is shared among all members of the school community, not simply seen as the sole responsibility of staff from the social work (Blyth 2001, 109). The need for the social work in school became evident in the decades after the Second World War, in close correlation with a series of major developments at the level of society and education, namely: the democratization of education, the extension of civic and child rights, and the increase the role of education in modern social life.

The democratization of education represented a strong current of opinion that appeared in the 60s, as a result of the dissemination of the results of the sociology of education research, which demonstrated how the school takes over and accentuates social inequalities, aiming to ensure the perpetuation of the dominance of the privileged social classes. It was directly incriminated the school selection and evaluation practices, the quantitative

and qualitative concentration of resources in the elite schools in the urban environment, the lack of ideological neutrality of their educational content, the elaborate language code used in the school and which disadvantaged students from poor families, who used a restricted linguistic code, the school's overemphasis on verbal ability, which disadvantages students with intelligent practice, etc. The representatives of different currents of the sociology of education claimed that the school system seems specially designed to give an education of inferior quality to children from the rural environment, those from the working class or belonging to ethnic and racial minorities.

Faced with these realities, the school wanted to be an instrument for equalizing opportunities; if initially the decision-makers considered equalizing the chances of access to school, later it was shown that this approach alone is not enough; the access equalization was doubled by the success equalization attempt. „A central idea in the approach to the democratization of education, the equalization of opportunities does not imply either leveling or guaranteeing an identical treatment to everyone, in the name of formal equality, but means offering each individual a method, a cadence, forms of education that correspond to him.” (Faure 1974, 126).

A sustained and long-lasting effort was necessary to achieve the dissemination of democratic values in education, and in this effort the social workers in the school also got involved; since the democratization of education does not only mean more education for more people, but also more people to participate in school decision-making, both administratively and educationally, school' social workers had to carry out a new mission – the one of facilitating the participation of students and parents in the management of school funds, in establishing the calendar of activities, in discussing the School Regulations, etc. The intensification of the participation of students and their parents in all moments of school life, the resettlement of the teacher-student relationship on a democratic basis and the mitigation of social-cultural disparities in education, determined by the liberalization of access to school learning, were major objectives in the activity of social work in the school.

The extension of civic rights to children represents a particular aspect of the process of democratization of societies, which manifested itself more and more strongly in the second half of the 20th century, as a result of research progress in the field of child psychology and evolutionary trends at the family level. The extension of civic rights over the child represents the penetration of democratic values in the child-adult relationship, which led

to the modification of the status of the child in the family, but also at school, the understanding of the psychological specificity of the child determined the re-discussion of some family and school educational practices; there was talk about the exposure of children to various types of abuse and the need to protect children from the abusive behavior of adults, parents or teachers. The abuse can lead the child to different types of addictions, because the addictive behavior intended to reverse a profound, intolerable sense of helplessness (Dodes 2011, 12). Child protection appeared, as a specific form of social work, which seeks to respect the rights of the child.

On November 20, 1989, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Child's Rights, an international document that recognizes for the first time in the history that a child has the same human value as an adult and must be treated with the same respect (Morşanu 1996, 193).

The growing role of education in social life has drawn attention to another phenomenon, namely school maladjustment. School maladjustment and school failure have evolved from the stage of isolated problems, specific to certain students and interpreted as problems related to the deficiencies of the subject, to the stage of true social phenomena as social integration demanded an increasingly higher level of studies, under the conditions in which everywhere in society a higher and higher educational qualification is demanded and the level of compulsory schooling is prolonged, from the individual's academic failure his social failure is deduced.

School maladjustment is the phenomenon that school's social workers must prevent or solve, which implies the following directions of action: investigating the social causes of school maladjustment, improving the school-family relationship and training the skills specific to social maturity. School adaptation involves both achieving school performance and adapting to the school group, based on the assimilation of age-specific values, there is a strong relationship between school success and adaptation to the group of students, expressed in the definition of school success as an indicator of school adaptation; thus, for example, it is appreciated that the student registers a school failure when he is unadapted to the school environment, to the collective of his class, when he experiences a situation of exclusion or conflict. Along with attending school, the child's relational field diversifies and enriches by establishing cooperative-competitive relationships with peers. In puberty, the needs for security, as well as those of love and belonging to the group, are specific (Munteanu 2003, 244).

Forming groups for students to participate in is of great importance, especially groups aimed at integrating students into society or calling on them to use the gifts and talents that they possess. The Religious Education teacher can also involve the students in the activities led by the church from the community. So, the process of socialization in school is characterized by social involvement, the context of the student class, and the process of social comparison, which influences the acquisition of school and social norms and values. These can be seen and put into practice in the community, especially by the people who live locally and the R. E. teacher who transmits them. It is so necessary for the students to see a role model in the adults from the school, especially to see a role model in the social worker and the R.E. teacher. It is so easy to judge and criticize them but not give them a model to follow and to support them in the moments of their vulnerability. Children need more models of healthy behavior than criticism (Burns 2010, 97).

The school's social work fights for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and other dysfunctional social phenomena: drug addiction, alcoholism, vandalism. The school is a subsystem of the global social system, having both a reactive and proactive character in relation to the dynamics of the society in which it integrates. The school and the community form an ecosystem characterized by relative stability and, consequently, the problems of the school cannot be treated separately from the problems of the community. Between school misadjustment and juvenile delinquency, a circular causality relationship is established, which can be summarized as follows: the models of deviant behavior in the community are reproduced in school, generate punishment, labeling and marginalization - the frustrations experienced by students at school fuel the motivation of non-compliance with the norms and school values, manifesting in deviant behaviors in the school and extracurricular social space.

Analyzing the phenomenon of child development, we find that it involves a socialization process in which the child learns to conform to society's norms and act appropriately (Bonchiş and Secui 2004, 53). But unfortunately the reverse is also true, when the child refuses to socialize, the link between school and community raises additional difficulties in the way of developing strategies to prevent maladjustment in school. Thus, measures such as stricter supervision of student behavior, school rules with appropriate prescriptive content may have the effect of reducing acts of violence and vandalism in schools, but at the same time, these problem behaviors will migrate into the community.

To the extent that the social worker in the school has the role of improving the relationship between the school and the other institutions of the community, naming the church also, favoring the school adaptation of all students, this approach translates into a reduction of social integration problems at the level of society. The therapeutic character of the work of the social worker in the school also serves the community, as the school becomes more capable of providing it with balanced, competent, healthy graduates, with the ability to adapt to the changes in the world in which they live.

Educational programs made in school aimed at preventing alcoholism, drug use, violent behavior, etc. have proven their effectiveness over time (Robbins 1966, 98). The school has the power to positively influence the behavior of students, even if they come into contact with deviant patterns of behavior outside of school. The school's social work can act decisively in this regard, coordinating the efforts of all educational staff and rewarding socially desirable models of conduct.

In conclusion, from the presentation of interdependent developments of the level of the school education and the level of school's social work, it follows that the need for the social work in school comes from the very social determination of educational systems, students arrive at school marked by their socio-cultural origin, which is manifested in the set of specific values, in the „pre-scientific” level and content of using school knowledge, in their social interaction skills. The social determination of educational systems refers to the multitude of socio-cultural variables that characterize the school population and that influence the development of the educational process and its efficiency. The action of these variables manifests itself in the family socialization process and in the school socialization process.

2. The social work in the school context carried out with the help of students

2.1. Support for other students

Life is getting more and more difficult and it seems like we only face problems. They do not want to avoid the children either, who, from an increasingly young age, face the concept of problems. However, children are with pure souls, ready to help and from what they have, they are ready to give to others, either material or spiritual, which is in fact an inexhaustible source. The social worker and the RE teacher can be there for the children to open their eyes to see the people in need around them and to challenge the students to

help, and by doing small things, they do great things for themselves. Serving others will make the students achieve greatness. We are to instill into the children a desire for greatness, but also instruct them that this is achieved through the virtue of service (Evans 2014, 212).

The social worker has to lead the solution of some things, and when he does it through other people, especially through children, he is satisfied that not only was the problem solved, but he also helped someone else learn to help. „He who succeeds in doing good things through others exercises the best kind of leadership.” (Sanders 1993, 189). Children’s help for other children seems to have a huge impact on and helps the person in need get over what’s bothering them. Here we are talking about family or school-related troubles, misadjustment to school requirements, misunderstandings with colleagues.

The social worker can positively influence the students’ adaptation to school, stimulating friendships between students and creating a series of opportunities to develop informal social relations between them. All social psychology studies demonstrate that a friend can influence an individual’s attitudes and behaviors. The necessary condition to develop friendships is proximity, which is met at school. The proximity in classes is not a sufficient condition, given the evaluative and constraining framework of instructional activities; therefore, the most convenient option is promoting extracurricular activities, which provide more opportunities for interaction with colleagues who carry out the same activity.

Stimulating social networks would configure a school ethos that would offer students more alternatives for expression, valorization and access to status. Access to status only through school success becomes frustrating for many students, a phenomenon visible in the labeling of those with school success as nerds and their marginalization. For example, in the USA, the prestige and popularity of a student can be due to other merits than exclusively high grades, namely: membership of the school’s sports teams, theater teams, instrumentalists or majors (for girls), to the teams of orators, editors of the school magazine or the team of animators from the school radio, etc. (Lawrence 1996, 48).

The ethos of the school generates multiple advantages for both students and teachers. For students, the ethos of the school represents the best alternative to learn to assume responsibilities, to cultivate their interests, talents, to develop their social maturity and to access status; from the point

of view of the school representatives, the ethos of the school contributes to the life preparation of the students, offers equal chances for success and affirmation, represents a way to highlight professional skills and interests and ensures the school's openness to community values. The isolation of the school from the cultural patterns of the students and the values of the community fosters a sense of rootlessness and loss of identity. Therefore, the organization of various activities, sporting, cultural, social, artistic, humanitarian, economic, scientific, consecrating specific ceremonies for significant moments in the life of the school (the beginning of the school year, graduation ceremonies, investiture of a new principal, anniversary ceremonies), stimulating the students' participation in the decoration of the school, in the management of the school's funds contributes to the creation of the feeling of belonging to the school, to the edification of the pride of being students of a certain school.

The school has the power to influence those student characteristics that can become a basis for social recognition and friendships; if the school authorities reward, in various ways, a certain character trait or a particular talent, the implicit value judgment thus carried out will enshrine the personality of the student in question as a role model. Giving specific responsibilities to all students based on their personality and choice will stimulate student interactions. The experiences made everywhere in the world demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy, all students having the opportunity to assume responsibilities (De Peretti 1996, 153). Responsibilities such as expert in a certain field (mathematics, history, environmental issues, etc.), delegated with the relationship with the management (canteen, library, parents' committee, etc.), assigned specific issues at the beginning and end of the school year, delegated for various social institutions, responsible for the sick, with security, negotiator of the difficulty of tasks or the severity of sanctions, organizer of festive moments or excursions, educational visits, photographer or reporter of the class, responsible for humor, supporter of the expression of shy students, responsible for good reception of new batches of students, responsible for cooperation and teamwork, expert in a certain procedure, monitor, spokesperson, etc. It is very benefic for the person to get involved in something that his or her heart to be involved too in that activity. Any work that does not enjoy the input of a person's endowments remains unproductive and useless (McDowell and Hostetler 1999, 505).

It has been observed that as students take on responsibilities and experience more and more of such responsibilities, schools and classrooms transform from a mass of anonymous in a known community, in a small solidary collectives, marked by the progress of all students and the assiduity in work; each student realizes that everyone's success also depends on him, that others recognize him according to his own responsibility and no one is marginalized. The school thus becomes a real center of activities, where each student can find his or her own path. The role of the social worker in this process is to crystallize the new social networks and to encourage all students, especially those with scholastic maladjustment, to assume such responsibilities, to support them in carrying out the specific tasks arising from these responsibilities, to encourage students to experience as many roles as possible during school.

Social networks can be created both inside and outside the school. The school's social worker must provide information about the existing resources in the community - sports clubs, cultural, civic, humanitarian, environmental protection associations - and encourage the involvement of students in wider social networks. The variants of action are multiple: for example, the social worker can stimulate a „twinning” program between school students and children with impairments, schooled in special educational institutions, or with younger children growing up in foster care centers, can stimulate students to assume the role of the „big brother” for one of the children with school adjustment problems; can suggest to students with alcoholic parents to participate in the activity of some associations, where they can meet children with similar problems, etc.

2.2. Support for other people outside the school

2.2.1. The families of needy students

The family is the basic unit of society and it must be strengthened, protected and supported, having the main responsibility in the protection, growth and development of children. All social institutions must respect the rights of children and their well-being and provide appropriate support to parents, families, legal representatives and people who have children in their care, so that children can grow and develop in a healthy and safe environment and an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (Save the Children, UNICEF 2003, 13).

Generally speaking, school social workers support students' families in using existing resources in the community specialized in the protection of their rights, connecting them to charitable associations, medical services, legal services, or facilitating grants for vulnerable social segments by various institutions from the community. School social workers can refer parents to such institutions and act as a link between the family and the community. If the social workers are members of the governing council of the community, they can contribute to improving the policy of using local resources, they can change local development strategies, they can coordinate the activity of the groups specialized in social assistance, they can even make the needs of the school better known to local level.

2.2.2. The people in need

By training students in voluntary activities in favor of people in need, the school's social work can directly serve the needs of the local community alongside those strictly professional tasks.

The social worker in the school, and in his absence, the religion education teacher, can coordinate the activity of a group of students who want to use their free time by putting themselves at the disposal of their peers in need: the elderly from various homes, the elderly alone and helpless, the people with chronic diseases, children who don't attend school due to medical problems, orphaned children in families, children from different placement centers, street children, homeless people, etc. Why can the religion teacher call on students to volunteer? In Romania, volunteer activities arise thanks to the activities organized by the Church and are aimed at helping those on the margins of society. Only then the normative acts that encouraged this type of activity appeared in our society (Goian 2004, 13).

Such activities are highly effective for all involved; students develop the skills of helping, cooperation, the attitude of solidarity, altruistic emotions and feelings, and from the point of view of school and professional orientation, they can clarify their professional ideals. And on the other hand, the beneficiaries of these services are satisfied for fulfilling series of needs, which contributes to increasing their quality of life. The school's social worker, based on the cooperation with social welfare institutions in the community, will identify the best courses of action and the best places to place students for social involvement, creating a new social network for students.

Conclusions

In our educational system in Romania, the presence of a social worker in schools is not yet foreseen, but the need for social workers in schools is supported, along with the obvious reality of the multiplication of medical, psychological and socio-cultural problems in educational systems. The school's social work is the prevention of juvenile delinquency and other dysfunctional social phenomena that can be seen even in the school environment. It was demonstrated that a friend can exert a major influence on an individual's attitudes and behaviors. The necessary condition to develop friendships is the proximity but in the school is not a sufficient condition, given the evaluative and constraining framework of instructional activities; the most convenient option is promoting extracurricular activities, providing more opportunities for interaction with colleagues.

A school can stimulate social networks among the students, and they are about involving the students in doing good to others, and it would configure an ethos that would offer students more alternatives of expression, valorization, and access to the status they long to have in the school and the community. These social networks can be created both inside and outside the school under the direct contribution of the school; the school's social worker or the R.E. teacher is the person who can directly provide information about the existing resources in the community and opportunities to get involved. Involving students in volunteering is beneficial for the students also. The social worker has to lead to the solution of some challenges in others' lives, and when he does it with the help of other people, especially with children, he is satisfied that not only the problem in the community was solved but also another person was helped on learning how to help the needy.

This research article aims to underline the need for support the school can give students in situations of risk and to anticipate and be proactive towards a possible undesirable behavior. On the other hand, by involving the students in social activities, volunteering will give students a good purpose and goal to achieve.

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Anthropological Values from the Work of C.S. Lewis Necessary for a Qualitative Correction of the Media

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ABSTRACT: Modern times and the speed at which information flows are leading civilization in directions it did not anticipate, therefore, the evaluation and correction of media quality are more important than ever. But given the context in which we find ourselves, the work of C.S. Lewis is a rich source of anthropological values that can create the essential foundation for improving ethics and integrity and contemporary media. Modern times are characterized by fake news that can have unforeseen consequences, among them the formation of a precarious anthropology, consequently truth about the human being is vital. The role of anthropological values that C.S. Lewis proposes can contribute to the improvement of the human being by offering perspectives and concepts of life with important elements that define man from a moral and spiritual point of view.

KEYWORDS: C.S. Lewis, anthropology, modern times, media, religion

Introduction

Our perceptions of reality are shaped in today's society by the mass media. It plays an important role in how we understand and relate to the world. The assumptions with which it works have to do with what defines culture as good or bad. It can, therefore, underestimate or completely ignore the religious and moral dimensions of human life (Rotaru 2019, 208-215). This is one of

the axiological shortcomings of contemporary media, and C.S. Lewis's work gives us the tools to correct this problem.

The need for a qualitative correction of the media

Lack of religious dimension of the media - Axiological deficiencies of contemporary media

The starting point for understanding today's media is that it offers a certain perspective on the world, an anthropological perspective. C.S. Lewis, in this context, offers, through his understanding of the world, a new way of thinking that has the moral dimension of the human being at its center. Media is more than an information tool; it is based on an ethical ethos and, therefore, becomes a means by which the moral and ethical nature of man is structured and shaped. From this point of view, religious perspectives are very important in the approach used by the media. C.S. Lewis is not alone in capturing the spiritual dimension of existence. There have been other authors who have sought to understand things from this point of view.

Speaking of this feature of the media that cannot be underestimated or ignored in the context of its beneficial correction, Nicholas Carr says of McLuhan: "His faith forms the moral and intellectual background of all his mature work. McLuhan believed that what awaits us is timeless eternity. Earthly conceptions of past, present and future were, by comparison, of little importance" (Carr 2011). For McLuhan, it is clear that theology and the proposals he made about media are closely related. Carr continues, "His role as a thinker was not to celebrate or denigrate the world, but simply to understand it, to recognize patterns that might reveal the secrets of history and thus offer clues to God's plan. His job was no different, as he saw it, from that of the artist" (Carr 2011). C.S. Lewis speaks of the "quality of human being" that is given by theology and man's place in the universe. The individual should, he says, not put himself at the center of existence because in doing so God's plan is overshadowed and affected (Lewis 2023, 65).

Both Jacques Ellul and Neil Postman view the process of communication through a religious lens. Ellul himself in *Perspectives on our Age* (1981) presents his experience:

In the Bible, I was led to discover a whole world that was very new to me, because I was not used to religious discourse, Christian discourse. A new world when I compared it with the realities of life, my own life and

experience. I was converted - not by anyone, nor can I say I converted myself. It's a very personal story, but I will say it was a very brutal and very sudden conversion. I became a Christian and was forced to declare myself a Christian in 1932 (Ellul 2004, 46).

As for Neil Postman, we know that he proposed an approach in line with Judeo-Christian understanding.(Geraldine 2015). We believe that the foundation of these perspectives has to do with a spiritual understanding of the media dimension of communication and therefore it is important to return to this background view of things.

Today's journalism is done only from a secular perspective and thus offers the audience half-truths that make the picture of reality look a certain way, not to mention how events are interpreted from the point of view of secular thinking. That is why it is important that events are also analyzed from a religious perspective. In this way, we can talk about the objectivity of reporting when we do not eliminate religion from our analysis. Although we must recognize that its place is no longer central to our understanding of events, we cannot eliminate its visible and invisible role in decisively influencing events of all kinds. All topics and disputes in the public arena are fundamentally theologically or religiously based, because they contain factors that refer to religion, such as human responsibility, altruism, human values, etc., values that C.S. Lewis also advocated. While our efforts are focused on reporting events and capturing elements that relate to the sensational, in reality we need a broader perspective on things and a deeper understanding of the meanings of events reported by the media, and this has to do with religion and understanding the cultural factors of the past and present. We understand the media's reluctance towards religion, but the analysis it proposes is incomplete and distorted without reference to the theological factor.

We see the benefits of implanting the theological vision in news reporting because we cannot ignore the most important catalyst of the human being. Calls for responsibility and altruism come from religious faith which is specific to human nature. Richard Neuhaus argues that without a "transcendent or religious point of reference, value conflicts cannot be resolved; there can only be procedures for their temporary accommodation" (Neuhaus 1984,110). The promotion of values and responsibilities comes from Christian faith which mobilizes man to act virtuously, and not to act in a certain way when manipulated.

Speaking of the right to information, the Catholic Church supports this way of looking at things when it says, in the *Decree on the Means of Social Communication*: “Communication should always be truthful and complete, taking into account justice and charity. And as regards the manner of communication, it should be honest and proper, that is, in the acquisition and dissemination of news, it should respect with sanctity the moral laws, as well as legitimate rights and human dignity; for not all knowledge is useful, “but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1) (Second Vatican Council 1964).

