

Claude-Hélène Mayer
Elisabeth Vanderheiden

International Handbook of Emotions

Resourceful Cultural Perspectives,
Volume 2

 Springer

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Claude-Hélène Mayer
Elisabeth Vanderheiden
Editors

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Culture is not an independent variable that somehow predicts or causes emotions. One way to understand culture is as patterns of emotions and emotional practices.

— *Batja Mesquita*, 2023

Acknowledgement

We extend our deepest gratitude to the distinguished contributors to this volume. Their scholarly commitment, interdisciplinary insights, and diverse cultural viewpoints have been pivotal in shaping *International Handbook of Emotions: Resourceful Cultural Perspectives, Volume 2*. This work builds upon the foundation established in **Volume 1**, exploring further the complex interplay between emotions, culture, and technology. The authors' contributions shed light on emotional dynamics in the digital age, societal impacts, and cultural nuances, offering a profound basis for advancing research in this evolving field.

This volume presents an innovative exploration of emotional phenomena, particularly in the context of digital transformation and cultural frameworks. It is our aspiration that this work inspires researchers, educators, and practitioners to engage deeply with its findings, encouraging mindful and transformative approaches to understanding emotions in diverse cultural and technological settings.

We are especially grateful to **Shinjini Chatterjee**, Senior Editor at SpringerNature, whose invaluable guidance and unwavering support have been instrumental throughout the editorial process. We also thank **Amala Gobiraman**, Production Editor, and her team, for their meticulous work, which has significantly enhanced the quality of this publication.

Our heartfelt thanks extend to **Paul Gilbert**, whose endorsement has amplified the significance of this work for a broader audience, highlighting its relevance and scholarly value.

As editors, we remain committed to advancing the understanding of emotions as dynamic and multifaceted phenomena influenced by cultural, societal, and technological forces. We hope this volume encourages mindfulness in both academic inquiry and practical application, reinforcing the transformative potential of emotions in an interconnected, digitalised, and culturally rich world.

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She has published numerous scientific books and articles. Her research interests range from shame as a resource, conflict, and love to andragogical research questions. She focuses particularly on cultural and transformative issues in the context of andragogy and positive psychology. Her work has received numerous awards, including the William B. Gudykunst Outstanding Book Award from the International Academy for Intercultural Research in July 2023 for the **International Handbook of Love: Transcultural and Transdisciplinary Perspectives**. Moreover, her book **Empowerment for a Sustainable Future: Transcultural and Positive Psychology Perspectives** (2024) received the Nautilus Award, Winner 2024, Special Honors: Academic Rigor.



Introduction to the Handbook of Emotions Volume 2

1

Elisabeth Vanderheiden and
Claude-Hélène Mayer

1 Introduction

This book offers a comprehensive and innovative exploration into the diverse terrain of emotional experiences titled “**International Handbook of Emotions—Resourceful Cultural Perspectives**”. It uniquely intertwines the fields of positive psychology and cultural sciences to examine emotions from multiple vantage points, encompassing individual, cultural, artistic, and technological perspectives.

Volume 1 focuses primarily on navigating emotional diversity in terms of the classifications of emotions in cultural contexts and across cultures. Further, Volume 1 includes investigating shame, suffering, and stress-related emotions. Additionally, Volume 1 highlights the discourses around emotional wisdom and mental health, emotions in the context of healing, transformation, and growth. Further chapters in Volume 1 explore emotions and positive psychology, forgiveness, and moral living as well as guilt, jeal-

ousy, depression, and destructive commitments. The final part of the book emphasises emotions and aesthetic appreciation, beauty, arts, and literature.

Volume 2 takes these insights further, addressing the broader cultural, societal, and digital dimensions of emotions. It explores the intersection of positive psychology with cultural traditions and emerging technological environments, such as artificial intelligence and robotics. Through a cross-cultural lens, this volume examines unique cultural emotions and the societal impact of collective emotional experiences, particularly in response to contemporary global challenges. Volume 2 illuminates how emotions are understood, expressed, and shaped within different cultures and highlights the complexities of integrating digital dynamics into the emotional lives of individuals and communities.

Together, these volumes offer an expansive view of emotion as both a personal and societal phenomenon, encouraging a deeper appreciation of how emotional well-being is cultivated across diverse contexts.

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2 Emotion Research

The term emotion has been discussed across disciplines and cultures and refers to a wide array of definitions and concepts (Suri & Gross, 2022).

Emotions can be defined as “a complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioral and physiological elements”, according to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2018). Often, emotions occur during transactions between persons and situations and are meaningful to the individual and their active goals (Moors et al., 2017). Thereby, emotions are flexible and at the same time coordinated responses to the individual’s interaction with the environment. Emotions are impacted by three components and these are subjective experiences, behavioural, or expressive and physiological responses (UWA, 2024). Emotions usually include, according to Gross and Ford (2024), four core elements, such as (1). An experienced, perceived or imagined situation, (2). a directed attention which aspects of a situation are perceived, (3). An appraisal or evaluation of a situation, and (4). A response to a defined situation which results in a change in behaviour, experience or physiology. Further, humans aim at regulating their emotions by making an effort to influence which emotions in terms of which emotions they have, they experience and express, and which not (Gross, 1998). Often emotions are being regulated when they are evaluated as good or bad and when this evaluation activates a goal to change the emotions (Gross et al., 2011). Therefore, a vast amount of the literature on emotions is connected to the question of how to turn negative experienced emotions into positive emotions and how to use emotions as resources in daily life and activities (Salovey et al., 2002; Abe, 2011).

Emotions as well as the ability of individuals to regulate their emotions, are often connected to experiences of mental health and well-being (Gross & Jazaieri, 2014; Mayer & Gonot-Schoupinsky, 2024). To increase mental health and well-being in context, it is therefore important to understand emotions in individuals within context and to, based on the in-depth, new and original understanding, create interventions to regulate emotions in a constructive and healthy way. This is in particular important since research has shown that pursuing positive emotions does not necessarily lead to experiencing more posi-

tive emotions, but can also lead to being disappointed or depressed (Ford & Mauss, 2014).

Emotions have been described as complex phenomena and they have been in focus of a large amount of cultural and cross-cultural research (Matsumoto, 2001; Mesquita, 2001). Tamir et al. (2020) have highlighted that emotions and emotion regulation are culturally constructed and impacted by social and cultural motives. Heelas (2024) has pointed out that members of different cultures talk about emotions in different ways and associate emotions with different parts of the body. The author has emphasised the fact that the importance to talk about emotions and reflect upon them is cross-culturally visible. Recent studies have shown that emotions are strongly determined and connected to technological changes, digitalised work places and contextualised systems-psychodynamics. They are not necessarily understood or conscious in the mind of the individuals experiencing the emotions (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2021). To experience emotions positively and as resources, however, authors have explained that salutogenic counselling framework can support the idea of transforming negatively experienced emotions towards positive experienced emotions across cultures (Mayer et al., 2019).

In this Volume 2 of the Handbook of Emotions, the authors focus in particular on emotional dynamics in the digital age, since new influences on emotions and their regulations occur with the increasing influence of technology, digitalisation, and changing socio-cultural contexts. Digitised emotions have become increasingly important in the past years (Fry, 2019; McStay, 2018) especially in two ways: on the one hand, humans are connecting digital experiences and communication with emotions; on the other hand, individuals engage with technology on emotional levels and experience emotions when connecting digitally. Therefore, research on emotions in the context of technology is increasingly becoming important, including social media, artificial intelligence, surveillance, and digital mental health topics (Ellis & Tucker, 2021).

3 Introduction to the Chapters

The volume is divided into four parts, each addressing distinct dimensions of emotional experiences and their interplay with cultural, societal, and technological frameworks. Together, the chapters provide a comprehensive exploration of how emotions influence, and are influenced by, personal, local, national, and global factors.

Part I: Emotional Dynamics in the Age of Digital and Robotic Interaction

The first part of this volume explores the evolving relationship between emotional intelligence, artificial intelligence, and robotic systems. With a focus on how emotions can be integrated into and influenced by digital and robotic technologies, the chapters examine both the theoretical and practical implications of these advancements. The authors navigate complex themes such as the authenticity of robotic emotions, the ethical dilemmas associated with emotional AI, and the transformative potential of robots in enhancing emotional well-being. This section provides an interdisciplinary perspective, blending insights from psychology, robotics, and ethics, to illuminate how emotions shape and are shaped by technological innovation.

Hitesh Yadav and **Surita Maini** explore the rapidly evolving domain of emotion recognition within artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on the integration of deep learning (DL) techniques. The chapter investigates methodologies like Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, applying them to multimodal data such as speech, text, facial expressions, and physiological signals. The authors highlight transformative applications in healthcare, education, and customer service, while critically addressing ethical concerns, including data privacy and algorithmic bias. They advocate for transparent, culturally sensitive AI systems governed by robust legal frameworks, paving the way for socially responsible innovations.

Arianna Sica and **Henrik Skaug Sætra** investigate the integration of Artificial Emotional

Intelligence (AEI) in robotics, focusing on the design and ethical considerations of creating “feeling machines.” This chapter examines the technological advancements in social robots capable of recognising, simulating, and augmenting emotions. The authors explore the philosophical debate on whether robots can genuinely possess emotions or merely mimic them, addressing issues such as anthropomorphism and authenticity. Ethical and societal implications of embedding human-like emotions in robots are critically assessed, with attention to their impact on human–robot interaction and societal norms.

Rudolf M. Oosthuizen explores the application of robotic positive psychology interventions to enhance emotional well-being. This chapter highlights the potential of robots as effective tools for improving mental health and resilience in workplace settings. By synthesising contemporary research, the author examines the effectiveness of robotic interventions, their ability to establish rapport with users, and the challenges of designing personalised and contextually adaptable emotional support systems. Practical implications and recommendations are offered to optimise the role of robots in promoting positive psychology and emotional well-being across diverse environments.

Part II: Theoretical and Cultural Perspectives on Distinct Emotions

This section focuses on the profound connection between emotions and cultural frameworks, highlighting how emotional experiences shape and are shaped by societal and individual contexts. Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches, the chapters discuss the psychological, cultural, and philosophical dimensions of emotions, emphasising their complexity and significance in human life. By examining emotions as dynamic and multifaceted phenomena, this part offers insights into their role in promoting resilience, shaping identities, and contributing to both personal and collective well-being.

Elisabeth Vanderheiden explores the German concept of *Zuversicht*, often translated as confidence or trust, through a multidisciplinary lens, integrating it with the theory of antifragility.

This chapter investigates the neurobiological underpinnings and cultural significance of Zuversicht, contrasting it with related notions such as hope and optimism. Vanderheiden highlights how Zuversicht serves as an adaptive emotional mechanism, promoting resilience and personal growth amidst uncertainty. The chapter provides a novel framework linking emotion theory, neuroscience, and positive psychology, positioning Zuversicht as a crucial element for individual well-being and collective social cohesion.

Elisabeth Vanderheiden examines Sehnsucht, a German term for life longings, as a deeply ambivalent emotion that combines cognitive and emotional dimensions. This chapter analyses Sehnsucht's role in personal growth, cultural expressions, and emotional development, presenting a detailed case study of a German woman navigating her life crisis through artistic expression. By exploring Sehnsucht from interdisciplinary perspectives, Vanderheiden illustrates its significance in understanding human longing and its potential for encouraging creativity, resilience, and self-reflection.

Félix Neto and **Etienne Mullet** investigate Saudade, a quintessential Portuguese concept encompassing a blend of longing, nostalgia, and bittersweet emotions. This chapter presents empirical analyses of Saudade's experiential structure, psychological correlates, and demographic influences. The authors explore how Saudade manifests in personal narratives and cultural practices, highlighting its dual nature as both an emotionally enriching and challenging experience. This comprehensive study contributes to a deeper understanding of Saudade's cultural and psychological relevance across Lusophone societies.

Part III: Cultural Contexts and Societal Impacts of Emotions

This part focuses on the diverse ways emotions are shaped by cultural contexts and societal factors, highlighting their profound influence on individual and collective experiences. The chapters address critical themes such as emotional resilience during global crises, the intersection of

emotions and education, and the role of cultural values in shaping emotional well-being. Through empirical studies, cross-cultural analyses, and theoretical frameworks, the authors provide insights into how emotions impact social cohesion, mental health, and intercultural interactions. This section offers a multidisciplinary exploration of the intricate relationship between culture, society, and the emotional lives of individuals.

Charles T. Hill, Kâmile Bahar Aydin, Jenny Lukito Setiawan, Takafumi Sawaumi, Tsutomu Inagaki, Soumia Eserraj, Silvia Mari, Laura Andrade, Cláudio V. Torres, and Olufemi A. Lawal examine the global emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a six-language survey with 2235 participants across cultures, the authors identify variations in emotional well-being, relationship closeness, and activity changes during the pandemic. Their findings reveal a nuanced picture: some positive emotions, like gratitude, increased due to family interactions, while negative emotions, like worry, heightened in many cultures. The chapter highlights the pandemic's differential effects on diverse populations and underscores the importance of social support and cultural context in emotional resilience.

Ana N. Tibubos, Lina Krakau, Sonja Rohrmann, and Tobias Ringeisen provide a narrative review of test anxiety from a cross-cultural perspective. The chapter discusses its cognitive and emotional dimensions, cultural influences, and measurement tools. By comparing individualistic and collectivist societies, the authors reveal how interpersonal orientations and contextual factors shape test anxiety. This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of cultural variability in test anxiety manifestations and coping strategies, emphasising the need for culturally adapted assessment and interventions.

Christian Heckel and **Tobias Ringeisen** explore the interplay between self-efficacy, test anxiety, and academic performance in individualistic cultures. Guided by Control-Value Theory and the Transactional Model of Test Anxiety, the chapter reviews empirical studies highlighting the negative cognitive effects of test anxiety and the positive role of self-efficacy in academic suc-

cess. The authors advocate for targeted interventions to address the cognitive aspects of test anxiety, offering insights for education systems in Western-oriented societies.

Emily Schuch Martins, Claudia Hofheinz Giacomoni, and Klaus Boehnke focus on the emotional experiences of Latin Americans, distinguishing cultural values that influence positive and negative effects. Using a scoping review, they highlight the role of familial support and collectivist values in promoting emotional well-being, even in the face of adversity. The chapter underscores the cultural richness of Latin American societies and provides a framework for understanding the intersection of cultural values and emotional health.

Megan C. Hall, Vaibhavi Venkataramanam, Rosalyn Y. Collins, and Elizabeth A. Li investigate post-traumatic growth and emotional resilience among African and Middle Eastern immigrants and refugees. Grounded in theoretical perspectives such as post-traumatic growth theory, the chapter discusses how coping mechanisms and cultural factors contribute to resilience. It offers policy and clinical recommendations for supporting individuals who have faced significant trauma, emphasising the role of collective cultures in promoting recovery and growth.

Marco Schickel and Tobias Ringeisen analyse boredom as a significant emotion in interactive learning settings. Using Control-Value Theory, the chapter highlights the conditions under which boredom emerges and its impact on motivation, engagement, and academic performance. By focusing on student-centred learning environments, the authors suggest strategies for reducing boredom and enhancing educational outcomes, particularly in individualistic cultural contexts.

Naomi Takashiro and Clifford H. Clarke review academic intervention programmes in Japan targeting low-socioeconomic-status (SES) students. The chapter identifies how these interventions encourage positive emotions like pride and excitement, contributing to resilience and academic success. The authors argue for the importance of emotional support in reversing

negative emotional patterns among disadvantaged students, providing valuable implications for policy and practice.

Piotr Szarota examines the socio-cultural context of well-being in Poland, utilising the concept of the “societal emotional environment” (SEE) to explore how historical and cultural factors shape emotional and psychological health. The chapter highlights the enduring effects of Poland’s Romantic tradition, World War II trauma, and a culture of complaining, presenting a comprehensive literature review on emotional regulation and well-being in contemporary Poland. Szarota emphasises the importance of understanding these historical and cultural dynamics in promoting individual and societal well-being.

Claude-Hélène Mayer investigates emotions and intercultural conflicts within the Semester at Sea (SAS) study-abroad programme. Drawing on qualitative data from 21 student essays, the chapter analyses how intercultural conflicts during the Fall 2022 voyage were experienced and managed emotionally. Mayer identifies key themes in students’ emotional responses and conflict resolution strategies, offering recommendations for enhancing intercultural competence and leadership skills in global education settings.

Kathryn Anne Nel and Saraswathie Govender explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and emotions in a South African context, focusing on Black Africans. Using qualitative case studies, the authors examine themes such as self-disgust, stigmatisation, and shame related to mental health diagnoses. The chapter highlights the role of cultural perceptions in shaping mental health experiences and advocates for the application of positive psychology to address stigma and support emotional resilience in marginalised communities.

Part IV: Emotions, Identity, and the Dynamics of Power.

This last part of this volume focuses on the complex interplay between emotions, identity, and power within political and cultural frameworks. The chapters highlight how emotions influence

collective identities, shape diplomatic encounters, and fuel political movements. From the symbolic significance of “Sofa-Gate” to the historical consequences of collective narcissism, the contributions analyse how emotions are strategically utilised to reinforce power structures or challenge them. Additionally, this section reflects on the potential of emotions to drive transformation, highlighting their role in addressing discrimination and encouraging empathy. Together, these insights provide a nuanced understanding of emotions as central forces in global human interaction.

Ljiljana Simic analyses the Sofa-Gate incident, focusing on its implications for EU-Turkey diplomatic relations, gender equality, and cross-cultural biases. This chapter explores how the incident, where Ursula von der Leyen was denied an equal seat during a high-level meeting, symbolised deeper societal tensions. Simic examines the emotional and political reactions, particularly regarding gender discrimination and European identity, and connects these to broader questions of protocol coherence, cultural diplomacy, and cross-cultural management. Drawing on interviews and thematic analysis, this chapter offers insights into the complex interplay of emotions, cultural values, and international diplomacy.

Hans-Jürgen Wirth examines the role of emotions in political movements, focusing on the interplay of populism, crisis, and vulnerability. This chapter analyses the emotional dynamics of resentment, shame, envy, and compassion within the contexts of pandemics, war, and societal divides. Drawing from interdisciplinary emotion research and grounded theory methodology, Wirth highlights how emotions like anger and hatred are harnessed in populist rhetoric, while also exploring the potential for empathy and vulnerability to open new pathways for political discourse and action.

Zsuzsanna Agora investigates the concept of collective narcissism within large historical groups, using the German experience post-Treaty of Versailles as a case study. This chapter explores the role of emotions in collective identity construction and the mechanisms of narcissistic defence, such as denial and projection, that shape

group dynamics over decades. Agora integrates perspectives from history, psychology, and philosophy to understand the cultural sources of collective narcissism and its emotional consequences. The chapter also addresses potential pathways for transforming collective narcissistic cultures into more stable and reflective identities.

Authored by **Lolo Jacques P.N. Mayer, Nicholas Derek Robinson, Sarah Ashleigh Naidoo, and Nkenda Baghana**, the last text presents an artistic exploration of grief through four sequences of a short play. The emotions of anger, grief, regret, and acceptance are portrayed as responses to the death of a friend, aligning with the five stages of grief.

Performed by the Helen O’Grady Online Drama Group in 2023, the work takes a creative rather than scientific perspective, highlighting the power of drama in expressing and processing loss. This chapter emphasises the role of art as a medium for emotional catharsis and its potential to deepen our understanding of human experiences.

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Elisabeth Vanderheiden is a pedagogue, adult educator, intercultural mediator and researcher. She currently serves

as the CEO of the Global Institute for Transcultural Research, an organisation dedicated to interdisciplinary research in culture, positive psychology, education, and societal matters. Additionally, Vanderheiden holds the title of President of Catholic Adult Education in Germany and is the Managing Director of a Catholic adult education organisation in Rhineland-Palatinate. She is also the editor of the largest German-language professional journal for adult education: ERWACHSENENBILDUNG.

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Claude-Hélène Mayer is a Professor in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management at the University of Johannesburg. She is a “Semester at Sea” (SAS), Alumni (SASFA22) and a Board member of the International Academy of Intercultural Research. Further, she is an Associate Editor for *Frontiers in Psychology (Positive Psychology)* and for the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*. She holds Doctoral degrees in Psychology, Management, and Cultural Anthropology. Her Venia Legendi is in Psychology with focus on Work, Organisational and Cultural Psychology from Europa Universität, Viadrina, Germany. Her research areas include transcultural mental health, salutogenesis, transcultural conflict management and mediation, women in leadership, shame and love across cultures, The Fourth Industrial Revolution, and psychobiography. Her teaching areas are cross-cultural psychology, mental health, organisational theory, systems and design thinking, coaching, positive psychology, organisational behaviour and transcultural conflict management and mediation.

Part I

Emotional Dynamics in the Age of Digital and Robotic Interaction



The Intersection of AI and Emotions: Deep Learning Applications for a Better Society

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1 Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming how societies operate since it has advanced quickly in a number of fields, including healthcare and education (Russell & Norvig, 2020). The ability of AI to engage with human emotions is a significant achievement in the field (Picard, 1997; Picard, 2003). AI was originally intended to process data, carry out logical operations, resolve issues, and offer solutions (Russell & Norvig, 2020). However, emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical component of AI research since emotions play a significant role in human cognition, decision-making, and social interaction (Goleman, 1995). AI systems are getting better at identifying, deciphering, and reacting to human emotions, and this creates an exciting new frontier at the junction of AI and emotional intelligence (Picard, 1997; Picard, 2003).

Within the realm of AI, Machine Learning (ML) is a subset that focuses on algorithms allowing machines to learn from data and improve over time without being explicitly programmed (Goodfellow et al., 2016). Deep Learning (DL), a further subset of ML, utilises artificial neural networks with multiple layers to model complex patterns in data (LeCun et al., 2015). DL has sig-

nificantly advanced the capabilities of AI, particularly in areas such as image and speech recognition, enabling the processing and interpretation of intricate emotional signals from various data sources (Goodfellow et al., 2016). In the context of emotion recognition, DL models have been instrumental in enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of AI systems (Li & Deng, 2020).

The creation of such systems holds the potential for revolutionising society in new ways, from boosting mental healthcare services to enhancing human–robot interfaces and even refining advertising methods (Picard, 2003). AI is the ability of machines to do activities like language understanding, learning, reasoning, and perception that would normally need human intelligence (Russell & Norvig, 2020). Conversely, EI entails being able to identify, comprehend, and control one's own emotions as well as those of others (Goleman, 1995). A new field known as affective computing, or emotion AI, is created by the merging of these two fields: AI's capacity to imitate human intelligence and EI's capacity to recognise and process emotions (Picard, 1997). Affective computing, which was introduced in the 1990s by Rosalind Picard, attempts to give machines the ability to comprehend human emotional states and react in a way that seems emotionally intelligent (Picard, 1997).

In social interactions and human communication, emotions are crucial (Goleman, 1995). Emotional cues facilitate connection-building,

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trust-building, and the expression of emotions (Goleman, 1995). Understanding and processing emotions becomes crucial for creating AI systems that can interact with people more naturally (Picard, 2003). Applications for emotionally intelligent AI are numerous and span industries like healthcare, education, entertainment, and customer service (Picard, 2003). For instance, in mental health, AI systems equipped with emotion recognition can assist in identifying sadness or anxiety by studying a patient's facial expressions, speech patterns, or physiological signals (Cowie et al., 2000). Emotion-aware AI in education can assist in personalising learning experiences by adapting the pace and content according to the emotional state of the student (Picard, 2003).

This chapter delves into the importance of DL in recognising and interpreting emotions. It also examines the range of applications that have previously seen success with emotion-aware AI (Huang et al., 2020). The author explores the ethical issues, possible social effects of AI in emotional circumstances, and future prospects in this exciting topic by reviewing recent developments in DL. The goal of this chapter is to thoroughly examine the broader socioeconomic ramifications of applying DL techniques to emotion recognition. Reviewing important DL models and their function in emotion recognition across numerous modalities, including speech, facial expressions, and physiological data, is also the main goal (Cowie et al., 2000). Analyse existing and potential uses of emotion-aware AI in several societal domains, including healthcare, education, human–robot interaction, and customer service (Picard, 2003). Moreover, the chapter also determines the ethical issues and difficulties raised by AI's capacity to perceive and control emotions and talks about how AI and emotional intelligence can be combined in the future to benefit society (Goleman, 1995; Picard, 2003).

2 Methodology

In developing this chapter, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature was conducted, guided by the principles outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and

Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA framework was utilised to ensure a systematic and transparent approach to identifying, selecting, and synthesising research findings related to AI and emotion recognition.

Various academic databases and reputable sources were explored to gather a wide range of studies, articles, and reports pertinent to the topic. Keywords such as “emotion recognition”, “artificial intelligence”, “deep learning”, “machine learning”, “affective computing”, “ethical considerations in AI”, and “privacy in emotion recognition” were used to search for relevant literature.

The selection of literature aimed to include foundational theories, recent advancements, practical applications, and discussions on ethical and societal implications. Emphasis was placed on studies that highlight the integration of deep learning techniques in emotion recognition across different modalities, including speech, text, facial expressions, and physiological signals.

By adhering to the PRISMA methodology, the chapter endeavours to provide a balanced and comprehensive overview of the field, acknowledging various perspectives and addressing both the potentials and challenges associated with emotion-aware AI systems.

3 Theoretical Framework

The basic ideas of Emotional Intelligence (EI) are examined in this section, along with the ways in which AI systems particularly those that use DL are developing to mimic and react to human emotions. It discusses the history of AI in emotional contexts, defines and frames EI, and explains the use of DL in emotion recognition systems.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise, comprehend, and control feelings in both oneself and other people. Psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer first proposed EI in 1990 (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Daniel Goleman popularised the concept in the mid-1990s (Goleman, 1998). Goleman identified five essential elements of EI and explained why it is essen-

tial for success in both personal and professional life. These five essential elements are:

1. **Self-awareness:** The capacity to identify and comprehend one's own feelings.
2. **Self-regulation:** The capacity to restrain or channel erratic feelings and impulses.
3. **Motivation:** A drive to strive for the sake of achievement, affected by emotional states.
4. **Empathy:** The capacity to comprehend the feelings of others.
5. **Social skills:** The ability to establish and maintain networks and manage relationships.

These elements serve as the cornerstone for comprehending the applications of EI in interpersonal interactions, decision-making, and general well-being (Goleman, 1998). Since then, EI has come to be recognised as essential to interpersonal communication, leadership, and conflict endurance.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) divided EI into four distinct talents in their initial model:

1. **Perceiving Emotions:** Acknowledging feelings in oneself, other people, and external stimuli like music, art, and other forms of expression.
2. **Using Emotions to Facilitate Thought:** Making use of feelings to direct attention and set priorities for thought.
3. **Understanding Emotions:** Being aware of the origins, effects, and changes that emotions undergo over time.
4. **Managing Emotions:** Controlling and effectively regulating emotions to bring about desired results.

As scientists work to create machines that can recognise, understand, and react to human emotions, the idea of EI has permeated AI research (McDuff & El Kalioubi, 2014). AI-based EI is primarily concerned with sensing, comprehending, and reacting to emotions, whereas human EI also involves intricate cognitive and social components. The process of identifying emotional cues, analysing them in the context of a particular situation, and producing relevant responses is known as machine emotional intelligence.

3.1 AI's Development in Emotional Environments

In the last few decades, there has been considerable advancement in the creation of AI systems that can recognise and react to emotions. Early AI systems paid minimal attention to emotions in favour of logic, problem-solving, and rule-based processing (Sloman, 1987). However, when researchers discovered the importance of emotional context in human communication and decision-making, the field began transitioning towards emotion-aware AI.

These advancements have been significantly propelled by DL, which has enabled the development of models that can automatically learn hierarchical representations from data (LeCun et al., 2015). Unlike traditional ML algorithms, DL models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) can process raw data inputs like images and audio to detect complex patterns associated with emotional expressions (Goodfellow et al., 2016). DL's ability to handle large datasets and model non-linear relationships has made it a cornerstone in modern emotion recognition systems (Li & Deng, 2020).

Figure 2.1 represents the key advancements in Deep Learning that have significantly contributed to the field of emotion recognition. It highlights the progressive stages from hierarchical representation learning to detecting complex patterns, handling large datasets, and modelling non-linear relationships. These developments are crucial to making Deep Learning a cornerstone of modern emotion recognition systems, showcasing its ability to process raw data and extract meaningful emotional cues.

Researchers in AI started examining how robots could mimic human emotions in the 1980s and 1990s. The majority of these works involved theoretical concepts and fundamental emotional response models. For example, Aaron Sloman's research on artificial emotions investigated the use of emotional states by machines to direct resource allocation and decision-making (Sloman, 1987). However these early systems relied on pre-programmed rules to simulate emotions; thus, they were essentially static and

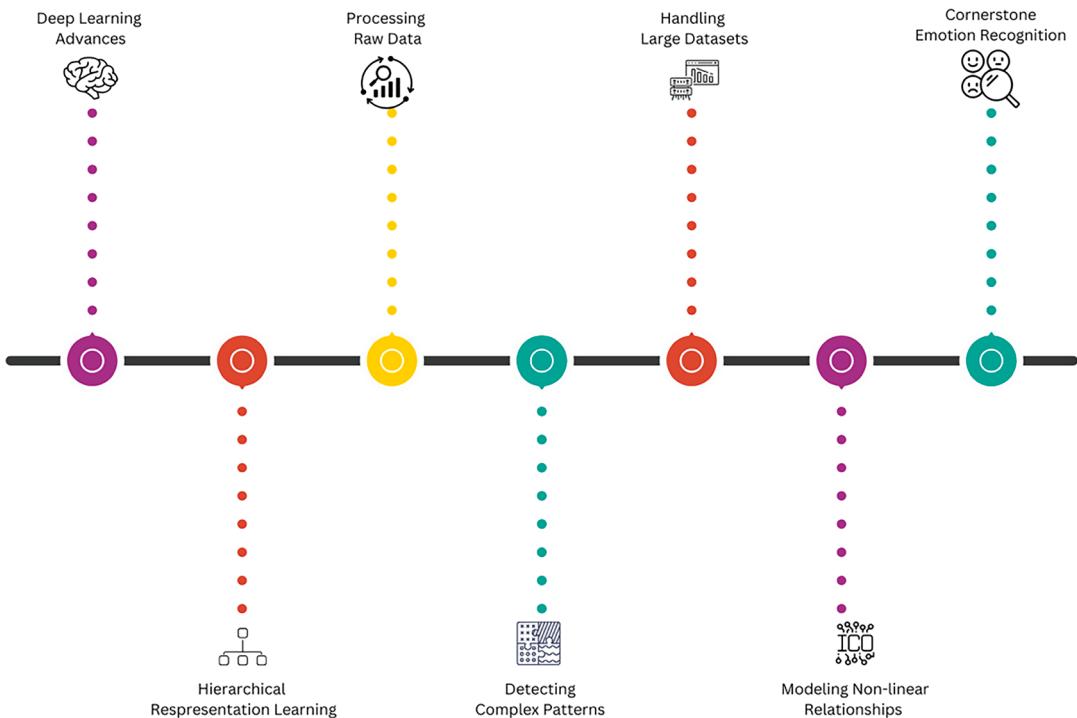


Fig. 2.1 Deep learning revolutionises emotion recognition

were not able to dynamically perceive or react in real-time to genuine human emotions.

Rosalind Picard introduced the idea of emotional intelligence in computers in her landmark book *Affective Computing* (1997), which helped to establish the area of affective computing in the late 1990s (McDuff & El Kaliouby, 2014). The goal of affective computing was to develop systems that could identify and react to human emotions in order to enhance human–computer interaction (HCI). Today’s emotion recognition technologies—such as facial expression recognition, sentiment analysis, and physiological data analysis (e.g. heart rate, skin conductance) to measure emotional states—are all based on affective computing.

3.2 Deep Learning’s Function in Emotion Identification

AI systems can now more accurately detect human emotions because of the significant advancements made in the field of emotion rec-

ognition thanks to DL. Analysing physiological signs, voice, text, or facial expressions is a common task in emotion recognition. Because DL models can learn from huge, complicated datasets, they perform exceptionally well in these tasks, particularly neural networks.

A type of DL model called CNNs is intended to interpret visual data. They are now considered the industry standard for facial expression recognition (FER), a technology that can identify minute variations in facial muscle movements that signify various emotional states.

Method for Using CNNs to Recognise Facial Emotions:

- **Data Input:** A sequence of pictures or video frames with a human face are fed into the model.
- **Feature Extraction:** CNN layers automatically extract features including wrinkle patterns, eyebrow positions, and mouth shapes.
- **Emotion Classification:** The network’s last layers classify a face into one of several emo-

tional categories (such as joyful, sad, furious, or shocked) after analysing the features.

Sequential data like speech or text is a good fit for RNNs and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, their more sophisticated counterparts. Tone, pitch, rhythm, and loudness all contribute to the complex emotional information conveyed in speech. The model can identify changes in mood over time since RNNs are able to capture temporal relationships in speech. Speech emotion recognition (SER) uses RNNs to classify emotions in spoken language by processing acoustic data like pitch, energy, and Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCCs). This is particularly helpful for apps like virtual assistants (e.g. Siri and Alexa), which may modify their replies according to the user's emotional tone.

DL-powered Natural Language Processing (NLP) has emerged as a key instrument for textual emotion recognition. Text context analysis and emotional cue extraction are potential uses for models such as BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers). Relatedly, transformer-based models that can discern emotional nuances in emails, consumer comments,

and social media postings have revolutionised sentiment analysis.

Recent developments in emotion recognition make use of multimodal DL, which combines many data streams such as voice, facial expressions, and physiological signals to create a more comprehensive picture of an individual's emotional state. CNNs and RNNs can be used by multimodal systems to process visual and aural input, respectively, and to combine predictions from each modality through decision fusion approaches.

AI developments in conjunction with the theoretical underpinnings of EI have produced systems that are able to identify and react to human emotions. These advancements have been made possible by DL, which has made it possible to detect emotions more accurately across a variety of modalities. The relationship between EI and AI will grow as the technology develops, offering new chances for creativity in a variety of sectors but also posing new difficulties, especially in the areas of justice, privacy, and moral application.

Figure 2.2 provides a conceptual overview of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in AI, illustrating the key components and techniques involved in integrating EI into AI systems. The diagram high-

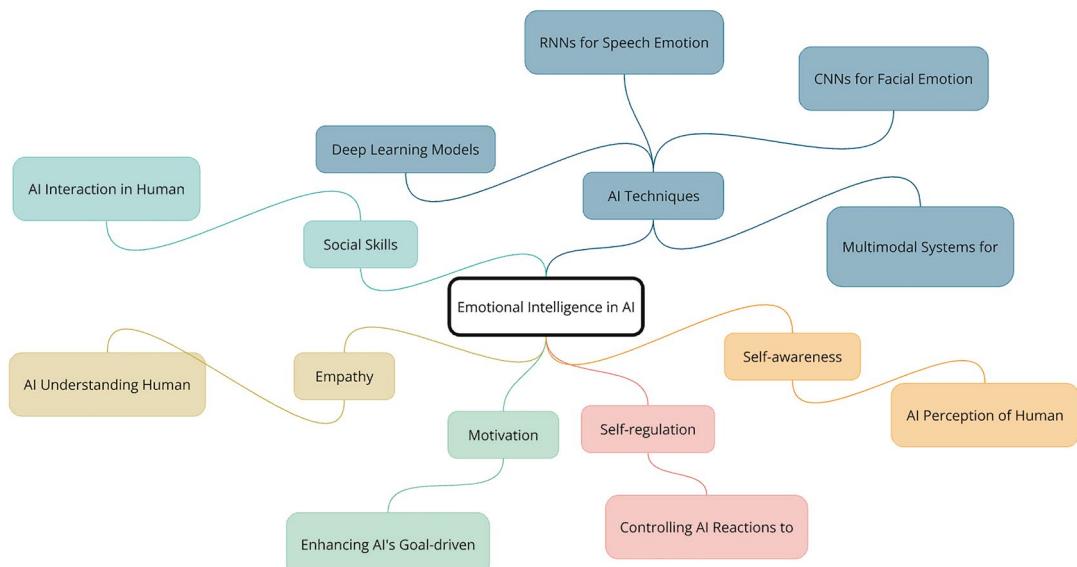


Fig. 2.2 Emotional intelligence in AI

lights how AI can utilise various techniques such as Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) for speech emotion recognition, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for facial emotion recognition, and multimodal systems to process complex emotional data. Additionally, the figure outlines core emotional intelligence elements like self-awareness, empathy, and motivation, demonstrating how these human attributes are applied to enhance AI's understanding of human emotions and interactions.

4 Deep Learning (DL) Methods for Recognising Emotions

Emotion recognition using AI has evolved dramatically, with DL algorithms playing a major role (Goodfellow et al., 2016). Analysis and interpretation of complex data, including speech patterns, text, physiological signs, and facial expressions, are now feasible because of these tools (Li & Deng, 2020; Zeng et al., 2009). Below, we look into the most extensively used DL models and how they contribute to emotion recognition.

4.1 Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)

CNNs are widely used DL methods for image-based applications, and their suitability for facial emotion recognition is particularly high (Li & Deng, 2020). CNNs comprise numerous layers, including convolutional, pooling, and fully connected layers, which work together to extract spatial information from input data (Goodfellow et al., 2016). Because of this feature, CNNs are especially good at identifying minute variations in facial expressions that represent different emotions. Face recognition tasks make considerable use of CNNs (Li & Deng, 2020). A dataset, which includes labelled photos of faces denoting various emotional states such as happiness, sorrow, rage, and surprise, may be used as a common configuration to train the CNN model (Mollahosseini et al., 2017). CNNs do not require

manually created features because they automatically extract features from facial photos (Goodfellow et al., 2016). In systems for HCI, CNN models are used to adjust the AI's replies according to the user's facial expressions (Zhang & Zhang, 2017).

4.2 Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs)

Sequential data is frequently handled by RNNs and their version of LSTM, especially when capturing temporal dependencies in inputs like speech or physiological signals (Goodfellow et al., 2016). Emotions frequently demand models that can retain information across numerous time steps, especially when they are expressed over time in conversation or through heart rate variability (Fayek et al., 2017). RNNs, in particular LSTMs, are useful for analysing speech signals because they can simulate the temporal relationships between the rhythm, tone, and pitch of the speaker (Fayek et al., 2017). LSTMs are perfect for the task since emotion recognition from audio input frequently requires analysing fluctuations in these properties over time. In systems like call centres, voice emotion recognition models are used to assess client satisfaction by recognising emotions such as irritation or excitement (Schuller et al., 2011). Additionally, LSTM networks have been used to analyse physiological signals, such as electroencephalogram (EEG) and heart rate, in order to identify emotional states such as anxiety, relaxation, and tension (Calvo & D'Mello, 2010).

4.3 Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs)

GANs, composed of two neural networks (i.e. the generator and the discriminator), are mostly employed for creating synthetic data (Goodfellow et al., 2016). They can be used in emotion recognition as well, though, especially for enhancing

datasets, producing authentic emotional expressions, and raising recognition accuracy (Li & Deng, 2020). GANs are particularly helpful in scenarios when labelled data is insufficient or unbalanced since they may produce artificial images or speech data that reflect various emotions (Deng et al., 2016). Because GANs may produce a variety of samples for each emotional category, this enhances the performance of emotion recognition models. In order to give AI systems access to a wider range of training data, GANs are employed to synthesise facial emotions (Mollahosseini et al., 2017). By adding or changing facial expressions in virtual settings, they can also improve real-time interaction by giving avatars and social robots a more realistic emotional expression (McDuff et al., 2016). When a balanced dataset is needed for every emotion, GAN-based models are employed to improve facial emotion detection datasets (Deng et al., 2016).

4.4 Transformers and Attention Mechanisms

Natural language processing (NLP) has been transformed by attention mechanisms and transformers, which have also begun to influence emotion recognition, particularly in text and multimodal environments (Devlin et al., 2019). When processing lengthy sequences of data, such as words or video frames, the ability of models to concentrate on particular portions of the input is essential. This is made possible by the self-attention mechanism. Transformers have shown effectiveness in identifying emotions from the text by comprehending linguistic context and subtleties, especially models such as Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) and Generative Pre-Trained Transformers (GPT) (Devlin et al., 2019). This can be employed in customer service chatbots, social media analysis, and therapeutic apps to detect emotions like joy, rage, or fear from textual data (Poria et al., 2020). Transformers can be expanded to multimodal emotion recognition, in which the model interprets inputs from several sources (such as

text, speech, and facial expressions) to offer a more thorough knowledge of an individual's emotional state (Baltrušaitis et al., 2019). The model may effectively predict the emotional state by concentrating on the most pertinent characteristics of each modality through the use of attention mechanisms. Transformers are employed in virtual assistants to improve voice and text emotion recognition, which makes interactions more perceptive and sensitive to emotions (Poria et al., 2017).

4.5 Recognition of Multimodal Emotions

Emotion is a multifaceted phenomenon that manifests itself in various ways. Humans express their emotions not just with words and facial expressions but also with body language, physiological shifts, and written language (Keltner & Ekman, 2003). Multimodal emotion recognition systems use DL to incorporate input from various modalities, resulting in richer and more nuanced emotion identification systems (Zeng et al., 2009). This allows them to better capture these complex signals.

4.5.1 Audio and Speech-Based Emotion Identification

Speech signals use variations in tone, pitch, rhythm, and prosody to transmit a multitude of emotional information (Cowie & Cornelius, 2003). Audio-based emotion detection algorithms often evaluate speech parameters such as MFCCs, pitch, energy, and spectral properties to detect emotions like happiness, sorrow, rage, or fear (Ververidis & Kotropoulos, 2006). Speech signals are frequently analysed using CNNs and LSTMs (Fayek et al., 2017). While LSTMs are beneficial for modelling the temporal relationships in the speaker's tone and rhythm, CNNs are capable of capturing spatial characteristics from the spectrogram of audio input. Call centres and virtual assistants frequently employ speech-based emotion recognition to gauge client pleasure or annoyance by listening to vocal patterns (Schuller et al., 2011).

4.5.2 Recognition of Facial Expressions

When it comes to emotion recognition, facial expressions are arguably the most logical and well-researched medium. Humans use micro-expressions to convey a wide range of emotions, and micro-expressions such as joy, surprise, rage, or contempt are frequently deciphered by analysing minute facial movements (Keltner & Ekman, 2003). CNNs are the dominating architecture for processing facial images, with models such as Visual Geometry Group Neural Network (VGGNet) and Residual Neural Network (ResNet) being extensively deployed (Li & Deng, 2020). Large datasets are used to train these networks so they can recognise patterns in facial movements that signify particular emotions (Mollahosseini et al., 2017). Sensitive variations in facial expressions can be utilised to infer emotional distress or well-being in human-computer interaction (e.g. social robots) and mental health monitoring (D'Mello & Graesser, 2010).

4.5.3 Physiological Signal-Based Emotion Detection (i.e. EEG, ECG, etc.)

A deeper understanding of emotions that may not be apparent through speech or facial expressions is possible thanks to physiological cues. The autonomic nervous system is influenced by emotions, which can alter skin conductance, heart rate, and brain activity (Calvo & D'Mello, 2010). Galvanic skin response (GSR) sensors, electrocardiogram (ECG), and EEG devices can all record these signals. Temporal physiological data can be effectively analysed using LSTMs and autoencoders. Long-range dependencies in signals, such as heart rate variability or EEG data, can be modelled by them, offering insights into an individual's emotional state (e.g. stress, relaxation, and excitement) (Calvo & Peters, 2014). Physiological signal-based emotion detection is used in healthcare to keep an eye out for indicators of stress, anxiety, or sadness in patients (Calvo & Peters, 2014). Heart rate sensors and EEG monitors on wearable technology allow for the real-time tracking of emotional states, providing insightful data for mental health interventions.

4.5.4 Sentiment and Emotion Analysis Based on Text

Another important modality for recognising emotions is text. These models contextually anticipate emotions based on textual input and use attention mechanisms to capture the semantic links between words in a sentence (Poria et al., 2020). Social media platforms are used for sentiment analysis, with tools designed to track public opinion and feelings during events such as elections, protests, or advertising campaigns (Poria et al., 2020).

4.5.5 Integrating Multimodal Data for Emotion Identification

Several data streams, such as speech, facial expressions, physiological signals, and text, are integrated into multimodal emotion identification to produce a more comprehensive and precise emotional profile (Poria et al., 2017). For instance, while facial expressions by themselves could offer some emotional indicators, integrating them with verbal and physiological data might give a more comprehensive picture of the person's emotional state, particularly in situations where contradictory or subtle emotions are present.

4.5.6 Fusion Approaches and Multimodal Techniques

These systems make use of techniques like late fusion, which combines predictions from individual models trained on many modalities, and early fusion, which combines input features from distinct modalities prior to training (Baltrušaitis et al., 2019). The new developments in transformer technology have prompted the creation of models with multimodal data processing capabilities. To arrive at a final prediction regarding the emotional state, these models employ distinct encoders for each modality and subsequently align the outputs using attention mechanisms (Baltrušaitis et al., 2019). Some examples of these techniques are smart surveillance systems in public areas that employ multimodal emotion detection to evaluate the emotional atmosphere of a crowd using cameras, microphones, and other sensors (D'Mello & Graesser, 2010).

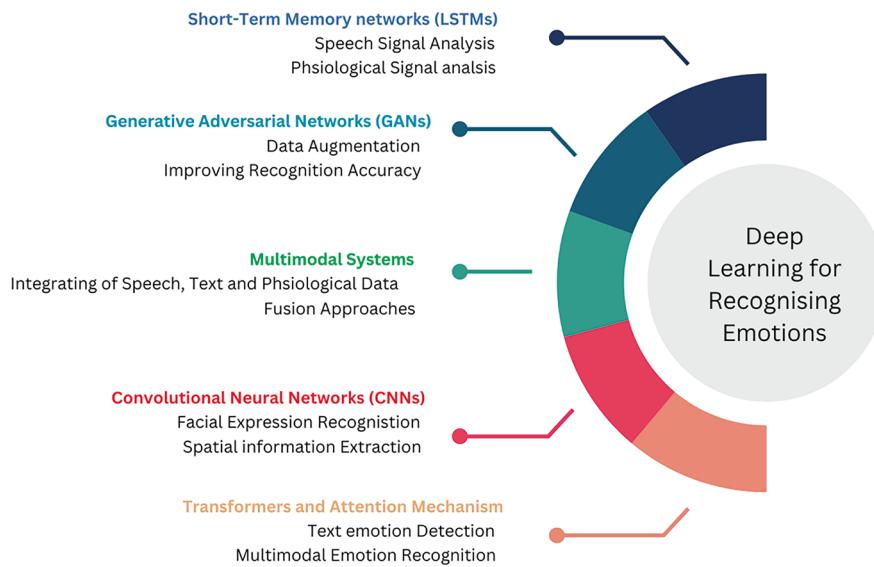


Fig. 2.3 Deep learning for recognising emotions

The state of the art in emotional computing is represented by multimodal emotion detection systems, which combine several data sources for a more thorough knowledge of human emotions using DL techniques (Poria et al., 2017). Compared to single-modality systems, the integration of speech, facial expressions, physiological signs, and text provides a more comprehensive approach to emotion recognition, yielding more accurate and nuanced predictions (Zeng et al., 2009).

Figure 2.3 provides an overview of key deep-learning methods used for recognising emotions across various modalities. It highlights techniques such as Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks for speech and physiological signal analysis, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for facial expression recognition and Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) for data augmentation. The figure also showcases the integration of multimodal systems, which combine inputs from speech, text, and physiological data, as well as transformers and attention mechanisms for advanced emotion detection in textual and multimodal environments. Together, these methods form the backbone of modern emotion recognition systems.

5 AI and Emotion Recognition Applications

AI's ability to integrate emotional intelligence has made a wide range of applications possible, from improving customer experiences to supporting mental health. The main industries where AI-powered emotion recognition has already had a big impact are examined below, along with the potential advantages it may have for society in the future.

5.1 Mental Health and Welfare Identification and Intervention Strategies

Mental health care has been one of the key beneficiaries of AI-based emotion recognition. Early identification of disorders like depression, anxiety, and stress is made possible by the ability to detect emotions in speech, facial expressions, physiological signs, and even written language. In an effort to enhance mental health care services, therapy sessions are increasingly incorporating emotion-aware AI technologies. AI systems examine the speech patterns of patients to

identify indications of anxiety or depression. Therapists and medical professionals can learn more about a patient's mental health by observing changes in the patient's tone, pitch, and speech cadence, which frequently signify emotional discomfort. With a focus on high-stress professions like call centres or military duty, Cogito, an AI platform, analyses speech patterns to monitor emotional wellness and provide help (Kamath et al., 2018). Using facial recognition technology, emotion detection has shown promise in diagnosing mood disorders. Emotion-aware AI systems can monitor patients' well-being and identify early indicators of emotional dysregulation by analysing micro-expressions (Naslund et al., 2016). Real-time tracking of stress and anxiety levels is possible using wearable technology that has sensors to assess heart rate, galvanic skin response, and EEG signals. When combined with AI models, these gadgets provide tailored input to help with stress management (Mills et al., 2022). Along with AI-powered programs such as Wysa and Woebot function as virtual advisors, utilising speech and text sentiment analysis to deliver cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) interventions (Mills et al., 2022). These emotionally intelligent AI systems provide users with personalised advice and coping strategies by adjusting their responses according to their emotional states (Inkster et al., 2018).

5.2 AI in Education: Emotional Feedback and Customised Learning

AI which is sensitive to emotions has a lot of applications in teaching. AI systems can improve learning outcomes and personalise instructional materials by identifying the emotional states of students while they are studying. AI algorithms in e-learning platforms can read students' body language, speech patterns, and facial expressions to determine if they are engaged or not. The system adjusts the content's level of difficulty, tempo, or even delivery method based on these

emotional cues to suit each user's demands. When an AI-driven intelligent tutoring system (ITS) notices that a learner is having difficulty or is confused, it can modify its responses. IBM's Watson Tutor, for instance, incorporates emotion recognition to provide personalised learning feedback (Kaplan-Rakowski, 2020). Except this, an Emotion-aware AI can help teachers in physical classrooms by pointing out kids who might require extra help. AI technologies, for example, can read body language and facial expressions to spot uninterested or nervous children so teachers can take proactive measures (Naslund et al., 2016).

5.3 Human–Robot Interaction: Improving Social and Empathy Competencies in Robotics

Robots are becoming crucial to different industries, from healthcare to consumer service. In human–robot interaction, emotionally intelligent robots can enhance empathy, trust, and cooperation by interacting with humans in a more natural way. Elderly care facilities are already using emotionally intelligent robots like Pepper and PARO to offer emotional support and companionship. These robots can react sympathetically to human emotions because they have the ability to recognise emotions. For example, Pepper can read facial expressions and modify its actions to reassure or interact with its users. This makes it a perfect buddy for older people who are depressed or lonely (Rabbitt et al., 2015). To improve user experiences, emotionally intelligent robots are also employed in customer service (Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2021). By monitoring clients' facial expressions, voice tone, and body language, these robots may alter their behaviour to offer emotionally appropriate responses. When a consumer is in a retail or customer service environment, SoftBank's Pepper robot recognises their emotions and reacts to them empathetically, which increases customer engagement and happiness.

5.4 AI for Customer Support: Emotional Intelligence for Better Results

AI-driven emotion identification is revolutionising customer service by helping businesses to better understand and respond to client emotions. Businesses may detect unhappy consumers and promptly address problems by using sentiment analysis in voice calls, emails, chat conversations, and social media posts. This enhances the overall customer experience (Tettamanzi & Tomaiuolo, 2022). Real-time analysis of clients' voice tones by emotion-aware AI systems allows for the detection of emotions like perplexity, rage, and impatience. These cues allow the AI to suggest conversational approaches to call centre personnel or even deliver automatic solutions based on the customer's emotional state. In order to improve customer interactions, Amazon Connect employs emotion recognition in voice calls to measure client happiness and give agents real-time recommendations (Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2021). Along with sentiment analysis-enabled text-based chatbots to read user messages to identify emotions and modify their responses accordingly. This makes it possible for chatbots to react sympathetically and give customers a better-tailored experience (Inkster et al., 2018).

5.5 Sensitivity to Emotions Smart Cities

Improving Access to Services AI-driven emotion identification is being incorporated into smart cities to improve citizen experiences and public services. Emotion recognition technologies are utilised in anything from public transit to security to track the emotional atmosphere in crowds, spot people who are in need, and even improve city services based on citizen feedback (Yang et al., 2021). Recognising Emotions in Public Monitoring Facial recognition technology is used by emotion-aware surveillance systems to identify emotions in busy public areas like train stations, airports, and events (Bennett & Kottasz,

2021). These technologies allow authorities to act in potentially harmful circumstances by identifying individuals exhibiting indicators of anxiety, hostility, or fear. AI emotion detection is utilised in smart transportation systems to assess people's moods. The system can implement efforts to alleviate traffic or enhance service if it detects a significant number of passengers experiencing stress or frustration (Gao, 2020).

5.6 AI in Marketing

Advertising motivated by emotion understanding customer emotions is essential to developing more successful marketing and advertising initiatives. Facial expressions, speech tones, and even social media activity are analysed by AI systems that are programmed to recognise emotions in order to predict how customers would react to ads or items. Emotion recognition systems are used by marketers to research how customers respond to new offerings or commercials. Businesses can gauge emotional engagement and improve their products or marketing strategies by examining the expressions made by participants in focus groups or during product testing (Malthouse et al., 2019; Ranjan & Sinha, 2021).

AI systems perform sentiment analysis on social media platforms. This enables businesses to adjust their marketing strategies in response to immediate emotional input. Businesses such as Coca-Cola have utilised emotion recognition technology to assess how consumers respond to commercials and modify their marketing strategies according to the emotional resonance they detect (Hernández-Maestro et al., 2021). Emotion-aware AI systems are changing numerous industries by boosting the emotional intelligence of robots, allowing them to interact more naturally with humans. From mental health care to customer service, AI's ability to comprehend and respond to emotions is leading to more personalised, empathic, and successful applications across society (López et al., 2020). AI's capacity to perceive and process emotions will probably grow as it develops, increasing its influence on society.

Fig. 2.4 AI and emotion recognition applications: diverse use cases

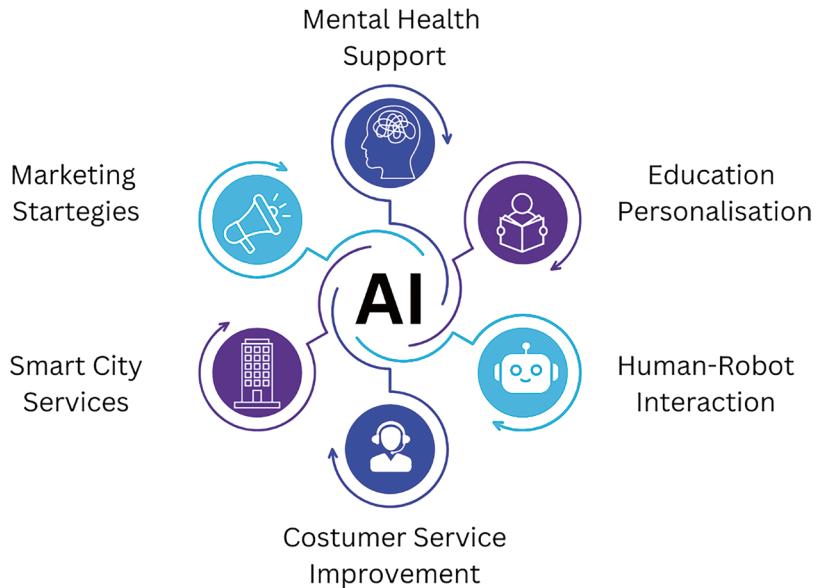


Figure 2.4 illustrates the diverse use cases of AI in emotion recognition across various fields. The diagram highlights key areas where AI, integrated with emotional intelligence, is making significant contributions: mental health support, education personalisation, human–robot interaction, customer service improvement, marketing strategies, and smart city services. These applications demonstrate how emotion-aware AI systems can enhance human interactions, optimise services, and improve overall societal well-being by recognising and responding to emotional states.

issues and how they affect society as a whole in this section.

6.1 Emotion Recognition Privacy Concerns

By definition, emotion identification systems depend on the gathering and analysis of private information about an individual, including physiological signals, voice patterns, facial expressions, and even thoughts (for EEG-based systems) (Awad & Krishnan, 2006). This offers severe privacy problems, as emotional data is inherently private and can be secured. Wearables, cameras, microphones, and other sensors that continuously monitor people are common sources of data for emotion recognition systems (Calo, 2012). Continuous monitoring required for these devices to operate could be viewed as intrusive, especially in public areas or places of business. There are questions regarding the storage, use, and access of the massive datasets needed to train emotion identification models. An illustration of a privacy issue is emotion detection systems in public surveillance may be used in smart cities to watch people's emotions in real-time and detect tension or anxiety. Although this might be helpful

6 Ethical Issues and Their Impact on Society

The convergence of AI and emotions offers significant opportunities to improve human experiences, but it also raises a number of moral conundrums (Crawford & Calo, 2016). As emotion detection technologies proliferate in public and healthcare sectors, among other businesses, they present a number of ethical concerns, such as maintaining transparency, guaranteeing consent, preventing prejudice, and protecting privacy (Mittelstadt et al., 2016). We will look at these

for emergency situations or security, it also raises questions about ongoing surveillance and the degradation of privacy (Calo, 2012).

6.2 Emotion AI's Bias and Fairness

The problem of bias in AI models has been extensively studied, and emotion recognition systems are not exempt from it (Binns, 2018). These algorithms frequently make predictions and choices based on datasets that might not be representative of various populations (Crawford & Calo, 2016). Emotions are expressed differently in different cultures. Facial expressions, body language, and even tone of voice may carry distinct messages in different cultural contexts. Emotion identification algorithms may be unable to correctly identify or interpret emotions in people from different cultures if they are primarily trained on datasets from those groups (such as Western populations). Research has revealed differences in the way that emotion recognition systems read emotions based on a person's gender and race. For instance, studies have demonstrated that a deficiency of diversity in the training data causes facial recognition technology to be less accurate in identifying emotions in women or people with darker skin tones (Crawford & Calo, 2016). An example of a bias issue is when Amazon's secret AI recruiting tool was found to show bias against women because it was trained predominantly on male resumes, highlighting underlying bias in the training data (Dastin, 2018). Similarly, MIT Media Lab conducted a study and discovered that emotion recognition algorithms were substantially less accurate in identifying Black people's emotions than White people's, indicative of an underlying bias in the training data (Crawford & Calo, 2016).

6.3 The Consent Question

When implementing emotion detection systems, consent is crucial, especially in situations where

people might not be completely aware that their emotions are being tracked (Awad & Krishnan, 2006). People must be fully informed about the methods used to gather, keep, and use their emotional data in order to give their informed consent (Wachter et al., 2017). In a lot of public or semi-public settings (like schools, airports, or smart cities), people might not have a convenient way to agree to or opt out of emotion recognition systems. Furthermore, because of the power dynamics at play in workplaces and hospital settings, people may feel pressured to submit to emotion monitoring (Calo, 2012).

Instance of Consent Concerns: Emotion recognition systems in retail settings may track consumers' facial expressions to gauge their level of happiness without getting their express approval, which raises ethical questions around consent and transparency (Awad & Krishnan, 2006).

6.4 Emotional Control and Self-Governance

There's a chance that AI systems, as they get better at identifying emotions, could be used to control feelings (Mittelstadt et al., 2016). Emotion recognition technology has the potential to be used in social media, politics, or marketing to subtly affect people's opinions or actions. Highly personalised marketing campaigns that target people's emotions in order to persuade them to make purchases or interact with products in particular ways can be made by employing emotion-aware AI systems (Awad & Krishnan, 2006). This could increase marketing efficacy, but it also raises moral questions about how much human emotion should be studied and controlled for profit.

An example of emotional manipulation is when political campaigns use emotion recognition to craft communications that prey on voters' emotional weaknesses and may even manipulate people's decision-making processes (Crawford & Calo, 2016).

6.5 The Effect on Human Relationships and Society

Technologies that identify emotions may change how people engage with computers, but they may also have an impact on interpersonal interactions (Mittelstadt et al., 2016). People may rely too much on these technologies for emotional support as AI systems become more emotionally sensitive, which could reduce human empathy and connection. In situations like mental health or elder care, emotionally intelligent AI systems can be a source of comfort and companionship, but they also run the risk of making people unduly reliant on machines for emotional connections (Crawford & Calo, 2016). This is an illustration of societal impact: the extensive usage of social robots, such as Pepper, in senior care facilities throughout Japan has prompted concerns about the long-term implications on interpersonal relationships and the emotional health of the elderly, who may not receive enough real human interaction (Mittelstadt et al., 2016). Figure 2.5 illustrates the ethical issues and their impact on society.

While emotion recognition technology is very promising, there are a lot of ethical issues to be resolved. The thorough consideration of privacy, bias, consent, manipulation, and societal impact is necessary to guarantee that the advantages of these technologies are achieved without violating personal freedoms or jeopardising interpersonal relationships (Wachter et al., 2017). The development and application of emotionally aware AI systems in society will require careful consideration of ethical frameworks, openness, and responsible use (Binns, 2018).

7 Final Thoughts and Future Prospects

The way AI and EI are combined has completely changed how humans and machines interact, and this has enormous potential to improve a number of industries, including public services, healthcare, education, and robotics. DL advancements in emotion identification technologies are making it possible for AI systems

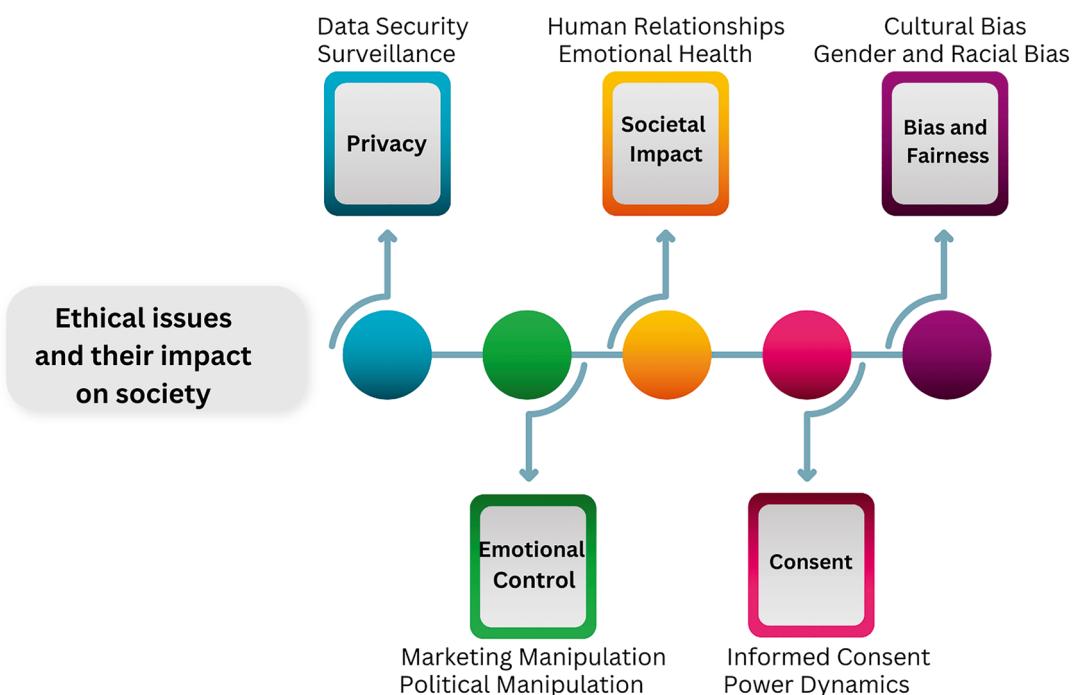


Fig. 2.5 Ethical issues and their impact on society

to comprehend and react to human emotions more skillfully (LeCun et al., 2015). But these developments also bring with them difficult moral and social issues, such as invasions of privacy, emotional blackmail, and cultural prejudice (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). Addressing these concerns through transparent, ethical frameworks is vital to realising the full potential of emotionally aware AI systems.

7.1 Key Insights Synopsis

DL and multimodal data processing have enabled emotion-aware AI systems to recognise emotions in text, voice tones, physiological signs, and even facial expressions (Soleymani et al., 2015). These developments enable computers to engage with people more sympathetically, which enhances their performance in a variety of areas, including education, mental health services, and customer service (Jain et al., 2021). AI with emotional intelligence has shown promise for revolutionising numerous industries. It can support the diagnosis of mental health issues and provide individualised therapy approaches in the field of healthcare. By modifying content according to students' emotional states, it personalises learning experiences in the educational setting. Emotion AI in customer service and marketing is increasing user pleasure and engagement, while social robots with emotion identification capabilities are boosting human–robot interactions. The extensive deployment of emotion detection systems creates important ethical challenges, particularly regarding privacy, prejudice, consent, and the possibility of emotional manipulation (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). Furthermore, there is a chance that human-to-human relationships will be compromised as society grows increasingly dependent on emotionally intelligent AI systems, especially in situations involving caregiving and mental health. Developing transparent, bias-free, and privacy-protecting systems is essential to ensuring that emotion recognition technology is applied properly (Deng et al., 2019). Regulations, fairness audits, and ethical frameworks will be essential

in directing the creation and application of these technologies in the future.