The partial and superficial presentation of moral evil

Through the information they provide to the general public, the media present the omnipresence of evil in the life of society, but we cannot fail to notice the limits of understanding this evil. It is presented only from a social or civic perspective, without theological implications, which is due to society’s conception of religion and its place in the postmodern human mentality. Basically, we see sin at work in the structure and basis of society, but we do not see it as such because the religious perspective is considered irrelevant in today’s media. Instead, what seems surprising is that we see ideologies promoted that aim to deal with order in the human being or in society. The human response to social evil is ideology. Alvin W. Gouldner distinguishes between religion, which is based on an epistemology “that makes knowledge a phenomenon granted to man and guaranteed by higher powers and authorities,” and ideology, which emphasizes “the self-foundedness of man’s knowledge, involving his reason and experience: cogito ergo sum” (Gardner 1976, 26). The great minus of the media is that it presents facets of evil and overestimates some forms of evil at the expense of others. There is no coherent presentation of it, nor is there a proposed solution to it. The media must present evil as a social and internal factor of the human being that finds its answer in God, i.e., in the theological vision.

The relevance of C.S. Lewis’ anthropology for a qualitative correction of the media

The search for theological and anthropological landmarks is important in order to understand the model to which we refer when we aim to understand the media from a different angle of understanding and to see its results as time goes by.

Imago Dei vs. man in the image of technology

The question of human identity has remained and will remain a hotly debated topic regardless of the historical period in which man raises his existential questions. Man has always been in search of a definition and understanding of the self linked to the context in which he lived. One of the fundamental narratives of identity in our time is related to the discovery of our deepest desires and longings and the human attempt to fulfill them, regardless of opposition or constraint. Postmodernism goes beyond affirming freedom and valuing feelings and proposes an understanding and a directing of our own passions to the point of putting them at the center of life. In the words of the sociologist Robert Bellah we speak of an “expressive individualism” (Bellah 1996, 142-167) described in terms of nothing being either good or bad and there being no rule of personal fulfillment and affirmation. Everything is possible. Identity is not achieved, as in traditional societies, by suppressing our desires for communal good; instead, what the modern paradigm aims for is to affirm and express our feelings and fulfill our dreams, regardless of obstacles.

Gabor Mate, in the book *The Myth of Normality*, tells us about how the mysteries of consciousness and the brain are put to the service of profit. He talks about neuromarketing, a relatively young discipline that seeks to explore the human mind and predict and influence thought processes and consumer behavior. He says that consistently, “corporations act like unscrupulous drug dealers at large in the perfectly legal mass addiction market” (Mate 2022, 305). Dr. Robert Lusting says, “Their goal is to market happiness on the bottle” (Lusting 2017, 522). So, media becomes the means by which expressive individualism is speculated by the media and which appeals to the satisfaction of the most powerful needs, artificial and real, in the human being.

The redefinition of human nature did not stop at the perspective of late modernism that spoke of this and related forms of individualism, but went on to take things to another level, namely, the inner man defined from the perspective of the technological self. He is defined by Ovidiu Hurduzeu, in *The Happy Slaves*, as follows: “the «against» element manifests itself in the form of intolerant exclusion. Refusing to step out of itself, to relate to the other, the technological ego only recognizes itself in an environment reformulated on its own terms” (Hurduzeu 2005, 89). The preoccupation with this new way of being implies a separation from the outside world, a disconnection from everything that involves relationships, mutual knowledge and communion.

Hurduzeu (2005, 90) continues: "The technological self lacks the awareness of a horizon of values and meanings that would open beyond the limited sphere of its own subjectivity... He does not define himself in relation to a plane that lies outside himself and above himself." The media and the technological universe offer man an immediate satisfaction of desires by presenting a distorted reality in which he is educated to relate only to himself. Through the media, he functions like technology, without reference to others, without value judgments, without ethical norms, etc. Man of this type is presented with realities in which he strives to integrate and live according to them. Satisfying desires becomes his priority. The individual who is constantly connected to the technological space becomes a prisoner in an environment that robs him of his deep and legitimate aspirations. He becomes a withdrawn person, educated to respond to stimuli, tempted to live his life based on the targets and ideals proposed by the media, becoming dependent and powerless in the face of the wave of precarious ideological thinking rising from the contemporary environment. For such an individual, life has no authenticity and he is thrown into a virtual, superficial space.

Hurduzeu (2005, 46) also says: "Like a gigantic spider, the gears wrap the planet with their communicational networks. The web of the technological arachnid transforms itself into the form and content of reality, while reality... dies and staphises itself." The monopolization of reality becomes the means by which technology aims to achieve its great goal, namely "...to assimilate everything. Man and what he carries on his back - tradition, religion, culture, principles, values - become a reflection of the insignificant, and the insignificant, the only legitimate manifestation of the seriousness of life" (Hurduzeu 2005, 46).

Despite such perspectives and such a reality unfolding before our eyes, the religious impulse has remained present in the human being, even if it has been made faithful by the kingdoms of this world. This is why C.S. Lewis's perspective, inspired by biblical theology, directs our attention to man, who is created in the image and likeness of the Divine. It comes in stark contrast to man created in the image and likeness of technology. This means that we are beings created in interdependence with God and our fellow human beings, that is, we are linked to two very important realities: the spiritual dimension and the social dimension. Our value is inherent, in that we are created as humans by God, and contingent, in that we are dependent on God. When we talk about our identity, these two aspects are important and cannot be taken away by any other entity. The surrogates only turn out to be solutions without a solid basis, just illusions that we cultivate with unfounded risks.

The media must encourage the formation of man on the two dimensions, not replace the Divine and propose itself as man's solution. Also, the value of man cannot be denied by any other means, and the media should maintain a balance between the depiction of what man is by fallen nature and the consequences of sin that are visible in life, and the power to recognize that although humanity is touched by the vices of sin, it still has in its nature reminiscences of the divine image that should be highlighted, enhanced and with the possibility of being transformed not by human striving but by turning to God as the source of hope and regeneration.

Another possible consequence of the fact that man is created in the likeness of God is that he is fully aware of his need to take on "an image" to guide his life. The solution the Bible sees is that we should seek God and conform to His plans and desires. In today's media view, the "face" we want is technology and the world it creates. We become like the god in whom we reflect ourselves and whom we desire. The reality created by the media is that of a hopeless man, seeking his own redemption by his own methods. The salvation of the soul proposed by the media bears the hallmarks of dehumanization and a search into the abyss. The only one who can transform us is God, who encourages us to look first to Him and then to ourselves.

One of the most significant passages in which C.S. Lewis speaks of man as created in the image and likeness of God relates to a sermon he delivered that came down to us from the Second World War - we are talking about a troubled period marked by the dehumanizing face of ideologies that materialized into war. In this context, he says: "In the light of these overwhelming possibilities we should conduct all our relations with each other, all our friendships, all our loves, all our games, all our politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never spoken to a mere mortal" (Lewis 2001, 46). From C.S. Lewis's observation we can get a clear view of the quality of our relationships, of the unique way in which we can view our fellow human beings. He speaks of a reality in which we should anchor ourselves: the world of our fellow human beings, their troubles and joys. He continues: "Nations, cultures, arts, civilisations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours like the life of a mosquito. But the immortals are those we joke with, work with, marry" (Lewis 2001, 46).

The perspective from which our fellow human beings should be understood is that of valuing them and valuing them. The media should facilitate dialogue and encourage this vision in which dialogue becomes memorable, unforgettable.

***Tao* vs. annihilation of values through media**

C.S. Lewis speaks in *The Abolition of Man* of a time when man will take Nature by storm with one purpose: to conquer it. By Nature, we mean all that is outside man and provides him with the support he needs to live a happy life. The conquest of Nature implies technological progress and its application to all spheres of life. In this context, in which technology controls and orders man's life, C.S. Lewis speaks of a reconstruction of the individual in parameters other than those in which he was created by God. Technological creation touches the very core of human being by overturning the norms and values of the *Tao*. C.S. Lewis puts it this way: "Values are now mere phenomena of nature. Value judgments will be produced by the learner in programming. Whatever *Tao* is to exist henceforth, it will be the product and not the motive of education" (Lewis 2023, 57).

We can thus speak of a broad educational process in which media consumers are involved and which aims at the reconstruction of man. Speaking about this, Karen E. Dill tells us how this process of changing values takes place: "When we allow ourselves to be carried away by the world of fiction, our attitudes and beliefs change to be more in line with the ideas and statements that take place within the story" (Dill 2009, 224). We see here a flexibility of the human in relation to what is offered. He seeks to harmonize the world in his mind with what is presented to him in the media. By finding this bridge, the media consumer moves to the next stage, described as follows: "We suspend our disbelief and, in doing so, open ourselves up to unwittingly absorb the belief system dramatized in the fictional world and act on those beliefs and ideas" (Dill 2009, 224). The individual we see is being shaped by what they consume, giving up internal defence systems. Karen E. Dill goes on to point out the next stage in this process of reconstructing the individual, and says, "Often what we see on the screen causes a change or response outside of our awareness. This is how the fantasy world of the media shapes our realities" (Dill 2009, 224).

The process of value inversion receives an explanation from C.S. Lewis that deserves our attention. In the book *The Screwtape Letters*, he says of man that he is like concentric circles and constituted in astonishing ways. "His will be the smallest circle, then the intellect, and lastly the imagination. You cannot hope at once to exclude from all the circles everything that smacks of the Enemy, but you must keep pushing all the virtues outward" (Lewis 2021, 37). C.S. Lewis says that the main movement has to do with the elimination

from the core of the human being of everything that signifies humanity. The movement is from the inside out. The objective is the gradual removal of the values that already exist in man. The ultimate goal is that by which non-values “are located in the circle of imagination, and all the desired qualities are located within, in the Will” (Lewis 2021, 37). The dehumanization of the human being occurs when the imagination becomes an instrument of evil and the will, the driving force of man, is annihilated. We can say in this context that imagination and will are the two dimensions of man with which the media operates. C.S. Lewis’s explanation is not a psychological one, but rather one that concerns the main human faculties.

At this point, speaking in the right of the media and the situation today, Malcolm Muggeridge tells us that the process of destruction of values described by Lewis is in an advanced state and that the West, as a civilization, is about to self-destruct and that another Middle Ages is knocking at the door of modernity, with the caveat that perhaps the process of destruction has already begun. He says that “With the media, especially television, ruling over all our lives, as it unquestionably does, it is easy to imagine that this can happen without us realizing it.... by adapting ourselves to the progressive deterioration of our values” (Muggeridge 1974). In Malcolm Muggeridge’s words we sense the alarm bell that is meant to be sounded as the moral decline of society is accepted, is induced in the public and makes the sunset of civilization loom.

Carl Henry speaks in his first book in the *God, Revelation and Authority* series of a crisis of revealed truth. One that has arisen in the context of the media’s abuse of man is that distortions and secular elements appear at the level of language that make man’s way of thinking and deciding conditional on what he learns and believes. Henry recognizes that the media of our time “has widened and complicated the present crisis of truth and speech” (Henry 1994, 19). How does the media do this? Carl Henry says, “By overshadowing the reality and permanence of truth and goodness, it sustains the storm of skepticism that floods contemporary civilization and abandons modern man to a relative ethic and a multitude of false deities” (Henry 1994, 20).

C.S. Lewis, on the other hand, invokes the value of sentiment attached to any kind of truth. In his view, it must not be destroyed or relativized (Lewis 2023, 30). He also speaks of the value of words, of language as a means by which children can be swayed towards ideologies alien and contrary to the *Tao*. Words that may seem harmless, innocent, carry the seeds of changing the human mind. He goes so far as to say, “No schoolboy will be able to escape the

influence which the suggestion of the word alone has over him” (Lewis 2023, 30). Why is this concern with such a minor issue from the point of view of many? He too explains, “It is not a theory, but a premise which they impress on his mind, and which, ten years later, when he has forgotten whence it came and is not aware of its presence, will induce him to take a stand in a controversy” (Lewis 2023, 13). From the words of C.S. Lewis, we can formulate a principle by which the media should be guided. There are no facts and words that are not significant. They become the means by which man is formed. The influence of words, and especially of images, goes beyond the present moment and has to do with the future of a generation.

C.S. Lewis also speaks of truth without feeling giving birth to men without chests, the consequence of which is the weakening of man’s structure. Propositional truth is the main value from which the meaning of the others stems. The media must focus on the harmonious use of common values that empower and contribute to the flourishing of the human being. According to C.S. Lewis, we must develop values that already exist, inventing new ones is impossible, so what we can do destructively for ourselves is to arrogate to ourselves the claim that we can create others, but there we are only talking about rebellion. “A rebellion of the branches against the tree” is how Lewis defines the new ideologies’ assault on the *Tao*.

Free will vs. manipulation, propaganda

For C.S. Lewis, in his 1943 work *The Abolition of Man*, there is a name for those who promote and support the ideology of perfect objectivity, namely Programmers. They are those who support the Green Book (a symbol chosen by C.S. Lewis to refer to a children’s textbook that popularized a philosophy that was fashionable in the author’s time, namely, logical positivism. In the context of ideologies that fight for the human soul, Lewis sees the process of education, learning and assimilation in this way: “For the sages of old, the cardinal problem was how to make the soul conform to reality, and the solution was knowledge, self-mastery, and virtue,” (Lewis 2023, 71) virtues were put in the service of learning, i.e., understanding reality. Speaking of the present day, C.S. Lewis points out the contrast: “The problem which magic and the applied sciences share is how to make reality obey man’s wishes; the solution is a technique; and both (magic and the applied sciences), in practicing this technique, are ready to do things hitherto considered repulsive

and ungodly” (Lewis 2023, 71). We note that the primary interest of these Programmers (a symbolic name for those who want to control the masses of people, setting aside principles and values by using instead the means of propaganda and manipulation) is the domination of reality and its conformity to the ideals of those who rule. C.S. Lewis’s vision comes even closer to the reality of today when he says: “But the manmakers of the new age will be armed with the powers of an omniscient state and an irresistible scientific technique: eventually we shall have a race of programmers who can indeed sculpt all posterity into the shape they desire” (Lewis 2023, 57).

It follows that the new values represent an artificial *Tao*, created by the new builders of the human race. It is obvious that C.S. Lewis saw at the time of writing this threat manifesting itself in his own time, but it is surprising in his anticipatory, prophetic spirit that he was able to see the new manifestations of evil in this form. We can therefore extrapolate his statements to the law of media activity today.

We see how, through associations of various kinds, personal blog pages and by all possible means there is intense talk about transhumanism as the divine key in the hands of men. Transhumanism comes with the promise of a bright future for human beings. The human body will be able to be improved to such an extent that we can talk about a perfect symbiosis between human organs and technology, the elimination of diseases, the enhancement of cognitive ability, genetic improvement - in short, an immortal man in a continuous overcoming of his own barriers. Denis Alexander talking about transhumanism and the media says that “transhumanist narratives are attractive to the media being perceived as controversial or as having strong visual “hooks” and becoming embedded in culture, especially through successful video games such as Avatar and Second Life, in which players create enhanced and digitized versions of themselves” (Alexander 2015). The support behind transhumanist ideology is unparalleled, with renowned giants such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft involved and providing the platform for the development of future technologies (Giesen 2018, 189-203). Nicu Gavriluță talks, in *New Secular Religions*, about how some recent films advertise the transhumanist movement (Gavriluță 2018, 182-187).

Although we have exemplified using transhumanist ideology, there can be other forms of propaganda, and here Carl Henry’s view helps, when he says: “The freedom to report, select and interpret media content varies by culture. It is well known how totalitarian tyrants exploit the power of the media to enslave

the masses through control of radio, television and the press” (Henry 1994, 21). Speaking of the value of free will and its proper understanding, Lewis says thus: “The minimum condition of self-consciousness and freedom would therefore be that the creature should conceive of itself as distinct from God” (Lewis 2021, 372). Here we find the opposite of what the media promotes. Its task is to understand its limited role as a guide or orientation, and not as a promoter and spearhead of propaganda of any kind. Understanding this position will highlight the fact that the media must present reality from a balanced position, in such a way as to capture both the good and the bad in real life, but to help promote the common good.

Through propaganda for certain ideologies, the media only draw the lines of a future morality, a narrow and imposed one. C.S. Lewis says that “Free will is what gives value to love, goodness and joy” (Lewis 2019, 64). In its absence, authentic morality, based on shared values necessary for the common good, cannot exist. Thus, with free will at its core, the media promotes values such as love and goodness, establishing itself as a means of promoting a free morality necessary to a society in which people understand that it is only by cultivating these values that they can make their lives better for themselves and their fellow human beings. This is why I believe that the media is more than a means of informing the public, it becomes, given the necessary tools, the promotion of a certain type of morality.

The meaning of life and the search for happiness in God vs. entertainment and the search for self-fulfilment

As mentioned earlier, the entertainment function is one of the basic elements of the media. We see that the media induce a certain state of mind and soul. Almost everything that appears in the media contains some element of entertainment, which is the packaging in which current journalism is wrapped, to the extent that entertainment becomes both the message and the medium in which all present reality is transmitted in this form. It is based on the premise that since it is the search of man, it can also become the means by which he more easily accepts various information or allows himself to be influenced in a certain way. The entertainment function has the great advantage of increasing the accessibility of the products that the media wishes to promote, because it uses accessible language conveyed in a simplistic to banal form, with content that does not necessarily have to be profound and does not require complex information from the masses.

The entertainment produced by the media proposes a detachment of the consumer from everyday worries and anxieties and an attempt to anaesthetise the pains, worries and burdens of tomorrow. In concrete terms, he is struggling with his own identity and his own way of thinking, and what the media offers him is a new, cultural identity in a cultural supermarket. The individual is challenged to become someone else, and the right attitude, from her point of view, is deduplication, detachment, projection into another reality. Along this line of thought comes Mihaela Constantinescu's perspective, who speaks of entertainment as "a true cosmology" (Constantinescu 2001, 203) for today's man.

It is shaped by the expectations created around modern man and how the mindset of the individual in this century has changed as a result of the transitions to which he is subjected. The meaning of life is understood in a different way because the media consumer can take on different identities depending on personal preferences and desires. The meaning of life is the creation of an identity promoted by the media. He is pushed to experiment, to be dissatisfied with what he has and is, and to enjoy the media's undeniable offerings. Life is not to be taken seriously and carefully analyzed, and introspection, that spiritual exercise that pushes the individual towards excellence through deep analysis of life, disappears, because he is taught not to waste his energy in these directions. Mario Vargas Llosa speaks of this loss of meaning in life when he says that people do not know what to do with themselves and the world around them when dramas and challenges arise because they are driven by "the need for entertainment, the engine of the civilization in which we live" (Llosa 2017, 36). We have lost touch with ourselves and that is why, he says, instead of "seeking encounter with ourselves through meditation and introspection, eminently intellectual activities that fickle and consumer culture finds boring," (Llosa 2017, 36) we seek detachment from our selves.

Entertainment offers him escape from the inner reality in which he does not feel fulfilled. Thus, the individual is pushed to live between real events and "pseudo-events," a term coined in 1961 by Daniel J. Boorstin (*The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*) to describe the media's tendency to report unreal events in order to gain attention. Mihaela Constantinescu says: "...real life has appropriated the techniques used in public relations to gain immediate access to the media, as life is increasingly lived for the media, it mediates itself" (Constantinescu 2001, 208). We see a hijacking of the purpose of life carried out by the media and for the media. Pseudo-life is what we live and desire, it is

the reality in which we move all the time. Entertainment has become the center of life. It marks all essential aspects of life. Everything we consume through media has this imprint.

Richard Weaver, in *Ideas Have Consequences*, also sounds a warning bell: “The frightening amount of facts available to man serves only to tear him from meditation on first principles, so that his attention becomes peripheral” (Waver 2020, 18).

From this point of view, we are helped by the perspective that C.S. Lewis proposes, namely that man finds himself only in one hypostasis, in Christ. Finding one’s true identity coincides with finding Christ. When we do not find Him we lose our life. This is why the media fulfills this ideal when it speaks of man from the perspective of a potential that he can discover and fulfill through Christ. Man can only be fulfilled when he sees his potential in Christ. C.S. Lewis speaks of the agony man experiences when he wants to live for himself. He says that man is dominated by his desires, his heredity, his upbringing, and therefore the true origins of the decision come from the propaganda he is subjected to (Lewis 2019, 244). They are, in fact, ideas induced for him to live according to the will of others. C.S. Lewis says that “it is only when I turn to Christ, when I surrender to His personality, that I begin to have a personality of my own” (Lewis 2019, 244). All human potential is found in a man who finds Christ. Consequently, the media, by promoting sound principles that have to do with enhancing human potential, with the flourishing of the human being, fulfills its purpose. It must seek to train man to live for ideals that go beyond his own sphere, and to relate to heavenly ideals.

The media should operate with the principle described by Ellen White, who says with reference to the generation that perished in the flood that “Contemplating evil, men were changed into its image, until God could no longer bear their iniquity and they were destroyed by the flood” (White 2000, 333). By looking at and contemplating evil, we are changed into its likeness, and by promoting good, the media works with an ideal that is related to the heavenly world.

Conclusions

In light of the analysis carried out on the need for a qualitative correction of the media, it is evident that there are a number of axiological deficiencies in the way contemporary media deal with information and fundamental

human values. Correcting the shortcomings of the media can only take place when we see the implications of the lack of the religious dimension and the understanding of moral evil as the main problems we face. C.S Lewis anthropological thinking can form the basis of a sound approach to the future of society. The media is not a medium of information but a transmitter of moral values. By being influenced, man shapes his life according to what he assimilates. The media is more than a means of presenting us with a perspective on the world. It could be the instrument through which society can be given sound, balanced theological thinking and through which individuals can assume values that strengthen human worth. The qualitative correction of the media is necessary to restore to society the ethical and moral dimension it so desperately needs, and here C.S. Lewis's anthropology offers a profound vision of man. It is therefore essential to focus on these benchmarks in our efforts to reform the media

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A Comparison of Maternal Stress Indicators for Women Mothering from Afar and Proximally

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines several indices of maternal stress (Hock et al. 1989) to answer the question, “Does where a child resides affect the stress a mother experiences in parenting?” The analysis focuses on maternal self-report measures using the Maternal Separation Anxiety Scale (MSAS; Hock et al. 1989) and its three subscales. Additionally, I argue that career salience, or the importance one places on one’s career, offers a protective measure to maternal stress. In the remainder of the paper, I will review the literature on long distance mothering, deployment parenting and maternal stress and then introduce the research study, discuss the findings and results, and make suggestions for policy reforms.

KEYWORDS: maternal stress, MSAS, deployment military, career salience

Introduction

Starting in 1975, the United States military implemented a series of policy changes. These changes allowed women to remain in service when becoming pregnant. Prior policy forced women to choose between service and children, however, with the end of conscription, the US military faced shortfalls in personnel and needed to welcome more women into its ranks (Murdoch et al. 2006; Snyder 2003). Today women constitute over 15% of the active-duty forces in the US (DoD 2016). Over 200,000 women serve, with approximately 10% of deployed troops being women. Women

can be deployed as soon as six months after giving birth, so the deployment of mothers is a routine part of military service, and an area that has been overlooked in research on families.

A vast body of literature exists concerning immiserated women performing domestic labor in foreign countries, separated from their families (Schmalzbauer 2004). However, literature is rather thin on women in the military mothering from afar. The US presence in the Republic of Korea is approximately 35,000 personnel, with slightly more than 10% women. Korea is still considered a hardship tour, and many service members choose not to bring families with them, or their commands do not support the movement of families. Hardship locations are those that the military considers living conditions to be substantially below those in the continental US. Because of this, Korea is an optimal location to examine the maternal stresses that women in the military face while parenting proximally and afar.

Literature review

Long distance parenting

When a mother must leave her child for long periods of time, other-mothers are key in maintaining family unity and easing children's emotional burdens of being separated from their mothers. Other-mother is defined by nurturing and caring, not by a biological connection to the child (Stack and Burton 1994; Hooks 1984). Other-mothers can be blood related, such as grandmothers, aunts, or sisters, or not blood related, such as friends or neighbors (Schmalzbauer 2004; Collins 1992; Dodson 1998). This role is crucial in transnational parenting, where the parent's absence is for a prolonged period (Artico 2003; Levitt 2001). Other-mothers can ease the child's discomfort by reassuring the child that their mother is a dedicated parent and her absence is a great personal sacrifice she is making for the sake of the family (Schmalzbauer 2004). Additionally, this parenting arrangement bolsters new family formations and challenges the standard of the nuclear family (Wong 2014). Other-mothers are just one of the strategies women mobilize when facing the challenges of reconciling migration and care provision. In this way, the mother provides for the child materially, while other mothers provide emotional and nurturing support (Wong 2014). Mothering from afar takes a lot of work to maintain connections (Schmalzbauer 2004). Mothers work to both economically and emotionally support their children

from afar (Yeoh et al. 2004). Transnational communication is not always an easy feat and is embedded in unequal power-geometrics (Yeoh et al. 2004; Wong 2014). Basically, mothering from afar comes easier to more economically advantaged women. The remoteness of the parent or child contributes to the difficulties mothers face in communicating. However, the declining costs of telecommunications allow mothers to parent from afar more readily today than ever before (Peng and Wong 2013; Wong 2014).

Peng and Wong (2013) explored the phenomenon of intensive mothering by transnational mothers in terms of virtual mothering, or super-mothering across borders of time and space (Hewitt 2009; Millman 2013). Here mothers send texts saying goodnight or call in the morning to wake the child, even going to great lengths to send text reminders for the child. Although absent from their child physically, these mothers work hard to remain a constant, daily presence in their children's lives. These women are enacting "good mothering" to the best of their ability. On the opposite end of the distance parenting spectrum, Peng and Wong (2013) describe passive mothers; those that find it too difficult and painful to try to interact regularly with their children via long distance. Passive mothers try to minimize contact because they feel impotent in tending to their children's needs from such a distance and those feelings of impotency lead to stress and frustration that is not easily relieved. These two extremes are just two ways mothers manage their emotions when doing the work of mothering from afar.

Deployment parenting

Kelley (1997) characterized military-induced separations as significant for both mother and child in that the mother cannot fulfill her role as primary attachment figure. While these separations are usually much more finite than transnational mothering, they occur frequently and repeatedly. Mothers' parenting goal of preserving their special bond with their child can be difficult to maintain from afar (Agazio 2012). When mothers deploy and leave their children behind, they want to normalize life as much as possible. In a two-parent household, the father usually becomes the primary caregiver, supplemented by nannies and/or grandparents. Mothers tend to keep much of their control in this arrangement. The most common plan for single mothers is leaving the child with grandma (Agazio 2012; Goodman et al. 2013). Here the mother faces relinquishing more control to her own

mother. Mothers have many concerns when relinquishing care of their children to others.

The primary fear mothers articulate when deploying is that the child will forget them. This is most common for mothers of small children (Agazio 2012; Kelly 1997; Tucker and Kelley 2009). Mothers' fears arise from the fact that they must entrust primary care of their child to someone else. Relinquishing control can prove difficult for mothers and many times they must distance themselves to achieve this. Additionally, mothers worry about missing milestones and life events. Most deployments are a year in length and children change a lot in that time. Mothers mentally prepare themselves for separation while still planning strategies to keep communication open.

While mothers cannot provide the fulltime daily support as they do when they are home, deployed mothers focus on "being there" as much as they can for their children and reassuring them that she will return safe and sound (Agazio 2012). They develop routines of communication, depending on what is available. While having strong lines of communication reassures children, sometimes the toll of involved parenting compromises the military mission by distracting mothers. The military is a demanding profession and one that cannot afford distractions, especially during deployments and wartime operations. The biggest problem distracting mothers is when their care plan fails. Family care plans are developed by single and dual-career military personnel for times when they must leave their child. This plan is developed to designate someone to care fulltime for the child in the parents' absence. According to the Department of Defense (DoD),

"Service members are responsible to ensure family members/dependents are cared for during deployments, reserve mobilizations and temporary duty, and at all other times which the service member is unavailable. Formal documentation of a family care plan is required under the following: service member with primary or shared physical custody of a minor child; both members of dual military couple have primary or shared physical custody of a minor child."

When a family care plan falls apart, the mother is generally thousands of miles away from her child, in a foreign country. Many times, the mother's chain of command does not discern the immediacy of such an event (Goodman et al. 2013; Kelley 1997; Tucker & Kelley 2009). Mothers tend to perceive less support from the military than fathers or non-mothers do, and as such, experience more stress related to deployments.

Maternal stress

Hock et al. (1989) developed the Maternal Separation Anxiety Scale, a 35 item, self-administered questionnaire. Each item is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale is meant to measure maternal separation anxiety, defined as “an unpleasant emotional state reflecting a mother’s apprehension about leaving her child.” Parental separation anxiety is distinctly different from that experienced by the child and as such, needs to be measured independently. The scale is composed of three factors that Hock reported a Cronbach’s alphas of .90, .71 and .79. The first factor, maternal separation anxiety, reflects worry, sadness, and guilt, as well as mother’s belief that a child suffers from care by someone else. The second factor, perception of separation effects on the child, measures mothers’ perceptions of the child’s reaction to separation and the effects of separation on the child. The third factor, employment-related separation concerns, examines mothers’ ability to manage work and family.

Subsequent research using Hock’s MSAS demonstrates that employment preference and status are important when examining maternal stress (DeMeis et al. 1986; Erdwins et al. 2001; Hock et al. 2001; Hock & DeMeis 1990; McBride 1988; Symons 1998; Wille 1995). Greater labor market attachment predicts less maternal separation anxiety. In a two-by-two model, Hock and McBride (1986) compared women who preferred employment to those staying home, working, and not working. Findings support the hypothesis of labor attachment reducing maternal stress. Mothers who preferred staying home, whether they worked or not, had more MSA than those who preferred working. Several studies confirm that child outcomes depend more on maternal attitude toward employment than maternal employment status. Adding to this distinction, Erdwins et al. (2001) found that MSA can be mitigated if the mother feels confident in her child-care arrangements. The more satisfied a mother is with her childcare situation, the less MSA she reports.

Hock and DeMeis (1990) examined MSAS and Greenhaus’ career salience, reaffirming the connection between employment preference and stress. Women with higher levels of career salience reported less maternal stress than those with lower career salience scores. Women with higher levels of career salience reported less investment in the maternal role. Also, these women reported less employment-related stress (ERS) than those with lower reported career salience. Furthermore, McBride (1988) found that mothers who stayed

home reported higher levels of ERS than those who were more career oriented, while Symons (1998) found that women exhibited less avoidance coping and lower maternal stress if they were career oriented than those who remained home. Finally, Wille (1995) determined that those women who did not plan to return to work after the birth of a child experienced more ERS than those who intended to.

Career salience

Almquist and Angrist (1970) discovered that women with high levels of career salience and those in atypical occupations tend to have more commitment to career than those in traditional female jobs. Adding to the discussion of job satisfaction and having children, Hull (1999) suggests that career salience is the predictor of having children, rather than an outcome. Moreover, high skilled women must manage misperceptions that arise in the workplace due to childbearing. Women are perceived much more negatively for having children than men in high skilled fields.

Highly skilled professional women tend to have a strong work identity, which Gash (2008) attributes to decisions to postpone or forego childbearing. Additionally, Bulanda and Lippmann (2012), in examining highly motivated female workers, found women timed children around career milestones, such as putting off a baby until one made partner or earned a promotion. Women learn they need to accommodate work in their timing of fertility, otherwise fertility negatively affects work outcomes (Bulanda & Lippmann 2012, Taniguchi 1999). Adair (2013) and Mason and Goulden (2004) attribute more negative feelings toward babies to women's work commitment. In Mason and Goulden's (2004) examination of female professors, the authors found that 1/3 of fast-track women never have children, while women who receive tenure are twice as likely to be single and childfree 12 years post PhD. Iskra (2010) found that female officers in the military face similar choices in career progression and family formation

Research questions

Mothering is a demanding and stressful job in the best circumstances. Whether parenting from afar or proximally, mothers face a myriad of stressors. I construct models and examine whether mothering from afar generates more maternal separation anxiety than having the child with her.

Additionally, I examine whether mothers whose children are not with them during a deployment perceive more negative effects from separation than those whose children reside with them. Finally, I formulate a series of models to examine employment-related stress and its relationship to where a child resides. I suggest that career salience and security in one's family care plan offer protective benefits to these stressors.

Hypothesis one: Controlling for basic demographic variables, I expect that women who are deployed without their children will experience more MSA than those who have their children with them.

Hypothesis two: Controlling for basic demographic variables, I expect that women who are deployed without their children will experience more PSE than those who have their children with them.

Hypothesis three: Controlling for basic demographic variables, I expect to find that women deployed without their children experience more ERS than women who have their children with them.

Data and methods

I chose to use the nonprobability strategies of convenience and snowball sampling. The researcher arranged to become the administrator of a social media group that informally served military members in the ROK. Members were vetted to make sure they fit the criteria of being females on active duty in the U.S. military in Korea. While not all women in the population of interest may have social media, the researcher felt confident that this method, coupled with travelling to remote bases along the demilitarized zone, would produce more robust results.

Data collection commenced in May of 2015 and concluded in November 2016. In total, 564 women participated in the online survey, with a 95% completion rate. Approximately 208,000 served in the United State Military on active duty. 3986 women were serving in the Republic of Korea during data collection. Because of the anonymity of the instrument, there is a possible issue that someone not fitting my sampling criteria could participate, but the researcher accepts that possibility as reaching participants via social media improved my ability to obtain responses.

Survey construction

The survey instrument was constructed under the guidance of work done by Czaja and Blair (2005), utilizing the online platform, Qualtrics, through

a contract North Carolina State University has. Qualtrics is a simple, web-based survey tool to conduct survey research evaluations and other data collection activities (Snow and Mann 2013). The software enables users to do many kinds of online data collection and basic analysis. Qualtrics allowed me to build in to the instrument skip logic, making the survey easier for participants to answer. Skip logic is a feature that changes what question or page a respondent sees next based on how they answer the current question. It is also known as conditional branching and creates a custom path through a survey instrument based on the respondent's answers.

Survey deployment

In order to keep respondents not only anonymous, but also comfortable that they had complete anonymity, I utilized the option to not track IP addresses on Qualtrics and allowed for undisclosed submissions through a web page I designed, <http://www//chelliplummer.com>. I printed business cards and travelled throughout the Republic of Korea, distributing the cards to women in military uniforms and asking them to participate. I enabled the mobile survey optimization on Qualtrics so women could take the survey on their cellphones.

Dependent variable

The dependent variables are the component measures of the MSAS (MSAS; Hock et al. 1989), which provides three subscales: (1) Maternal Separation Anxiety (MSA), where high scores are related to maternal sadness, worry, and guilt about separation, as well as apprehension that non-maternal caregivers may not adequately meet her child's needs; (2) Perception of Separation Effects on the Child (PSE), where high scores reflect belief in the disadvantages of separation experiences on child social development; and, (3) Employment-related Separation Concerns (ERS), where high scores reflect anxious concerns about the competing demands of maternal role and career/occupation. Adequate factor structure, construct validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability of this measure have been demonstrated.

Independent variable

The first independent variable is where the child lives. Possible answers are with the mother in Korea, with the other parent, with another family member or my child currently maintains two homes. The second independent variable is women's reported comfort with her family care plan. The third independent

variable is woman's reported level of career salience. Additionally, for ERS I have a fourth independent variable of woman's reported confidence in her childcare.

Control variables

The first control variable of interest is the variable asking if the respondent is an officer or enlisted member. The second control was race, followed by highest education level attained, relationship status, and age.

Analysis

As my three dependent variables are continuous, and my independent variables are a mixture of categorical and continuous, the best method for analysis is multiple linear regression. Multiple linear regression allows us to look at the linear relationship between two or more normally distributed predictors and one normally distributed interval outcome variable. The purpose of a multiple regression is to find an equation that best predicts the Y variable as a linear function of the X variables. Multiple regression allows for determination of the overall fit of the model and the relative contribution of each independent variable. I generate a series of models for each dependent variable.

Being a parent tends to be a stressful endeavor in general. Being a mother in the military seems to have its own distinct stressors that may have an additive effect. Careers in the military require separations from family, often for long periods. As a result, women in the military must perform their familial roles from afar. As the Republic of Korea is a remote deployment, many families do not accompany soldiers on their tour of duty, especially to Area I, which is in the northern most section of the country. This makes my research location optimal for studying the differences between women who enact their familial roles from afar, and those who enact them on a daily, proximal basis. For this research question, I turn to work done by Hock et al, (1989), Hock (1976) and Weinberg and Leif (1979) in creating questions that focus on family separations and the stress involved.

Results

538 respondents answered for the first dependent variable, while 407 answered questions for the second dependent variable. 28% of the women have served 5 years or less, 21% served more than 5 years but no more than 10, 17% served more than 10 years but no more than 15, while 34% served more than 15 years. 198 of the women are in non-traditionally female positions while 366

are. 201 of the women are officers and 363 are enlisted members. Women range in age from 22-46 with the mean of 32.7 and SD of 6.9. 33% report they are White, 32% Black, 15% Hispanic, 11% other and 9% mixed. 26% of the service member have a high school diploma or GED only, 19% have some college, 34% are college graduates, while 20% have graduate degrees. 37% are married, 16% single, 23% divorced and 24% report being in a committed relationship. 50% of the women are in the army, 22% in the air force, 22% navy, 6% marines and <1% coast guard.

My first dependent variable, maternal separation anxiety (MSA) is made up of 10 questions with a Cronbach’s alpha of .8535. Questions are on a five-point Likert scale with some reverse scored. Statements are in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables that make up MSA (alpha .8535)

I miss being with my child when I am away from him/her
Only a mother best knows how to comfort her distressed child
I worry when someone else cares for my child
I worry about my childcare arrangements frequently
It takes a long time for my child to get used to new things
I don’t like to leave my child
Finding reliable childcare is easy (reverse score)
My child will benefit from group experiences such as nursery school (reverse score)
If I could choose between working and staying home with my child I would stay home
Sometimes I feel trapped by parenting responsibilities (reverse score)

My second dependent variable, perceptions of separation effects (PSE) is made up of six statements with a Cronbach’s alpha of .7866. Questions are on a five-point Likert scale with some reverse scored. Statements are in table 2.

Table 2: Variables that make up PSE (alpha .7866)

It takes a long time for my child to get used to new things
I worry about my childcare arrangements frequently
My child will benefit from group experiences such as nursery school (reverse score)
I worry when someone else cares for my child
I don’t like to leave my child
Finding reliable childcare is easy (reverse score)

My third dependent variable, employment-related stress (ERS) is made up of nine statements with a Cronbach's alpha of .8546. Questions are on a five-point Likert scale with some reverse scored. Statements are in table 3.

Table 3: Variables that make up ERS (alpha .8474)

My life would not be complete without my career (reverse score)
I would resent my job if it meant being away from my child for long periods of time
I have a systematic plan for how I am going to build my career (reverse score)
My career brings me a lot of personal satisfaction (reverse score)
I would regret postponing my career in order to stay home with my child (reverse score)
Children are very demanding (reverse score)
I often wish I had more time for my career (reverse score)
Sometimes I feel trapped by parenting responsibilities (reverse score)
If I could choose between working and staying home with my child I would want to stay home

To examine the relationship between where a child resides and types of maternal stress, I estimate a series of models for my three dependent variables in tables four, five and six. For maternal separation anxiety (MSA), I first estimate a model with only the constant and the predictor of where a child lives. The model predicts for those whose child lives with the other parent a decrease of 2.02 point on the MSA score while those whose child is with another relative are predicted to experience a 4.42-point increase.

The next model introduces the control variables military category of rank, race, education, relationship status and age. If the child lives with the other parent, the model predicts a decrease in MSA of 2.51, whereas if the child lives with another relative, the model predicts an increase in MSA of 3.37, net the effects of all other variables in the model. When examining the control variable for race, the model predicts that all other races experience more MSA than white mothers, however, the coefficient for the "mixed" category is not statistically significant.

The third model estimated includes a measure of the woman's security in her family care plan. The model predicts that mothers whose child lives with the other parents will report MSA scores 3.22 lower than the baseline, mothers whose child is with them, while those whose child resides with another family member expect a 2.74 increase, net the effects of all other variables in

the model. Race is statistically significant, except for “mixed.” Security in one’s family care plan seems to offer a protective measure. It is statistically significant, and every level of the variable predicts a lower level of MSA.

The final model of table 4 introduces the predictor for career salience. The model *F* is statistically significant to the .000 level, with an adjusted *R*² .2404, meaning the model explains 24% of the variance in MSA. The variable for career salience is not quite statistically significant, which led me to estimate the likelihood ratio. The likelihood ratio test yields a χ^2 of 3.82, with a *p* of .05 which indicates that the full model is an improvement over the restricted model.

Table 4: Effects of where a child resides on maternal separation anxiety (MSA)

MSA	Model One	Model Two	Model Three	Model Four
Where does child reside				
With other parent	-2.02* (1.01)	-2.51* (1.01)	-3.22* (0.95)	-2.97* (0.95)
With another family member	4.42* (1.39)	3.37* (1.40)	2.74* (1.30)	3.08* (1.31)
Military category of rank				
Enlisted		-0.50 (1.49)	-1.13 (1.39)	-2.38 (1.53)
Race				
Black		3.20* (1.25)	2.17* (0.97)	2.36* (0.97)
Hispanic		3.36* (1.25)	2.72* (1.15)	3.03* (1.16)
Mixed		2.98 (1.53)	2.43 (1.42)	2.86* (1.43)
Other		5.42* (1.51)	4.58* (1.41)	4.04* (1.42)
Education				
Some college		-1.04 (1.16)	-0.91 (1.07)	-0.81 (1.07)

	Bachelor's degree	0.86 (1.13)	0.71 (1.04)	0.83 (1.04)
	Graduate Degree	3.04 (1.92)	2.17 (1.78)	2.56 (1.78)
Relationship status				
	Single	-0.61 (1.41)	-0.57 (1.30)	-0.99 (1.32)
	Divorced	0.93 (1.03)	0.13 (0.96)	-0.14 (0.96)
	Committed relationship	-0.11 (1.15)	-0.49 (1.07)	-0.52 (0.96)
Age		-0.11 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	
Family care plan				
	Disagree		-5.16* (2.30)	-4.61* (2.31)
	Neither agree nor disagree		-6.73* (2.21)	-6.48* (2.20)
	Agree		-9.57* (2.00)	-9.48* (1.99)
	Strongly agree		-12.70* (2.13)	-12.62* (2.12)
Career salience				-0.20 (0.11)
Constant	29.86* (0.50)	30.99* (3.16)	39.10* (3.40)	42.95* (3.94)
Adjusted R^2	.0453	.1021	.2337	.24

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$

Table five examines the relationship between perceived separation effects (PSE) and where the child resides. I first estimate a model with the intercept and the predictor of where the child resides only. For this model, the variable indicating where the child resides is only statistically significant for women whose child lives with the other parent or maintains two homes. The model predicts those women will have scores 3.84 and 3.59 points lower than the baseline.