7.2 Prospects for AI with Emotion Awareness

Even though emotion-aware AI has advanced significantly, there are still plenty of areas for study and development. A number of important domains show promise for the development of emotion AI. Current emotion detection systems frequently rely on solitary modalities (e.g. facial recognition or voice). Subsequent studies ought to concentrate on merging several modalities, like body language and facial emotions (Soleymani et al., 2015). AI will be able to comprehend the entire range of human emotions more fully thanks to these multimodal systems. As we've observed, bias in emotion detection algorithms can lead to unequal outcomes for different demographic groups (Deng et al., 2019). The creation of equitable and inclusive datasets that cover a range of racial, gender, cultural, and age demographics must be given top priority in future AI research (Latif et al., 2020a, 2020b). The implementation of explainable AI (XAI) and ongoing fairness audits can guarantee that emotion recognition systems function uniformly across all demographic groups.

One of the biggest obstacles to the widespread use of emotion detection technologies is privacy concerns (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). Future studies should examine the application of methods that let AI models learn, like federated learning and differential privacy. This would protect people's privacy and allow the deployment of emotion-aware technology. The process of creating uniform ethical standards for the application of emotional AI is essential to ensure ethical innovation (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). In the future, efforts should be directed towards developing global guidelines for data protection, consent, openness, and the moral use of emotional data, especially in delicate areas like public surveillance, healthcare, and education.

Future emotionally aware AI systems should give priority to human-centred design principles

in order to avoid an over-reliance on AI for emotional interactions. Rather than taking the place of human emotional intelligence, these systems ought to be designed to complement and enhance it. For example, AI could support human carers in mental health and caregiving contexts by offering data-driven insights (Jain et al., 2021), but leave the emotional and compassionate components of caregiving to people. The goal of future research should be to create emotion detection systems that can understand emotions in a variety of cultural contexts and are culturally sensitive. Applications in global businesses like marketing, international diplomacy, and customer service would benefit greatly from this. More meaningful and productive relationships in increasingly globalised environments may result from cross-cultural emotion AI (Jain et al., 2021).

Real-time emotion monitoring could improve public services, security, and well-being in smart city programmes. Emotion recognition technology shows great promise in this regard. The technological and ethical difficulties of implementing real-time emotion-aware systems in urban settings should be investigated in future studies. This involves researching how these systems can raise the standard of living for city people generally, lessen traffic in transit networks, and increase public safety all without sacrificing consent or privacy (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). As AI for mental health support develops further, more advanced instruments for identifying and treating emotional and psychological disorders may become available. More individualised and easily accessible mental health treatment will be possible with the integration of AI systems with licensed mental health professionals. Creating resources that support mental health and emotional resilience should also be a priority for research, especially in marginalised areas (Jain et al., 2021).

7.3 The Path Ahead: Innovation in Ethics and Social Benefits

Developers, researchers, legislators, and the general public must have an ongoing conversation

about the ethical implications of emotion-aware AI as it develops. To guarantee that these technologies are applied in ways that advance people and society rather than violating people's privacy or autonomy, ethical frameworks and laws must be developed (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). Maintaining the preservation of core human rights while balancing the need for innovation will be one of the major issues going forward. If emotion detection technology is created and applied appropriately, it has the potential to significantly improve human lives. The ethical decisions that society makes will determine the destiny of AI, not simply its technological prowess. To sum up, emotion-aware AI is a big step towards creating robots that are more sensitive to and understanding of human emotions. This technology has several uses and has the potential to completely transform a wide range of sectors, including robots, smart cities, healthcare, and education.

In the future, it will be critical to create increasingly complex, equitable, and private emotion recognition systems (Deng et al., 2019). International norms and ethical principles will also contribute to ensuring that these technologies are applied for the good of all (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). We can create a society that is more emotionally intelligent and compassionate by promoting a future in which AI systems enhance human emotional intelligence rather than replace it.

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Feeling Machines: Challenges and Ethical Perspectives in Developing Robots with Emotions

3

Arianna Sica and Henrik Sætra

1 Introduction

The integration of emotions into artificial systems, particularly social robots, represents a frontier in both robotics and artificial intelligence research, reflecting a profound shift towards more human-like machines and enhanced human–robot interaction (HRI) (Churzinova & Stebelska, 2021, p. 54; Fong et al., 2003). This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the emerging realm of “feeling machines”, focusing on the design challenges and ethical perspectives associated with developing robots equipped with emotions.

The pursuit of creating machines with emotions stems from an increasing recognition of the essential role that emotions play in human behaviour, communication, interaction, alongside cognition and intellect. Emotions for machines can be useful both for making machines more effective in their interactions with humans *and* potentially for enabling machines to make better—or at least more human-like—decisions. Emotional

intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others (Kambur, 2018). Those possessing a high level of emotional intelligence excel in interpersonal communication, displaying empathy, and forming strong relationships (Schutte et al., 2007). Given its significance, incorporating emotional intelligence into social robots, for which empathetic and effective communication is crucial, could greatly enhance interactions with users by increased perceived authenticity and a more effective social presence (Fong et al., 2003).

Furthermore, research by Damasio (1994) has been instrumental in understanding that emotions are not peripheral to rational thinking but are central to the operation of the human mind. This evolving research underscores that emotions are crucial, pervasive drivers of intelligent behaviour and decision making. Emotions influence judgements and choices by altering the content and importance of our thoughts, including any information related to decision processes, and shifting our implicit motivations and goals (Lerner et al., 2015). Emotions shape attentional focus—fear narrows it to immediate details, while positive affect broadens it to a wider perspective. This dynamic influences both short-term reactions and long-term cognitive outcomes (Gasper & Clore, 2002; Pessoa & Ungerleider, 2004). Another example of emotions influencing cognition involves memory and working memory performance (Levens & Phelps, 2008). Our mood not

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only affects what we remember but also how we take in new information and how we feel when recalling these memories (Bower &Forgas, 2000; Buchanan, 2007).

This integral role of emotions in human processes underpins their potential utility in robotic systems. The quest to create social robots with emotions is not a mere exercise in technological advancement but a necessary step towards the creation of truly intelligent machines, able to participate in and contribute to human social environments in a way that feels natural and intuitive to us (Picard, 2003). Central to this endeavour is the technology of Artificial Emotional Intelligence (AEI). The aims of AEI are twofold. First, to enhance communication with users by enabling social robots to express and recognise others' emotions. Second, to enrich the robot's internal mechanisms for behaviour organisation and activity selection, thereby optimising decision making and responsiveness in complex environments.

AEI social robots are still far from being fully realised, but we already have machines capable of quite sophisticated emotion recognition and mimicking abilities. In this chapter, we explore the frontiers of their development, delving into the feasibility and implications of AEI technology. Particularly, we ask: To what extent have we succeeded in embedding emotions into systems like social robots, and what are the limits, both technologically and ethically, of this pursuit? We proceed as follows. Section 2 defines AEI and explores its main functions, particularly how it applies to social robots. Section 3 examines the dynamics of how social robots display emotions, discussing how these emotions are perceived through anthropomorphism, simulated, and integrated into their systems. Section 4 delves into the quest of authenticity in robots' emotions. It discusses the philosophical and practical challenges in assessing whether artificial emotions can truly equate to human emotions. Section 5 explores the potential social and ethical implications if social robots were to successfully replicate human-like emotions, considering changes in social structures, interpersonal relationships, and the moral status of such robots. Finally, Sect. 6 concludes by summarising the discussions and

emphasising the need for continued exploration in this complex field.

2 Artificial Emotional Intelligence

Let us start with defining AEI, also known as affective computing. This field of studies within AI research finds its greatest potential in developing computers “to be genuinely intelligent [...] and to interact naturally with us” (Picard, 2000).

Schuller and Schuller (2018) define AEI as a technology that possesses three main functions: emotion recognition, emotion generation, and emotion augmentation. The first, *emotion recognition*, enables AEI to detect others' emotions by analysing emotion-related data through multimodal processes. This means that the computer recognises emotions by using a variety of channels or modalities, including facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and physiological indicators like heart rate and galvanic skin response. This multimodal approach significantly enhances the accuracy of emotion recognition, offering a more comprehensive understanding than single-modality methods (Weng & Lin, 2022). Modern AI systems are today routinely promoted as having such capabilities, as seen, for example, in OpenAI's launch of GPT-4o in May 2024. In that launch, they highlighted the ability of the system to detect user emotions (Noone, 2024).

Furthermore, given its embodiment, the robot utilises such modalities not just to detect but also to express emotions. This second capability is called *emotion generation* and allows the robot to respond appropriately to the user's needs and expectations, consequently enhancing affective and social interactions. Progress in this area has been slower compared to the research for emotion recognition (Krakovsky, 2018). Nevertheless, the emergence of advanced chatbots has sparked debates on their emotional capacity, as seen in former Google engineer Blake Lemoine's claim of chatbot sentience (Chanan, 2023). Returning to the GPT-4o example, OpenAI also explicitly state that the system can “express emotion”

(OpenAI, 2024) and communicate in “different emotive styles” (Noone, 2024).

However, emotion generation is about external emotional expressions, which does not provide insight into the robot’s internal states. In that regard, research is advancing in *emotion augmentation*, a third capacity that enables the system to determine behaviour and activity selection based on simulated inner emotions. For instance, incorporating anxiety and confidence as emotional parameters can significantly improve the machine’s efficiency in planning and achieving goals (Khashman, 2008).

2.1 AEI into Social Robots

AEI is applied across various domains within AI and computing, serving distinct purposes, such as employee hiring and workplace monitoring (Monteith et al., 2022). This chapter, however, will focus on the use of AEI in social robots—autonomous physical entities designed to engage with users socially and emotionally, learning and evolving from these interactions (Darling, 2012). This is because social robots with AEI offer unique capabilities, not found in other purely virtual machines, such as ChatGPT, Replika AI companions, etc.

Social robot design, often mirroring animal or human forms, allows for the more complex and complete expression of emotional states in an embodied manner, potentially leading them to a level of authenticity, naturalness, and reliability not found in non-embodied technologies like chatbots or virtual characters. Moreover, according to some theories, emotions are necessarily embodied experiences (Damasio, 2003), and this might imply that emotion augmentation is *only* possible for embodied AI systems. As a result, AEI in social robots enables interactions that are emotionally resonant, marking a significant step towards creating robots that can participate in human social environments in a deeply integrated manner.

Implementing AEI into social robots becomes particularly relevant across various applications, especially in areas where the capacity to under-

stand, adapt, and respond to users’ emotional states is particularly significant (Leite et al., 2013). While some AEI applications remain theoretical, there are many examples both emotion recognition and generation in both AI systems and robots. However, with the recent rapid developments of AI systems, it is reasonable to anticipate further enhancements such a technology could introduce to the functionalities of existing social robots, especially within healthcare contexts. Consider the case of Paro, a robot whose presence in therapeutic settings is already notable (Wada & Shibata, 2006, 2007). We can plausibly expect that, by incorporating more advanced AEI, Paro’s interactions could be further improved, enabling it to detect and interpret subtle emotional shifts of elderly patients and responding in more dynamic, tailored ways. This advancement would not only deepen emotional bonds but also provide support that is intricately aligned with the individual’s emotional needs, enhancing the quality of their experience. Similar applications for AEI social robots could be envisioned in educational settings (Blanchard et al., 2009; Pai et al., 2024), and private and domestic environments (Sica, 2023).

However, the advancement of AEI in social robots and their integration into society necessitates a closer examination of the nature of emotions within these artificial agents. As interactions between humans and robots grow in complexity, there might be growing expectations for robots to exhibit sophisticated social behaviours (Arbib & Fellous, 2004). This challenge is not merely about enabling robots to display simulated emotions. It is about equipping them with the capability to deeply understand and appropriately respond to human emotional states. This leads to a pivotal question: If a robot can accurately interpret and respond to human emotions, does this imply it possesses emotions of its own, or is it simply exhibiting a high level of mimicry? Addressing this question is vital for the ongoing development and application of AEI social robots. It pushes us to reconsider how our perceptions of emotional authenticity within robots impacts not only HRI, but also our societal and ethical norms.

3 How an AEI Social Robot Manifests Emotions: Perception, Simulation, and Authenticity

As the integration of emotional intelligence progresses, it becomes imperative to examine how these artificial entities manifest emotions. This section delves into the complex dynamics between the appearance of emotional expressions in social robots, and their underlying mechanisms. We explore three critical aspects: the perception of emotions facilitated by anthropomorphism, the simulation of emotional states for functional HRI, and the integration of emotional apparatus internal to the robot system. This last aspect, in particular, leads to the question of authenticity in artificial emotions. Each facet contributes uniquely to our understanding of what it means for a robot to “feel” and how these manufactured emotions influence interactions with humans.

3.1 Perceived Emotions and Anthropomorphism

Human perceptions often ascribe human emotional and personal qualities to robots, not necessarily based on the robot’s internal architecture but rather on our tendency to attribute human-like traits to them. Such phenomenon, known as anthropomorphism, is generally defined as the inclination to attribute human characteristics to non-human entities (such as non-human animals, natural forces, and, yes, technological devices), or to interpret non-human behaviours as being driven by human-like motivations, intentions, or emotions (Damiano & Dumouchel, 2018).

Social robots are specifically designed to be anthropomorphised, as it can facilitate social exchange between the robot and the user and promote HRI accordingly (Healy, 2022). As these robots are deployed in a growing range of fields, many of their applications specifically depend on their anthropomorphic features. For instance, in areas like healthcare and education, the effectiveness of social robots is significantly increased

when users perceive them as a “social agent”, rather than just tools (Darling, 2015). Let us revisit the example of Paro, the therapeutic robot previously discussed. Its design, resembling a baby seal, deliberately invokes emotional responses from users, fostering engagement and comfort (Hung et al., 2019). In such therapeutic environments, Paro’s anthropomorphic qualities, which often lead it to be perceived as a pet or even a child (Coeckelbergh, 2014), enable its placement within a social dimension, with positive effects on users’ overall wellbeing (Hung et al., 2019; Leite et al., 2013). Therefore, in these cases, as Darling argues (2015), leveraging our natural tendency to anthropomorphise these machines is necessary for their effective and beneficial use.

In such contexts, whereas implementing AEI would plausibly enhance anthropomorphism, it is not essential for its emergence. Even the simplest robots that are not intentionally designed for social interaction, such as the vacuum cleaner Roomba or the military robot PackBot, can be seen as exhibiting human traits (Scheutz, 2009). This entails that a robot, to be perceived as socially and emotionally capable and form an emotional bond with their users, does not need to possess internal emotional states: people already greatly contribute to imagine it having feelings and personality. Nevertheless, the more sophisticated the robot becomes, the more likely it is to be anthropomorphised (Whitby, 2011). The integration of AEI, in particular, could enhance the tendency to anthropomorphise by depicting the robot as an entity able to *feel*, leading the users to ascribe even more complex emotional states and personality traits to these robots. We will explore this aspect in the following.

However, before we continue, we must briefly address some ethical concerns that arise from anthropomorphism and the resulting social and emotional engagement with the robot. Human tendency to attribute mental states and intentions to robots allows such entities to enter our social sphere, potentially creating the illusion of genuine social relationships (Turkle, 2011). Consequently, anthropomorphism in social robots can lead to deception, i.e. the false belief

that robots possess emotions and can reciprocate ours (Scheutz, 2009). The ethics of anthropomorphism and the potential for deception remain debated, with some authors such as Darling (2015) and indirectly Levine and Schweitzer (2015) arguing in favour of accentuating anthropomorphic tendency when it benefits the user.

3.2 Playing the “Social Game”

Here, we examine how robots can simulate emotions through AEI. Unlike anthropomorphism, where human-like qualities are projected onto robots by users, emotional behaviours in AEI social robots are specifically designed to evoke emotions and to simulate social cues. As described in Sect. 2, AEI aims to equip robots to interpret and adapt to human feelings and actions in real time, as well as to generate appropriate emotional responses. Such capabilities, which we referred to as emotion recognition and emotion generation, could transform the landscape of HRI by allowing robots to participate meaningfully in social interactions. Significant progress in social robots such as Pepper (Fiorini et al., 2022), Buddy (Weiss & Hannibal, 2018) and Ryan (Abdollahi et al., 2022) have been made. Equipping robots with human-like empathic abilities, however, still proves challenging (Marcos-Pablos & García-Peña, 2022).

Although AEI is not yet fully developed, let us consider a future scenario where it has advanced sufficiently to be capable of recognition and generation of emotions. For instance, a social robot equipped with AEI could analyse a user’s facial expressions, voice tone, and body language to discern underlying emotional states. Such insights would enable the robot to respond in a way that is not only appropriate but also contextually aware, potentially offering comfort, humour, or empathy, depending on the situation. This level of interaction goes beyond simple programmed responses and begins to touch the realm of genuine social exchanges, with consequent ethical questions. While our previous discussion around anthropomorphism raised concerns about

the deceptive aspect of human-robot relationships, AEI introduces a deeper and perhaps more concerning layer of ethical complexity. If a robot’s emotional responses are so convincingly realistic, what does this mean for the authenticity of the emotions themselves? Are these expressions of genuine emotional experiences, or are they sophisticated simulations designed to mimic human emotions? These questions are not merely theoretical. They carry significant implications for the design, deployment, and perception of social robots.

At the level of emotion generation and recognition, the robot’s emotional manifestations may not be linked with genuine emotional experiences within the robot. Instead, we can expect that these are calculated responses, programmed specifically to simulate emotional processing, and not rooted in any sentient experience (Sica & Sætra, 2024). Such simulations are purely external and instrumental for the robot to fulfil specific roles or achieve tasks for effective HRI. This functional mimicry should not be confused with the experiential reality of emotions.

Nevertheless, authors such as Coeckelbergh (2010) argue that focusing on whether robots’ emotions are “real” might miss a crucial point. In human interactions, we do not have direct access to another’s internal emotions. Instead, we depend on external cues such as behaviour, expressions, and words, to interpret what the other person might be feeling or thinking. Thus, if a robot can emulate these cues convincingly, its emotions might be considered “authentic” in terms of their functional impact on human observers. For Coeckelbergh, what truly matters in interactions—whether with humans or robots—is not the internal experience but the external expression and its effects. This perspective shifts the emphasis from a technical analysis of artificial emotions to their practical implications in social contexts, suggesting that the authenticity of a robot’s emotions may be assessed based on their believability and efficacy in social interactions, rather than their fidelity to human emotions.

We are not advocating specifically for or against this perspective. However, for the pur-

pose of this chapter, the question at hand is not just about the external manifestations of emotions in robots but also concerns the fundamental nature of what it means for an emotion to be *genuine*. As we continue our exploration, we aim to critically assess the capacities of robots to experience emotions that meet criteria not only for believability but also for authenticity within their interactive and functional contexts.

3.3 Integrated Emotions: Beyond Simulation?

In this subsection, we focus on the third capability of AEI, namely emotion augmentation. Differently from emotion generation and emotion recognition, machines with emotion augmentation are designed to replicate *some form of* emotional apparatus to enhance their functionality. More specifically, informed by Damasio's theories (1994), advances in AEI have led to the development of machines that incorporate emotion-based algorithms as key components in decision-making, responsiveness, and interactions (Moerland et al., 2018; Rosenbloom et al., 2015; Strömfelt et al., 2017).

Strömfelt et al.'s study (2017) provide a detailed analysis of how artificial emotions are integrated into AI systems at a fundamental level to enhance performance. One key example presented is the inclusion of an emotional backpropagation-learning algorithm in smart pattern recognition programmes (Khashman, 2008), where the emotional biases of confidence and anxiety are applied during the system's learning process. This emotional framework improves both the recognition rate and the learning efficiency, as it allows the system to better focus on new or interesting data that may otherwise be overlooked by traditional learning algorithms.

Building on Khashman's work, Yang and colleagues' model (2012) offers a novel view on how emotions influence decision-making. Their model features an emotion generator composed of sensations, feelings, emotions, and a hormonal system that interact to impact the feeling component. These components interact to affect the sys-

tem's emotional state with feelings like anxiety, triggered by diminishing rewards and confidence, which acts opposite to anxiety. Other emotions such as fear and warmth influence strategic decisions and indicate when to stop the algorithm based on the number of iteration and level of fear. These emotional cues give rise to a primary emotion that plays a crucial role in adjusting the algorithm parameters and potentially shifting its strategies and actions.

Another example discussed is the development of emotional conditioning models that closely mimic human emotional processes. These models integrate various emotional aspects—including, again, anxiety and confidence—to adapt AI responses based on the emotional state of the system. This approach has proven effective in applications ranging from robotic controllers to pattern recognition systems, demonstrating significant improvement in flexibility and adaptability over standard models. Such emotional AI systems showcase their ability to not just perform tasks, but also to learn and adapt in ways that are inspired by human emotional intelligence (see Strömfelt et al., 2017 for further details).

Emotion augmentation can be applied across a range of technologies. Yet, its application becomes particularly compelling in robotics when considering whether artificial emotions could match the quality of human ones. This emphasis stems from theories suggesting that emotions can only be experienced within a physical body. Therefore, when comparing emotions in robots to human emotions, the embodied form of robots may allow for a more direct analogy with human emotional processes. As we will see later, embodiment may be crucial for the assessment of the authenticity of the robot's emotional capabilities.

To sum up, while AEI is still exploring ways to model and generate artificial emotions, it is evident that using emotional elements into AI systems such as machine learning could greatly enhance their performance and learning efficiency, but if we successfully integrate such an artificial emotional system into a robot, does this mean the robot experiences genuine, proper emotions?

4 “The Million Dollar Question: Will AI Have Emotions?”

This question, originally posed by Schuller and Schuller (2018, p. 44), remains a million-dollar question: Will AI ever achieve proper human-like emotions? This also relate to age-old questions in computer science, such as “can machines think?” (Turing, 1950), and more general question regarding whether technology that mimics human and animal functionality can be said to be doing the same. For example, does a plane fly, does a submarine swim, etc. In this section, we explore the challenges in assessing whether artificial emotions can genuinely compare to human emotions. We first provide an overview of various definitions and theories of emotions and then compare these to the concept of artificial emotions. Next, we explore the intricate connection between emotions, consciousness, the physical body, and the social sphere, discussing how these relationships may imply complications in drawing parallels between artificial and human emotions. As our discussion unfolds, it becomes clear that there is no straightforward answer to their potential equivalency.

4.1 Understanding Emotions

The concept of human emotions lacks a unified definition in psychology. Scarantino and De Sousa (2018) discuss three primary theoretical frameworks: the James-Lange, Evaluative Theory, and Motivational Theories. Each theoretical framework offers a different perspective on what emotions are and how they function, which influences how we might understand and design AEI. Our aim here is not to debate the validity of these perspectives. Instead, we focus on how the variety of approaches to understanding emotions highlights a fundamental issue, that the problem of defining emotions is unresolved. Without a universal understanding of these concepts, which fundamentally define us as humans, the effort to create emotional robots that resemble us becomes exceedingly difficult.

As we have seen when introducing the AEI capability of emotion recognition, designers often simplify the understanding of emotion to the expression of biophysiological signals such as facial expression, gait, or blood conductivity. This approach is rooted in the Motivational Traditions, which posits that human emotional expressions are regular and identifiable (Stark & Hoey, 2021). Such a theoretical choice carries technical as well as ethical concerns. For example, a frown would be interpreted simply as an expression of sadness or anger, missing the evaluative nuances that might indicate confusion, concentration, or even physical discomfort. This might lead to systems that misinterpret human behaviour and intentions, leading to potentially inappropriate or harmful decisions by robots. Moreover, it risks reinforcing stereotypes and reducing the complex spectrum of human emotions to a narrow set of recognisable patterns (Stark & Hoey, 2021). In this context, therefore, replicating authentic emotions in robots remains a challenging and ethically complex effort.

4.2 Consciousness

It is commonly assessed that emotions are subjective experiences and therefore related to consciousness (Sica & Sætra, 2024). Consciousness is here understood as the capacity to have private mental experiences (DeGrazia, 2022), a trait traditionally viewed as lacking in robots (Danaher, 2017; Dennett, 1994). As such, although robots may exhibit signals that mimic the functions of human feelings, this similarity does not imply that their emotional systems are equivalent to ours. In discussing emotion generation, for instance, we did not expect a robot displaying an emotion to necessarily experiencing it internally. Therefore, by lacking emotional experience, robots might have emotional systems, “but no real feelings” (Picard, 2003).

However, authors such as Frank and Nyholm (2017) caution against prematurely dismissing the possibility that robots might 1 day achieve some level of consciousness, given the current

trajectory of research in artificial consciousness. Additionally, the definition and understanding of consciousness are not fixed, which implies that, depending on the theoretical perspective adopted, robots could be considered conscious. Dehaene et al. (2021) argue that if consciousness is viewed as emerging “from nothing more than specific computations” (p. 54), then artificial consciousness might be achievable by mimicking the computational architectures found in the human brain. Others suggest that, even in their present form, robots exhibit some level of consciousness. For instance, by defining consciousness as the ability to report verbally one’s perceptions, we might say that some AI machines already have consciousness (Frank & Nyholm, 2017). Alternatively, theorists like Dennett (1994) argue that practical requirements can be established for robots to develop a form of consciousness specific to their kind.

While this topic is complex and extends beyond the scope of this chapter, it highlights the prevailing absence of unanimity on the definition of consciousness and how this reflects the authenticity of artificial emotions.

4.3 Emotions in the Physical

Earlier in this chapter, we stressed the importance of the embodied nature of social robots over virtual systems to generate emotions. This is because, in addition to brain activity, human emotions are deeply connected to our physicality (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1998). For instance, bodily experiences such as stepping on an unstable rock initiate instinctive reactions within us. These reactions include an “alarm” mechanism that detects a possible loss of balance and triggers adrenaline surge to prompt corrective actions (Sloman, 2001). This example highlights how human reactions and emotional responses are directly linked to the body functions. For genuine emotions to emerge, a body that physically interacts with the world is required (Schuller & Schuller, 2018). Therefore, in this view, social robots offer a more realistic and relevant com-

parison to human emotional experiences than entities that are purely digital.

Some views reject the possibility for an artificial system, regardless of their level of embodiment, to experience emotions such as humans do. Emotion augmentation shows that machines can have mechanisms that partially implement the functions of human emotional systems, and some pain sensors are already utilised in robotics (Picard, 2003; Schuller & Schuller, 2018). However, there is a fundamental difference in bodily architecture between robots and humans. As Churkinova and Stebelska (2021) point out, this disparity means that robots’ experiences of reality will inherently differ from ours. Therefore, computers can imitate human emotion only partially, “because our bodies differ” and, as discussed before, “because so little is known about human emotions” (Picard, 2003).

Whether robot and human bodies will ever match, or sufficiently approximate each other for their emotions to be considered equivalent remains uncertain. One could counter the previous views by suggesting that advancements in bio-inspired and synthetic nervous systems in AI might 1 day enable robots to replicate human emotional processes (Kagan et al., 2023; Kagan et al., 2022; Smirnova et al., 2023). The ongoing debate underscores that much is left to be explored and that a definitive answer is not yet within reach.

4.4 Let’s Mix It Up

We have so far discussed the comparison between human and robot emotions, reaching an unclear conclusion. However, we have not considered the possibility that “not all emotions need to be like human emotions” (Arbib & Fellous, 2004, p. 554). What if the substantial differences in physical embodiment, perception, and interaction with reality between humans and robots do not imply that robots lack “genuine” emotions, but rather suggest that their emotional experiences differ essentially from ours and may require a different conceptualisation? This final subsec-

tion offers a different view, which considers robot emotions on their own terms, recognising them distinct from human emotions, rather than seeking to equate them. As we will see, among the three capacities of AEI, it is emotion augmentation that provides a critical role in this discussion.

Let us start with considering that not all emotions are human. Research into the emotional processes of non-human animals shows that emotions extend beyond purely human experiences (Arbib & Fellous, 2004; Picard, 2003). Similarly, robot emotions might not need to replicate human emotions to be considered legitimate. Artificial emotions may instead represent a different spectrum of emotive responses, analogous to organic emotions but distinct in expression and underlying mechanisms.

Furthermore, building upon a functionalist approach, Arbib and Fellous (2004) and Fellous (2004) argue that emotional concepts can apply to robots by focusing on functionality within their specific operational environments, rather than by replicating human emotional experiences. As we discussed, the primary functions of emotions in biological entities, such as enhancing communication, modulating behaviour, and facilitating social interaction, can be similarly valuable in robotics. By adopting a functionalist perspective, emotions in robots are not about the subjective experiences typically associated with human emotions, but about the utility and application of these emotional states in achieving functional outcomes. Emotion augmentation plays a pivotal role here, enabling these systems to adapt and respond effectively within their operational environments.

Along the same lines, Parisi and Petrosino (2010) claim that robots can “*have emotions*” (p. 453), these latter understood as states of an individual’s body and brain that optimise the motivational decision-making processes. They demonstrate this by developing an artificial neural network with an emotional circuit, which improves the robot’s functionality by taking faster and more correct motivational decisions. They also considered the relationship between emotions and body, by implementing output/

input processes within the emotional circuit that interact with the robot’s hardware. As the authors sustain, such robots can be said to have emotions, provided that there is a clear functional role for these emotional states in their behaviour and a specific part of their neural network that facilitates these functions. Additionally, they do not consider robots with emotion recognition and emotion generation as actually possessing emotions, since these capacities do not contribute functionally to their behaviour.

Such functionalist approaches underscore how emotion augmentation is crucial in advancing the functionality and adaptiveness of robotic systems therefore supporting the possibility of artificial emotions as a distinct category. We must remember, however, that this discussion does not necessarily address the challenges outlined before. Rather than equating human and artificial emotions, the aim here is to seek an alternative perspective that recognises artificial emotions as unique to robots—designed for specific operational roles—and moves away from direct comparisons with human emotional processes. This calls for an appreciation of robot emotions in their right, reflecting their practical utility and the distinctive contexts in which they operate.

To conclude Sect. 4, our exploration of the potential for AEI social robots to exhibit human-like emotions has highlighted the complexity and ongoing nature of this debate. The array of conflicting views and theoretical frameworks precludes a definitive conclusion about the equivalence of human and artificial emotions. Given that emotions are intertwined with physical, cognitive, and social elements, asserting equivalence without deeper understanding could indeed be premature and potentially ethically irresponsible.

5 What If We Succeed?

Building on the unresolved debate of Sect. 4, let us delve into a future where we do succeed in artificially replicating human-like emotions. In this final section, we explore possibilities and challenges that such a development could intro-

duce. What ethical and social implications could arise? How will our interactions with social robots evolve, and what new roles will these machines play in our society?

First, even if human-like, or especially because of this, artificial emotions could still present significant issues when implemented. Emotional expressions vary widely across cultures (Hareli et al., 2015). Without cultural sensitivity, AEI might misinterpret or inadequately respond to emotional cues from people of different cultural backgrounds, leading to biased interactions (Chursinova & Stebelska, 2021). Also, societal expectations often dictate how individuals of different genders should express emotions. For instance, women might be expected to display more empathy, while men might be encouraged to suppress emotions like sadness or fear (Zhu et al., 2020). Harmful biases also arise in recognising emotions, as studies show a tendency to associate angry faces to men, particularly Black men (Becker et al., 2010; Neel et al., 2012). If robots possess artificial emotions equal to humans', ensuring their emotional systems are free from these biases is crucial. Clearly, as previously addressed, these biases are already problematic in developing AEI, even without the aim to reproduce genuine emotions, adding to the challenges discussed in Sect. 4.

Furthermore, drawing from Sætra's (2022) analysis of the impact of social robots designed for loving relationships, we can extend this argument to robots possessing proper emotions. As the author suggests, such machines could redefine our understanding of love, transforming traditional concepts such as monogamy and commitment, and encourage more diverse forms of intimacy and companionship. Society might become more accepting of diverse relationship structures, perhaps helping the recognition of other sexual minorities, and the role of technology in meeting emotional needs. Other significant changes could impact marriages, traditional family structures, and reproduction, as in relationships with robots we might expect a decline in birth rates (Sætra, 2022).

The presence of robots with genuine emotions could alter our views on other human values,

such as the fundamental concepts of life and death. How will engage with emotional entities with whom we might share friendships or loving relationships, when such entities do not age or die in the conventional sense? The emotional continuity offered by robots could provide a sense of comfort and stability, yet it might also lead to a shift in how we cope with grief and loss, and challenge our acceptance of life's impermanence. Some individuals might be prompted to prefer robotic companions over humans, seeking to avoid the inevitable heartache associated with human loss.

Moreover, replicating human-like emotions in AEI raises questions about the moral status of these machines. We have argued elsewhere about the moral considerations of social robots with AEI (Sica & Sætra, 2024), suggesting that the absence of equivalence between artificial and human emotions delineates the boundary between moral consideration for machines and individuals. However, if this equivalence is validated, the moral status of AEI machines would need to be re-evaluated, potentially requiring us to extend moral considerations and rights to them as we do to other moral beings. We would then ask: Should we seek consent for their use and deployment? Are they still considered property, belonging to the user or the company that produced them? Will they be held responsible for their actions, or would they lack moral agency? When it comes to loving robots, will they be granted the choice of their romantic partner? These questions also make us reflect on the actual utility of these machines. It is crucial to consider whether the pursuit of genuine emotional capabilities in robots truly serves our needs or introduces more issues than it resolves.

Finally, another critical issue is the role of AEI in the pursuit of artificial general intelligence (AGI), expected to reach and exceed human intelligence (Goertzel, 2014; McLean et al., 2023). While authors such as Bach (2008) considers the progress in AI as largely unsuccessful, the integration of AEI principles could potentially be a transformative breakthrough. As said before, emotional intelligence is fundamental to human cognition. Understanding and replicating

human-like emotional responses is essential for developing AI systems that can think, learn, and interact in ways that are truly analogous to human intelligence. Thus, by progressing in AEI, we might accelerate our approach towards achieving AGI. However, this prospect also introduces new ethical complexities, such as a threat to human values and norms, with the hypothesised event of humanity annihilation (Boyles, 2018; Chalmers, 2016).

6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the integration of AEI into social robots, highlighting both its progress and limitations. As we explored the ways in which robots manifest emotions, we examined three critical aspects: anthropomorphism, simulation of emotions, and internal emotional apparatus within robots. This exploration raised fundamental questions about the authenticity of artificial emotions and their implications for what it truly means for a robot to feel. These questions are not merely technical but extend into deep ethical, social, and philosophical realms, touching on the very nature of emotion and the role of artificial agents in our social fabric. As Picard (2003) reminds us, we are still trying (and we might never succeed) to understand emotions in the living systems, and “the machine is not even alive”. Whether AEI machines will ever genuinely possess emotions akin to humans remains uncertain (Picard, 2003). As this field evolves, it will be crucial to continue engaging with these questions, ensuring that advancements in AEI proceed with an awareness of the deep ethical dimensions and a commitment to enhancing human well-being—not merely for technological aspiration but for genuine societal benefit.

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Robotic Positive Psychology Interventions and Emotional Well-being

Rudolf M. Oosthuizen

1 Introduction

The goal of positive psychology is to foster the flourishing of individuals, communities, and societies by focusing on understanding, cultivating, and building human strengths, rather than focusing on human weakness (Chengchen, 2019; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Zábo et al., 2024). Clinical psychology focuses on treating negative mental and emotional pathology, while positive psychology studies the positive aspects that allow people to thrive. Emotional intelligence and resilience can enhance people's psychological well-being and happiness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Positive psychology-based psychotherapy interventions have been shown to reduce depression symptoms and improve psychological well-being in both people with and without psychological disorders (Seligman et al., 2006). As an alternative to maintaining a "normal" or "average" life, positive psychology helps people thrive. The application of positive psychology to non-clinical populations would therefore make sense for promoting their well-being (Jeong et al., 2020).

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Using interactive technologies, Jeong et al. (2023) argue, clinicians will be able to access resources and services that were once only accessible through human interaction. Mobile or wearable devices can be used to track and monitor patients' conditions (Vidal et al., 2012; Chum et al., 2017). A number of companies have also developed interactive software tailored for psycho-education and intervention (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017) that can be accessed at any time by users through computers or mobile devices. Most of their interactions with users are health related. Users can discuss their mental health and ways to improve it with Woebot (<https://woebothealth.com/>), a cognitive behavioural therapy mobile chatbot. The bot does not provide daily news or act as a game companion.

Contrary to human therapists or clinicians with whom patients typically interact, personal electronic devices are not restricted to healthcare settings. Interactive agents can engage users both for health-related tasks and in other contexts to build positive relationships and rapport with them. Jeong et al. (2023) suggest that interactive agents can do this by interacting with and engaging users both for health-related tasks and for other purposes. Positive relationships between agents and their users might even enhance their intervention. The degree of rapport between the clinician and patient can lead to improved health outcomes, as well as better adherence to and sat-

isfaction with treatment regimens (Fuertes et al., 2007; Wampold, 2015). Moreover, a strong rapport helps patients cope with depression and stress, facilitates clinicians and patients collaborating and determining treatment goals and expectations, and makes it easier for patients to undergo long-term behavioural changes necessary for successful health outcomes (Qina'au & Masuda, 2020).

In human–robot interactions and human–computer interactions based on social psychology research, artificial agents have been shown to build rapport with people using nonverbal and verbal cues like facial expressions, empathetic feedback, backchannelling, prosody, and intonation (Hou et al., 2024; Lucas et al., 2017; Riek et al., 2010). Due to shared experiences, the user and agent can also create familiarity, trust, and mutual understanding (Bickmore & Picard, 2005; Jeong et al., 2023). The potential impact of robot–user rapport on mental health is yet to be explored. In addition, personality traits may have an impact on the adherence to a physician's recommended medication regimen (Christensen & Smith, 1995; Villieux et al., 2016; Lamers et al., 2012). In studies examining long-term survival, stress tolerance, and response to treatment, conscientiousness has been shown to influence long life (Hill et al., 2011). Low neuroticism and high extraversion have been found to be associated with psychological well-being (Kokko et al., 2013).

1.1 Problem Statement

In accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), work may protect employees' mental well-being by providing them with a sense of purpose, a sense of accomplishment, and the opportunity to feel part of a community. However, excessive workload, tight work schedules, and a lack of a work–life balance can also undermine emotional well-being (Uyeri, 2024). It is therefore recommended by the WHO that employers provide employees with adequate mental health protection and support at work to prevent work-related mental health problems.

However, implementing these recommendations is hampered by a shortage of resources and personnel (Spitale et al., 2023).

Research on human–robot interaction (HRI) (Bodala et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2024) suggests that robots can be a great tool to help improve and sustain human well-being, and their adoption might enable employers to overcome existing obstacles to hire them. In the past, robots have been used as coaches to promote human well-being in a variety of contexts, such as encouraging physical activity in the elderly and mental well-being (Abbasi et al., 2022; Axelsson et al., 2021; 2022a, b; Churamani et al., 2022). Due to difficulties associated with running studies in the real world, such as finding a host organisation, ethical concerns, and technical set-up issues, most of these studies are conducted in laboratory settings. To deliver positive psychology exercises in the laboratory, Axelsson et al. (2022a, b) used Pepper as a robotic coach. Robots have not been widely studied in real-world settings, for instance in the studies by Jeong et al. (2020) and Ostrowski et al. (2022). In none of these studies was robots investigated as mental well-being coaches at work (Spitale et al., 2023).

The form of a robot influences how people perceive it (Haring et al., 2018; Li et al., 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012). Axelsson et al. (2021) examined the relationship between different forms and the tasks performed by the robot in the context of providing mental well-being exercises. The participants expected the robot's form to match its functionality (i.e., they would not expect a robot dog to speak, but they would expect a humanoid robot to engage in conversation). No study has examined the effect of different robot forms on delivering mental well-being exercises in the wild.

Spitale et al. (2023) presented the first study that investigates the deployment and use of two forms of robotic mental well-being coaches in the workplace. The authors worked with Cambridge Consultants Inc. whose employees (26 coaches) interacted with either a QTrobot or a Misty robot over a period of 4 weeks. Positive psychology exercises were delivered by robots four times a week (one exercise per week). In

collaboration with two (human) well-being coaches, the robot's personality was designed to reflect that of a well-being coach (DeVault et al., 2014; Sonlu et al., 2021). By combining quantitative data from standardised and specifically designed questionnaires with qualitative data from in-person interviews and focus groups, the authors developed a comprehensive understanding of how robotic coaches can be used to improve workplace well-being (Patton, 1999).

1.2 Objective of the Chapter

The objective of this chapter is to provide an in-depth insight into robotic positive psychology interventions and emotional well-being.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Key Theoretical Concepts

2.1.1 Conceptualisation of Robotic Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology

Lomas et al. (2021) postulate that the development of academic fields is often described through the metaphor of “waves”. The first wave focuses mainly on positive phenomena (emotions, traits, behaviours, cognitions, and organisations). The inclusion criteria and continuum criteria for identifying something positively were defined by Pawelski (2016a, b). The inclusion criterion is based on preference: It is positive if a phenomenon is preferred over its absence. With a continuum criterion, positivity is defined as a function of (a) relative preference (the strength with which you prefer it over something else); (b) sustainability across time; (c) sustainability across people; (d) sustainability across effects; and (e) sustainability across structures. The perception of positive phenomena is determined by their preferability, longevity, relevance to a larger number of people, and scalability and transferability across organisations and cultures (Zábo et al., 2024).

Following the instantiation of the first wave of positive psychology (PP1.0), scholarship emerged looking critically at the notions of positive and negative, becoming known as the second wave of positive psychology (PP2.0). PP2.0 is still grounded in the same meta-concepts as the first wave, such as flourishing and well-being (Lomas et al., 2021). The ambivalent nature of the good life is appreciated, and the dialectical nature of well-being is understood to be fundamental (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016). Overall, Ryff and Singer (2003) recognise that flourishing involves both positive and negative aspects (p. 272) of living. In contrast to polarisation, the second wave consists of “dynamic harmonisation” of dichotomous states and “balancing opposite elements” (Delle Fave et al., 2011, p. 199).

A more recent evolution is one that embraces greater complexity and moves beyond the individual (Lomas et al., 2021). A deeper examination of groups and systems within which people are embedded goes beyond the individual person as the primary focus of inquiry. A wider range of methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches is also required (Held, 2004; Rich, 2017; Synard & Gazzola, 2013). A third wave of positive psychology (PP3.0) is in the process of emerging based on these interrelated ripples, which constitute an epistemological “broadening”.

Robotic Positive Psychology

Greer et al. (2019) conducted a study with young adults (age 18–29 years) within 5 years of completing active cancer treatment by using the Vivibot chatbot on Facebook messenger. In the study, the participants were randomly assigned either immediate Vivibot access (experimental group) or access to daily emotion ratings and full chatbot content after 4 weeks (control group). A human-centred design process was used to create Vivibot content, which includes 4 weeks of positive psychology skills, daily emotion ratings, videos, and other material produced by survivors. Online surveys were administered at baseline, weeks two, four, and eight to assess psychosocial well-being. In the study, the participants were evaluated on chatbot engagement and open-ended feedback regarding likability and per-

ceived helpfulness, and anxiety and depression symptoms were compared between the experimental and control groups between baseline and 4 weeks. To verify the main effects, follow-up analyses were conducted on participants in the control group after they had accessed all chatbot content for 4 and 8 weeks.

Greer et al. (2019) found that positive psychology skills, delivered by a chatbot, were perceived as helpful and non-judgmental by young adults who had undergone cancer treatment. A variety of factors, including changing health behaviours, improving physiological functioning, and increasing resources that influence health, influence positive emotion, both directly and indirectly (Pressman & Cohen, 2005; Cohen & Pressman, 2006; Yang et al., 2024), when stimulated by skills-based interventions. Youthful people who have undergone cancer treatment may be influenced by positive psychology interventions through increased feelings of support and social control, a function influenced by positive emotion (Kok et al., 2013) that may be potentially poor after the treatment. In addition to enhancing receptivity to learning stress-management skills, talking to a non-judgmental “robot” can also enhance participant receptivity to positive emotion (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). To link skill building to subsequent long-term health impacts, more research should be done on individual positive emotion intervention skills. Future studies using this format on young people may benefit from the non-judgmental experience provided by bot-based interventions.

2.1.2 Conceptualisation of Robotic Emotional Well-Being

Emotional Well-Being

National public health objectives as described in Healthy People 2030 include identifying and developing strategies to promote robustness and well-being (Koh et al., 2021; Park et al., 2023). A vast body of research emphasises the importance of mental health for overall wellness; it is not only desirable but may also contribute causally to healthy ageing and longevity (Kushlev et al., 2020; Ngamaba et al., 2017). In addition, there is a strong correlation between physical health and

factors that reflect healthy psychological functioning, such as life satisfaction or sense of purpose (Chida & Steptoe, 2008; Pressman et al., 2019; Zaninotto & Steptoe, 2019). In multiple disciplines, researchers have recognised how studying states of positive well-being can provide important insights into reducing suffering, improving public health, and even improving civil society (Frijters et al., 2020). Several strategies have been identified for improving psychological health beyond reducing suffering, but it is unclear whether such interventions will have a sufficient impact to alter subsequent physical health and are scalable for implementation at the population level if they have an effect of sufficient magnitude.

A national public health initiative focusing on emotional well-being was proposed by Feller and colleagues in 2018. The term *emotional well-being* encompasses psychological concepts such as life satisfaction, life purpose, and positive emotions. Feller et al. (2018) recognise that many related terms are already in use. They suggested that a more unified definition of key concepts and the measurement approach would be necessary for this initiative to succeed. The concepts of flourishing (Seligman, 2012) and thriving (Su et al., 2014) have been introduced to other broad conceptualisations of psychological aspects of well-being. To define emotional well-being, three components are considered: (1) eudaimonia, defined as the sense of purpose and meaning in life; (2) evaluative well-being (or life satisfaction), which is a reflection on life satisfaction and a perception of it; and (3) hedonic (or experiential) well-being, which refers to momentary emotional states (Uyeri, 2024).

Robotic Coaches for Emotional Well-Being

Coaching aimed at improving a person’s emotional well-being (psychological therapy aimed at treating mental illness) (Hart et al., 2001; Spitale et al., 2023) is an important part of healthy living and work (Hart et al., 2001). Green et al. (2006) outlines general coaching goals as increasing hope and goal-striving for the coachee and generally enhancing his/her well-being. Various psychological practices may be used in coaching. Coaching that emphasises cognitive behavioural

principles emphasises the connection between emotions, thoughts, and actions, whereas coaching that emphasises positive psychology stresses focusing on the positives (Seligman, 2007). Working alliances between coachees and coaches are also crucial to the success of a coaching practice (De Haan & Gannon, 2017). A successful alliance relies on trust and is strengthened by transparency (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). A therapeutic working alliance's quality has previously been measured by measuring the bond between a therapist and his/her client, as well as the agreement on the tasks and goals of therapy (Munder et al., 2010).

Spitale et al. (2023) denote that few studies have explored how robotic coaches can promote emotional well-being. Students in home settings participated in a longitudinal study (7 days) using Jibo robots. Students' well-being, moods, and readiness to change improved, and they formed an alliance with the robot during the sessions. Bodala et al. (2021) assessed participants' perceptions of human and robotic mindfulness coaches as part of a 5-week study. Despite receiving positive feedback from both coaches, the human coach was rated significantly higher on animacy, likeability, and intelligence. The perception of the robot was also affected by the participants' neuroticism and conscientiousness. According to a recent study (Abbasi et al., 2022), robots can be used to assess children's emotional health. Compared to self-report and parent-report standard tests, the robot-based emotional well-being assessment seemed most suitable for identifying anomalies related to children's well-being. Robots have not been studied as workplace emotional well-being coaches in any of these studies.

Robot Form in Human–Robot Interaction

People's perceptions of robots are influenced by the robot's form, specifically though the form function attribution bias (Haring et al., 2018). Cognitive shortcuts are used to attribute certain capabilities and functionalities to robots using visual information (Hou et al., 2024). Past studies have shown that robot form impacts human–robot interactions (Paetzl et al., 2020). People were shown static pictures of the different robotic

platforms in most of these studies (Perugia et al., 2021). A survey study conducted by Schaefer et al. (2012) involved university students evaluating robot pictures. Robots' physical form influenced their perceived trustworthiness, according to their study. In a similar study, Li et al. (2015) examined how different robot platforms influence human social attention through pictures and videos. The results showed that different agents (robots, androids, and humans) impacted social attention, especially how quickly the user was able to disengage from the robot and respond. Only a few works conducted user studies in which participants interacted with different robotic platforms. A study by Paetzl et al. (2020), for example, examined the persistence of first impressions among different levels of human-likeness of a Furhat robot. In repeated interactions, they found that perceptual differences persist between robots with varying degrees of human-likeness (see Chap. 3). According to Spitale et al. (2023), none of these studies examined the differences between human perception when individuals interacted with different robotic platforms (forms).

Robot Personality in Human–Robot Interaction

According to Van Otterdijk et al. (2022), people can recognise robot personality from verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Prior studies have used behavioural variables such as speed (Whittaker et al., 2021) and gesture frequency (Bevacqua et al., 2012; DeVault et al., 2014) to create robot and virtual agent personalities. A robot's form, however, can also influence users' perceptions of personality (Broadbent et al., 2013). There is evidence that robot personality influences interaction outcomes. When extroverted people are matched with extroverted robots (and vice versa), motivation is improved (Andrist et al., 2015), preference is influenced (Tapus et al., 2008), as well as social attraction (Lee et al., 2006) and conscientious robots can diminish uncanny feelings (Paetzl-Prüssmann et al., 2021). The human–robot interaction for health care is lacking a systematic understanding of robot personality (Robert, 2018) despite these encouraging works (Esterwood & Robert, 2020). The Big Five model

of personality traits (Goldberg, 1993; Norman, 1963) is commonly used in expressing robot personality. However, standardised, open, and commonly used tools are lacking to design and measure robot personality.

3 Method

3.1 Study Design

Research on robotic positive psychology interventions and emotional well-being was reviewed in this systematic review of the research literature. A document-based approach allowed the author to evaluate existing research.

3.2 Study Eligibility Criteria

A systematic review was conducted by including only contemporary research published between 2020 and 2024 in the field of human resources and industrial and organisational psychology. An information technology service searched Google Scholar and EBSCOhost/Academic Search Premier online. This search was conducted using the terms “robotic positive psychology interventions, emotional well-being, emotions, and positive psychology (PP1.0, PP2.0 and PP3.0)”. A systematic review was conducted by downloading full texts of publications. Articles that examined robotic positive psychology interventions and emotionally well-being were included in this chapter. The research articles served as data sources.

3.3 Data Analysis

The study explored robotic positive psychology interventions and emotional well-being through a qualitative approach. The first stage of the study involved studying the findings carefully to gain a deeper understanding of robotic positive psychology interventions and emotional well-being. In the second stage, the author formed an overall impression of them, considering their relation-

ships and interrelationships. Stage three involved theorising about robotic positive psychology interventions and emotional well-being. The fourth stage involved re-contextualising the new knowledge about robotic positive psychology interventions and emotional well-being and framing these phenomena and relations considering the evolving knowledge articulated by other authors. Between January 2020 and January 2024, 91 studies were identified through a systematic search of the electronic databases EBSCOhost/Academic Search Premier and Google Scholar Academic. Twelve studies were identified as primary sources of information after evaluating the quality of publications.

3.4 Strategies Used to Ensure Data Quality

A systematic, rigorous, and auditable analytical process distinguishes good research from poor research. Consequently, the researcher articulated his findings in a way that allowed a critical reader to understand how they were developed. A clear connection between the data set and the conclusions is offered, as well as credible and valid claims about the data set. A variety of factors were considered, including publication bias (i.e., assuming all research on the topic has not been published); integrity, credibility, quality, appropriateness, and reflections of the overall research process. Reviewing each article for scientific and methodological rigour was vital to ensuring its value and quality. For future reference, all data was retained.

4 Discussion and Practical Implications

4.1 Robotic Positive Psychology Interventions and Emotional Well-Being

Based on their positive psychology intervention, concluded that robotic coaches built rapport and working alliances with participants. The proac-

tive behaviour of the robot was enjoyed by some participants, but uncomfortable by others. People's feedback led to improvements in several areas of the robot system to mitigate privacy concerns. The robot's animate and lifelike behaviour allows it to build rapport without compromising it. Users can control robots more effectively by using their "proactive" and "idle" behaviours. Several study participants reported that they enjoyed the robot's companion-like features; however, others reported feeling uncomfortable when the robot followed their faces or responded to sudden sounds. Robots' idle behaviour can be controlled more directly with a hat-like accessory that covers their cameras and puts them to sleep.

A physical device, as opposed to a mobile app or screen-based feature, would provide an easy way for older adults and others unfamiliar with screen-based technologies to check the robot's status. A camera cover would also provide additional assurance for users by physically covering the cameras on the robot, similar to a webcam cover commonly found on laptops. A user could request that the robot report the status of data collection verbally or visually. Positive psychology sessions would be the only time audio and video recordings would occur. Participants were informed of this during the consent process. It was also communicated verbally during the initial set-up process. It was reported that many participants felt unsure whether the robot was recording during post-study interviews. Users might not be best informed about how their data are collected, used, and stored by long text-based information about data collection.

In Jeong et al.'s study, it is suggested that the robot can inform users in layman's terms what sensors are being used and how data is stored, processed, and recorded, e.g. "Right now, I'm looking at your face with my cameras and listening to your voice with my microphones". On the robot system, the amount of raw data and the number of recording devices could be reduced to respect people's privacy. Participants' interactions with the robot were recorded using static cameras to examine fine-grained behavioural cues during human–robot interactions in their study. When participants were not actively par-

icipating in positive psychology sessions, the robot responded in real time to them.

According to Spitale (2023), previous studies on mental well-being applications like Calm and Headspace found that healthy participants' well-being improved after 8 weeks of continuous positive psychology practice (O'Daffer et al., 2022). Individuals can experience different benefits from well-being practices, and it may take longer for them to be effective based on their unique needs. In addition, mental well-being practices can also be helpful for people who do not have mental health problems, just as mindfulness practices are for everyone (Hart et al., 2001). Axelsson et al. (2022a, b) argue that robotic coaches could be used by healthy populations since they are not intended to replace professionals. The effectiveness of robotic mental well-being coaches can be assessed—alongside pre- and post-assessments of coachees' mental well-being—by how well the robot is able to connect with them. Literature on coaching by humans supports the authors' argument (De Haan & Gannon, 2017). Among patients with strong rapport with their coaches, Qina'au and Masuda (2020) found that they managed stress more effectively.

4.2 Deploying Robotic Well-Being Coaches in the Workplace

From qualitative data collected, Spitale (2023) concluded that robotic coaches are valuable at work as a strong visual reminder for doing positive psychology exercises, as observed by several coachees (Axelsson et al., 2021). As stated in a previous study investigating the needs of users for robotic well-being, coaches' positive psychology exercises would probably be more effective if the respondents walked past the robot in the office. In addition, one respondent said that "a robot would be able to remind you to keep doing the exercises yourself". One respondent said the exercises they learned during the study were "even more memorable because I did them with this robot for the first time". These promising findings do not negate the fact that there remain many open challenges. Robotic coaches may face

challenges in workplace settings due to people's unrealistic expectations (Hou et al., 2024). Coachees' expectations of the robot capabilities are not matching reality, possibly due to distorted media portrayals, reinforced by sales videos. Several coaches noted that they expected more from these robots after seeing demos from cutting-edge teams and seeing Alexa and Google Assistant in action. Coachees' also expected the robotic coach to adapt and personalise its responses based on what they said—e.g. “to change responses based on what the human says” (between people) and “to have more personalisation in the sessions (between people and over time), e.g., referencing throughout”.

Coaches reported little prior experience with robots (average = 1.3 on a five-point Likert scale) before joining our study. The robotic coach(es) delivering the well-being positive psychology exercises may not have had the skills and capabilities they expected. A mismatch between expectations and reality can create priming before we interact with robots. A second barrier was the feeling of embarrassment associated with using the robot coach. Both groups of coaches reported that if their colleagues saw them using the robot in the future, they might feel embarrassed. The respondents noted that they would prefer to use the robot in a closed environment, and that it should be seen as normal. According to some coaches, “being seen going to the robot room” outside the scope of this study could have negative social consequences. In previous studies, it was shown that embarrassment discouraged people from seeking counselling (Heyman et al., 2018; King et al., 2006). Future research should examine how robotic coaches' social framing (e.g., keeping them private vs. public) will affect coachees' motivations to use them in their workplaces.

4.3 Practical Implications and Recommendations

Practical implications include developing computational models that are able to detect behavioural cues that communicate users' affect and

rapport with robots. This model allows for a robot to use the sensors to detect various behavioural cues without storing raw footage. Participants' feedback indicates that the robot's behaviour and interventions need to be further personalised based on their feedback about positive psychology. In the future, robot-mediated mental health interventions should be designed in a flexible and adaptable way, allowing users to customise their interaction with the robot as per their lifestyle, needs, and preferences. There are users who prefer shorter 5- to 10-min interactions with the robot at the end of the day, and there are others who prefer longer interactions at a lower frequency. Future research should provide users with the ability to continually adapt and change the way they want to be supported, as opposed to providing a one-size-fits-all approach.

Jeong et al. report that current interactive technologies for well-being are limited when it comes to building rapport with users, such as chatbots, virtual agents, and conversational agents. Mixed results are produced by these well-being intervention technologies, making generalisation of their protocol difficult. Positive psychology robots were deployed to college dormitories to improve student well-being. Over the course of seven positive psychology sessions, 35 college students lived with the robotic coach. Students were able to build rapport with the robot through the intervention session and other useful skills that the robot demonstrated throughout the day.

Jeong et al. found that college students who interacted with the robot displayed improved psychological well-being, better moods, and greater willingness to change their behaviour. In addition, the authors examine how personality traits, working alliances with robots, and behaviour during interaction affect robot intervention effectiveness. In post-study interviews, students reported that the robot's companionship and proactive behaviour were appreciated. In future studies, students' privacy concerns may influence how data is collected and used by the robot.

A social robot could be used as a long-term mental health intervention tool if it is able to be tailored to people's characteristics and behaviour. An interactive agent must be designed as a sup-

portive and helpful companion that builds long-term therapeutic alliances (Hou et al., 2024) to improve the effectiveness of its health interventions.

5 Conclusion

Contrary to other existing health technologies, social robots can create unique opportunities to build rapport with users. By offering both positive psychology-based interactions and companionship, the effectiveness of positive psychology sessions between users and the robot could be enhanced. It is believed that users' adherence to mental health therapy in long-term therapy contexts could be enhanced by working alliances between the agent and the users. In their study, Huddy et al. (2012) demonstrated that clients' satisfaction and working alliance have a significant effect on the length and quality of their therapy sessions. It is important to observe users' behavioural cues during interactions and their personality traits during the intervention which could provide insight into their effectiveness. Users are still struggling to sustain their engagement in digital mental health interventions over the long term. User satisfaction and retention as well as intervention effectiveness could be improved by personalising and tailoring health technologies.

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Part II

Theoretical and Cultural Perspectives on Distinct Emotions



Zuversicht and Antifragility: A New Emotion Theoretical Perspective on a German Concept

5

Elisabeth Vanderheiden

Der Hoffende fasst trotz Unsicherheit einfach Zuversicht.

The hopeful person embraces confidence despite uncertainty.

Niklas Luhmann, German sociologist and social theorist

Wo alle Hoffnung endet – darf Zuversicht beginnen.

Where all hope ends, Zuversicht may begin

Heike Ullmann, German psychologist and author

1 Introduction

This chapter presents a theoretical exploration of the German concept of Zuversicht (confidence/trust) within the framework of emotion theory, integrating it with the concept of antifragility. Zuversicht, deeply rooted in the German cultural and linguistic context, is often associated with a resilient and positive outlook on future challenges. However, this chapter goes beyond the traditional understanding by examining Zuversicht through the lens of emotion theory and its potential evolutionary and neurobiological underpinnings.

The methodology adopted in this chapter is theoretical, aiming to synthesise insights from various disciplines, including psychology, neuro-

science, and cultural studies. The integration of Zuversicht with the concept of antifragility, as proposed by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2012), provides a novel perspective on how emotions can not only withstand stressors but also grow and strengthen through them. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how Zuversicht functions as an adaptive emotional mechanism, facilitating personal growth and emotional stability in the face of adversity.

The following sections will delve into the etymology and cultural significance of Zuversicht, its differentiation from related concepts such as hope and optimism, and the potential neurobiological processes that underlie this emotional state (Gireaux 2013, 2017). By linking Zuversicht with antifragility, this chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how emotional resilience and growth can be cultivated through positive engagement with life's uncertainties and challenges (Masten & Obradović, 2008; Schrank, & Slade, 2007).

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1.1 Definition of Zuversicht in the German Language

The word ‘Zuversicht’ can be etymologically traced back to Old High German and has undergone several linguistic developments over time. It is likely that the term was first documented around the year 1000, in the Alemannic-influenced Old High German of the Lake Constance region, as documented in a manuscript from the Abbey of St. Gallen (Gruber, 2023).

In Old High German, the term ‘Zuversicht’ was known as ‘ziuwarsicht’, which means ‘reverent looking up’ (Adelt, 2022). This term is composed of the elements ‘ziu’ (to) and ‘war’ (true, certain), with ‘sicht’ being a derivation of ‘sehen’ (to see). The word thus expresses confidence or certainty regarding the future and simultaneously includes the ‘foresight of the future’ (Schnabel, 2018, p. 17).

In Middle High German, the word evolved to ‘zuoversicht’, with the meanings of confidence and certainty taking precedence. This semantic orientation remained in New High German, where the word eventually became established as ‘Zuversicht’, continuing to carry the fundamental meaning of trust in the future or positive expectations (Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, n.d.).

This linguistic evolution appears to reflect not only the changes in the German language but also the constancy of fundamental human needs for security and positive expectations throughout history, which seems to be particularly anchored in the German cultural sphere.

Weidner (2018) emphasises the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the term, which describes a culture-specific form of optimism or the capacity for hope, acknowledging challenges while still maintaining a positive future outlook. This uniqueness is also reflected in psychological research, as seen in the development of the Heidelberg Hope Scale, which is specifically tailored to the German-speaking context (Krafft et al., 2019). The interdisciplinary consideration of Zuversicht, highlights the relevance of the concept across disciplinary boundaries (Snyder et al., 2005; Snyder, 2002). Krafft and Walker

(2018) stress the urgency of considering the specific connotations of ‘Zuversicht’ in the German-speaking world, especially when dealing with related concepts such as ‘hope’ or ‘optimism’ in international research.

However, it is important to note that fundamental research on the specific conceptual anchoring of the term ‘Zuversicht’ within the German-speaking cultural sphere is still lacking.

1.2 Implications of the Concept of Zuversicht

Zuversicht is understood as a psychological state characterised by positive and optimistic trust in the future and one’s own abilities (Luhmann, 1989). It is described as both a temporary phenomenon and a fundamental attitude:

Zuversicht is a fundamental attitude that can exist temporarily (e.g., only related to certain events or topics) or long-term (in the form of a personal mindset) (Evangelische Kirche in Heidelberg, n.d.; translated by the author)

Zuversicht is associated with inner freedom (Schnabel, 2018, p. 15), defined as a ‘hope that is indispensable for continuing life’ (Schnabel, 2018, p. 23), ‘as a necessary form of life energy, as that deep drive within humans that makes our existence possible in the first place’ (Schnabel, 2018, p. 23), and is described as an expression of the will to live (Schnabel, 2018, p. 24):

Zuversicht, therefore, does not mean harbouring illusory hope, but rather maintaining a clear view of the seriousness of the situation; at the same time, however, Zuversicht also means not allowing oneself to be paralysed, but rather taking advantage of the opportunities that arise—no matter how small they may be. (Schnabel, 2018, p. 16; translated by the author)

and is based on the certainty ‘that our life and our actions have meaning’ (Schnabel, 2018, p. 51).

At the same time, it seems that satisfaction and Zuversicht in one’s own life can be relatively strong, yet stand in clear contrast to dissatisfaction and pessimism regarding societal developments, as Krafft points out (2022a, b). Moreover, Zuversicht can relate to circumstances that are

only slightly or not at all influenced by the affected individual (Krafft, 2019, p. 119).

1.3 Distinction from Related Terms

The term Zuversicht captures a multifaceted phenomenon that is often used interchangeably with other related concepts, despite having distinct nuances in meaning, such as trust, hope, or optimism. Zuversicht, understood as a general positive expectation towards the future, extends beyond an individual focus and implies a broader perspective on what lies ahead (Florian, 2015). Krafft and Walker (2018) emphasise that trust is a fundamental basis for both hope and Zuversicht. This trust can extend to various dimensions, such as trust in one's abilities, in others, or in transcendent forces. In this context, Zuversicht can be viewed as a specific manifestation of trust, characterised by positive expectations of the future.

Similar to Zuversicht, hope entails a positive expectation for the future. However, a key difference lies in the fact that hope more strongly encompasses the possibility of failure and the non-achievement of a goal (Eagleton, 2016). Zuversicht, by contrast, implies a more deeply felt certainty and a more valid trust in one's abilities to manage uncertainties and challenges (Kern & Grützner, 2022). Krafft and Walker (2018) understand Zuversicht as part of the affective behavioural dimension of hope, which relates to the trust in one's plans for achieving goals.

Although optimism is often used as a synonym for Zuversicht, there are significant differ-

ences between the two concepts. Optimism tends to overlook potential difficulties and may adopt a potentially naive perspective, whereas Zuversicht explicitly acknowledges the possibility of setbacks and challenges, while simultaneously maintaining a deep trust in positive outcomes (Schnabel, 2022). Zuversicht distinguishes itself from optimism through a conscious and realistic assessment of the situation, including the recognition of the possibility of failure.

Courage, composure, dedication, and self-assurance are terms frequently associated with the concept of Zuversicht, as they represent different dimensions of an underlying attitude. Courage enables individuals to face challenges despite existing fear or uncertainty. Composure describes the ability to remain calm and level-headed even in stressful situations. Dedication refers to the full commitment to a particular task or idea, while self-assurance implies a firm belief in one's abilities and worth. Taken together, these qualities form a theoretical foundation that facilitates and promotes the development of Zuversicht (Kern & Grützner, 2022; Starker & Roos, 2024).