The second model introduces the control variables of military category of rank, race, education, relationship status and age. Again, the coefficients for children living with the other parent and children maintaining two homes are statistically significant. If the child lives with the other parent, the model predicts a decrease of 3.96 in PSE score, net the effects of all other variables in the model, while it predicts a decrease of 3.98 for those whose child maintains two homes.

The third model estimated includes a measure of the woman’s security in her family care plan. This model predicts a decrease in PSE if the child resides with the other parent (-4.56) and an increase if the child maintains two homes (4.35), net the effects of all other variables in the model. Security in one’s family care plan seems to ameliorate PSE for those who are the most secure with their plan.

The fourth model introduces career salience into the estimation. The model predicts that if the child lives with the other parent (3.01) or maintains two homes (1.95) PSE will be less. However, if the child lives with another family member, the model predicts an increase in PSE of 2.87, net the effects of all other variables in the model. Additionally, military category of rank is statistically significant with the model predicting enlisted members having a score 3.77 less than officers. Again, security in one’s family care plan seems protective for those who feel the strongest security. This model introduces the measure for career salience. The model predicts that for each one unit increase in the score for career salience, PSE with drop by .73, net the effects of all other variables in the model.

Table 5: Effects of where a child resides on perceived separation effects (PSE)

PSE	Model One	Model Two	Model Three	Model Four
Where does child reside				
With other parent	-3.84* (0.86)	-3.96* (0.89)	-4.56* (0.88)	-3.01* (0.82)
My child maintains two homes	-3.692* (0.95)	-3.98* (0.97)	-4.35* (0.96)	-1.96* (0.92)
With another family member	1.61 (1.16)	1.51 (1.21)	0.92 (1.18)	2.87* (1.10)

Military category of rank				
	Enlisted	1.07 (0.87)	1.08 (1.23)	-3.77* (1.26)
Race				
	Black	1.07 (0.87)	0.43 (0.85)	1.03 (0.78)
	Hispanic	1.47 (1.05)	1.10 (1.26)	2.16* (0.93)
	Mixed	0.49 (1.30)	0.11 (1.26)	1.26 (1.15)
	Other	2.96* (1.27)	2.37 (1.24)	3.81* (1.14)
Education				
	Some college	-0.53 (0.97)	-0.44 (0.94)	-0.15 (0.85)
	Bachelor's degree	0.59 (0.95)	0.51 (0.92)	0.87 (0.83)
	Graduate Degree	1.53 (1.62)	0.96 (1.57)	1.99 (1.43)
Relationship status				
	Single	0.46 (1.18)	0.43 (1.15)	-1.10 (1.06)
	Divorced	0.92 (0.87)	0.47 (0.85)	-0.68 (0.78)
	Committed relationship	-0.90 (0.97)	-1.06 (0.94)	-1.31 (0.85)
Age		-0.09 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)
Family care plan				
	Disagree		-2.81 (2.03)	-0.70 (1.85)
	Neither agree nor disagree		-2.30 (1.94)	-1.33 (1.77)

Agree			-3.99*	-3.75*
			(1.76)	(1.59)
Strongly agree			-6.79*	-6.24*
			(1.88)	(1.70)
Career sa- lience				-0.73*
				(0.09)
Constant	23.48**	24.33*	27.69*	41.63*
	(0.47)	(0.86)	(2.99)	(3.21)
Adjusted R ²	.0863	.0966	.1520	.3042

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$

Table 6 examines the relationship between employment-related stress (ERS) and where the child lives. I first estimate a model with the intercept and the predictor of where the child resides. The model predicts a decrease in ERS for women whose child lives with the other parent (-4.08) or maintains two homes (-5.16). Model two introduces control variables of military category of rank, race, education, relationship status and age. The model predicts a decrease in ERS for women whose child lives with the other parent (-4.09) or maintains two homes (-5.14), net the effects of all other variables in the model. While that is statistically significant, none of the rest of the control variables are.

The fourth model estimated introduces security in childcare. Two categories of the predictor variables are statistically significant. This model predicts a decrease in ERS if the child resides with the other parent (-4.04) or maintains two homes (-5.40), net the effects of all other variables in the model. Again, mother’s security in her family care plan does not appear to be protective in this model. For the variable indicating confidence in childcare, two of the five categories are statistically significant, with those expressing ambivalence (-3.64) or strongly agreeing (-3.27) that they don’t worry about childcare seeing reductions in ERS, net the effects of all other variables in the model.

The fifth model incorporates career salience into the equation. All categories of where a child resides are statistically significant in this model, with those in the categories of child living with other parent (-2.06) or maintaining two homes (-1.65) expected to have lower ERS scores, while those whose child resides with another family member (2.54) are expected to have higher ERS scores, net the effects of all other variables in the model.

Additionally, this model predicts enlisted members will have a score 6.31 lower than officers on ERS, net the effects of all other variables in the model. The only category of relationship status that is statistically significant is “in a committed relationship” (1.66), which shows a protective value for ERS. Also, only those women who worry the least (3.23) about childcare have decreases in their ERS scores that are statistically significant. Finally, career salience seems to offer protective measures in that for every one-point increase in career salience, the model predicts a 1.27 decrease in ERS score, net the effects of all other variables in the model.

Table 6: The effects of where a child resides on employment-related stress(ERS)

ERS	Model One	Model Two	Model Three	Model Four	Model Five
Where does child reside					
With other parent	-.408* (0.84)	-4.09* (0.85)	-4.35* (0.87)	-4.04* (0.91)	-2.06* (0.62)
My child maintains two homes	-5.16* (0.93)	-5.14* (0.93)	-5.40* (0.95)	-5.40* (0.95)	-1.65* (0.69)
With another family member	-1.11 (1.13)	-0.26 (1.16)	-.56 (1.17)	-0.56 (1.17)	2.54* (0.81)
Military category of rank					
Enlisted		1.90 (1.21)	1.82 (1.21)	1.82 (1.21)	-6.31* (0.93)
Race					
Black		-0.83 (0.83)	-1.02 (0.84)	-0.87 (0.84)	0.10 (0.57)
Hispanic		-0.41 (1.00)	-0.49 (1.00)	-0.36 (1.00)	1.39* (0.68)
Mixed		-1.65 (1.24)	-1.81 (1.25)	-1.81 (1.24)	0.11 (0.84)
Other		-1.30 (1.22)	-1.53 (1.23)	-1.60 (1.23)	0.85 (0.84)
Education					
Some college		-0.15 (0.93)	-0.12 (0.93)	-0.03 (0.93)	0.49 (0.63)
Bachelor's degree		-0.54 (0.91)	-0.10 (0.91)	-0.08 (0.90)	0.56 (0.61)
Graduate Degree		-0.43 (1.55)	-0.61 (1.55)	-0.45 (1.55)	1.19 (1.05)

Relationship status					
	Single	1.71 (1.13)	1.70 (1.13)	1.64 (1.13)	-0.88 (0.77)
	Divorced	1.39 (0.83)	1.22 (0.84)	1.29 (0.84)	-0.82 (0.57)
	Committed relationship	-1.00 (0.93)	-1.11 (0.93)	-1.23 (0.93)	-1.66* (0.63)
Age					
		-0.04 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.04)
Family care plan					
	Disagree		-2.21 (2.00)	-0.81 (2.12)	1.49 (1.43)
	Neither agree nor disagree		-1.28 (1.92)	0.73 (2.11)	0.91 (1.42)
	Agree		-1.38 (1.74)	1.07 (2.05)	-0.25 (1.38)
	Strongly agree		-2.80 (1.86)	-0.23 (2.18)	-0.29 (1.47)
Worry about child care					
	Disagree			-2.45 (1.47)	-0.35 (0.99)
	Neither agree nor disagree			-3.64* (1.45)	-1.00 (0.99)
	Agree			-1.78 (1.45)	-0.70 (0.98)
	Strongly agree			-3.27* (1.65)	-3.23* (1.11)
Career salience					
	Constant	25.42* (0.46)	25.77* (2.54)	27.01* (2.95)	27.02* (2.96)
	Adjusted R^2	.1141	.1584	.1584	.1718
					.6246

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$

Discussion and conclusion

Women serving in the military on active duty in the Republic of Korea struggle with the everyday stresses of parenting that all parents experience. However, Korea is a unique microcosm of military service because it is considered a hardship tour. This means that families may or may not elect or be selected to accompany their service members. When surveying women

serving in Korea, over 50% of the respondents were mothers. Of these, slightly over $\frac{1}{2}$ the women had their children in Korea with them, while the other mothers did not. Because of this, comparing women in a forward position by where their child resided became a natural way to study maternal stress.

Hock's (1989) first component of their MSAS scale is that of maternal separation anxiety. My expectation was that women deployed without their children would experience more MSA than women who have their children with them in Korea. My hypothesis was only partially supported in that it depended on who the child was living with. If the child was with the other parent, women reported less MSA. However, if the child was with another family member, women experienced more MSA. While relationship status was not statistically significant in my models, there may be a secondary factor, such that those who are married are more comfortable leaving the child with the other parent than single or divorced women.

Having confidence in their family care plan did provide protective measures. The stronger the women felt about her care plan, the stronger the reduction in stress. Prior research indicates that a care plan that falls apart can be highly stressful for parents away from their children in general, but even more so for women, as the lion's share of the care work is traditionally hers.

Despite prior literature supporting my hypothesis that women with higher career salience would experience less MSA, this was not supported. This could be reflective of my sample in that it is an older group of women than overall in the military as well as being on a hardship tour that may lower career salience. I did discover that women of color tend to have higher rates of MSA than white women. This could represent cultural differences, as many minorities are first- or second-generation immigrants in the military.

Another component of Hock's model is perceived separation effects (PSE). My second hypothesis, that women who deployed without their children would perceive more negative effects from the separation was marginally supported by the models, however, the relationship is more nuanced than expected. If the child is with the other parent, or maintains two homes, perceived separation effects are reduced. This may be because the mother feels secure in the other parent's care of the child. Being secure in one's family care plan appears to only matter for those who moderately agree with the statement. In the full model, military category of rank is statistically significant. This is the model with career salience and the model predicts that enlisted members will

have less PSE than officers. This could be reflective of relationship status as officers in my study tend to be married more than enlisted members. Moreover, co-parenting may provide a security in one's family care plan. This reduction in PSE due to career salience supports prior research that employment attachment can serve as a preventative measure for PSE. Women who are more invested in their careers will experience less employment related stress, and this is enhanced by involvement in the care of the child by the other parent.

The final component of Hock's model is employment-related stress (ERS). My hypothesis, that women who have their children in Korea with them experience more ERS than those whose children are not with them was supported, but again not in the exact way I predicted. All models predict a decrease in ERS when the child resides with the other parent or maintains two homes. Much like PSE, this may be because of the security in one's family care plan when co-parenting. Women may be better able to focus on their careers when the other parent is caring for the child.

Enlisted members experience lower levels of ERS than officers, leading me to believe that employment attachment for higher skilled women increases ERS. Enlisted members may feel that parenting is not as big a drain on their careers as officers because officers have a much stricter career progression. Career salience seems to reduce the effect of where the child lives for the categories of with the other parent or maintains two homes, while model five is the only model that the child living with another relative becomes statistically significant. With another family member appears to increase ERS.

In examining ERS, when a woman can focus on her career, and her career is important to her, the child being with a spouse may allow for more work engagement whereas being with another family members detracts from work, thus increasing ERS. While the relationship of the child living with another family member and ERS is not statistically significant, it appears that the stress of the child not living with a parent increases work stress giving credence to the spillover theory that one's family life encroaches on one's work life.

This research project serves to illuminate parental stress in mothers deployed overseas. While my hypotheses were only partially supported, the data seems to support the general theoretical perspectives. Moreover, this research points to policy implications for the DoD, namely that having a child with you in a deployment situation may not be the best way to reduce parental stress, however, it depends on who is caring for the child. Additionally, the military

needs to work to make sure parents have workable and reliable family care plans in order to limit distractions to the mission. Finally, it should be examined why there is a difference in employment stress between officers and enlisted. Clearly there are demands on officers that are not placed on enlisted personnel and this may be a factor in retention.

Further research should examine parental stress for women in the military on active duty in multiple locations. The relationship between where a child resides and a mother's stress is nuanced and complicated, more research needs to be conducted to untangle just exactly what is going on. Because women are more likely to be divorced in the military than men, and stress is related to where the child lives, the military would be well served by offering marriage counseling, especially to dual military couples.

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Trends of Current and Future Retail Formats Based on Customer Personas. Implications on the Example of the Premium Automotive Retail

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ABSTRACT: External factors are influencing the strategic orientation of today's automotive retail. Innovative architecture, new job roles and digitalized processes are affecting the automotive dealerships and the whole industry. Furthermore, the current decision-making process in the retail industry is intricate due to the lack of available foresight regarding future investment opportunities. Consequently, retailers need to be able to anticipate which strategic direction could be future-oriented, which adjustments they need to anchor to create a sustainable environment and which shift is effectively needed to attract today's and future customers. Therefore, the issue of the automotive retail is to be well prepared for upcoming trends, shifts and new competitors by setting up a distinct market position. Although many changes in today's automotive retail are currently initiated, the uncertainty of the future-oriented retail format is omnipresent. New retail formats are developed and partly implemented in today's retail sector to reach the customers and address their needs of buying a car. The following journal paper is facing the objective to map retail formats with persona types of automotive customers. Thus, retail industry leaders such as experts in automotive

retailing are interviewed to get an impression of how to map automotive retail formats with distinct customer groups. Hypotheses can be derived as well as closing the current knowledge gap in scientific literature of customer needs and upcoming retail sales formats. At the same time widening and deepening the research in the fields of marketing, sales and strategic management while using and discussing rigorous research methods.

KEYWORDS: retail formats, future retailing, automotive retail, consumer trends, customer persona types, customer expectations, car dealership

Introduction

Given the multitude of touchpoints, customers are faced with the challenge of choosing which retail format is relevant to them. Consequently, it becomes imperative for the automotive industry to identify the customer segments and persona types that align with specific retail formats. Different customer segments exhibit diverse needs and motivations, which are crucial in formulating an effective sales strategy for future retail endeavors (Skier 2019).

Existing scientific sources primarily present conceptual ideas for new retail formats, lacking in-depth exploration and fundamental insights into customer personas. Moreover, other industries have successfully pioneered their sectors by adapting retail formats to meet customer demands (Sinha and Kar 2010, 119-140). In contrast, the automotive industry is still in its nascent stages of implementing these proposed retail formats. Other industries such as the textile or the fast-moving consumer goods industry are shifting their sales concept to reach value-seeking customers (Krafft and Mantrala 2010, 3-10). Therefore, these industries are currently reacting to the key trends and developments, such as changing customer needs, increasing interest in retail store experience, retailer consolidation, emerging multi-channel retailing strategy, and changing the nature of competition within and between retailing formats (Krafft and Mantrala 2010, 3-10). These changes are having a dramatic impact on the way large retailers do business and strive to reach and satisfy their customers. Drawing learnings from the fashion and fast-moving consumer goods industries could provide valuable insights into the implementation of retail formats within the automotive sector.

Additionally, the literature suggests that new automotive sales formats for contemporary retail will emerge rapidly; however, the underlying characteristics of these formats remain unexplored. Current analyses of these new retail

formats primarily focus on financial aspects and revenue streams, neglecting to consider customer needs and motivations as key perspectives (Sinha and Kar 2010, 119-140). Which is why the following research is conducted to combine today's and future retail formats with decision-making persona types to derive initial indications of a mapping model.

Thus, this paper seeks to answer the following research question (RQ) as an overall objective: *Which persona type or automotive customer, in terms of their behavior and needs, can be most effectively mapped to which automotive retail format?*

The present paper is structured into three primary sections. Firstly, it provides a summary of the current trends and observations in the automotive retailing sector. Secondly, it describes the existing retail formats within the context of these current trends, aiming to establish the prevailing state of the premium automotive industry. Lastly, it analyzes the implications of future retail formats based on personas of the automotive customer segments, as well as customer expectations during dealership visits. This analysis is based on a qualitative survey conducted by the researcher. The overall objective of this study is to provide an initial indication of customer segments and retail formats, ultimately leading to the derivation of a preliminary mapping model design.

Theoretical background

Trends in retailing

Looking at the retail as an ecosystem, trends for physical retail are being increasingly analyzed from both a practical and an academic perspective. By that, several studies identified crucial trends and effects on customer behavior when visiting a retail store. According to Cloughton, retailers are operating in a changing environment and therefore must react to anticipate developing customer expectations. Hence, it is imperative for retailers to update their existing business models by prioritizing customer trends to foster their growth and development. (Cloughton 2020). For the upcoming research the analysis of the following trends is essential to demonstrate the transformation of retailing.

Create atmosphere

Especially in physical retail formats and stores the created atmosphere (e.g., music, fragrances, etc.) influences the customer's behavior. Several studies show an effect on consumer response while visiting a retail store (Morris and

Chebat 2005, 181-191). "...the environment created by retail managers is an important strategic variable. Most of the work in atmospheric has focused on consumer reactions to environments while the strategic dimensions of this decision have largely been ignored." (Turley and Chebat 2002). That's why Rayburn and Voss elaborate the perception of retail atmosphere. The essential element of this study is the focus on the organism level rather than atmospheric investigations and stimulus response. Rayburn and Voss demonstrate that a customer interacts with the product but although with the environment. Especially the environment is crucial for a physical store and therefore the authors identify the interaction with the store itself as a key variable to create shopping value (Rayburn and Voss 2013, 400-407).

Reach customer by emotions

Based on research, emotions are the key drivers to create loyalty and satisfaction to a specific brand, a product or even a store. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is based on Verhoef et al. concept of customer equity drivers (CEDs), which are intricately connected to the establishment and maintenance of customer loyalty (Verhoef et al. 2009, 31-41; Souiden, Ladhari and Chiadmi 2019, 286-288). Further emotions can be triggered by the effect of entertainment (Swartz 2000, 123-132). Sales promotion could be presented in an entertaining approach to reach the customers emotion. Additionally, events which take place in store can create an additional value for customer loyalty. However, according to Chung, this effect depends on the target group as well as the segment and can therefore show different results (Chung 2018). As brand culture evolves, retailers that choose the approach to become an experience center focus on the experience rather than the sale. By aligning with the latest trends in the retail industry, retailers can effectively stay abreast of market developments and capitalize on the associated advantages. Thus, the experience centers should use the newest technology to engage their customers, create experience and showcase their brand without solely focusing on the purchase. Therefore, the storytelling of how to sell the product is changing to an experience based entertaining approach (Krell 2020; João et al. 2022).

Make products available

Because stores mostly have locations spread across a wide geographic area, they are well positioned to either deliver common items almost anywhere

or make the product available for pick up. In contrast, online stores obtain wider range of items which are sometimes not available in retail stores (Krell 2020). Especially, the FMCG (fast moving consumer good) and the fashion industry depend on a high level of inventory to sell the products when they are needed. Due to a high amount of stock products, pricing rebates can occur (Munoz Macas et al. 2021, 71-78).

All these trends can as well be observed in the current strategic approaches in the automotive industry. "Automotive retail will shift from a product-driven to a customer-centric approach to drive customer loyalty and to adapt to changing customer behavior and expectations" (Miller 2015). Due to the uncertainty of today's retail, the shift of a product-driven to a customer-centric approach has already started. The rise of the omni-channel automotive retailer experience is affecting the customer journey of a dealership visitation. That is why the automotive industry is currently dealing with specific trends when it comes to retailing.

Retailing becomes retaining

The automotive retail as a physical space is changing its appearance and attitude towards the customers: less spatial, at least not in the form of sales space. Instead of product display space, various car dealership brands are focusing on experiential space. They understand that attracting the willingness of customers to visit the dealership is getting more complex. Hence, it can be inferred that the customer's motivation for visiting a retail establishment extends beyond the mere product itself. Rather, it is the desire for an enhanced experience, encompassing elements such as superior coffee and music, that serves as a primary driver of customer engagement and loyalty. This gives stationary retailer an advantage that e-commerce models can answer with convenience at best, but not with customer loyalty and trust build on stationary experience. Today, good retailing consists of good retaining, because retaining customers becomes the most important discipline, especially in the automotive industry (Schumacher 2023).

Showrooming as an experience

In the context of direct-to-customer (D2C) sales, the practice of showrooming is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor for achieving success in the market. The car dealership of tomorrow is a place where new models can be explored and experienced. By that, sales consultants only have to advise

and not primarily to sell the product (Severin 2023). Asian OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) are actively striving to meet the evolving needs of customers by establishing a community space that serves as a hub for interaction and product experience. This innovative approach entails providing not only the latest car models from their portfolio but also additional amenities such as childcare services, coworking facilities, and libraries. The aim is to create an exploratory environment where customers can engage with the brand and its offerings on multiple levels (Schumacher 2023).

Therefore, retailing requires a different mindset, new skills besides the classical sales approach. Retailing is becoming the new core competence of brands. All the data generated along the customer journey is the base to match current and future customer needs – exclusively available to the manufacturer. Data is the key to intelligent customer contact and care, for the development of needs-based solutions and new sales potential (Severin 2023).

Current retailing formats in the automotive industry

Studies and scientific sources are currently identifying four major retail formats in the automotive industry. The distinction between own retail and independent retail is of overriding importance. In the following, besides the classic (traditional) retail four different formats are introduced: pop-up stores, flagship stores, concept stores, and mixed formats (e.g., experience center or satellite hubs). Further designations, such as temporary stores or mall formats etc., will be stated. These form a sub-category to the first three mentioned. In order to distinguish the sub-categories, similarities and overlapping characteristics are given. Therefore, the mentioned formats will be elaborated in detail.

Traditional car dealership

Format Description: The traditional automotive dealership format is characterized by a full range of services. From car sales - new and used cars - to the offer of after-sales products as well as service and accessories. This format is called “full-fledged” automotive retail. The traditional car dealership is more likely to be found on a long car dealership mile. So, the customer can meet many OEM brands in one place. In general, this retail format is located on the outskirts of cities, in industrial areas or in rural areas near large cities. Test drives, consultation, car selection and the final contract signing takes place in this format. Thus, it is often named a complete branded dealer, and is known as a traditional car dealer format (Gall 2020).

Dedicated target group: The target group is very heterogeneous. Existing customers are among the format's most frequented audience. New customers also become aware of the format, but they are not the main target group. The format is more focusing on retaining customers in the long term - especially through the service and workshop offering. It can be observed that the customer interaction points with this format are becoming fewer for various reasons (Gall 2020).

Brand example: Nearly all heritage brands are applying the traditional format approach in their current brand mix appearance. In particular, the dealer network, which consists of contractual partners and therefore does not represent an own retail, is currently more likely to rely on this format. New players on the market such as Tesla or Asian OEMs such as NIO have not included this format in their brand presence and green field approach.

Flagship stores/brand center

Format Description: The word flagship is known by the Cambridge dictionary as "the best or most important product, idea, building, etc. that an organization owns or produces (Cambridge Dictionary 2023a)". A flagship store is developed to increase and create brand awareness as well as to strengthen a long-time relationship with the customer. In those often large and representative stores, the brand heritage is at the center of customer communication and utilizes technics to highlight key messages to their target group (Petermanns and Kent 2016). The decision to establish a flagship store is primarily driven by considerations related to brand reputation and reinforcement, rather than focusing solely on sales and profitability. It is noteworthy that even non-retail brands are now venturing into the creation of flagship stores to connect with their target audience through a specific dimension or experience (Varley 2005, 176). Studies by Haenlein and Kaplan show that especially flagship stores have significant impact on customer brand relationship. The corporate environment in which a customer interacts can significantly impact their purchase intent. (Haenlein and Kaplan 2009). For this reason, this concept is often called brand experience center. The customer can find almost each current product of the brand in the flagship store. A further extend of the flagship store is the innovation "cyberstore". The OEMs combine two dimensions – the digital product presentation and the personal advice by an employee (Ebel, Hofer and Genster 2014, 544). Hence, careful consideration is given to the extent to which investing in a

typically costly location is justified and how effectively it can promote the brand's values (Baeuchle 2019).

Dedicated target group: Flagship stores are implemented to reach a heterogenous target group and to communicate distinct brand statements to mutual customer segments. Studies indicate that there is no certain target group for that kind of format, but the number of flagship stores visits are remarkable. A customer is more likely to visit a flagship store several times in general. This derivation is essential since the traditional retail format is visited proportionally less (Nierobisch et al. 2017, 117-137).

Brand example: Destination Porsche – Porsche established the new retail concept “Destination Porsche” for the first time in 2020. The “Destination Porsche” retail concept places customers even more at the center of attention. Customers should have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the brand, engage in personal interactions, and exchange ideas, such as enjoying a coffee in the lounge area. The flagship store provides access to nearly every Porsche model, not only for sales purposes but also for after-sales services. The customer can see through glass panes into the workshop and observe the process. The car handover is also designed as an emotional experience with special delivery rooms.

Volkswagen Flagship store – China is by far the most important market (in terms of sales) for the Volkswagen brand (Paba 2022). To further tap the potential, the brand has been showcasing itself with a flagship store in China. In the “Jung Baojie Volkswagen Indigo Center” in Beijing, Chinese customers can explore all Volkswagen models offered in China in one place. In addition to the car dealership, it also offers space for events, exhibitions, and other non-car related offers (Grimm 2016). The flagship store focuses on central topics such as e-mobility, connectivity, and autonomous driving. Besides the flagship store in Beijing the Volkswagen “Future Center” is also located nearby (Auto-Medienportal 2016).

Concept/boutique store

Format Description: The so-called concept stores are often defined as a “strategic approach for creating a destination experience”. This store format locates in the inner-city center. The name boutique store comes from the similarity to a fashion boutique - a rather small store that offers a certain selection of products. Typically, such stores adhere to a specific concept or thematic focus, such as electromobility, lifestyle branding, or co-branding

with fashion brands. Additionally, there are concept store approaches that periodically change their theme every three months, resulting in the creation of a “new” store each time (Pavel 2016).

Dedicated target group: This format is particularly common in the city center. Therefore, this approach is often associated with the acquisition of new customers or the reactivation of inactive existing customers. The aim is to create an accessible and open brand experience.

Brand example: Porsche Driven by Dreams - The “Driven by Dreams” brand store opened in Stuttgart city center in October 2022. The goal is to make Porsche’s brand purpose more tangible. However, the name brand store is misleading in the characterization that this format is a concept/boutique approach – because the term “name brand center” is frequently employed to refer to the flagship store format. This is made clear by the fact that the concepts in the store change at regular intervals. This means that the entire interior is designed and elaborately changed according to a certain theme. Likewise, new vehicles are always on display to match the different concept. Another key element of the store is the regularly events held on site. Since October 2022, 35 events with a total of almost 1,000 guests have already taken place (Newsroom Porsche 2023).

Porsche Sylt – Porsche already established the concept store in 2017. The retail format has the aim to get in touch with the customer and to create a brand experience along a distinct product portfolio as well as its brand heritage. The architecture of the building is different comparing to a usual Porsche center. Only one vehicle is displayed besides accessories and other brand related products. The aim of this format is not linked to generate sales volume, rather it is about relationship management between brand and customer (Schmidt 2017). In 2017, the Porsche Studio Guangzhou, the second location worldwide, was opened. A further Porsche Studio was established in Beirut, Lebanon, in the beginning of 2018. All locations bear an individual signature and are adapted to the conditions on site and local requirements (autohaus.de 2017; Newsroom Porsche 2017).

Audi City – 2012, the first so called Audi City store was opened in London. Due to the aim of brand recognition openings in Beijing and Berlin followed (Petermanns and Kent 2016, 103). Until today, several Audi City stores have been built worldwide (autohaus.de 2018). Instead of physically exhibition vehicles, the entire product portfolio is presented in virtual form. Hence, the customer can discover the whole brand experience virtually. That

strives the activation of the customers imagination and therefore strengthen the brand relationship (Dänzler 2014, 301). The target audience of the Audi City format benefits from a virtual showroom that offers a personalized customer journey tailored to their specific needs. By strategically locating Audi City near city centers, the brand is able to engage with customers in their familiar surroundings (Petermanns and Kent 2016, 223).

Pop-up

Format Description: Pop-up stores can be described as temporary brand presence stores in city centers. Those formats are often located in city malls and therefore simultaneously called mall format. The format allows retailers to execute projects with minimal resource utilization. Pop-up stores, fundamentally, serve as experimental platforms to test specific communication strategies with their target audience. The key characteristic of these stores is their impermanence, as they are implemented for a pre-defined period of time. In store, there are usually only a few vehicles on display – often the samples are changing from time to time and focus on product innovations. In addition, other brand products and material samples are omnipresent to pointing out the whole brand experience. Customers can often configure their vehicle on site and view it using new technologies like augmented reality technology and virtual reality glasses (Jongen 2018, 107-108; Wedeniwski 2014, 114). Therefore, the overall objective of this format is to create a brand experience and reach new target groups which are not yet related to the brand.

Dedicated target group: The offer is brought directly to the customers, rather than expecting them to seek it out. In an urban setting, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) aim to target groups that typically have limited exposure to the brand or are unlikely to visit a traditional dealership format. This approach considers both the strategic location and the opportunity for customers to engage with the brand. The format is aiming to attract a relatively young target group by using modern technologies (the age varies by brand) (Business Insider Deutschland 2020).

Brand example: Almost every premium manufacturer is currently introducing or has already introduced a pop-up store format. Typically, this format is initially tested in the brand's most significant sales market before being expanded to other markets.

Porsche NOW is a format which is currently in the phase of implementation. Porsche NOW stands for a flexible retail concept designed for

a short period of time, conceived for highly frequented city centers and shopping malls, and intended above all to appeal to new target groups. Store visitors can configure their individual vehicle live via augmented reality technology or VR glasses. Digital displays in the store show online sales offers of immediately available cars. The thematic focus of each sales pop-up store is determined individually by each retailer. Worldwide six pop-up stores exist which are designed according to the concept “NOW”. Numerous other stores are planned worldwide in the next years - primarily in Europe and Asia (Rachor 2020).

Tesla On Tour – Tesla installed its Tesla’s pop-up stores “Tesla On Tour” mainly in Europe (Spain, Portugal, France and Italy). This format has the objective to reach new customer segments by offering test drives on demand. Hence the store concept is highly flexible and can be transported and unfolded immediately. Tesla focuses on retail locations in upscale shopping areas and hereby bypassing the traditional dealership approach. With this concept Tesla is supporting its idea of boutique stores which are in the city center as well as in malls. Both approaches appear with the idea of letting customer explore and learn about the brand and its products (Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson 2014, 389; Tesla 2021).

Volkswagen, WE Concept – In Berlin Volkswagen created a location that is focusing on an open design and allows flexibility for individual use. The concept combined the concept store in the DRIVE Volkswagen Group Forum with a bar, lounge, checkroom, and exclusive interior design, allowing receptions for around 200 guests. Besides that, Volkswagen uses the WE Space for internal training purposes. This concept will be used for other cities in future to ensure a brand-based event location. The customer brand experience is named as the overall goal to attract new target groups (PresseBox 2020).

Mixed formats

Format Description: A so-called Service Experience Hub is primarily created for the after-sales service and handling of a vehicle. Besides that, a Showroom-Service concept is integrated to increase the vehicle brand experience for the customer. The format differentiate itself from a full-fledged sealer concept by focusing on service repairs. However, it also invites service customers to engage with the brand experience through a connected showroom that showcases both sales and after-sales products in the same space. As a result, this format is driven by after-sales services but also stimulates sales. By consolidating all service vehicles in one location, the dealer can efficiently handle a large

volume of service orders. These Service Experience Hubs are often situated on the outskirts of cities, where ample space allows for potential expansion opportunities (Kessler 2017; Rehse et al. 2020).

Dedicated target group: This format identifies no distinct target group by the OEM. Some Service Experience Hubs are differentiating between a private customer and business customer – especially fleet. In general, the customer's intention is to acquire a service for their vehicle, thus categorizing them as service customers.

Brand example: Mercedes-Benz Service Center – The Service Center was established in the beginning of 2020 in Münster. It is located near the airport and therefore named Airport-Center. The Service Center has a central location close to the German highway "Autobahn" (Mauritz 2020). This format is primarily utilized for the comprehensive process of receiving, evaluating, maintaining, and ultimately commercializing leased vehicles upon their return. Additionally, a small handover and showroom area is situated adjacent to the main building to facilitate the delivery of vehicles to customers. Until today the handover showroom is only in use for the fleet customer segment. Private customers receive their vehicle handover at the city store dealership. One advantage of this format is the reduction in outsourcing services to subcontractors and service providers. As a result, a greater number of working hours can be conducted internally, particularly in areas such as the workshop, painting, and reconditioning. Hence planning reliability, cost reduction and profit maximization through bundled and independent execution of self-defined after-sales processes is generated. Each process step is processed and documented in a digital tool. Herby each employee works through his or her process and enters it in the tool for documentation reasons. The reporting via dashboard is evaluated on a daily base (Mauritz 2020).

Mercedes-Benz World Berlin – With the opening in 2019 of the service terminal, the Mercedes-Benz retail Berlin is offering service packages for Mercedes-Benz and smart customers that simplify access to electromobility. The Mercedes World developed new processes, which are aligned with the individual customer needs. Therefore, this format is focusing on a smother, more efficient and consistent dialog-oriented service process with many digital aspects. Customers can book service appointments via application and the customer's vehicle is recognized via license plate scan as soon as it enters the Mercedes-Benz World and informing the service advisor of its arrival. At the same time, the customer vehicle is automatically checked for exterior damage

via a 360-degree scan. A visual guidance system directs customers to a reserved parking space in the service terminal, where they are greeted by their service advisor. The Mercedes-Benz World is connected to the main building, which is the Mercedes-Benz flagship store in Berlin. Therefore, sales and after-sales are immediately connected in the same place (autohaus.de 2019).

Customer segmentation in the automotive industry

According to Kicova, Kral and Janoskova (2018), customers can be distinguished by the speed of decision-making that decisively influences them during the purchase process. These customer groups have been described in detail by Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg in their publication 'Waiting for Your Cat to Bark.' The researchers utilized decision-making persona types as a foundation for their study on the automotive industry, specifically focusing on how brand communication should be developed to effectively reach these target groups. According to Eisenberg, four primary persona categories are delineated, 5-10% of the population can be classified into a competitive category, 45% into a methodical category, 10-15% into a humanistic category, and 25-35% into a spontaneous category of buyers (Kicova et al. 2018). Based on that study, in this paper the following figure 1 is derived. This system categorizes target groups who are interested in purchasing a car and visiting a specific retail format (see figure 1).

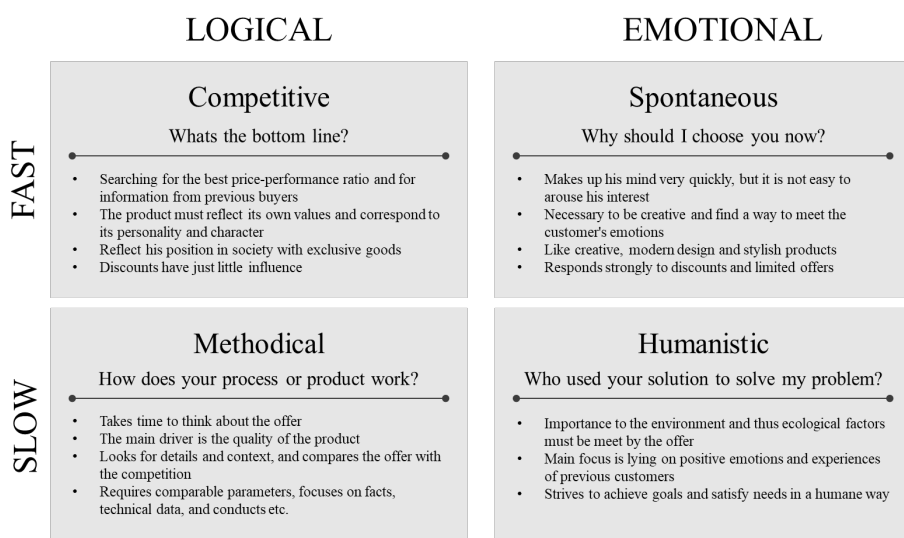


Figure 1. Decision-making persona types
(Own illustration – related to Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg 2006)

Thus, according to Kicova, Kral and Janoskova, customers can generally be divided into these four groups based on their purchasing behavior. However, this does not mean that these groups are universal. Thus, categorizing behavior is complex due to the dependency on the current situation of a customer, their mood, and their personality. Depending on the situation, the buyer may have several expressions from different categories. Moreover, the product itself plays a crucial role in the decision-making process (Kicova et al. 2018). For example, an automobile, which is referred to in this elaboration, receives greater and more extensive attention because it is a high-involvement product (Diez 2012, 31-41).

Research - Implication of future retail formats and customer expectations

Context of the research

The present study is based on a qualitative research project conducted in Germany. Its aim is to gain insights into the future of automotive retailing from a sales perspective. To achieve this, the study analyzes interviews conducted with executives from various German and international companies. These interviews include representatives from both international and national brands operating within the premium and luxury automotive segment. The surveyed experts are decision-makers in fields directly associated with the automotive industry, such as strategic original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), car dealership management, management of large international car dealer groups, and researchers specializing in future automotive retailing. The selection of interviewees was based on their extensive experience of over 10 years in the retailing field. The underlying research question determines the following elaboration – RQ: *Which persona type or automotive customer, in terms of their behavior and needs, can be most effectively mapped to which automotive retail format?*

Data Collection

The data for this study is collected through twelve semi-structured interviews. The sample consists of C-level management interviews and senior managers from national and international automotive companies, including OEMs, subsidiaries, car dealerships, and researchers. The interviews were conducted between October 2022 and March 2023. The interview sample was purposefully selected. Initially, the authors compiled a list of potential

interview partners based on their positioning and background to ensure a broad coverage of national and international brands. Websites, reports, and LinkedIn accounts were afterwards reviewed to identify suitable survey participants. All eligible companies were approached for at least one representative interview. Participants were interviewed individually either in person or online. However, most of the interviews were conducted online using the video communication tool Microsoft Teams. The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 to 60 minutes and were conducted in German language. All participants provided consent to be recorded for research purposes. The consent included the interviewer's assurance to anonymize data such as names and company affiliations. The interviews followed a semi-structured format with open-ended questions and follow-up questions to clarify any unresolved topics. The order of the questions was adjusted based on the responses of each interviewee. Throughout the survey period, the interview guide was iteratively adapted and continuously improved upon knowledge about the topic at hand.

Analysis of the data

Following established qualitative research methods for interview data, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the collected data was transcribed and analyzed using the qualitative data management software MaxQDA. Initially, an inductive approach was employed, and codes were created based on the transcripts. The collected data was examined in an open-ended manner, followed by a reduction process resulting in a structured data set. The analysis adheres to the principles of qualitative data analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1998), which involves reducing the data by organizing it into codes and subcodes, identifying patterns by connecting the coded data, and drawing conclusions. A deductive approach was employed, wherein the research questions were used to derive the main categories – so-called themes: market, retail formats, customer, and outlook. The first step involved determining which answers corresponded to each theme. Specific text passages, referred to as anchor examples, were then selected and translated from German (the language of the interviews) into English. Following this reduction process, paraphrases were created to summarize the anchor examples and condense them into core statements. The collected data was analyzed using the coding system depicted in table 1.

Theme	Main-code	Sub-code
Automotive retail market	Automotive Market changes	Indicators/Reasons
Retail Formats	Retail Characteristics in general (unspecific)	Retailing Trends
		Business Model "Agency"
	Retail Format Characteristics (specific)	City Store
		Pop-Up Stores
		Traditional Car Dealership
		Flagship Store
		Service Hub
	Retailing KPIs	KPIs to measure success (new/urban formats)
	Prioritization of core retail characteristics	Atmosphere
		Product portfolio
Appearance		
Accessibility		
Customer	Customer Segmentation	Competitive Customer Segmentation
		Humanistic Customer Segmentation
		Spontaneous Customer Segmentation
		Methodical Customer Segmentation
	Customer Trends	Behavior
		Expectations
Outlook	Future Retailing	Future Retailing Trends
		Future Retailing Formats

Table 1. Overview of themes, main-codes and subcodes
(Own illustration)

The following section presents the data analysis process to derive the results. Only a partial excerpt of the collected data is provided below. Specifically, the theme of "customer" and the sub-code of "customer segmentation" are listed below, as they contain valuable data for addressing the identified research gap.

Using an inductive approach, four codes were identified that pertain to customer segmentation in the decision-making process within the automotive industry. These codes encompass distinctions between competitive, humanistic, spontaneous, and methodical customer persona types. To enhance clarity and transparency regarding the researcher's methodology, table 2 displays the corresponding reduction and paraphrases derived from these codes.