Table 5.1 provides a comparative analysis of various terms related to Zuversicht. It includes definitions, key characteristics, and distinguishing features for each term, highlighting their unique aspects. Terms such as trust, hope, and (optimism) are explored in detail.

These distinctions help to clarify the nuanced differences between these related concepts, offering deeper insight into their specific implications and applications in both linguistic and psychological contexts.

Table 5.1 Distinguishing concepts related to Zuversicht

Term	Definition	Key characteristics
Zuversicht	Positive trust in the future and one's own abilities	Greater certainty, trust in one's own abilities and positive circumstances
Trust	Positive expectation towards others' intentions	Expectation of positive actions from individuals or entities
Hope	Positive expectation for the future	Possibility of failure, yet positive expectation
Optimism	Positive expectation for future events	Tendency to ignore potential difficulties
Courage	Ability to act despite fear or uncertainty	Confronting fear or uncertainty

2 Zuversicht from an Evolutionary Perspective

Emotions are complex and multifaceted phenomena, encompassing both physiological and cognitive components, and are believed to have evolved as adaptive responses to environmental conditions (Vaas, n.d.). Although there is no specific research exclusively addressing the evolutionary dimensions of *Zuversicht*, various theoretical approaches provide valuable insights into its potential evolutionary function. Forgas et al. (2012) posit that emotions emerged as adaptive responses during the course of evolution to enable organisms to respond appropriately to environmental changes, thereby increasing their chances of survival. Emotions serve as mechanisms that allow for the assessment of the relevance of situations to individual well-being and the initiation of corresponding adaptive responses. In this context, one might speculate that *Zuversicht* could be interpreted as an adaptive emotion that strengthens confidence in one's ability to act, thereby increasing the likelihood of survival in uncertain situations.

Borgstede similarly argues that psychological mechanisms, including emotions, should be understood as products of a general principle of selection. Emotions, therefore, are not merely immediate reactions to current environmental conditions but also the results of a long-term process of adaptation that promotes survival.

Taleb (2013) introduces the concept of 'antifragility' and argues that systems, including human emotions, can be strengthened by stressors. Although Taleb does not explicitly address the role of *Zuversicht*, it could be inferred that *Zuversicht* might be considered an evolutionarily advantageous trait within the context of antifragility, facilitating adaptation to uncertainty and change. In this sense, *Zuversicht* could enhance resilience in crisis situations, enabling individuals to emerge stronger from challenges (Vanderheiden, 2020, 2021; Gärtner, 2020; Vanderheiden & Mayer, 2020, 2023).

In addition to these theoretical considerations, Bleckwedel (2022) introduces the concept of systemic *Zuversicht*, which describes how social and cultural factors influence human evolution. Systemic *Zuversicht* is defined as a social resource that enables both individuals and collectives to actively and humanely shape the world:

Depending on how people view the future, they will shape their daily lives in the here and now. What people do and how they organise their lives largely depends on the visions they have for the future, the goals they set, and the means they employ to achieve them. [...] By developing new and powerful images of desirable ways of living, a society begins to mobilise its creative energy once again. (Krafft 2022a, b, p. 55; translated by the author)

This form of *Zuversicht* is based on a belief in one's own creativity and collective agency, particularly in times of uncertainty and crises. It arises from an awareness of shared connectedness and collective vulnerability, which facilitates looking beyond individual and cultural differences. Systemic *Zuversicht* also entails believing in the possibility of positive change and committing to a liveable future for all, with the well-being of the community and the environment at its core.

This suggests the hypothesis that emotions in general, and *Zuversicht* specifically, could fulfil evolutionary functions by promoting survival and facilitating adaptation to a complex and dynamic environment. Furthermore, Bleckwedel's concept of systemic *Zuversicht* extends these considerations to include a social dimension, emphasising how collective agency and an awareness of shared connectedness can contribute to managing uncertainty. Following the etymological analysis and cultural contextualisation of the term *Zuversicht* in the German-speaking context, the focus now shifts to the exploration of the evolutionary and psychological dimensions of this concept. The subsequent chapter will therefore examine the potential function of *Zuversicht* from an emotion research perspective and discuss its possible role within the framework of human evolution.

3 Exploring the Neurobiological Basis of Zuversicht

There are currently no targeted neurobiological studies that focus exclusively on *Zuversicht*. However, existing research on related topics such as emotions, motivation, and personality traits can provide valuable insights into the neurobiological foundations of *Zuversicht* (DeYoung & Gray, 2009; Depue & Collins, 1999; Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2003a, b; Lazar, 2011). Recent advances in neurobiological research could also contribute to a better understanding of how *Zuversicht* is anchored in the brain. Various brain regions and neurochemical processes are likely to play a central role in this.

From a neuroscientific perspective, emotions are viewed as complex processes involving both cortical (cerebral cortex) and subcortical structures (Vaas, n.d.). These processes are hierarchically organised and involve various brain regions, ranging from sensory systems to the neocortex. Each of these levels contains automatic and self-regulating mechanisms that prevent a higher-order system from exerting full control. The brain structures are interconnected through positive and negative feedback mechanisms, further increasing the complexity of emotional processing.

The dopaminergic system, particularly the mesolimbic pathway, may play a crucial role in *Zuversicht*, as the neurotransmitter dopamine is strongly associated with reward, motivation, and learning (Baik, 2020; Sittenberger & Clemens, 2024). Increased dopamine activity might correlate with optimistic expectations and a positive mood (DeYoung & Gray, 2009; Depue & Collins, 1999). The prefrontal cortex, responsible for higher cognitive functions such as planning, decision-making, and impulse control (Wulf, 2020), could also be involved in the evaluation of risks (Hölzel et al., 1979) and rewards. This could support the ability to anticipate future successes and maintain *Zuversicht* even in challenging situations (Bechara et al., 2000a, b).

The insula plays a key role in the perception of internal bodily states and their transformation

into conscious feelings, a well-recognised aspect of research (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2003a, b). Its role in monitoring bodily reactions and assessing risks and rewards could plausibly influence the feeling of *Zuversicht*, although direct empirical evidence for this is still lacking.

A central element of emotional processing is the amygdala, which plays a key role in the generation of fear and anxiety. It receives sensory inputs from the thalamus and sensory areas of the cortex and projects these inputs back to these areas as well as to other brain regions involved in controlling behaviour and physiological responses. This allows the amygdala to influence attention, perception, and memory processes in dangerous situations and coordinate emotional responses to threats (Vaas, n.d.).

Given that the amygdala is strongly associated with emotional processes and the regulation of fear (Derntl, 2023; Tafet, 2024; Grandey, 2000), it has been proposed that reduced amygdala activity may be associated with greater *Zuversicht*, as diminished activation in this region corresponds to lower experiences of fear and uncertainty. This would be particularly relevant in regulating stress-related reactions and maintaining *Zuversicht* in stressful situations, as described by LeDoux (2000) in relation to hope.

The hippocampus is considered crucial for memory and learning. It could help in evaluating past experiences and shaping future expectations. It might support the ability to learn from positive experiences and use these to stabilise and enhance *Zuversicht* (Fanselow & Dong, 2010). Serotonin, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood and emotional well-being, might also play a role. A balanced serotonin level could support the ability to regulate emotions and maintain a positive outlook (Fischer & Ullsperger, 2017).

Neurobiological studies have shown that perceptions, thoughts, and behavioural responses in various emotions could be closely integrated. This might explain how *Zuversicht* could be linked with other emotional and cognitive processes (Gray, 1990; Damasio, 1994). The evolutionary perspective on emotions, discussed earlier, suggests that human neurobiological mechanisms have been shaped by natural selection to respond to different environmental

conditions. These adaptations could also influence the ability to experience *Zuversicht* in various situations (Di Domenico & Ryan, 2017; DeYoung et al., 2013). Furthermore, research indicates that certain personality traits associated with *Zuversicht*, such as openness to new experiences, might have a neurobiological basis (Depue & Collins, 1999; DeYoung et al., 2013).

Neurobiologists like Gerhard Roth (Roth et al., 2020) emphasise that despite genetic predispositions, changes in the brain—and consequently in behaviours and attitudes—are possible. This plasticity of the brain suggests that it might be possible to develop or strengthen *Zuversicht* through targeted interventions and experiences (DeYoung, 2006; Eisenberger, 2012).

4 Zuversicht as a Multidimensional Key Resource for Mental Health and Social Cohesion

Zuversicht is associated in research with numerous positive effects across various life domains. It is described as a crucial resource for coping with crises (Schnabel, 2022) and is considered an essential prerequisite for a successful life (Adelt, 2022). Furthermore, *Zuversicht* is seen as a factor shaped by social interactions and relationships, while also acting as a mediator that influences these dynamics (Schnabel, 2022; Kern & Grützner, 2022). In this context, *Zuversicht* could be viewed as a fundamental component for achieving a fulfilling life.

Zuversicht has the evident capacity to spread to others. This contagious effect can lead people out of feelings of fear, doubt, powerlessness, and helplessness, especially in crisis situations. The positive feelings generated by *Zuversicht* seem to remain persistently alive. It is therefore hypothesised that *Zuversicht* possesses a ‘depot effect’ similar to certain medications (Kern & Grützner, 2022, p. 8).

Regarding mental well-being, it is believed that *Zuversicht* can significantly enhance it (Rubin et al., 2016). Positive psychology interventions aimed at strengthening *Zuversicht* have

shown significant effects in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. These interventions promote positive emotions and attitudes, leading to an overall improvement in mental health (Chakhssi et al., 2018). It is likely that this also applies to *Zuversicht*.

Research in the field of positive psychology also clearly demonstrates that positive thoughts and expectations can significantly promote well-being and resilience (Krafft & Walker, 2018; Schnabel, 2018; Pfammatter et al., 2012). Optimistic thoughts and the resulting positive emotions contribute not only to fostering mental and physical growth but also increase cognitive flexibility and open new perspectives. These positive emotions can initiate a ‘positive spiral’, enabling the constructive management of negative events and increasing the chances of future success (Krafft & Walker, 2018, p. 121). This positive expectation is essential for overcoming uncertainties and gaining agency, as Möllering (2006) shows. As a central positive emotion, it plays a crucial role in helping to overcome negative feelings and focus on the positive, thereby generating new solutions.

Moreover, *Zuversicht* enhances resilience (Schnabel, 2018) and the ability to cope with setbacks. People with high *Zuversicht* appear better equipped to handle challenges and learn from failures, supporting their personal growth (Schnabel, 2022). Another important effect of *Zuversicht* is the improvement in the quality of social interactions. Individuals with strong *Zuversicht* are reportedly less self-focused and better able to engage with others, fostering deeper and more empathetic relationships (Simader, 2022; Orth & Robins, 2022; Harris & Orth, 2020).

Additionally, *Zuversicht* contributes to enhancing creativity and problem-solving skills. Positive emotions fostered by *Zuversicht* support the development of creative and innovative solutions to problems. This positive emotional spiral leads to improved performance and increased cognitive resources (Markway, 2018). Finally, *Zuversicht* promotes a stronger awareness of one’s authentic self. Individuals with high *Zuversicht* find it easier to accept their strengths

and weaknesses and to act in alignment with their principles and values, leading to a heightened sense of meaning and purpose (Markway, 2018; Krafft, 2019).

Although Zuversicht has been only marginally considered in emotion research to date, it is increasingly recognised as a complex concept that transcends the classical definition of a simple emotion (Wengel, n.d.). Instead, Zuversicht is increasingly interpreted as a fundamental attitude or life stance (Kern & Grützner, 2022). In crisis situations, it can stabilise the individual and maintain agency by focusing on existing possibilities rather than potential impossibilities (Florian, 2015). Rather than remaining in fear and passivity, Zuversicht enables individuals to analyse a situation, identify options for action, make decisions, and thus maintain their ability to act (Wyler, interviewed by Schnabel, 2018).

Often mistakenly understood as a purely personal trait, Zuversicht reveals itself upon closer examination as a multifaceted social phenomenon with far-reaching implications for societal cohesion. Recent research reveals the transformative power of Zuversicht, which extends far beyond individual boundaries and serves as a catalyst for collective resilience and social cohesion (Kern & Grützner, 2022). This perspective broadens the understanding of Zuversicht from a personal resource to a dynamic, socially embedded construct that has the potential to liberate collectives from states of fear and helplessness and ignite a sustainable positive dynamic (Wyler, cited in Schnabel, 2018).

A central aspect of Zuversicht is its anchoring in social relationships (Kern & Grützner, 2022). It does not develop in a vacuum but is nurtured by role models, mutual support, and the exchange of experiences in crisis management. This social dimension of Zuversicht plays a crucial role in promoting resilience and post-traumatic growth within communities (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Research on post-traumatic growth underscores the importance of social interactions for the positive management of crises. Positive social bonds and support systems can help individuals and groups emerge stronger from adversity (Thiele, 2022; Prati & Pietrantoni, 2009). This process

not only fosters individual growth but also strengthens social cohesion.

The concept of systemic Zuversicht extends this perspective by viewing Zuversicht as a collective resource. It enables communities to respond creatively and solution-oriented to challenges, especially when a common goal and shared sense of purpose are present (Bleckwedel, 2022). This form of Zuversicht can act as a catalyst for social innovation and collective problem-solving.

Social cohesion, understood as the solidarity and connectedness within a society, can be significantly influenced by Zuversicht. Individuals who are confident are more likely to connect with others in times of crisis and seek solutions together (Fritzsche et al., 2017). This networking and the resulting collective action, in turn, strengthen the sense of community and social cohesion.

Zuversicht thus functions as a social adhesive that promotes resilience at the community level, unleashes collective problem-solving potential, and ultimately contributes to the strengthening of social cohesion. In times of global challenges, the cultivation of Zuversicht as a collective resource is becoming increasingly important for addressing complex societal problems and promoting sustainable social cohesion.

Having explored the implications of Zuversicht for mental health and social cohesion, the following discussion introduces the concept of antifragility, which offers a new perspective on the ability to achieve positive development, particularly in contexts perceived as highly uncertain and crisis-ridden.

5 **Antifragilität: A Paradigm Shift in Understanding Resilience and Emotional Development**

5.1 **Introduction to the Concept of Antifragility**

The concept of antifragility, introduced by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2012), describes the

ability of systems not only to withstand stressors and uncertainties but to actively benefit from engaging with these challenges. Unlike resilience, which merely involves surviving disruptions and returning to the previous state, antifragility goes further by emphasising the improvement and strengthening of a system through stressors (Danchin et al., 2011). Taleb (2012) aptly describes this: ‘Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better’ (p. 25). This distinction is crucial for understanding how people not only respond to adversity but also use it as an opportunity for further development. Taleb (2012) points out that ‘absolute robustness is impossible to achieve’ and that systems ‘must continuously regenerate themselves by leveraging unpredictable shocks, stressors, or volatility, rather than suffering from them’ (p. 36).

5.2 The Relevance of Antifragility for Emotion Research

The concept of antifragility can offer new perspectives to emotion research. Traditionally, emotion research has focused on examining individual emotions, their triggers, and their effects (Gross, 2015). Applying the concept of antifragility to emotional processes allows for an exploration of the dynamic nature of emotions and their potential capacity for self-improvement. Confidence could be viewed here as an emotional attitude that not only provides resilience but also fosters a form of ‘emotional antifragility’ that is strengthened through challenges. Taleb (2012) emphasises: ‘The antifragile loves randomness and uncertainty, which also crucially includes a certain type of errors’ (p. 26).

Principles of Antifragility and Their Application to Emotions.

Taleb’s concept of antifragility is based on several fundamental principles that explain how systems can respond to stressors. These considerations can also be applied to emotion research, particularly in terms of promoting confidence through similar processes. The central aspects are

briefly presented below; however, a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter.

- **Stochastic Tinkering:** Iterative experimentation with small, often random changes enhances a system’s adaptability. In the context of emotions, this could mean that repeated, small adjustments lead to a more stable emotional structure.
- **Redundancy:** Redundancy allows a system to compensate for failures through other components. Diverse coping strategies enable individuals to be more emotionally resilient.
- **Via Negativa:** This principle emphasises the elimination of harmful elements to strengthen the system. In emotion research, this could mean avoiding destructive emotional patterns to promote long-term emotional health and confidence.
- **Optionality:** This principle allows for flexibility in choosing strategies in uncertain situations. Regarding emotions, optionality could describe the ability to apply different coping strategies depending on the situation, which supports emotional resilience and confidence.
- **Heuristics and Small Errors:** These principles stress learning from small mistakes through simple decision rules. In the realm of emotional development, small setbacks could be utilised to foster long-term emotional growth.
- **Skin in the Game:** This principle highlights the need to take risks in order to learn from decisions. In the emotional context, this could mean that taking risks in difficult situations is necessary to promote emotional growth.
- **Convexity and Ergodicity:** These principles emphasise that non-linear effects and repeated exposures promote long-term stability. In terms of emotional processes, this could mean that repeated positive experiences increase emotional stability and confidence over time.
- **Decentralisation and Lindy Effect:** Decentralisation stresses the strength gained from the independence of individual components, while the Lindy Effect describes stability and longevity through repeated stress. These principles could indicate that confi-

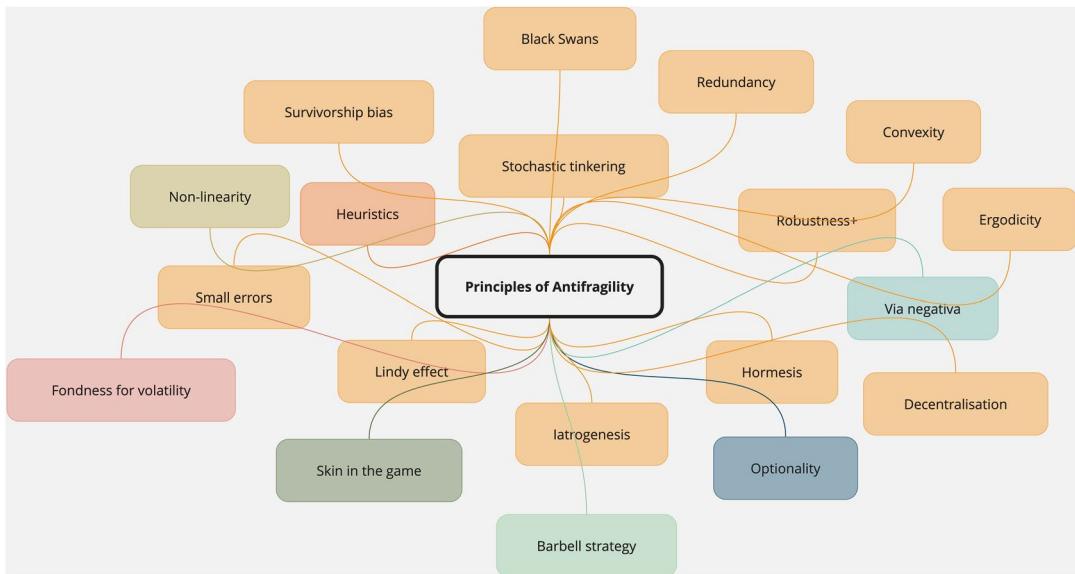


Fig. 5.1 Principles of antifragility

dence is strengthened through social networks and repeated positive experiences.

- **Hormesis:** Small doses of stressors can strengthen the system. In relation to emotional processes, this suggests that controlled stressors could enhance emotional resilience and confidence.

Figure 5.1 serves as a comprehensive overview of the principles that define antifragility, highlighting the interconnected nature of these concepts and their collective contribution to the robustness and growth of systems in the face of uncertainty and change processes.

5.3 Antifragility as an Adaptive Mechanism

Emotions are often considered adaptive mechanisms that enable individuals to respond to environmental challenges (Tooby & Cosmides, 2008). The idea of emotional antifragility suggests that the emotional system is not only capable of adapting to stressors but can also grow stronger as a result of them. Fredrickson's 'Broaden-and-Build' theory of positive emotions (2001) can be seen as

an example of an antifragile emotional process, where positive emotions build personal resources over the long term. Taleb (2012) describes this as a process where 'antifragility allows us to deal with the unknown, to tackle something—and succeed—without understanding it' (p. 26). This approach could also be applied to Zuversicht, which could be understood as a state that evolves through positive emotional experiences.

5.4 Emotion Regulation and Antifragility

Research on emotion regulation could be enriched by the perspective of antifragility. Traditional approaches to emotion regulation often focus on the reduction of negative emotions (Gross, 2015). However, an antifragility approach would explore how emotional challenges can be leveraged to enhance emotional competence and regulatory capacity. Bonanno and Burton (2013) propose the concept of regulatory flexibility, which shares similarities with antifragile processes. This flexibility could serve as the foundation for a form of Zuversicht that is strengthened through the successful management of emotional challenges.

5.5 Trauma and Post-Traumatic Growth

The phenomenon of post-traumatic growth (PTG) offers an interesting parallel to antifragility in the context of emotions. PTG describes positive psychological changes that arise from dealing with extreme life crises (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This process goes beyond resilience, demonstrating how emotional systems can be strengthened by extreme stressors. Zuversicht could also play a role here, serving as an emotional resource that not only helps individuals to survive but also to emerge from crises with reflection, learning, and transformation. Taleb (2012) summarises this concept by stating: 'Antifragile is a term that is relative to a particular situation' (p. 68).

6 Zuversicht and Antifragility: An Integrative Perspective on Human Growth and Fortitude

The concepts of Zuversicht and antifragility provide a remarkable foundation for understanding human resilience and growth potential in the face of uncertainty and challenges. While Zuversicht is understood as a positive expectation towards the future, deeply rooted in confidence in one's abilities and the possibility of a favourable outcome despite adverse circumstances, antifragility describes the capacity of systems not only to withstand stressors and uncertainties but to become stronger and more resilient through them (Taleb, 2012).

The interconnection of these two concepts fosters a profound understanding of the emotional and cognitive mechanisms that enable individuals not only to respond resiliently to challenges but to actively seize them as opportunities for growth and improvement. Zuversicht could be interpreted in this context as a form of emotional expression of antifragility, allowing individuals to maintain a constructive and optimis-

mistic outlook on the future, even under adverse conditions. This perspective is supported by emotion research, which increasingly views emotional processes as dynamic and adaptive mechanisms that can be strengthened through challenges (Gross, 2015; Fredrickson, 2001).

Applying the concept of antifragility to emotional processes illustrates that Zuversicht is not merely a passive attitude of trust in the future but can be understood as an active, dynamic process that perceives uncertainties as opportunities for transformation and improvement. In this sense, antifragility broadens the understanding of Zuversicht by demonstrating that positive emotional attitudes can be reinforced through active engagement with risks and challenges.

In summary, the interdependence of Zuversicht and antifragility offers a valuable perspective for emotion research. It highlights the potential to maintain and enhance emotional health and well-being not only by managing stressors but by growing and maturing through these experiences. In this context, Zuversicht can be understood as a key resource that enables individuals to confront uncertainties and use them as a springboard for personal and collective growth. This suggests that Zuversicht, much like antifragility, represents a dynamic and adaptable mindset, strengthened through conscious and reflective engagement with challenges (Taleb, 2012; Schnabel, 2022).

This framework (Table 5.2) illustrates the intricate interplay between antifragility, resilience, and confidence. It demonstrates how various concepts, from stochastic tinkering to positive feedback loops, contribute to the development of a robust and dynamic form of confidence. This confidence is not merely a static trait but emerges as a result of successfully navigating challenges and uncertainties, underpinned by the principles of antifragility. The synergistic relationship between these concepts suggests that confidence, when cultivated through these mechanisms, becomes a powerful resource for personal growth and adaptability in the face of life's inherent unpredictability.

Table 5.2 Interdependence of Antifragility Principles and Zuversicht (author)

Concept	Description	Contribution to Zuversicht
Antifragility	Ability to grow through challenges	Enables viewing difficulties as opportunities for growth
Stochastic Tinkering	Iterative experimentation and adaptation	Builds Zuversicht through repeated small successes
Emotional Growth	Sustainable learning from crises	Promotes constructive handling of challenges
Resilience	Productive coping with difficult situations	Strengthens Zuversicht through successful crisis management
Risk Readiness	Constructive approach to challenges	Develops Zuversicht by mastering risks
Optionality	Flexibility in dealing with uncertainties	Supports Zuversicht-based response to unforeseen circumstances
Coping Strategies	Effective methods for stress management	Provides reliable tools for crisis management
Positive Feedback Loop	Self-reinforcing cycle of positive experiences	Reinforces Zuversicht through successful coping experiences

6.1 Critical Reflection on the Linkage Between Zuversicht and Antifragility

A critical perspective on the interdependence between Zuversicht and antifragility is essential to highlight the potential limitations and challenges associated with these concepts. While Zuversicht is significant as a positive expectation, there is a possibility that excessive Zuversicht could lead to a distorted perception of risks. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) demonstrated that people often tend towards excessive optimism, which can result in misjudgements and negative consequences.

Moreover, the idealisation of antifragility may lead individuals to take unnecessary or excessive risks, believing that all stressors are potentially growth-promoting. This assumption could result in the downplaying of burdens that are harmful or traumatising. A nuanced approach is necessary to distinguish between constructive challenges and potentially destructive burdens.

Additionally, there is the question of how far the concept of antifragility, originally developed for technical and economic systems, can be applied to human emotions and psychology. Emotional and psychological processes are often more complex and less predictable than technical systems, which makes the application of the con-

cept challenging. Empirical studies are needed to assess whether and how the principles of antifragility can be applied to human emotions without neglecting the complexity and individuality of emotional experiences. Cultural and contextual differences in dealing with uncertainty and stress must also be considered.

7 Future Research Perspectives

The linkage between Zuversicht and antifragility opens up a wide range of potential research areas that warrant further exploration both theoretically and empirically. Initially, it seems promising to investigate the neurobiological foundations of Zuversicht. The focus could be on identifying specific brain regions and neurochemical processes that contribute to a positive outlook on the future. This might involve a closer examination of the role of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin in promoting Zuversicht, particularly in stressful situations (Baik, 2020; Fischer & Ullsperger, 2017).

Positive psychology also offers fertile ground for exploring targeted interventions that can strengthen Zuversicht. Techniques that foster emotional strength and antifragility could be tested in various contexts. Particular attention

should be given to gender differences, as existing research suggests that men and women may respond differently to emotional challenges.

Furthermore, there is a need for specific studies that analyse the unique aspects of Zuversicht in the German-speaking world. It would be essential to investigate the cultural and historical factors that have shaped this attitude and to explore which comparable or similar ideas exist in other cultures. Such comparative studies could contribute to a better understanding of the role and significance of Zuversicht in an international context and reveal differences in emotional strengths of resistance across cultures.

Age-related differences also deserve attention, as the expression and impact of Zuversicht may change over the course of life. Research could examine the lifespan of Zuversicht to understand if and how this positive expectation varies across different life stages and what influence it has on psychological well-being.

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Sehnsucht (Life Longings) Is a Signpost: A German Case Study

6

Elisabeth Vanderheiden

*God certainly did not create Sehnsucht
without also having the reality at hand,
which belongs to it as fulfilment.*

Our Sehnsucht is our path.

Tania Blixen in: Babette's Feast and Other Tales

1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the complex feeling of Sehnsucht, which is very common in German culture. Sehnsucht (often translated as “longing” or “yearning” in English) generally describes a strong desire for something that is missing in the present.

The “typically German” nature of Sehnsucht may also be illustrated by the fact that there is no real equivalent term for Sehnsucht in the Anglo-American language area. Sometimes the word “life-longings” (“Lebenssehnsüchte”) is used for it, but more often, the German term Sehnsucht is adopted into the English vocabulary (Strauß, 2012, p. 41).

In the German language and culture, this phenomenon is highly valued and is often described

as a strong, bittersweet feeling (e.g. Baltes, 2008; Tröger, 2021). The etymology of the word, a compound of “sehnen” (in Middle High German “to be powerless, unenthusiastic”) and “Sucht” (in Old High German “illness/addiction”), already points to the ambivalent nature of Sehnsucht: A painful desire for something that seems unattainable (Schwelgengräber, 2022). In literature, Sehnsucht is a frequent motif used in novels, poems, and songs from antiquity to the present day. It can be directed towards various objects, such as the absence of a loved one, the search for knowledge, or the utopian “other life” (Tröger, 2021).

Psychological research has recently begun addressing Sehnsucht, a complex mixed feeling, in lifelong development (Baltes, 2008; Baltes & Montada, 1996; Brandstädter & Brandstädter, 2011; Mizin & Ovsiienko, 2020; Kotter-Grühn et al., 2009a, b; Marxen, 2020; Sarkar, 2023; Scheibe, 2005; Scheibe et al., 2007b; Scheibe & Freund, 2008; Scheibe et al., 2007a, 2009, 2011; Wilhelm, 2008).

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Key Characteristics of Sehnsucht According to Paul Baltes (2008)

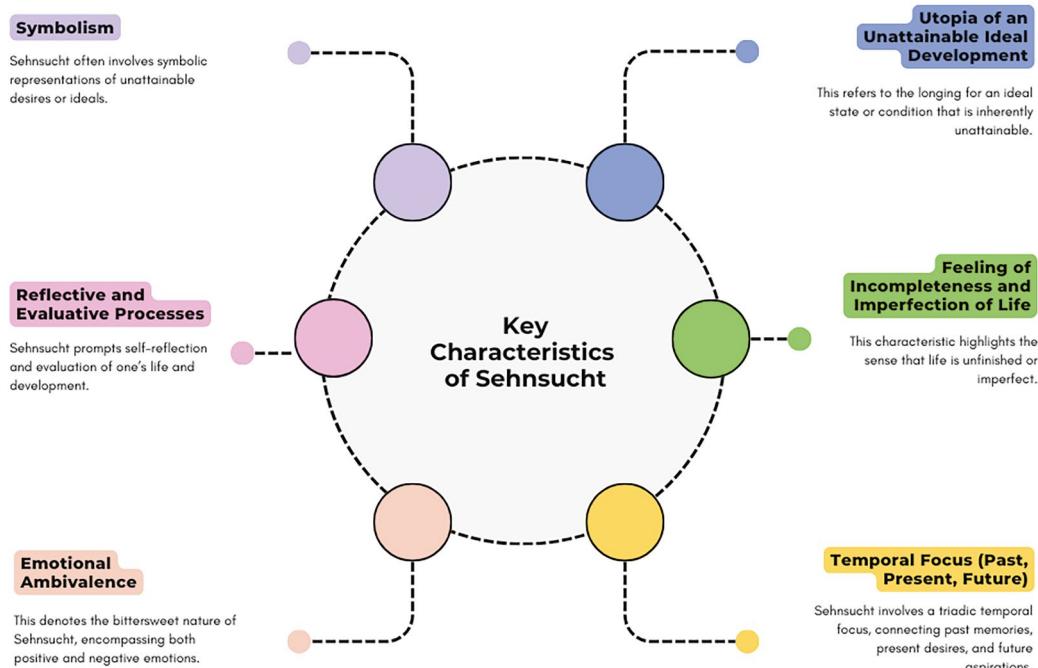


Fig. 6.1 Key characteristics of Sehnsucht (Vanderheiden, based on Baltes, 2008)

Psychologist Paul Baltes notably developed a psychology of Sehnsucht. He characterised Sehnsucht based on six central characteristics (Fig. 6.1):

- Utopia of an unattainable ideal development
- Feeling of imperfection and incompleteness of life
- Triptych focus (past, present, future)
- Ambivalence of the emotions
- Reflective and evaluative processes
- Symbolic nature

Baltes regarded Sehnsucht not only as passive suffering from unfulfilled desires but also identified considerable development potential (Kotter-Grühn et al., 2009a, b). Thus, Sehnsucht can contribute to coping with losses and blocked life wishes and give life a direction by clarifying what is really important to an individual and promoting a corresponding realisation.

Later research concretises Baltes' definition. Scheibe et al. (2010), for example, define

Sehnsucht as an intense desire for alternative life plans and states that are currently unattainable. They point out that Sehnsucht can refer to intense dreams or desires for people, objects, experiences, events, or states in life or the world. Sehnsucht can relate to past, present, or future and can be directed towards one's own life, other people, or the world in general. Sehnsucht is constant or recurring and relate to life as a whole, as opposed to, for example, achievable life goals or current plans. The authors differentiate between concrete life goals and more abstract Sehnsüchte. While life goals tend to have a concrete, achievable character and are pursued more actively, Sehnsucht tends to manifest in a vague, often unrealistic form and relate to an underlying feeling of incompleteness. Sehnsucht is not necessarily tied to specific actions and often only exist in the mind of an individual (Scheibe et al., 2010, p. 618).

People experience Sehnsucht when thinking about life dreams, missed opportunities, or observations of others that they wish for themselves.

Others feel Sehnsucht when they remember intense experiences in the past that they would like to relive or related to the world in general. Sehnsucht is often perceived as very private and concern issues that are often perceived as intimate.

To summarise, they can be described as intense, persistent, or recurring desires for unattainable or hard-to-reach aspects of life or the world (Scheibe et al., 2010).

In this chapter, the question of how Sehnsucht expresses itself in different contexts and what functions it can take on in an individual's life will be explored. A case study from the context of adult education in Germany shows how a woman succeeds in reflecting on and transforming a significant crisis in her life in the context of an artistic exploration of the theme of Sehnsucht. The results of this case study are presented and discussed. This is followed by a conclusion and an outlook on future research needs.

2 Sehnsucht: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on a Complex Phenomenon

2.1 Sehnsucht in Emotion Research and the Neurosciences

Sehnsucht has so far received little attention in emotion research. Although Sehnsucht has a strong emotional component, it is not classified as a pure emotion due to its equally recognisable cognitive aspects. Instead, Sehnsucht is understood as a comprehensive psychological phenomenon that combines emotions and cognition. This complex interplay of emotional and cognitive components makes Sehnsucht a unique and significant subject of psychological research:

For all its emotionality, however, Sehnsucht is also a cognitive phenomenon. This means that it also takes place in the brain—in the form of very complex thought processes. These thoughts and feelings are usually both positive and negative (Felchner, 2022).

From an evolutionary perspective, Sehnsucht can be seen as an adaptive emotion that helps individuals remain motivated to maintain or re-

SEHNSUCHT AS A DYNAMIC INTERCONNECTION OF LEIDENSKAFT, DESIRE, AND SADNESS

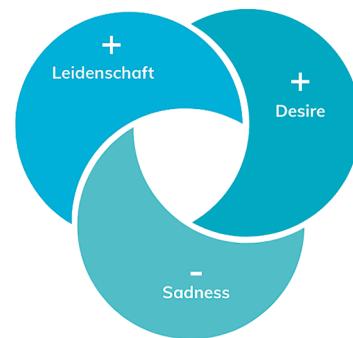


Fig. 6.2 Sehnsucht as a dynamic interconnection of passion, desire, and sadness (Vanderheiden according to Scheibe et al., 2007a)

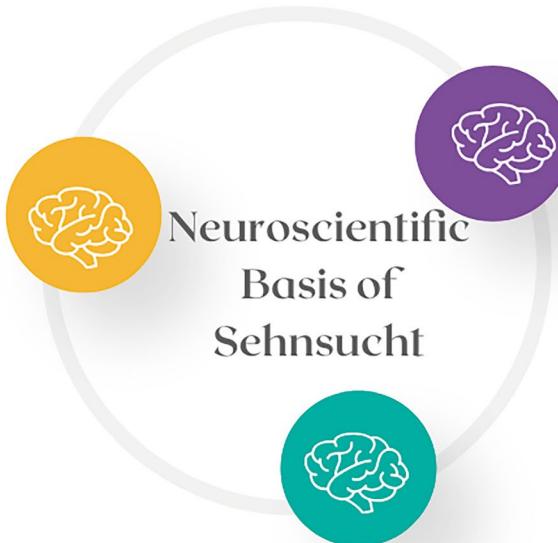
establish important relationships or goals (Scheibe et al., 2007a). Thus, Sehnsucht functions as a social emotion in which the positive (Leidenschaft (passion) and desire) is immediately transformed into the negative (sadness), as the individual's prospects for realisation are (or can be) thwarted by the utopian nature of these prospects (Fig. 6.2). The “sweet” fantasies, hopes, and dreams are immediately neutralised by the “bitter” impossibility of their realisation, which is why researchers refer to this emotion as “bittersweet” (Scheibe et al., 2007a, p. 779).

Surprisingly, Sehnsucht has also hardly been researched neuroscientifically. Nevertheless, some plausible assumptions can be derived from existing findings. As a multi-layered emotion that encompasses both cognitive and affective components, Sehnsucht involves complex thought processes accompanied by intense feelings. From a neuroscientific perspective, it can be assumed that several brain regions are involved in Sehnsucht (Fig. 6.3):

- **Limbic system and amygdala:** These regions play an important role in emotional processing. The amygdala is particularly known for processing emotions such as fear and pleasure and could therefore also play a role in longing (LeDoux, 2007).
- **Prefrontal cortex:** This region could be involved in the cognitive aspects of longing,

Limbic System

- Emotional Processing
- Role of the Amygdala



Prefrontal Cortex

- Cognitive Processes
- Future Scenarios and Planning

Reward System

- Processing of Rewards
- Role of the Nucleus Accumbens

Fig. 6.3 Neuroscientific basis of Sehnsucht

such as imagining future scenarios or remembering past experiences. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for planning and decision-making and helps to control complex thought processes (Miller & Cohen, 2001).

- **Reward system and nucleus accumbens:** The brain's reward system, including the nucleus accumbens, may be activated when processing the positive aspects of craving. This region is known for its role in the processing of rewards and positive emotions (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2015). The ventral tegmentum releases dopamine, which sends excitatory potentials to other brain structures, thereby evoking satisfaction and (Abler et al., 2005; Kim & Birbaumer, 2015).

Since the neurosciences are generally concerned with cognitive information processing, the development and course of emotional reactions, and phenomena such as consciousness and memory, it can be concluded that these areas can

undoubtedly also be considered relevant to understanding Sehnsucht. Studies have shown that Sehnsucht is both past- and future-focused and is perceived as emotionally and developmentally ambiguous (Sedikides et al., 2008). This temporal and emotional complexity indicates a complex interplay between different neural networks. Future in-depth research on this is still pending.

2.2 Cultural Differences in Sehnsucht

Although Sehnsucht as a phenomenon and concept is particularly present in German culture, its components probably influence experiences and behaviours across cultures (Scheibe et al., 2011). Although Sehnsucht is phenomenologically considered specific to the German-speaking cultural area, it is also known in other language communities and cultural areas, “though in an incom-

plete and fragmental form" (Scheibe et al., 2011, p. 605).

People of all cultures grapple with the issues of the finite nature of life, the impossibility of being with loved ones, loss, unfulfilled goals, and genetic and societal limitations (Scheibe et al., 2011). Nevertheless, there are cultural differences in terms of Sehnsucht, as emotional and motivational processes are to some extent culturally shaped and develop as individuals interact with and are shaped by culturally specific ideas, practices, and institutions over the course of their lives:

At the same time we expected cultural differences in some aspects of Sehnsucht. Emotional and motivational processes are to some extent culturally patterned, because they develop as individuals engage with culture-specific ideas, practices, and institutions throughout their lives. (Markus & Kitayama, 2014; Triandis, 1989 as cited in Scheibe et al., 2011, p. 605)

2.2.1 Sehnsucht in German and US-American Culture

German and US cultures, for example, differ in two important dimensions relevant to the experience of Sehnsucht: Independence (the tendency to feel autonomous and in control) and dialectical thinking (the tendency to acknowledge psychological contradictions, e.g. to evaluate things as both good and bad). Due to these global cultural differences, there are differences in two of the structural features and the directional function of Sehnsucht. For example, while Americans feel a similar personal relevance to the concept of life Sehnsucht as Germans, it is less emphasised in US culture.

There are also differences between Germans and Americans in terms of the strength of certain characteristics of Sehnsucht:

- Personal utopia: Germans score higher than US Americans.
- Ambivalent emotions: US Americans score higher than Germans.
- Reflection, symbolic wealth, and three-time focus: Culture-dependent differences exist only for participants up to the age of 60. From

the age of 60, these Sehnsucht characteristics are comparable in both cultures (Scheibe et al., 2011).

2.2.2 Viraha: Sehnsucht in the Indian Cultural Area

For the Indian cultural context, Viraha in particular has been researched (e.g. Barua, 2020; Dharap, 2024; Hillgardner, 2014, 2016; Lee, 2017; Lutjeharms, n.d.; Purohit, 2019; Timm, 1991). Viraha describes the experience of Sehnsucht, especially for a loved one (Srivastava, 2016). It goes beyond mere separation (viyoga) to describe the emotional and sometimes physical anguish of a loved one's absence (Srivastava, 2016). Viraha is central in Indian literature, especially in the bhakti tradition, where it describes the soul's Sehnsucht for union with the divine (Hillgardner, 2014).

Viraha manifests in various aspects of life, from romantic love to spiritual quest (Srivastava, 2016; Hillgardner, 2014, 2016). It goes beyond viyoga—the physical separation of two lovers, focusing on the emotional and spiritual experience of separation (Srivastava, 2016). It represents the pain, Sehnsucht, and perceived emptiness from the loved one's absence. In the bhakti tradition, Viraha also has religious connotations, interpreted as the soul's burning Sehnsucht for God (Hillgardner, 2014). Poets often use earthly love metaphors to describe Sehnsucht for God (Srivastava, 2016).

Viraha is also a catalyst for artistic expression. In Indian art, especially Kathak dance, it expresses Sehnsucht for a lost loved one (Lee, 2017). It is often contextualised through nature and seasons, reflecting the emotional landscape of lovers and reinforcing Sehnsucht. For example, the rainy season often associates with Sehnsucht and the desire for union (Butters, 2022).

Like Sehnsucht, Viraha is not necessarily negative. Sources emphasise it can be inspirational and creative. In poetry and dance, Viraha expresses complex emotions and deeper truths about love, loss, and Sehnsucht.

2.2.3 Saudade: A Lusophone Perspective on Sehnsucht

In addition to the concepts of Sehnsucht and Viraha, Saudade may also be considered a representation of another example of culturally characterised, complex emotional phenomena that have both similarities and distinct characteristics. Both phenomena are characterised by their complexity, which goes beyond simple emotions and combines cognitive and affective components. Saudade, a concept deeply rooted in Portuguese and Brazilian culture, is often described as a melancholic Sehnsucht for something absent or lost. Similar to Sehnsucht, Saudade combines positive and negative emotional aspects but is often perceived as more intense and specific in its focus on the past or the absent (Farrell & Peeters, 2006; Feldman, 2001; Gilberto & Jobim, 2010; Silva, 2012; Piñeiro, 1995; Seto and Mullet in this book). The literary and cultural significance of Saudade in the Lusophone world emphasises its deep anchoring in the collective consciousness. Both concepts share the characteristic of emotional ambivalence, often described as “bittersweet”, and their function as a catalyst for self-reflection and personal growth. However, they differ in their cultural character and specific orientation: While Sehnsucht is often future-oriented and contains utopian elements, Saudade tends to be more anchored in the past or the absent.

The exemplary comparative analysis of Sehnsucht, Viraha, and Saudade opens interesting perspectives for intercultural emotion research and emphasises the importance of culturally specific emotional concepts for understanding human experiences and development processes. Future research could benefit from a deeper analysis of the neural basis and psychological functions of these complex phenomena to broaden our understanding of the diversity of human emotional experiences.

2.3 Sehnsucht in the Life Course

Confrontation with the themes of Sehnsucht does not occur similarly at all ages. Only with

the development of the ability to think counterfactually can people develop the feeling of Sehnsucht. Individuals must be able to imagine that reality could be different from what it currently is and differentiate between various possibilities—what happened, what almost happened, what should have happened, and what could have happened.

According to Baltes (2008), the function of Sehnsucht changes over the course of life. At a young age, it serves as a guide for personal development. Later in life, when the unattainability of some goals becomes clearer, Sehnsucht becomes more important as a coping strategy. It helps us to deal with loss, unfulfilled desires, and the finite nature of life:

In coping with these developmental tasks, I expect Sehnsucht to become relevant whenever people struggle to achieve certain developmental goals and have to experience imperfections and incompleteness in the process, as well as whenever they plan, organise and retrospectively reflect on their lives as a whole. (Baltes, 2008, p. 82)

Various research studies describe how Sehnsucht manifests at different ages and what functions it fulfils.

2.3.1 Young Adults

At this stage of life, Sehnsucht is often focused on topics such as education, work, social affiliation, self-confidence, identity, and professional development. The future still seems open, and the challenges lie primarily in choosing the right development paths. In this phase of life, Sehnsucht serves as an orientation aid for development and helps to find an identity (Baltes, 2008; Felchner, 2022).

2.3.2 Middle Adulthood

Here, topics such as partnership, family, and the current job increasingly become central to Sehnsucht. The experience that not all life goals are achievable means that Sehnsucht increasingly functions as a coping strategy for unfulfilled desires. Dealing with loss and accepting one's own imperfections become more important (Baltes, 2008; Scheibe & Freund, 2008).

2.3.3 Older and Advanced Age

In this phase of life, Sehnsucht is more focused on topics such as health, family, generational dynamics, death, and dying. The experience of boundaries, loss, and reflection on one's own life characterise Sehnsucht in this phase of life. Sehnsucht can also relate to social and political issues, which is interpreted as an expression of generativity in old age (Baltes, 2008; Scheibe & Freund, 2008).

Existing research (especially Baltes, 2008; Scheibe & Freund, 2008) thus underlines that Sehnsucht is a complex phenomenon not limited to one age group. Over the course of life, the content of Sehnsucht changes, while the underlying structure and function remain the same.

2.4 Sehnsucht and Attachment

Research (Strauß, 2012a; Tröger, 2021) emphasises the strong connection between attachment, relationship(s), and Sehnsucht. Socio-psychological research considers attachment a central human need. This need for closeness and security is particularly evident in interpersonal relationships.

Strauß (2012b) stresses that unfulfilled attachment needs can give rise to a Sehnsucht for attachment. When people experience that their needs for closeness, security, and reliability in relationships are not sufficiently fulfilled, this can lead to a feeling of lack and Sehnsucht.

Sehnsucht is particularly common in romantic relationships (Strauß, 2012b; Bühler-Ilieva, 2004; Hantel-Quittmann, 2011; Holzberg, 2023; Schlenker, 2022). In romantic relationships, conflicts and unfulfilled expectations can lead to feelings of Sehnsucht. The desire for an ideal partnership, for merging, and unconditional love is a frequent theme of Sehnsucht. Sehnsucht for attachment seems to be influenced by inner working models of attachment, which are based on early attachment experiences (Strauß, 2012a, b). These models shape expectations of relationships and influence how people allow closeness and regulate Sehnsucht for attachment. On the one hand, people long for closeness and security; on

the other hand, they fear dependency and vulnerability in relationships. This ambivalence can lead to people feeling torn between the desire for attachment and the need for autonomy (Strauß, 2012a, b).

2.5 Sehnsucht as a Catalyst for Further Development, Well-Being, and Motivation

Sehnsucht can act as a catalyst for further development, well-being, motivation, and goal achievement, as Sehnsucht not only manifests as passive suffering from unfulfilled desires, but research also demonstrates its development potential by showing how Sehnsucht can act as a driving force for positive change and personal growth (e.g. Baltes, 2008).

2.5.1 Sehnsucht as a Compass and Source of Inspiration

Direction-Giving Function

Sehnsucht directs the focus to what is really important for an individual and can, therefore, serve as a signpost or compass for shaping life and finding one's identity. Especially at a young age, when the future still seems open, Sehnsucht plays an important role in the development of goals and motivation (Felchner, 2022).

Discovering Resources and Potential

Dealing with Sehnsucht, whether through reflection or artistic expression, can help to (re)discover one's resources and talents and mobilise the power to change. Baltes (2008), for example, underlines that Sehnsucht can be seen as a potentially creative force that can motivate people to think beyond the status quo and look for new, innovative solutions.

Dealing with Imperfection

Sehnsucht is closely linked to the feeling of imperfection in life and the unrealisable nature of all desires (Tröger, 2021). Recognising one's imperfection and striving for an ideal state are central elements of human existence. Dealing

with this area of tension can be a driving force that motivates individuals to search for new solutions and possibilities (Scheibe & Freund, 2008). Sehnsucht acts as a motor to analyse the discrepancy between the desired ideal and lived reality and to explore ways to realise this Sehnsucht. However, it can also lead individuals to resign themselves, withdraw from reality, and indulge in unrealisable dreams.

2.5.2 Ambivalence of Sehnsucht

Between Inspiration and Excessive Demands

Control as a Key Factor

An excess of Sehnsucht, especially if it is experienced as uncontrollable, can have negative effects on well-being and lead to melancholy, dissatisfaction, feelings of loss, and despair. Strauß (2012) stresses the importance of emotional and cognitive control in dealing with Sehnsucht, as conscious acts of control can contribute to a positive attitude towards life, while weak control over one's Sehnsucht tends to evoke negative feelings. The experience of control over one's desires is crucial for well-being. People who experience their Sehnsucht as controllable report a higher subjective sense of well-being. This can be achieved through emotional and cognitive strategies that help people to reflect on their desires, evaluate them, and, if necessary, transform them into realistic goals (Baltes, 2008; Scheibe et al. 2007a, b).

2.5.3 Sehnsucht as a Motor for a Successful Life

Active Shaping

People who can reflect on and regulate their Sehnsucht benefit from the positive aspects without being overwhelmed by the negative implications. They use Sehnsucht as a source of inspiration for personal growth and for actively shaping their lives. Sehnsucht is often associated with the desire for something unattainable. Schwegengräber (2022) and Strauß (2012) high-

light the importance of dealing constructively with this unattainability. Instead of losing oneself in unrealisable Sehnsucht, it can be helpful to use Sehnsucht as an incentive for personal development. Scheibe and Freund (2008) also show that Sehnsucht is an essential part of human existence. Instead of trying to suppress Sehnsucht, it can be liberating to accept this feeling and engage with the emotions associated with it.

Dealing with Sehnsucht can unleash creative potential. In art, literature, and music, Sehnsucht often serves as a source of inspiration. Schiltz (2013), for example, describes how kitsch, often interpreted as an expression of Sehnsucht for an idealised past, can have a positive function in the context of art therapy. The authentic expression of this Sehnsucht in artistic form can pave the way for a deeper confrontation with traumatic experiences and unleash creativity. Baltes (2008) also mentions the importance of Sehnsucht for artistic innovation and excellence, highlighting that Sehnsucht serves as a driving force for creativity, particularly when coping with life changes. Jellenko-Dickert and Dickert (2014) establish a connection between the Sehnsucht for simplicity and creativity. They argue that the complexity of modern life, characterised by mistrust and control, hinders creativity and constructive cooperation. In this respect, the Sehnsucht for simplicity can be understood as an expression of the need for a space for inspiration and self-development.

Transformation of Sehnsucht into Goals

Sehnsucht can support the development and pursuit of specific goals if certain conditions are met, such as a high degree of confidence, the conviction that one can influence the situation, trust in one's ability to act, and specific belief systems.

Sehnsucht has a reflective function in that it makes people aware of what is missing in their lives. This diffuse feeling encourages people to explore their own needs and desires and to understand what is really important. As a result, Sehnsucht becomes a way of determining one's position and a signpost (Felchner, 2022).

Sehnsucht for an ideal state also inspires the development of goals by initiating an idea of what life could look like if the Sehnsucht were fulfilled. This allows people to identify and formulate concrete goals that bring them closer to this ideal (Teischel, 2014; Tröger, 2021).

In such cases, Sehnsucht acts as a strong source of motivation. The desire to fulfil aspirations gives people the energy and drive to take action and pursue their goals (Baltes, 2008; Scheibe et al. 2007a, b; Tröger, 2021).

Coping with Loss

Research emphasises the importance of Sehnsucht as a coping mechanism for losses and unfulfilled desires. Sehnsucht is described as a way of dealing with the “chronic incompleteness of human beings” and the “unattainability of optimal states” (Baltes, 2008, p. 78). By escaping into Sehnsucht for a lost person, a past time, or an unfulfilled dream, individuals can temporarily forget the painful reality and find emotional relief.

This function of Sehnsucht is particularly evident in old age when the experience of loss and unattainability increases. In these phases of life, Sehnsucht can help to act as an “imagined fulfilment of positive utopias” (Baltes, 2008, p. 79) and thus find comfort and meaning.

Coping with loss through Sehnsucht often arises from the loss of a loved one, a place, or a dream. In such cases, transforming the Sehnsucht into goals can help to deal with the loss and find new ways to achieve meaning and fulfilment in life (Baltes, 2008).

2.5.4 Sehnsucht and Sucht (Addiction)

Sehnsucht is also repeatedly associated with Sucht (addiction) (Teischel, 2014; Schlenker, 2022; Baumann & Lenhard, 2023). Teischel (2014), for example, places Sehnsucht in the context of “searching, questioning, and hoping” (Teischel, 2014, p. 1) and links it

with the willingness to keep ourselves awake and open, to remain attentive and interested, to want to overcome boundaries, and to patiently endure the

inevitable, currently after the unchangeable. In the hope of a different and, if possible, beautiful life that is yet to come, the achievement of which we can only mention and prepare for. (2014, p. 1)

He distinguishes addiction from this, which he describes as something that has no time to wait, no patience and no hope that circumstances can be changed or a solution can be initiated (2014, p. 1).

Furthermore, Teischel assumes that “Sucht, as an addiction, always also represents a crisis of meaning”, “forms in an existential vacuum of alienation, in the search for the true self” (2014, p. 53) and as a “loss of previously perceived health” (2014, p. 38). In this context, he defines illness as a desperate Sehnsucht (2014, p. 53) and health as a “Sehnsucht for security within oneself” (2014, p. 225). For him, this perspective is also closely linked to the question of meaning when he explains “For an addict, health means being able to feel—again or for the first time—empathically and lovingly connected to oneself and other individuals and to live out of the strength to fulfil one’s own potentials in a meaningful way” (2014, p. 225).

Sucht is only the other, painful side of Sehnsucht, its desperate antithesis, which in the lack of health and security still heralds the freedom to be able to creatively shape one’s own self. (Teischel, 2014, p. 334)

Nevertheless, Sehnsucht can also be a driving force for positive development. Both US and German participants with strong Sehnsucht report that it gives their lives direction and encourages them to set goals to move towards their ideals:

Sehnsucht fulfils an important task: it helps people to deal with their imperfect lives, while at the same time giving them direction and setting goals. (Weber, 2010, n.p.)

3 Methodology

The research design, data collection, and analysis as well as the ethical considerations and possible limitations of the study are explained below.

3.1 Research Design

This chapter focuses on a case study, which was chosen as a particularly suitable research strategy for investigating the respondent's experiences in the context of her existential crisis. Case studies are characterised by a comprehensive and detailed analysis of a specific research unit. In contrast to quantitative methods, which are based on statistical models and large samples, case studies are dedicated to a few examples of a phenomenon and analyse them in depth. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual case, systematically taking into account the specific context of their situation and systematically analysing it with regard to the *topos of Sehnsucht*.

3.2 Sample

This case study presents the case of a 60-year-old German woman—Flora (name changed)—who had experienced a divorce a few years earlier after a long-term relationship, which had plunged her into a deep existential and traumatising crisis. She was confronted with great loneliness and suffered from what she described as a “deep, never-ending sadness”.

In 2018, the author ran an adult education programme that focused on dealing constructively with life crises. The aim of this weekend event was to reflect on and ideally transform personal experiences of crisis using artistic methods, among other things. Three men and five women took part in the seminar, each of whom was able to choose a suitable artistic method, such as bodywork, working with clay, poetic approaches, sculpting with stone, collages, or painting. One person opted for a picture-text collage on the subject of *Sehnsucht*. Flora, the subject of this case study, took part in the educational programme. After attending the seminar, Flora agreed to take part in an interview a few weeks later, which was conducted using a structured guide. The data was collected during an interview lasting several hours.

3.3 Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2011; Eatough, & Smith, 2017; Eatough, & Shaw, 2019; Smith et al. (1999, 2022) was chosen as a suitable approach to analyse the present case study, as this approach focuses on how individuals understand their personal and social worlds. The approach is phenomenological because it aims to examine the lived experience of the participants and interpretative because it recognises that this examination is influenced by the perspective of the researcher. This creates a double hermeneutic.

IPA seemed particularly appropriate for this study as it offered a nuanced understanding of Flora's experiences following her divorce, a time characterised by deep emotional turmoil and existential crisis for her. By focusing on the detailed personal account of a single case, IPA enabled an in-depth exploration of Flora's subjective experience, the meanings she attributed to her emotions and in particular her *Sehnsucht*, and how she navigated her feelings of loneliness and sadness and transformed them through this reflection.

The data analysis procedure followed IPA standards in seven steps:

1. **Reading and re-reading**
2. **Initial notes**
3. **Development of emergent themes**
4. **Looking for connections between emerging themes**
5. **Deepening the analysis of the single case**
6. **Reflection and synthesis**
7. **Writing**

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The respondent volunteered to participate in the interview. She was fully informed about the purpose of the interview and the intended publication of the results and gave her consent. The interviewee was guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.

3.5 Limitations

This case study has several limitations. The small number of participants (only one person) limits generalisability. It's difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions from a single case study for a wider population.

Voluntary participation results in potential self-selection bias. Volunteers may differ from the general population, limiting transferability. The data is based on subjective reports and personal experiences, susceptible to bias, including memory and socially desirable responses.

Without a control group, isolating the specific effects of the educational provision from other factors is challenging. It's unclear if changes are due to the intervention or other factors. The study focuses on short-term results without analysing long-term effects. Long-term studies are needed to determine if positive effects are sustainable.

Different artistic methods chosen by the subject may complicate isolating and evaluating the specific effects. Individual differences (age, gender, personal background) could affect comparability and perception of the intervention.

The study is mainly qualitative and subjective. Adding objective measures like physiological data or standardised tests could increase validity and reliability. Cultural and social backgrounds could influence responses, making results less transferable to other contexts.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting results and planning future research to improve validity and applicability.

4 Case Study: The Importance of Sehnsucht for a Constructive, Transformative Approach to Life Crises

This case study presents the case of a 60-year-old German woman—Flora—who had experienced a divorce a few years earlier after a long-term relationship, which had plunged her into a deep existential and traumatising crisis. She was confronted

with great loneliness and suffered from what she described as a deep—never-ending—sadness.

Figure 6.4 shows Flora's collage “Sehnsucht is a signpost”. The individual dimensions are highlighted below and linked to her reflections (a translated version can be found in the Appendix).

Flora decided on a picture-text collage on the subject of Sehnsucht:

It is important for me to keep reminding myself that although I feel great loneliness and a sadness that feels as vast and finite as the universe, I AM not these emotions. I FEEL them, in all their heaviness, but they do not make up the whole of me. So that I can regain my strength, not lose my confidence, not give up hope that this phase of my life will also end one day, I would like to look at the topic of Sehnsucht.¹

Flora's reflection on her feelings of loneliness and sadness shows a deep understanding of the nature of her emotions and at the same time a conscious separation between her experience and her identity. This differentiation is a crucial step in emotional coping and self-care. By recognising that she feels her emotions but is not defined by them, Flora maintains a certain distance that allows her to critically examine and process these feelings without being overwhelmed by them. This attitude can be seen as a form of emotional resilience or antifragility (Taleb, 2013), which helps her to maintain her ability to act and her confidence despite severe emotional stress. Flora's ability to accept her feelings in their ‘full gravity’ indicates a strong emotional intelligence and demonstrates the importance of accepting and integrating negative emotions rather than repressing them or allowing them to define her.

Flora decided to limit her collage to a single issue of a well-known German women's magazine and to use only images and text excerpts from this issue:

At this stage of my life, I lack abundance, I mainly see boundaries and limitations. Through this conscious self-restriction in this artistic action, which I set—and not someone else—I play with these limitations and use them as a resource, transform-

¹The original statements were translated from German by the author.



Fig. 6.4 Flora's collage "Sehnsucht ist ein Wegweiser". (original, translated version in the Appendix)

ing limitation into a spectrum of possibilities. This idea energises me.

Flora found the images and text excerpts that suited her relatively quickly. She quickly discarded her original idea of creating a zine from them in favour of the idea of turning them into a poster:

I quickly abandoned my original idea of a zine.² A zine is well suited to self-reflective processes or narratives, but I was Sehnsucht—in the truest sense of the word—for a larger space and a view of the big, whole picture, so I spontaneously changed my mind. I also really wanted to make the most of the power of the colour images. I then realised at the end of the process that this was a very decisive step that significantly changed my perspective.

Flora's conscious decision to limit herself in her artistic work is a powerful act of self-determination and creativity. By setting her own boundaries, she takes control of her creative process and transforms potential limitations into sources of inspiration and possibility. This approach shows how limitations, which are often perceived as negative, can be transformed into productive and energising experiences through a conscious and creative perspective. Flora's ability to use these limitations as resources demonstrate her creative resilience and her ability to turn challenges into opportunities. This is an example of how self-limitation can serve as a catalyst for innovation and personal growth rather than an obstacle. Her experience shows that by consciously playing with boundaries, new paths and perspectives can be opened that were previously invisible.

In her artistic reflection process, many dimensions of the concept of Sehnsucht are revealed:

²The term “zine” is short for “magazine” or “fanzine” and has its roots in the science fiction fan culture of the 1930s (Duncombe, 1997). Today, zines encompass a wide range of topics, including art, music, politics, personal experiences, and more. A zine usually has a do-it-yourself character. Zines provide a platform for marginalised voices and alternative perspectives that are often overlooked in the mainstream media. They are an important medium for cultural and social expression and promote community and the sharing of ideas within subcultures (Piepmeier, 2009; Triggs, 2010; Spencer, 2005).

Of course, Sehnsucht is always associated with a lack, but the terms “backwards”, “forwards” and “sideways” in the top right-hand corner show me that I have a choice: To understand Sehnsucht in the sense of a wistful, perhaps bitter look backwards, to mourn what I have lost, perhaps even to long for it back; to orientate myself sideways, perhaps with the thought that Sehnsucht is all I have left, a positive change, a “forwards”, to new shores, to a new happiness is perhaps not even conceivable, in which case Sehnsucht would have more of a compensatory meaning: to dream myself out of my current and imperfect world. Or—and this is the spirit of this collage—to use what actually manifests itself strongly for me in it, this Sehnsucht as a catalyst in the sense of this “forward”, a departure, and very specifically as a signpost in which the Sehnsucht indicates the direction in which I can move if I want to.

Flora's reflection on the different directions that Sehnsucht can take shows her ability to interpret and utilise this complex emotion in different ways. She recognises that Sehnsucht can be both backward-looking and melancholic, as well as sideways, corresponding to an escape from current reality. Most significant, however, is her decision to use Sehnsucht as a forward-looking, positive force that can serve as a source of strength as well as a catalyst for change and personal growth. This view is supported by the terms used in her collage and demonstrates Flora's ability to realise Sehnsucht as a dynamic and directional force. Through this interpretation, she gives Sehnsucht a transformative meaning that helps her to actively work towards new goals, a changed life situation and new experiences of happiness.

This idea is reinforced by the statement below: “Sehnsucht drives us to keep searching, to set off on a new journey. Sehnsucht keeps us alive”. Flora's decision to use Sehnsucht as a positive force is in line with the concept of Sehnsucht as a driver of resilience and adaptation in times of crisis.

I experienced the end of my marriage and the subsequent divorce as a very existential, traumatic experience. This crisis—as I would describe it—completely cut me off from my resources and talents. This term “me+” reminded me that I am not and never have been alone. That there are people, systems and structures that support me – even through this crisis, within me and in relation to my

environment. This process reminds me of my great creative potential, revitalises me, confronts me with my strength and my confidence. I would not have expected that. When I decided on Sehnsucht as a potential theme for my artistic exploration, I was initially afraid that I might be overcome by nostalgic feelings and melancholy, but that didn't happen at all during the process itself, I focussed much more on tomorrow, the positive, happier tomorrow.

Flora's experience of divorce as a traumatic event that cut her off from her resources and talents illustrates the profound impact of personal crises. However, the term "me+" reminds her that she is not alone and is surrounded by supportive people and structures. This realisation revitalises her creative potential and confronts her with her inner strength and confidence, as well as her awareness of existing stable social networks and relationships. Flora's decision to deal with Sehnsucht artistically leads to a positive reorientation, focusing on a happier future instead of being overwhelmed by nostalgic feelings.

This view is supported by additional text elements that encourage movement and change, as well as the deconstruction and reconstruction of negative experiences and associated emotions, such as "Just don't stand still!" and "I'm not failing, I'm learning". These phrases convey a positive attitude towards failure and encourage people to learn from their mistakes and continue to develop, but also to transform negative experiences, thoughts, and experiences.

During this weekend, in this intense confrontation with the *topos* of Sehnsucht, I realised that I don't have to give up hope for a different, better, happier life, that I shouldn't give up, or that I shouldn't give up at all, because 'as a woman of a certain age' I know better—I'm not 'clueless'.

One metaphor that came to mind when I was working on the collage was the motif of the heroine's journey. The heroine who follows her Sehnsucht, who shows her the right path, who knows that she cannot (and will not) stand still, who knows that she actually has all the resources at her disposal. This reminded me that even in this dark phase of my life, I can use Sehnsucht as a complex positive force that inspires me to go on, to develop and to insist on my right to fulfil my dreams 'of other [happy, fulfilled] times, regardless of the obstacles I encounter and have to overcome. In doing so, I

have to accept failure and mistakes and reframe them as learning opportunities.

Flora's intensive examination of the topic of Sehnsucht leads to the realisation that she must not give up hope for a better and happier life. Her reflection as a woman "of a certain age" reveals a deeper wisdom and a better understanding of her own possibilities and resources. This insight encourages her to use her Sehnsucht as a positive force that inspires and motivates her to continue striving for happiness and fulfilment. Flora's realisation underlines her resilience and her ability to actively use her life experience and wisdom to positively shape her future.

The decisive factor for me was therefore the focus on setting out from the endurance of suffering, to put an end to the feeling of being focused on bare survival and endurance and to help this Sehnsucht to be realised by taking further steps, taking action, moving on, remaining aware that I want something and helping me to understand the Sehnsucht, not just to put it into words, but to make it a reality. And: to get me into action.

This is also symbolised by the depictions of the women in the collage. Their self-confident posture, upright gait, and colourful dresses are metaphors for symbols of strength, indicators of change, and self-confidence. For me, they convey the impression of *joie de vivre*, elegance, and determination, but also fearlessness. They give me hope and strength to (re)discover this pride and vigour in myself.

Flora's determination to set out and pursue her Sehnsucht shows her resolve to step out of a purely receptive and passive attitude of tolerating toxic emotions and thoughts, survival, and endurance, and proactively take steps to achieve her goals. This perspective highlights her willingness to use her Sehnsucht as a driving force that motivates her and moves her into action. Flora's ability to not only put her aspirations into words, but also into action, demonstrates her resilience and commitment to actively pursuing her dreams and goals. This proactive attitude towards her desire and action reveals her inner strength and her ability to use her emotions constructively to bring

THE TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS OF SEHNSUCHT IN FLORA

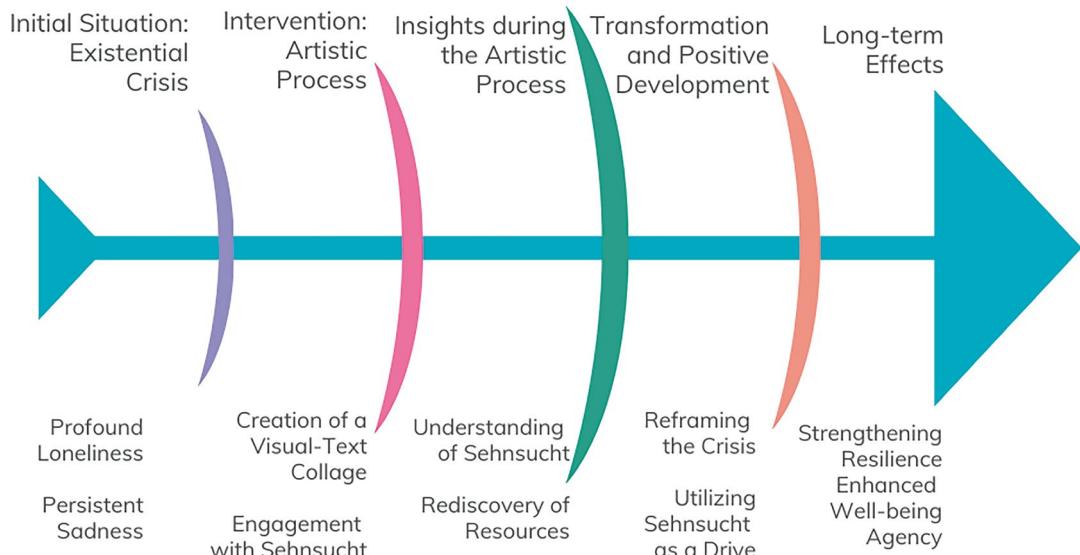


Fig. 6.5 The transformative process of Sehnsucht in Flora

about positive change in her life. Flora's positive reorientation and her concept of age as a resource illustrate how she successfully navigates this crisis and uses her Sehnsucht as a positive force to promote her well-being and further her life (Fig. 6.5).

5 Discussion

Theoretical findings on Sehnsucht as a coping mechanism and its functions are reflected in Flora's case study. After a traumatic experience, Flora uses Sehnsucht to transform her life circumstances (Vanderheiden, 2020, 2021; Vanderheiden & Mayer, 2020, 2023).

5.1 Sehnsucht as a Coping Mechanism

Research emphasises Sehnsucht as a coping mechanism for losses and unfulfilled desires. Sehnsucht helps deal with the “chronic incom-

pleteness of human beings” and the “unattainability of optimal states” (Baltes, 2008). Flora's divorce and subsequent crisis exemplify this perspective. She transforms toxic experiences, using Sehnsucht to create agency and strengthen confidence.

Scheibe et al. (2007) stress Sehnsucht in old age can also drive personal growth and resilience. Flora's constructive use of Sehnsucht reflects this, showing how older adults can use life experiences and inner resources to develop new perspectives and strengthen well-being.

5.2 Reflection and Reorientation

Flora's artistic exploration and image-text collage illustrate reflection and reorientation. She consciously reflects on and accepts her feelings of loneliness and sadness without letting them define her, demonstrating emotional intelligence and the importance of integrating negative emotions.

By setting her own boundaries in her artistic work, Flora transforms limitations into sources of

inspiration and possibility, showing self-determination and creativity.

5.3 Sehnsucht as a Catalyst for Personal Growth

Sehnsucht acts as a source of motivation, giving energy and drive to set and pursue goals. Flora's Sehnsucht serves as a leitmotif for her personal journey, helping her overcome crises and reassess her resources, potential, and identity. This aligns with Joseph Campbell's Monomyth Theory (1990). Flora's reflection on Sehnsucht's facets shows her ability to use this complex phenomenon emotionally and cognitively. She uses Sehnsucht as a forward-looking, positive force for change and growth.

5.4 Acceptance and Integration

Scheibe and Freund (2008) emphasise accepting Sehnsucht can be liberating. Flora's artistic engagement with Sehnsucht leads to positive reorientation, focusing on a happier future rather than nostalgic feelings, strengthening resilience and creativity.

5.5 Creative Potential of Sehnsucht

Flora's case illustrates Sehnsucht's creative potential. In art, literature, and music, Sehnsucht serves as inspiration. Schiltz (2013) notes kitsch, expressing Sehnsucht for an idealised past, can positively function in art therapy, fostering deeper confrontation with trauma and creativity. Baltes (2008) highlights Sehnsucht as a driving force for creativity, especially during life changes.

5.6 Capacity for Control and Well-Being

Excess Sehnsucht, especially if uncontrollable, can negatively affect well-being. Strauß (2012) emphasises cognitive control in dealing with

Sehnsucht, as conscious control contributes to a positive life attitude, while weak control evokes negative feelings. Control over Sehnsucht enhances well-being through cognitive strategies to reflect on, evaluate, and transform desires into realistic goals (Baltes, 2008; Scheibe et al., 2007a, b).

Flora's artistic exploration shows how creative processes regain emotional control. Reflecting on Sehnsucht and depicting it in an image-text collage transforms it into a constructive force. Flora's use of Sehnsucht aligns with resilience and adaptation concepts, demonstrating cognitive control and contributing to improved subjective well-being.

6 Conclusion

The multidisciplinary approach of the chapter highlights different dimensions of Sehnsucht and integrates psychological, cultural, and neuroscientific perspectives. Psychologically, Sehnsucht connects emotions and cognition by linking deep emotional experiences with complex cognitive processes. This integration is evident in how individuals reflect on their past, present, and future and fill their life path with rich, often unattainable idealised visions (Baltes, 2008).

Culturally, Sehnsucht is not only a German phenomenon but also resonates in other cultural contexts, albeit in unique forms. For example, the Indian concept of Viraha and the Portuguese concept of Saudade share similar emotional structures of Sehnsucht and absence but are contextualised differently in their respective cultural frameworks (Hillgardner, 2014; Silva, 2012). These cultural differences emphasise the universal human experience of Sehnsucht while highlighting the specificities shaped by cultural narratives and values.

Neuroscientifically, although specific research on Sehnsucht is limited, existing studies suggest that this emotion involves multiple brain regions associated with both emotional and cognitive processing. The involvement of the limbic system, prefrontal cortex, and reward pathways indicates that Sehnsucht is deeply rooted in the complex networks of the brain and is likely to

influence both affective and cognitive areas (LeDoux, 2007; Miller & Cohen, 2001).

Sehnsucht also plays a crucial role in the life course, changing in its manifestations and functions over the course of life. In adolescence, it serves as a compass that guides aspirations and the search for identity. In middle adulthood, it helps to deal with unfulfilled desires and to accept the imperfections of life. In later adulthood, Sehnsucht becomes a mechanism that helps to reflect on one's entire life and assists in coping with past losses while promoting resilience and continued personal growth (Scheibe et al., 2007a, b).

Flora's case study illustrates how Sehnsucht can act as a transformative force. Through artistic expression and reflective practice, Flora navigated her post-divorce crisis by using Sehnsucht as a catalyst for personal renewal and resilience. Her experience exemplifies how engaging with Sehnsucht can uncover hidden resources and inspire positive change, even amid profound emotional turmoil.

Overall, this shows that Sehnsucht is not just a passive state of desire but a dynamic and motivating force. It drives individuals to search for deeper meanings of experiences, to self-reflect, and to pursue personal development, despite the inherent tensions and paradoxes it contains. Future research should continue to investigate the neural underpinnings and cultural manifestations of Sehnsucht to deepen our understanding of this complex emotion and its impact on human well-being and development.

7 Future Research Needs

Based on the chapter content, several future research projects are suggested. The neuroscientific basis of Sehnsucht requires further exploration. Future studies could identify the brain regions and neural circuits activated during

Sehnsucht, providing insights into related phenomena like nostalgia, craving, and emotional regulation. Key areas include brain regions and networks involved in Sehnsucht, the roles of dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and cortisol, and the effects on brain structure and function, particularly neuronal plasticity.

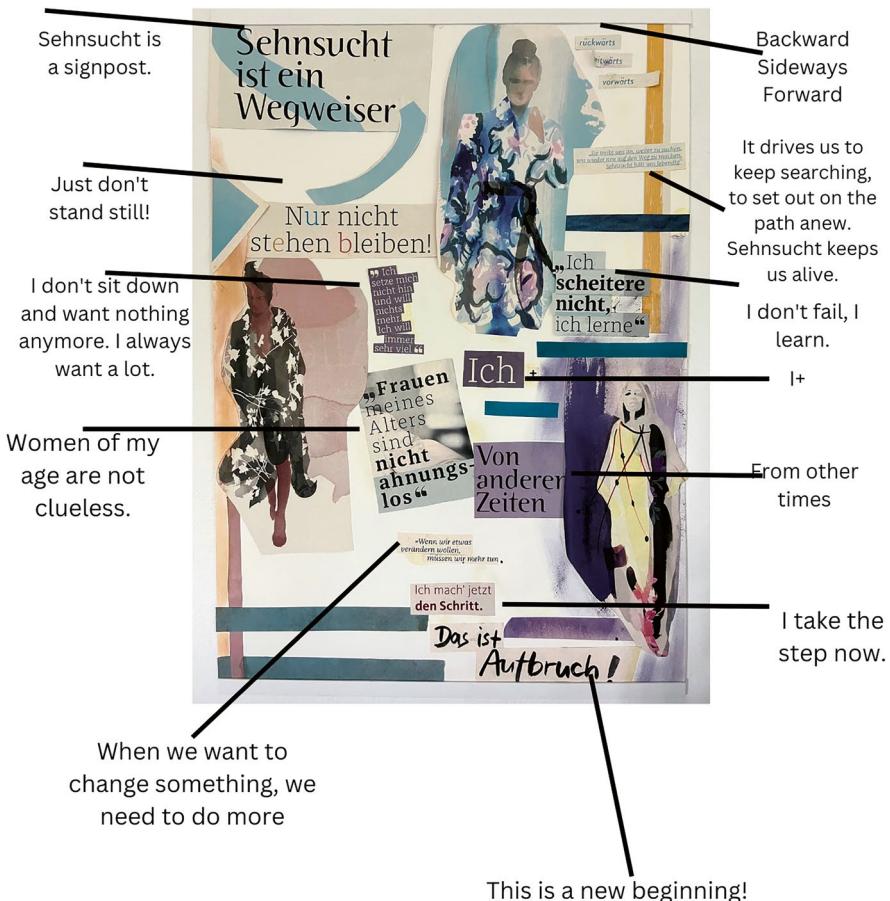
The cultural aspects of Sehnsucht offer a rich field of research. Comparative studies across cultures could identify universal and specific elements. Research questions include: How does Sehnsucht manifest in different cultural contexts? Which cultural narratives and practices influence its experience and expression? Are there cultural differences in Sehnsucht's function and meaning across the lifespan?

Research on gender differences in Sehnsucht could yield valuable insights. Questions include: Are there differences in Sehnsucht's intensity and frequency between men and women? How do gender stereotypes influence Sehnsucht? What are the differential effects of Sehnsucht on well-being and personal development for men and women?

Practical applications of Sehnsucht research could lead to interventions and therapeutic approaches. Studies could investigate using Sehnsucht to promote positive change and growth. Questions include: What interventions harness positive aspects of Sehnsucht and minimise negative impacts? How can artistic expression reflect and transform Sehnsucht in therapy and education? Which techniques effectively address Sehnsucht in practice? Addressing these questions could enhance theoretical understanding and develop practical applications to support individuals in constructively utilising Sehnsucht to improve their well-being.

This condensed version maintains the academic tone and core information, reducing the length while retaining the essential details for future research projects.

Appendix



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Saudade: Empirical Analysis of a Portuguese Concept

7

Félix Neto and Etienne Mullet

Abbreviations

- ESS Experience of Saudade Scale
PSS Porto Saudade Scale

1 Introduction

The term *saudade* is a lusophone word that encompasses a wide range of psychological reactions to situations involving separation from loved ones and/or habitual places. This word seems to defy translation. In 2004, Today Translations considered the term *saudade* to be the seventh most difficult word in the world to translate. It is generally translated into English as longing, yearning, missing, homesickness, and nostalgia (Silva, 2012) (see Vanderheiden on Sehnsucht), but none of these terms seem to convey the exact meaning of *saudade* as the Lusophones generally understand it. There is no consensus on the etymology of the word *saudade*. However, most authors suggest that it derives from the Latin *solitare*, meaning solitude, through

intermediate forms such as *soidade* and *suidade* (Machado, 1977; Vasconcelos, 1996).

Nowadays, the concept of *saudade* is very present in Portuguese-speaking countries. This is one of the most evoked emotions among Lusophones (Farrell, 2006). According to Neto and Mullet (2023), around forty percent of participants in various Portuguese samples (teenagers, university students, and people working abroad) said they had experienced *saudade* often or very often. In fact, it is one of the terms most commonly used by the general public to express emotion. In Brazil, *Saudade Day* (O Dia da *Saudade*) is celebrated annually on January 30th.

Saudade has been a source of inspiration for thought and literature from medieval times to the present day (Botelho, 1990; Fanha & Letria, 2002; Lourenço, 1978; Noronha, 2007; Rodrigues, 1967; Teixeira, 2006; Vasconcelos, 1996). The term emerged in the fourteenth century in a song (*trova*) from Prince Pedro of Portugal commemorating his love for Dona Inês de Castro, his official mistress (Castro, 1980). According to Dom Duarte, in the fifteenth century, “*saudade* itself is the sense that the heart feels when it is broken by the presence of some person or persons that it loves very much [suydade propriamente he sentido que o coração filha por se achar partido da presença dalguma pessoa ou pessoas que muyto per afeição ama]” (Botelho, 1990, p. 36). For this author, it neither simple sadness, nor just grief, nor even annoyance or disgust.

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A century later, Duarte Nunes Leão defined saudade as “remembrance of something with a desire for it [lembrança de alguma cousa com desejo dela]” (Teixeira, 2006, p. 24). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Francisco Manuel de Melo suggested that “Love and Absence are the parents of saudade [Amor e Ausência são os pais da saudade]” (Vasconcelos, 1996, p. 101). Finally, it was at the beginning of the twentieth century that a philosophical and literary movement called *saudosismo* was created by Teixeira de Pascoaes, in which saudade is defined as “the desire for the thing or creature loved, made painful by its absence. It is desire and pain fused together [o desejo da coisa ou criatura amada, tornado dolorido pela sua ausência. É o Desejo e a dor fundidos]” (Teixeira, 2006, p. 30).

However, empirical research on this topic in the psychological sciences is still rare (Neto & Mullet, 2023). In this chapter we present some empirical research carried out by our team on: (a) autobiographical analyses of saudade (b) its experiential structure, (c) its demographic and psychological correlates, and (d) the psychological effects, positive or negative, of saudade induction.

2 Autobiographical Analyses of Saudade

Neto (2021, p. 2) defined saudade as “a bittersweet, usually intense emotional experience that occurs when you remember a loved one from whom you are separated, an important place from which you are estranged, or a period that was happy and is now over.” Saudade appears to be a complex and multifaceted construct that covers emotions (e.g., sadness, loneliness), cognitions (e.g., memories, thinking), behaviors (e.g., crying, a new meeting), and motivations (e.g., wanting to go back in time, wanting to be close) (Neto & Mullet, 2014). In addition, saudade involves negative aspects (e.g., melancholy, sensation of loss) as well as positive aspects (e.g., joy, liking) (Neto & Mullet, 2022a). It can, therefore, be catalogued as what Braniecka et al. (2014) called a mixed emotion.

Autobiographical accounts of, for example, episodes of anger (Baumeister et al., 1990), moments of inspiration (Trash & Elliot, 2003) or nostalgia (Holak & Havelena, 1992; Wildschut et al., 2006) proved to be rich in psychological elements that would be difficult to grasp otherwise. Autobiographical accounts of nostalgia must therefore also represent relevant sources of information that are likely to be unique and significant. In this respect, we have tried to find out under what circumstances people experience saudade, the feelings associated with this experience and the coping strategies they generally use when they experience saudade (Neto & Mullet, 2022a).

This experience tends to be triggered mainly in situations of spatial separation (e.g., physical distance) or spatio-temporal separation (e.g., death) from persons (or animals) with whom there has previously been intimate emotional contact for a long time (e.g., a romantic partner). For example, a 20-year-old woman declared: “I feel saudade for my boyfriend mainly when he goes on vacation because he is from Madeira Island and I am from Porto. And that’s when I feel saudade for him the most, because it’s the time of year when I’m without him for the longest time, and even though cell phones and internet are never the same. Nothing replaces face-to-face contact.” The reasons for separation are studies and work, displacement of the person (or the object of longing), and death. However, it can happen that the object of saudade is a particularly treasured place that you’ve been to many times, a particularly pleasant event that won’t be repeated, or even a whole period of your life (a carefree childhood). For example, a 19-year-old woman stated: “I feel saudade for the old days, without responsibilities. Christmas, mainly. That Christmas when I had the whole family around the table. A banquet decorating the kitchen and the whole decorated space. Each one with his own candle, a full plate and a smile on his face. The smell of turkey, old rag and lit candle. The joy, the laughter and the old and typical stories of our past blunders. Table and heart full. It’s a memory that I love a lot. That makes me feel saudade for an easier time, without responsibilities.”

A whole range of feelings appears associated with saudade: depression, longing for the past,

anxiety, positive affect, negative affect, and psychosomatic symptoms. For example, an 18-year-old woman declared: “I feel some anguish, sometimes happiness because when we feel saudade for someone or someplace it is because that person or situation was important for us. It is almost like a bipolar feeling: joy and happiness and on the other hand sadness/pity for not being able to go back.”

It should be noted that three of these categories—depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms—are generally related to mental health problems (Berry et al., 2006; Neto, 2009). All the valences associated with these categories are negative (Neto & Mullet, 2014). On the other hand, two of these categories—positive affect (e.g., joy, happiness and desire to see the person) and negative affect (e.g., desire to cry)—are generally related, directly or inversely, to subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2018).

During the experience of saudade, people tend to dwell on it a lot. Some people maintain this emotion in various ways, most often by getting physically close to objects that can prolong the experience of saudade. Others tend to get rid of the emotion as quickly as possible, for example by moving away from the circumstances that may have triggered the emotion or by changing activities. Still others tend to accept the experience and do nothing special to interfere with it.

3 Implicit Theories of Saudade

Implicit theories about the circumstances that are likely to trigger saudade were examined by Neto and Mullet (2022b), using a realistic scenario technique, e.g. “Cláudia is 19 years old. She lives and works in Porto. Her grandmother, to whom Cláudia is very attached, lives in the village, 450 km away. Cláudia only gets to see her grandmother twice a year, when she returns to the village. Do you think Cláudia will experience saudade when she thinks about her?” Three factors were considered in the scenarios: (a) the object of the saudade (an affectionate grandmother, a close mother, a gruff father, a nurtured

little brother, a close friend, a classmate, and the house cat who had been a childhood companion), (b) the physical distance from this object, and (c) the length of separation between two encounters (e.g., 1 year).

For around a third of the participants in the study, none of the situations presented appeared likely to actually trigger episodes of saudade. For another third, any separation, however long it lasts, is likely to trigger fairly frequent episodes of saudade. These people, however, do not seem to have a very elaborate personal theory. For them, saudade occurs without warning, and no analysis of the conditions of onset has been carried out. For the final third, the identity of the person from whom one is separated plays an important role. Separation from one’s mother is more likely to provoke saudade than separation from a classmate. Even the domestic cat is likely to be the subject of some degree of saudade. These findings are consistent with that reported earlier, according to which a majority of people report episodes of saudade although for some of them, their specific antecedents are not necessarily well understood.

4 The Experiential Structure of Saudade

A major roadblock to research empirically saudade has possibly been the lack of validated measures of its experience. Neto and Mullet (2020a) carried out four studies aimed at creating a measure of saudade called Experience of Saudade Scale (ESS) and derived from previous prototype analyses (Neto & Mullet, 2014). Via exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, a three-factor model of experience saudade was suggested. The first factor—*Missing Close Others*—loaded statements such as “I suffer from being so far away from people I love” and “I would like to come back and see my family.” The second factor—*Lack of Intimacy*—loaded on statements such as “I suffer from lack of affection.” The third factor—*Longing for the Past*—loaded on statements such as “I keep remembering the past.” This three-factor structure was found not

only among university students, but also among adults and adolescents.

The first aspect of the experience of saudade—separation from loved ones—is clearly of an interpersonal nature. It corresponds to the realization that maintaining close relationships with those with whom it would be most natural (e.g., family) is unfortunately, given the circumstances, impossible. These persons live far away; in other words, they are absent. In many cases, it is in fact the life partner who lives far away and is therefore painfully absent, even though it is now possible to communicate visually from a distance. The second aspect of the experience of saudade is clearly of an intrapersonal nature: the lack of intimacy. It corresponds to the feeling that, even if you have many relationships, at work or in the neighborhood, these relationships are certainly not close enough to be considered intimate. As for televised relationships, despite technological advances, these are probably not close enough to be considered truly intimate either. Finally, the third aspect is of an inter-temporal nature: the memory of the past. It corresponds to the feeling that, even if you are surrounded by your loved ones and enjoy a satisfactory level of intimacy with them, the good old days will never return.

The correlations between the factor scores were positive and non-negligible. This means that the three factors were not completely independent. These three factors in fact express three statistically separable but psychologically related aspects of the experience of saudade. Evidence concerning the psychometric properties of the ESS has been subsequently obtained from various studies (Neto, Neto, & Mullet, 2024). ESS showed good psychometric properties on any Portuguese sample of adults.

This scale, initially constructed from Portuguese samples (Neto & Mullet, 2020b; Neto, Neto, & Mullet, 2024), showed good psychometric properties on Brazilian sample of students (Neto, Oliveira, et al., 2024). In addition, measurement of invariance tests showed that ESS can assess this concept for both genders. That is, despite the documented emotional differences between them, men and women conceptualize saudade in a similar way and experience it in the same way.

A measure to evaluate general disposition to saudade was also developed: the Porto Saudade Scale (PSS, Neto, 2021). A sample of item is the following: “How often do you feel saudade in comparison with other people?” CFA showed that, in this case, a one-dimensional model of the PSS accounted for the data, which was consistent with the main findings from the study of implicit theories of saudade. Convergent, discriminant, and external validity of this measure were also evidenced.

5 Demographic Correlates of Saudade

The relationships between demographic factors (gender, age, education, marital status, migration) and saudade have been examined. It was expected that, since women are more relationship-oriented than men (de Ridder, 2000), they should experience more saudade than men, or at least feel more comfortable than men in reporting such experiences. Indeed, female participants, as well as adolescents in general, reported higher levels of saudade than male participants or adults, but the usual demographic variables were poorly associated with experiencing saudade (Neto & Mullet 2022a; Neto & Mullet, 2020b). Although this result is also consistent with Pavot and Diener's (2008) suggestion that women generally experience more negative affect than men, it remains to be seen whether the difference found is due to the experience of saudade itself or the greater ease with which women mention it.

The level of saudade reported by Portuguese migrants residing in Switzerland has been compared with that of Portuguese who always stayed in Portugal (Neto, 2019). Migrants displayed greater saudade than non-migrants. “As migration involves separation from close persons and places, it makes sense that migration might exacerbate this feeling” (Neto, 2019, p. 675). In another study of African migrants from Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique residing in Portugal, migrants who had been abroad longer reported less saudade than recent migrants (Neto, 2023). African migrants whose

immediate neighborhood was mainly composed of people from the same ethnocultural group reported higher levels of saudade than those whose neighborhood was more heterogeneous.

6 Psychological Correlates of Saudade

6.1 Subjective Well-Being

The relationships between saudade and psychological variables such as subjective well-being (positive affect, negative affect, satisfaction with life, satisfaction with love life), self-esteem, loneliness and personality traits were also examined. Subjective well-being includes three components: satisfaction with life, positive affect, and absence of negative affect (Diener et al., 2002). Subjective well-being includes a cognitive judgment of one's satisfaction with life, either as a whole or relatively to specific life domains (Diener, 2000). It is an important indicator of life quality given its positive links with health and social relationships (Diener et al., 2013).

Given the independence of negative and positive affect, one would expect that, despite the fact that negative affect and saudade are related, positive affect (e.g., joy, euphoria) and saudade are not. Finally, since satisfaction with life, a cognitive assessment, is assessed in a necessarily distanced way, and considering that when this type of assessment is used, the negative and positive affect associated with the experience of nostalgia are balanced, one might expect a rather weak association between the experience of saudade and satisfaction with life.

Indeed, negative affect has been evidenced to correlate positively with the experience of saudade in Portuguese adolescents (Neto, 2021; Neto & Mullet, 2020b), students (Neto & Mullet, 2020a) and adults (Neto & Mullet, 2020b). In contrast, positive affect and the experience of saudade has been found not to correlate in Portuguese adolescents (Neto, 2021), students (Neto & Mullet, 2020a) and adults (Neto & Mullet, 2020b). Finally, subjective well-being has been shown to correlate negatively with experi-

enced saudade among Portuguese migrants (Neto, 2019), with the three subscales of the ESS among college students, and with lack of intimacy and longing for the past among adolescents (Neto & Mullet, 2020a). This finding has been replicated in Brazil (Neto, Oliveira, et al., 2024).

Satisfaction with Love Life is a specific subjective wellbeing domain. It has been defined as “a judgmental process in which individuals assess the quality of their love lives on the basis of their own set of criteria” (Neto, 2005, p. 4). It has also been shown to correlate negatively with the three subscales of the ESS (Neto & Mullet, 2020a). This finding has been replicated in Brazil (Neto, Oliveira, et al., 2024).

6.2 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers, of course, to self-evaluation (Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982). In accordance with Orth and Robins (2022, pp. 13–14), a “voluminous body of research suggests that high self-esteem helps individuals adapt to and succeed in a variety of life domains, including having more satisfying relationships, performing better at school and work, enjoying improved mental and physical health, and refraining from antisocial behavior.” Self-esteem has been shown to correlate negatively with two of the subscales of the ESS—lack of intimacy and longing for the past—among Portuguese adults (Neto & Mullet, 2020a) and among Brazilian college students (Neto, Oliveira, et al., 2024).

6.3 Loneliness

Loneliness can be conceptualized as the feeling of a mismatch between the social relationships a person would like to have and those he or she currently enjoys (Asher & Paquette, 2003). Loneliness is, by definition, a subjective (not necessarily objective) experience of isolation. It is an unpleasant emotion that is linked to a range of negative physical outcomes (e.g., obesity and elevated blood pressure), negative mental health outcomes (e.g., depression, and anger), and high

risk of mortality (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Loneliness is a key trigger for saudade (Neto & Mullet, 2014), which probably explains why it has been found to predict experienced saudade beyond and above all other related psychological constructs considered (demographics, subjective wellbeing, and personality traits) among Portuguese participants aged 20–65 years (Neto & Mullet, 2020a). These findings have been replicated in Brazil (Neto, Oliveira, et al., 2024).

Loneliness being the feeling of a mismatch between desired the social relationships and current ones, it is a common experience among migrants. It has been found that the lonelier Portuguese migrants living in Switzerland felt, the more saudade they reported (Neto, 2019). Also, experienced saudade correlated significantly and positively with loneliness among African migrants living in Portugal (Neto, 2023). In addition, loneliness partially mediated the relationship between perceived discrimination and saudade. Perceived discrimination was directly related to the level of saudade, and indirectly related to saudade via its relationship with loneliness. In sum, this set of studies supported that loneliness was, as expected, positively related to saudade in line with research showing that loneliness was linked to poor quality of life (Furnham, 2007; Rokach, 2012).

6.4 Personality

Personality traits are “dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to exhibit consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions” (McCrae & Costa, 2003, p. 25). It has been repeatedly found that, in Portuguese adults, the associations of the three ESS subscales with personality were most substantial in neuroticism (Neto & Mullet, 2020a; Neto & Mullet, 2020b). In Brazil, a high level of experienced saudade was, in the same way, related to a high level of neuroticism in students (Neto, Oliveira, et al., 2024). In addition, among them, (a) a high level of lack of intimacy was linked to high levels of openness and agreeableness, and (b) a high level

of longing for the past was linked to a low level of conscientiousness. In all cases, however, neuroticism remained the strongest predictor of each of the three factors of experienced saudade. These findings are consistent with research showing that neuroticism predisposes to a negative view of the experience of life events (Widiger, 2009).

If, as has been shown, demographic variables are relatively little associated with the experience of saudade, one might suggest that when people, for reasons linked to the situation in which they find themselves, are led to feel negative affect, to perceive themselves as alone and with low emotional stability, they probably experience intense saudade more often than others.

7 COVID Experience and Saude

The relationship between COVID experience and saudade has been examined: To what extent do COVID-19 related constructs predict experienced saudade beyond well-being constructs (Neto, Neto, & Mullet, 2024). Four indicators of subjective wellbeing were used: (a) satisfaction with life, as above, and (b) life purpose, (c) optimism, and (d) altruism, for which no evidence was available regarding their possible association with saudade. Purpose in life is positively associated with subjective well-being, even when the effects of personality factors are controlled (Hill et al., 2016). Optimism is thought to enable individuals to be happier, more successful, and healthier (Lopez & Snyder, 2003). Positive relationships between altruism and well-being have been found worldwide (e.g., Rhoads et al., 2021).

Four indicators of COVID-19 constructs were employed: (a) coronavirus anxiety, (b) fear of COVID-19, (c) empathic prosocial concerns, and (d) experiences related to COVID-19 (see Hill et al. in this book). Coronavirus anxiety has been shown to be positively related to depression, generalized anxiety, and death anxiety (Lee, 2020). Fear of COVID-19 has been shown to be negatively related to mental and physical health (Lin et al., 2020). Prosocial empathy is associated

with preventive behaviors such as compliance with social distancing instructions and the systematic wearing of a mask during the pandemic (Pfattheicher et al., 2020). Experiences related to COVID-19 include internalizing symptoms, such as sadness, anxiety and loneliness, and externalizing symptoms, such as anger and argumentation (Skinner et al. (2021).

The three subscales of the ESS were diversely related to these constructs. Missing close others correlated positively with altruism. Lack of intimacy and Longing for the past correlated negatively with satisfaction with life, purpose in life, and optimism. Missing close others and Longing for the past correlated positively with empathy. All three subscales correlated positively with coronavirus anxiety, fear of COVID-19, and experiences related to COVID-19. Hierarchical multiple regression analyzes showed that COVID-19 measures were associated with experienced saudade over and above classical well-being measures. Specifically, empathic prosocial concerns predicted Missing close others, and experiences related to COVID-19 predicted Lack of intimacy and Longing for the past, even when the effects of well-being measures were controlled. This study supported the idea that, although its three subscales are not completely independent, ESS offers an analytical tool that enables a fairly detailed account of Portuguese population's experience of saudade.

8 Psychological Effects of Saudade Induction

A series of three studies aimed at examining the immediate a posteriori effects of saudade, without prejudging the positive or negative nature of these effects, has been carried out (Neto & Mullet, 2020c). In each, participants were encouraged to experience saudade by voluntarily recalling an episode from their past lives, i.e., in a natural way. They were then invited to transcribe this experience, as fully as possible, in a free text. In the first study, the participants were then asked to answer a series of statements evaluating their current positive and negative affect,

their current degree of loneliness and the quality of their social connection. In the second study, participants also assessed, in addition, their current self-esteem. In the third study, they assessed their current level of inspiration.

The first study therefore examined the effect of induced saudade on positive affect, negative affect, social connectedness, and loneliness. Participants (young adults) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: induced saudade (the experimental group) or recall of a neutral event (the control group). Participants in the induced saudade condition were asked to recall a particularly intense episode of saudade in their lives. In other words, they were asked to start thinking about an event from the past that made them experience as much saudade as possible. This type of manipulation, which is obviously very simple and even simplistic, was chosen because of its ecological nature. Remembering a specific event from the past, often when you don't expect it, is a fairly common experience. Participants in the control condition were asked to recall an event in the past week that had affected them neither positively nor negatively.

Participants placed in the induced saudade condition unsurprisingly reported a higher level of experienced saudade than participants placed in the control condition. Participants placed in the induced saudade condition reported a higher level of positive affect and close connection than participants placed in the control condition. The induction of saudade was therefore not only associated with positive affect, but even more so with an increase in close social ties. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between conditions in negative affect, loneliness or societal connectedness.

The second study examined the effect of induced saudade on the same variables as well as on self-esteem. Participants in the induced saudade condition reported, as in the first study, a higher level of positive affect and close connection than participants in the control condition. However, there were no differences between the groups in terms of negative affect, loneliness or even self-esteem. The results observed in the first study can therefore be con-

sidered robust. When the experience of saudade is evaluated a posteriori; that is, in a distanced way, its beneficial aspects are undeniably manifested and these are not accompanied by undesirable side effects.

The third study examined the effect of induced saudade on the same variables as well as on inspiration. This time, participants were mature adults. Participants in the induced saudade condition, reported, as in the other two studies, a higher level of positive affect and close connection than participants in the control condition. In addition, they reported a higher level of inspiration than participants in the control condition.

In short, the results observed in the three studies are indeed robust. When the immediate consequences of the experience of saudade are evaluated, its beneficial aspects manifest themselves in both mature adults and young adults. These beneficial effects include a slight inflation of positive affect, a notable increase in the sense of close connection and an increase in inspiration. In other words, the experience of saudade does not seem to have any therapeutic contraindications.

9 Conclusion

The experience of saudade seems to be the locus of a paradox. When measured using a questionnaire such as the PSS or ESS (e.g., "I suffer from lack of affection"), the relationship between these measures and negative constructs such as loneliness, negative affect or neuroticism is positive and sometimes even quite strong. On the other hand, when one evaluates one's psychological state at the end of a saudade experience, positive aspects dominate. One feels less lonely and more inspired.

In everyday life, saudade often occurs without warning. We are busy with a routine task, or we allow ourselves a moment's rest, and suddenly old memories invade us. Then saudade captures us and can last for some time. It's also possible to provoke saudade on a daily basis. When we're bored, when we don't know what to do, we sometimes get involved in voluntarily evoking certain

moments from our past life, and again saudade captures us. And we can even, if we have nothing better to do, try to prolong this moment.

The fact that the experience of saudade produces emotional benefits is consistent with the finding that fragile people (e.g., those who feel lonely, those who are emotionally unstable) tend, as indicated above, to experience saudade more often than others. It is these fragile people who, logically, are most in need of the "therapeutic" effects of saudade (in the same way that people who feel the most pain report the highest consumption of analgesics and antipyretics). Through saudade, these people can draw on the emotional capital of the past to rebalance the emotional tone of the present. Given the ephemeral nature of this rebalancing, these people need to do it more often than others.

But delving into the past is not without its drawbacks. The past has passed and this thought in itself is unpleasant, a source of discomfort. If experiencing saudade has "therapeutic" effects for a while, it has an immediate cost, linked to what Marcel Proust called the *search for lost time*. So, at best, we can't help but describe this experience as bittersweet, sour because this past that we're going to look for will never come back, and sweet because what was lived in joy and happiness can still, through memory, reach us and affect us.

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Part III

Cultural Contexts and Societal Impacts of Emotions



Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Emotions and Other Aspects of Well-Being: Variations Within and Across Diverse Cultures

8

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1 Introduction

A great deal of research has explored negative impacts on the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health (NIMH, 2024). But less is known about variations within and across diverse cultures around the world, and about any positive impacts of coping with the pandemic.

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This was explored in a cross-cultural study of the impacts of the pandemic on emotions and other aspects of well-being using a questionnaire developed by the first two authors, which was online in six languages: English, Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, Turkish, Japanese, and Indonesian. College or university students and older non-students were recruited in those languages in the USA, Brazil, Italy, Türkiye, Japan, Indonesia, plus Nigeria in English. Emails were also sent by the first author to persons known elsewhere around the world. These convenience samples are not representative, but they are very diverse, indicating some of the variations in impacts that have occurred.

The analyses in this chapter are based on 2235 participants. They include 54.9% students and 45.1% older non-students, 63.4% females and 36.0% males plus 0.6% ($N = 13$) trans or non-binary persons who are included in overall means but too small to be included in comparisons of gender. The numbers for each culture are 351 USA, 78 Brazil, 138 Italy, 743 Türkiye, 295 Japan, 461 Indonesia, 121 Nigeria, and 48 elsewhere.

Impacts on well-being were measured in terms of changes in positive feelings, negative feelings, negative experiences, relationship close-

ness, activities with others or alone, plus impacts on employment, physical symptoms, and social support. Participants were first asked, “In the year before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate each of the following?” using 9-point scales from 0 = NOT AT ALL to 8 = COMPLETELY. Participants were then asked “When the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was strongest, did each of each of the following decrease, stay the same, or increase?” Responses were on a 9-point scale from -4 to +4 including 0, labeled DECREASED on the left and INCREASED on the right.

Variations in decreases or increases were explored by comparing overall means and standard deviations, as well as by three-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) comparing students and older non-students, males and females, and cultures around the world.

2 How Did Decreases in Positive Feelings Vary?

Changes in positive feelings that often decreased are shown in Table 8.1 along with mean ratings before the pandemic for comparison. The greatest overall decreases were on feeling satisfied with your life, and feeling happy, followed by feeling optimistic about the future, feeling economically secure, feeling free to choose how to live my life, and feeling safe. Smaller decreases were in feeling hopeful, enjoying life, and feeling your life is meaningful. But all of the changes and ratings before had large standard deviations (S.D.), which means that about one-third of indi-

viduals had up to that much variation above the mean, and one-third had up to that much variation below the mean. These standard deviations may reflect individual, cultural, and sampling differences.

Variations of changes in these positive feelings, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.2, which displays the probability values that the mean differences between students and older non-students (ST), between males and females (MF), and across cultures (CU), along with the interactions among these variables, are statistically different from zero. Differences due to one variable are called main effects. Interaction indicates whether the effect of one variable varies among the levels of the other variable(s). Probability values less than 0.05 are considered statistically significant, and are highlighted in bold in the table.

None of the main effects for student versus non-student were statistically significant, which means that on the average, changes in these positive feelings did not differ between students and older non-students. However, there were statistically significant differences between males and females on four of these changes in feelings. On average, females became feeling less happy than males (mean change -0.50 females vs. 0.00 men), feeling less free to choose how to live my life (-0.56 vs. 0.03), and feeling less hopeful (-0.32 vs. 0.31), while males became feeling less safe than females (-0.12 vs. -0.22).

All of the main effects of cultures were statistically significant, but none of the interactions among the three variables, which means that the effects of student vs. non-student, and effects of

Table 8.1 Overall means of positive feelings that often decreased

Positive feelings often decreased	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Feeling satisfied with your life	-0.47	2.18	5.40	2.06
Feeling happy	-0.45	2.18	5.55	1.94
Feeling optimistic about the future	-0.42	2.23	5.23	2.23
Feeling economically secure	-0.39	2.14	5.29	2.33
Feeling free to choose how to live my life	-0.35	2.24	5.53	2.22
Feeling safe	-0.31	2.36	5.87	2.01
Feeling hopeful	-0.24	2.29	5.78	2.06
Enjoying life	-0.24	2.18	5.11	2.19
Feeling your life is meaningful	-0.18	2.24	5.45	2.10

Table 8.2 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of positive feelings that often decreased

Positive feelings often decreased	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Feeling satisfied with your life	0.748	0.063	<0.001	0.131	0.282	0.423	0.190
Feeling happy	0.643	0.015	<0.001	0.165	0.858	0.762	0.556
Feeling optimistic about the future	0.895	0.093	<0.001	0.167	0.282	0.145	0.483
Feeling economically secure	0.725	0.060	<0.001	0.128	0.704	0.583	0.191
Feeling free to choose how to live my life	0.526	0.005	<0.001	0.536	0.774	0.822	0.527
Feeling safe	0.651	0.020	<0.001	0.794	0.901	0.940	0.743
Feeling hopeful	0.655	0.003	<0.001	0.990	0.676	0.859	0.516
Enjoying life	0.795	0.074	<0.001	0.184	0.288	0.214	0.425
Feeling your life is meaningful	0.594	0.103	<0.001	0.224	0.567	0.843	0.871

males vs. females, did not vary across cultures even though the cultures varied.

Mean changes in these positive feelings across cultures in the three-way ANOVAs are shown in Table 8.3. Negative changes are highlighted in bold. They reveal that while these positive feelings decreased somewhat in the USA, Brazil, Türkiye, and Japan, they actually increased slightly in Italy, Indonesia, and Nigeria, likely due to more time spent with family members and others, as revealed in later tables in this chapter. These variations across cultures may reflect sampling differences rather than actual cultural differences, but they nonetheless indicate differences in the ways in which people coped with the pandemic.

The two countries with the greatest decrease in satisfaction with life, Brazil and Japan, were the ones that reported the lowest mean satisfaction with life before the pandemic. The countries with increases in satisfaction with life, Italy, Indonesia, Nigeria, and elsewhere, had higher satisfaction with life before the pandemic. It appears that the pandemic may have intensified positive or negative conditions that were present before the pandemic.

3 How Did Increases in Positive Feelings Vary?

Perhaps surprising is that some positive feelings often increased, as shown in overall ratings in Table 8.4. Feeling gratitude, feeling loved, and to some extent feeling respected, appreciated, or admired increased. Gratitude often occurs in cri-

sis situations, and feeling loved and respected, appreciated, or admired could increase due to spending more time at home with family members.

Feeling positive about yourself, feeling your life has purpose, and feeling pride in spite of prejudice had very little increase, but at least did not decrease during the threats to well-being of the pandemic. Again, the large standard deviations reveal a great deal of individual variation in changes in these positive emotions.

Variations of changes in these positive feelings, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.5. Probability values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold. None of the main effects for student versus non-student were statistically significant, which means that on the average, changes in these positive feelings did not differ between students and non-students.

There was only one statistically significant difference between males and females in these feelings: males increased feeling positive about yourself more than females (mean 0.57 males vs. 0.07 females). Staying home from work due to the pandemic may have been good for men's feelings about themselves.

All of the main effects of cultures were statistically significant, but none of the interactions among the three variables, which means that the effects of student vs. non-student, and effects of males vs. females, did not vary across cultures even though the cultures varied.

Mean changes in these positive feelings across cultures in the three-way ANOVAs are shown in Table 8.6. Negative changes are highlighted in

Table 8.3 Mean changes across cultures of positive feelings that often decreased

Positive feelings often decreased	USA	Brazil	Turkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Feeling satisfied with your life	-0.62	-1.04	-0.75	-0.96	0.41	0.41	0.75	0.29
Feeling happy	-0.76	-1.30	-0.71	-0.72	0.45	0.40	0.69	-0.06
Feeling optimistic about the future	-0.60	-1.12	-0.57	-1.03	-0.05	0.72	1.62	-0.07
Feeling economically secure	-0.07	-0.61	-0.66	-0.94	0.22	0.16	0.73	0.16
Feeling free to choose how to live my life	-0.65	-1.37	-0.49	-0.78	-0.10	0.49	1.43	-0.64
Feeling safe	-0.68	-1.28	-0.20	-1.37	0.68	0.47	1.07	0.00
Feeling hopeful	-0.49	-1.11	-0.41	-1.25	0.50	0.93	1.50	0.30
Enjoying life	-0.46	-1.05	-0.54	-0.55	0.57	0.90	1.13	0.54
Feeling your life is meaningful	-0.20	-0.44	-0.60	-0.83	0.69	0.85	1.22	0.50

Table 8.4 Overall means of positive feelings that often increased

Positive feelings often increased	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Feeling gratitude	0.80	2.15	5.65	2.12
Feeling loved	0.62	2.11	5.65	2.15
Feeling respected, appreciated, or admired	0.31	2.04	5.34	2.17
Feeling positive about yourself	0.07	2.19	5.57	2.12
Feeling your life has purpose	0.04	2.23	5.77	2.04
Feeling pride in spite of prejudice	0.04	1.45	2.31	2.66

Table 8.5 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of positive feelings that often increased

Positive feelings often increased	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Feeling gratitude	0.573	0.558	<0.001	0.634	0.835	0.277	0.394
Feeling loved	0.724	0.171	<0.001	0.910	0.967	0.838	0.198
Feeling respected, appreciated, or admired	0.505	0.216	<0.001	0.422	0.953	0.458	0.331
Feeling positive about yourself	0.430	0.016	<0.001	0.502	0.968	0.854	0.380
Feeling your life has purpose	0.918	0.057	<0.001	0.409	0.994	0.625	0.300
Feeling pride in spite of prejudice	0.158	0.159	<0.001	0.150	0.618	0.240	0.136

bold. They reveal that feeling gratitude and feeling loved increased across all cultures, even though the amount of the increase varied.

However, feeling positive about the self and feeling your life has purpose actually decreased in the USA, Brazil, Türkiye, and Japan, while it increased in Italy, Indonesia, Nigeria, and elsewhere. These are the same countries that increased in satisfaction with life as shown in Table 8.3. Feeling respected, appreciated, or admired, and feeling pride in spite of prejudice, decreased in Japan as well.

main effects and interactions. Statistically significant effects are highlighted in bold.

All but two of these negative feelings had statistically significant main effects for students vs. older non-students, and these last two had a trend with $p < 0.06$. In every case, students reported a greater increase in these negative feelings than older non-students: feeling worried about something (mean 1.74 students vs. 1.30 non-students), feeling stressed (1.53 vs. 1.14), feeling anxious (1.60 vs. 1.09), feeling tied down (1.46 vs. 0.93), feeling fatigued (1.36 vs. 0.79), feeling sad (1.29 vs. 0.82), feeling burnout (1.20 vs. 0.55), feeling helpless or powerless (1.27 vs. 0.075), feeling angry (1.17 vs. 0.62), feeling lonely (1.09 vs. 0.63), feeling socially isolated (1.18 vs. 0.74), feeling sick (0.80 vs. 0.32), feeling different from others (0.66 vs. 0.35), and feeling shy (0.40 vs. 0.08).

Since students were generally younger, they may have had less experience dealing with stress. The change to distance learning disrupted their lives perhaps even more than working From home disrupted the lives of older non-students.

There were only three statistically significant main effects of males vs. females, with females increasing negative feelings more than males: feeling anxious (mean 1.54 females vs. 1.14 males), feeling fatigued (1.35 vs. 0.79), and feel-

4 How Did Increases in Negative Feelings Vary?

Changes in negative feelings that often increased are shown in Table 8.7 along with mean ratings before the pandemic for comparison. The greatest overall increases were on feeling worried about something, feeling stressed, and feeling anxious. The smallest overall increases were in feeling different from others, which may reflect having different identities, and feeling shy, which may be a more stable personality characteristic.

Variations of changes in these negative feelings, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.8, which reports *p*-values for

Table 8.6 Mean changes across cultures of positive feelings that often increased

Positive feelings often increased	USA	Brazil	Turkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Feeling gratitude	0.68	0.98	0.18	0.59	1.19	1.81	1.47	0.97
Feeling loved	0.51	0.30	0.33	0.12	1.11	1.20	1.76	0.94
Feeling respected, appreciated, or admired	0.24	0.00	0.19	-0.32	0.80	0.88	1.42	0.68
Feeling positive about yourself	-0.08	-0.55	-0.23	-0.51	1.04	0.86	1.48	0.59
Feeling your life has purpose	-0.06	-0.41	-0.38	-0.46	0.84	0.87	1.28	0.66
Feeling pride in spite of prejudice	0.03	0.06	0.29	-0.09	0.25	-0.24	0.05	0.62

Table 8.7 Overall means of negative feelings that often increased

Negative feelings increased	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Feeling worried about something	1.43	2.06	4.10	2.40
Feeling stressed	1.33	2.07	4.01	2.42
Feeling anxious	1.29	2.08	3.93	2.40
Feeling tied down	1.15	2.11	3.16	2.52
Feeling fatigued	1.14	2.07	3.81	2.47
Feeling sad	1.01	2.00	2.96	2.40
Feeling burnout	0.90	2.06	3.17	2.53
Feeling helpless or powerless	0.87	1.98	2.68	2.49
Feeling angry	0.84	1.92	2.78	2.43
Feeling lonely	0.82	2.01	2.81	2.55
Feeling socially isolated	0.81	2.00	2.23	2.46
Feeling sick	0.58	1.78	2.11	2.24
Feeling different from others	0.38	1.62	2.92	2.62
Feeling shy	0.20	1.73	2.82	2.53

Table 8.8 P-values of three-way ANOVAs of negative feelings that often increased

Negative feelings increased	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Feeling worried about something	0.029	0.181	<0.001	0.300	0.052	0.035	0.875
Feeling stressed	0.048	0.051	<0.001	0.327	0.251	0.085	0.847
Feeling anxious	0.012	0.045	<0.001	0.369	0.028	0.096	0.676
Feeling tied down	0.010	0.286	<0.001	0.660	0.045	0.177	0.965
Feeling fatigued	0.004	0.006	0.007	0.831	0.109	0.223	0.951
Feeling sad	0.016	0.024	<0.001	0.401	0.348	0.453	0.507
Feeling burnout	0.001	0.173	<0.001	0.924	0.247	0.260	0.973
Feeling helpless or powerless	0.007	0.111	<0.001	0.426	0.143	0.294	0.502
Feeling angry	0.003	0.699	0.001	0.614	0.312	0.226	0.782
Feeling lonely	0.018	0.252	0.020	0.601	0.468	0.760	0.395
Feeling socially isolated	0.022	0.156	<0.001	0.138	0.205	0.178	0.324
Feeling sick	0.006	0.173	0.005	0.532	0.638	0.616	0.554
Feeling different from others	0.056	0.990	0.013	0.540	0.631	0.334	0.167
Feeling shy	0.057	0.927	0.328	0.877	0.631	0.247	0.204

ing sad (1.27 vs. 0.83). Staying at home may have increased the domestic workload of women more than men.

There were statistically significant effects of cultures for all negative feelings except feeling shy. And there were only three out of 42 interaction effects, all involving variations across cultures. Mean changes in these negative feelings across cultures in the three-way ANOVAs are shown in Table 8.9. Although there were statistically significant variations across cultures, all of the changes in these negative feelings were increases.

5 How Did Decreases in Negative Experiences Vary?

While negative feelings often increased, some negative experiences decreased in overall means, as shown in Table 8.10. Experiencing bullying, harassment, discrimination, and prejudice, witnessing violence, and experiencing a disability (see chapter Santinele in this book) or illness often decreased slightly. During social isolation, people were less around others who might cause these negative experiences. At the same time, however, there was a slight increase in awareness

Table 8.9 Mean changes across cultures of negative feelings that often increased

Negative feelings increased	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Feeling worried about something	1.37	2.37	1.02	1.88	1.16	0.94	1.58	1.82
Feeling stressed	1.35	2.02	0.95	1.81	1.05	0.86	1.13	1.50
Feeling anxious	1.31	2.06	0.79	1.84	0.88	0.91	1.50	1.44
Feeling tied down	0.89	2.12	1.10	1.36	0.76	0.60	1.19	1.56
Feeling fatigued	0.92	1.66	1.00	1.36	0.58	0.79	0.86	1.43
Feeling sad	1.08	1.87	0.91	0.83	0.74	0.58	0.98	1.42
Feeling burnout	1.10	1.68	0.85	0.43	0.48	0.65	0.66	1.12
Feeling helpless or powerless	1.01	1.79	0.52	1.11	0.99	0.24	0.73	1.69
Feeling angry	0.83	1.24	0.79	1.04	0.49	0.40	1.03	1.36
Feeling lonely	1.00	1.48	0.68	0.81	0.69	0.52	0.63	1.06
Feeling socially isolated	1.33	2.07	0.33	0.84	0.73	0.44	0.67	1.24
Feeling sick	0.24	0.55	0.75	0.65	0.45	0.29	0.73	0.84
Feeling different from others	0.63	0.79	0.34	0.49	0.09	0.19	0.52	1.01
Feeling shy	0.27	0.16	0.23	-0.04	0.19	0.17	0.45	0.49

Table 8.10 Overall means of changes in negative experiences

Negative experiences	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Experiencing bullying	-0.28	1.43	0.92	1.88
Experiencing harassment	-0.25	1.46	0.80	1.84
Experiencing discrimination	-0.11	1.49	1.17	2.05
Experiencing prejudice	-0.09	1.48	1.37	2.14
Witnessing violence	-0.08	1.49	1.05	2.03
Experiencing a disability or illness	-0.02	1.50	1.13	2.10
Experiencing injustice	0.08	1.57	1.72	2.37

Table 8.11 P-values of three-way ANOVAs of changes in negative experiences

Negative experiences	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Experiencing bullying	0.572	0.200	0.001	0.749	0.063	0.114	0.008
Experiencing harassment	0.092	0.131	<0.001	0.998	0.340	0.025	0.026
Experiencing discrimination	0.310	0.451	0.013	0.815	0.504	0.100	0.010
Experiencing prejudice	0.029	0.111	0.018	0.821	0.120	0.008	<0.001
Witnessing violence	0.100	0.123	<0.001	0.311	0.190	0.006	0.005
Experiencing a disability or illness	0.120	0.988	<0.001	0.799	0.583	0.025	0.109
Experiencing injustice	0.022	0.204	<0.001	0.236	0.082	0.035	<0.001

of injustice. Many negative impacts of the pandemic fell more on marginalized groups (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7205696>).

Variations of changes in these negative experiences, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.11. Statistically significant effects are highlighted in bold. Only one of the main effects for student versus non-student was statistically significant. Students reported experiencing slightly more prejudice than non-students (mean 0.19 vs. -0.13).

None of the differences between males and females were statistically significant, but all of the culture differences, and all but one of the three-way interactions, were statistically significant, revealing complex variations. Mean changes in these negative experiences across cultures in the three-way ANOVAs are shown in Table 8.12. About two-fifths of the means are negative, highlighted in bold, while three-fifths are positive. Hence, the decreases revealed in the overall means varied considerably among experiences within and across cultures.

Table 8.12 Mean changes across cultures of negative experiences

Negative experiences	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Experiencing bullying	-0.19	-0.25	-0.36	-0.28	-0.06	-0.45	-0.12	0.86
Experiencing harassment	-0.06	-0.24	-0.41	-0.14	-0.09	-0.43	0.01	0.70
Experiencing discrimination	0.04	-0.10	-0.13	0.06	-0.07	-0.33	-0.11	0.63
Experiencing prejudice	-0.04	-0.04	-0.18	0.09	-0.10	-0.20	-0.13	0.81
Witnessing violence	0.11	0.37	-0.19	-0.11	-0.04	-0.25	0.28	0.87
Experiencing a disability or illness	0.20	0.41	-0.19	0.14	0.00	-0.27	-0.03	0.69
Experiencing injustice	0.14	0.36	0.05	0.50	0.01	-0.08	-0.26	1.06

The three countries that had the greatest decrease in experiencing bullying and harassment, were the ones that had the highest levels of bullying and harassment before the pandemic: Türkiye, Japan, and Indonesia. The isolation due to the pandemic was beneficial in that regard. Also note that Indonesia was one of the countries that increased instead of decreased positive feelings as shown in Table 8.3, and increased positive feelings the most as shown in Table 8.6.

Students reported becoming emotionally closer than older non-students to their mother (1.90 vs. 1.39), their sister(s) (1.49 vs. 1.04), their brother (1.42 vs. 0.79), their closest friends (1.12 vs. 0.65), and their grandparents (0.67 vs. 0.16), and had a trend ($p < 0.08$) to their father (1.34 vs. 0.98). They were more likely to be living with their parents and siblings during the pandemic than were older non-students.

Older non-students reported becoming emotionally closer to their spouse or romantic partner (1.845 vs. 0.98) and to their children (1.71 vs. 0.13) than students, who were less likely to be married or have children. The only gender differences were females that reported becoming closer than males to their mother (1.86 vs. 1.42), and females becoming less close than males from their casual friends (-0.11 vs. -0.50). There were variations across cultures for all of these measures, except for nieces or nephews and for grandchildren, which did not change much in general.

Mean changes in emotional closeness across cultures in the three-way ANOVAs are shown in Table 8.15. Negative changes are highlighted in bold.

Most changes in emotional closeness are positive for family members, even though the amount of change varied across cultures. The changes are more variable in direction for non-family members. The greater number of decreases in emotional closeness, with closest friends and others, in Japan may reflect the government's greater emphasis on staying at home, rather than emphasizing social distancing outside the home.

6 How Did Emotional Closeness in Relationships Vary?

Changes in emotional closeness in relationships are shown in Table 8.13 along with ratings before the pandemic for comparison. Negative changes are highlighted in bold. Emotional closeness to family members and closest friends often increased, while it decreased with casual friends and co-workers, and essentially did not change with neighbors and non-romantic roommates. This is not surprising since people spent more time at home, and less time at workplaces and other places with casual friends. And they may have made more effort to stay in contact with relatives and close friends by phone or social media.

Variations of changes in emotional closeness, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.14, which reports p -values for main effects and interactions. Statistically significant effects are highlighted in bold.

Table 8.13 Overall means of changes in emotional closeness

Emotional closeness	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Your mother(s), if living	1.83	2.02	6.29	2.14
Your sister(s), if any	1.43	2.14	5.25	2.72
Your father(s), if living	1.37	2.08	5.43	2.55
Your spouse or romantic partner, if any	1.37	2.26	5.33	3.00
Your brother(s), if any	1.24	2.05	4.94	2.75
Your children, if any	1.19	2.14	3.99	3.54
Your closest friend(s)	0.83	2.23	5.93	1.97
Your niece(s) or nephew(s), if any	0.63	1.99	4.05	2.78
Your grandparent(s), if living	0.53	2.18	4.10	2.74
Your grandchild(ren), if any	0.12	1.82	1.79	2.91
Your casual friend(s)	-0.40	2.13	3.82	2.10
Your colleague(s) or co-worker(s)	-0.20	2.04	3.66	2.48
Your neighbor(s)	-0.02	2.00	3.06	2.44
Non-romantic roommate(s) unrelated to you	-0.01	1.81	2.26	2.74

Table 8.14 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of changes in emotional closeness

Emotional closeness	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	S*MF*CU
Your mother(s), if living	0.008	0.021	<0.001	0.737	0.919	0.239	0.628
Your sister(s), if any	0.047	0.131	<0.001	0.243	0.684	0.181	0.482
Your father(s), if living	0.078	0.383	<0.001	0.161	0.998	0.091	0.603
Your spouse or romantic partner, if any	<0.001	0.435	0.015	0.893	0.256	0.644	0.043
Your brother(s), if any	0.002	0.995	<0.001	0.567	0.274	0.249	0.652
Your children, if any	<0.001	0.748	0.013	0.125	0.029	0.718	0.148
Your closest friend(s)	0.027	0.711	<0.001	0.435	0.317	0.119	0.044
Your niece(s) or nephew(s), if any	0.751	0.896	0.111	0.952	0.559	0.795	0.102
Your grandparent(s), if living	0.022	0.906	<0.001	0.250	0.042	0.681	0.821
Your grandchild(ren), if any	0.479	0.248	0.122	0.318	0.323	0.436	0.164
Your casual friend(s)	0.692	0.002	<0.001	0.463	0.451	0.592	<0.001
Your colleague(s) or co-worker(s)	0.392	0.149	<0.001	0.737	0.029	0.208	0.006
Your neighbor(s)	0.608	0.062	<0.001	0.258	0.564	0.080	0.587
Non-romantic roommate(s)	0.565	0.199	<0.001	0.993	0.039	0.206	0.262

7 How Did Decreases in Activities Vary?

As shown in Table 8.16, the activities that often decreased included many that risked exposure to other people outside the family, especially travel activities and going to cafes and restaurants. But many activities decreased little since people were able to interact with others using telephone and video calls and social media. It is noteworthy that dating or romantic activities and sexual activities decreased very little in general.

Variations of changes in activities that often decreased, within and across cultures in three-

way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.17 which reports *p*-values for main effects and interactions. Probability values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold.

Older non-students decreased travel activities (-1.38 vs. -0.72), meeting new people (-0.80 vs. -0.21), drinking alcohol with others (-0.93 vs. -0.34), political activities (-0.36 vs. -0.08), and interacting with co-workers (-0.40 vs. -0.01) more than students. Females decreased going to cafes and restaurants (-1.12 vs. -0.45), interacting with casual friends (-0.82 vs. -0.01), club or organization activities (-0.81 vs. -0.33), sports activities with others (-0.65 vs. -0.18),

Table 8.15 Mean changes across cultures of emotional closeness

	USA	Brazil	Turkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Emotional closeness								
Your mother(s), if living	1.39	1.78	2.01	1.00	1.21	2.08	1.97	1.70
Your sister(s), if any	1.06	1.36	1.61	0.33	1.01	1.61	1.59	1.58
Your father(s), if living	0.93	0.92	1.69	0.64	0.71	1.69	1.09	1.64
Your spouse or romantic partner, if any	1.22	1.46	1.52	0.96	1.65	1.79	1.15	1.57
Your brother(s), if any	0.97	1.01	1.49	0.33	0.86	1.20	1.70	1.28
Your children, if any	0.93	1.22	1.29	0.50	0.30	1.21	0.65	1.25
Your closest friend(s)	0.65	0.40	1.09	-0.16	0.92	1.23	1.70	1.24
Your niece(s) or nephew(s) if any	0.30	0.48	0.86	n/a	0.00	0.56	0.92	0.61
Your grandparent(s), if living	0.53	0.48	0.54	-0.37	0.37	0.66	0.13	0.99
Your grandchild(ren), if any	0.39	-0.65	0.06	n/a	0.00	0.17	-0.31	0.76
Your casual friend(s)	-0.38	-1.20	-0.36	-1.61	0.02	0.37	1.46	0.14
Your colleague(s) or co-worker(s)	-0.25	-0.67	0.02	-1.19	-0.15	0.35	0.54	0.62
Your neighbor(s)	0.06	-0.54	0.25	-1.16	0.17	0.13	1.10	0.53
Non-romantic roommate(s)	-0.04	-0.37	0.38	-0.96	0.06	0.14	0.34	0.70

Table 8.16 Overall means of activities that often decreased

Activities decreased	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Travel activities	-1.24	2.51	5.24	2.56
Going to cafes and restaurants	-1.11	2.50	5.05	2.39
Going to dance clubs	-0.79	1.96	1.83	2.59
Interacting with casual friend(s)	-0.78	2.29	4.05	2.38
Club or organization activities	-0.72	2.10	3.50	2.79
Meeting new people	-0.71	2.44	4.67	2.47
Drinking alcohol with others	-0.70	2.10	2.36	2.83
<i>Activities decreased less</i>				
Visiting museums and historical sites	-0.57	2.15	3.56	2.74
Sports activities with others	-0.52	2.27	3.89	2.85
Cultural activities	-0.49	2.03	3.68	2.73
Volunteer activities	-0.48	2.03	3.23	2.71
Religious activities with others	-0.43	2.06	3.23	3.04
Political activities	-0.38	1.82	1.88	2.42
Interacting with co-worker(s)	-0.37	2.14	4.11	2.71
Having fun with others	-0.33	2.49	5.57	2.38
<i>Activities decreased least</i>				
Interacting with neighbor(s)	-0.28	2.10	3.60	2.61
Dating or romantic activities	-0.21	2.16	4.11	2.90
Sexual activities	-0.20	2.00	3.21	2.91
Interacting with relatives you don't live with	-0.12	2.30	4.68	2.51
Hiking or camping	-0.05	2.07	3.20	2.91
Making music with others	-0.04	1.65	1.89	2.65
Smoking tobacco	-0.25	1.84	1.20	2.38
Drinking alcohol alone	-0.03	1.90	1.57	2.46

religious activities with others (-0.47 vs. 0.00), and interacting with co-workers (-0.41 vs. 0.00), more than males. All of these activities varied across cultures, except smoking tobacco, and sometimes culture interacted with student status or gender.

Mean changes across cultures in activities that often decreased are shown in Table 8.18. Decreases are highlighted in bold. Most, but not all, mean changes are decreases.

The greater decreases of drinking alcohol with others and having fun with others, and increase of drinking alcohol alone, in Japan, are consistent with the decreased emotional closeness with closest friends, casual friends, and co-workers in Japan shown in Table 8.15, reflecting the Japanese government emphasizing staying at home. Note that travel activities, going to cafes and restaurants, interacting with casual friends, meeting new people, interacting with neighbors, dating or

romantic activities, and sexual activities decreased less or actually increased in Italy, Indonesia, and Nigeria, the same countries that increased in positive feelings as shown in Tables 8.3 and 8.6. This highlights the importance of personal relationships in promoting positive feelings, in spite of the pandemic.