Sub-code	Representative quote / anchor example	Reduction	Paraphrase
Competitive Customer Segmentation	<p>Wettbewerbsorientiert glaube ich schon, dass das auch was mit dem Alter zu tun hat. Also, eine junge Zielgruppe - 25 bis 35 würde sich sicherlich auch bei einem Experience Center, bei einem Pop-Up wiederfinden oder an triggern lassen - würde nicht tendenziell extra in traditionelles Autohaus fahren.</p>	<p>A competitive customer is often younger. So, a young target group - between 25 to 35- would rather find themselves at an experience center and at a pop-up. This customer is usually not visiting a traditional car dealership.</p>	<p>A competitive buyer tends to be a relatively younger customer. They need less advice and are attracted by experience-oriented formats such as city stores and pop-up stores.</p>
	<p>Wer wettbewerbsfähig unterwegs ist, würde sich auch dazu verleiten lassen, einfach in der Innenstadt zu sagen: Ach was, wir gucken uns jetzt einfach mal zehn Minuten an - wir gehen mal schnell rein. Das ist ein Vorteil dieser Konzepte. Ich glaube das es mit dem Alter zu tun hat, mit der Hemmschwelle - wir beobachten, dass sich ganz junge Leute gar nicht beraten lassen wollen.</p>	<p>A competitive customer would also be tempted to visit a city center. That's one advantage of these concepts. Additionally, it has to do with age, with the inhibition threshold - we've noticed that very young people don't want to seek advice at all.</p>	
	<p>Für mich sehr wahrscheinlich im traditionellen Autohaus, weil ich bin in meinem digitalen Prozess so weit, dass ich jetzt sage, ich möchte eine Probefahrt machen, dazu brauche ich einen physischen Kontakt.</p>	<p>Very likely attracted by a traditional car dealership because the customer is well informed online, so that it now comes to the test drive and the physical contact. That is mostly covered by a traditional format.</p>	
	<p>Der Wettbewerbsorientierte ist sicherlich, was das Thema traditionelles Autohaus betrifft, dort nicht schlecht beraten, faktisch methodisch rein Auto kaufen.</p>	<p>The competition-oriented person is certainly well advised to buy a car from a traditional car dealership - takes a fact-oriented and methodical approach.</p>	
	<p>Der wettbewerbsorientierte Sucht nach dem besten Preis Leistungsverhältnis. Die Produkt Spiegel die Stellung in der Gesellschaft wieder. Der ist sicherlich tendenziell eher im traditionellen Bereich angesiedelt (...).</p>	<p>The competitive search for the best price-performance ratio. The product reflects the position in society. This certainly tends to be more in the traditional area (...).</p>	
	<p>...</p>	<p>...</p>	

Table 2. Anchor example of the sub-code customer segmentation
(Own illustration)

Findings

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the alignment between customer/persona types and automotive retail formats. Additionally, the interview results offer guidance for characterizing automotive retail formats and identifying emerging trends in the industry.

Customer segmentation

In the automotive industry, customer segmentation reveals the presence of distinct persona types. These types vary primarily across different brands, as original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) tend to adopt a more brand-specific approach to persona development. The decision-making persona types described by Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg serve as a framework for characterizing these customer types, as reported by the interviewees, and aligning them with specific automotive retail formats.

The **competitive customer** persona was extensively discussed among the various interview participants (=IP). The interviewed individuals exhibit diverse opinions within this target group. Therefore, the categorization of the respondents is varied and not congruent – this is demonstrated by the following anchor examples. It was highlighted that this particular target group is likely to be younger and driven by experiences. *“A competitive customer is often younger. So, a young target group - between 25 to 35- would rather find themselves at an experience center and at a pop-up. This customer is usually not visiting a traditional car dealership”* (IP – 05).

Moreover, it was observed that a younger target group tends to require less guidance and is thus more inclined to seek out formats that inspire them. Consequently, traditional formats that emphasize intensive advisory services are less appealing to this target group. *“A competitive customer would also be tempted to visit a city center. That’s one advantage of these concepts. Additionally, it has to do with age, with the inhibition threshold - we’ve noticed that very young people don’t want to seek advice at all”* (IP – 09).

The competitive customer persona engages in thorough price comparisons, predominantly online. Accordingly, this customer is well-informed prior to visiting an automotive retail format. As a result, the initial stage of decision-making is already completed by the time of physical interaction with the brand. The interviewees emphasized that competitive customers not only compare prices, but also evaluate the product itself. They express a desire to

physically test and experience the product, such as through test drives. Formats that are less focused on providing experiential elements are more likely to fulfill this requirement for the competitive customer persona. *“Very likely attracted by a traditional car dealership because the customer is well informed online, so that it now comes to the test drive and the physical contact. That is mostly covered by a traditional format”* (IP – 03).

Despite the primary focus on obtaining the best price-to-value ratio, the competitive customer persona also places importance on physically examining products. This preference aligns well with traditional automotive formats like the conventional car dealership or flagship stores, which offer a wide range of physical products for evaluation. *“The competitive search for the best price-performance ratio. The product reflects the position in society. This certainly tends to be more in the traditional area (...)”* (IP – 11).

The **humanistic persona** type is characterized as a deliberative individual who takes their time in making decisions. They rely on additional cues and emotional information, subjective factors to guide their product choices. Notably, this target group demonstrates a greater interest in seeking advice and guidance during the decision-making process. *“This target group needs a high level/intensity of advice and is more likely to gain information at a traditional car dealership format”* (IP – 11).

If a format has a thematic focus and thus embodies certain values, this target group is also addressed. *“that’s the type of person who probably feels less comfortable in traditional car dealerships, but rather tends towards boutiques. In other words, this person is more likely to engage with the corresponding ecological perspectives e.g., vegan textiles, perhaps electromobility and alternative drive systems”* (IP – 12).

The **spontaneous customer** persona is characterized by their highly emotional nature, which drives their decision-making process. This persona is particularly drawn to experiential elements and seeks out brands that can evoke strong emotions. Consequently, formats that offer an emotional brand presentation and inspire customers are most appealing to this target group. Based on the interviews conducted, it was suggested that pop-up or concept stores are likely the most effective means of engaging with this persona. As a result, urban formats tend to be the primary focus for reaching this target group. *“The spontaneous person, who is always looking for something very special and is emotionally driven, (...) is most likely to be found in a pop-up store”* (IP – 10).

The spontaneous customer, in their quest for stimuli, becomes aware of an urban format. This awareness can occur in a casual manner, such as during a shopping excursion in the city center. *“The spontaneous feels more addressed by the format flagship, concept / boutique and pop-up - to get an impulse. For instance - the spontaneous person who actually wants to buy a fashion product and sees accidentally an urban automotive format next door”* (IP – 8).

The **methodical customer** persona is characterized by a highly rational approach, where experience-oriented formats have less appeal. This target group places greater emphasis on facts and data in their decision-making process. This methodical nature is also evident in how this customer visits a car dealership. While they may visit only a few dealerships, their visits are purposeful and focused, with the intention of reaching a final decision. *“This target group will never walk into a concept store or pop-up store because they are approaching rather methodical/rational than emotional. They visit for instance three car dealerships, three different brands and afterwards are deciding. This target group wants to see the maximum range of products. They want to see everything that confirms their purchase and are just looking for clear facts”* (IP – 02).

Characteristics of retail formats

The **traditional car dealership** is commonly referred to a “car dealership mile” and is typically situated outside urban areas. In this format, various brands are positioned side by side, offering a wide range of products. Additionally, after-sales services are often provided alongside sales. The interview participants unanimously agree that this format is outdated. However, it remains a crucial component within the ecosystem of an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) and plays a significant role in their network strategy. *“Large, glassy, metallic, cold, distant. Lots of cars, consultation-intensive, pushy salesperson wants to sell you a car. Little individualization, little personalization. Period”* (IP – 10). *“That is, of course, the car mile (...). This is something that is currently being dubbed a bit of a dinosaur and threatened with extinction. However, it has been shown that the automotive industry and, above all, the retail sector is already very resilient to change. In other words, it has been shown that the car dealership, where sales, services and after-sales are offered, is actually still the linchpin”* (IP – 08).

However, the future viability of this format is subject to critical discussion. While it currently holds value within the industry, there is a growing trend towards concentration in the distribution network. According to the interviewees, a significant portion of these traditional formats is expected to

gradually disappear from the market. “(...) there are still many, many, many car dealerships that will probably no longer exist in the future” (IP – 11).

Flagship stores are seen as a forward-thinking format. These stores serve as brand destinations where customers can fully immerse themselves in the brand’s world and receive a personalized brand experience. “*The brand center/flagship is of course very good from a brand perspective, because I can basically present the entire brand to the customer as I imagine it. I bring the customer into such a complete world*” (IP – 10).

In addition to the future viability of these format and the expansion of flagship stores, there is also an anticipated increase in urban formats. It is argued that urban formats serve as traffic drivers for flagship stores, indicating a complementary relationship rather than a mutual dependence. Consequently, when customers encounter a brand for the first time in an urban format, such as in a city centre, they are more likely to visit a flagship store in the future to fully experience the brand’s comprehensive offerings. “*What you can clearly see, is that these flagship formats are increasingly being complemented by new, primarily focused or urban formats. We see studios, we see temporary formats such as pop-up stores, where the focus is on brand representation, and in some cases also on sales. But we also see resource and investment-saving formats such as service points, express service, etc.*” (IP – 06).

The **city store** format is commonly adopted by new market entrants, with Asian brands utilizing this strategy to establish their presence in Europe. The primary objective of this format is to generate brand awareness and engage with customers who may not be reached through other means, thereby creating an initial brand touchpoint. These formats are predominantly situated in inner-city locations, often selected based on the criterion of high footfall. “*These are brands that don’t have a traditional footprint, which means they have to reach relatively quickly awareness. The best way to do that is to actually have a presence in the city centres*” (IP – 10).

Special automotive brands with a premium to luxury positioning are actively seeking highly desirable real estate properties within established and thriving environments. The fashion and lifestyle industry, in particular, is regarded as an ideal setting due to the presence of customers who align well with the brand and are more likely to spend time in these areas. “*Especially in the luxury segment. Sure, Mercedes is now turning it into a strategy (...) and then, like Louis Vuitton, Hermès and Gucci, they have to come into the city centers with all kinds of formats. Especially in the top locations of Stuttgart, Frankfurt, the Ruhr area, Berlin, Munich and Hamburg*” (IP – 11).

The interview results emphasized the importance of **pop-up stores**. This format will become much more widespread in the future. By being able to change locations and adapt specific themes, pop-up stores are highly agile. *“What will increase is the relevance of pop-ups, because we need to develop a much more agile understanding of retail. In other words, you have to go much more to where the people are. The expectation that they will come to me is over”* (IP – 10).

They are frequently located in areas that may not be traditionally considered suitable for permanent retail establishments. However, there are ample opportunities for collaborations between different industries. The fashion and lifestyle sector, for instance, often serves as a dependable partner for this format, attracting customers in highly frequented locations. *“And pop-ups are a great story. It’s a really cool thing where you can make a big splash with department stores, i.e., in the luxury sector, for six months, show a new side of yourself and tap into new customer groups. That will proliferate. But I am firmly convinced that there will be a very strong trend towards urban format”* (IP – 09).

In addition to the aforementioned sales-oriented formats, another format that focuses on after-sales services is frequently mentioned - the **service hub**. The interpretation of this format varies. In some cases, it is described as a dedicated service point or workshop operation. Conversely, interviewees also describe it as a charging destination for electric vehicles, where customers can relax in a lounge while their vehicle is being charged. The service hub format is considered a standalone concept with significant added value in terms of processes, infrastructure, systems, etc., which can be specifically tailored to the after-sales department and structurally represented. Such customization may not always be feasible in a comprehensive “full-fledge” approach. *“We have developed formats (...) cost-optimized and process-optimized car dealerships can perhaps be built, which, for example, only serve the purpose of picking up cars and not just presenting cars and providing advice, but a small central delivery hall as a new format”* (IP – 08).

Further, the interviewees emphasized the significance of the atmosphere in physical stores, which surpasses the importance of the actual product. The emphasis lies on the product’s allure rather than the breadth and depth of the displayed product portfolio. Similarly, the concept of personalized shopping experiences has not been fully comprehended in contemporary automotive retailing. Customers desire an individualized and almost exclusive encounter with the brand. *“In other words, the more you operate in the premium and luxury*

segment, the more you really have to address the needs of the individual customer” (IP – 3). “Large units are still off-putting for many customers and, in principle, they want a personal approach” (IP – 08).

Hence, it is crucial to possess a comprehensive understanding of the target demographics and conduct detailed analyses. The presumed younger target demographic may exhibit distinct consumer behaviours and prioritize different factors when making automotive purchases. The future of automotive retail format development is not solely reliant on new car sales. Thus far, there has been a lack of development in pure used car formats that deviate from traditional used-car retail formats. *“Who actually buys new cars these days, they’re incredibly old people. In other words, if I want to persuade a 28-year-old to buy a new car. You’d better do it in a fun way, embedded in the reality of their lives” (IP – 6).*

Discussion and Conclusion

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the future of automotive retailing by examining current trends and developments in the industry. It analyzes the decision-making personas of customers in the automotive sector and matches them with present and future retail formats and their characteristics.

The study aligns with the trend of retailing evolving into retaining, as well as the idea of showrooming as an experience (Severin 2023). The significance of atmosphere, emphasized by each interviewee, is consistent with the insights provided by theoretical sources such as Rayburn and Voss, highlighting emotions as a key driver in future brick-and-mortar retail (Rayburn and Voss 2013, 400-407). However, there are discrepancies between the characteristics of retail formats identified in scientific sources and those derived from the analysis. Traditional car dealerships are described as effective in retaining existing customers and successful in attracting new target groups. Due to the full-fledged approach the findings demonstrate that this format is more likely to retain existing customers and not specifically acquire new target groups in the first step.

In summary, this research deepens the understanding of previous findings presented in the theoretical section through scientific sources. There is no gap between these statements and the theoretical background; rather, this research provides a more concrete depiction of the current state of research. Given the limited number of scientific approaches and surveys on this topic, this journal article presents an approach that warrants further discussion.

To operationalize these findings, a decision-making matrix is derived and presented in figure 2. The matrix integrates the theoretical descriptions - sourced from academic literature - with the data obtained from the qualitative survey. It shows exemplary the defined customer segments on the y-axis, whereas the x-axis illustrates the retail formats. It aims to present initial implications that describe which target audience/persona type has specific needs for the discussed format. This process demonstrates an initial matching between persona types and automotive formats. It can be reasonably assumed that each segment relies on different customer motivations and needs of visiting the format in question. Interestingly, not every retail format fits each customer segment. Hence, the decision-making matrix demonstrates those unsuitable connections between customer segments and retail formats. Consequently, the decision-making matrix highlights the mismatch between certain customer segments and retail formats. This suggests that some formats may need to be modified or updated in order to better attract these target groups. Alternatively, the characteristics of a retail format can be tailored to suit a specific customer segment. The following matrix is filled based on the data identified in the analysis. This filling enables an initial derivation and assignment of personas to their respective retail formats.

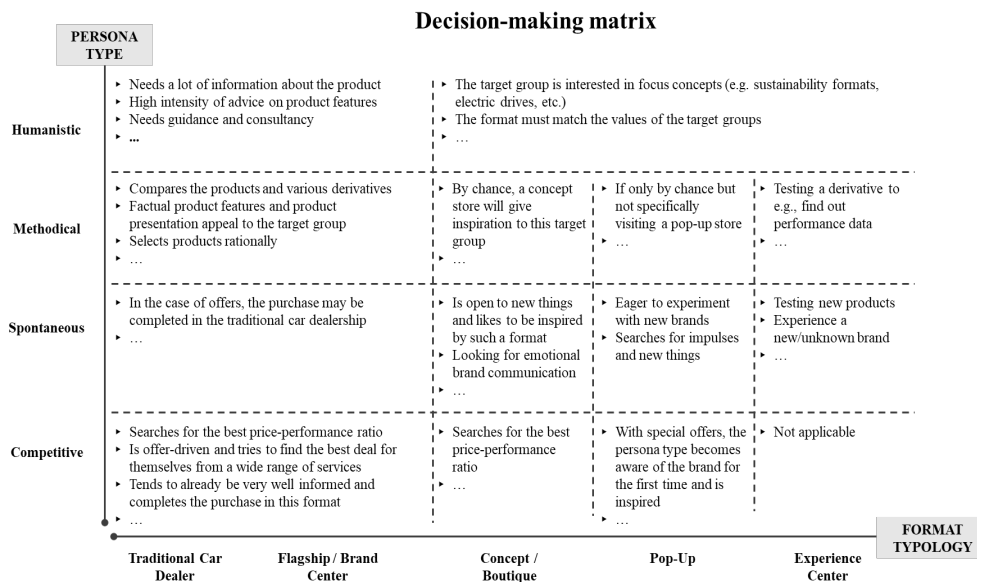


Figure 2. Filled-out decision-making matrix
(Own illustration)

Importantly, this matrix outlines a practical approach that is not limited to the automotive premium sector but can also be applied to other industries within the premium to luxury sector. It is important to note that the research question cannot be fully answered at this stage.

RQ: Which persona type or automotive customer, in terms of their behavior and needs, can be most effectively mapped to which automotive retail format?

However, the study does provide preliminary implications that are formulated as hypotheses. These hypotheses will need to be further tested and substantiated through a quantitative study. The initial indications provided serve as a foundation for these hypotheses, but they must be validated through subsequent research. First indications as a baseline for hypotheses (must be proven by further studies):

1. The **humanistic** persona type tends to be addressed by traditional formats such as the traditional car dealership as well as flagship stores.
2. The **methodical** persona type tends to be addressed by traditional formats such as the traditional car dealership as well as flagship stores.
3. The **spontaneous** persona type tends to be attracted by new urban formats like concept, pop-up, or even more experience-oriented formats.
4. The **competitive** persona type tends to be addressed by traditional as well as new urban formats.

This study specifically focuses on the retail segment, which includes private customers, self-employed individuals, and small commercial customers. It is important to note that this study solely examines sales formats and does not explore after-sales customers, processes, and retail formats. Hence, there are still additional prospects for future research due to the limitations identified in this study. The subsequent step involves conducting a more comprehensive analysis of these findings and initial indications. Specifically, it is necessary to delve deeper into the disparities between the characteristics of a traditional car dealership and a flagship store. A following analysis will provide a more detailed and outlined understanding of these differences.

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25 Years Since the Adoption of the Aarhus Convention

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ABSTRACT: According to internationally agreed rules, the public is one of the key actors to be involved in the adoption of environmental legislation. At the same time, by means of their laws, States guarantee citizens access to information of public interest. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The purpose of this paper is to analyze whether the content of the Convention is still relevant in the current global context. The topic has relevance in the present times and has practical applicability, being a topic of general interest not only to the public authorities but also to the general public. In order to achieve the proposed objective, the analysis is interdisciplinary, the chosen topic being at the confluence of several disciplines: administrative law, environmental law, and public international law. The structure of the paper is divided into three sections: section I presents the reflection of the Aarhus Convention into the national law, section II analyzes the European framework applicable to the public participation in environmental decision-making, and section III highlights the relevance of the Aarhus Convention in the present times - a case study.

KEYWORDS: Administrative Code, Constitution, Aarhus Convention, public authorities, public interest

1. Introduction

The participation of citizens in the law-making process is commonplace in a democratic society. The administrative law doctrine states that “the public interest has priority over the private interest, starting from the idea that, in the rule of law, the interests of the State are those of the community and must therefore take priority over those of the individual” (Ștefan 2023, 33). The revised Romanian Constitution enshrines guarantee rights for citizens in relation to the public authorities: the right to defence, free access to justice, the right to petition, and the right of the person injured by a public authority.

In 2023, it was the 25th anniversary of the signing, in Denmark, of the Aarhus Convention of June 25, 1998, on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (published in the OJEU L124 of May 15, 2005). The Aarhus Convention was ratified by Romania through Law no. 86 of May 10, 2000 (published in the Official Gazette no. 224 of May 22, 2000). This situation made us curious to document the subject because the environmental information is information of public interest. The aim of the study is to find out as much as possible about the Aarhus Convention in the current context.

2. Reflection of the Aarhus Convention in the national law - some highlights

According to the Constitution, the Aarhus Convention has been part of national law since its ratification. In this regard, we indicate: Article 11-*international law and domestic law* [para. (1) - the Romanian State undertakes to fulfil in good faith its obligations under the treaties to which it is a party, and para. (2) - treaties ratified by the Parliament, according to the law, are part of the domestic law] and Article 20 - *international human rights treaties* [para. (1) – the constitutional provisions on citizens’ rights and freedoms shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the pacts and other international treaties to which Romania is a party]. Therefore, the public authorities are obliged to observe the Aarhus Convention and to fulfil the obligations undertaken. In fact, “it is the States who participate in the international relations, but not just anyhow, but as legally equal subjects of international law” (Popescu 2023, 9).

At the same time, “in order to fulfil the obligations undertaken by ratifying the Convention and to transpose Directive 2003/4/EC into the national law – such directive implementing Pillar I of the Convention -

Government Decision no. 878/2005 on public access to environmental information was adopted, which establishes the general legal framework for access by any person to environmental information held by or intended for the public authorities, regulating the conditions, the basic terms, and the modalities for exercising this right” (Niță 2022, 136).

The environmental protection legislation also includes the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 195/2005 on environmental protection (published in the Official Gazette no. 1196 of 30 December 2005). According to Article 5 “the State recognizes the right of every person to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, guaranteeing to this end:

- a) access to environmental information, subject to the conditions of confidentiality laid down by the legislation in force;
- b) the right of association in environmental organizations;
- c) the right to be consulted in decision-making on the development of environmental policy and legislation;
- d) the right to approach, directly or through environmental protection organizations, the administrative and/or judicial authorities, as appropriate, in environmental matters, regardless of whether damage has been caused or not;
- e) the right to compensation for the damage suffered”.