8 How Did Increases in Activities Vary?

Some activities with others often increased, as shown in Table 8.19. This was especially true for interacting with family members you live with, which is not surprising since people spent more time at home. In addition, people sometimes formed a “bubble” of people to continue interacting with in person, including a few family members not living with them, such as parents or adult children, or closest friends.

Table 8.17 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of activities that often decreased

Activities decreased	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Travel activities	0.018	0.064	< .001	0.885	0.028	0.290	0.463
Going to cafes and restaurants	0.059	0.010	< .001	0.460	< .001	0.197	0.038
Going to dance clubs	0.572	0.798	< .001	0.126	0.079	0.036	0.022
Interacting with casual friend(s)	0.234	< .001	< .001	0.928	0.005	0.378	0.349
Club or organization activities	0.064	0.035	< .001	0.202	0.029	0.160	0.218
Meeting new people	0.016	0.083	< .001	0.490	0.037	0.575	0.689
<i>Decreased less</i>							
Drinking alcohol with others	0.014	0.507	< .001	0.151	0.093	0.226	0.125
Visiting museums and historical sites	0.192	0.501	< .001	0.990	0.068	0.433	0.670
Sports activities with others	0.071	0.046	< .001	0.239	0.021	0.203	0.305
Cultural activities	0.132	0.417	0.090	0.376	0.073	0.139	0.170
Volunteer activities	0.261	0.143	< .001	0.602	0.001	0.229	0.842
Religious activities with others	0.212	0.022	< .001	0.322	0.202	0.019	0.177
Political activities	0.048	0.519	< .001	0.480	0.122	0.014	0.152
Interacting with co-worker(s)	0.049	0.037	< .001	0.705	< .001	0.162	0.088
Having fun with others	0.379	0.566	< .001	0.555	0.071	0.790	0.705
<i>Decreased least</i>							
Interacting with neighbor(s)	0.167	0.075	< .001	0.166	0.308	0.365	0.711
Dating or romantic activities	0.502	0.209	< .001	0.176	0.622	0.468	0.659
Sexual activities	0.949	0.171	< .001	0.117	0.008	0.389	0.326
Interacting with relatives you don't live with	0.641	0.487	< .001	0.425	0.807	0.515	0.996
Making music with others	0.361	0.191	< .001	0.440	0.328	0.381	0.302
Hiking or camping	0.812	0.764	< .001	0.405	0.048	0.773	0.699
Smoking tobacco	0.256	0.044	0.122	0.201	0.019	0.012	0.163
Drinking alcohol alone	0.155	0.083	0.002	0.055	0.014	0.511	0.258

Table 8.18 Mean changes across cultures in activities that often decreased

Activities that decreased	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Travel activities	-1.90	-1.22	-0.83	-2.02	-0.48	-0.57	-0.51	-0.88
Going to cafes and restaurants	-2.09	-1.57	-0.53	-1.81	-0.20	-0.07	0.18	-0.38
Going to dance clubs	-1.10	-1.54	-0.48	-0.83	-0.67	-0.70	-0.36	-0.05
Interacting with casual friend(s)	-1.25	-0.99	-0.57	-1.57	-0.05	0.13	1.15	-0.17
Club or organization activities	-0.85	-0.98	-0.55	-1.22	-0.51	-0.13	-0.22	-0.11
Meeting new people	-1.48	-0.74	-0.23	-1.68	-0.58	-0.03	0.90	-0.20
<i>Decreased less</i>								
Drinking alcohol with others	-0.92	-1.32	-0.32	-1.59	-0.28	-0.42	-0.12	-0.11
Visiting museums and historical sites	-1.24	-0.78	0.02	-0.84	-0.60	-0.36	-0.43	0.10
Sports activities with others	-0.84	-0.77	-0.11	-1.38	-0.83	0.04	0.51	0.07
Cultural activities	-0.77	-0.45	-0.35	-0.42	-0.10	-0.38	-0.26	0.29
Volunteer activities	-0.79	-0.56	-0.35	-0.64	-0.05	-0.13	0.35	0.37
Religious activities with others	-0.83	-0.70	-0.08	-0.77	-0.21	-0.22	0.73	0.23
Political activities	-0.19	-0.01	-0.32	-0.59	-0.21	-0.64	-0.47	0.66
Interacting with co-worker(s)	-0.70	-0.63	0.10	-1.16	-0.32	0.27	0.75	0.06
Having fun with others	-0.97	-0.51	0.32	-1.59	0.27	0.21	1.17	-0.59
<i>Decreased least</i>								
Interacting with neighbor(s)	-0.64	-0.89	-0.01	0.06	-1.21	-0.04	1.48	0.48
Dating or romantic activities	-0.46	-0.52	0.12	-0.08	-0.46	0.16	0.52	0.43
Sexual activities	-0.55	-0.67	0.37	0.03	-0.39	0.25	0.04	0.25
Interacting with relatives you don't live with	-0.24	-0.07	0.47	0.01	-0.90	0.25	1.13	0.48
Making music with others	-0.15	-0.27	-0.36	0.78	-0.74	-0.38	-0.31	0.54
Hiking or camping	-0.34	-0.25	-0.11	0.33	-0.39	-0.07	0.32	0.67
Smoking tobacco	-0.36	0.07	-0.07	-0.04	-0.22	-0.38	-0.44	0.63
Drinking alcohol alone	-0.15	0.08	-0.06	-0.18	0.40	-0.10	-0.25	0.65

Table 8.19 Overall means of activities with others that often increased

Activities with others often increased	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Interacting with family members you live with	1.68	2.05	5.85	2.42
Interacting with a spouse or long-term partner	0.58	2.13	4.19	3.26
Parenting activities	0.57	1.98	3.28	3.20
Avoiding arguments with others	0.54	2.02	5.14	2.46
Seeing a counselor or other mental health professional	0.36	1.87	2.72	2.82
Adult care-taking activities	0.33	1.83	2.52	2.79
Helping others	0.29	2.15	5.14	2.32
Mentoring, advising, or teaching others	0.24	1.88	3.61	2.73
Seeking help from others	0.19	1.85	4.02	2.37
Interacting with your closest friend(s)	0.09	2.43	6.17	1.98
Watching sports with others	0.07	2.00	2.85	2.83

Variations of changes in activities with others that often increased, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.20, which reports probability values for main effects and interactions. Probability values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold.

Not surprisingly, older non-students increased interacting with spouse or partner more than students (1.08 vs. 0.42), and increased parenting activities more (0.69 vs. 0.31), while students interacted more with closest friends. But there were no gender differences, except males increased more than females interacting with closest friend(s) (0.75 vs. 0.18). These changes varied across cultures, and sometimes culture interacted with student status, but rarely with gender.

Mean changes across cultures in activities with others that often increased, are shown in Table 8.21. Decreases are highlighted in bold. Most changes are increases, in spite of variations across cultures, except in Japan, and to a lesser extent in the USA.

The decrease in seeing a counselor or other mental health professional in Japan may be due to stigma of being considered mentally ill if seeing a counselor. The decrease in interacting with closest friends in Japan is consistent with decrease in emotional closeness to closest friends, as shown in Table 8.15. And helping others not close, and watching sports with others, are less possible if more time is spent at home, as emphasized by the Japanese government.

Note that interacting with family members you live with, avoiding arguments with others, helping others, mentoring others, and interacting with closest friends increased the most in Indonesia and Nigeria. These were two of the countries that increased the most in satisfaction with life as shown in Table 8.3. Overall in this study, increases in life satisfaction are correlated with increases in interacting with family members you live with ($r = 0.12^{***}$), avoiding arguments with others ($r = 0.28$), helping others ($r = 0.23^{***}$), mentoring others ($r = 0.21^{***}$), and interacting with closest friends ($r = 0.24^{***}$).

Other activities also increased, as shown in Table 8.22. These were primarily ones that could be done at home or alone. The greatest increases were for watching television shows, videos, or films; engaging in social media; avoiding disease; listening to music; and spending time alone. Changed the least were job or career activities, and scholarly and intellectual activities, which often could be done remotely by students or graduates of colleges or universities.

Variations of changes in other activities that often increased, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.23, which reports p -values for main effects and interactions. Probability values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold.

Not surprisingly, college or university students increased playing video games (1.39 vs. 0.91) and increased scholarly and intellectual activities (0.70 vs. 0.20) more than older non-

Table 8.20 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of overall means of activities with others that increased

Activities with others that increased	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Interacting with family members you live with	0.067	0.032	< 0.001	0.273	0.148	0.087	0.559
Interacting with a spouse or long-term partner	0.001	0.170	< 0.001	0.036	0.014	0.010	0.759
Parenting activities	0.044	0.356	< 0.001	0.478	0.031	0.120	0.040
Avoiding arguments with others	0.616	0.547	< 0.001	0.969	0.028	0.161	0.240
Seeing a counselor or other mental health professional	0.066	0.090	< 0.001	0.938	0.096	0.408	0.700
Adult care-taking activities	0.677	0.657	< 0.001	0.627	0.024	0.127	0.194
Helping others	0.142	0.443	< 0.001	0.981	0.035	0.129	0.669
Mentoring, advising, or teaching others	0.536	0.189	< 0.001	0.471	0.269	0.416	0.363
Seeking help from others	0.233	1.00	< 0.001	0.308	0.169	0.096	0.313
Interacting with your closest friend(s)	0.008	0.012	< 0.001	0.965	0.014	0.730	0.561
Watching sports with others	0.008	0.475	< 0.001	0.220	0.537	0.022	0.402

Table 8.21 Mean changes across cultures in activities with others that often increased

Activities with others that increased	USA	Brazil	Turkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Interacting with family members you live with	1.63	1.54	1.66	1.00	1.17	2.26	2.00	1.15
Interacting with a spouse or long-term partner	0.59	0.88	0.71	0.06	0.55	0.98	1.19	1.04
Parenting activities	0.14	0.54	1.09	-0.02	0.45	0.48	0.62	0.69
Avoiding arguments with others	0.12	0.47	0.53	-0.03	0.65	1.35	1.27	0.64
Seeing a counselor or other mental health professional	0.16	0.99	0.48	-0.29	0.50	0.20	0.34	1.04
Adult care-taking activities	-0.01	0.48	0.54	-0.16	0.36	0.54	0.98	0.94
Helping others	0.09	0.63	0.42	-0.77	0.53	0.98	1.50	0.77
Mentoring, advising, or teaching others	-0.03	0.29	0.46	-0.51	0.40	0.69	1.01	0.67
Seeking help from others	0.02	0.46	0.09	-0.36	0.29	0.65	0.82	0.95
Interacting with your closest friend(s)	-0.13	0.20	0.37	-1.21	1.24	0.78	1.82	0.64
Watching sports with others	-0.41	0.09	0.60	-0.92	0.10	0.26	0.68	0.81

Table 8.22 Overall means of other activities that often increased

Other activities that increased	Change	(S.D.)	Before	(S.D.)
Watching television shows, videos, or films	2.25	1.77	5.27	2.25
Engaging in social media	2.24	1.84	5.19	2.34
Avoiding disease	2.16	2.05	5.85	2.32
Listening to music	2.13	1.82	5.82	2.31
Spending time alone	2.05	1.93	5.45	2.31
Cleaning and other housework	1.84	1.79	4.60	2.46
Cooking meals	1.82	1.91	4.48	2.56
Staying healthy	1.67	2.16	6.03	2.09
Reading for pleasure	1.49	1.85	4.62	2.61
Playing video games	1.11	1.97	3.02	2.92
<i>Activities increased less</i>				
Appreciating nature	0.95	2.19	4.80	2.61
Taking care of a yard or garden	0.81	1.84	2.90	2.77
Interacting with pet(s) or other animal(s)	0.80	2.16	4.39	3.00
Watching sports alone	0.63	1.90	2.77	2.87
Taking photographs	0.61	2.11	4.45	2.63
Creative activities	0.52	2.17	5.03	2.36
Exercise activities	0.50	2.37	4.89	2.45
Sports activities alone	0.50	2.26	4.17	2.73
<i>Activities increased least</i>				
Religious activities alone	0.44	2.01	3.30	3.05
Being financially self-supporting	0.40	2.07	5.28	2.56
Other activities	0.29	1.88	3.13	3.13
Making music alone	0.28	1.70	2.01	2.74
Donating money to charities	0.27	1.82	3.37	2.78
Making as much money as possible	0.17	2.05	4.00	2.88
Job or career activities	0.14	2.16	4.78	2.74
Scholarly and intellectual activities	0.13	2.12	5.01	2.51

students. They also increased watching sports alone (0.77 vs. 0.43) and taking photographs (0.75 vs. 0.33) more. Females increased being engaged in social media (2.28 vs. 2.01), cleaning and other housework (2.08 vs. 1.55), cooking meals (2.19 vs. 1.36), and reading for pleasure (1.68 vs. 1.08) more than males, while males increased playing video games (1.51 vs. 0.78) and watching sports alone (0.65 vs. 0.28) more than females. All of these activities varied across cultures, except watching television, videos, and films, spending time alone, cooking meals, and other not listed activities.

Mean changes across cultures in other activities that often increased are shown in Table 8.24. Decreases are highlighted in bold. These are often increases, in spite of variations across cul-

tures. The decreases are primarily in Japan, with a few in Türkiye, and one in the USA.

The decreased time for appreciating nature in Japan may also reflect the government's emphasis on staying at home. The decreased time exercising may also reflect that, in addition to sports facilities and exercise clubs being shut down. The decreased religious activities alone may reflect the fact that most Japanese do not practice religious activities on a daily basis, but only go to temples and shrines on special occasions (e.g., New Year's holiday), and even less during the pandemic. The lesser donating money to charities in Japan may reflect greater financial insecurities due to shorter work hours shown below. Also note that Indonesia and Nigeria increased the most in religious activities alone and donating money to charities.

Table 8.23 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of overall means of other activities that often increased

	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
<i>Other activities that increased</i>							
Watching television shows, videos, or films	0.194	0.275	0.050	0.375	0.181	0.089	0.553
Engaging in social media	0.068	< 0.001	<0.001	0.618	0.488	0.168	0.374
Avoiding disease	0.358	0.418	<0.001	0.808	0.155	0.801	0.946
Listening to music	0.105	0.067	<0.001	0.353	0.288	0.373	0.168
Spending time alone	0.120	0.175	0.408	0.006	0.120	0.163	0.550
Cleaning and other housework	0.573	< 0.001	<0.001	0.961	0.775	0.170	0.177
Cooking meals	0.303	< 0.001	0.203	0.865	0.983	0.896	0.272
Staying healthy	0.677	0.792	< 0.001	0.452	0.597	0.539	0.932
Reading for pleasure	0.442	< 0.001	0.003	0.622	0.394	0.088	0.799
Playing video games	0.009	< 0.001	<0.001	0.814	0.002	0.016	0.020
<i>Increased less</i>							
Appreciating nature	0.394	0.339	<0.001	0.433	0.357	0.189	0.927
Taking care of a yard or garden	0.123	0.333	<0.001	0.121	0.295	0.676	0.887
Interacting with pet(s) or other animal(s)	0.471	0.793	<0.001	0.665	0.170	0.007	0.588
Watching sports alone	0.020	< 0.001	<0.001	0.377	0.380	0.017	0.031
Taking photographs	0.043	0.586	<0.001	0.666	0.777	0.234	0.291
Creative activities	0.452	0.863	<0.001	0.556	0.625	0.764	0.382
Exercise activities	0.132	0.372	<0.001	0.236	0.074	0.400	0.027
Sports activities alone	0.071	0.085	<0.001	0.762	0.550	0.197	0.087
<i>Increased least</i>							
Religious activities alone	0.756	0.556	<0.001	0.354	< 0.001	0.090	0.606
Being financially self-supporting	0.883	0.452	<0.001	0.555	0.305	0.662	0.095
Other activities	0.163	0.694	0.065	0.898	0.044	0.572	0.059
Making music alone	0.196	0.095	<0.001	0.766	0.096	0.070	0.161
Donating money to charities	0.357	0.431	<0.001	0.227	0.023	0.233	0.629
Making as much money as possible	0.614	0.228	<0.001	0.812	0.073	0.938	0.525
Job or career activities	0.073	0.091	<0.001	0.328	0.485	0.674	0.051
Scholarly and intellectual activities	0.015	0.392	<0.001	0.542	0.600	0.209	0.172

Table 8.24 Mean changes across cultures in other activities that often increased

	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Other activities that increased								
Watching television shows, videos, or films	1.54	1.80	2.51	1.82	1.74	2.62	2.16	1.93
Engaging in social media	2.09	2.29	2.25	1.90	2.30	2.36	1.85	2.41
Avoiding disease	2.33	2.51	1.69	1.89	2.62	2.74	2.26	2.33
Listening to music	1.53	2.09	2.55	1.51	1.80	2.26	2.48	2.12
Spending time alone	1.71	1.87	2.02	2.07	2.31	1.97	1.79	2.37
Cleaning and other housework	1.26	1.93	2.14	1.55	1.47	1.96	2.23	1.95
Cooking meals	1.62	1.73	1.93	1.63	1.63	2.11	1.94	
Staying healthy	1.43	1.40	1.50	1.33	1.79	2.67	2.32	1.53
Reading for pleasure	1.18	1.41	1.76	1.25	1.28	1.33	1.47	
Playing video games	0.67	0.84	1.67	1.09	1.18	1.27	0.98	1.46
<i>Activities increased less</i>								
Appreciating nature	1.04	1.16	1.66	-0.29	0.93	0.36	1.43	1.32
Taking care of a yard or garden	0.64	1.07	1.21	0.37	0.29	0.79	1.14	1.28
Interacting with pet(s) or other animal(s)	1.30	1.40	0.59	0.27	1.00	1.02	0.57	1.42
Watching sports alone	0.27	0.35	1.27	0.07	.174 ^a	0.81	0.59	1.19
Taking photographs	0.33	0.46	0.72	0.08	0.22	0.90	1.06	0.56
Creative activities	0.85	0.81	0.17	0.37	0.52	0.87	1.40	1.01
Exercise activities	0.63	0.27	0.52	-0.40	0.44	0.95	1.47	1.11
Sports activities alone	0.07	0.07	0.70	-0.37	0.36	1.23	0.79	0.85
<i>Activities increased least</i>								
Religious activities alone	-0.21	0.10	0.96	-0.64	0.16	1.13	1.87	0.90
Being financially self-supporting	0.50	1.18	0.01	0.07	0.44	1.09	0.50	1.02
Other activities	0.12	0.34	0.35	-0.19	0.38	0.31	0.29	0.90
Making music alone	0.14	0.14	0.67	-0.29	0.09	0.00	0.42	0.79
Donating money to charities	0.06	0.50	0.40	-0.36	0.14	0.91	0.63	1.10
Making as much money as possible	0.37	0.54	-0.08	-0.04	0.39	0.79	0.55	1.01
Job or career activities	0.22	0.77	-0.02	-0.21	0.86	0.67	0.46	0.97
Scholarly and intellectual activities	0.28	0.47	-0.17	0.51	0.43	0.00	0.76	1.32

9 How Did Impacts on Employment Vary?

Impacts on employment are shown in Table 8.25. The greatest impact was working more from home, which students and graduates of colleges or universities were more likely to be able to do. However, some had reduced hours, had salary or benefits reduced, were unable to work due to symptoms, or a few had lost a job.

Variations of impacts on employment, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.26, which reports *p*-values for main effects and interactions. Probability values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold.

Older non-students reported that hours were reduced more than students (0.29 vs. 0.17). There were no overall gender differences, but all impacts on employment varied across cultures, except lost a job.

Percentage impacts on employment across cultures are shown in Table 8.27. Each impact varied a great deal across cultures.

The greater percentage of hours being reduced in Japan, and lesser percentage of losing a job, are consistent with the Japanese having less frequent job changes.

10 How Did Physical Symptoms Vary?

Participants were asked whether they had experienced any physical symptoms of illness from COVID-19 and from other causes. They were also asked how severe the physical symptoms were when they were most severe, from COVID-19 and from other causes, on scales from 0 = NOT AT ALL to 8 = EXREMELY. And they were asked for how many weeks they had experienced physical symptoms of illness from each. An additional question asked whether they had been upset by disagreements with others about wearing masks or getting vaccinated, with responses from 0 = NOT AT ALL to 8=EXTREMELY. Percentages or means for these measures are shown in Table 8.28.

While the overall mean scores on scales from 0 to 8 suggest that the symptoms were not severe in general for the participants in this study, the large standard deviations indicate a great deal of variation among individuals. In general, ratings of being upset by disagreements on avoiding symptoms were higher than ratings of the severity of symptoms.

The occurrence, severity, and weeks of symptoms did not vary overall between students and older non-students, or between males and females, but did vary across cultures and in a few interactions, in three-way ANOVAs shown in Table 8.29. Probability values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold.

Percentages or means of physical symptoms across cultures are shown in Table 8.30. Each measure of symptoms varied a great deal across cultures.

Table 8.25 Overall percentage of impacts on employment

Impacts on employment	Percent	S.D.
Worked more from home	46.0	0.50
Hours were reduced	26.0	0.44
Salary or benefits reduced	23.0	0.42
Unable to work due to symptoms	16.0	0.37
Lost a job	8.0	0.27

Table 8.26 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of impacts on employment

Impacts on employment	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CU
Worked more from home	0.158	0.497	<0.001	0.856	0.570	0.313	0.523
Hours were reduced	0.009	0.106	<0.001	0.789	0.128	0.232	0.734
Salary or benefits reduced	0.496	0.851	0.002	0.788	0.038	0.477	0.335
Unable to work due to symptoms	0.148	0.945	<0.001	0.056	0.114	0.566	0.042
Lost a job	0.771	0.395	0.196	0.515	0.914	0.015	0.185

Table 8.27 Mean percentages of impacts on employment across cultures

Impacts on employment	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Worked more from home	51.7	71.9	31.0	37.7	17.6	59.2	51.0	62.6
Hours were reduced	17.2	20.8	22.1	39.9	16.0	25.6	25.5	15.4
Salary or benefits reduced	13.0	22.9	22.6	30.9	19.2	25.3	33.8	28.9
Unable to work due to symptoms	15.3	41.6	19.4	12.1	6.4	11.9	11.4	35.1
Lost a job	10.1	12.5	4.9	7.6	9.6	8.5	13.5	13.4

Table 8.28 Physical symptoms of illness

Physical symptoms	Percent	S.D.
Physical symptoms—COVID-19 (no/yes)	35.9	0.48
Physical symptoms—Other (no/yes)	29.8	0.46
<i>Severity of symptoms</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Severity of COVID symptoms (0–8)	2.83	2.47
Severity of other symptoms (0–8)	2.97	2.54
Weeks of COVID symptoms (0–8)	2.12	2.29
Weeks of other symptoms (0–8)	2.54	2.93
Upset by disagreements (0–8)	4.05	2.84

Perhaps Japanese were less upset by disagreements due to fewer disagreements with others with whom they had less contact outside the home. The lesser physical symptoms due to COVID and other conditions in Japan may have been due to tighter government restrictions outside the home.

Variations in social support, within and across cultures in three-way ANOVAs, are shown in Table 8.32, which reports *p*-values for main effects and interactions. *P* values less than 0.05 are highlighted in bold.

Students reported more help with stress from family (68.9% vs. 54.7%), from friends (68.0% vs. 49.7%), from Mental Health Professionals (31.1% vs. 13.9%) and from others (17.7% vs. 6.7%) than older non-students. Females reported more help with stress from family (70.8% vs. 52.7%), and from friends (66.8% vs. 50.9%). All four measures varied across cultures.

Percentages reporting social support across cultures are shown in Table 8.33. Each measure of symptoms varied across cultures.

Japan reported the highest help with stress from family, and the lowest help with stress from mental health professionals and from others.

11 How Did Social Support Vary?

Participants were asked since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, had they received help to cope with stress from the sources listed in Table 8.31. The majority of participants were able to get help to cope with stress from family members and from friends. Some also gained help from Mental Health Professionals (MHP), and some from others. This is consistent with other research showing the importance of social support from family (Aydin, 2022).

12 Conclusion

While some positive feelings often decreased, such as happiness and life satisfaction, other positive feelings often increased, such as feeling gratitude and feeling loved. While some negative feelings often increased, such as feeling worried and feeling stressed; other negative feelings often decreased, such as bullying and harassment due to less contact with others. Emotional closeness to family members and closest friends often increased. The activities that decreased included many that risked exposure to other people outside the family, especially travel activities and going

Table 8.29 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of physical symptoms

Physical symptoms	ST	MF	CU	ST*MF	ST*CU	MF*CU	ST*MF*CCU
Physical symptoms—COVID	0.123	0.131	< 0.001	0.031	0.011	0.031	0.356
Physical symptoms—Other	0.414	0.078	< 0.001	0.513	0.120	0.026	0.215
Severity of COVID symptoms	0.257	0.199	< 0.001	0.608	0.337	0.109	0.159
Severity of other symptoms	0.104	0.980	< 0.001	0.815	0.396	0.041	0.596
Weeks of COVID symptoms	0.530	0.123	0.001	0.317	0.057	0.671	0.199
Weeks of other symptoms	0.538	0.656	< 0.001	0.983	0.123	0.273	0.957
Upset by disagreements	0.597	0.689	< 0.001	0.171	0.035	0.023	0.316

Table 8.30 Percentages or means of physical symptoms across cultures

	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
<i>Percent</i>								
Physical symptoms—COVID	45.9	56.3	36.7	25.4	38.6	34.9	10.4	60.6
Physical symptoms—Other	42.9	46.7	23.0	17.9	49.5	23.3	26.9	34.4
<i>Means</i>								
Severity of COVID symptoms	2.89	2.81	3.16	2.97	2.64	2.21	1.71	3.61
Severity of other symptoms	3.41	3.43	3.07	3.00	2.01	2.06	2.60	3.27
Weeks of COVID symptoms	1.84	1.99	2.42	2.59	1.55	1.72	1.95	3.20
Weeks of other symptoms	3.39	3.45	2.19	3.19	1.52	1.50	2.32	2.99
Upset by disagreements	4.13	5.60	4.47	3.10	3.93	3.32	4.00	4.93

Table 8.31 Overall percentage of social support

Social support	Percent	S.D.
Help with stress from family	63.2	0.48
Help with stress from friends	61.5	0.49
Help with stress from MHP	20.8	0.41
Help with stress from others	11.5	0.32

to cafes and restaurants. But some activities increased, such as those done at home or alone. The largest impact on employment was increased working from home.

Social support from family and friends for coping with stress was gained by the majority of participants. Changes in feelings, closeness in relationships, and activities, often varied across cultures, and sometimes between students and older non-students or between genders. The greater differences on some measures in Japan may reflect the government's greater emphasis on

staying at home during the pandemic. The greater increases in positive feelings in Italy, Indonesia, and Nigeria are consistent with increases in positive interactions with family members and others, in spite of the pandemic.

13 Need for Future Research

Participants in this study were college or university students and older non-students who were likely to be college or university graduates. They answered the questionnaire online, which others may not have access to, but the study was in multiple languages. Those with more severe impacts might be less likely to participate in the study. Future research should explore the impact of pandemics on those with other educational backgrounds, and those less able to respond to questionnaires online.

Table 8.32 *P*-values of three-way ANOVAs of social support

Social support	ST	MF	CY	ST*MF	ST*CY	MF*CY	S*MF*C
Help with stress from family	0.002	<0.001	<0.001	0.080	0.048	0.001	0.565
Help with stress from friends	<0.001	<0.001	0.001	0.367	0.197	0.035	0.399
Help with stress from MHP	<0.001	0.145	<0.001	0.363	0.809	0.982	0.150
Help with stress from others	0.005	0.902	0.003	0.822	0.734	0.477	0.881

Table 8.33 Percentages reporting social support across cultures

Social support	USA	Brazil	Türkiye	Japan	Italy	Indonesia	Nigeria	Elsewhere
Help with stress from family	51.1	75.4	58.9	80.8	52.4	54.3	52.7	68.6
Help with stress from friends	49.8	73.9	58.9	64.9	51.0	53.6	50.7	68.0
Help with stress from MHP	31.6	39.3	13.5	11.2	20.3	16.9	15.4	32.1
Help with stress from others	20.8	10.4	10.5	4.6	4.7	10.1	7.9	28.5

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Test Anxiety from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

9

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1 Introduction

Cultural comparisons have been widely used and are well studied in test anxiety research for decades (e.g., Bodas & Ollendick, 2005). A particular focus is on studies that examine the frequency, intensity, and forms of manifestation of test anxiety in different countries or cultures.

Culture can be viewed from two perspectives, an etic and an emic perspective (Berry, 1999). The etic perspective corresponds to a cross-cultural external view. Here, culture is usually operationalized on the basis of characteristics

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that are assumed to have a universal meaning, but which can take on culture-specific expressions. Social norms or values are corresponding examples. Culture can therefore be understood as a variable that influences human functioning, especially cognitions, feelings and behavior. The emic perspective, on the other hand, represents a culturally adapted internal view. To date, an etic perspective has dominated comparative cultural research on test anxiety, which has had a major influence on the approach and choice of methods used by researchers. Of crucial importance here is the psychometric approach, in which individuals from different cultures are compared with regard to characteristics of interest using test procedures. By comparing different cultures, researchers hope to gain a more precise insight into the specificity and generalizability of their study findings. This may result in systematic similarities or differences in the antecedents, manifestations or consequences of test anxiety (von der Embse et al., 2018).

To determine the influence of cultural factors on the construct of test anxiety, the research community needs a common understanding of culture. Numerous theoretical approaches have been proposed to this end, with the concept of individualism vs. collectivism (IC) being one of the most popular (Lowe, 2022; Yeo & Ong, 2020). To characterize the IC approach, Triandis (1999) proposed four bipolar dimensions: (1) the priority of personal goals vs. community goals; (2) the

emphasis on personal attitudes vs. social norms; (3) the emphasis on rationality vs. connectedness to the collective; and (4) an independent vs. interdependent self-concept. The IC approach thus makes it possible to determine the degree of social connectedness of an individual to a collective. Accordingly, individualist societies tend to focus on personal goals, with behavior serving self-fulfillment. Individualist countries are mainly considered to be Western-oriented nations in Northern and Western Europe, Australia, and North America, e.g., the USA. By comparison, in more collectivist countries, fitting into social networks and solidarity with one's own collective play an important role. Individual desires take a back seat in favor of group goals. The majority of (East) Asian, African, and South American countries are considered collectivist countries (Minkov et al., 2017).

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, which examined the frequency and quality of the manifestation of test anxiety in individualist vs. collectivist societies, questions about the relevance of environmental and contextual variables are becoming increasingly important in comparative cultural research on test anxiety. Due to reforms in the school system, new forms of examinations such as computer-based tests, adaptive tests, or the practical testing of acquired skills such as presenting or moderating have become established worldwide in conjunction with digitalization. Emotions associated with these types of examinations were subsequently examined in more detail for the first time (e.g., Lu et al., 2016; Schickel et al., 2023; von der Embse et al., 2018). In the last decades, for example, much attention has been paid to the impact of central examinations, the so-called high stakes tests, the passing of which is the ticket to higher education.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the possibilities for the psychometric assessment of test anxiety in comparative cultural research. Specifically, we will report and discuss findings on potential cultural influences on the manifestations of test anxiety and/or on underlying contextual variables. An important question is the extent to which societies differ in terms of the interper-

sonal orientation of their members and whether associated differences in self-efficacy expectations or public identity awareness have an influence on the expression of test anxiety. Contextual variables, e.g., how an examination is organized, can also be culturally influenced at an institutional level and have an impact on learners' experience of anxiety. This aspect also gains importance against the backdrop of increasing international mobility.

2 The Psychological Construct of Test Anxiety

Since the 1950s, psychologists and educators have been studying the manifestations, determinants, consequences, and treatment forms of test anxiety with the aim of enabling people with test anxiety to deal more effectively with assessment situations (e.g., Mandler & Sarason, 1952; Sarason, 1980; Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 1998).

Most cross-cultural research on anxiety relates to the clinical concept of anxiety disorders (Patel & Hinton, 2020). The rates of people affected by test anxiety are considerable, but vary depending on the study. A worldwide prevalence estimate concludes that around 15–20% of pupils and students suffer from test anxiety (Hill & Wigfield, 1984). This is consistent with findings, showing an average of 16% of British secondary school students to report high levels of test anxiety (Putwain & Daly, 2014). Other samples showed significantly higher prevalence rates in some cases. At a Canadian university, a prevalence rate of around 39% was found (Gerwing et al., 2015), while in a Turkish sample, 48% of high school students reported increased test anxiety (Kavakci et al., 2014). The international comparison by the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2017) paints a similar picture.

According to Spielberger's trait-state anxiety model (1972), a distinction has to be made between anxiety as a trait and anxiety as a state. Trait anxiety characterizes relatively stable interindividual differences in the tendency to evaluate situations as threatening and to react with

increased state anxiety as a result. Test anxiety as personality trait is defined as a persistent tendency to react with fear to performance requirements that are perceived as threatening to self-esteem (Spielberger, 1980). Higher test anxiety is also associated with higher reported test scores of generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder, but distinct from both disorders (Putwain et al., 2021).

The starting point for empirical test anxiety research was the habit interference theory of Mandler and Sarason (1952), which assumes different activated drives (task drives and an anxiety drive) with different consequences in test situations. Theory development has been decisively influenced by the differentiation of two test anxiety components (Liebert & Morris, 1967). The authors distinguish between a cognitive component (worry), which includes cognitions about performance and its consequences, doubts, and fears of failure, and an affective component (emotionality) accompanied by physiological arousal, which includes unspecific emotional reactions, the perception and communication of autonomous arousal processes (see for overview Roos et al., 2021). A large number of studies have demonstrated the differential effect of both components on performance. The cognitive component shows a consistent, negative relationship to performance; however, findings between emotionality and performance have been inconsistent, showing either no or weak associations with performance, or only at high anxiety levels, whereby the latter can even have a performance-enhancing effect. Meta-analytical data (von der Embse et al., 2018) corroborated these patterns, showing that cognitive components of test anxiety are more closely related to performance (r between -0.24 and -0.32 , depending on the performance measure) than affective-physiological components (r between -0.06 and -0.22).

Apparently, anxiety and emotionality not only represent two different manifestations but also different systems and mechanisms of action in test anxiety. The facet of worry is seen as a decisive determinant. The self-focus of test-anxious individuals impairs effective information processing in performance situations, as self-

centered cognitions restrict attention to task-solving (Richardson et al., 2012; von der Embse et al., 2018). More recent conceptualizations agree on the multidimensional nature of test anxiety differentiating two or more cognitive facets, aside from emotionality, although authors have disagreement on the exact number and the naming of the facets (e.g., Möcklinghoff et al., 2021; Putwain et al., 2021; Schillinger et al., 2021; von der Embse et al., 2018).

2.1 Measuring Test Anxiety

For measurement, it is assumed that a situation-specific trait anxiety scale is better suited for predicting the current state of mind and behavior in trait-congruent situations than a general trait anxiety scale. A test anxiety scale specifically designed for test situations is, therefore, a better predictor of the level of state anxiety and performance in the test situation than a general anxiety inventory (Spielberger, 1980).

To enable a more differentiated assessment of test anxiety, Sarason (1984) developed the Reactions to Tests Scale (RTT). Inspired by findings on cognitive interference in performance situations (e.g., Wine, 1982), the RTT has a four-dimensional structure in which the cognitive component was divided into the anxiety and test-irrelevant thoughts scales. The agitation component consists of the tension and physical symptoms scales. The RTT also exhibited psychometric weaknesses, such as an unstable factor structure and moderate reliability values of the subscales (Zimmer et al., 1992).

In German-speaking countries, Hodapp (1991, 1996) and colleagues (Hodapp et al., 1995) developed an extended and modified version of the English-language TAI, which was referred to as the TAI-G. In addition to worry and emotionality, two subscales were added to assess other relevant cognitive facets of test anxiety. Following Sarason (1984), the cognitive interference scale was added to measure disturbing thoughts. Lack of confidence was added as a fourth independent scale, as lack of confidence and lack of self-esteem correlate substantially with test anxiety.

Following a translation of the TAI-G into English and extensive validation studies (e.g., Musch & Bröder, 1999; Ringeisen et al., 2010), the Test Anxiety Questionnaire (PAF, Hodapp et al., 2011) is now available as a shortened version of the procedure with very good psychometric properties. Both the German language version (Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016; Ringeisen et al., 2015), the English adaptation of the PAF (Hoferichter et al., 2016; Mowbray et al., 2014), and the Italian version of the PAF (Donati et al., 2020; Ringeisen et al., 2020) have been shown to have high factorial validity, construct validity, and criterion validity.

Adaptations of a measurement instrument in different language versions that are equivalent in terms of factor structure and psychometric properties are essential for comparative cultural research into test anxiety. To date, mostly two-dimensional instruments for measuring test anxiety have been examined for their transcultural validity (Zeidner, 1998). In order to measure test anxiety in a multidimensional way, multidimensional instruments that can be applied across cultures are required, the validity of which has been proven on the basis of representative national samples or on the basis of the respective target group (Hagtvet & Sipos, 2004).

In the context of comparative cultural research, multilevel analysis is an important methodological aspect that has hardly been used in previous research (van de Vijver & Poortinga, 2021). Studies at the cultural level understand culture as a unit of analysis. However, there is a danger of unreflectively transferring characteristics found at the cultural level to individuals. In multilevel analyses, variables of interest can be examined simultaneously at different levels, both at the individual level and at aggregated levels.

2.2 Context Variables in Examination Situations

According to the cognitive-motivational model (Lazarus, 1990, 1991; Zeidner, 1995) exam-related emotions, such as test anxiety, are best understood as an interaction between an individual and their environment. Accordingly, both dis-

positional and situational variables should exert an influence on the extent of test anxiety (Ringeisen & Heckel, 2019). While the relevance of dispositional variables has been demonstrated in numerous studies, a systematic investigation of environmental and situational variables has long received little attention in test anxiety research (e.g., Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Zeidner, 1998). These include, for example, factors such as workload or time pressure which have a potential influence on emotions and coping in various exam phases.

Environmental variables at the institutional level in the education system include predetermined structures of the school system or university education, such as the requirements for entering school or obtaining a school-leaving certificate, the number of different types of school in the respective society or the importance of examinations for school and professional careers (King et al., 2024; Lowe, 2022; Sung et al., 2016). The structure and type of examination are of particular importance in this context, as they determine both coping possibilities and emotional manifestations (Green, 1981; Zeidner, 1998).

In recent years, educational reforms have led to an increase in centralized final examinations and standardized aptitude tests. These types of tests, in which the results are compared within a large population group, are referred to as high stakes testing. During these tests, students experience higher test anxiety compared to standard class tests. In a meta-analytical study (von der Embse et al., 2018), the link between test anxiety and reduced test performance was highest for high stakes testing as compared to other influential factors, such as the classroom setting or the individual grade point average. Aptitude tests in particular appear to exert an aversive influence.

Increased internationalization leads to the growing importance of language skills. Learners are taking tests in a foreign language more often, presenting them with a further challenge that goes beyond the mere content of the test. Research explicitly concerned with analyzing tests in a foreign language has mostly examined English as a foreign language. The studies often come from Turkey (e.g., Cakici, 2016; Elaldi, 2016) or other Asian countries (e.g., Salehi &

Marefat, 2014; Tsai & Li, 2012; Yang, 2017), where the language difference to English is greater than to German, for example. A high correlation between foreign language anxiety and test anxiety has been identified, with both constructs being negatively related to performance in the test to be taken (Salehi & Marefat, 2014; Tsai & Li, 2012).

Computer-based tests have also become increasingly important internationally, as they are associated with numerous advantages such as simplified evaluation and, in general, an increased use due to advanced technology overcoming local dependency. Due to the increasing digitalization of the education system, test anxiety research is looking at the effects of this test modality. In summary, computer-based testing alone does not appear to have a significant impact on test anxiety in mostly young samples (Cassady & Gridley, 2005; Deloatch et al., 2016; Stowell & Bennett, 2010). However, individuals who rate their computer-related skills as poorer report higher anxiety (Balogun & Olanrewaju, 2016; Lu et al., 2016; Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019). Being allowed to complete a computer-based test at home, often has an anxiety-reducing effect, while test anxiety levels remain elevated in a normal classroom setting (Stowell & Bennett, 2010). Yet, for some individuals, remote-testing may increase test anxiety (Jaap et al., 2021). Newly developed forms of examinations due to crises or pandemics, such as open-book examinations, also have no significant influence on test anxiety compared to traditional examinations (Hong et al., 2023).

Another aspect of testing is computer-adaptive testing (CAT). The test difficulty is adjusted by an iterative estimation of the respondent's abilities: If the respondent answers an item correctly, a more difficult item follows; if an item is answered incorrectly, an easier item follows. Accordingly, each respondent is confronted with approximately 50% items that they can solve and 50% that they cannot. It has been shown that groups of people with high test anxiety are at a further disadvantage compared to conventional testing (Colwell, 2013; Lu et al., 2016; Ortner & Caspers, 2011). One possible reason for this is that the characteristics of the CAT are associated with a decrease in the subjective expectation of

success, which particularly affects people with test anxiety (Ortner & Caspers, 2011).

A special examination modality is also found in situations where interpersonal communication is required in addition to the test content. These include, for example, oral examinations and other situations in which a high level of moderation or presentation skills is expected. The role of test anxiety in the context of test situations that require interpersonal communication has been investigated particularly in relation to oral examinations (Sparfeldt et al., 2016; Zeidner, 1998). A study by Ringeisen et al. (2019) highlights the role of self-efficacy expectations: high self-efficacy expectations influence the threat assessment of the exam, which in turn is associated with a decrease in anxiety indicators on the day of the exam. In general, the training of interpersonal communication skills has become increasingly important in both school and university teaching. In addition to anxiety, other emotions are also relevant in the acquisition and performance of such skills. In particular, boredom during learning appears to have a negative influence on students' performance in a practical test of their moderation skills (Ringeisen & Schickel, 2019). An increase in self-perceived moderation skills is achieved primarily through enjoyment of the learning process, which in turn can be promoted by a teaching concept that supports competence, relationships, and autonomy (Tibubos et al., 2019). Moderation skills have not yet been explicitly investigated in relation to test anxiety, but self-perceived moderation skills presumably play a decisive role here, too, as self-efficacy and competence expectations are strongly related to anxiety in learning and performance situations (for overview, see Ringeisen & Heckel, 2019).

3 Test Anxiety in Different Cultures

Research into test anxiety from a comparative cultural perspective not only provides an insight into the universality or specificity of its cognitive and affective components, but also differentiates its macrosociocultural antecedents and consequences. In the stress process, cultural factors can

exert a decisive influence on a number of parameters, such as perception, cognitive evaluation, or the attribution of evaluative situations (Zeidner, 1998). Culture may also play an important role in determining the frequency of occurrence and the form of expression of anxiety (Öner & Kaymak, 1987). Thus, in current cognitive-motivational models of stress and emotions, it seems almost imperative to consider cultural factors in the conceptualization of anxiety, stress, and coping (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Seipp & Schwarzer, 1996; Zeidner, 1998). The construct of test anxiety has been studied in many countries around the world in order to determine the influence of cultural factors on the experience and manifestation of test anxiety (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Seipp & Schwarzer, 1996; Zeidner, 1998). Researchers around the world are studying test anxiety in various ways. An overview of studies from different countries and cross-cultural comparisons can be found in Tibubos et al. (2020).

Seipp and Schwarzer (1991) conducted a meta-analysis based on TAI data from 14 nations, which capture the emotionality and worry components of test anxiety. The highest mean values of test anxiety were found in Egypt, Jordan, and Hungary. In the upper midfield are countries such as Germany, Korea, and Puerto Rico, followed by the USA, India, Czechoslovakia, and Turkey. The lowest levels of test anxiety were found in the samples from the Netherlands, Italy, China, and Japan. In summary, the highest levels of test anxiety were found in Islamic countries, while lower levels were recorded in Western European and Asian countries. Seipp and Schwarzer (1996) found similar results in another meta-analysis in which they examined studies that compared at least two countries in terms of levels of test anxiety. The highest levels of test anxiety were found in Islamic countries (Egypt, Jordan, Iran, and Turkey), followed by South American countries (Brazil and Puerto Rico) and Eastern European countries (Hungary and Czechoslovakia). Lower levels of test anxiety were observed in the samples from North America (USA and Canada) and Asia (India, Korea, China, and Japan), with the lowest overall levels found in Western European countries (the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy).

Based on this comparative cultural research, it could be assumed that pupils and students in many collectivist societies are at a higher risk of suffering from test anxiety than cohorts in individualist countries (King et al., 2024; Lowe, 2022). But the findings described in the previous section contain inconsistencies in the relationship between test anxiety and the degree of individualist orientation. For example, one would expect a higher dispositional level of test anxiety in collectivist Asian countries such as Japan and China than in individualist countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, or Italy. Studies that examine general anxiety in young people in East Asian countries (e.g., Liu et al., 1997; Yao et al., 2007) find extremely high levels of anxiety that reach into the pathological range from a Western perspective. It therefore seems essential to consider additional control variables such as the general level of anxiety when test anxiety is examined in a comparative cultural context.

3.1 Cultural Factors That Influence Test Anxiety

In order to explain cultural differences in the manifestation of test anxiety, various environmental factors and school-related variables have to be considered. A number of studies have tested specific hypotheses related to the effects of culture-specific factors on the development and manifestation of test anxiety. Examples include cultural and parental values, norms, socialization practices, and particular characteristics of the respective educational system and its organization (for an overview, see Lowe, 2022).

As described above, collectivist countries differ from individualist countries particularly in their interpersonal structures. It is postulated that an individualist orientation, on the one hand, has a relatively favorable effect on dealing with evaluation situations, as this leads to the development of more self-efficacy-related attitudes, skills, and coping strategies. In collectivist countries, on the other hand, hierarchically organized interpersonal and interdependent structures are more common. As a result, pupils and students are

under far greater pressure not to disappoint authority figures such as teachers, parents, or older family members. Academic and professional success is not only associated with positive associations for the individual (higher income, career prospects) but also for the collective as a whole. Personal achievement motivation should therefore be understood in relation to loyalty to the collective (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005). In many collectivist countries, behavior aimed purely at personal self-fulfillment without consideration of the collective is associated with feelings of guilt and shame (Wang & Ollendick, 2001). In the event of failure, family reputation may be affected, possibly leading to the development of increased anxiety and public identity awareness (Zeidner, 2007).

Another characteristic of many collectivist countries is the existence of an extremely competitive and selective education system (e.g., Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan, and China). The education system determines many environmental variables as well as school-related factors that can be of crucial importance for the manifestation of test anxiety (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005). In Islamic-Arab countries in particular, both school-diplomas and university entrance qualifications depend on a single nationwide examination. Exam results therefore have far-reaching consequences and are perceived as highly threatening (El-Zahhar & Hocevar, 1991). Furthermore, in collectivist-oriented East Asian countries, pupils and students invest more time in school activities than in individualist countries such as the USA (Larson & Seepersad, 2003), which is associated with increased school stress (Verma et al., 2002). In many of these countries, such as India, China, or Korea, the focus is predominantly on the acquisition of knowledge. Free time and vacation may be used mainly for school preparation (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Kim et al., 1997). The perceived challenging nature of an exam and extreme exam conditions could therefore be responsible for cultural differences (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Lowe, 2022). Contradictory research results found comparatively low levels of test anxiety in countries such

as Japan (Araki et al., 1992) or Turkey (Öner & Kaymak, 1987). In addition to the expectations of the group and the examination conditions, familiarity with test situations may also play an important role in this context, which varies depending on the education system.

Furthermore, countries differ in terms of specific school-related variables that are determined by the structure of the education system. These include organizational variables such as the number of given school types and their respective concepts as well as individual variables such as the form of teaching. There is great variation in terms of class size and the associated type of teaching method (e.g., frontal or interactive).

3.2 Cultural Factors That Influence Test Anxiety

As described in the previous sections, research into test anxiety in different countries reveals cultural differences in the manifestation of test anxiety. Nevertheless, researchers were able to find similar structures for the construct of test anxiety across cultures, which were particularly evident when different national samples were considered together.

Despite significant mean differences in the test anxiety values of different country samples, according to Seipp and Schwarzer (1996), differentiation between cultures is limited pointing to test anxiety as a relatively homogeneous cross-cultural phenomenon. The results indicate an average test anxiety score across different nations of around 40 TAI points with a standard deviation of around ten TAI points and a range of 20–80 points.

Irrespective of the IC dimensions, a similar relationship between trait test anxiety and state test anxiety was found in various national samples across the different phases of a test (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Ringen, 2008; Seipp & Schwarzer, 1996; Zeidner, 1998). The correlation between trait anxiety and state anxiety levels decreases with time proximity to the test, while the influence of contextual factors increases.

Furthermore, no cultural differences in the structure of the test anxiety facets can be observed on a psychometric level. In numerous independent research studies, for example, in the USA (Spielberger, 1980; Szafranski et al., 2012), Egypt, Brazil (Hocevar & El-Zahhar, 1985, 1988), and Germany (Schwarzer, 1984), the two-dimensional structure of the TAI with the facets of anxiety and emotionality was repeatedly replicated using linguistic adaptations of the procedure.

The identification of gender differences as an interpersonal factor has received a lot of attention. There are similar findings across cultures, too: Girls report higher average test anxiety scores than boys (for an overview, see von der Embse et al., 2018). However, these gender-specific differences appear to be more pronounced in North American samples than in Asian samples (Robson et al., 2023). In the USA, an increase in test anxiety levels has been recorded in girls compared to boys since the 1980s (Szafranski et al., 2012).

Overall, individualist and collectivist societies appear to exhibit comparable patterns of state emotions at different stages of testing (e.g., Vishwanathan et al., 1997; Wang & Ollendick, 2001). At the same time, research suggests that the relationship between cultural influences and test anxiety is moderated by long-term persistent contextual and interpersonal factors (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 1998). For example, results from the PISA study (2017) show that socio-economic status is associated with test anxiety in many countries. Yet, the nature of the correlation is culturally influenced: In countries such as Denmark, Luxembourg, and Sweden, primarily socioeconomically disadvantaged students suffer higher levels of test anxiety; in contrast, in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Korea, Peru, and Spain, it is the socioeconomically privileged.

The inconsistent findings suggests that cultural differences in test anxiety are not adequately explained by the rather broad IC concept, particularly, when the average level of test anxiety is only compared between different countries. A recent study by King et al. (2024) analyzing PISA data from 2015, including 51 countries,

indicated that students in more unequal countries reported not only greater test anxiety but also had lower levels of achievement. In order to enable a more differentiated assessment of cultural factors from a methodological perspective, the consideration of contextual and interpersonal factors at different levels has been proposed (e.g., van de Vijver & Poortinga, 2021). Additionally, research employing an emic approach is warranted to be able to concretize culture-specific variables.

4 Conclusion

Research of test anxiety in different countries has been made possible by numerous adaptations of test anxiety questionnaires in the respective languages. Many studies relied on Triandis' IC paradigm (1995a, 1995b, 1999) to investigate possible cultural variability. In addition, interpersonal variables (cultural norms, parental expectations, socialization practices) and environmental variables (structures of the educational system, school, and examination-related variables) were examined. Depending on these factors, cultural differences in dispositional test anxiety could be identified, although the findings to date are inconsistent. A great deal of evidence was found in favor of the transcultural validity of the postulated cognitive and emotional facets of test anxiety. There also appears to be a cross-cultural pattern of relationships between dispositional test anxiety and the respective state anxiety across the individual phases of an exam (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Ringeisen, 2008; Seipp & Schwarzer, 1996; Zeidner, 1998).

Although countless studies have been conducted on test anxiety and numerous cultural factors have been considered as potential determinants, to date there is no sound theoretical framework that explicitly incorporates cultural factors. Previous research results are mostly based on sample comparisons at the country level, which were interpreted post hoc. In this way, they do not allow any conclusions on possible systematic influences of cultural variables regarding the manifestation and development of test anxiety. Only a theory-based approach would

enable the formulation of specific hypotheses and facilitate the interpretation of the research results and their integration into the existing body of findings (Zeidner, 1998).

5 Need for Future Research

Most of the findings of comparative cultural research come from studies in which researchers compared comparable indices on the construct of test anxiety. Although transculturally valid instruments such as the TAI exist for measuring test anxiety, country-specific studies can only be compared with each other to a limited extent. According to Zeidner (1998), the studies in question differ in a number of ways, such as the survey method, the time of measurement or the demographic characteristics of the test subjects (e.g., age, group affiliation, level of education, or socioeconomic background). Subjective situational factors at the individual level, such as perceived time pressure or subjective workload, have also been neglected to date for practical reasons. To improve the comparability and interpretability of future studies, El-Zahhar and Hocevar (1991) suggested collecting data in at least two countries in parallel. The operationalization, the survey instruments used, and the samples should be as identical as possible with regard to certain key parameters. Furthermore, the representativeness of the observed samples is another critical point, as cultural comparisons are often carried out without the prior collection of normative data (Zeidner, 1998).

Test anxiety research has its roots in the USA (Mandler & Sarason, 1952), which, according to Bodas and Ollendick (2005), has influenced subsequent research in terms of the methods and approaches used due to an etic approach to culture. They note an individualist orientation of test anxiety research and criticize the lack of reference to culture-specific contextual variables, which include interpersonal and environmental variables (see, e.g., meta-analyses by Hembree, 1988; Seipp & Schwarzer, 1991, 1996). As a solution, Bodas and Ollendick (2005), following Poortinga and van de Vijver (1987) and Berry

et al. (2002), suggest operationalizing culture-specific contextual variables at the individual, inter-individual, and societal levels after adequate preliminary research and theoretical grounding. In this way, an emic perspective, which focuses on cultural characteristics, can be embedded in psychometric approaches.

From a clinical perspective, there is ultimately a need for multidimensional instruments that enable a differentiated assessment of the facets of habitual test anxiety in different cultures. For German-speaking countries, for example, there is the test anxiety questionnaire (PAF, Hodapp et al., 2011) to evaluate interventions aimed at reducing test anxiety in a nuanced way. In Asian countries (see Bodas & Ollendick, 2005), test anxiety may increasingly manifest on the somatic level. However, in order to make the quality of somatic symptoms more useful for diagnosis and treatment, there is a lack of multidimensional instruments that differentiate between the affective and somatic aspects of test anxiety in addition to the cognitive facets. Against this background, it would be useful to also analyze physiological correlates in exam situations (Roos et al., 2021) to be able to make well-grounded statements regarding possible cultural differences in the emotional component.

In view of the relatively high prevalence of test anxiety, possible forms of intervention to reduce test anxiety have also been researched internationally. In a meta-analysis conducted by Huntley et al. (2019), the majority of the studies included came from the USA, and behavioral therapy interventions were effective in reducing test anxiety. Acceptance-commitment therapy (ACT), as a third wave of cognitive behavioral therapy, can also contribute to a reduction in test anxiety (Uysal et al., 2024). In a German study comparing different interventions, both cognitive behavioral therapy and a facilitated self-help group reduced self-reported test anxiety, but none of the interventions showed a reduction in physiological reactivity (Reiss et al., 2018). Initial findings on the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions, e.g., the use of biofeedback devices in conjunction with breathing training, mindfulness-based painting before an exam situa-

ation and the use of lemon essential oil, show a reduction in test anxiety (e.g., Carsley & Heath, 2020; Özer et al., 2022; Rosenberg & Hamiel, 2019). The influence of situation-specific variables, such as exam modality, is also receiving increasing attention in test anxiety research. This reflects changes in the education system and the associated changes in examination modalities (e.g., Lu et al., 2016; Tibubos et al., 2019; Yang, 2017). For oral examinations as well as for computer-based testing, it has been shown that self-perceived competence in particular influences the level of test anxiety (Lu et al., 2016; Ringeisen et al., 2019), whereas high stakes testing has the potential to have an overall anxiety-increasing effect on learners (von der Embse et al., 2018).

With increasing international networking, more and more examinations are being taken in a foreign language and educational contexts are becoming more international. A study in the German-speaking world was able to show that non-native speakers exhibit increased anxiety reactions and a greater risk of inhibited performance among students (Ringeisen et al., 2019). The internationalization of the education system and the associated intercultural settings for examinations represent new framework conditions that need to be further researched from a culturally sensitive perspective—also in terms of equal opportunities.

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The Interplay of Self-Efficacy and Test Anxiety in Academic Performance from an Individualistic Cultural Perspective

10

Christian Heckel and Tobias Ringeisen

1 Introduction¹

Taking examinations constitutes a major evaluative stressor for many students, which may elicit cognitive, affective, and endocrinological stress responses, for instance, threat appraisals, feelings of anxiety, and cortisol secretion. These stress responses can have a negative effect on academic performance as they may impair working memory capacity as well as the retrieval and processing of learned information (for an overview, see Oberauer et al., 2016; Wolf, 2006). Researchers have made an effort to identify within-person dispositional variables, which may either aggravate or reduce the detrimental effects of these stress responses on exam performance. Test anxiety and self-efficacy are considered as important examples of either category in academic settings. While test anxiety gained scholarly attention,

especially with the rise of theories that conceptualize learners' emotions, the construct of self-efficacy was developed by none other than one of the most frequently cited psychologists of all time, Albert Bandura (e.g., Bandura, 1997, von der Embse et al. 2018).

Self-efficacy describes a person's belief in being able to achieve a challenging goal through sufficient behavioral effort and can be considered a competence belief and as such as a dispositional resource (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2002). Self-efficacy can be assessed on an overarching level as beliefs about being able to meet challenges in life (general self-efficacy) but also as a contextual facet that focuses on demands in specific settings or situations (Bandura, 1997, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2002). In that sense, academic self-efficacy represents self-directed competence beliefs, which characterize an individual's self-perceived conviction of being capable to master performance-related tasks in educational settings, especially in exam situations (e.g., Putwain et al., 2013). Academic self-efficacy attenuates exam-related cognitive, affective, and endocrinological stress responses, and thus the negative effects these responses can have on performance (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Minkley et al., 2014).

Test anxiety is conceptualized as a dispositional yet situation-specific multifaceted tendency to experience performance evaluations as threatening, and to respond with higher levels of stress and state anxiety, as well as more intense

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physiological symptoms (e.g., Hodapp et al., 2011; Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 2007). Three cognitive facets can be differentiated, namely, *interference* (distraction from academic tasks at hand by intrusive and irrelevant thoughts), *worry* (intrusive concerns about the own performance and resulting consequences of failure), and *lack of confidence* (low faith in the own ability to overcome academic challenges). A fourth facet, known as *emotionality*, represents the perception and expression of autonomic bodily reactions and accompanying negative affect. Each of these four facets shows differential associations with exam-related cognitions and achievement (e.g., Hoferichter et al., 2016; Möcklinghoff et al., 2021, 2023; Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016; Ringeisen et al., 2020; Schillinger et al., 2021).

Cultural factors have been acknowledged in anxiety research for decades, especially when investigating relations between test anxiety, its antecedents, and performance-related outcomes. Older (e.g., Dion & Toner, 1988, Guida & Ludlow, 1989, Sharma & Sud, 1990) and newer (e.g., Bodas & Ollendick, 2005, Nyroos et al., 2015) research findings indicate that manifestations, structure, and levels of test anxiety, as well as relation patterns with related constructs, may vary depending on the cultural background of the studied student samples (for an overview, see Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Tibubos et al., 2025 chapter 5 in this volume).

To conceptualize cultural differences, Triandis (1995a, 1995b, 1999) largely developed and refined the concept of individualism–collectivism (IC), which suggests that cultures vary in the degree to which they prioritize individual vs. (group-related) social needs. The IC framework helps us to understand how interconnected people are within their societies and how the quality of these interrelations shapes their values and behaviors. In individualistic societies, mainly found in North America, Scandinavia, Western Europe, and Australia/New Zealand, personal goals and self-fulfillment are central. Conversely, collectivistic societies prioritize group harmony and shared goals, with individuals often putting the needs of the group ahead of their own. This is

often seen in countries in East Asia, Africa, and South America (Minkov et al., 2017).

Therefore, if the quality, structure, and/or intensity of the manifestations of test anxiety and its relations with other constructs constitute the focus of research, it may be beneficial to draw on existing cross-culturally comparative research to examine whether the patterns of relationships between the variables of interest can be replicated with samples of comparable cultural orientation (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Minkov et al., 2017; Tibubos et al., 2025 chapter in this volume). This goes in line with a growing number of studies that have found structural differences in test anxiety in samples from different cultural contexts (e.g., Thomas & Ozer, 2024). Moreover, several established theories, such as Control-Value Theory (CVT), that conceptualize the relations between academic emotions, such as anxiety, antecedents such as self-efficacy, and outcomes such as performance, were developed mainly by scientists with an individualistic orientation. To account for cultural variations, CVT proposes that the basic psychological functions that describe these relations should be universal, although “the compositions of these functions” may vary strongly in cultural contexts (Pekrun & Goetz, 2024, p. 88). The authors summarize several studies that have found evidence of differences in the strength, but not the valence, of academic emotions such as anxiety between students from different cultural backgrounds, which appear to be related to variation in beliefs about effort and ability. It is therefore debatable whether and how the assumptions derived from theories such as CVT can be transferred to collectivistic learning settings.

Based on these premises, this chapter provides an overview of the research findings on the relationships between self-efficacy, test anxiety, and academic achievement in samples with an individualistic orientation. We applied the following criteria to identify suitable studies for inclusion in our overview: (1) the samples include school or university students from education settings; (2) the samples are from countries that can be classified as having a predominantly individualistic orientation (operationalized by achieving a

positive score on the IC dimension in the meta-analysis by Minkov et al. (2017), with possible values between 182 and –291); (3) the studies assessed at least the three core constructs of test anxiety (as a trait and/or as a state), self-efficacy in relation to academic settings, and performance outcomes; (4) the studies either used a sum score of test anxiety or assessed at least one of its four facets (cf. Hodapp et al., 2011); and (5) the studies used a conceptual theoretical framework that reflected either the core assumptions of CVT (Pekrun, 2006, 2024; Pekrun et al., 2023) or the Transactional Model of Test Anxiety (TMTA; Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 2007), even if the theories were not explicitly mentioned.

Despite the strict application of these criteria when searching the relevant literature databases, our overview does not fulfill the criteria of a systematic review and does not claim to have identified all relevant studies. However, our selection of studies enables a thorough understanding of the patterns of relationships between the variables.

In addition, (methodological) reviews and meta-analyses on the assessment of or on the relationships between test anxiety and its manifestations, self-efficacy, and performance measures were considered. These publications were also predominantly based on samples from countries that can be identified as individualistic according to the above-mentioned criteria of Minkov et al. (2017). After screening the papers with regard to their theoretical foundation, methods, and results, we grouped the findings with regard to the assumptions of CVT and TMTA, summarized, interpreted, and discussed the patterns of results, also with regard to methodological considerations and shortcomings.

2 Perspectives on Self-Efficacy, Test Anxiety, and Performance

Several theories conceptualize the interplay of self-efficacy, test anxiety, stress responses, and performance in the context of examinations. However, each theory puts an emphasis on different processes and/or constructs, proposing an

alternative order of variables. For instance, CVT (e.g., Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2007) highlights the importance of control and value appraisals that elicit and modulate learners' emotions while the biopsychosocial model of challenge and threat (e.g., Blascovich, 2008; Fonseca et al., 2014) specifies, under which conditions appraisals of threat and challenge are related to physiological stress responses, which, in turn, can affect performance. Motivational theories such as the Dual Process Model (e.g., Brandtstädtter, 2009) may be used to investigate how exam-related cognitions and emotions change when students become aware that a performance goal was unaccomplished, for instance, after failing an exam (Bermeitinger et al., 2018).

For the current chapter, we focused on studies which were directly or indirectly based on the assumptions of two influential theories, CVT (Pekrun, 2006, 2024; Pekrun et al., 2023) and the TMTA (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 2007). CVT proposes a three-dimensional taxonomy of emotions (see also TenHouten in this book) that can vary regarding their valence (positive or negative) and arousal (activating or deactivating). Moreover, emotions can differ in their object focus and be related to achievement activities (e.g., enjoyment) and/or subsequent learning outcomes in terms of success or failure. Anxiety represents an important example. As such, test anxiety can be classified as a negative activating outcome emotion that arises when academic success is of personal importance yet uncertain. CVT also proposes a sequence of cognitive predictors assumed to trigger anxiety, which, in turn, should directly affect performance (cf. Frenzel et al., 2009, p. 219, Fig. 9.2). We adapted this sequence which is depicted schematically in Fig. 10.1. According to CVT, the emotional quality depends on the (1) subjective control individuals perceive over performance-based activities and outcomes and (2) the value they attach to these activities and outcomes. In its current state (Pekrun, 2024), CVT acknowledges that these appraisals constitute students' individual antecedents of emotions, which are fueled by past experiences of failure and success and beliefs about future achievement, such as self-efficacy.