At the same time, the Constitution regulates free access to justice (Article 21) and the right of a person injured by a public authority (Article 52). The regulatory framework is completed by the Administrative Litigation Law no. 554/2004 (published in the Official Gazette no.1154 of December 2004). The Constitution also regulates in Article 31 - the right to information, supplemented by Law no. 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest (published in the Official Gazette no. 663 of October 23, 2001). We refer to the provisions of Article 31 of the Constitution - the right to information: para. (1) “The right of a person to have access to any information of public interest cannot be restricted” and para. (2) “The public authorities, each according to their powers, must make sure that citizens are properly informed about public affairs and matters of personal interest”.

3. The European framework for public participation in environmental decision-making

In this section we will highlight the most important pieces of legislation adopted at international level on the subject under analysis, starting from the fact that

2024 will mark the 20th anniversary since the adoption of the *Polluter Pays Directive* (Directive 2004/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 21, 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage). Since 2004, the regulatory framework at international level has been enriched, with a growing interest of citizens to get involved in environmental protection.

The Council Decision 2005/370/EC of February 17, 2005 (published in the OJEU L124 of 17 May 2005) adopted the Aarhus Convention at European Community level, ratified at European level by Council Regulation (EC) No. 1367/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 September 2006 on the application of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters to community bodies and institutions (published in the OJEU 264 of June, 25, 2006). Subsequently, on 6 October 2021 Regulation (EC) No. 1367/2006 (...) was amended by Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1676 of the European Parliament and of the Council (published in the OJEU L 356 of October 8, 2021).

The objectives of the Aarhus Convention are: “*in order to contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being, each Party shall guarantee the rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters in accordance with (...) this Convention*”. The Preamble of the Aarhus Convention recognizes that “*adequate protection of the environment is essential for human well-being and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, including the right to life itself*” (Article 1).

Drawing a parallel with administrative law, we found it interesting how the Convention relates to the notion of *public authority*, which we interpret as having a broader meaning in the European normative act. Within the meaning of the Convention, the notion of public authority means:

- a) “Government at national, regional or other level;
- b) Natural or legal persons performing public administrative functions under the national law, including specific tasks, activities or services related to the environment;
- c) Any natural or legal person having public responsibilities or functions or providing public services in relation to the environment or the control of a body or person falling within subparagraphs (a) or (b) of this Article;
- d) Regional economic integration institutions or organizations (...)” (Article 2(2)).

In administrative law, the notion of public authority is defined by the Administrative Code (Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57/2019, published in the Official Gazette no. 555 of July 2019) in Article 5(k) as follows: “a State body or body of the administrative-territorial unit acting under public authority for the satisfaction of a public interest”. At the same time, the Constitution contains a Title called *Public authorities* (Title III).

At European level, there is legislation on access to information of public interest: “the legal framework applicable to applications for public access to documents concerning the European institutions consists of Regulation (EC) No. 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 30, 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents” (published in the OJ L 145, May 31, 2001) (Ștefan 2023, 65).

4. The topicality of the Aarhus Convention - case study

According to the doctrine: „Regulations have general applicability” (Fuerea 2010, 141). Regarding the monitoring of compliance with the Convention, the Convention Compliance Committee has made a series of Recommendations to Romania (Decision VII/8o on Romania’s compliance with its obligations under the Aarhus Convention, adopted by the Meeting of the Parties in Geneva on October 18-20, 2021). From this perspective, not only is it mandatory for our country to comply with the provisions of the ratified Convention, but it is also highly topical in the context of external monitoring.

The recommendations are: “1. *Take practical legislative, regulatory, and administrative measures to ensure that public officials:*

- a) respond to requests from the public as soon as possible, but no later than one month, and in case of refusal, specify reasons for the refusal;
- b) *implement the Convention correctly (...);*
- c) *interpret the grounds for refusing access to environmental information in a restrictive manner, taking into account the public interest served by making environmental information available (...)*” (Idem).

Other recommendations are: “(...) 5. *Make appropriate commitments and arrangements to ensure that activities (...) are carried out with the broad participation of the authorities and the public concerned*” (Idem). Following this Compliance Decision, the Romanian State has adopted a series of measures through the Strategy on the implementation of the provisions of Decision VI/8h on Romania’s compliance with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention (2021).

At the same time, one of the legal instruments available to citizens to prevent their participation in environmental measures is the Ombudsman, to whom they can address a complaint. The Constitutional Court of Romania is also the public authority called upon to ensure that the Constitution is observed. “The essential role of the Constitutional Court is to guarantee the supremacy of the Constitution” (Barbu & al. 2021, 17). According to Article 59 of the Constitution, the Ombudsman exercises their powers *ex officio* or at the request of persons whose rights and freedoms have been infringed, within the limits of the law. With regard to his role, the Institution of the Ombudsman aims to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens in their relations with the public authorities (Law no. 35/1997).

In accordance with European legislation, our country has implemented the deposit-return system. We refer to Government Decision no. 1074/2021 on the establishment of the deposit-return system for non-reusable primary packaging - DRS (published in the Official Gazette no. 1120 of November 21, 2021). Originally, the DRS was supposed to enter into force on the 1st of October 2022, but the executive postponed it by one year, setting the date for the 30th of November 2023. The legislative act has been subject to public debate, as shown by public information (<http://www.mmediu.ro/articol/mmmap-supune-dezbaterii-publice-proiectul-de-hg-pentru-stabilirea-sistemului-de-garantie-returnare-pentru-ambalaje-primare-nereutilizabile/3799>). We therefore consider that the central public authority has fulfilled its obligations by adopting this legislation in full compliance with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention.

5. Conclusions

Following the analysis, some conclusions can be drawn as follows. The Aarhus Convention is extremely topical today, even though 25 years have passed since its adoption by the signatory States. It was ratified by our country in 2000 and is part of the national law. The issue of public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters is one of the most important. Access to justice in environmental matters is guaranteed by Constitution and environmental information is information of public interest.

According to the doctrine: “human coexistence feels more and more acutely the need for security, clarity and order in the relations within itself” (Popa 2008, 63). In our country, legal levers are created to support the citizens

and protect their rights and freedoms in their relations with the public authorities, such as the Institution of the Ombudsman. At the same time, one of the recent pieces of legislation through which the executive has fulfilled its obligations deriving from the Convention is the implementation of the deposit-return system for non-reusable primary packaging, a piece of legislation that was the subject of many consultations with the public and private sectors and was in the decision-making transparency stage for a long time.

In conclusion, we believe that the Aarhus Convention, ratified by our country, is totally relevant in the present time, as society is becoming increasingly interested in involving citizens in the environmental decisions of public authorities, especially in the light of climate change, a situation that calls for general responsibility.

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Self-Love as the Development of Neighborly Love through the Prism of God's Love: Augustinian Love through the Lens of Oliver O'Donovan

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ABSTRACT: This study examines Augustine's perspective on love through four defining aspects: cosmic love, positive love, rational love and benevolent love. O'Donovan will demonstrate, in dealing with these four aspects of Augustine's thought, how he manages to move from one to the other in the order necessary for the equitable fulfilment of the commandment of love given by Christ to his disciples. These sensible claims have been thoughtfully fulfilled by Oliver O'Donovan, in his eminent book *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, where, in one section, he makes an essential systematization of love in Augustine, a systematization we shall present in this study.

KEYWORDS: cosmic love, positive love, benevolent love, rational love, neighbour

Introduction

It is well known that Augustine's vast and monumental work does not allow itself to be authoritatively rendered to those who do not meet the extremely exacting demands of knowing the work in its entirety and in detail of the chronology-writing relationship overseen by the index of transitional maturity, and of the penetrating force necessary to mirror the originality of his ideas.

These sensible claims have been thoughtfully fulfilled by Oliver O'Donovan, in his eminent book *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, where, in one section, he makes an essential systematization of love in Augustine, a systematization that we will present in this study (O'Donovan 2006, 19-36). O'Donovan makes a significant contribution because he has made Augustine's great writings accessible again. A long perspective will be of immeasurable benefit to Christian political reflection as it confronts the challenges of our day. O'Donovan is the most learned and persuasive advocate of a Christian state of English-language writers. His arguments for the Christian state are both subtle and powerful. Although O'Donovan claims that his task is to make politics "morally intelligible," he has been interpreted as offering a defense of Christianity, a vision of politics in which the state is confessionally Christian. O'Donovan's exaggeration on this point is difficult since O'Donovan argues that such a state is only in favor of the possibility of a confessional Christian constitutional order, not the necessity of it. O'Donovan insists that the possibility of a government that is confessionally Christian is legitimate because he says that this is an appropriate response to the government in a society that is confessionally Christian. A Christian society also needs Christian principles. He therefore analyzes love in Augustine's thought through four defining aspects: cosmic love, positive love, rational love and benevolent love. O'Donovan reasons that "in dealing with these four aspects of Augustine's thought we shall see how he manages to move from one to the other in the order necessary for the equitable fulfillment of the commandment of love given by Christ to his disciples" (O'Donovan 2006, 19).

Love is central to Augustine's understanding of God and the human person. It is present in a wide range of issues, including what shapes our identity or drives us to seek truth. It motivates our ethical actions, delineates the social order (i.e., the two cities), and binds us to God. Given love's multifaceted role, it is no wonder that it remains a source of inspiration for commentators, both those who wish to direct the Augustinian perspective on contemporary issues and those who wish to read contemporary issues through Augustine's insights (Pollmann & Otten 2014). Elaborating on the latter trajectory, Anders Nygren argues in his much debated book, *Agape and Eros*, that Augustine continued his adherence to a platonic notion of eros that undermines both his own concept and a broad concept of Christian agape (Nygren 2019, 253-257). In Nygren's reading, eros, which is self-fulfilling love originating in the soul's movement

towards God, stops with agape, which is self-denial, love originating in God and condescending to us through Christ's sacrifice.

Before doing so, however, there are a few points to remember as we move forward. First, Augustine relies on three main Latin words to describe love: *amor*, *caritas* and *dilectio*. Scholars have sometimes sought to find trends in the use of these terms, trying to relate them to good and bad forms of love or to place them within contemporary debates (e.g., *eros vs. agape*). We need to be wary of such efforts, however, as Augustine's terminology can be loose and flexible. Sometimes Augustine explicitly draws attention to this tendency. For example, in *The City of God*, 14.7, he argues that all three Latin words *amor*, *caritas*, and *dilectio*, following their indiscriminate use in Scripture, can designate good and bad forms of love and have no fixed meaning. This does not mean that Augustine fails to distinguish between good and bad love or between human (*eros*) and divine (*agape*) love. But at least as far as human love is concerned, he tends to differentiate it, not by precise terminological categories, but rather on the basis of the moral and immoral ways in which we apply our love to the various objects within our lives.

Second, one of the underappreciated points for examinations of Augustine's writings is the extent to which his understanding of love depends on developments in his understanding of God and the human person. It is not enough simply to speak of "divine love." It is also necessary to consider the Trinitarian doctrine that comes to shape his view of divine love. Similarly, one cannot simply refer to "human love." One must also consider Augustine's evolving understanding of the human self, which is at least for a modern audience somewhat problematic because it does not have a Latin word for "self" (Cavadini 2007, 119–132). Rather than a fixed concept, terminologically speaking, it is based on a variety of less precise pronouns and terms designating the human person. This should alert us to the difficulties the contemporary reader faces when faced with the challenge of perceiving the Augustinian "self" through a post-Cartesian, post-Freudian lens (Menn 1998, 18). It is extremely important to understand exactly what this "self" is that Augustine supposedly recommends as the central element of our love for God.

1. Cosmic love

Cosmic love, in the form of the two commandments comprising law and prophecy, is closely related to the three philosophical divisions of the Stoics

(natural philosophy, moral philosophy and logic) (Rotaru 2005, 185-190). "It is evident that Augustine believed that love is firmly rooted in the fundamental reality of the cosmos ... he sees love as a natural law of the universe" (O'Donovan 2006, 19). In *The City of God*, Augustine writes the following: "anyone who gives even moderate attention to the human problem and to our common nature will recognize that if there is no man who does not desire to be happy, there is also no man who does not desire peace. For even those who wage war desire nothing but victory, the desire, so to speak, to obtain peace together with glory. In what else would victory consist if not in conquering those who resist us? And when that is achieved, there will be peace. There is, then, a desire for peace in those who wage war even as they find pleasure in the exercise of their warlike nature in commandments and battles. For every man seeks peace by waging war, but no man seeks war by waging peace. For even those who interrupt the peace in which they live do not hate peace, but only wish it to change into a peace in which they can better accommodate themselves" (Augustin 2015, 78).

Looking, among other things, at this passage, O'Donovan is of the opinion that one can see an illustration of cosmic love, here in the form of the love of peace characteristic of human nature. He sees different phenomena that are summed up in the natural law of love: "a physical phenomenon, which consists in the continual search for equilibrium, is compared with a political phenomenon, in which people form communities even in the way of overthrowing each other, and both are compared with the anthropological phenomenon, in which people do not want to die and will fight to preserve their lives. Behind all this is discerned the universal tendency towards pax, a word that can be translated as stability, or equilibrium, which will not take place apart from the pursuit, through justice, of perfect happiness in the City of God" (O'Donovan 2006, 20).

After observing from Augustine's words that people can not love peace, but instead can love an unjust peace, he reasons that "being obliged to love a certain peace is argued to be in the power of loving that peace. And so we see that the distinction between natural necessity and moral obligation is not completely eroded, only that one is used to reinforce the other. If such a natural law exists to be the basis of human morality, the applications must be distinct. Each element of the natural universe loves the kind of peace that is intended for it (O'Donovan 2006, 20).

O'Donovan directs us, among other things, to the famous passage from *Confessions*: "To this place our love lifts us up, and your good Spirit lifts our humility from the gates of death. In your goodness we have peace. By its weight, the body tends to a place of its own. Weight does not only pull towards those below, but towards its own place. The fire rises up, the stone falls down. All are actuated by their own weights, all tend towards their own places. Oil poured under water rises above water, and water poured over oil sinks under oil. All are carried by their own weights, all seek their own places. Those that have been worse made are seething with restlessness; as soon as they are well ordered, they are at peace. My weight is my love; I am carried by them wherever I am carried. By Thy gift we are kindled and carried up, we begin to kindle and start" (Augustin 2018, 56).

This passage contributes to the critic's conclusion that, metaphysically speaking, God's love is a movement of the will towards the final cause. But in the paradise of this conception the serpent of sin inexplicably creeps in. This being the case, Augustine attempts a reconciliation in *De libero arbitrio*, III. 1. 2., where, making an analysis of two significant elements (the will and a stone), he makes a distinction and a similarity between them: the distinction is that the movement of the stone is natural, and the movement of the will is voluntary, and the similarity is that each of them exists without any "external propulsive force". Then, the question of will is difficult to elucidate. Finally, O'Donovan says: "the solution lies in an order of love. But it proved difficult for Augustine to be adequate. The concept of love, as a cosmic necessity, was nowhere allowed to unfold, and so, on the other side of the classical tradition, he turned to supplement it by establishing an order of love in the free choice of the subject" (O'Donovan 2006, 21).

2. Positive love

Positive love is a love in which Augustine tries to capture verbs taken from Cicero (to desire, to seek), verbs which together with the verbs to gain, to acquire, represent man's relationship with the good in the Eudemonist tradition. This synonymic metamorphosis "gives the idea of love a new meaning as the target of the subjective conception of the good, and at the same time unites this positivist teleology with Plotinian cosmic teleology in an obvious complementarity" (O'Donovan 2006, 24).

Love thus takes on new positive connotations without losing its earlier cosmic ones. Naturally this identification of love with the pursuit of subjective ends is supported by another modification Augustine makes to the tradition: the transformation of "finis bonorum from being the status of a subject to being a transcendent object of attention, God Himself" (O'Donovan 2006, 24).

From here, and from taking the ordering of love from the Eudemonist tradition, which distinguishes between "ends" and "means", Augustine develops his ideas around the verbs *uti* (to use) and *frui* (to enjoy), ideas that we will consider in another section, and at the end of the analysis. O'Donovan says that "the only positive love that remains is that by which a man pursues his final end, his finis bonorum" (O'Donovan 2006, 24).

3. Rational love

Rational love is frequently stifled by Augustine's reason in his mature years. This rational love is a love which, while keeping its distance, succeeds in creating a contact through an admiring touch; the distance between subject and object is abrogated in the direction of a dimension which opens itself to empathic movements. "Let us admire them! Let us praise them! Let us love them!" (Sermo 284. 3) are some of Augustine's words in which O'Donovan notes the synonymy of this love.

He says: "The response of the lover towards the object of his admiration is delectatio: "Nothing can constitute an object of love unless it produces pleasure." (Sermo 159. 3) But the basis of this pleasure is rational. The more the object is known, the more it is loved; some may not find pleasure in something they perceive deformed, but the moment the value is known in a proper way, it will be allowed to be loved. But this rational pleasure is by no means purely passive, since it evokes conformity between the subject and the good that constitutes the object of his love. "The more you love someone", Augustine remarks in passing, "the more you will take him as a model for your actions" (Ephesians 45:1), (O'Donovan 2006, 24-25).

In this situation, however, there is no place for loving the wicked, a conclusion which is obviously unacceptable to those who believe in God's love for sinners and in the duty of Christians to love their enemies. Augustine finds a way to avoid these conclusions. He can go on to speak of the rational love of the unworthy by admitting the possibility of loving certain aspects of the person. This also allows for right and wrong love of values. O'Donovan

shows that rational love finds a very important place in Augustine's thought (Rotaru 2013, 104-108) because through it, he can restore coherence and flexibility in the "ordering" of love.

4. Benevolent love

Benevolent love, strictly between man and man, is the love that regards man on the basis of a positive futuristic orientation. Man, thanks to this love he receives, is directed in a parallelism with the passage of time towards the attainment of his destined fullness. It is the love that gives credit, the love that invests with hope, the virtuality that materializes the potentiality of becoming. Augustine says: "every form of affection, my beloved brothers, shows that there is a certain good will towards those who are loved. But this is not how we should cherish people (...), so this is not how we should love people, as we hear the foodies say: "I like thrushes." Then you ask: "But why do you like them?" The glutton likes thrushes so that he can kill and eat them, and he says he loves them, but he loves them precisely so that they are no more, so that he can destroy them. And everything we like for food, we "love" in this way, so that it may be eaten, and we may feed ourselves. Is it thus that people are to be loved as if they were to be destroyed? But there is a certain kind of friendship, accompanied by goodwill, which consists in our being helpful to those we love." (Augustin 2003, 35-37).

Looking at these words O'Donovan argues that "if goodwill cannot be shown to God and cannot be shown to objects used by man, this is, as the same passage makes clear, the feature of all loving relationships between man and man. This does not constitute a genre of human love, but a partial analysis of all human love. Hence the importance of getting rid of empirical conditions, so that the actual realizations of benevolence and perception, as Augustine sometimes does, between the attitude, *benevolentia*, and the act itself, *beneficentia*. This again emphasizes the independence of the beloved from the lover. I will have to bring fulfillment to my brother's existence, even if he does not fulfill me and, most likely, will not ask for my help" (O'Donovan 2006, 33-34).

Benevolent love necessarily implies that its manifestation is rooted in two substantial reasons: man must be brought to God, and man must be loved for what he is. As regards the first reason, we must understand that it is not the result of human endeavours. The appearance that the lover, by his limited creative powers, is obliged to act in profiling the goal to be assimilated by the

beloved, is opposed to the evidence that the goal, created and bestowed by the Transcendent, is only to be discovered.

The beloved's mission exists, and the lover has only to recognize it and help the beloved to recognize himself in it; and this mission, Augustine emphasizes, is that the lover allows himself to be used to facilitate the beloved's reaching the absolute Love, God. Augustine, does not advocate the one-sidedness of this goal but its fundamentality. Only this affinity of the object with this goal gives a full certainty to the loving subject. On the right of the second reason, that man is to be loved for what he is himself, O'Donovan prohibits (supports) the distinction between the end expressed in benevolent love and the ulterior end. The lover does not love the fulfillment of the end in place of the one who receives the love. The author sees here "an echo of the repudiation with which Cicero greeted utility as a reason for friendship, and we can understand those occasional expressions which seem to restrict true love, in its entirety, to love aimed at the object for its own sake.

In the context of benevolent love such a restriction is understood as a way of excluding further ministry; the opponent of "for his own sake" at this point is not "for God's sake" but "for personal advantage." It follows that people are to be loved either because they are good or because they can become good. An example from Augustine's writings might be this: "But if we must love those who are not yet righteous, in order that they may become so, how much more fervently must you love the righteous" (Augustin 2002, 17).