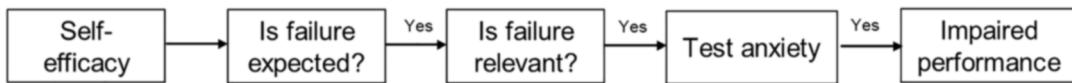


Fig. 10.1 Schematic depiction of the relations between self-efficacy, appraisals, test anxiety, and exam performance, based on CVT

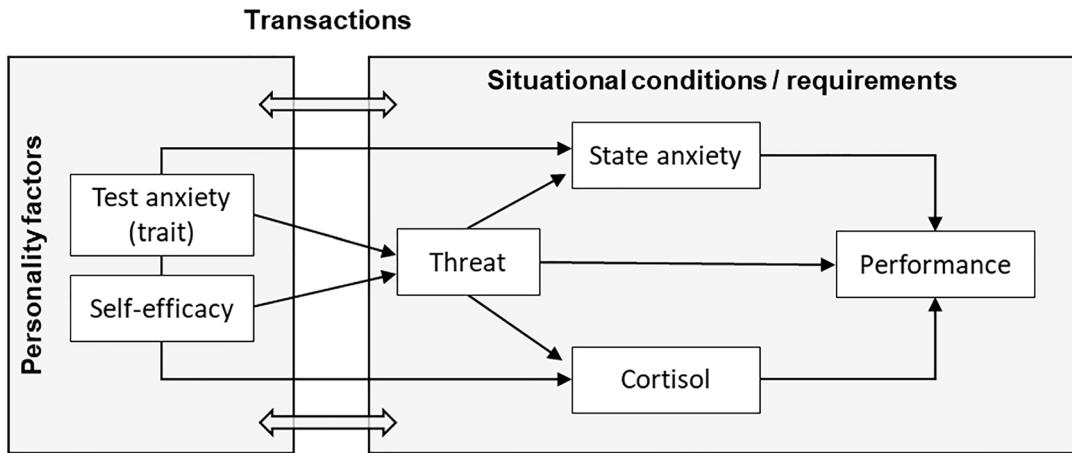


Fig. 10.2 Schematic depiction of the relations between self-efficacy, test anxiety, threat appraisals, stress responses, and exam performance, based on TMTA

Regarding anxiety, value appraisals signify whether the activities and outcomes are rated as positive or negative and to which extent success or failure is personally relevant. High self-efficacy beliefs should enhance perceived situational control, thus reducing the anticipated risk of failure. Mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2002) might play a crucial role for this relationship, as experiences of past success may alter appraisals of personal efficacy and, in turn, control. Students who believe in their ability to prepare adequately for an exam will expect to pass an exam and achieve a good result. The anticipation of doing well should, in turn, be related to higher relevance of success. In this combination of high control and value appraisals, test anxiety is unlikely to be elicited. On the other hand, when perceived control is low, failure might be expected and of high personal relevance, which should trigger test anxiety. Especially, the cognitive facets of test anxiety will hinder effective learning (e.g., due to worrying about the consequences of failure) and thus reduce performance.

Aligned with Bandura (1997), test anxiety in the context of CVT may therefore be conceptual-

ized as a negative, activating emotion which arises as a direct function of low self-efficacy beliefs during situations in which learning activities and outcomes are perceived as highly relevant but uncontrollable. CVT acknowledges that test anxiety may have detrimental and/or beneficial effects, depending on the quality and intensity of the anxiety manifestations (Pekrun & Stephens, 2012; von der Embse et al., 2018). Despite specifying the structure of relations between cognitions, test anxiety, and performance, however, CVT does not distinguish if and how specific facets of anxiety relate to appraisals and learning outcomes. CVT neither considers explicitly how exam-related stress responses may develop over time nor addresses the role of threat appraisals in this context.

The TMTA conceptualizes changes in exam-related stress responses as a transaction between dispositional antecedents like self-efficacy and/or test anxiety, and features of the environment (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 2007). The proposed structure of relationships is schematically depicted in Fig. 10.2. According to the TMTA, students respond with heightened state anxiety and physiological stress responses, when

they perceive performance-related evaluations as threatening. Self-efficacy is considered a key personality variable, which is assumed to attenuate threat appraisals and exam-related stress responses. High levels of (trait) test anxiety should have opposite effects. The TMTA proposes direct effects of self-efficacy/and (trait) test anxiety on threat appraisals and stress responses, as well as indirect effects through threat appraisals and stress responses on performance. The quality and intensity of environmental features may also aggravate or reduce threat appraisals and stress responses. For instance, compared to students high on self-efficacy, those with low self-efficacy beliefs may perceive difficult tasks or time pressure as more threatening, and thus respond with greater anxiety. The intensity of stress responses may thus fluctuate over the course of an examination if relevant environmental features change.

Lowe et al. (2008, pp. 217) introduced a holistic test anxiety model, which extended the assumptions of the TMTA. In essence, Lowe and colleagues suggest that personality characteristics beyond self-efficacy and test anxiety, for instance, intelligence, locus of control, or the five-factor model, determine the intensity with which a test is perceived as an evaluative threat evoking cognitive, physio-affective, and behavioral stress symptoms. These symptoms, in turn, are proposed to influence the actual test performance, which may reflect back on self-efficacy beliefs in terms of time-lagged feedback-loops.

2.1 Empirical Findings for Control-Value Theory

To date, several studies have examined the structure of relationships between self-efficacy, appraisals, test anxiety, and academic performance based on CVT in different educational settings (for an overview, see, e.g., Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). Many studies rely on cross-sectional designs, which do not allow to test causality (e.g., Frenzel et al., 2007; Goetz et al., 2007; Putwain et al., 2014; Ringeisen et al., 2016). Only a few studies realized longitudinal

designs, which allow to test the proposed structure of relationships, and the direction of influences, including true mediation effects. For instance, Butz et al. (2016) examined the full sequence of US students' control and value appraisals, anxiety (among other emotions), and academic success. While control and value appraisals were positively related with each other, both showed negative relations with anxiety. Also, only anxiety fully mediated the positive effects of control and value on students' perceived success.

Two German studies provided empirical evidence for the validity of the full sequence of variables as proposed by CVT in traditional learning settings, using a correlational design (Ringeisen et al., 2016) and a time-lagged design (Roick & Ringeisen, 2017). Over the course of 10 days, for instance, Roick and Ringeisen (2017) found that greater self-efficacy predicted greater perceived control, which was related to greater relevance of academic success. The latter predicted higher levels of test anxiety before and after an oral exam. In addition, self-efficacy was related to all other study variables, including better exam performance.

For traditional learning settings, various studies yielded evidence for the anxiety-reducing and performance-enhancing effects of high self-efficacy. The majority of existing studies, however, focused on single facets of test anxiety, especially worry and emotionality (e.g., Brandmo et al., 2019; Ringeisen et al., 2016; Roick & Ringeisen, 2017; Schnell et al., 2015). Only a few studies realized a differentiated assessment of the four test anxiety facets, measuring interference, worry, lack of confidence, and emotionality simultaneously. These studies also yielded consistent negative associations between all four test anxiety facets and self-efficacy, corroborating the assumption that test anxiety may develop as a function of low dispositional control perceptions (Keith et al., 2003; Putwain et al., 2013; Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016). Compared to the other three test anxiety facets, the relations between self-efficacy and lack of confidence were the strongest, albeit both can be considered as conceptually different (Hodapp et al., 2011; Hodapp & Benson,

1997; Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016). These patterns of relations were identified based on student samples from Western European countries. Interestingly, they mirror the overall findings reported in the meta-analytic review by von der Embse et al. (2018), who found that self-efficacy was negatively related to test anxiety overall, although the relationships between the different studies included in the meta-analysis were less homogeneous compared to other concepts related to students' self-concept (e.g., personal control).

Pekrun et al. (2023, study 3) found students' anxiety to be related to control and value appraisals. In terms of latent correlations, perceived control was negatively related to anxiety over the course of three different measurement points. The value of success and failure, both of which related to the consequences of passing or failing an exam, was initially positively related to anxiety, but by measurement time 3, there were no longer any significant relationships. Interestingly, unexpected failure was also related to anxiety at all three measurement points. Regression analyses were used to examine longitudinal effects of appraisals on anxiety emphasizing that lack of control and focus on past failure seems to modulate students' anxiety. The latter relations are consistent with the findings of Heckel et al. (2021), who found that in Italian students, lower mastery experiences predicted higher levels of test anxiety across all cognitive and affective facets.

In their meta-analytical review, von der Embse et al. (2018) report on negative relations between test anxiety and various performance indicators (grade point average, IQ-Tests, standardized exams). However, studies that examined multiple facets of test anxiety simultaneously provided evidence that the four test anxiety facets may show differential relations with performance (Meier & Kane, 2017; Möcklinghoff et al., 2021; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012; Schillinger et al., 2021). For instance, in a study by Möcklinghoff et al. (2023), only cognitive interference emerged as a negative predictor of students' average grade, while the other three facets had no effects on performance. Schillinger et al. (2021) and Donati et al. (2020)

found only interference and lack of confidence to be negatively related to performance. The mechanisms may be explained as follows: Low levels of interference and greater confidence release working memory capacity, which enhances exam-related information processing, reinforces learning efforts, and thus contributes to better performance (Oberauer et al., 2016).

For the context of online learning, the patterns are less clear. Heckel and Ringeisen (2019) found that student's self-efficacy was positively related to perceived control, which in turn was positively related to interest as a value appraisal. Surprisingly, test anxiety was unrelated to interest and was predicted by self-efficacy only yet showed a negative relation with the affective learning outcome satisfaction, as assumed. Other studies confirmed the negative relationships between self-efficacy and anxiety, suggesting that high self-efficacy buffers from anxiety (González et al., 2016; Marchand & Gutierrez, 2012). Concerning the relationships between anxiety and performance, some studies found negative associations, while a few reported zero or even positive relations (Brosnan, 1998; Butz et al., 2016; Daniels et al., 2009; Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019; Marchand & Gutierrez, 2012; Yang et al., 2018). Other studies differentiated the combined effects of self-efficacy and test anxiety on performance. For instance, Putwain and Daly (2013) found that a combination of higher test anxiety and lower self-efficacy led to lower performance, whereas highly self-efficacious students with low to moderate test anxiety levels performed better.

2.2 Empirical Findings for the Transactional Model of Test Anxiety

Employing correlational designs in real-life exam settings and experimental designs, a number of studies from various theoretical backgrounds has examined assumptions that are also emphasized in the TMTA. These assumptions refer to associations between dispositional antecedents like

self-efficacy or trait anxiety, changes in different exam-related stress responses, and performance in a test situation. For instance, several laboratory studies jointly assessed levels and changes in appraisals, negative emotions, or physiological stress correlates in test situations, such as carrying out a mental arithmetic task or a social-evaluative speech task (e.g., Fonseca et al., 2014; Pruessner et al., 1997; Tomaka et al., 1997). However, many of these experimental studies did not measure personality traits as potential antecedents of stress responses. If dispositional predictors were included, studies seldom assessed a combination of cognitive, physiological and affective stress responses. Moreover, relationships between dispositional variables and stress responses are difficult to compare because the assessment intervals varied considerably across studies, ranging from a few days to several weeks. For instance, the cortisol assessment intervals ranged from 30 min to a few days (for an overview, see Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). Changes in cortisol are primarily expected in close proximity to the exam, which calls for multiple assessments on the exam day. However, most studies measured cortisol only once before and after an exam, and seldom in combination with state anxiety (Preuß et al., 2010; Schoofs et al., 2008). Only one study, to our knowledge, has examined the interplay of self-efficacy, threat appraisals, affective and endocrinological stress responses, and performance in the context of a real-life exam, when anxiety and cortisol were measured repeatedly yet parallelized before and after the exam (Ringelisen et al., 2019). Repeated parallelized longitudinal assessments are recommended to detect the relations between levels and changes of multiple stress responses and other relevant variables over the course of an exam (Raffety et al., 1997). Employing such a repeated parallelized longitudinal design, Ringelisen et al. (2019) reported that anxiety levels and cortisol concentrations decreased from before the exam until the grades were announced, although levels and change trajectories of both stress responses were not related to each other. Interestingly, participants with higher levels of self-efficacy reported

lower threat appraisals and a steeper anxiety decrease from before until after the exam, which, in turn, was related to better exam performance. Similarly, Schickel et al. (2023) applied a longitudinal design and assessed self-efficacy, challenge and threat appraisals, stress responses, and presentation performance in German university students. Lower performance was related to higher initial threat appraisals and a steeper increase in cortisol concentration over time. Interestingly, neither self-efficacy nor the slopes of threat or challenge responses were associated with performance.

Other research on the effects of self-efficacy in real-life exams assessed only selected stress responses, mostly focusing either on physiological indicators or affective manifestations (Campbell & Ehlert, 2012; Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004; Schönfeld et al., 2017; Zeidner, 2007). In essence, findings indicate that higher self-efficacy may be associated with better performance and reduced stress responses such as lower anxiety and lower cortisol secretion, with anxiety often acting as a mediator between both variables (e.g., Bonaccio & Reeve, 2010; Mills et al., 2006; Putwain et al., 2013). Aligned with the holistic test anxiety model (Lowe et al., 2008), Torkzadeh et al. (2006) found evidence that high technology-related anxiety might hinder the development of self-efficacy. Laboratory studies on social-evaluative performance yielded multiple evidence for negative albeit weak linear associations between self-efficacy and physiological stress measures such as changes in cortisol concentrations or heart rate parameters (Nierop et al., 2008; Pruessner et al., 1997; Schönfeld et al., 2017). Outside this context, other experimental studies also supported a linear dampening effect of self-efficacy on the cortisol response, for instance, with regard to phobic stressors (Bandura et al., 1985; Wiedenfeld et al., 1990). However, it is worth noting that a few correlational and experimental studies failed to identify associations between self-efficacy and physiological stress responses in the context of social evaluative stressors (Schommer et al., 1999; Schoofs et al., 2008; van Eck et al., 1996).

3 Conclusion

In this article, we summarized the state-of-the-art in research from an individualistic cultural perspective, which examines the associations between self-efficacy, test anxiety, and performance in the context of social-evaluative exam situations. We focused on studies that tested the assumptions of two established theories, namely, CVT and TMTA, mainly with student samples from Western Europe and North America, which have been identified as individualistic in previous research (Minkov et al., 2017).

Although it may be criticized that the quality of the sociocultural background was not explicitly assessed in most studies (Bodas & Ollendick, 2005; Tibubos et al., 2025 in this volume; von der Embse et al., 2018), it is worth noting that patterns of relationships between self-efficacy, facets of test anxiety, and academic performance were largely consistent across studies. However, this approach comes at a cost, as our conclusions might be less applicable to learners from collectivistic education systems. Therefore, the validity of the assumptions of CVT (cf. Pekrun & Goetz, 2024) and TMTA (cf. Bodas & Ollendick, 2005) about the structural patterns of relationships between the core variables should be tested and replicated using collectivistic samples, as culturally specific relationships may emerge that vary across educational settings or contexts. Another solution could be to analyze the relationships using person-centered methods such as latent profile analysis instead of applying variable-centered approaches, as this allows the identification of learner types where the patterns of intensity and relationships of the same constructs may vary, both within and across cultures (e.g., Möcklinghoff et al., 2021; Thomas & Ozer, 2024).

With regard to CVT, existing studies from various educational settings and across different academic domains provided support for the validity of the proposed structure of relationships, indicating that self-efficacy may directly predict lower test anxiety levels, which, in turn, enhances performance. These findings are in line with Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which

considers test anxiety as a direct function of low self-efficacy beliefs during achievement situations that are perceived as uncontrollable, therefore reducing the chances to attain highly valued academic success. In terms of findings, a few studies failed to find negative associations between self-efficacy and test anxiety, reporting nonsignificant or even positive relations. In terms of methodology, many of the studies which relied on CVT used only cross-sectional designs and assessed test anxiety without differentiating its facets. In essence, validity evidence for the assumptions of CVT is convincing although more longitudinal studies are needed to better disentangle the proposed chain of effects.

Regarding studies that focus on TMTA, there is strong evidence that high self-efficacy may act as a protective factor against the performance-hindering effects of threat appraisals and different kinds of stress responses. High self-efficacy may reduce state anxiety and foster a steeper decline of anxiety after an exam, which is conducive to better performance (Ringeisen et al., 2019). Overall, existing studies provide support for the assumptions of TMTA although findings on the relations between self-efficacy, anxiety, and endocrinological stress responses show some inconsistent patterns.

An explanation for these inconsistencies may be derived from studies on hormonal regulation mechanisms in combination with appraisal emotion theories such as CVT or TMTA. Endocrinological and affective stress responses may be associated with different cognitive processes. Cortisol may be linked to immediate control expectancies, which may benefit from high self-efficacy beliefs but largely depend on situational variables (Schönfeld et al., 2017; Wolf, 2006). Lower levels of anxiety, on the other hand, can be conceptualized as a function of positive achievement outcome expectancies, which are primarily triggered by high self-efficacy (Pekrun et al., 2007; Putwain et al., 2013). Nonetheless, only a few studies coherently assessed cognitive, affective, and endocrinological stress responses in combination with test anxiety and/or self-efficacy. Moreover, the measurement intervals for the different stress

responses varied considerably across studies, which makes it difficult to compare findings.

Regarding future research, we suggest not only testing the cultural universality of the association patterns with collectivistic samples but also examining the interplay between self-efficacy and test anxiety, and changing variables such as environmental features, affective, cognitive, and physiological stress responses, and outcomes in longitudinal studies. This way, reciprocal effects between personality factors, stress responses, and performance may be disentangled (cf. Lowe et al., 2008). Along with such approaches, the research community should thrive toward standardized procedures to assess stress responses in order to increase the comparability of studies and to strengthen theory testing and development itself.

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Positive and Negative Affect Across Cultures: The Case of Latin Americans

11

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1 Introduction

First of all, it is necessary to differentiate emotion and affect, as they are often used interchangeably, and there is an overlap between these concepts (Snyder et al., 2011). Knowledge about emotions, concepts, and functions derives from a historical overview, covering various physiological, psychological, sociocultural, and cognitive aspects. However, the study and interest in emotions are not recent. They date back to classical antiquity, including ancient and modern hedonist philosophers. One of them was William James, who argued that emotions consisted of “responses of a complex system, whose objective is to prepare the organism to respond to stimuli in the environment that have evolutionary significance” (1884, p. 38). This definition contributed to the central concept of emotions as having a physical and psychological survival function and understanding the influence of emotions in promoting individual psychological well-being (Vasco, 2013).

Additionally, it is now known that emotions are linked to physiological phenomena involving relatively short-duration hormonal discharges.

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These discharges involve the limbic, striatum, and endocrine systems, producing waves of hormonal discharge that generate physiological reactions in different body parts and through different perceptual registers (Damásio, 2012).

In contrast, affect is an immediate physiological response to a stimulus, often influenced by an underlying sense of arousal (Snyder et al., 2011). Positive and negative affects make up the emotional sphere of subjective well-being (SWB) (Zanon et al., 2013). Well-being is influenced by different variables, making it difficult to define (Giacomoni, 2004). However, SWB is the subjective evaluation of how happy a person feels about their life, assessed through two dimensions: affective and cognitive (Diener et al., 2004).

The affective dimension consists of experiences and emotions, resulting in a hedonic balance of pleasant and unpleasant feelings (Zanon et al., 2013). On the other hand, the cognitive component comprises the perception of life satisfaction, evaluated globally concerning past, present, and future experiences (Zanon et al., 2013).

This chapter focuses on the emotional aspects and the positive and negative affects. Positive Affect (PA) is a genuine hedonic contentment felt at certain moments, such as when a person feels enthusiasm, attention, energy, and pleasure (Diener, 1995; Watson et al., 1988). This transient feeling of active pleasure translates more

into describing an emotional state than a cognitive evaluation (Diener, 1995).

Negative Affect (NA), on the other hand, reflects aversive mood states such as anger, contempt, guilt, fear, and nervousness (Watson et al., 1988). It refers to a transient and unpleasant state of distraction and engagement (Diener, 1995). Thus, people with high levels of negative affect tend to experience episodes of displeasure more intensely. Similarly, people with high levels of positive affect tend to feel more intense and recurring feelings of pleasure (Zanon et al., 2013). Notably, in the evaluation of hedonic perception, the frequency with which positive or negative affects are experienced will impact more than the intensity with which they are felt.

Furthermore, as Serrano and Rampazzo (2017) point out, cultural values are defined as a set of values shared by a community that defines its identity as a society. The authors also state that it is difficult to establish a map of cultural values due to the great diversity of factors that shape cultural manifestations. Thus, cultural values represent a community heritage related to the identity of societies, which must be protected by their representatives (Serrano & Rampazzo, 2017).

Finally, cultural psychologists consider that Latin contexts are characterised by convivial collectivism, evidenced by social relationships with openness to expression, positive emotions, frequent social encounters, and care and honour for others (Campos & Kim, 2017; Acevedo et al., 2020). Additionally, Latin cultures tend to have a more sociocentric and interdependent view (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2015). Therefore, at the core of Latin American societies, there are fundamental values that contribute to their existence.

Thus, although there may be different viewpoints among people of the same ethnicity, understanding the commonly held broad values provides ways to assess how culture affects the socialisation of emotions (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2015). The author also highlights that in Latin culture, there is less restriction on the expression of affect compared to other cultures, contributing to these socialisation practices. So, the aim of this chapter is to distinguish the cultural values that

interact with positive and negative affects among Latinos in the international context.

1.1 Latin American Context

Latin America is a regional division of the American continent consisting of countries with similar historical backgrounds and socioeconomic structures. Additionally, these territories are home to languages with Latin origins (Gavião, 2021). The main languages spoken are Portuguese, Spanish, English, and various Indigenous languages (Souza, 2011).

It is a region with more than 700 million inhabitants, encompassing 12 countries in South America, 7 in Central America, and 14 in the Caribbean (D'Araujo, 2006). Its total area is 21,000 square kilometres (Souza, 2011). This region comprises different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic heritages and possesses an intense and diverse cultural richness.

The concept of “Latin America” has spread across different dimensions of the social and cultural field, referenced in various sources, from official documents, academic books, manifestos, and popular songs (Gavião, 2021).

The literature has some imprecision and controversy regarding its conceptual origin, with no single interpretation (Souza, 2011; Gavião, 2021). Additionally, there are controversies about the first use of the term. One theory is that the expression originates from the term “Amérique Latine”, first used by French intellectuals in the nineteenth century (Souza, 2011).

The term was also used to highlight economic and geopolitical interests and to justify the French imperialism of Napoleon III (Souza, 2011; Horta, 2021). Behind the cultural discourses in favour of Latin peoples, there were strategies for economic expansion in the “Hispanic” and “Portuguese” Americas (Horta, 2021).

It is also worth noting that Latin cities have experienced intense growth in recent decades. This occurred due to the influx of immigrants from rural areas and neighbouring countries seeking jobs and better living conditions (Tonon, 2012, 2014). This resulted in the cohabitation of

many people from heterogeneous cultures in small areas, leading to overcrowding and the emergence of new neighbourhoods (Tonon, 2014).

Concerning Latin identity, literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often presented a Eurocentric colonialist view of these territories (Souza, 2011). Negative conceptions emphasised characteristics such as poverty and corruption, associating them with the Latin people (Souza, 2011).

Despite this, it is essential to highlight that Latin America possesses diverse cultural richness. Although the Spanish language is predominant among various countries in South and Central America, different languages, such as local and native dialects, are still preserved in these areas. These languages descend from the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans.

Some issues regarding Latin American identity(ies) need to be raised. Horta (2021) points out fundamental misunderstandings related to geographical, territorial, and regional meanings. Firstly, there is a gap between Brazil, a country of Portuguese colonisation, and the countries of Hispanic colonisation. For this reason, Brazil is often not considered a Latin country. In other words, Latin Americans have a cultural definition internally subdivided between Spanish and Portuguese speakers. Moreover, Mexican culture is pervasive. This explains why many studies on Latin America focus on the Mexican population, also referred to as "Hispanics".

Additionally, there is the Caribbean region, which also suffers from exclusions in texts and documents referring to Latin America. Thus, the expression Latin America and the Caribbean, frequently used in publications and various institutions, highlights yet another division (Horta, 2021). The author also highlights that ethnocentric perspectives differentiate the Caribbean due to territories of Dutch, British, and non-Latin colonisation. Cardoso et al. (1993) also point out that former non-Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and South America are sometimes excluded for not participating in historical events in the region.

Therefore, even with the predominance of the Spanish language, Latin culture presents diverse aspects. Linguistic aspects impact cultural values, as we describe in the chapter. Another vital aspect to mention is that many Latinos migrate to the United States, with approximately 16% of the American population identified as Latino (Ennis et al., 2011). This exposes this group to different social contexts, such as discrimination, identity conflicts (bicultural), and distance from family, directly impacting their psychological functioning (Driscoll & Torres, 2013).

Finally, developing in a context with two different cultures can contribute to the emergence of acculturative stress resulting from cultural adaptation and adjustment (Driscoll & Torres, 2013). Thus, an essential variable in the concept of acculturative stress is the negotiation of different cultural values (Diaz-Lazaro et al., 2012).

2 Methodology

A scoping review was conducted to comprehensively synthesise the available evidence on Latin cultural values and their relationships with positive and negative affects. This methodology is used to determine the extent of the existing literature in a particular area and provide a comprehensive or detailed overview of the topic (Munn et al., 2018). Additionally, due to the relatively recent nature of this topic, it aimed to identify research gaps. The research question was: What is the relationship between Latin cultural values and positive and negative affects among Latin immigrants?

Searches were carried out in the Scopus, PsycINFO (APA), and Google Scholar databases, along with manual searches of references in the included studies. Articles were selected according to the following inclusion criteria: (a) studies with Latin immigrant populations; (b) no limitation on date or language. Studies were excluded if they (a) focused solely on cultural values, without relating to positive and negative affects, and (b) reviews and conference abstracts.

Furthermore, one of the potential biases relates to the fact that only the most prominent

cultural values in the literature were selected, resulting in a substantial selection bias (Kazi et al., 2021). Additionally, the fact that grey literature was not included or used suggests a publication bias. As McDonagh et al. (2013) point out, just as the exclusion of studies generates systematic variation, the inclusion of grey literature can affect the results of the studies, impacting the conclusions of a review.

3 Findings and Discussion

Below are the main findings in the literature regarding the studies carried out to assess the relationship between the main Latin cultural values and positive and negative affect.

3.1 Familismo

The family is the first and most important environment in a human being's life, where cultural socialisation and participation in cultural practices take place (Cahill et al., 2021). Thus, *familismo*, or *familism* in English, is one of the most fundamental and researched Latin cultural values. This concept is defined by reciprocity, respect, attachment, and solidarity with the family (Calzada et al., 2012; Diaz & Bui, 2017). In Latin culture, parents are considered key figures in the socialisation of their children and in teaching them values, beliefs, and cultural norms (Calzada et al., 2012).

Furthermore, individuals who uphold the cultural value of *familismo* seek to maintain strong family relationships, prioritising the needs of the family and turning to them for instrumental and emotional support (Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Mahrer et al., 2019).

Cahill et al. (2021) highlight that people growing up in ethnic-racial minority and immigrant families face constant challenges. One of the main challenges is integrating the family's cultural transmissions with the cultural context of the host country, as well as reconciling family and personal values. Therefore, the authors emphasise that *familismo* becomes an important

example of the complex union between the triad of family, culture, and adaptation.

A study by Diaz and Bui (2017) sought to assess the predictors of positive affect among low socioeconomic status Mexican and Mexican-American women. The results indicated that perceived social support from the family was the most significant predictor of positive affect. This result is also supported by other studies (Almeida et al., 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2007; Sabogal et al., 1987). Notably, a fundamental component of *familismo* is the perceived social support from the family, which has been shown to be a significant predictor of positive affect (Diaz & Bui, 2017).

Another study by Lindsey (2022) found that parents who uphold the cultural values of *familismo* and *simpatia* establish relationships with higher levels of positive affect shared with their children. According to the authors, these cultural values are based on cooperation and concern for the feelings of family members, contributing to increased harmony in social interactions.

On the other hand, the study by Villalobos & Bridges (2016) with Latin participants born in Mexico, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela found different results, showing that *familismo* did not predict positive affect or emotional and instrumental family support.

Additionally, a large number of Latinos live in the United States. Liang et al. (2017) highlight that American institutional programming and policies promote values such as independence from family for the success of university students, which contrasts with the value of *familismo*. This results in poorer adjustment to college and higher levels of adverse effects among Latino students.

Therefore, with regard to *familismo*, Villalobos and Bridges (2016) point out that it is essential to evaluate the cultural context and environmental factors that may influence caregiving. Furthermore, they emphasise that attributions tend to depend on cultural issues, particularly regarding family members' perceptions.

3.2 Simpatia

An essential cultural script in Latin American culture is *simpatia*, or *sympathy* in English. This term refers to a person seen as pleasant, attractive, relaxed, and easy to get along with (Triandis et al., 1984a; Kreitler & Dyson, 2016). This concept is fundamental to convivial collectivism and demonstrates the tendency of Latinos to establish social relationships imbued with warmth and emotional positivity, avoiding conflict and negativity (Triandis et al., 1984b; Ortiz, 2017).

Ortiz (2017) highlights that *simpatia* translates into interdependence among members of the culture, cooperation, and good interaction. The author also emphasises that children are taught to relate in a caring, affectionate, and respectful manner from an early age. Emphasis is placed on harmony, acceptance, social support, and the expression of hospitality (Ortiz, 2017). For this reason, *simpatia* is seen as a cultural value that produces positive affect in interpersonal interactions.

A study conducted by Triandis et al. (1984a) with 90 US Navy recruits (41 Hispanic and 49 non-Hispanic) showed that, in conflict situations, Latinos tended to adopt more positive behaviours (e.g., respect, equality) and fewer negative behaviours (e.g., rejection, arguments) compared to non-Latinos.

Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2008) claim there is a cross-cultural prediction that Latin Americans have higher levels of *simpatia* and agreeableness than other cultural groups. However, according to the authors, research points to an opposite pattern. Studies on *simpatia* demonstrate that a fundamental element of the Latin behavioural repertoire is a modest style of self-presentation. In pursuit of this socially appropriate modesty, people with high levels of *simpatia* tend to underestimate their scores on positive traits.

Additionally, according to the authors, Spanish-English bilinguals score higher on questionnaires answered in English than in Spanish. For this reason, Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2008) conducted a study that sought to test this hypothesis and revealed that Mexican-American bilinguals scored lower on *simpatia* in Spanish

questionnaires than in English. However, they exhibited more behaviours related to sympathy in a social interaction task in Spanish than in English. This difference proves that in the presence of culturally significant cues, such as language, bilinguals tend to experience a culturally appropriate shift in beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Thus, the language of the questionnaire tends to provoke differences in responses, pointing to evidence of the cultural frame-switching phenomenon.

Conversely, Varela et al. (2019) report that *simpatia* and *familismo* emphasise family interdependence and harmony but may contribute to increased suffering among Latin children. According to them, these children find it difficult to verbalise negative emotions to avoid conflict and family rupture. This can lead to the development of anxiety problems and a deficit in learning how to manage negative emotions (Varela et al., 2004).

3.3 Respeto

The cultural value of *respeto*, or *respect*, is transmitted when caregivers calmly demonstrate their authority and show their expectations of obedience (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2019). Children express this value by understanding parental authority, following rules without confrontation, and demonstrating an awareness of social hierarchies.

Studies in Latin American countries highlight the importance of obedience and respect towards caregivers (Mata & Pauen, 2023). According to the authors, this value is also tied to the high levels of violence and low socioeconomic conditions in these countries (see Takashiro and Clarke). Therefore, the cultural values of *familismo* and *respeto* are related to the need for constant vigilance to ensure children's safety, acting as a protective factor for families (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2019; Nievar et al., 2021). Additionally, practices that require respect are essential for *familism*, as they emphasise connection and family closeness (Stein et al., 2014).

In the family context, particularly in child-rearing, this cultural value aims to delineate boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours for children, which is relevant to parenting practices (Calzada et al., 2010; Lugo-Candelas et al., 2015; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Bridges et al., (2012) state that the importance placed on *respeto* is widespread among Latino parents living in the United States, as they consider it as a sign of successful parenting. In the North American context, Latino university students who demonstrate high levels of the cultural value of respect may struggle with integration. *Respeto* emphasises obedience to rules and the fulfilment of responsibilities imposed by parents, as well as the hierarchical structures of age, gender, and social status. This can lead to pressure to fulfil both family and academic responsibilities (Liang et al., 2017). Consequently, these students may find it challenging to question or disagree with family expectations, reflecting the significance of cultural values and acculturation, especially at home and in school.

Another study involving Latina mothers (Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican) and Euro-American mothers found that Latina mothers tend to minimise or not respond to negative emotions (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2015). The authors suggest that this attitude may represent a way of teaching children that contexts and circumstances are crucial to emotional expression, as well as a method to enforce respect and teach them the most appropriate way to behave socially.

Rudy et al. (2021), in a study involving Mexican and European-American mothers and children in the United States, found that in both groups, children's positive emotions towards their mothers increase over time, while mothers' positive emotions decrease. Sallquist et al., (2010) state that, over time, children develop an understanding of the value of positive emotions and begin to express them independently, without maternal assistance.

The findings of Mata and Pauen (2023) also support this, showing that Chilean parents, compared to those from El Salvador and Germany,

avoid conflicts and the expression of negative feelings during the early years of a child's life. They discourage the expression of negative emotions, as they believe it disrupts group harmony. Over time, negotiation strategies with children increase. This result is also supported by Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2019).

4 Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to revisit the key Latin cultural values and understand their associations with positive and negative affects. From this scoping review, it can be observed that the family context is the primary foundation for the dissemination of these cultural values among Latin immigrants. Thus, as seen, there is a focus on learning hierarchy, respect, harmony, and the appreciation of the family unit.

Regarding the cultural values presented, they have a direct impact on the social context, as they seek greater harmony, cooperation, and integration among people. It should be noted that the Latin context is characterised by convivial collectivism, openness to expression, and routine social contact. This may explain why these three cultural values are the main ones transmitted transgenerationally in this population.

Another important point to highlight is that *familismo* and *simpatia* translate into interdependence among family members. This can be a point of divergence for Latin immigrants residing in countries considered individualistic, where personal autonomy and independence from the family are favoured, potentially leading to a clash of values.

It is also important to emphasise that a large proportion of Latin immigrants currently reside in the United States. Moreover, many of them choose to live in culturally known neighbourhoods where there is a significant portion of the Latin population. Possibly, a point to consider is that, particularly in the values of *familismo* and *simpatia*, the importance of socialisation and interdependence among family and cultural members is reinforced. This may explain the

behaviour of living alongside their peers, even when residing in another country.

Simpatia also translates into the ability to interact well, avoid interpersonal conflicts, exhibit positive behaviours, and avoid negative ones (Triandis et al., 1984a). In this way, Latinos tend to have higher levels of agreeableness than other cultural groups, precisely because this is a cultural value for them. This can serve as a protective factor when considering the establishment of a support network for immigrants in a new country.

Additionally, *simpatia* and *familismo* also focus on greater engagement in positive emotions and discourage the expression of negative affects. On the other hand, this can result in a greater difficulty in expressing displeasure and negative emotions towards others.

Moreover, *familismo* and *respeto* reflect a high degree of parental expectations for their children. Since *respeto* is seen as a result of successful parenting, Latinos may experience internal conflicts as they try to meet both their own expectations and those of their parents.

As Liang et al. (2017) pointed out, Latino university students with high levels of *respeto* may find it more difficult to integrate into the host culture, given the strong obedience to rules and parental expectations. They may also struggle to question or challenge family expectations. Therefore, when self-expression is discouraged, and family conflicts or ruptures are avoided, these individuals may face greater difficulties in integrating the host society's cultural values, which can result in poorer adjustment.

In this regard, although *familismo* emphasises family support and connection, it can also create a sense of obligation for the individual, a duty to care for family members and consider them when making life decisions (Valdivieso-Mora et al., 2016). Therefore, when talking about the immigrant individual, it is important to consider the cultural values of origin and how these may be affecting the person's mental health both psychologically and socioculturally.

Regarding the studies and limitations of this review, there is a significant body of research and instruments developed to assess *familismo*.

However, there is a scarcity of research on *simpatia* and, above all, *respeto*. This may be due to the availability of various assessment measures already developed for *familismo*, while there is a lack of instruments developed to assess *respeto*, making this construct more difficult to measure.

Furthermore, there is a shortage of studies with Latin populations from South American countries, with most research focusing on the Mexican population. As Horta (2021) points out, this could be explained by the fact that Mexican culture is more widely recognised globally compared to others. Additionally, countries like Brazil, with a Portuguese rather than Spanish colonisation, may be overlooked. Brazil is often not considered a Latin country due to the internal subdivision between countries, their native languages, and identities, which persists to this day.

Finally, as mentioned, there are still few studies conducted with immigrants from South American countries, and these results cannot be extrapolated to the entire Latin population. It is also important to highlight that the findings relate to the databases searched and should not be generalised.

5 Need for Future Research

Further research is necessary to more closely measure the relationship between cultural values and negative and positive emotions. It is noted that among the values listed in this chapter, *familism* is more widely represented in the literature. However, few studies relate emotions to *respeto* and *simpatia*.

Moreover, studies highlight the difficulty in measuring the construct of *respeto* due to the scarcity of developed instruments. So, it is suggested that future studies develop new measures to evaluate this construct.

Additionally, as proposed by Varela et al. (2019), it is suggested to directly assess the observance of *simpatia* and *familismo* for the mental health treatment of Latino children, as well as to explore concepts of what is acceptable in a family context concerning the processing of negative emotions. Therefore, the construction of

future interventions aimed at working on the interaction between cultural values and the openness to expressing negative emotions from childhood is suggested.

Furthermore, additional studies with the Latino population in other countries are necessary due to the complexity of the intersections between culture and emotion. There is a greater focus on studying Latinos residing in the United States due to the large population in the country. However, it is essential to understand whether these findings can also be expected for Latino immigrants residing in other countries and continents. Thus, there is a need for more studies on native Latinos from different countries. A significant proportion of studies focus on Mexican people, and there is a scarcity of studies on Latino populations, especially in South America.

Finally, this review aimed to investigate the interface between cultural values and positive and negative affects, constructs explored by Positive Psychology. It is suggested that further studies be developed to evaluate this intersection, incorporating other variables. Understanding the conditions and processes that facilitate the flourishing or optimal functioning of individuals, groups, and institutions contributes to the understanding of protective factors and the promotion and prevention of health.

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Post-Traumatic Growth and Emotional Resilience in Immigrants and Refugees from Africa and the Middle East

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1 Introduction

A traumatic event can be defined as an extremely uncontrollable, sudden, and negative experience (Carlson & Dalenberg, 2000). A traumatic experience can negatively impact one's psychological and physiological well-being. It is well established that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which are potentially traumatic events occurring in childhood, are associated with an increased risk of depression (Chapman et al., 2004), and may be linked to chronic health conditions, including diabetes and heart attack (Monnat & Chandler, 2015).

In parallel to the negative effects of ACEs on well-being, there is a growing need to better understand the experiences of those who have emigrated to the Global North, with immigrants comprising over a fifth of the total population in four of the states within the United States of America (US) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Refugees, also known as individuals who are forced to move out of their home country to another country for safety, experience various types of trauma, including oppression and physical abuse (Papadopoulos, 2007). Furthermore, immigrants in the United States are more prone to mental illness such as anxiety and depression due to various stressors (e.g., discrimination and poverty) experienced after migration (Araújo & Borrell, 2006; Hovey & Magaña, 2000).

While there has been much exploration regarding the adverse effects of traumatic experiences on an individual's mental and physical health, there is growing interest in examining the positive consequences of traumatic experiences. Prior research supports this idea and has found that traumatic experiences may produce positive changes such as spiritual growth, improved interpersonal relationships, increased awareness of inner strength, greater life appreciation, and increasingly identifying new opportunities (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This phenomenon can be described as post-traumatic growth (PTG). These changes have been seen among different populations, including refugees

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and immigrants, with higher PTG being positively associated with perceived social support, satisfaction with life, dispositional optimism, and other positive outcomes (Acar et al., 2021; Sleijpen et al., 2016).

In the same line of research, PTG theory suggests that adversity may foster emotional resilience (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Resilience may be considered a process that comprises an individual adapting positively upon experiencing a significantly challenging situation (Luthar et al., 2000).

Given that traumatic experiences disproportionately impact immigrants and refugees, who may emigrate due to unsafe or harsh conditions, there is a need to better understand the experiences of immigrants and refugees from many different cultures (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022; Beitin & Allen, 2005). However, the majority of research using PTG as a framework has examined immigrants and refugees from Asia. To address this gap in the literature, this chapter focuses on exploring currently available research on PTG and emotional resilience in immigrants and refugees who emigrated from Africa and/or the Middle East. These findings are contextualized through multiple theoretical perspectives, and recommendations for clinicians, researchers, and policymakers are provided.

2 Methods

2.1 Search Strategy

The narrative review began with a preliminary search on PTG and emotional resilience among immigrants and refugees. Based on the available literature and to better focus the scope of this review, the countries included were Africa and the Middle East. Databases searched included Google Scholar, Psychology Database, SAGE Journals, Wiley Online Library, ProQuest, and PubMed. Further literature was also retrieved through choosing relevant articles from the reference list of previously included publications.

2.2 Keywords Used

In order to find articles that discussed emotional resilience and PTG in specific areas of the world, a combination of keywords related to trauma, positive growth, and location or status as an immigrant or refugee were used:

- Africa OR African OR the Middle East.
- Trauma OR post-traumatic growth OR growth OR PTG OR resilience OR emotional resilience.
- Immigrants OR immigrant OR immigration OR refugees OR refugee.

2.3 Inclusion Criteria

Only articles where participants were migrants or refugees from the Middle East were included. Additionally, the article had to be a peer-reviewed publication based on primary data in which the association between traumatic experiences and emotional resilience was reported. There was no date limitation for inclusion, and articles included have been published between 2007 and 2024. All articles included were written in the English language. This resulted in an initial ($n = 38$) articles.

2.4 Selection Criteria

Abstracts were first read and screened by at least one of the authors. If it was relevant to the current study, the author read through the entire article to see if it met all inclusion criteria. If it did, the article was included in the review. Studies were not included if they were duplicates ($n = 1$) or did not meet all the inclusion criteria ($n = 2$).

3 Theoretical Perspectives on Trauma and Resilience

There are a multitude of scientific theories surrounding trauma and emotional resilience. Although this chapter focuses on PTG theory, it

is important to understand this in the context of other theoretical models and perspectives. Some alternative theoretical models to consider include: a systems model, family resiliency model, and social constructionism, all of which allow for a deeper understanding of the family dynamics and external forces that play a role in one's reaction to a traumatic experience (Beitin & Allen, 2005).

Many systemic factors, such as discrimination, the experience of immigration, government policies, and family dynamics, are connected to perseverance (Beitin & Allen, 2005). In support of examining immigration from a systems perspective, researchers have also found that migration was often for socioeconomic or familial reasons (Cooke & Bélanger, 2006). In lieu of this, a model developed in the context of intersectionality and Liberation Psychology suggests that nativism and racism are ingrained in Western culture, laws, and policies, all of which negatively impact immigrants of color (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019).

While understanding trauma from a systems perspective is necessary, it is also important to consider the interdependent nature of collective trauma. Social constructionism is a theoretical perspective in which there are many perspectives and situation-dependent "truths," with knowledge being contextually developed through discussion in interpersonal relationships (Stead, 2004). Similar to social constructionism, interpretivism is an epistemological approach which argues that, contrary to positivism which considers objectivity and empirical research to be key, truth and knowledge is subjective and based on one's own lived experience (Ryan, 2017). The interpretivist approach is useful for deeply understanding the subjective experiences of immigrants and refugees (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022). In regards to these perspectives, resilience may be described as a socially constructed process rather than a fixed set of traits, as some may believe they are able to cope with new stressors successfully due to prior traumatic experiences in war or immigration (Beitin & Allen, 2005). Further building on the interpersonal aspect of resilience, the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model theorizes that the family system

works to continue functioning with available resources during times of increased stress (Patterson, 1988). This form of family adaptation is also observed in couples when they focus on the development of family members, such as in work, raising children, and engaging with the community or religious groups (Beitin & Allen, 2005). Each theoretical perspective is important in understanding different aspects of the collective immigrant and refugee experience in relation to coping strategies of resilience, especially regarding people from Africa and the Middle East.

4 Post-Traumatic Growth and Emotional Resilience in Africa

The African continent comprises diverse people from various cultures, ethnicities, languages, political views, religions, and tribes; however, war and conflict is prevalent in this area. Africa has shown high levels of distress and rates of PTSD among the 2017 global estimate of 25.4 million refugees according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), yet there is a large gap in the literature regarding PTG and emotional resilience in African refugees (Goninon et al., 2021). African immigrants and refugees have encountered pre-immigration, transitional social, and postwar trauma. Despite the traumas endured by the African people, many have experienced emotional resilience and PTG after immigrating to a different area of the world.

African refugees and migrants experience chronic mental health issues, and PTG may aid in recovery (Tesfai et al., 2023). For Moroccan immigrants living in Spain, protective factors against these chronic mental health problems included social support and optimism with high levels of resilience (Sánchez-Teruel & Robles-Bello, 2022). Gilpin-Jackson (2014) found that African immigrants who are war survivors often have higher levels of social consciousness with values of inner humility, tolerance and respect for others, and leadership within their family and community. Religious commitment and spiritual

beliefs further aid African immigrants in gaining resilience and PTG. Spirituality, including deep spiritual beliefs, practices, connections, and values, is a vital source of strength and resilience for the majority of African immigrants (Ekwonye & Nwosisi, 2021).

Social justice and social healing can be expected with PTG as a result of religious coping, social consciousness, and resilience (Henry, 2012; Acquaye, 2017; Acquaye et al., 2020; Gilpin-Jackson, 2014). As a collectivistic culture, many African immigrants, refugees, and migrants find community, empowerment, and purpose as a result of altruism, religious commitment, spiritual practices, and cultural connectedness. Incorporating the positivity in religious coping in therapy and enhancing awareness of available community resources can strengthen resilience against mental illness (Maier et al., 2022). African immigrants may benefit from group-based culturally responsive interventions for mental illnesses, making the individual(s) feel more comfortable sharing their experiences (Goninon et al., 2021; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020).

In addition to religion, cultural differences can define how one responds to trauma. African immigrants tend to experience a form of PTG acculturation that includes bicultural identity integration, an overlapping of their rich African cultural heritage and that of the new host culture of the land where they reside. This cultural assimilation may disproportionately impact men, as female immigrants are able to obtain jobs with higher incomes than their male counterparts, despite having less education; culturally, this is a problem as men are expected to be the provider for the family (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014). Immigrant assimilation into their host culture may elevate internal conflict as a result of their traumatic experiences or may be healing as they embrace new life experiences and mourn the traumatic experiences from their past (Henry, 2012).

Unlike many refugees, African immigrants deal with both the trauma of fleeing their home country and racial discrimination (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Additionally, there is much adjustment to living in a new environment when

immigrants may long to be at peace in their homeland. The optimistic emotions and realities that Africans living throughout the diaspora are able to draw from within to discover PTG and emotional resilience is incredible. However, there is still much to learn about the African immigrant and refugee experience. Studies of African refugees and immigrants are scarce, and continued research is needed to better understand their experiences with their schools, places of employment, community, the healthcare system, and systematic racism to provide more informed resources and treatment (Ekwonye & Truong, 2022; Goninon et al., 2021; Shannonhouse et al., 2024). Although mental health professionals are necessary, incorporating culture and spirituality may require the involvement of religious leaders from relevant religious denominations.

5 Post-Traumatic Growth and Emotional Resilience in the Middle East

Like Africa, the Middle East is a region that has experienced an uptick in war, conflict, and political upheaval, contributing to a rise in individuals fleeing their home country in search of asylum. Many of the individuals living in these areas have been exposed to severe trauma, impacting their mental and physical health. Despite these experiences, these individuals have been able to foster their own PTG and emotional resilience (Chan et al., 2016; Holthe & Söderström, 2024; Kira et al., 2019; Rizkalla & Segal, 2018; Sultani et al., 2024).

With individuals of all ages and backgrounds experiencing trauma, it is important to consider nuances within PTG and emotional resilience. While adversity has been shown to positively predict PTG, trauma to self (i.e., kidnapping, torture) has been shown to negatively predict it (Kılıç et al., 2016). Younger women, but not men, typically show stronger relationships with PTG (Kılıç et al., 2016). Additionally, younger individuals are likely to have higher levels of PTG while older adults are less likely to view their traumas as beneficial (Wen et al., 2020). Pre-

existing gender roles can affect PTG and emotional resilience, which can vary depending on where the refugee migrates to. In particular, women have demonstrated challenges in navigating their identity, including Iraqi women fleeing the Gulf War who have aimed to hold on to their past selves as it is more predictable and less damaged (Shoeb et al., 2007). Lastly, higher education level has been shown to positively influence PTG amongst refugee populations (Alqudah, 2013).

In acknowledging the impact of gender and education, religion and spirituality are important factors to consider in PTG of refugees (Çetrez & DeMarinis, 2017). Many refugees from the Middle East have shared how they relied on faith to navigate their journey as a refugee and turned to prayer for comfort (Ahmed Garoon et al., 2022; Hirad et al., 2023). Syrian refugee women were found to score highly on the spiritual change dimension based on having more optimistic and religious beliefs after their conflict-based traumas (Kheirallah et al., 2022). For Syrian refugees in Turkey, while the strength of their religiosity was related to their overall PTG, religion predicted strength of PTG beyond the strength of religiosity itself (Ersahin, 2022). Furthermore, individuals who had higher levels of PTG had strengthened beliefs, meaning that they chose to believe in the afterlife (Taher & Allan, 2020). Dysfunctional appraisal and well-being for refugees has been shown to be mediated by spiritual needs but negative religious coping has been shown to mediate the relationship between spiritual needs and well-being (Maier et al., 2022). While religious faith has been demonstrated to be potentially protective against psychological distress, it did not counter the impact of lower resilience and social support (Schlechter et al., 2021).

Social support is demonstrated in different forms, contributing to PTG. Among Syrian children living in Jordanian refugee camps, higher levels of resilience were associated with prosocial competence, or seeking out social support, compared to those with lower levels of resilience, who experienced greater levels of trauma and emotional symptoms (Veronese et al., 2021). Exposure to war-related violence has been shown

to be associated with increases in prosocial behavior. Refugees from Syria and Iraq living in Turkey reported greater ingroup bias in terms of stronger empathy and altruism. PTG also predicted greater empathy and altruism relative to post-traumatic stress (Canevello et al., 2022). How refugees perceive their social support and make sense of their traumatic experiences in the process can be affected by their values, and this can impact their self-esteem (Simsir & Dilmac, 2021). Further, refugees with greater PTG tended to consider others and engage with fellow community members, creating a sense of solidarity and companionship (Hirad et al., 2023).

The presence of social support can impact hope for the future and the likelihood of seeking out opportunities. Paving a new path in life and discovering new strengths and abilities have been shown to be central to PTG for refugees (Kangaslampi et al., 2022; Taher & Allan, 2020). For example, refugees who scored low on the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) tended to have primary goals of survival while those scoring highly on this measure tended to convey longer term goals like education and working, with goals centered around their loved ones (Umer & Elliot, 2021). Additionally, these individuals tended to show more agency by seeking out opportunities in their new country compared to low PTGI individuals, who were more inclined to dwell upon returning to their home country (Umer & Elliot, 2021). However, research is mixed in regards to whether thinking about one's home country can negatively affect their PTG. A study of Syrian refugees living in Turkey found that individuals who had hope of returning to their countries after the war finished were using it as a coping strategy, aiding their PTG (Şimşir et al., 2021). Despite the trauma these individuals have experienced, they were also able to recognize the importance of their homeland and freedom in this process (Şimşir et al., 2021). Also, among Syrian refugees living in Turkey, problem-focused coping aided PTG, meaning that individuals were more likely to actively seek opportunities to rebuild their lives (Ersahin, 2022). Similarly, for Palestinian adolescent refugees in a camp in Lebanon, problem-focused

coping strategies appeared to be the most used, allowing individuals to focus on their tasks, and also aiding PTG (Al Beainy & El Hassan, 2023).

PTG and emotional resilience for immigrants and refugees from the Middle East is a complex process. The kinds of trauma these individuals experience can affect the trajectory of their outcomes. Despite this, individuals from all ages and backgrounds experience PTG differently, with younger individuals exhibiting a greater likelihood of experiencing PTG compared to older individuals. When focusing on the Middle East, religion is often a critical factor driving PTG, with many relying on prayer and beliefs in the afterlife. Along with religion, social support aids in PTG in individuals, and their self-esteem. Building on these components, hope for the future, and seeking out opportunities can allow these individuals to build a new life for themselves while navigating aspects of their identity, which tends to be greatly tied into their values. PTG and emotional resilience in the Middle East consist of an intricate interplay of factors and these should be considered when working with these populations and developing clinical practices/interventions.

6 Policy Recommendations

Given the systemic nature of many causes of trauma (e.g., war, natural disaster), improving legal and governmental policies is necessary to aid PTG for immigrants and refugees. Some important policies to consider include the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

The VPRS was instituted by the British Government in response to the Syrian Civil War and ensuing refugee crisis, allowing additional Syrian immigrants to more easily enter Britain (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022). While some refugees were resilient and integrated into the UK's culture, others felt distressed by this pressure to integrate; thus, the government and stakeholders could do more to foster social cohesion with the

host society and support refugees in gaining education and translating their skills to gainful employment (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022). Despite some negative consequences, VPRS is valuable in streamlining the process of migration for refugees and should be expanded to include asylum seekers from other countries in the future (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022).

The DREAM Act and DACA are legal policies that have previously been proposed and, in the case of DACA, utilized in the United States to create a more streamlined path to citizenship for immigrants (Torres et al., 2018). Specifically, the DREAM Act would provide immigrants who have entered the United States without authorization with temporary residency and a potential pathway to permanent residency (Torres et al., 2018). While there are multiple US states with some version of the DREAM Act, it has not received enough support to pass in Congress as of 2024 (Torres et al., 2018). DACA does not provide a path to citizenship, but allows for those who are not authorized to be in the United States to get a work permit, providing them with financial stability (Torres et al., 2018). Unfortunately, an injunction was raised against DACA in 2021, and as of 2024, the program is not accepting new applicants (Torres et al., 2018). In addition to understanding these policies, it is vital that clinicians, researchers, and immigrants with lived experience partner to advocate for policy changes and promote social justice (Cadenas et al., 2022).

7 Recommendations for Clinicians

As has been established, trauma is a multifaceted issue with many different causes. Treatment, therefore, requires listening to and understanding the patient's perspective. In fact, research shows that immigrants and refugees who received treatment from healthcare providers preferred that mental health professionals have a deep understanding of their story as opposed to using brief screenings and assessments that do not necessarily translate to non-Western cultures (Wylie et al., 2018). Refugees, specifically, would benefit from

more individualized mental healthcare which takes post-migration distress in the adjustment to a new culture and society, as well as pre-migration trauma, into consideration (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022).

Primary health care settings are a common point of access for immigrants and refugees and an opportunity for primary care providers, mental health professionals, and those from other fields to aid refugee health outcomes. Iqbal et al. (2022) suggest increasing refugees' access to health care and empowering them to discuss their health with health care providers, continuing to develop the skills of health care workers to more effectively serve refugee populations, and improving the quality of health care delivery through community support networks. Additionally, interventions to enhance communication systems including multimodal and multilingual tools, as well as telehealth care, demonstrate ways in which more systemic changes can be made to enhance refugee health outcomes (Iqbal et al., 2022). Primary care settings present an opportunity for providers, clinicians, and other professionals to make an impact on refugee health, at both the person-level and system-level, with mental health professionals being crucial in aiding refugees in processing their trauma, identity, and experiences.

Beitin and Allen (2005) make specific clinical recommendations for working with immigrants and refugees based on interviews conducted with couples who have immigrated from the Middle East. Specifically, they suggest that mental health professionals work with immigrants to explore their identity, create a genogram to better understand their client's prior experiences, discuss how the stressor is affecting relationship dynamics in couples, encourage immigrants to make or maintain connections with religious and cultural communities, and to assess whether their client has acculturated or wishes to acculturate (Beitin & Allen, 2005). Further, research with Syrian women suggests that there are additional challenges they face in adapting to an environment in which they have a different gender role; thus, mental health professionals should work to

understand the context of gender within immigrants' lives (Asmal-Lee et al., 2022).

While it is important to understand a patients' lived experience as an immigrant, acknowledging the impact of systemic problems is also necessary. The HEART (Healing Ethno and Racial Trauma) model was proposed in order to address the systems of oppression that are harmful as opposed to only supposing individual responsibility for feeling the effects of trauma (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). First, providers must understand the impacts of societal regulations on immigrants, and be able to establish a sanctuary space where one can feel physically and emotionally safe (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Second, clinicians should use a combination of traditional trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) and concientización, the process of understanding one's experiences in historical context, thereby developing culturally responsive ways of coping and avoiding self-blame (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Finally, providers should seek to engage in and provide guidance for becoming involved in social justice work; engagement with community issues has been shown to improve mental health for POC (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019).

8 Conclusion

The majority of research across immigrants from Africa and the Middle East suggests that social support, religion, and having a future-focused outlook aids in developing resilience to stress and experiencing positive growth despite harsh circumstances. Social networks and family support aids in improved mental health outcomes, especially in cultures that are interdependent. Additionally, religion is associated with more community support and can lead to a more positive outlook and increased focus on the future, which are major components of PTG. This has important policy, clinical, and research implications, including the need for developing additional ways for immigrants to become more integrated in their community and obtain the resources they need to thrive. Policies such as

DREAM, DACA, and VPRS have been proposed or implemented for short periods as a way to streamline the process of obtaining citizenship and becoming part of the community more easily, but these should be scaled to include more immigrants and refugees from a wider range of countries in the future. Advocates, including clinicians, policymakers, and those with lived experience, should work together to bridge the gap between immigrants and lawmakers. Further, at both an individual and systems level, mental health professionals are crucial in aiding refugees with processing their trauma and improving their state of mind; therefore, building an understanding of how to effectively work with refugees and asylum seekers comes from a myriad of factors. Clinicians should work to deeply understand the histories and identities of patients who are immigrants, keeping an open mind about the systems that may unfairly disadvantage certain groups and working to be culturally sensitive. Working with clinicians and community members, researchers should continue to document the experiences of immigrants and refugees from many different areas of the world.

9 Need for Future Research

While there has been more research in PTG and emotional resilience in recent years, there is still a need for examining this from different cultural perspectives, especially in immigrants and refugees emigrating from Africa. Additionally, much of the current literature on PTG focuses on children, youth, and young adults; future research should also examine PTG in older adults. Although some prior research suggests using TF-CBT, CBT, and culturally responsive treatments, there is no consensus for what treatment(s) clinicians should focus on, and frequently mental healthcare is not accessible for immigrants and refugees. Future research should focus on scalable mental health interventions for immigrants and refugees, including interventions, digital tools, and creating community support networks.

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Boredom in Interactive Learning Settings

13

Marco Schickel and Tobias Ringeisen

1 Introduction

Boredom has gained recognition as a significant emotion in the context of learning processes, with researchers increasingly examining its impact on students' academic experiences (e.g., Putwain et al., 2018; Sharp et al., 2020). Feeling bored is not merely a fleeting state but one that can profoundly influence motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (e.g., Pekrun et al., 2010; Tze et al., 2016). Studies consistently highlight its negative associations with performance and other critical academic variables across various educational levels. Research has documented these detrimental effects in school contexts (e.g., Götz et al., 2007; Putwain et al., 2018) as well as in higher education settings (e.g., Pekrun et al., 2010). Boredom thus stands out as a pivotal emotion in educational research, helping our understanding of the challenges students face in staying engaged and achieving academic success.

As boredom has been widely studied in the context of passive, lecture-based instruction (see Sharp et al., 2020; Tze et al., 2016), research

highlights its growing relevance in more interactive learning environments. These environments are designed to foster student participation and learning by interactive methods such group work, student presentations, and hands-on experiments, which should counteract the development of boredom (Minkley et al., 2017; Schickel & Ringeisen, 2020; Tibubos et al., 2019) (see Tibubos et all in this book; see Ringeisen's chapters). In these settings, boredom often emerges when tasks fail to provide sufficient challenge or meaningful engagement. This is more likely to occur if teaching does not meet students' core needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, as these elements are essential for maintaining motivation and active involvement (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Without such support, students are prone to disengagement, which can undermine self-regulated learning and lead to avoidance behaviors, ultimately affecting their academic performance (Pekrun et al., 2010, 2011; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012; Watt & Vodanovich, 1999).

Cultural factors may significantly shape the characteristics and organization of educational systems and corresponding learning environments (e.g., Ohlmeier et al., 2020; Pekrun, 2018; Tempelaar & Niculescu, 2023). The way in cultural factors manifest themselves can be understood using the multidimensional Individualism-Collectivism (IC) framework, pioneered by Hofstede (1986) and refined by Triandis (1995,

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1999), which portrays the degree and expression of social relatedness and/or social dependence that individuals experience in/to their communities. Most countries in Western and Northern Europe, some in Eastern Europe, as well as Anglo-American countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand may be considered as individualistic as they encourage individuals to define personal goals. In contrast, the majority of societies in East Asia, Africa, Central and South America may be seen as collectivistic cultures that prioritize community goals and social harmony over individual goals (Minkov et al., 2017). Applying the IC framework may provide valuable insights into how cultural factors shape learning environments and their role for student emotions and academic outcomes (e.g., Klein et al., 2024; Mesquita, 2001; Ringeisen & Bürgermeister, 2016). For instance, while collectivistic education often favors traditional, structured, and content-driven instruction that does not necessarily consider students' potentially diverse goals and needs, individualistic education places a stronger emphasis on interactive, student-centered learning environments that acknowledge self-actualization and encourage students to set their own goals for learning and achievement.

In order to conceptualize the interplay of characteristics of the learning environment, the occurrence of boredom, and various learning- and performance-related outcomes, the Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions (CVT) (Pekrun, 2006, 2024) may serve as a guiding framework. According to CVT, students' perceptions of control over a learning activity and the value they assign to it are key predictors of their emotional responses. When students feel a lack of control or see little value in a task, boredom is more likely to arise, which can further impair their performance and learning outcomes (Pekrun et al., 2007). Although the structural relations between the variables are assumed to be universal, recent refinements of CVT acknowledge how cultural factors such as the degree of IC may shape characteristics of the sociocultural learning environment (Pekrun, 2018, 2024). The theory therefore seems suitable to examine how differ-

ent instructional designs, teaching behaviors, and student characteristics interact in order to shape boredom and its performance-reducing effects in learning environments.

In response, this chapter summarizes research on the role of boredom in educational settings, with a specific focus on interactive learning environments in both higher education and school contexts, which are most prevalent in individualistic educational systems (e.g., Ohlmeier et al., 2020; Pekrun, 2018; Ringeisen & Bürgermeister, 2016). We searched relevant literature databases and applied the following criteria to identify suitable research for this overview: We included studies (1) that examined conditions under which boredom develops in educational environments and the role it plays in learning and performance, taking into account learner-related variables as well as situational and contextual factors; (2) whose samples include school or university students from countries with an individualistic orientation (operationalized by achieving a positive score on the IC dimension in the meta-analysis by Minkov et al. (2017), with possible scores between 182 and -291), (3) that put an emphasis on interactive learning settings and/or the role of need-supportive teaching behaviors, namely, autonomy support, competence support, and relatedness support; and (4) that utilize a conceptual theoretical framework that reflects the core assumptions of CVT (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun 2024; Pekrun et al., 2023), even if the theory was not explicitly mentioned. In addition, (methodological) reviews and meta-analyses were considered (e.g., Schneider & Preckel, 2017), which are also predominantly based on samples that can be described as individualistic according to Minkov et al. (2017).

Drawing on the premises of CVT (e.g., Pekrun, 2006, 2024), we integrate the findings of these publications to outline the conditions under which boredom develops and how it influences student engagement, competence development, and performance. A particular focus is on interactive learning environments, including science experiments in schools or communication training in higher education. Our overview does not fulfill the criteria of a systematic review and does

not claim to have identified all relevant studies. However, synthesizing the findings from the presented selection of studies provides educators with insights into how they can design interventions to reduce boredom and promote more interactive, and therefore engaging, emotionally supportive educational practices.

2 Boredom in Interactive Learning Settings Through the Lens of Control-Value Theory

2.1 Overview of Control-Value Theory and Its Core Components

Control-Value Theory (CVT), introduced by Pekrun and colleagues, provides an integrative framework for understanding how achievement emotions function as mediators between characteristics of the learning environment, individual and situational appraisals of control and value, and resulting learning outcomes (Pekrun, 2006, 2024). The theory aims to explain the mechanisms through which emotions experienced during achievement activities affect learning processes, competence development, and therefore students' performance. Achievement emotions are defined as emotional responses closely tied to activities that enable individuals to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and/or perform in educational contexts. CVT proposes a three-dimensional taxonomy to classify emotions according to their valence (positive or negative), activation level (activating or deactivating), and object focus (activity-related or outcome-related). Within this classification, boredom is identified as a negative, activity-related deactivating emotion (e.g., Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

CVT identifies two core appraisal dimensions: (a) the learner's perceived control over tasks and achievements and (b) the personal significance or value they attach to these tasks. When students experience strong control and value, positive emotions like enjoyment are supposed to increase, thereby enhancing the use of deep

learning strategies, skill development, and generally academic success. In contrast, boredom emerges when students encounter low perceived control over an activity and when they perceive the task as devoid of (intrinsic) value, which, in turn, is linked to reduced engagement, lower motivation, ineffective learning, and therefore lower performance (Goetz & Hall, 2013; Pekrun et al., 2007; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

CVT specifies that three main types of supportive teaching behaviors—autonomy support, competence support, and relatedness support—are proposed to heighten students' perceived control, as well as perceived relevance and interest in learning activities (cf. Schneider & Preckel, 2017). Teaching practices that foster competence, autonomy, and social relatedness should therefore play a substantial role in influencing achievement emotions. Autonomy support involves behaviors that foster students' independence, offering choices, and enhancing their self-regulated learning (e.g., Reeve, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Competence support refers to structured, goal-oriented teaching that clearly communicates expectations, provides feedback, and facilitates student progress in academic tasks. Lastly, relatedness support refers to behaviors that strengthen students' sense of social connection and belonging, as teachers convey warmth, empathy, and respect, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020). The theory posits that the more teachers promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the stronger the students' sense of control and personal relevance attached to learning activities, which, in turn, should lead to a decrease in boredom, ultimately enhancing learning processes and academic achievement (e.g., Goetz & Hall, 2013; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

Therefore, supportive teaching behaviors that foster control and value in learning activities play a crucial role in shaping students' emotion regulation. By creating an environment that meets students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, educators not only enhance students' motivation and engagement but also improve their emotional readiness to face academic chal-

lenges and achieve learning goals. These insights highlight the significance of emotionally informed teaching strategies, particularly in promoting positive achievement emotions like enjoyment and minimizing hindering emotions such as boredom (Pekrun et al., 2007; Pekrun et al., 2010).