5. Love your neighbor

In the same way that the path of humility is about the liberation and elevation of the individual, Augustine's statement that love of neighbor flows through our love for God is about the elevation and perfection of the neighbor. As with his recommendations about humility, some modern commentators worry that he is arguing that our love of neighbor must flow through God, and that this aspect brings neighbor into a utilitarian role that violates the integrity of neighbor. In the *Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine distinguishes between two forms of love: *frui* is love that has as its ultimate goal the object of its desire, and *uti* is a purposeful love that loves the object for a greater purpose. Augustine argues that *frui* should only be directed towards God and that we should love everything else, including our neighbour of the *uti* type. The problem is that this seems to reduce our love of neighbor to just a

utilitarian (means-ends) formula in which neighbor becomes nothing more than a way for us to find divine love. This was not Augustine's aim and desire, but rather his emphasis on prioritizing and growing in love of God, which we need to distinguish from other forms of human love.

Augustine's framing is well-intentioned, as is the variety of modern critics who protest. The latter, however, err in their criticism, which, of course, owes as much in itself to Augustine's terminology as anything else. This is unfortunate because Augustine actually shares many of the same concerns as his modern critics the way his model is intended to preserve and uplift the integrity of the neighbor.

To understand Augustine's recommendation of how one's neighbor should be loved, we must turn again to his conception of the human self. To the extent that the authentic self exists in and through divine love, I cannot but truly love my neighbor when I refer to my love of neighbor through divine love. If my love of neighbor originates in me apart from God, or fails to return from neighbor to God, it leads to a similar ecteny of sins that arise when I choose to love myself apart from God (Rotaru 2010, 7).

Beyond this, there is also a Trinitarian basis for Augustine's claim that true love of neighbor must run through God. As we have seen, genuine love for Augustine is not an impersonal force or an abstract metaphysical principle - it is not rooted in an emanation from the One - but rather is the free and personal act of the Trinitarian God. "In particular, it is the presence of the Spirit in the soul. Our love of neighbor, then, if it is genuine love, is also the presence of the Spirit moving through us to neighbor and so will always return to God because it is God" (O'Donovan 1994, 129).

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of Oliver O'Donovan's exposition is: "the choice of means to ends, the admiration of what is good in one's neighbour, the pursuit of the true welfare of one's neighbour, are all subjective aspects of a single movement of the soul, reflecting the main cosmic movement, the return of created beings to their source and the highest good" (O'Donovan, 2006, 36). Here we can see the transcendental aspect of changing the foundation of love. The more intimate our love is with God, the more it becomes effective love for our human partners in public social life. The forms of Augustinian love, through the lens imposed by O'Donovan, are transformative forms that maintain a

close connection between *kardia* (heart) and *skepsi* (thought), between *phoni* (voice) and *praxis* (practice).

Usually the structural complexity is directly proportional to the size of the object concerned. As for the universe of love, in all its welcome breadth and richness of variation, a concept that Augustine miniaturises as far as possible in a form that is often overwhelmingly enthusiastic for his readers, it gives rise to a guiding structuring, a form of human social direction in which the human, a participant in public life, transforms himself from actor to creator. He is the person who creates love around him through forms of relational existence. He not only looks at the cosmos as a visual existence but he is captured by its greatness through a form of existential love, a love that allows him to find himself in the other neighbour who, even far away, coexists closely through the existence of love.

The whole conceptual outline of love presented above is permeated by an order, the "order of love", which, through its practice, becomes the fuel that transforms the public space, making it the fruit of a continuous love of the human, and at the same time presenting the bond that makes this love possible, and this factor of profound unity is the love of God.

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Critical Materials Raw as Leverage in Global Geopolitics

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ABSTRACT: The most economically critical and high supply risk raw materials are called critical raw materials and are essential to the functioning and integrity of a wide range of industrial ecosystems. The enormous appetite for resources (energy, food and raw materials) exerts extreme pressure on the planet, being the cause of half of greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90% of biodiversity decline and water stress. Resource access and sustainability are key to the EU's resilience in terms of raw materials. The Critical Raw Materials Act is an essential element of the equation in this generational societal transition. It aims to strengthen all stages of the European value chain of critical raw materials by diversifying EU imports to reduce strategic dependencies, improving the EU's ability to monitor and mitigate the risks of disruption to the supply of critical raw materials, and improving circularity and durability. In this sense, the European Commission proposes a new Regulation on Critical Raw Materials to ensure that the European Union has access to a safe and sustainable source of supply of critical raw materials essential for the transition to clean energy. This article highlights the importance of the critical raw materials in the European Union's pursuit of the Green Deal and the challenges associated with the growing global resource demands.

KEYWORDS: critical materials raw, reduce dependencies, improve efficiency, resilience, European Commission

Introductory considerations

The term "raw material" is used to denote material in a pure, unprocessed or minimally processed state, such as: latex, coal, iron ore, wood, air or

seawater. Metals, minerals and natural materials are inherently related to our daily existence. The most economically critical and high supply risk raw materials are called critical raw materials and are essential to the functioning and integrity of a wide range of industrial ecosystems.

Access to resources is a strategic security issue for achieving Europe's ambitious goal of making the Green Deal a reality (European Commission 2019, Communication COM 2019/640 final). The new industrial strategy for Europe (European Commission 2020a, Communication COM 2020/102 final) proposes to strengthen Europe's open strategic autonomy, warning that Europe's transition to climate neutrality could replace the current dependence on fossil fuels with a dependence on raw materials, many of which come from abroad and being subject to increasingly fierce competition worldwide. Therefore, the EU's open strategic autonomy in these sectors will need to continue to be anchored in diversified and undistorted access to global commodity markets, with global trade and its integrated value chains remaining a major growth driver and essential to Europe's recovery. At the same time, and to reduce external dependencies and environmental pressures, the underlying problem of rapidly increasing global demand for resources must be addressed by reducing and reusing materials before recycling them.

The enormous appetite for resources (energy, food and raw materials) exerts extreme pressure on the planet, being the cause of half of greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90% of biodiversity decline and water stress. Scaling up the circular economy will be vital to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, while decoupling economic growth from resource use and keeping resource use within the planet's resource limits (European Commission 2020b, Communication COM 2020/98 final). Resource access and sustainability are key to the EU's resilience in terms of raw materials. To guarantee the security of resources, actions are needed to diversify the supply, both from primary and secondary sources, to reduce dependencies and to improve the efficiency of the use and circularity of resources, including sustainable design of products. This approach is valid for all raw materials, including base metals, industrial minerals, aggregates and biotic materials, but is more necessary for EU-critical raw materials.

As if this challenge were not enough, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how quickly and how deeply global supply chains can be disrupted. The Commission has proposed an ambitious recovery plan following

the COVID-19 pandemic (European Commission 2020d, Communication COM 2020/456 final), to increase resilience and open strategic autonomy and to promote the transition to a green and digital economy. Aiming to ensure resilience through a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials, this Communication can contribute substantially to the recovery and long-term transformation of the economy.

Based on the EU Raw Materials Initiative (European Commission 2008, Communication COM 2008/699 final) which established a strategy to reduce dependencies on non-energy raw materials for industrial value chains and societal well-being by diversifying sources of primary raw materials from third countries , strengthening domestic sources and supporting the supply of secondary raw materials through the efficient use and circularity of resources, this communication (European Commission 2020c, Communication COM 2020/474 final) presents: i) the 2020 EU list of critical raw materials; ii) the challenges for a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and actions to increase EU resilience and open strategic autonomy.

2020 EU List of Critical Raw Materials

Some sectors are particularly strategic for the EU's renewable energy, digital, space and defense objectives. Every three years, the Commission reviews the list of critical raw materials for the EU. The Commission published the first list in 2011, updating it in 2014 and 2017 (European Commission 2011, Communications COM (2011) 25 final; European Commission 2014, COM (2014) 297 final; European Commission 2017, COM (2017) 490 final). The assessment is based on data from the recent past and shows how criticality has evolved since the list was first published. As this does not forecast future trends, the Commission also presents a prospective study. The assessment examined 83 materials (5 more than in 2017) and, where possible, looked more closely than in previous assessments at the point where criticality occurs in the value chain: extraction and/or processing.

Economic importance and supply risk are the two main parameters used to determine EU criticality. Economic importance analyzes in detail the allocation of raw materials to end uses based on industrial applications. Supply risk concerns country-level concentration of global production of key raw materials and EU supply, governance of supplier countries- Methodology

for establishing the EU list of critical raw materials (European Union 2017), including environmental aspects, the contribution of recycling (i.e. secondary raw materials), substitution, EU import dependence and trade restrictions in third countries.

The resulting list of critical raw materials provides a factual tool to support EU policy-making. The Commission considers the list when negotiating trade agreements or trying to eliminate trade distortions. The list helps to identify investment needs and guide research and innovation within the EU's Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe and national programs, particularly in new mining technologies, substitution and recycling. This is also relevant for the circular economy (The EU Methodology uses the Worldwide Governance Indicators - WGI: Kaufmann and Kraay 2023). The WGI addresses the environmental aspects provided for in the indicators on the effectiveness of public administration and the quality of the regulatory framework), for the promotion of sustainable and responsible supply, as well as for industrial policy. Member States and businesses can also use it as an EU reference framework for developing their own specific criticality assessments.

The 2020 EU list contains 30 raw materials, up from 14 raw materials in 2011, 20 raw materials in 2014 and 27 raw materials in 2017. 26 raw materials remain on the list. Bauxite, lithium, titanium and strontium are added to the list for the first time. Helium remains a concern in terms of supply concentration, but is removed from the 2020 list of critical commodities due to a decline in its economic importance. The Commission will continue to monitor helium closely, given its relevance to a number of emerging digital applications. The Commission will also closely monitor nickel, given developments related to increased demand for battery raw materials.

From the 34 critical raw materials identified, a specific list of strategic raw materials was created (including 17 strategic critical raw materials: nickel, natural graphite, gallium, manganese, titanium metal, platinum group metals, heavy rare earths, light rare earths, germanium, metallic silicon, cobalt, aluminum/bauxite, lithium, tungsten, bismuth, boron/borate, copper) for raw materials that are expected to grow exponentially in supply, have complex production requirements and, therefore, they face a greater risk of supply problems. Without critical raw materials, most segments of society could not function, as they are found in many everyday appliances and essential products for the economy of each member state. For example: vibrating technology in

telephones – tungsten, electric vehicles – nickel, cobalt and lithium, wind turbines – boron, semiconductors – metallic silicon, glass making and fertilizer production for plant growth – borates, building and piloting airplanes – magnesium and scandium, etc. Globally, some countries produce a large quantity of these materials, such as: – 60%, Mexico, fluorine – 33%, Brazil, niobium – 92%, Chile, lithium – 79%, South Africa, manganese – 48%, Congo, tantalum – 35%, Guinea, aluminum – 63%, Morocco, phosphate rock – 27%, Spain, strontium – 99%, France, hafnium – 76%, Belgium, arsenic – 59%, Norway, metal sicily – 33%, Finland, nickel – 38%, Poland, coking coal – 26% and copper – 19%, Russia, nickel – 29%, Qatar, helium – 35%, Kazakhstan, phosphorus – 65% and titanium metal – 36%, Australia, coal coke – 25%, China, barytine – 45%, bismuth – 65%, gallium – 71%, germanium – 45%, magnesium – 97%, natural graphite – 40%, scandium – 67%, tungsten – 32%, vanadium – 62%, light rare earths: cerium – 85%, neodymium – 85%, praseodymium – 85%, samarium – 85%, heavy rare earths: dysprosium – 100%, erbium – 100%, europium – 100%, gadolinium – 100% , holmium – 100%, lutetium – 100%, terbium – 100%, thulium – 100%, yttrium – 100%.

In terms of strengthening the economy, by reducing dependence in order to obtain access to critical raw materials, the EU has set the following objectives for 2030: i) extraction in the EU, at least 25% of the EU's annual consumption to come from recycling in the EU, ii) processing in the EU, at least 40% of the annual EU consumption to come from processing in the EU, iii) recycling in the EU, at least 25% of the annual EU consumption to come from recycling in the EU, iv) external sources, at most 65% of the Union's annual consumption of each strategic raw material, at any relevant stage of processing, to come from a single third country. To achieve this, the EU will step up trade action, which will include: i) a critical raw materials club for all like-minded countries that want to strengthen global supply chains, ii) strengthening the World Trade Organization, iii) expanding its network of sustainable investment facilitation agreements and free trade agreements, iv) tightening enforcement measures to combat unfair trade practices (SNST 2020).

1. Integrating strategic foresight analysis into the EU policy - making process – an approach by which the European Commission aims to integrate it into the policy-making process in all areas, thus encouraging participatory and forward-looking governance in Europe and beyond its borders.

2. Resilience as a new orientation compass for EU policies

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Rotaru 2020, 71-82) has highlighted a number of vulnerabilities in the EU and its Member States. In this sense, resilience refers not only to the ability to deal with challenges, but also to bring about transformations in a sustainable, equitable and democratic way. The EU's vulnerabilities and resilience capacities are analyzed through the lens of relevant megatrends (Megatrends Hub) – long-term driving forces that are likely to have a significant influence on the future.

3. Cvadri-dimensional analysis of resilience

– *The social and economic dimension of resilience* refers to the ability to cope with economic shocks and achieve long-term structural changes in an equitable and inclusive manner. This translates into creating favorable social and economic conditions for a transition-oriented recovery, promoting social and regional cohesion and supporting the most vulnerable people in society, while taking into account demographic trends and respecting the European Pillar of Social Rights.

– *The geopolitical dimension* - Geopolitical resilience refers to strengthening Europe's "open strategic autonomy" and its global leadership role. This is anchored in the expression of EU values in a world of competing powers with a high degree of interdependence, where COVID-19 has affected geopolitical trends and the balance of power. As the United States increasingly focuses on the domestic situation, it leaves an empty seat on the world stage that other actors such as China (Council on Foreign Relation 2020), are eager to fill it. By mobilizing strategic resources for humanitarian aid and development, and through its efforts to ensure the global availability of a vaccine and medicines for COVID-19, the EU is playing a leading role with a "Team Europe" approach (The objective of the "Team Europe" approach is to combine resources from EU institutions, Member States and financial institutions, in particular the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development).

– *Green Dimension* - Green resilience refers to achieving the goal of climate neutrality by 2050, in parallel with mitigating and adapting to climate change, reducing pollution and restoring the capacity of ecological systems so that we can live well within resource limits our planet. This involves eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels, reducing our impact on natural resources,

conserving biodiversity, developing a clean and circular economy, removing toxic substances from the environment, changing lifestyles, production and consumption patterns, achieving climate-resilient infrastructure, providing new opportunities for healthy living, creating green businesses and jobs, actively pursuing ecosystem restoration, and saving our seas and oceans.

– *The digital dimension* - Digital resilience means ensuring that the way we live, work, learn, interact and think in this digital age respects and strengthens human dignity (Rotaru 2016, 29-43), freedom (Rotaru 2019, 208-215), equality, security, democracy and other fundamental European rights and values. This is an increasingly important aspect as hyperconnectivity continues to accelerate with physical-digital integration, the Internet of Things, smart home technology, the use of big data, augmented and virtual reality, machine learning and other technologies increasingly capable artificial intelligence. Digital technologies are blurring the distinction between physical and virtual worlds, and between people, machines and nature, which has implications for our own selves and policy frameworks. They have been instrumental in keeping our economies and societies running during the pandemic.

4. *The agenda of the strategic prospective analysis*

– *Monitoring resilience* - As resilience becomes a new compass for EU policy-making, appropriate monitoring tools are needed. This communication proposes the transition to resilience dashboards and their joint creation in the framework of the exploratory discussions organized with the Member States and the main stakeholders.

– *Horizontal forward-looking analysis activities aimed at promoting effective EU transition-focused policies*. Prototype dashboards are shown as an example. In cooperation with Member States and other important stakeholders, the Commission will further develop resilience dashboards in a forward-looking perspective. The dashboards will be based on strategic forward-looking analysis, which can help identify emerging challenges and propose new forward-looking indicators for assessing vulnerabilities or capabilities. As resilience is a characteristic that needs to be strengthened over time, this work will focus on a medium- and long-term approach to provide the best conditions so that policies based on forward-looking analysis mitigate vulnerabilities and build capacities. The impact of megatrends and anticipated risks will thus be taken into account.

An EU legislative act on critical raw materials for the future of EU supply chains (European Council, Council of the European Union 2023)

In November 2023, the EU reached a provisional agreement on a European Critical Raw Materials Act, with the aim of strengthening Europe's strategic economy, as the demand for rare earths is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years. Critical raw materials are raw materials of great economic importance for the EU, with a high risk of supply disruption due to the concentration of their sources and the lack of suitable and affordable substitute products. The act aims to: i) increase and diversify the EU's supply of critical raw materials; ii) strengthening circularity, including recycling; iii) supporting research and innovation on resource efficiency and the development of substitutes.

The need to develop an EU legislative act on critical raw materials

Critical raw materials are important for the EU in terms of: i) industrial value chains - non-energy raw materials are linked to all industries along all stages of the supply chain; ii) strategic technologies such as space and defense - technological progress and increased quality of life depend on a variable and increasing number of raw materials; iii) climate, energy and environment - clean technologies require raw materials, which are irreplaceable in the case of solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles and energy-efficient lighting.

EU demand for base metals, battery materials, rare earths and more is set to grow exponentially as the EU moves away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy systems that require more minerals. The EU's green transition will require the development of local production of batteries, solar panels, permanent magnets and other clean technologies. To meet the related demand, generous access to a wide range of raw materials will be required. Local production is key to the overhaul of the EU's energy and mobility systems, which is partly driven by the Repower EU plan and the 2035 ban on internal combustion engines.

The Critical Raw Materials Act is therefore an essential element of the equation in this generational societal transition. It aims to strengthen all stages of the European value chain of critical raw materials by: diversifying EU imports to reduce strategic dependencies, improving the EU's ability to monitor and mitigate the risks of disruption to the supply of critical raw materials, and improving circularity and durability. In this sense, the European

Commission proposes a new Regulation on Critical Raw Materials to ensure that the European Union has access to a safe and sustainable source of supply of critical raw materials, essential for the transition to clean energy.

The purpose of the new Regulation is to strengthen the EU's autonomy in the supply of key raw materials, such as those used in batteries, solar panels, wind turbines and digital technology, as the EU is currently vulnerable to supply risks, these raw materials coming from a limited number of countries, such as China, which currently provides 100% of the EU's supply of rare heavy metals such as dysprosium, europium, gadolinium, terbium and yttrium, or Turkey, which provides 99% of the EU's supply of boron, which is used in the production of electric cars and in the renewable energy sector.

European Commission Directives for a US Critical Minerals Agreement

According to Agerpress.ro (Dicu, Marinescu, and Aruștei 2023), on June, the 14th, 2023, the European Commission adopted its negotiating directives for an agreement on critical minerals with the US, as they were shown in a press release from the Community Executive. The objective was to promote EU-US supply chains of critical raw materials needed for the production of batteries for electric vehicles. According to the balance sheets, in 2022 alone, the EU exported €8.3 billion worth of critical raw materials relevant to this industry.

In August 2022, the USA adopted the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), introducing the subsidy-credit for clean vehicles, in the form of a tax credit for the purchase of vehicles on batteries or fuel cells. To qualify for the full subsidy, a vehicle must, among other things, be equipped with a battery that has at least some of its critical mineral content either recycled in North America or mined and processed in the US or a country with which the US has concluded a free trade agreement or an agreement on critical materials, without which EU firms are at risk of being excluded from US automotive supply chains, reducing the EU's export possibilities.

The EU and the US announced their intention to negotiate an agreement on critical minerals in the March 10, 2023, joint statement by President von der Leyen and President Biden, as well as in the May 31 joint statement of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council. The conclusion of an EU-US agreement on critical minerals will guarantee that the EU, as an ally, will enjoy a status equivalent to that of US free trade partners under the US Inflation Reduction Act. EU firms will then be able to compete on a level playing field in the US

market with US and third country competitors such as Chile, the Republic of Korea and Japan. An agreement on critical materials between the EU and the US will also help to boost the EU's production capacities in industrial sectors of strategic importance. The existence of strong environmental and labor provisions will help ensure a better supply of critical raw materials in a sustainable manner. In addition, the agreement will help strengthen the Commission's proposal for the Regulation on Industry Contributing to Net Zero Emissions and the European Critical Raw Materials Act, which aims to expand the EU's production of key carbon-neutral technologies.

Once adopted by the Council, the authorization and accompanying directives will give the Commission the power to negotiate an agreement containing provisions on: trade facilitation so that critical raw materials extracted or processed in the EU can be used in vehicles eligible for subsidies under in the form of US clean vehicle credits, cooperation to make the critical raw materials sector more sustainable by encouraging a high level of environmental protection, international technical standards and circular economy approaches, promoting workers' rights in the critical raw materials sector and strengthening sustainable and fair supply chains through common standards, collaborating with allies and partners.

Conclusions

Critical raw materials are indispensable for the EU economy and for a wide range of technologies needed in strategic sectors such as renewable energy, digital, space and defense. Access to resources and sustainability are a strategic security issue and are essential for the EU's resilience in terms of raw materials. To guarantee the security of resources, actions are needed to diversify the supply, both from primary and secondary sources, to reduce dependencies and to improve the efficiency of the use and circularity of resources, including sustainable design of products.

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