2.2 Specifying Boredom as an Achievement Emotion

Within CVT, boredom, described as a deactivating, negative emotional state, is particularly salient as a “silent” but pervasive emotion, often overlooked in research on achievement emotions (Pekrun et al., 2010). Its inconspicuous nature, in contrast to more visible emotions like anger or anxiety, has resulted in limited attention within the research community. However, boredom, typically characterized by a lack of stimulation, unpleasantness, and a sense of time dragging, is increasingly recognized as a significant impediment to academic motivation, engagement, and long-term academic achievement (e.g., Pekrun et al., 2002, 2010). Boredom does not merely stem from a lack of intellectual challenge; rather, it arises from a perception that the activity is irrelevant or misaligned with students’ personal goals and interests. Pekrun et al. (2010) argue that boredom acts as a form of cognitive and emotional disengagement, often functioning as a coping mechanism when students view tasks as uninteresting or meaningless. Unlike other negative emotions that may be triggered by high task demands, boredom typically results from low perceived relevance, which discourages active engagement and leads to passive learning behaviors (Csikszentmihalyi, 2012; Pekrun et al., 2010). In this sense, boredom serves as an indicator of both cognitive and emotional withdrawal, diminishing cognitive resources as students become more susceptible to distraction and off-task thoughts, while also weakening intrinsic motivation. The consequences of boredom are significant, as it tends to inhibit both immediate performance and long-term academic outcomes

by diminishing students’ engagement and reducing the effectiveness of learning strategies.

2.3 Characteristics of Interactive Learning Environments from an Individualistic Perspective

In individualistic educational settings, there is a strong emphasis on autonomy, self-directed learning, and personal achievement. These individualistic cultural values encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, set personal goals, and view academic success as a result of personal effort. This helps them to build a sense of personal agency by experiencing learning as self-development and growth (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schweisfurtha, 2013), which is central to CVT’s concept of perceived control, as it fosters an environment where students feel empowered and in charge of their educational journey.

The CVT framework emphasizes that understanding the antecedents of boredom—particularly low control and low task value—is essential for educators aiming to create more engaging and student-centered learning environments. By providing autonomy support, competence support, and relatedness support, educators can shape interactive environments that enhance perceived control and value to promote positive achievement emotions such as enjoyment and minimize deactivating emotions such as boredom (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Interactive learning settings thus actively involve students, which enables them to take ownership of their learning contents/processes, enhances their motivation and emotional and cognitive engagement, resulting in deeper learning and better achievement (e.g., Artino, 2009; Freeman et al., 2014; Goetz & Hall, 2013; Pekrun et al., 2007; Pekrun & Perry, 2014; Prince, 2004).

In interactive learning environments, autonomy support, competence support, and relatedness support are essential (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020;

Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Autonomy support gives students choices with regard to what, how, where, and with whom they wish to learn (e.g., Freeman et al., 2014; Prince, 2004; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Autonomy-supportive interactive environments encourage students to select academic tasks that align with their interests and goals, thereby increasing the students' sense of control and the perceived relevance of the learning content, allowing them to find intrinsic value and interest in their learning activities. As a correlate, positive emotions like enjoyment and pride intensify, while negative emotions like boredom are reduced. More positive achievement emotions, in turn, promote higher intrinsic motivation, sustained engagement, more effective self-directed learning, and higher achievement (e.g., Artino, 2009; Bandura, 1997; Nisbett, 2003; Pekrun, 2006, 2024; Zimmerman, 2002).

Aside from warm, respectful, and integrative interaction guided by the educators, all variants of peer collaboration serve as relatedness support in interactive settings, fostering social connectedness and making learning tasks more meaningful through shared experiences. Engaging with peers helps students to recognize the relevance of the learning content within a social framework. A sense of social connectedness, built through collaborative activities, can reduce boredom and create a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and motivated (e.g., Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

An individualistic educational perspective also places high importance on the development of self-directed competence beliefs such as self-efficacy and positive ability self-concepts, encouraging students to see themselves as active agents in their success (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2002).

Competence support in interactive learning settings is essential to build self-efficacy, as structured guidance and constructive feedback guide students through tasks, foster confidence in their abilities and help maintain engagement. As a core component of competence support, students should regularly receive feedback from educators and/or peers, with the format depending on the tasks and experience level of the stu-

dents (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback allows students to reflect on and adjust their learning progress, thereby enhancing their sense of control and mastery. Environments that encourage goal-setting and contain structured feedback enhance intrinsic motivation: When students perceive tasks as challenging yet achievable, they feel they can influence their learning process and progress, which keeps them engaged and intrinsically motivated to overcome challenges, contributing to sustained focus (Pekrun et al., 2010; Tze et al., 2016). As a result, students experience more positive activity-related emotions like enjoyment, and less negative activity-related emotions such as boredom, which supports effective learning strategies and reduces disengagement (e.g., Camacho-Morles et al., 2021; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). Additionally, studies show that when students are provided with well-structured tasks and clear feedback, they are better able to develop adaptive coping mechanisms and confidence in their abilities, reducing the likelihood of disengagement and boredom (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Overall, by adopting an individualistic educational approach (e.g., Ohlmeier et al., 2020; Pekrun, 2018; Ringen & Bürgermeister, 2016; cf. Triandis, 1995, 1999), CTV provides a suitable framework by emphasizing control and task value in the particular context of interactive learning environments. The more educators engage in autonomy support, competence support, and relatedness support, the more students can realize personalized goals, which helps them to experience control and value in their learning, and build confidence in their abilities, which is essential for cultivating positive emotions and reducing negative emotions such as boredom (Pekrun et al., 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Consequently, interactive learning settings align well with CTV by creating conditions that encourage students' active engagement, intrinsic motivation, and emotional well-being, all of which are vital for building connections between existing knowledge and new learning contents, applying the knowledge to new areas and examples, which enhances understanding and there-

fore contributes to successful learning (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Pekrun et al., 2017; Reeve, 2009; Zimmerman, 2002).

3 Antecedents, Correlates, and Associations of Boredom in Interactive Learning Settings: Specific Insight Through Three Exemplary Studies

While much is known about boredom in traditional, lecture-based environments, there is still a significant gap in understanding how boredom manifests, changes, and longitudinally impacts learning in interactive learning settings, both in school and higher education contexts (e.g., Pekrun et al., 2010; Sharp et al., 2020; Tze et al., 2016). Given the growing emphasis on active and student-centered approaches, it is essential to explore how boredom develops over time in these dynamic environments and how it can be shaped when educators provide autonomy support, competence support, and relatedness support over time. To address this gap, this section introduces the methods and findings of three key studies that longitudinally investigate the functions of boredom in specific interactive, educational contexts using the CVT framework.

The first study explores the role of boredom in fostering presentation skills, revealing how variations in boredom over time impact students' skill progression and performance (Schickel & Ringeisen, 2022). The second study focuses on the acquisition of communication skills and examines how boredom and enjoyment contribute to competence development, when students learn to moderate group work during a semester-long course (Tibubos et al., 2019). The third study analyzes how different task structures—such as individual work, group work, or passive observation—impact students' emotional and physiological responses, including boredom, when students perform experiments in biology classes in high school (Minkley et al., 2017). Together, these findings aim to con-

tribute to a deeper understanding of boredom in interactive learning contexts and highlight both challenges and strategies for enhancing student engagement.

3.1 Exemplary Study 1: Investigating the Role of Boredom for Fostering Presentation Skills (Schickel & Ringeisen, 2022)

This study investigated the relationship between boredom and the development of presentation competence over time, specifically examining how changes in boredom relate to self-efficacy and presentation performance during a one-semester presentation training in university students. Using a longitudinal design with three measurement points over the course of one semester, the study applied latent growth modeling to capture boredom's changes and its associations with competence gains, self-efficacy, and final performance outcomes (Ringeisen et al., 2019). The course design actively promoted autonomy support (e.g., students could choose the contents of their exam presentation), competence support (e.g., students received feedback throughout the course when presenting), and relatedness support (e.g., lecturers created a warm and encouraging atmosphere).

3.1.1 The Role of Self-Efficacy for Boredom and Performance

Aligned with CVT assumptions (Pekrun, 2006), higher self-efficacy assessed at the beginning of the course predicted better presentation behaviors during the exam at the end of the course. However, contrary to the study's assumptions, self-efficacy did neither significantly predict initial levels nor changes in boredom. This discrepancy with prior studies (e.g., Tze et al., 2013) might be attributed to the autonomy-supportive, interactive teaching concept which may have counteracted boredom's inhibiting effects by fostering self-engagement (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

3.1.2 Boredom and Competence Development

Findings confirmed linear changes over time: Students' boredom levels decreased while their perceived improvement in presentation competence increased. Notably, higher initial boredom was linked to a sharper decline in boredom and a smaller initial gain in perceived competence. Students with lower boredom levels at midpoint reported greater self-perceived progress, underscoring the benefit of reducing boredom in fostering competence. This dynamic suggests that low initial boredom, combined with a teaching framework that supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness, not only promotes competence acquisition but also enhances self-awareness and self-evaluation (e.g., Linnenbrink, 2007; Peixoto et al., 2017; Pekrun et al., 2007; Tibubos et al., 2019). Interestingly, when students perceived a significant improvement in their presentation skills early in the seminar, their boredom decreased at a slower rate in later sessions, even when instructors actively worked to engage them. High-performing or fast learners may not find the remaining material sufficiently challenging or relevant, leading to an elevated risk of boredom compared to peers with lower skill levels (e.g., Putwain et al., 2013; Roick & Ringeisen, 2018).

3.1.3 The Role of Boredom for Performance

Boredom's role in predicting performance outcomes proved notable. Lower initial boredom levels and a greater decline in boredom throughout the seminar predicted better presentation behaviors and a better performance during the practical presentation exam. This aligns with prior research suggesting that lower boredom levels and a steeper decline support task focus and competency development, ultimately predicting improved performance across various academic disciplines (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2013; Daniels et al., 2008; Linnenbrink, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2009; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

3.1.4 Significance and Contributions

This study extends the applicability of CVT to social-interactive learning environments by illus-

trating that instructors can mitigate boredom and enhance students' development of essential behavioral skills during practical courses such as presentation training by promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which has a significant influence on the development of presentation competence and performance outcomes. The reciprocal relationship between boredom and competence improvement underscores the benefit of need-supportive instructional strategies in higher education that reduce boredom and thereby facilitate competence acquisition.

3.2 Exemplary Study 2: Investigating the Role of Boredom in Building Moderation Competences (Tibubos et al., 2019)

The second study explored how boredom affects students' perceived competence and performance in a university course aimed at developing oral communication skills, specifically moderation competence. Conducted as a longitudinal quasi-experimental study, it compares an experimental group (EG: autonomy-supportive teaching enriched with high levels of competence support and relatedness support) to a control group (CG: autonomy-supportive teaching enriched with basic levels of competence support and relatedness support). It was hypothesized that the instructional approach in the EG, compared to the CG, can more strongly reduce boredom yet more strongly enhance enjoyment during the course, thereby fostering stronger skill development and better performance during a practical moderation exam at the end of the course (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Pekrun et al., 2007).

3.2.1 The Role of Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness for Boredom

Compared to the CG, the instructional framework in the EG proved effective in facilitating the learning-enhancing effects of reducing boredom yet enhancing enjoyment. Such a teaching approach aligns with research showing that stu-

dents' engagement and achievement benefits when their psychological needs are met (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Key factors, such as detailed feedback and integration of students into active roles during moderation exercises, played a significant part in sustaining engagement, reducing boredom, and enhancing enjoyment, ultimately facilitating better learning and promoting competence development in moderating groups.

3.2.2 Boredom and Competence Development

This study found that boredom levels were consistently lower in the experimental group (EG) compared to the control group (CG). Over time, students in the EG reported stronger associations between enjoyment and perceived moderation competence, while boredom did not display reciprocal effects with competence in either group. These findings align with CVT, which posits that positive learning environments with high levels of autonomy and competence support can reduce boredom yet enhance enjoyment, thereby improving students' self-perceived competence (Pekrun et al., 2007). This is further corroborated by studies showing that relatedness support from instructors, through behaviors like encouraging student participation and addressing negative emotions, enhances students' perception of competence (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012).

3.2.3 Boredom's Influence on Performance

Lower boredom levels in the EG were linked to higher grades in the practical moderation exam. This relationship suggests that the comprehensive support provided in the EG—particularly through structured feedback and active social engagement—reduced boredom, which enabled an effective application of moderation skills, thereby enhancing learning and academic success. These findings align with CVT's premise that boredom has direct implications for academic performance, with reduced boredom correlating with enhanced learning and better practical output (Jang et al., 2010; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

3.2.4 Significance and Contributions

This study provides important insights into the role of boredom in social-interactive learning, particularly in relation to competence development and performance. The study highlights boredom as a critical factor in students' academic experiences. Notably, findings indicate that reducing boredom—through enhanced autonomy, competence, and relatedness support—substantially boosts skill acquisition and academic performance. The study emphasizes that structured support in settings prioritizing autonomy and engagement minimizes boredom, fostering self-perceived competence and practical performance and contributing to a broader understanding of achievement emotions in social-interactive learning contexts.

3.3 Exemplary Study 3: The Role of Boredom During School Experiments in Biology Classes (Minkley et al., 2017)

The aim of this study, which was conducted as a controlled field experiment, was to clarify how different working environments affect physiological, subjective, and emotional stress responses, including boredom, when high school students participated in a molecular biology project with hands-on experiments. The students were assigned to one of three conditions: observing a video of the experiment (passive), conducting it individually (active), or performing it collaboratively in small groups (interactive). Researchers measured heart rate variability, cortisol levels, subjective stress ratings, and achievement emotions to assess the impact of engagement level on both emotional and physiological stress responses for competence development.

3.3.1 The Role of Work Setting for Boredom and Competence Development

The researchers found that work settings requiring different levels of active participation shaped students' boredom experiences, ultimately affecting their sense of competence. In the passive set-

ting, where students only observed a video of the experiment, boredom levels were notably higher and students reported lower perceived competence, as their limited engagement with the material restricted meaningful learning opportunities and self-assessment of skills. This setting provided minimal cognitive engagement and limited students' ability to interact with the material, aligning with CVT's premise that passive learning environments are prone to eliciting boredom due to reduced personal control and relevance (e.g., Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). In contrast, the active condition, where students performed the experiment independently, showed a moderate reduction in boredom. Conducting the experiment alone allowed for deeper engagement with the material, facilitating a sense of autonomy and control. However, the high cognitive demand of managing the experiment individually also increased stress, which sometimes detracted from enjoyment. While active involvement helped sustain engagement, the stress associated with self-managed tasks may have dampened the potential reduction in boredom (Lindahl et al., 2005). Finally, in the interactive setting, where students conducted the experiment collaboratively, boredom levels were lowest, and perceived competence was highest. The opportunity for social interaction, mutual feedback, and collaborative problem-solving appeared to sustain engagement and reduce boredom, supporting the idea that a sense of autonomy and control, coupled with peer support, mitigate boredom and enhance competence in interactive environments (e.g., Gillies, 2004; Malecki & Demaray, 2003).

3.3.2 Associations of Stress and Boredom

This study found that lower engagement and increased boredom, particularly in the passive condition, correlated with higher subjective and physiological stress markers like elevated heart rate variability and reduced stress recovery indicators. Unlike earlier studies (Lindahl et al., 2005; Spangler et al., 2002), cortisol levels did not cor-

relate with boredom or stress across the conditions, suggesting that moderate challenge levels may moderate this relationship. Additionally, a drop in enjoyment strongly coincided with a rise in boredom, reinforcing that limited engagement increases boredom yet undermines enjoyment (e.g., Pekrun, 2006; Petrowski et al., 2010).

3.3.3 Significance and Contributions

The findings of this study emphasize that the nature of working environments can significantly influence students' boredom and its impact on competence development when students conduct experiments in science education in high school. The results highlight the differential impact of active, passive, and interactive work settings on boredom and stress, suggesting that collaborative, interactive settings best promote constructive stress levels while minimizing boredom. By underscoring the effectiveness of working environments that enhance the students' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness within group work, this research supports CVT's assumptions in the school context. The findings emphasize the need for educational designs that integrate interactive elements, as these reduce boredom and support sustained interest and engagement to optimize learning and both emotional and performance-related outcomes in science education (e.g., Arnold et al., 2014; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

4 Integrating Insights on Boredom in Interactive Learning into Educational Practice

The insights from existing research gathered in this chapter highlight several teaching strategies to combat boredom, foster engagement, and therefore enhance competence development in interactive learning environments, of which central strategies are introduced in this section in the following order:

- **Competence support** (ensuring clear structure and goal-setting, challenging students according to their level of competence, providing targeted feedback).
- **Autonomy support** (promoting structured choices).
- **Relatedness support** (creating adequate collaborative environments, actively integrating students in class).

Educators are encouraged to engage in teaching strategies from all three support categories, ideally applying a combination of behaviors.

4.1 Ensuring Clear Structure and Goal-Setting

Clear structure and defined goals are critical for supporting competence and maintaining engagement. Well-structured courses with transparent objectives can help students feel competent and focused. Educators can enhance students' confidence by setting clear expectations, making learning goals explicit, and breaking down complex tasks into smaller subtasks, which are easier to handle (e.g., Camacho-Morles et al., 2021; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2023).

4.2 Challenging Students According to Their Level of Competence

Moreover, educators should select tasks, which fit the competence level of students, as boredom is experienced differently depending on students' skill levels, highlighting the need for adaptable learning challenges (e.g., Schickel & Ringeisen, 2022). To address this, educators could differentiate tasks within the same setting, offering advanced students more complex challenges or opportunities to mentor peers. Tailoring tasks in this way may help maintain engagement for both advanced and less-experienced learners, which might reduce boredom by ensuring continuous, appropriate challenges (e.g., Putwain et al. 2013).

4.3 Providing Targeted Feedback

Feedback is a powerful tool for reducing boredom and supporting a sense of progress. Providing formative, detailed feedback, which follows up on structure and the goals defined at the beginning of a course, emphasizes incremental improvement, helping students see their growth and maintain focus on skill development. By providing feedback on methods and outcomes, educators can acknowledge progress albeit identify potential for improvement, to foster a sense of mastery, and competence development. Additionally, self-assessment and peer feedback can empower students to actively reflect on their learning, consequently sustaining their engagement (e.g., Bürgermeister et al., 2016; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Tibubos et al., 2019).

4.4 Promoting Structured Choices

Structured autonomy—such as allowing students to choose project topics, select task order, or decide on learning methods—gives students a sense of control and relevance, which fosters engagement. Studies show that when autonomy is combined with structure, students feel more motivated, as they can connect tasks to their personal goals, which helps reduce boredom (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Educators should offer choices within clear boundaries, as this balance maintains student motivation and prevents disengagement (e.g., Vansteenkiste et al., 2012; Peixoto et al., 2017).

4.5 Creating Adequate Collaborative Environments

Research shows that collaborative problem-solving in interactive settings can lower boredom levels and enhance students' engagement if students feel connected to each other and perceive (mutual) social support (e.g., Bürgermeister et al., 2016; Gillies, 2004; Hagenauer & Volet,

2014; Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Group-based activities such as discussions, structured group projects, or peer feedback sessions provide students with opportunities for mutual support and shared responsibility. However, it is essential to guide students well through these collaborative activities, help them to choose topics of adequate complexity and contents, and monitor if they need assistance in their group activities, for instance, if some students lack social and self-regulatory skills.

4.6 Actively Integrating Students in Class

Aside from providing the adequate framework for collaborative work among students, educators should actively enhance social relatedness with and between students (e.g., Bürgermeister et al., 2016; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Schneider & Preckel, 2017). Educators can foster this by creating a welcoming atmosphere, using introductory rounds, and encouraging quieter students to participate. Such personal, welcoming, and actively integrative interactions strengthen students' sense of belonging, and reducing disengagement.

In summary, managing boredom in educational settings involves a thoughtful combination of clear structure, appropriately challenging tasks, targeted feedback, structured autonomy, collaboration, and social connectedness. By integrating these elements into their curricula, educators can create competence-supportive environments that mitigate boredom, enhance student engagement, and improve learning outcomes.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of boredom as a significant achievement emotion within interactive learning environments, framed by the IC paradigm and contextualized through the lens of CVT. Drawing from a breadth of empirical findings, it emphasizes how interactive settings—designed to foster students' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness

through the three respective support behaviors—can effectively mitigate boredom and enhance student engagement. These educational practices align closely with individualistic educational ideals, prioritizing self-directed learning and personal responsibility, and thus resonate with CVT's focus on perceived control and task value. Future research could deepen these insights by examining and specifying conditions, under which boredom interacts with factors like traits (e.g., self-efficacy), state variables (e.g., subjective stress experiences), and contextual variables (e.g., peer dynamics) to disentangle effects, especially in collaborative settings.

Additionally, future research should examine in more detail how cultural factors, particularly the expression of IC, may shape characteristics of the learning environments through the central figure of educators and their support behaviors, which is essential for the experience and effects of boredom in learning environments. Since the findings stem mainly from individualistic contexts through the lens of CVT (e.g., Pekrun, 2018; Pekrun & Götz, 2024), their applicability to collectivistic societies, where educational norms may emphasize fitting in with the group and group cohesion over individual autonomy, remains uncertain (Mercan, 2020; Minkov et al., 2017). Exploring culturally specific teaching practices could provide insights into how socio-cultural contexts influence boredom and its interaction with CVT variables (e.g., Tempelaar & Niculescu, 2023; Ohlmeier et al., 2020).

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Low-Socioeconomic Status (SES) Students Experience Positive Emotions Through Academic Intervention Programs in Japan: A Literature Review

14

Naomi Takashiro and Clifford H. Clarke

1 Introduction

Past literature has indicated that socioeconomic status (SES) is related to various detrimental factors. For example, low-SES students tended to exhibit higher conduct problems, negative emotions, hyperactivity, peer problems, and academic achievement (Bierman et al., 2021; Takashiro, 2017).

Negative emotions have detrimental effects on student learning. Students who were bored in mathematics classes tended to be less engaged and to use less learning strategies, and to be less motivated in learning. Consequently, student academic performance tends to be lower (Putwain et al., 2018). Emotions are "...conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body" (Merriam-Webster, 2024). American Psychological Association (APA, 2019) also adapted this definition of emotions.

Although a study suggested that utilization of negative emotions can facilitate learning (Pekrun et al., 2016), positive emotions bring multiple, significant benefits for individuals. Positive emotions broaden children's repertoire and attention, reverse adverse aspects of negative emotions, advance physical and psychological health, and increase resiliency (Belfer & Mugurira, 2017). For example, a happy child tends to be engaged in play, be creative, and develop social and problem-solving skills (Belfer & Mugurira, 2017).

Positive emotions are beneficial for students' learning. For example, positive emotions (e.g., curiosity and enjoyment) were associated positively and negative emotions (e.g., boredom) were associated negatively with students' perceived value of the task (Bierman et al., 2021). Positive emotions are also predictors of student academic achievement. Students' higher enjoyment and lower boredom in mathematics predicted primary school students' academic performance (Putwain et al., 2018).

Low-SES individuals may benefit from the usage of positive emotions in learning. Given low-SES students tend to have higher negative emotions (Bierman et al., 2021), academic interventions may be a key to reverse students' negative emotions to positive ones. Understanding and utilizing positive emotions may be particularly important for low-SES students. For example, resilient individuals tend to recover from negative emotions (Tugade & Fredrickson,

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2004). Growing up in a disadvantaged family, low-SES individuals can use resilience in developing positive emotions to cope with unfavorable situations.

There are several issues involved in positive emotions developed from academic interventions in Japan. First, considering a majority of the reviewed articles relating to academic interventions on types of positive emotions and efforts were written only in Japanese, findings on low-SES students' positive emotions developed from intervention programs are not known for most researchers outside Japan. Second, although academic intervention programs have been around about 20 years in Japan, there is a scarcity of synthesizing the extant literature in the area. Third, the quality of academic intervention programs may be inconclusive (Takashiro, 2024). When results of studies are inconclusive, such results most likely draw inaccurate conclusions. Therefore, a synthesis of literature reviews on positive emotions, developed through academic interventions in Japan, should be examined. The purpose of the current study is to (a) identify types of low-SES students' positive emotions as developed through academic intervention programs and (b) identify how the academic interventions created positive emotions for low-SES students in Japan.

2 Academic Intervention Programs Focusing on Positive Psychology for Low-SES Individuals

Before presenting summaries of literature reviews, the theme of this handbook, positive psychology is explained as follows. Research on positive psychology using psychological theory focuses on one's psychological states (e.g., happiness), and one's positive traits (e.g., hope). In addition, positive psychology focuses on social institutions (e.g., family, religions, education, and government) that increase one's evaluation of levels of happiness, life satisfaction, meaningful life, and worthiness of living (APA, 2018).

A brief summary of academic interventions in Japan is explained for readers who are not familiar with the systems. Similar to the combination of Head Start in the United States, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 2024; Head Start of Lane County, 2024), the academic interventions in Japan tend to provide one-to-one tutoring, small-size class teaching, mentoring, educational services, and learning activities for low-SES individuals. Academic interventions supported by government funds have existed for about 20 years. Academic interventions target middle school students mainly but include elementary and high school students as well (Takashiro, 2024).

Summaries of main findings related to positive psychology for low-SES individuals at intervention programs in international studies are introduced. The next three studies are related to Head Start programs, which develop low-SES young children's education, health, and well-being in the United States (Office of Head Start, 2023).

Izard et al. (2004) measured children's emotions using a theory-driven, emotion-centered prevention program in Head Start. The program focused on four basic emotions of happiness, sadness, anger, and fear and how the program helped children to identify, regulate, and utilize these emotions. Main findings in the program included improved children's emotion knowledge and reduced negative emotion expressions compared to those in the control group. The authors discussed how teacher ratings might have influenced some of the positive outcomes.

Domitrovich et al. (2007) evaluated the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATH) program in Head Start. The purpose of the program was to reduce negative emotional problems and increase children's social emotional abilities. Focused emotions were similar to Izard et al.'s (2004) study. In addition to Izard et al.'s (2004) study, the authors also included attention and problem-solving domains. Main findings revealed that children in the intervention indicated higher emotion knowledge, social com-

petence, and were less socially withdrawn compared to those in the control group. The strengths of their study was to include parents' as well as teachers' assessments. One of the limitations was in analyzing individual children's data due to the unit of randomization being the small classrooms, as mentioned by the authors. This limitation might have affected the outcomes of their study.

Bierman et al. (2021) examined an effect of a Head Start REDI (research-based, developmentally informed) intervention program in the United States compared to the usual Head Start programs to improve children's emotional understanding, social skills, self-control, and social problem-solving skills. Main findings indicated that children decreased negative emotional symptoms (e.g., worries, unhappiness, and depression), conduct problems, and peer problems compared to the control group. Similar to Baourda et al.'s (2023) research, the weakness of the study was the sole usage of teacher ratings on adolescent emotional symptoms as mentioned by the authors.

Another study emphasized the regulation of negative emotions in the United States. Rozek et al. (2019) conducted an emotion regulation intervention with 1175 low-SES students. The main findings were that students who participated in the intervention tended to improve course passing rates, class grades, and reduce appraisal test anxiety more than those in the control group. The authors suggested that emotion regulation was one intervention factor that reduced the achievement gap between high and low-SES high school students in the United States. The number of low-SES students was only 24% in their study.

The next two international studies focused on improving children's reading skills and social emotional skills. Ni et al. (2021) investigated effects of mothers' volunteer involvement in child-reading programs for migrant and urban families in China. Qualitative results relating to emotion indicated that the reading intervention altered children's negative emotional problems and produced positive psychological changes, such as lively, cheerful, and confident emotions.

The authors postulated that such positive changes may be attributed as follows: volunteering in the reading programs created a sense of accomplishment and community, fostered parent self-efficacy, and positive psychology in children. The qualitative results were based on six case studies.

Tijms (2017) and other scholars assessed effects of a school-based preventative intervention program to improve reading skills and social emotional skills for 90 low-SES young adolescents in the Netherlands. Main findings indicated that students in a book club group achieved higher reading comprehension, reading attitude, and social emotional skills than those in a control group. The authors were unable to identify which aspects of the book club intervention were most influential for outcome improvements.

Other studies have measured individuals' positive traits and emotions. Emotions are part of one's psychological states in positive psychology (APA, 2019). Baourda et al. (2023) examined effects of a school-based positive psychological intervention for 361 elementary school children in Greece. Main findings were that children in the intervention group increased hope, optimism, and self-esteem compared to the control group. Additionally, children in the intervention group reduced pessimism and anxiety compared to their counterparts. Parental educational backgrounds had no effect on the outcomes. The scholars explained that sociodemographic variables did not have a major influence on the intervention. This suggests that socioeconomic status did not have an impact on students' emotions in their research.

Yang et al. (2022) investigated 120 low-SES 9th and 11th graders' different types and evolution of academic emotions during the Knowledge Building process of the intervention to improve their community knowledge in Hong Kong. It was found that students in the intervention used positive emotions such as joy and less negative emotions such as anxiety and boredom.

In summary, results from international studies indicated that low-SES individuals regulated negative emotions, improved social emotional skills, positive emotions and traits after the aca-

demic interventions. Results also indicated that many studies have measured low-SES individuals' positive traits, but not positive emotions. Reviewing, synthesizing, and evaluating the literature is essential to identifying low-SES individuals' positive emotions emerged from interventions in Japan.

3 Method

The current study intended to review, evaluate, and synthesize the existing literature on low-SES students' positive emotions developed through academic intervention programs in Japan.

3.1 Selection Criteria

The first author, who has published articles on academic intervention programs for low-SES and is a native speaker of Japanese, searched for materials in Japanese and English. The three search engines used for the review were: Google Scholar, and J-Stage, and The Japanese Association of Educational Psychology, for published articles pertaining to Japan.

Initially, the search was limited to only peer-reviewed journals; however, the first author extended the search to include gray literature due to the insufficient numbers of peer-reviewed articles in the area and to avoid possible publication bias. Gray literature included government reports, research reports by research agencies and individuals, monthly publication materials, non-peer reviewed articles, and conference proceedings. Grant and Booth (2009) stated that literature reviews may include research findings, peer-reviewed journals, and informal literature.

The following study criteria were employed, (a) participants were low-SES elementary to high school adolescents, (b) one purpose of academic interventions was to teach students school subjects or non-cognitive skills, (c) articles included qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods; (d) articles were published between 2000 and 2023, (e) outcomes were related to children's positive

emotions developed from academic interventions, and (f) articles were written in English or Japanese.

Several explanations are provided herein to justify the above study criteria. Given that academic interventions have existed for 20 years in Japan, references published between 2000 and 2023 were searched.

The first author attempted several Japanese keywords to find out the optimal keywords to find references. The optimal keywords were gakushūshien (academic assistance), kodomo no gakushūshien (children's academic assistance), kodomo no gakushūshien kōka kenshō (effectiveness of academic interventions), kodomo no hinkon (child poverty) and seikatsu konkyūsetai (poverty households). The initial search produced 617 references. After reviewing titles of the articles and abstracts, 31 studies were utilized in the current study. Most of the articles were not written specifically for investigating children's positive emotions; however, they were included as long as articles indicated findings related to the purposes of the current study. The first author also used some English keywords such as child poverty, academic intervention programs, and Japan to locate references. However, none of the reviewed articles met the study criteria. Preschool children studies, complimentary meal programs as a part of interventions, visitations of low-SES children's home programs, children with disabilities were excluded from the literature review.

Although a synthesis of findings is typically presented in narrative style in a literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009), the authors of the current study decided to present themes and sub-themes instead to make findings presentable and readable. Given that the reviewed materials were all written in Japanese, the first author read the entire materials to be familiar with the content a few times and to identify types of positive emotions. Then she extracted positive emotions from the materials with page numbers and the names of authors into Word. The first author consulted with the second author, who is familiar with oral Japanese, about the findings to reduce translation bias.

4 Results

4.1 Characteristics of the Reviewed Studies

A summary of characteristics of the reviewed studies is introduced. Eighteen articles employed quantitative research, nine used qualitative research, and four utilized mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative). About 70% of quantitative research employed frequency to draw conclusions. Frequently used inferential statistics were t-tests and chi-square. Interviews were most frequently used and content analyses were also used in 70% of the qualitative research. About 30% of quantitative studies had less than 30 participants. Respondents of the studies were commonly middle school students (12 articles), staff and/or teachers (9 articles), parents (9 articles), and others. About 50% of the articles measured non-academic skills such as students' motivation. Roughly 30% measured both academic and non-academic skills. Sixteen of the thirty-one studies used high school advancement as a measurable outcome. Most of the academic skills were measured by perceived academic understanding and competence rather than actual test scores. Students' emotions were identified by students, staff, and parents. None of the studies drew theoretical or conceptual frameworks.

4.2 Types of Positive Emotions Identified in the Reviewed Studies

Four themes relating to positive emotions were identified in the reviewed studies. Themes were presented from those most frequently to the least frequently identified. The themes were: (a) excitement in learning; (b) contentment with self and others; (c) anticipation of the future; and (d) pride in self. The four themes with subcategories are discussed in detail below.

4.3 Excitement in Learning

Low-SES students' forms of excitement were identified from students', parents', staff members', and teachers' perspectives. Positive emotions related to learning were: joy, like, interest, fun, happiness, and enjoyment. These emotions were found most frequently.

Positive emotions were reported as follows: fun and enjoyable (e.g., study was fun (Kumamoto et al., 2022; Sendai City, 2023; Hyōgo Child Support Organization, 2015; Obayashi, 2020); joyful (e.g., Understanding school subject was joyful, Takashima et al., 2016; Uchida, 2014); happy (e.g., My child appeared to be happy in understanding school subjects, Ozawa et al., 2012; Learning for All, 2021, like (e.g., Students liked to study (Learning for All, 2021; Kodama et al., 2019); interests (e.g., A student's interests in learning, Kodama et al., 2019), and glad (e.g., A student was glad to learn, Kano, 2018).

4.4 Contentment with Self and Others

Low-SES students' contentment with themselves and others (staff, peers, parents, and teachers) were found. Positive emotions found were satisfaction, relief, and calmness. Students', parents', teachers', and staff members' comments were identified as satisfaction and relief (e.g., Students' satisfaction and relief with the program) and calmness in the program (JMA, 2020; Kodama et al., 2019; Oka et al., 2011). Furthermore, female students' decreased loneliness by attending the program was related to well-being (Yamamoto et al., 2020).

4.5 Anticipation of the Future

Future goals and educational aspirations were noted in the studies. Positive emotions were associated with anticipation and admiration for stu-

dents' present and future situations. Anticipation (e.g., Anticipation toward future goals and dreams, Learning for All, 2021; Shindō, 2020; Yamamoto et al., 2020) and admiration (e.g., Students admired the idea of becoming a college student and of becoming a teacher) as Kamitani and Koda (2021) reported. Future-related findings were identified; e.g., students became positive about the future (Yoshizumi, 2018; Kamitani & Koda, 2021) and students had higher educational aspirations (Abe & Matsumura, 2020).

4.6 Pride in Self

Low-SES individuals also had pride in themselves. Confidence and self-efficacy were identified within the same theme. More specifically, confidence (e.g., I am now able to share my opinions with confidence, Inoue (2021); Iwata (2020); Uchida, 2014), and self-efficacy (e.g., students' self-efficacy in arithmetic had improved (Kodama et al., 2019).

Overall, four themes were found that related to positive emotions, (a) excitement in learning; (b) contentment with self and others; (c) anticipation of the future; and (d) pride in self.

4.7 How Academic Interventions Created Low-SES Students' Positive Emotions

After creating themes for positive emotions, the authors of the current study examined how the academic interventions created students' positive emotions. Eighteen out of the 31 articles were included. The most frequently identified theme to the least frequently identified theme is presented in sequence.

4.8 Teachers' Qualifications and Efforts

Teachers' skills, experience, confidence, teaching method, efforts, and assessment of students'

level of understanding were reported. Teachers' skills, experience, and confidence were reported as follows: Experienced teachers corrected students' undesirable behavior in class, (Kanuma City, 2019; Kano, 2018; Kodama et al., 2019). Two other articles reported teaching methods such as one-to-one support that tended to increase students' self-efficacy, and helping students learn new materials that were deemed important (Ozaki et al., 2018; Takashima et al., 2016). Teachers' efforts were also reported, e.g., teachers' comments on students' reflection papers helped to establish relationships with them (Tsukuda, 2019) and student teachers praised and advised students on their drawings (Kamitani & Koda, 2021).

4.9 Relationships with Staff, Teachers, and Peers

Low-SES students valued their relationships with teachers, peers, and staff. Students perceived college students as role models; perceived staff as caring, e.g., a staff expressed concerns to a student, which helped her open up herself to the person, (JMA, 2020; Miyashita et al., 2020; Matsumura, 2021); and students' enjoyment in mathematics and learning motivation (Kodama et al., 2019, Sendai City, 2023). In addition, relationships with peers created friendships, e.g., Natsuko's taking initiative toward Michiru helped them get along with each other (Tajiri, 2018).

4.10 Students' Experiential Learning Activities

Students' educational activities and non-educational activities, such as cooking and playing sports were identified, e.g., in addition to tutoring, playing card games, and participating in handicraft activities were enjoyable for students (JMA, 2020; Shindō, 2020).

4.11 Low Personal Risk in Safe Interventions

Academic intervention programs provided students with safe environments in which to feel comfort and at ease. Two related comments were identified as: Attending an academic intervention helped students like to study and to increase confidence (Kids' Door, 2019); students felt calmness, relief, and enjoyed participating in the academic intervention (MRI, 2019).

To summarize, the four themes found to create positive emotions for low-SES students were (a) teachers' qualifications and efforts; (b) relationships with staff, teachers, and peers; (c) students' experiential learning activities; and (d) low personal risk in safe interventions.

5 Discussion

The purpose of the current study is to identify (a) types of low-SES students' positive emotions as developed through academic intervention programs, and (b) how the academic interventions created positive emotions for low-SES students in Japan. Findings on low-SES students' positive emotions in the literature were (a) excitement in learning; (b) contentment with self and others; (c) anticipation of the future; and (d) pride in self. Additionally, the elements in academic interventions that created positive emotions were (a) teachers' qualifications and efforts; (b) relationships with staff, teachers, and peers; (c) students' experiential learning activities; and (d) low personal risk environment established for safe interventions.

5.1 Excitement in Learning

Most frequently found positive emotions in the reviewed literature were: joy, like, interest, fun, happiness, and enjoyment. Consistent with the current finding in Kralova et al.'s (2023) study, joy and related emotions were significantly dominant positive emotions. Positive emotions are associated with resilient mechanisms (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Individuals with higher resil-

iency have more positive emotions during adversity than those with lower resiliency (Fredrickson, n.d.). Considering low-SES individuals are prone to face more adversity, possessing positive emotions is important for them to become resilient in coping with adversity.

5.2 Contentment with Self and Others

In the current study, the second-most frequently found positive emotions were satisfaction, relief, and calmness. These findings are also congruent with Kralova et al.'s (2023) findings in Slovakia. Applying the findings of the current study to Fredrickson (n.d.)'s reference to students' calmness of finding a place to study in academic interventions may help students create motivation and achieve academic success. Furthermore, satisfied students with broadened mindsets developed by playing with peers and learning from caring teachers may improve their intellectual abilities, socio-emotional abilities, and brain functions. In other words, positive emotions may strengthen low-SES individuals' mindsets and personal resources.

5.3 Anticipation of the Future

The current study found that low-SES students indicated anticipation and admiration for their educational aspirations. Inconsistent with Kralova et al.'s (2023) findings, anticipation and admiration are important for low-SES students. Inconsistency of the findings with Kralova et al. (2023) may be due to the positive emotions. Positive emotions are also associated with ones' different emotional definitions of well-being. According to Fredrickson (n.d.), present positive emotions are likely to last longer into the future. This suggests that low-SES students' anticipation and admiration may lead to higher educational aspirations in the future. For example, going to college may become an option for students. Given the importance of higher educational aspirations for high achievers from low-SES back-

grounds in Japan (Takashiro, 2023a, 2023b), strengthening anticipation and admiration of college students is likely to be beneficial for low-SES students.

5.4 Pride in Self

Low-SES students took pride in themselves in the reviewed literature. This finding of the current study is also inconsistent with Kralova et al.'s (2023) research. Such discrepancy may be due to the definitions of positive emotions. Pride is another positive emotion for low-SES students to achieve academic success. Research has indicated that high-achieving, low-SES students tend to have higher confidence than low-achieving, low-SES students in Japan (Takashiro, 2023a, 2023b). Positive emotions may create multiple optimal effects on a giver of the act, receiver of the act, and a bystander to the act (Fredrickson, n.d.). Applying the finding of the present study to Fredrickson (n.d.), a student who displays positive emotions is likely to help peers. Further, a peer who receives assistance may feel appreciation, and a third party, who recognizes such a kind act, may feel uplifted, and the helpful student takes pride in his or her self for helping others.

5.5 How Academic Interventions Created Positive Emotions

There were four themes found helpful for low-SES students to create positive emotions: (a) teachers' qualifications and efforts; (b) relationships with staff, teachers, and peers; (c) students' experiential learning activities; and (d) low personal risk activities in safe interventions.

5.6 Teachers' Qualifications and Efforts

The finding of the current study revealed that teachers' skills, experience, confidence, teaching methods, efforts, and assessment of students'

level of understanding were useful for low-SES students. Teachers' teaching methods such as writing reflection papers, small groups, and individual work contributed to students' positive emotions. Such findings are in line with Kralova et al.'s (2023) and Bieg et al.'s findings in Slovakia and Switzerland. In addition, consistent with Wang et al.'s (2023) results in China, the current study also found that teachers' helping students to solve academic problems and students talking to teachers and others about difficulties enhanced students' positive emotions. Findings of the current study suggest that teachers' various scholastic and cognitive support is likely to help students increase confidence and motivation to solve scholastic problems (Wang et al., 2023).

5.7 Relationships with Staff, Teachers, and Peers

Promoting protective factors such as support from peers and caretakers helped to reduce the risk of adverse conditions (Luthar et al., 2014). In the case of academic interventions, peers, teachers, and staff appeared to promote protective factors to mitigate low-SES students' unfavorable circumstances. Positive emotions drawn from protective factors may not be obtained easily in regular schools.

The academic interventions utilize college students as staff and teachers. The finding of the current study is partially inconsistent with Takashiro and Clarke's study (2020). Their finding revealed that not all the individuals received positive influence from teachers; however, where exhibited they reversed negative influences to positive ones. Students' negative responses were rarely described in the reviewed materials.

Positive emotions found in the literature, such as happiness and enjoyment can spread to others. Displaying positive emotions is likely to produce positive emotions in others (Fredrickson, n.d.). Positive emotions also appear to be bidirectional. Staff members' and teachers' smiling faces would foster positive emotions in students. In a similar vein, students' positive words and smiles would cultivate positive emotions in their peers.

5.8 Students' Experiential Learning Activities

In this current study, student academic and non-academic learning activities produced students' positive emotions. This finding is consistent with findings from a systematic review of benefits of extracurricular activities in the West (European Commission, 2021). Their results revealed that extracurricular activities brought multiple benefits to children, such as positive academic achievement, social and emotional skills, and behaviors. More specifically, participating in extracurricular activities was related to students with empathy, self-confidence, resilience, and joy (European Commission, 2021). Their findings also indicated that extracurricular activities may be more beneficial for disadvantaged individuals than advantaged ones. Research evidence continuously indicated that low-SES children were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities (European Commission, 2021). Nevertheless, low-SES students in academic interventions may feel increasing ease in participating in activities with peers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds in academic interventions.

5.9 Chronological Development in the Literature

One approach for conducting literature reviews is to chronologically trace (Purdue OWL, n.d.) the development of academic intervention studies. Except for the authors of the current study reviewing selected literature from the last 20 years of low-SES academic interventions literature related to positive emotions in Japan, it appears that the field has not progressed much in 20 years. Results from the literature have consistently revealed that middle school students' improved non-academic skills (e.g., students' motivation) and measurable skills (e.g., high school advancement). Similar methods of analysis such as frequency and t-tests have been used consistently. Additionally, the purposes of studies have been commonly the assessment and challenges of academic interventions. Consistent

with Yamamoto et al. (2020), rigorous evaluation would be necessary to advance the field.

5.9.1 Methodological Issues and Recommendations

Quality assessment of literature can be included in a literature review (Grant & Bootht 2009). Thus, several methodological issues and recommendations are presented because these issues influence reliability and validity of studies. The methodological issues and recommendations are mostly related to research papers in the reviewed studies. Inconsistent with Takashiro (2023b), most of the reviewed studies in the current study tended to conclude an effectiveness of the academic intervention programs with inadequate scientific evidence. In other words, conclusions are likely to be inconclusive for several reasons.

First, several studies have conducted pre and post-tests and only one study conducted experimental and control groups to examine the effectiveness of the academic interventions. Lack of an experimental condition would present an inadequacy for drawing conclusions on the effectiveness of interventions. Gravetter and Wallnau (2008) stated that a control study with no treatment is used as a guideline to compare with an experimental study with treatment. Low-SES students in the reviewed studies who took part in academic interventions might have had higher motivation and academic achievement before their programs. More rigorous research designs are recommended to draw accurate findings.

Second, lack of descriptions of the reviewed studies was commonly identified. Overall, the majority of the articles explained backgrounds of their studies sufficiently and purposes of their studies. However, methods, results, and discussion sections tended to be insufficient. For example, although numbers of original participants were reported, the actual numbers of participants after excluding missing values were not clearly reported. Reporting missing values and handling of missing values in analyses tended to be insufficient. Additionally, none of the studies utilized theoretical or conceptual frameworks. Another example is that although some authors presented findings in discussion, an absence of presenting

their findings compared to previous findings in other literature was found. Sufficient descriptions in research are imperative.

Third, absence of advanced analyses is another issue. Although 70% of the qualitative studies had more than a 100 sample size, frequency was used most. T-tests and chi-square tests were also commonly used. Use of advanced statistical analysis draws accurate findings about complex relations between variables and provides profound understanding from data (IBM, n.d.). Utilization of advanced statistics in addition to basic statistics would be helpful for researchers to understand the complexity.

5.9.2 Limitations

There were two limitations in the current study. First, it was challenging to locate qualified, peer-reviewed articles in the area of academic intervention programs for low-SES students in Japan. Second, given that all the positive emotions were translated from Japanese to English, translation bias may exist. The authors were unable to conduct back translations and inter-rater reliability; however, the authors discussed findings and themes to minimize such bias.

6 Conclusion

Although there were limitations, the current study extended the extant literature by synthesizing a literature review on academic interventions on positive emotions for low-SES students in Japan. The present study found the following low-SES students' positive emotions: excitement in learning; contentment with self and others; anticipation of the future; and pride in self. Additionally, the authors revealed the following themes for positive emotions of low-SES students: teachers' qualifications and efforts; relationships with staff; teachers, and peers; students' experiential learning; and low personal risk in safe interventions.

Understanding and increasing positive emotions are important because they bring significant benefits for low-SES students. Positive emotions broaden children's repertoire and attention,

reverse adverse aspects of negative emotions, advance physical and psychological health, and increase resiliency (Belfer & Muguira, 2017). Enhancing positive emotions may be one of the approaches to narrow the gap between low-SES and high-SES students' academic and educational inequalities.

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The Sociocultural Context of Well-Being: The Case of Poland

15

Piotr Szarota

1 Introduction

In cross-cultural research, culture is usually defined as the expression of beliefs and values in a society's institutions, practices, and artefacts transmitted across generations through social learning (Oishi, 2014). The most popular universal dimension of culture studied in the context of well-being is individualism–collectivism. As defined by Harry Triandis (1995), individualism is a tendency for people to be motivated primarily by their own goals and preferences; collectivism, on the other hand, is a tendency to view one's self as part of a network of social groups. It could be assumed that the indices of well-being should be higher in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures since individualistic cultures encourage their members to pursue personal happiness over honour and the meeting of social obligations. This assumption has been supported by subsequent research (e.g. Diener et al., 1995). Recently, the validity of early cross-cultural research on well-being has been questioned. Firstly, the fact that researchers have often operationalised culture as a country is very problematic. In times of mass migrations, there are fewer and fewer countries that could be described as monocultures; consequently, ethnicity is an

important variable that should be considered while planning research. As David Matsumoto (2003, p. 196) observed: "A sound cross-cultural comparison would entail the collection of data from multiple sites within the same cultural group [...] to demonstrate the replicability of a finding across different samples within the same culture."

In addition to the above, the original concept of individualism–collectivism needs some refinement. As early as 1995, Harry Triandis proposed that individualism and collectivism could be further modified to horizontal (emphasising equality) or vertical (emphasising hierarchy). Combining these relative emphases with individualism and collectivism produces four distinct patterns: horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, horizontal individualism, and vertical individualism (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). On the other hand, Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama introduced the concept of independent and interdependent self-construals. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), Western cultures tend to construe the self as separate from its social context and thus emphasise autonomy and independence, which is independent self-construal. By contrast, East Asian cultures conventionally construe and construct the self as a constituent of a broader social context; their concept of self entails characteristics and qualities of the social environment, which is interdependent self-construal. More recently,

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Kitayama et al. (2022) described four distinct forms of interdependence in four non-Western cultural zones: East Asia, South Asia, Arab regions, and Latin America. It can be surmised that each of these four forms has a unique association with well-being.

The final point is that researchers began to acknowledge diverse ways in which people conceptualise and desire well-being (Krys et al., 2021). Well-being valuation varies across cultures; there are cultures in which achievement-oriented well-being is especially valued (e.g. life satisfaction; Diener et al., 1985) and others in which relationship-oriented well-being is desired more (e.g. interdependent happiness; Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015). Individualistic cultures value the well-being of individuals, while in the collectivistic cultures the well-being of families is probably more important (Krys et al., 2021).

It is possible to escape at least some of the previously mentioned methodological and theoretical problems by focusing on a single culture. Typically, such cultural analyses require a deeper psychological understanding of a studied culture. Furthermore, good knowledge of the traditions and history of a given region is usually regarded as a valuable asset. It is small wonder there are only a handful of such cultural studies focused on emotional regulation and well-being. One of the most accomplished is the analysis of Balinese culture by the Norwegian social anthropologist, Unni Wikan (1990). The book *Managing Turbulent Hearts* summarises 20 months of fieldwork and effectively combines anthropological insights with psychological expertise.

In this paper, I focus on Polish culture, emphasising the importance of socio-historical factors that might shape the well-being of a present-day population. I use an interdisciplinary framework to draw on social and clinical psychology, linguistics, social history, and cultural studies.

In the first part of the chapter, I focus on Polish history as the reference point for discussing the cultural context of well-being. I present three lines of research documenting the specificity of Polish culture and history, which I found crucial in understanding the emotional landscape of Poland. The first focuses on the cultural scripts

encoded in Polish language, the second on the longevity of the Romantic tradition in Poland, and the third one on the Second World War trauma experienced by Polish citizens.

The second part of the chapter is a literature review in which the current psychological research on emotional regulation and well-being in Poland is presented and analysed in connection to the previously discussed historical factors.

2 The Burden of History

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, social psychologists have become more interested in understanding people's historical thinking (Bilewicz et al., 2017; Klein, 2013) and the ways in which people represent history (e.g., Liu et al., 2005). As Wójcik and Lewicka (2022, p. 3) put it:

History is a resource that can be used for many group purposes. Historical references to the noble and victorious past of the group tend to boost self-esteem, create a positive in-group image, and satisfy the group self-enhancement motive [...] History also plays an essential role in legitimizing and coordinating current in-group actions, which in turn increases group identification.

Another interesting research question is the possible impact of the historical past on the present human behaviour. According to socioecological approaches, culture codifies and transmits successful solutions to the challenges and opportunities afforded by the physical and social environment (Sng et al., 2018). For instance, ancestral diversity represents the region's migratory history. Research shows that respondents from high ancestrally diverse countries favoured the overt expression of both negative and positive emotions, whereas respondents from low ancestrally diverse countries favoured the suppression of emotional expression (Niedenthal et al., 2023).

The idea of studying the possible impact of the historical past on the present human behaviour seems very intriguing. In the following paragraphs, I use Polish history as the reference point for discussing factors that might be crucial to

understanding the cultural context of well-being in Poland.

2.1 Language and Polish Cultural Scripts

To some extent, the historical past of a region or country is represented symbolically in the language. “There is a very close link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language spoken by it. This applies in equal measure to the outer and inner aspects of life,”—argues the Polish-Australian linguist, Anna Wierzbicka (1997, p. 1), in her book *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words*. “Different cultures encourage different attitudes toward emotions, and these different attitudes are reflected in both the lexicon and the grammar of the language [...]”—Wierzbicka elaborates in another book (Wierzbicka, 1994, p. 133).

According to Wierzbicka (1999), Polish culture does not have a tradition of elaborate verbalisation of emotions or highly developed analysis of one’s emotions. She argues that “Polish culture encourages spontaneity, not introspection” (p. 258), stating that “Polish cultural emphasis on the involuntary character of feelings is reflected in Polish grammar, which has a productive pattern for talking about involuntary emotions” (pp. 262–263). To illustrate her point, Wierzbicka (1999, p. 262) quotes Eva Hoffman, an American writer, whose family emigrated to America in 1959:

Once, when my mother was very miserable, I told her, full of my newly acquired American wisdom, that she should try to control her feelings. “What do you mean?” she asked as if this was an idea proffered by a member of a computer species. “How can I do that? They are my feelings.” My mother cannot imagine tempering with her feelings, which are the most authentic part of her, which are her. She suffers her emotions as if there were forces of nature, winds and storms and volcanic eruptions.

Wierzbicka (1994) states that *szczerość* (roughly, sincerity) is one of the core values of Polish culture. The cultural scripts of *szczerość* concern the value of presenting one’s feelings

‘truthfully’, that is, saying and ‘showing’ what one really feels. Wierzbicka (1994, p. 165) notes that the English concept of frankness (as distinct from sincerity) has no exact equivalent in Polish:

[frankness] acknowledges the value of saying what one thinks in spite of the fact that by doing so, one may cause someone to feel something bad (a consequence that is seen as clearly undesirable), and thus it celebrates two values at once: saying what one thinks and paying attention to other people’s feelings.

The Polish concept of *szczerość* celebrates only the value of saying what one feels or thinks since in Polish culture, emotional spontaneity is valued more highly than a desire to make someone else feel good (Wierzbicka, 1994). In my opinion, this lack of consideration for other people’s feelings profoundly impacts Polish emotional culture.

2.2 Romantic Tradition and Messianic Myth

According to Maria Janion (2000, p. 45), an eminent Polish literary theorist, Romanticism became an exceptional and utterly incomparable phenomenon in Polish culture partly because the Romantic revolution in culture was interwoven with the national struggle for liberation. As another Polish scholar, Katarzyna Zechenter (2019, p. 8), puts it:

Poland’s loss of political independence (1795–1918) and the subsequent suffering over that period and later can be read as the most important trauma in that country’s history that marked Polish identity. The continuous trauma was understood through its major element—the suffering of the people.

According to Zechenter (2019), Polish preoccupation with suffering has its genesis in the Jesuit version of Catholicism adopted in Poland in the seventeenth century:

Probably the most important role in suggesting that Poland had a special mission to fulfill that later developed into Messianism with its emphasis on suffering, was played by a masterly Jesuit orator and a royal preacher, Piotr Skarga [...] It was Skarga’s vision of Poland as a place chosen by God

to defend the Catholic faith that began an influential fusion between politics and Catholicism in Polish culture that is still clearly visible (pp. 11–12).

In the nineteenth century, messianic doctrine based on the New Testament was skilfully adopted by Polish Romantics, who identified Polish historical fate with the messianic suffering of the Crucifixion. As Zechenter (2019, p. 14) puts it: “Suffering within the religious outlook was thus seen not only as necessary but also as a constructive part of the mission to liberate the world and to bring ‘freedom to the people,’ not just to the Poles.”

It is worth mentioning that the Polish word *cierpiętnictwo*, which denotes (cf. Stanisławski, 1990) a “morbid pleasure derived from the recollection of one’s past suffering,” has no direct equivalents in other languages. Additionally, the outstanding popularity of the word *martyrologia* [roughly, martyrology] —typically used in the context of the history of Polish suffering is quite telling. While Anna Wierzbicka (1999) did not propose the Polish cultural script of suffering, she observes the importance of good feelings, such as cheerfulness, enjoyment and fun, in American culture and the absence of similar norms in Polish culture (Wierzbicka, 1999, p. 250). She illustrates these cultural differences quoting Eva Hoffmann’s (1989) reminiscences of different farewell rituals as she experienced in Poland and America:

But as the time of our departure approaches, Basia [...] makes me promise that I won’t forget her. Of course I won’t! She passes a journal with a pretty, embroidered cloth cover to my fellow classmates, in which they are to write appropriate words of goodbye. Most of them chose melancholy verses in which life is figured as a vale of tears or a river of suffering, or a journey of pain on which we are embarking. This tone of sadness is something we all enjoy. It makes us feel the gravity of life [...] It’s only 2 years later that I go on a month-long bus trip across Canada and the United States with a group of teenagers, who at parting inscribe sentences in each other’s notebooks to be remembered by. ‘It was great fun knowing you!’ [...] ‘Keep cheerful, and nothing can harm you!’ they enjoin, and as I compare my two sets of memories, I know that [...] I’ve indeed come to another country.

Romantic movement not only inspired Polish writers and artists for the centuries to come but profoundly impacted Polish emotional culture. There were periods in Polish history when messianic myth did not feel relevant, especially in the interwar period, which lasted from November 1918, when Poland regained independence, until 1 September 1939. However, the myth was not forgotten. Most recently, it was recreated again after the Smoleńsk plane crash in 2010, in which 96 people died, including President Lech Kaczyński. There was a strange coincidence because the Polish delegation was to attend an event commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre, in which nearly 22,000 military officers were executed by the NKVD (the Soviet secret police). After the accident, the Romantic rhetoric and the language of national martyrology were skilfully utilised by the Law and Justice Party (PiS), which helped them secure victory in the general election of 2015. As Leszek Koczanowicz (2017, p. 99) states: “The catastrophe provided a definitive link between Poland’s contemporary history, post-communist transformations, and two centuries of struggles for independence.”

2.3 Second World War Trauma

It was not only Poles who regarded WWII as a crucial event in modern history. The Second World War was mentioned as one of the most important historical events in more than 30 nations (Pennebaker et al., 2006). There were many reasons that might explain this phenomenon, for instance, the unprecedented death toll, the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Rutkowski and Dembińska (2016, p. 936) put it:

World War II differed from World War I in the objectives the warfare attempted to achieve. [...] It was the first time in history when military actions were directed against civilians on such a large scale [...] That phenomenon contributed to the occurrence and widespread of trauma and post-traumatic disorders to the extent that had never been experienced before.

The Polish human losses during WWII were among the highest of all countries involved in the war. Approximately 2.7 million Poles and nearly three million Polish Jews lost their lives as a result of the War (Materski & Szarota, 2009); the country's material devastation was immense; Warsaw, the capital of Poland, was virtually razed to the ground. Moreover, for many Poles, the war did not end in 1945. The political transformation of post-war Poland into a Communist state resulted in terror and oppression with thousands being imprisoned and tortured. Additionally, the history of WWII had been largely rewritten to suit official communist propaganda, for instance, crimes committed by the Soviet army or NKVD could not be officially mentioned, and their victims were not commemorated.

3 Polish Emotional Environment: Literature Review

It is universally assumed that the emotions people express around us influence our well-being. Recently, Krys et al. (2022, p. 118) introduced the concept of 'societal emotional environment': the emotional climate of a society. They proposed that in order to better comprehend societal and individual well-being, positive psychologists may need to study the emotional climate in a given society that is constituted by the frequency of expressed positive emotions and the frequency of expressed negative emotions. According to Krys et al. (2022), living in a negative societal emotional environment fosters negative emotions and inhibits life satisfaction, while living in a positive societal emotional environment fosters positive emotions and promotes life satisfaction. The proposed framework might be useful not only in cross-cultural comparative research but also in a single-culture analysis. I have used this framework to provide evidence that Poland constitutes the negative emotional environment.

3.1 Inheritance of Trauma

In Poland, research on war trauma started in the late 1940s. The first scientific publications were focused on the psychological functioning of former prisoners of concentration camps (Rutkowski & Dembińska, 2016). One of the pioneers of PTSD research in Poland, Antoni Kępiński, together with fellow researchers from the Psychiatric Clinic of the Medical Academy in Cracow examined a large number of Auschwitz-Birkenau survivors and mapped out the clinical picture of concentration-camp syndrome. The psychiatrist, Maria Orwid, a former student and then a co-worker of Kępiński, researched the delayed reaction to trauma. She documented that the disorders were present for many years after the traumatic factor receded (Rutkowski & Dembińska, 2016, p. 939). Another line of research was devoted to the effects of war trauma on WWII survivors who were not concentration camps prisoners. In his recent book *Traumaland*, Michał Bilewicz (2024) discusses some of the findings. Two years after the end of the war, the eminent Polish psychologist, Stefan Baley, and his colleagues started research on the effects of war trauma on children and adolescents. In his paper published in 1948, he concluded that these young WWII survivors exhibited high levels of anxiety, they were also distrustful and oversensitive. Some experienced symptoms characteristic of survivor's guilt syndrome, lost their zest for life and were unable to experience joy and other positive emotions (Bilewicz, 2024, p. 23).

One of the leading contemporary Polish psychologists researching the WWII trauma is Marcin Rzeszutek. As Rzeszutek et al. (2023a, p. 2) put it: "The psychosocial effects of WWII remain an unspoken topic of scientific discourse and public debate in Poland. However, a few studies have revealed a significant discrepancy between the prevalence of WWII-related PTSD among survivors of the war in Poland compared to other European countries. One such example is the fact that the prevalence of PTSD among civilian survivors of WWII ranged from 1.9% in

Austria to 10.9% in Germany, while PTSD among Polish survivors of the war has been reported to range from 29.4% to 38.3%.” Explaining this discrepancy, Rzeszutek et al. (2020) point to the fact that Polish survivors of WWII were not able to share their war-related trauma experiences in a stable, safe, and supportive community, which is regarded as a key factor in PTSD treatment. The authors also suggested that Polish WWII survivors might have transferred this atmosphere of anxiety and taboo to their offspring.

It was Vivian Rakoff, a researcher at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, and her colleagues (1966) who first observed the problem of intergenerational trauma among descendants of Holocaust survivors who were secondarily traumatised by parental traumatic history and the related negative emotional atmosphere in their family of origin. The idea that a parental traumatic experience could reach the second generation soon gained support. Numerous subsequent studies have found that the offspring of Holocaust survivors were at increased risk of mental health problems, predominantly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) depression and anxiety. Recent research by Rzeszutek et al. (2023a) conducted among a representative sample of 1598 adult Poles documented that the transmission of trauma may take place not only among Holocaust survivors and their descendants but also in families of other WWII survivors. It should be added, however, that results obtained quite recently by Maja Lis-Turlejska et al. (2008) show that in Poland, current posttraumatic stress disorder was almost twice as high for Jewish (55.6%) than for non-Jewish WWII survivors (30.9%).

Recent research among a representative sample of adult Poles confirmed that the current rate of probable PTSD in Poland is intriguingly high in comparison to rates in other countries. Results show that nearly 20% of the Polish population might be affected by PTSD (Rzeszutek et al., 2023b). These alarming results suggest that the horrors of WWII, which ended 80 years ago, still significantly affect Polish emotional environment. Rzeszutek et al. (2020) explains this result pointing to the Polish turbulent post-war history.

Bilewicz (2024) suggests another factor which might also be relevant. He argues that the Polish preoccupation with the nation’s martyrology, which hasn’t diminished since 1989 but has gained even more exposure (also in popular culture), might contribute to the re-traumatisation of the younger generation of Poles. Previous research on secondary trauma, after visiting Auschwitz Museum and Memorial, reported by Bilewicz and Wójcik (2018) suggests that much more psychological care is needed for young people visiting memorial sites that commemorate a traumatic past. Bilewicz’s insight might partly explain the paradoxical result of recent research (Rzeszutek et al., 2023b) that the transmission of WWII trauma appeared to have affected the younger generations more than older generations.

Whatever the reason of the high rate of probable PTSD in Poland might be, it must have a detrimental effect not only for affected individuals but also for their families. Research (e.g. Ahmadzadeh & Malekian, 2004; Goff & Smith, 2005) shows that when a person experiences PTSD, his or her spouse, children, and parents may show an array of adverse reactions from heightened stress through to anxiety, depression, a decrease in well-being, and a variety of functioning problems in such areas as intimacy and social relations. Moreover, the negative emotions a traumatised individual experiences might also be transferred to other persons with whom that individual is regularly interacting, for instance, work colleagues. Research indicates that negative social interactions have a potent detrimental effect on well-being (e.g. Lincoln, 2000).

3.2 Culture of Complaining and the Norm of Negativity

Capitalising on psychological research conducted in Poland in the 1990s and at the beginning of the current century, Bogdan Wojciszke (2004) proposed that Poland could be labelled as culture of complaining. Wojciszke (2004, Wojciszke and Barylka (2002) identified three building blocks of the culture of complaining:

the first one is the norm of negativity of one's own states—an expectation and rule that people express their affective states as negative rather than positive. Second, the norm of negativity of the social world is an expectation and rule that people express negative judgments and beliefs about the social world [...] The third building block consists of complaining scripts, that is, ritualistic habits of expressing dissatisfaction, especially when specific topics are raised in a conversation.

Shortly before the outbreak of WWII, the American psychologist, Winifred Bent Johnson (1937), conducted a study in which she asked participants (a sample of students) how they felt on a particular day—the same, better, or worse than usual. Average judgements for 65 consecutive days showed that the majority of the participants generally felt better than usual. Subsequently, the study was often quoted as an excellent example of the positivity bias—a presumably universal *tendency for people to report positive views of reality*, including judgements of themselves and their own life. More than half a century later, Dariusz Dolinski (1996), assuming that Poland—a country dominated by culture of complaining—is an appropriate place to check the universality of Johnson's findings. When he replicated the study with Polish students, for all but two persons, the average judgements for 100 days appeared significantly lower than average. The Polish participants felt generally worse than usual. Several years later, Wojciszke asked the same question using a Polish national sample and obtained similar results (Wojciszke & Barylak, 2002). Although a majority of 54% felt the same as usual, 30% of those in the sample felt worse and only 16% felt better on that particular day. Moreover, the percentage of those who felt worse than usually increased significantly with age. Since acculturation increases with age, Wojciszke (2004) suggested that older participants probably conform to the complaining norm to a higher degree than younger ones.

Research conducted in Poland over the last 30 years indicates that Poles have held a generally negative view of the social world. An example of such research is a study by Wojciszke and Grzelak (1996) in which a clear majority of participants believed that people in their country

were becoming more egoistic, nervous, untrustworthy, and ill-intentioned but less helpful, honest, and kind to each other. This negative worldview remained stable during the first decade of political transformation (after 1989), although it was confined to the public domain and does not include personal life.

According to Janusz Czapinski (1993), as many as 51% of Poles are of the opinion that their compatriots complain without reason and only 23% think it is acceptable to talk about one's happiness. The popularity of behavioural scripts for complaining was confirmed in subsequent research (Szymków et al., 2003; Źemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009). Antas (2002), see Kurtyka (2019) places complaining in first position on her list of politeness principles in the Polish oral communication style. The linguistic analyses conducted by Andrzej Kurtyka (2019) show that indirect complaints in Polish have a predominantly affiliative function. As Kurtyka (2019, p. 44) puts it: "The act of complaining is based on the speaker's belief that the interactant is actually able to show understanding of their negative attitude or emotional state. Because the speaker seeks affiliation through complaining, other participants are supposed to express *solidarity in the negativity*."

From the perspective of subjective as well as national well-being, complaining has a detrimental effect. According to Wojciszke (2004): "a society where the complaining norms prevail is easy prey to a *negativity trap*. The essence of this trap is that because of some psychological processes people are not able to perceive positive changes in their situation and to fully benefit from and act on these changes." According to Wojciszke (2004), several processes contribute to the negativity trap, one of the most important is a vicious cycle of negative affect. As Wojciszke (2004, pp. 51–52) puts it:

Instead of bringing relief, complaining may actually lead to the deterioration of affective states in both the complainer and the listener [...] Chronic complaining correlates negatively with life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and optimism, but positively with various dispositions marking negative affectivity. The latter include anxiety (conceived as a trait-like disposition), rumination on

the self (recurring, negative, and unwanted thoughts on the self), rumination on the social world (recurring, negative, and unwanted thoughts on the social world), habitual mood deterioration, and disruptive stress-coping styles.

The causal relationship between complaining and the negative affect was later confirmed in the series of experiments (see Wojciszke et al. 2009).

4 Conclusion

In this section, I have documented evidence pointing to the fact that Poland is a predominantly negative emotional environment. I have focused on the psychological phenomena that were thoroughly researched. However, there are also others, which have not been studied systematically. Probably, the most intriguing of them are the public rituals of mourning which in Poland are deeply set in the historical past. Recently, they were observed on a massive scale in 2005 after the death of pope John Paul II, and 5 years later after the Smoleńsk plane crash. In the latter case, the initial spontaneous outpourings of grief were later followed by the highly politicised monthly wakes in front of the President's Palace in Warsaw. It has to be added that in Poland, such public gatherings in which people are sharing their sadness and grief singing patriotic and religious hymns are typically much more popular than public celebrations of positive events or anniversaries. It seems that in Poland, sadness is an emotion that people like to celebrate and share with others.

Why do Poles engage in behaviours which may increase the negativity of their social environment? The answer is twofold. While complaining and expressing negative emotions usually have negative consequences and outcomes for others, for instance, through emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1993), additionally, it is often beneficial for the individual (Krys et al., 2022); for instance, negative emotional expression helps in coping with stressful life-events (Stanton & Low, 2012) and soliciting support (Graham et al., 2008). Furthermore, complaining might also be rewarding for the person who com-

plains. According to Wojciszke (2004, pp. 56–57) complaining may serve two important functions: self-presentational and relational:

Complaining about external factors helps in saving face, and presenting oneself as a victim of adverse circumstances gives the impression that the self-presenter is a noble person who deserves regard. Building and maintaining social relations is also an important function of complaining [...] In the culture of complaining, the expression of dissatisfaction functions as an invitation to a deeper, more personal contact and a vehicle for maintaining relatively intimate relationships.

In most collectivistic societies, these individual benefits will not have significant regulatory importance while people are typically focused on the well-being of others and social harmony. In Poland, however, people tend to be very individualistic. Moreover, the research shows the narrowing of the social sphere to the family, the network of friends, and informal ties (e.g. Sikorska, 2023). Tarkowska and Tarkowski (2016) speak about “amoral familism,” which characterises a society composed of a collection of extended small groups built around the family and enlarged by friends, neighbours, and colleagues. Poles typically trust neither public institutions nor less known people and strangers. Additionally, as Wierzbicka (1994) observed, in Polish culture there is usually a lack of consideration for other people’s feelings. It may also explain the absence of the social smile in Poland. Klos Sokol (2005)—an American linguist, who lives in Warsaw: “Poles don’t initiate an exchange of smiles in a quick or anonymous interaction [...] And some Poles may not feel like masking their everyday preoccupations. From this perspective, the smile would be a fake” (p. 70). Subsequent research documented the empirical validity of these observations (e.g. Szarota, 2010).

5 Needs for Future Research

The culture does not change overnight, however, there is room for cautious optimism in Poland. Several years ago, Przepiórka and Błachnio (2015) documented increasingly higher social acceptance for expressing satisfac-

tion in the young generation of Poles. Further research is necessary to check the stability of this change.

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Emotions in Intercultural Conflicts in a Study-Abroad Programme: Experiences at Semester at Sea (SAS)

16

Claude-Hélène Mayer

“Traveling—
it leaves you speechless,
then turns you into a storyteller.”
Ibn Battuta

1 Introduction

Semester at Sea (SAS) is a study-abroad programme which attracts students from all over the world to spend one semester at sea, making intercultural experiences and developing intercultural competences, a global mindset and leadership qualities (Medora et al., 2020; Mayer et al., 2024). Research has shown that many of the attendees of SAS become future leaders in their fields as a consequence of the programme’s strong impact and their intercultural experiences during the voyage (Dukes et al., 1991; Dukes, 2006; Allen et al., 2007; Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). The attendees focus on developing global citizenship, experiencing academic benefits and career enhancement through leadership experiences, and improving their leadership skills (SAS, 2023).

During SAS, attendees are exposed to academic learning and contact with leaders who are contracted to address attendees as future leaders (Caton, 2011), as well as diverse situations in which they develop intercultural competence, leadership skills, mindsets and roles (Mayer et al., 2024). Often, attendees are extraordinary individuals who have taken on leadership roles early in their lives and aim to become future global leaders in their fields. Therefore, leadership, resourcefulness and initiative are a focus while attending SAS (McDonald, 2017).

Leadership is viewed as a “process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal” (Kruse, 2013) and as

the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. (Yukl, 2006, p. 8)

It has been pointed out that leaders need to use emotions intelligently when working with people (Goleman et al., 2002). Emotions are key in leadership (Clore & Huntsinger, 2007; Connelly & Gooty, 2015) and need to be increasingly explored (Yusof et al., 2014).

While working with people, individuals learn about themselves in relation to others (O’Connor & Myers, 2018). Study-abroad programmes aim to foster this learning while taking the cultural

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context, norms, values, attitudes into consideration (Reiche et al., 2017). Accordingly, “leadership-centered study abroad experiences encourage students to look beyond their previously held worldviews” (Haber-Curran & Owen, 2013, p. 149).

Interpersonal and intercultural interactions can lead to conflict (Kim, 2016) as a common part of human relationships (Canary, 2003). While conflict can be defined as “a struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals” (Wilmot & Hocker, 2010), it can also occur intrapersonally (Mayer, 2008). LeBaron (2003, p. 3) emphasises that culture affects the “ways we name, frame, blame, and attempt to tame conflicts”. Solutions to intercultural conflicts are not often easily found owing to cultural ambivalence and differences in how to handle conflict adequately across cultures (Lederach, 2005).

Conflicts are framed through identity (Gardner, 2023) and informed by language, differences in conflict styles and ambiguity (Grothe, 2020). Intercultural conflicts require leadership to explore the cultural values, behavioural attitudes and emotional impacts (Mayer, 2008; Rahman, 2019) in which emotions are central in intercultural interactions (Haugh, 2017). In intercultural encounters, people often experience emotional dissonance (Wierzbicka, 2003, Chang & Haugh, 2017) and must reconstruct emotional meaning (Kecskes, 2020).

1.1 Studying Abroad

The number of US students in study-abroad programmes has increased recently (Savicki & Brewer, 2023). While studying in various countries, students who attend study-abroad programmes foster their cultural learning and develop their identity (Allen et al., 2007). They gain new cultural perspectives, develop a broader understanding of the world and enjoy meeting students from different cultural backgrounds (McCabe, 1994; Campbell, 2011; Tamas, 2014). These programmes are especially effective if stu-

dents reflect on their learning and develop critical thinking skills (Ash & Clayton, 2009) and global perspectives (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011).

SAS is a US study-abroad programme run by the Colorado State University, in operation since 1963. Students spend a semester on a ship which takes them to 10–15 countries while they earn degree points for use at their home universities (Kang, 2018). Students who attend SAS increase their intercultural competence, their cultural sensitivity and mindfulness (Medora et al., 2020, 2021; Mayer et al., 2024).

1.2 Intercultural Conflict Experiences

Conflict evolves through the interrelationship of an individual or a group and the environment (Aggestan, 1999; Lederach 2000) and is therefore seen by Northrup (1989, p. 54) as a psycho-social process. According to Mayer (2000, p. 3), conflict can be described as “a feeling, a disagreement, a real or perceived incompatibility of interests, inconsistent worldviews, or a set of behaviours”. The conflict can occur in organisations, between individuals or groups, but also within an individual (Rahim, 2002) and it is usually connected to cultural environments, meanings and values (Avruch, 1998). Lederach (1988, p. 39) highlights that “conflict situations are those unique episodes when we explicitly recognize the existence of multiple realities and negotiate the creation of a common meaning”.

Conflicts are mental processes; they are connected to cognitive, affective and conative aspects of the human psyche (Mayer, 2020) and they help to grow awareness and self-realisation (Horten-Deutsch & Horton, 2003). In intercultural situations, individuals experience differences in values, thinking and emotions and clashes at intra-psychological, inter-psychological and social levels (Mayer, 2008). Especially during study-abroad programmes which can be stressful, intra- and inter-group conflicts are rife. Contact with other co-nationals (individuals from the same nation) usually provides students during their study abroad with emotional support,

increased self-esteem and sameness in terms of cultural identity, but it can also lead to intra-group conflicts based on personality differences, acculturation stresses or differences in goals and expectations (Bodycott, 2015). Conflicts with individuals from other cultural groups during study-abroad programmes are often based on religious differences (Sobkowiak, 2019), and conflicts with “cohabitating students, being overwhelmed and frozen with anxiety, family and interpersonal problems and more serious conversations around self-harm and suicidal ideation.” (Watkins, 2022, p. 35). Conflicts occur when students experience the world around them as different and incongruent with their own ideas and mindsets (Watkins, 2022). Unresolved conflicts might lead to negative emotions and mental health problems (Ede & Sturin, 2014) and need to be further researched across cultures (Mayer & Louw, 2012).

1.3 Emotions While Studying Abroad

Emotions are defined as relatively undifferentiated bodily arousals, while sentiments are viewed as combining bodily gestures, sensations, emotional responses and cultural meanings which are learned in enduring social relationships (Gorden, 1990). They have been rarely explored in leadership studies (Van Kleef et al., 2009; Dubey, 2020) until recently (Vendrell Ferran, 2022; Wilson, 2022).

Research on emotions during study-abroad programmes is mainly found in language-learning contexts (see Franco, 2022; Kim, 2022). Such research often shows that individuals struggle with emotional experiences and insecurity based on second-language learning, identity and perception issues and transculturality (McGregor, 2014). This is particularly the case when emotional support and problem resolution are removed (Savicki, 2013) and students suffer from anxiety, uncertainty (Gudykunst 1995) and intergroup contact anxiety (Frey & Tropp, 2006). During these programmes students often experience frustration, anger, confusion and disappointment (Duke, 2023). They usually deal with

these emotions by communicating with family and friends.

Emotionality needs to be recognised and taken seriously as one important factor in students' socialisation processes while studying abroad (Duff, 2019). The emotions of study-abroad students are complex, dynamic and relate to self-formation questions, professional and academic development, and the experience of freedom and student agency (Jaeger & Gram, 2019). Negative emotions need to be transformed through reflection and meaningful participation in new cultural communities (Kim, 2022), to foster emotional resilience, openness, flexibility, perceptual acuity and personal autonomy (Kitsantas, 2004), together with intercultural leadership qualities and abilities (Kiersch & Gullekson, 2021).

2 Purpose, Aim and Research Question

This chapter presents emotions and conflicts which students experience while attending the study-abroad programme at Semester at Sea (SAS) during the Fall 2022 voyage. This analysis aims at creating awareness of the challenges which students experience at cognitive and emotional levels and describes how they cope with these challenges. The chapter presents findings based on the research question: What intercultural conflicts do students experience during the SAS voyage and how do they deal with them emotionally?

3 Research Methodology

This qualitative research study uses a holistic, in-depth approach to understanding the complex reality of students who wish to develop leadership qualities while studying abroad. It uses an interpretivist phenomenological paradigm, implying that reality is subjectively constructed and understood holistically (Thanh & Thanh, 2015) and from multiple perspectives (Ponelis, 2015). The described emotions and conflict experiences of participants, while studying

abroad, decipher meaning which is explored in this study (Neubauer et al., 2019) and offer insight into what and how it is experienced (Zolnikov & Furio, 2020).

3.1 Sample, Data Collection and Data Analysis

The sample consists of 21 students who attended a “Conflict Management Course” on SAS during the Fall 2022 voyage. Students were asked to describe an intercultural conflict and their emotions and resolutions experienced during the voyage (on board or in port).

Data were collected through self-written, subjective reflective essays which are a frequently used tool in higher education to develop a deeper understanding of a topic (Gardner, 2023). Essays were analysed through the six phases of thematic analysis to identify, organise and provide insight into patterns of meaning within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

3.2 Ethical Considerations, Quality Criteria and Limitations

The study is built on ethical protocols that comply with the DTMD University, Luxembourg and which include the critical protection of the participants and the researcher from any harm or misconduct. Ethical considerations include voluntary participation, confidentiality, beneficence, autonomy and non-maleficence (Stake, 2005). Based on autonomy, informed consent, truth-telling and confidentiality are important ethical considerations (Varkey, 2021).

In terms of the qualitative quality criteria, trustworthiness (Feldman & Shaw, 2019), credibility (research findings are plausible and trustworthy), dependability (extent of replication possibility of research), confirmability (clear link between data and findings), transferability (findings may be transferred to another group, context or setting) and reflexivity (continuously engaging with the context of research and researcher)

(Stenfors et al., 2020) are used to guarantee the study’s quality.

4 Findings: Intercultural Conflict Experiences and Emotions During a SAS Voyage

Altogether, 21 participants described conflicts in different contexts and situations. In total, five conflicts occurred during the voyage on the ship within the diverse shipboard community (5¹) and one student described a conflict that she had experienced at home in the USA (1). The other 15 conflicts were all experienced on land in different ports in Jordan (4), Morocco (4), Croatia (3), Spain (2), the Netherlands (1) and Cyprus (1) (Table 16.1).

In the following sections, various conflicts are described by the participants. Two conflicts happened in the USA (P3, P19), 4 on board the ship (P4, P7, P13, P21) and 15 in ports (P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20).

4.1 Conflicts and Emotions Connected to Home

Two reported conflicts had happened “back home” in the USA before and during the SAS study-abroad programme. This suggests that the time away from home provides students with distance to reflect on their experiences.

One student describes an intercultural conflict she experienced as a third party while living in a shared student apartment (P3). This conflict happened between a US and a European student, but was actually driven by lifestyle and communication differences and habits. The participant remembers the disturbing emotions involved on both sides, such as anger, stress, defensiveness and being upset.

The second participant (P19) talks about a conflict with her boyfriend’s mother who disrespects her, while her boyfriend does not suffi-

¹Number of incidents.

Table 16.1 Conflicts experienced by future leaders

P-No	Theme	Country	Location	Gender/nationality
P1	Entrance fee at beach	Jordan	Public beach	Female, US
P2	Henna at Medina market	Morocco	Market	Female, US
P3	Roommates	At home in the US	Campus accommodation	Female, US
P4	Political discourse about US healthcare system	Shipboard	Cafeteria on ship	Female, US-Mexican
P5	The wi-fi man	Croatia	Internet cafe	Female, US
P6	"I am praying for you"	Amsterdam	Restaurant	Female, US
P7	Different communication styles	Shipboard and countries	Ship	Female, Netherlands
P8	Europe is hypersexual	Croatia, Europe	Public spaces	Female, US
P9	The vendors	Jordan	Public spaces	Female, US
P10	Attack on Jews	Morocco	Shop	Female, US
P11	Wi-fi usage	Croatia	Internet cafe	Female US
P12	Bargaining	Morocco	Market	Female, US
P13	Time management among friends on ship	Shipboard, Jordan	Taxi	Female, Netherlands
P14	Money conflict of driver	Jordan	Taxi	Female, US
P15	Grabbing me by the throat	Spain	Discotheque	Female, US
P16	Not keeping a promise	Cyprus	Bus	Female, US
P17	Laundromat	Spain	Laundry shop	Female, German
P18	Location unsent	Jordan	Trip to Wadi Rum	Female, US
P19	Boyfriend at home	At home in the US	Ship and home	Female, US
P20	Wrong direction to the hotel	Morocco	Taxi	Female, US
P21	Refugee boat	Shipboard	Coast of Spain	Female, Zimbabwe

Table 16.2 Conflicts, emotions and solutions back home

P-No	Theme/place	Conflict issues	Solution	Emotions
P3	Roommates at home (USA)	Differences in lifestyle, personality, ways of living together (one is clean and loud, the other one silent and messy) and communication (one talks, the other is quiet)	The third roommate (the narrator) mediates between the two, helps to ask for silence and to clean the mess	Both feel angry, defensive and upset about how the other was taking care of the apartment
P19	Boyfriend at home (USA)	Narrator is disrespected by her boyfriend's mother and wants him to go for therapy	He is reluctant to find a therapist but she helps him to locate and email one	Narrator feels emotionally exhausted, sensitive and hurt

ciently support or defend her against his mother. The narrator feels emotionally exhausted and hurt and experiences her boyfriend and his mother as insensitive (Table 16.2).

The conflict parties feel upset, emotionally exhausted and hurt. In both described conflicts, the narrators take the lead: In the first conflict, the narrator becomes the mediator and in the second, the narrator is the driving force for her boyfriend's self-development.

4.2 Conflicts and Emotions on Board the Ship

Conflicts on the ship included participants from different backgrounds. One was between two US participants, another between a Dutch and a US-Mexican participant, and finally one intrapsychological conflict about a refugee boat that was spotted from the ship. Solutions were driven by stopping the conversation (P4), ending the

Table 16.3 Conflicts, emotions and solutions on the ship

P-No	Theme/place	Conflict issues	Solution	Emotions
P4	Political discourse about US healthcare system	Shipboard: US students discussing US healthcare systems and are of different opinions	Narrator becomes the mediator, echoing all opinions and agreeing to disagree	Strongly fuelled emotions and verbal fights, shouting
P7	Different communication styles	Shipboard and countries: Dutch-US-Mexican conflict about committing to how to communicate, plan and travel together	Break-up of friendship	One person is withdrawn and unemotional; the other is pressured and emotional
P21	Refugee boat	Shipboard: A refugee boat flags need for assistance. Conflicts regarding ethics, the supposed rules, marine laws and decision-making, no information-giving, ethical dilemma	Coastguard is called, without communicating with ship's community. Later there is a reflection session which can be attended	Conflicted feelings, irritation, frustration at lack of information

friendship (P7, P13) and leaving the situation to a higher authority (P21) (Table 16.3).

The emotions involved in these conflicts are described as negative. In the political US conflict, the narrator (P4) emphasises that the emotions were “fuelled”, evolving into a “fight back and vice-versa, leading to a very rapid conflict escalation”. P4 describes herself as the mediator, leading the conversation by asking questions and emphasising similarities, finally coming to “agreeing to disagreeing”.

P7 deals as a mediating party with culture-based differences of two international friends with regard to communication styles, time management and concepts of truthful communication. Cultural dimensions are described as contrary and the main source of conflict is differences in commitment to verbal agreements. The conflict is experienced between a European and a US-Mexican participant (P7) regarding differences in culture, commitment, communication and travel. The conflict leads to a break-up of the friendship: one party withdraws and becomes unemotional, while the other experiences a “nervous breakdown”, intense pressure and emotions.

Finally, an intra-psychological conflict erupts while the shipboard community assists a “small boat at sea that was assumed to be a migrant or refugee boat flagged towards the ship for assistance”. Since management did not provide information for the voyagers, the narrator describes

conflicting feelings and irritation since she could not “make sense of the situation” (P21).

Of the three described conflicts experienced on board the ship, two are described from a conflict mediator perspective (P4, P7) and one as an intra-psychological conflict (P21). The narrators try to make sense of the situation, understand, reflect on the conflicts and deal with negative emotions such as irritation, emotional breakdown and strong emotions which erupt into shouting and verbal attacks.

All conflicts are addressed proactively (mediating, direct confrontation and reflection) and individuals try to lead conflicts to a resolution, taking cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects into consideration.

4.3 Conflicts and Emotions in Different Countries

A total of 15 participants experienced conflicts in port: five in Jordan, three in Morocco and seven in Europe (one in Amsterdam, one in Cyprus, two in Spain, three in Croatia).

4.3.1 Conflicts and Emotions Experienced in Jordan

The conflicts experienced in Jordan by P1, P9 and P14 deal with financial issues (fees at public beach, overpriced products, payment of taxi). Conflicts are about honesty and truth (P9, P14)

Table 16.4 Conflicts, emotions and solutions in Jordan

P-No	Theme/place	Conflict issues	Solution	Emotions
P1	Entrance fee at beach	Payment at public beach, language barrier	Mediation from a group of Australians; entrance fee is paid with cash	Anger, distress, upset, yelling, defensive body language and attack, unsettled and insecure
P9	The vendors	Tour guide presents dichotomy (friendly and complimentary towards vendors vs. speaking badly of them in bus). Narrator also struggles to deal with overpriced products and scams	No resolution, but reflection	Confused by two-faced tour guide. Insecure and irritated at being scammed into buying products. Feels insulted by vendors
P13	Time management among friends	Two friends from Belgium and the Netherlands travel with a person from Columbia who is always late	No further common travels	Two participants waiting for the third one and becoming annoyed and stressed
P14	Money conflict of drivers	Fight between two taxi drivers over the money paid by customers	Conflict is resolved by the police	Public shouting; eventually the police become involved
P18	Location unsent	Narrator booked accommodation but without receiving location details. Taxi driver calls accommodation owner to find exact location	Taxi driver intervenes to help bridge the language barrier; takes students to the correct location	Frustration with communication and language barrier. All parties frustrated by communication problem. Gratitude that locals with language competence help to find the location

and the irritations and frustration regarding communication and language barriers (P1, P9, P18). P13 describes a conflict about differences in time management between SAS students of European and South American backgrounds (Table 16.4).

P1 describes a conflict in which she goes to a public beach with a friend in Jordan and uses a restroom to change her clothes—when she is screamed at in Arabic and told to pay an entrance fee. However, she has no money and cannot pay. A group of Australians tries to mediate between the students and the locals and escalate the conflict. In the end, the Australians pay for the students to resolve the conflict. The students experience extreme distress, are upset and defensive in body language and verbal communication, and feel unsettled and insecure while the locals yell at them angrily.

In the narration of P9, the tour guide speaks badly of the vendors in Jordan, while being extremely friendly when meeting them. P9 is conflicted by this behavioural dishonesty and the two faces of the tour guide. She feels insecure,

irritated by this behaviour, insulted and afraid of being scammed by the vendors.

The conflict of P13 is based on cultural differences regarding the management of verbal commitment and time. Two students from Europe sharing a taxi are waiting for the third student (from Columbia) to arrive. He is delayed and the two European students and the taxi driver are irritated: “Meanwhile both me and Eva started to get annoyed, additionally so did the Jordanian driver. Eventually Juan arrived without any stress [or] intentions to hurry up” (P13).

P14 describes a conflict situation between two taxi drivers who fight over the money of the customers. They are screaming at each other while P14 is watching. The conflict is finally resolved by the police.

Finally, P18 who has booked accommodation in Jordan has not been sent the location. A taxi driver calls the owner and consequently finds the hotel. The students are frustrated and insecure regarding the communication and language barrier until the taxi driver mediates. The students are grateful for this intervention.

Table 16.5 Conflicts, emotions and solutions in Morocco

P-No	Theme/place	Conflict issues	Solution	Emotions
P2	Henna at Medina market	Pushy women selling henna without price, then demand absurd amount; money removed from narrator's handbag	Agree on an overpriced payment to escape situation	Narrator's friend crying, emotional breakdown; seller "freaks out" in response
P10	Attack on Jews	Jewish narrator is verbally attack as thief and "filthy Jew" in a jewellery shop	Narrator tells accuser to choose happiness and respect; the man leaves the shop	Anger, upset, also pity for the other
P12	Bargaining at Marrakesh market	Whisked into an overpriced henna buy	Pays the overpriced charge	Alarmed, nervous, frustrated; defensive body language (shoulders hunched, eyebrows knitted). Sellers are angry, use attacking, physical persuasion, raised voices, accusations
P20	Wrong direction to the hotel	Taxi is driving in the opposite direction of the hotel	Overcome language barrier by using Google maps	Worry, panic of narrator and friends

All conflicts experienced in Jordan are related to anger, frustration and being upset, also often involving strong body language, yelling, shouting and screaming. Further, the participants highlight that they become insecure, unsettled and defensive in response to gestures and loud verbal attacks from the conflict partners.

4.3.2 Conflicts and Emotions Experienced in Morocco

Table 16.5 provides an overview of conflicts experienced in Morocco, two of which deal with scamming at the market (P2, P12), one with a personal attack on a female Jewish student (P10) and one in which a taxi driver into the opposite direction of the hotel (P20).

Two US students would like to "get henna painting and are pushed around by the women selling it" (P2). In the end, the women demand an "extremely high amount of money" and one of the students experiences a "crying breakdown" when the women attempt to force them to go to the bank to draw the money.

"She grabbed my arm and demanded I go to the bank; this is when my friend started breaking down crying. Her crying caused one of the ladies to freak out and just accept the money we had, which was physically taken out of my bag by one of them".

In a similar incident at the market in Marrakesh, P12 who is forced to go into a henna shop and to

pay an overpriced amount, experiences alarm and frustration.

Both conflicts experienced at the market deal with situations in which female students are scammed into buying a henna product and then to pay more than agreed upon. Both situations end in the narrator being alarmed, nervous, stressed, angry and upset, and crying. The henna vendors are described as aggressive, "in my space", angry, loud, physically persuasive and accusing. The students all act defensively and pay the inflated prices.

In another incident, P10 is verbally attacked in a Moroccan shop and accused as a "thief" and "filthy Jew". She reacts calmly, but is angry, irritated and upset while at the same time experiencing pity for the perpetrator. The situation is resolved by the perpetrator leaving the shop.

Finally, P20 deals with a language barrier with a taxi driver who heads in the opposite direction to the hotel where the students want to go. The conflict is resolved by using Google maps to show the driver the correct direction, and he apologises. However, during the conflict, the students experience worry and panic as basic emotions.

Three of the conflicts in Morocco take place in shops, and one in a taxi. Two conflicts concern overpriced henna services, one concerns a taxi ride and one is a personal religious-based attack. All conflicts are connected to negative emotions,

predominantly anger, panic and fear. The students (apart from P20) do not show leadership in these incidents. They are defensive and act threatened, helpless and powerless.

4.3.3 Conflicts and Emotions Experienced in Europe

Two conflict experiences take place in Croatia, one of which is described individually by P5 and P11. In this incident, an old man attacks the students sitting in a café using wi-fi. He complains about the wi-fi lifestyle of the youth and “gossips about the students” with other customers. The students feel “offended, misunderstood, hurt, and angry” about this inter-generational lifestyle conflict.

Two conflicts involve sexual assault: one in Croatia (P8) and one in Spain (P15). P8 complains about men in Europe staring at her, talking to her, coming too close to her and making her a sexual object, while P15 describes a scene in a

discotheque in Spain where she is sexually assaulted:

“As we approached the bar, these men approach us and start making conversation. ... One of them in particular was all inside my personal space. I had backed away a few times, but that was not enough. One of the times he got super close I started to walk away and as I tried to turn around, he grabbed me by the throat. Even though it was scary in the moment he was not hurting me and I don’t think he meant to hurt me. I felt super thrown off by this so my immediate reaction was to push his hand off of me and walk back to my guy friends.”

The situations present conflicts based on gender and sexuality, public and private space negotiations and physical touch without boundaries (Table 16.6).

The three other conflicts are as follows: P6 observes a couple in conflict fighting in a café in Amsterdam. The woman then comes to the student who witnessed the conflict, and says: “I’ve been watching you, I just wanted to let you know

Table 16.6 Conflicts, emotions and solutions in Europe (Croatia, Spain, The Netherlands, Cyprus)

P-No	Theme/place	Conflict issues	Solution	Emotions
P5 and P11	The wi-fi man: Croatia	In a café, a group of US students are using wi-fi. An old man criticises their lifestyle, then goes to others in café and they laugh, making fun of the students	Students defend themselves, explaining why they use wi-fi (to contact home) but situation is not further resolved	Students feel offended by the old man’s view, and hurt by gossip and laughter from surrounding Croatians
P6	“I am praying for you”: Amsterdam	Narrator observes couple fighting. The woman tells narrator she prays narrator will never be in a situation like this	The narrator does not know what to do, just says “thank you” and the situation stays unresolved. She feels conflicted about the situation	The narrator is stunned, and feels defensive
P8	Europe is hypersexual: Croatia	Men across Europe tell narrator that she is sexy, look at her, put their hands on her shoulders	Situation stays unresolved for the narrator who tries to ignore men; concludes that Europe is hypersexualised	Narrator feels disgusted and violated by men’s behaviour
P15	Grabbing me by the throat: Disco in Spain	A man invades narrator’s personal space and grabs her by the throat when she turns away from him	Narrator pushes the man away and walks to her male friends	Narrator feels scared, “thrown off”, insecure
P16	Not keeping a promise: Cyprus	Spontaneous change to field trip itinerary; professor and guide do not keep promise to stop for ice-cream	Situation is unresolved; professor continues as though nothing is wrong, avoiding argument and confrontation	The entire group is disappointed and frustrated
P17	Laundromat: Spain	A couple does not manage the usage of a laundromat and gets into a conflict. The narrator helps them	The narrator offers help and resolves the conflict	Narrator feels conflicted about helping the couple, thoughtful and worried

that I am praying for you. I hope you never have to experience what I have to go through." The student is left with an intra-psychological conflict and does not know what to do or say; she is "at a loss for words", stunned and defensive and simply says "thank you."

P16 reports a conflict during a field trip in Cyprus. Although the student group was promised a stopover at an ice-cream shop by their professor, the tour guide does not make this stop. The students are very angry with the tour guide and with the professor for keeping quiet to avoid confrontation and not supporting students. The conflict is unresolved.

Finally, P17 describes conflict she witnesses at a public laundromat where a couple does not know how to operate the machine. To resolve the couple's conflict, the student explains to them what to do. She intervenes despite feeling worried and thoughtful about the situation.

5 Discussion

This chapter presents conflicts and emotions experienced during an SAS voyage, responding to the research question: What intercultural conflicts do students experience during the SAS voyage and how do they deal with them emotionally?

The findings are that SAS students described the following: one intra-personal conflict in response to an observed situation (P21), four conflicts in which they mediated for others (P3, P4, P17, P19) and 16 conflict situations in which the participants were the conflicting parties (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P18, P20). Most of the self-experienced conflicts are micro-level conflicts, where participants are involved on an interpersonal conflict level, except one (P21), where a societal, global event (the refugee boat), is experienced as an intra-individual conflict which questions maritime laws and the management of SAS regarding information-giving.

The study shows that several conflicts between European and US/Mexican/Columbian students occur on the ship, in ports, and at home (P3, P7, P13). These conflicts are usually anchored in

cultural and personal differences, such as personal lifestyle preferences and communication styles. The data show a reflected and differentiated understanding of the causes of conflict and a high degree of self-reflection regarding the involvement of conflict parties' backgrounds and preferences. Reflection and intercultural competence as leadership skills and qualities are vivid in these conflict descriptions (see Mayer et al., 2024). In these descriptions, students demonstrate leadership qualities by finding solutions for the conflicts and growing into future leadership mindsets (Caton, 2011). This is particularly the case where participants describe how they intervened in observed conflicts and took on leadership positions (P3, P4, P17, P19).

Global mindset learning, global citizenship and leadership qualities (Mayer et al., 2024; Medora et al., 2020) are fostered by the SAS programme (SAS, 2023). These aspects are outstanding in the P21 conflict where a participant reflects on the broader picture of the refugee boat support through SAS, the maritime laws, the ship's involvement and her own opinion and standing.

As emphasised in previous studies, emotions are important to consider in conflicts (Clore & Huntsinger, 2007; Connelly & Gooty, 2015). While emotions are mentioned in all of the conflict descriptions, they seem to be less reflected upon than, for example, the conflict behaviour and actions. Therefore, this study supports previous calls for more research focus on the emotions of students as future leaders (Crowley, 2022; Malamateneiou, 2022). This is supported by the demonstration in this study that negatively experienced emotions such as distress, anger or fear can lead to crying, emotional breakdowns and even the destruction of friendship, which is strongly connected to defensiveness and withdrawal in intercultural conflicts. There is a strong correlation between negative emotions and defensive behaviour which does not develop leadership, but instead encourages powerlessness and helplessness.

In intercultural conflicts in ports and with locals in Jordan, Morocco and Europe, helplessness is experienced by the participant based on unbridged language barriers (P20). Confusion

and irritation are experienced in interactions when narrators are surprised (P6) or feel misunderstood (P5, P11). Powerlessness and helplessness are experienced when locals interfere with the participants' personal space, become physical, use physical force, touch them and become violent (P2, P8, P12, P15), or in sexualised situations (P8, P15). Participants retain negative feeling about these unresolved conflicts. However, when mediation is used, conflicts are viewed as resolved and participants are able to transform their negative emotions into gratitude and growth experiences.

In terms of the intercultural communication and competences of participants, the study shows that all conflicts are connected to the values, norms and attitudes of the conflict parties, and the descriptions show that individuals aim at a deeper intercultural understanding (see Reiche et al., 2017). However, the more participants experience negative emotions, the less open they are to understand the background, culture and actions of the other person (P10, P2, P12) and degree of reflection is minimised (P1, P9).

In a positively experienced conflict resolution or in the case where the conflict is observed and mediated, the degree of reflection is usually higher and the emotions are either more positive or experienced as less intense (P4, P7). The higher the emotional involvement in a situation, the less considered and the more stereotypical are the ascriptions regarding the other (P8).

Culture plays a role in the ways individuals describe "name, frame, blame and tame" conflicts, as emphasised by LeBaron (2003); they highlight the impact of culture and settings on their conflict experiences. In addition, behaviour and emotions affect communication across cultural communication styles and language (see Grothe, 2020). Emotional dissonances are presented in the intercultural conflicts (Wierzbicka, 2003, Chang & Haugh, 2017) and only in one incident does the narrator express gratitude for external conflict mediation (P18), highlighting her emotional relief. All other intercultural conflict descriptions remain emotionally draining and exhausting – especially where conflicts were not resolved in favour of the narrator (P4, P7, P21

on ship, and P1, P2, P5, P, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16 in port). Only selected descriptions show a positive resolution (P17, P20) and only one shows emotional transformation (P18).

Findings reveal that participants experience cultural learning and develop their identities (Allen et al., 2007), highlighting what they could be doing differently in a similar situation in future, showing increased leadership, effective reflection and critical thinking with less egocentric, self-centred and ethnocentric perspectives (see Ash & Clayton, 2009; Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). Through the conflict experience, participants experience increased mindfulness (Medora et al., 2020; Mayer et al., 2024), reflection and leadership based on the voyage's impact (Dukes et al., 1991; Dukes, 2006).

Participants realise through the conflicts that individuals and groups live in different realities that might clash (Lederach, 1988), for example at the Moroccan market (P2, P12), with Jordanian vendors (P9), or regarding political views and realities of the healthcare system (P4). All narrators mention cognitive, affective and conative experiences (see Mayer, 2020), some of which are resolved through growing awareness and self-realisation (Horten-Deutsch & Horton 2003) and support-seeking (P18). Religious conflicts (Sobkowiak, 2019) are mentioned to a limited degree only in Morocco (P10).

The emotions experienced in the intercultural conflicts are interrelated and are based on anger, fear, confusion, irritation, being upset, frustrated, distressed, scared and worried. Clearly the language gap plays a role in the experienced conflicts (P1), in addition to general anxiety and uncertainty regarding how to behave in specific situations in a foreign country (P2, P5, P6, P11).

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study contributes to filling the void in conflict, emotion and research in students and potential future leaders in study-abroad programmes. It suggests that these programmes need to include a

focus on conflict, as a normal part of life, learning to deal effectively with intercultural conflicts, and the emotions involved. This focus will also foster leadership qualities, global citizenship, intercultural competence and the transformation of negative (emotional) experiences—and a sense of being helpless or powerless—into positive learning experiences encouraging life skill development and student agency with a deeper cultural and intercultural understanding.

On a theoretical note, it is recommended that more research is conducted on intercultural conflicts and their resolutions in SAS study-abroad programmes to improve the intercultural experiences and deal effectively with conflicts on board and in ports. Participants need to be trained through the academic curriculum to deal with culture-general and culture-specific conflicts in stressful situations.

On a practical and organisational note, the training programme curricula at SAS need to be improved to prepare participants specifically for the ports visited during the voyages. More training sequences should be included, focusing on culture and language learning to develop culture-specific intercultural competences which can be used either to avoid conflicts, or to resolve them at cognitive, affective and conative levels.

Trainings should include obligatory pre- and post-port reflection sessions and participants of SAS should write a daily diary to reflect intercultural experiences on board and in ports. These reflections need to be guided and debriefed by *staculty* (faculty and staff members) and practical solutions need to be found together to develop applied intercultural leadership qualities.

Additionally, a management course on intercultural practical conflict and leadership quality development should be obligatory for all participants to increase their skills in becoming interculturally competent future leaders.

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Mental Health and Emotions in a South African Context Post-Pandemic: A Positive Psychology Perspective

17

Kathryn Anne Nel and Saraswathie Govender

1 Introduction

In South Africa mental health is still embedded in the Western biomedical model (Lima-Smit et al., 2022) which promotes individual healthcare use and treatment of psychological illnesses with medication (Deacon, 2013). The biopsychosocial model of mental illness, which is supposed to treat the individual as a whole, is currently used in psychological and psychiatric domains worldwide however, it can be argued that it is still deeply entrenched in the biomedical model of mental illness (Bolton, 2023). The prevalence of psychological illness in South Africa is high with nearly a third of the population (Stein et al., 2021) estimated at having experienced for instance, depression or anxiety disorders. It is an inherently violent society (Lancaster, 2013) and gender-based violence (GBV) and criminal attacks on households lead to many experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD (Oparinde et al., 2021). There have been many attempts to add more community-based interventions such as district Mental healthcare plans (MHCP), which to a large extent have not been realised due to lack of government funding (Petersen et al., 2016).

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In South Africa there are various notions of what mental illness is and many of them do not concur with Western-conceptualisations (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). This is problematic as the majority of the population in the country is Black African (Stats SA, 2023) who have very different notions pertaining to understanding of psychological illness as for instance, individuals in America (Watters, 2010). In this regard, social constructions of illness, which includes psychiatric disorders are co-constructed with cultural norms and social values that exist within a community (Conrad & Barker, 2010). Ancestral beliefs exist in all African communities in Africa (Falola, 2022) and knowledge generated from these beliefs is often used to understand psychiatric illness (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). It is also true that in African society psychiatric illnesses are viewed in a discriminatory and judgemental manner which makes them off-limits in terms of family and community acceptance (Alemu et al., 2023). As a result, individuals who have a mental disorder often internalise stigmatisation, feelings of shame, disgust and guilt (Dolezal, 2022; Lima-Smit et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic affected all ethnicities in South Africa however, the poor, the majority of whom are Black, were most affected due to their lack of access to all forms of healthcare (Daniels & Casale, 2022). The National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan (2023–2030) has provided a broad overview of the imperative need for mental

health services in the community, because of the high prevalence of mental illness in the country. However, the authors have observed that this has yet filtered down to local African communities.

Positive psychology looks at an individual's strengths and allows them to gain insight into the "positive" as compared to the negative emotions in their lives. This helps them reflect on their challenges and gain an understanding of what their lives could be (The Positivity Project, 2024). In this research, semi-structured interview questions were underpinned by positive psychology in order to allow participants to mitigate any stigma they internalised because of Westernised notions of psychiatric illness, which resulted in their stigmatisation and discrimination in their communities. The questions also allowed them to understand that cultural knowledge and emotions related to conceptions of mental illness are not all harmful or damaging.

1.1 Emotions and Mental Health in Black Populations

According to Liao et al. (2019), research in America amongst so-called "strong-black women" (SBW) found that the SBW stereotype was associated with "maladaptive perfectionism", which had some undesirable consequences. This suggests that the women had internalised SBW and that, as they tried to live up to this ideal, they were more likely to become emotional in terms of being lonely, anxious and depressed. Bruwer et al. (2011) suggest that stress linked to racism is likely to negatively affect the mental health of non-white populations. In this regard, overt and institutional racism is linked to racial stigma and living in an unsupportive social environment (Lima-Smit et al., 2022).

Fourie et al. (2017) state that in South Africa, the emotional health and mental well-being of Black people is still impacted by apartheid. Blacks in the country feel resentment about the suffering endured by their families and ancestors. Moreover, these authors suggest that this was illustrated by changes in the amygdala, seen on Magnetic Resonance Images (MRI) scans, after

they were shown images related to apartheid. Whites in this research were found to experience shame. As a result, the authors postulate that the emotional responses of Blacks and Whites in South Africa is related to racial discrimination. Negative emotional well-being was also found in a group of working age Black South Africans who migrated to different parts of the country in order to find work. This group showed a tendency towards becoming depressed which impacted on their life-satisfaction and overall well-being (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). This is supported by Olonisakin and Idemudia (2022) who report that a critical indicator of overall well-being amongst Black Africans is life-satisfaction. The emotional and mental well-being of Black South Africans is thus related to the environment they live in, discrimination and stigmatisation as well as historical racism (Jackson et al., 2010).

Negative emotional well-being has heightened amongst Black South Africans during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021) (see Hill et al. in this book). This is supported by Kindred and Bates (2023) who report that the pandemic had negative mental health consequences globally, which included social anxiety and emotional behaviours.

The research aim was thus to: Investigate the mental health and emotions of Black Africans in a South African context during and post-pandemic.

1.2 Mental Health in South African Societies

Mental health is defined as state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stressors of life, realise their abilities and contribute to their community (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2017). It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and identify and express emotions adequately. This highlights the importance of mental health and well-being as it contributes to a person's ability to navigate through life and successfully deal with subjective challenges or difficulties. For many individuals, however, this

is not always the case as they suffer from mental health disorders which compromise their ability to lead a considered life.

Currently mental health in South Africa has been at the forefront of social issues and described as an escalating crisis (Benjamin et al., 2021; Pillay, 2019; Pilgrim, 2020). It is estimated that a significant proportion of people living in South Africa have a mental illness and do not have accesses to mental health services (Pillay, 2019). Stigmatisation, prejudice and alienation from the community are the most problematic challenges facing individuals with mental health problems in South Africa (Monteiro, 2015; Pillay, 2019). People living with mental illness are perceived as imprudent, under a spiritual curse, weak or simply misunderstood (Milner et al., 2019). The fact that these illnesses are often devoid of physical symptoms, combined with the lack of appropriate terminology in African languages to describe psychological symptoms, contributes to the complexity of how mental illnesses are perceived in the South African context (Lima-Smit et al., 2022).

The state of mental health during and after COVID-19 remains of significant concern globally and the rates of mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression increased by 28% in the first year of the pandemic (WHO, 2017). South Africa, like many low-and-middle-income countries, has a high burden of mental health disorders (Shisana et al., 2024). These authors maintain that there are several factors that contribute to the high burden of mental health disorders in the country such as childhood trauma, poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, alcohol and substance abuse, gender-based violence (GBV) and a history of political and social upheaval, which can contribute to developing mental health disorders.

1.3 The Role of Culture in Mental Health in South Africa

Bila and Carbonatto (2022) report that South Africa is a country of diverse cultures which may influence the causative beliefs, and consequently,

the help-seeking behaviour of mental health care users. Cultural norms can account for differences in how people communicate their symptoms which can lead to misdiagnoses. Each cultural group brings its own beliefs, traditions and practices about the concept of mental health, making it crucial to understand the role of cultural factors in an individual's overall approach to getting treatment.

Traditional beliefs and practices regarding mental health and illness are still extensively followed in the rural communities of South Africa. These beliefs and practices form a coherent system that has maintained individual and social equilibrium for generations (Benjamin et al., 2021). Amidst the differences across cultures and ethnicity in South Africa, there remains a general belief that mental health disorders are sourced from external causes such as a breach of a taboo or custom, demonic possession, evil eye, sorcery, natural causes, and affliction by God (Motau, 2024). These systems provide accessible and often effective mental health care to Black South Africans. This requires cultural understanding of factors relating to emotion and mental health in traditional settings (Ahad et al., 2023).

According to Lima-Smit et al. (2022), in the South African context, it is necessary for mental health practitioners to consider the role of cultural stigmas as every culture has a different way at looking at emotion and mental health. Some cultures see emotion and mental health challenges as a sign of weakness; others do not view it as a need for help-seeking as they believe it is within each individual's control. These, and other, misconceptions make it harder for those struggling to talk about a mental health issue openly and negatively affect their decision to seek help. Dimitrov et al. (2022) suggest that cultural taboos can also lead to a reluctance to discuss symptoms. Preventing discussions of mental health challenges can have a profound impact on whether an individual chooses to acknowledge psychological and emotional symptoms and seek professional help.

Every individual's experience in the journey of recovery from mental health issues is different.

Understanding the societal and cultural influences at play in mental health care is crucial in avoiding misconceptions, removing obstacles and encouraging people to access the care they need (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). Consequently, using positive psychology to underpin research can provide an impetus to bring about a change to shift the individual's negative emotions to the brighter aspects of their lives.

1.4 Positive Psychology and Mental Health in Black Populations

Wilson et al. (2022) report that research in sub-Saharan Africa needs to encompass an African-centred positive psychology which, if embedded within a traditional cultural context, could be appropriate for investigations in multi-cultural contexts on the African continent. Additionally, they report that a culturally centred positive psychology, in an African environment, can contribute to research on the overall well-being of Black people. Moreover, as African culture is embedded in a collectivist society which incorporates spirituality and being one with Gaia (earth), it is important to question different contexts and theories which relate to cultural and group values. In this regard, the use of positive psychology, rooted in an African environment, could contextualise and ground African experience in a constructive manner.

According to Wilson et al. (2022, p. 1) research using positive psychology on the African continent should use cross-border partnerships to ensure that social norms and values, within different cultural contexts, can be better understood. Furthermore, that in an African population the following must be considered:

"Questions of conceptual clarity of terms, better understanding of contextual factors which influence well-being, and well-being research embracing the complexity of bio-psycho-social-ecological well-being, and science concerned with health-promotion interventions."

2 Research Methodology for the Study

In this section, a comprehensive overview of the research process for the study is provided.

2.1 Participants and Setting

Research took place in an African township at a community centre in a city in South Africa. Two African females (25 and 28 years) and 2 African males (22 and 30 years) participated in the research. They had all been diagnosed with mental illnesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 Sampling Technique

A purposive sample, using a judgemental technique, where researchers used, their expert judgement to recruit participants for the study was utilised. One of the researchers knew an individual who met the requirements for the investigation and was referred to two other individuals who had been identified as having a mental illness post-COVID-19.

2.3 Research Design

This research follows the interpretivist paradigm and is qualitative in approach. The research design used a case study technique. According to Babbie (2021), a case study design is one that investigates in an in-depth manner, in this case, the feelings and detailed experiences of four Black individuals, in terms of their mental health and emotions, after the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

2.4 Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview guide using 10 questions was constructed underpinned by positive

psychology. This was carried out as positives and negatives do co-exist but often questions are developed that elicit more negative aspects of an individual's feelings. Questions underpinned by positive psychology try to provoke positive emotions that motivate personal strengths and optimistic thinking (Armenta et al., 2017). Examples of questions used in the research are:

- Did you feel thankful when you found out your mental health diagnosis?
- Was your family happy to support you after your mental health diagnosis?

2.5 Data Collection

Data were collected in four separate interviews in a clinic where the participants collected their medication. The room was comfortable and participants had access to water and tissues. No other inducements were given. The interviews were an hour in length, the first 5 min were used to build rapport and the last 5 min to de-brief participants. Participants gave permission for audio recordings to take place which ensured the researchers did not miss any nuances in the responses. The researcher also observed the body language of participants and described it in field notes. The interviews were conducted by a psychologist thus, if participants became emotional, the interview was stopped and an intervention, if needed, was provided. Although all participants did show some emotion the interviews, at their request, continued. A follow up interview to verify the transcribed data also took place. The participants were given the phone number of the psychologist and, were told, that if they needed to speak to her at anytime, after the interview they could phone and she would set up a counselling session. The researcher also followed up per phone to find out if the participants were coping emotionally.

2.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) as per Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse the data. The following steps in the process were used. Familiarisation

where the researchers read and re-read the transcripts so that we were engaged and fully immersed in the data. Coding was then entered into where content in the text was identified and broken down into small, more meaningful pieces and labelled. After this, we induced themes by checking codes for keywords and repetitions by key phrases. Additionally, elaboration took place where we unpacked data and ensured that themes and sub-themes reached the point of saturation. We then checked to ensure the themes were relevant and accurate and reflected on the whole process to safeguard objectivity in the procedure. Finally, we wrote down the themes and, in this case, presented them in the form of a book chapter.

2.7 Quality Criteria (Trustworthiness)

Shenton's (2004) criteria to satisfy reliability and validity in qualitative research were used.

- Triangulation—the researchers used many sources of data to validate the findings that emerged from the data. In this instance, face-to-face interviews, the use of audio recordings.
- Member checks—the transcripts of the interviews were verified by the participants to ensure that their words were accurately captured and an accurate reflection of their feelings.
- Regular debriefing sessions—the researchers had many meetings to ensure that any bias in either of their thoughts and/or analysis was not biased in anyway. They used each other as sounding boards in which they were able to recognise their own, or the others bias.
- Transferability—in this regard we identified that the research was applicable as it gave enough information for readers to assess the relevance and pertinence of the findings to different contexts.
- Dependability—it is likely that if the same research methodology was used in another study, similar results would be obtained. In this regard, the following process was fol-

lowed, data collection and analysis were properly described and a pilot study took place where the questions were posed to a person recently diagnosed with a mental health issue. This ensured questions were appropriate and how long each interview would take. Findings from this interview were not included in the study.

- Bias—as one researcher conducted the face-to-face interviews, administrative bias was controlled as the questions were asked in the same order and any probing was similar. The researcher had an in-depth understanding of the objectives of the study and any prejudices she might have which helped her guard against any bias. Bracketing, where the researcher set aside any of her own ideas or thoughts on the subject was also used. Findings were also checked for credibility by participant verification, peer debriefing (with the other researcher) and a reasonable period of engagement with participants.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations according to Babbie (2021) were followed. All participants signed informed consent forms which were attached to a letter explaining the research and giving the researchers names and contact details. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by telling participants that their names and details would not be used and they would be given pseudonyms. Participants were also told that they could withdraw from the research at anytime during the process with no negative outcomes, thus they took part voluntarily. The researchers did not deceive the participants in anyway and the nature and rationale for the research was explained to them.

Ethical clearance was granted for the research which overall looked at cognitive stressors amongst healthcare workers and the general public during (and after) the COVID-19 pandemic (TREC/459/2020: IR).

3 Finding of the Study

Themes arising out of the data were Theme 1: Self-Disgust; Theme 2: Stigmatisation when Diagnosed with a Mental Health Illness; Theme 3: Mental Illness is Shameful; Theme 4: Theme 4: Understanding my Reality as Othering. The themes are presented with responses from the participants that underpin them together with a discussion.

Participants pseudonyms: PF1 = Participant 1 Female (25 years); PF2 = Participant 2 Female (28 years); PM3 = Participant 3 Male (22 years) and PM4 = Participant 4 Male (30 years).

3.1 Theme 1: Self-Disgust

The perceptions of young adults, who have received mental health diagnoses, are particularly important when looking at mental health in any context (Choudhry et al., 2016). The participants in this research were all young adults which is a particularly susceptible time for the onset of mental illness (Jurewicz, 2015), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bevilacqua et al. 2023). In an African cultural context, mental illness is socially constructed in terms of the ancestors (McGorry et al., 2011). Fundamentally, in a traditional African environment mental illness is embedded in a sociocultural context (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). In this regard, spirits of the ancestors are reported as causing a negative impact on the mental well-being of individuals (Motau, 2024). This leads to the “afflicted” individuals regarding themselves with distress (Shange & Ross, 2022) and “self-disgust”. The following responses from participants support this theme.

“You know I always used to think that these illnesses in the head were from the ancestors...but now I know they’re not. I am ashamed that I have this weakness and it is disgusting.” [PF1]

“We Africans think that all illnesses that cause strange behaviour like talking to others who are not there, or make people look strange, are from the ancestors. This is a cause of shame and I cannot think of anything good about it.” [PM3]

“I cannot tell my family or my neighbours I tell them I have diabetes so have to go to the hospital

for medication. They will think that my ancestors have cursed me if I tell them as it is a thing of shame.” [PF2]

“My uncle was the only one who understood as he had a problem with his thinking and that helped but I felt ashamed as my uncle is not really accepted by the family as it is thought he has offended the spirits [ancestors] in some way. In this way, I do feel a bit disgusted with myself as I know it is probably a family thing [hereditary] but others don’t understand that. It is a lonely thing.” [PM4]

Although questions were framed in a positive manner, only PM4 was able to respond in a manner that was constructive in terms of his uncle showing understanding as he also had a mental health diagnosis. All participants felt ashamed or disgusted with themselves which showed a lack of understanding of mental illness in the social-context of their community and one participant reported feeling lonely which is supported, in different contexts, by previous research (Prizeman et al., 2023).

3.2 Theme 2: Stigmatisation of Africans Diagnosed with a Mental Health Illness

Lima-Smit et al. (2022) report that stigmatisation of the mentally ill often occurs in a South African context because the afflicted are thought to have angered the spirits of their ancestors. This happens in all environments and is both historical and contemporary in nature. In this regard, people who are known, or thought, to have mental illness in their family are shunned as it is considered a discredit to the family.

“I remember one old lady in our village she used to laugh at nothing and we all avoided her. When we were children, we called her names, that makes me very ashamed of myself now. I told my mother what was wrong with me and she speaks to me now on the cell [phone] but doesn’t come to my house anymore. I asked her why and she said that my father and her neighbours would not understand her visiting a ‘mad’ person. I feel so sad, can you imagine, that is my mother.” [PF1].

“Ya, you know I see how my family and friends talk about those that are ‘not right in the head.’ They don’t mix with them even their families don’t. I just agree and laugh with them.... more

when I’m with my friends. I don’t tell them I have such an illness I would be outcast and I could not stand that.” [PF2]

“This thing is terrible for me. I see people looking at me different now and friends I played soccer with don’t invite me anymore”. [PM3]

“I hate it my mother and father don’t treat me like they did before I am the firstborn [In African society much is expected of the firstborn son and, he is only replaced in the case of death] and should be consulted by my brothers and sisters [younger] but they all know that I am sick. My one sister told me that my second brother was going to take my place as firstborn because I am not right [in the head]. This is so bad but I do try to behave in a good [optimistic] way every-day.” [PM4]

All participants noted they had encountered stigmatisation as a result of their mental illness diagnoses from both friends and close family members. Participant PM4 did try to frame his day-to-day life in a more positive manner by noting that he was behaving in a good way, when the researcher probed it was noted that he tried to be optimistic. As questions were framed by positive psychology this response suggests that this participant is trying to “shift” his emotions from negative to positive in order to bring a more hopeful aspect to his life.

3.3 Theme 3: Mental Illness is Shameful

Mental illness has often been conceptualised as deviant or abnormal (Stein et al., 2021). Participants noted this in their responses; however, over-riding these concepts was that of “mental illness as shameful”. According to Lima-Smit et al. (2022), this feeling of “shame” defines their self-worth and existence which is characterised by behaving in an illogical and bizarre way. Participants’ responses which underpinned this theme are as follows.

“No, I cannot see anything positive in my life. Mental illness is shameful that is it! Everyone I know says it is a brain that has a problem and it cannot be fixed. I have had nothing but shame in my life since I was diagnosed. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic.... sometimes I think it is that virus which caused my illness.” [PF1]

"I know my family would find my illness shameful 'cos they always laugh about these who are 'mad in the head.' I am always careful when I go to the clinic, I go to one far away so I don't meet anyone I know. How is getting a diagnosis like this, what did you say, a positive thing because I get the medicine I need. No, no, it is not I would rather have never got such an illness, never." [PF2]

"I hate myself my family would be shamed in the community if they knew of my sickness. It is not a thing that we Africans can live with. You know, those who become traditional healers go through something that some say is like mental illness but that is not right. They get better and are called to become healers me, I am not called to be anything I just have a brain that is sick and will never get better." [PM3]

"Well, telling my uncle was a positive thing. His family have accepted his illness but not his neighbours. He also has a few friends who have stayed loyal over the years. He helped me see that if I keep taking my medicine that my family, who are shamed by me, will one-day accept me once more as the firstborn son. I hope this is right and will always go to the clinic and keep taking my pills." [PM4]

Three participants were overwhelmed by the feelings of shame they experienced after their mental health illness diagnosis. However, PM4, because of support from his uncle, was able to see some positives in his situation. This may well suggest that an African-centred positive psychology, if underpinned by cultural norms (Wilson et al., 2022), could be applied on the African continent.

3.4 Theme 4: Understanding My Reality as "Othering"

Social identity in African culture is related to cultural norms those who differ are seen as "the other" (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). Perceptions of "the other" are related to those who are stigmatised, discriminated against and marginalised in their own environment (Bhugra et al., 2023). Participants in this research noted that they experienced all of the aforementioned which incurred negative outcomes in terms of their day-to-day well-being. For instance, systematic rejection from their support systems.

"It is like I am someone else now. There is another person in my skin I am not who I was. In my culture we don't like someone being different. Well.....we can be different in some ways but those who act strangely, like the mentally ill are not wanted. They [the community] will see all things as strange [the way they behave] if they know you have a mental sickness." [PF1]

"I have always thought that those who are mentally ill are not like the rest of us.....that there is something weird about them. Suddenly, I find myself 'one of them,' and realise that they are not different they just have an illness like any other.....but the community cannot see that." [PF2]

"Those other people with mental illness are strange, not like me I don't behave in a funny way. Sometimes my family say something to me and I wonder if they think I'm behaving in a funny [strange] way. Then I tell myself no, it is just me thinking I am different to them but I'm not.....at least I don't think so." [PM3]

"Sometimes my family say I should go and live in another place. I should go and stay where people like me live. When I ask them what they mean they say you're 'not right in the head' so you must go so as not to bring shame on us. Where can I go? I'm not giving up, and as the firstborn son, I have just got a job and if they want my money [the family] they will have to start accepting me [in African families those who are working help support the rest of the family]. If they don't then I will move on as I will have money. I suppose life is getting better." [PM4]

Social identity is closely related to cultural norms and values in a community which in Africa is collective in nature (Lima-Smit et al., 2022). In African culture, this is related to *Ubuntu* that is: *I only see myself through others and how they see me*. This means that if others see an individual differently and not in terms of social norms they become "othered" or different (Bhugra et al., 2023). Three participants, in their responses, note to being "othered". PM4 is othered but has not given up on being accepted as the firstborn son which is a positive.

4 Discussion

The findings of the study, are important, in that they indicate that generally the participants were unable to break the chain of negativity associated

with their mental health diagnosis. This, even though questions were framed using positive psychology which it was hoped would help participants reflect on anything constructive (or optimistic) in their circumstances (Wilson et al., 2022). This suggests that their social identity, which is linked to the cultural norms, emotions and values of their communities, is negative because they become the “other” (Bhugra et al., 2023) and are social outcasts in their communities. This results in them feeling shame and disgust and having a negative self-identity because their diagnosis (Dolezal, 2022). This was a small qualitative study thus the interpretation of results is limited to participants even so; it is likely that suffering from mental health illnesses leads to stigmatisation across cultures (Ahad et al., 2023) in South Africa, particularly for Black South Africans (Lima-Smit et al., 2022).

African culture is highly collectivistic, with an emphasis on social connectedness. The definition of the self in relation to others is a central aspect of the collective (Ahad et al., 2023). Collectivistic cultures view individuals as interconnected within their communities and place less emphasis on autonomy or independence (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). This suggests that critical reflection and research are imperative when providing mental health services for people from collectivistic cultures, or there is a risk of undermining traditional cultural beliefs and practices. According to Sargeant and Yoxall (2023), understanding spirituality and diversity are essential in a positive psychology perspective. This ensures holistic care and respect for and will help promote the development of resilience and healthy coping strategies.

As alluded to earlier in the chapter, in South Africa mental health is still entrenched in the Western biopsychosocial model of mental illness (Deacon, 2013). Even though it is Eurocentric in nature, it does offer a comprehensive framework to aid in the understanding of the interplay between psychological well-being and emotions in mental health (Lima-Smit et al., 2022) in a post-pandemic context. Although research in positive psychology has been gaining momentum in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, it still

has its theoretical underpinnings that originated in the West and is not always inclusive of African cultural values such as collectivism and the principles of *Ubuntu* and its norms and values (Fadiji & Wissing, 2022). In this regard, a sociocultural underpinning of mental health and well-being, reinforced by positive psychology, which factors in the role of the family, community solidarity and other Afro-specific features is necessary for a more precise understanding and promotion of, psychological well-being amongst the African population. This will provide a much-needed framework for mental health practitioners so that they can plan and evaluate mental health interventions that promote positive life outcomes.

Other implications for the research are that it is likely that mental health discrimination and stigma exists in all Black South African communities. In a practical manner, this should be addressed by the immediate and urgent implementation of the National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan (2023–2030), which has not yet filtered down to local communities. To promote the understanding of mental health especially emotions, there is an urgent need for the dissemination of mental health awareness campaigns within communities so that the understanding of mental health could significantly enhance mental health seeking behaviour. These initiatives will provide hope for a prognosis of widespread psychological recovery and growth post-pandemic which will equip people with the right knowledge, skills, supports and practices. These positive psychology interventions, including helping people find a sense of meaning and coherence, providing information on coping skills and how to engage in positive refocusing and re-appraisal will help people to constructively navigate their way out of despair and bring hope to themselves and others.

5 Conclusion

Overall, it was found that the diagnosis of mental illness was experienced in a very negative manner by participants; however, one participant was able to see his illness in a more positive light.

Positive psychology, used to underpin interviews, did seem to help participants' understanding of how and why they were diagnosed with a psychological illness but their experiences were heavily influenced by the negative perceptions of mental health in their respective communities.

6 Future Research Needs and Recommendations

There is a need for a larger mixed-methods study using a representative sample so that results can be substantiated. This type of study will help provide policy directions at both national and local levels. The South African government has made some efforts in providing policy directions for mental health literacy in their National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan; however, this has not yet been broadly applied in the country. There is thus an urgent need for workshops and psycho-educational programmes to be implemented at both local government level and national level. In this regard, the research will be made available to relevant authorities.

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Part IV

Emotions, Identity, and the Dynamics of Power



Sofa-Gate: Impact of Cross-cultural Biases and Emotions in EU External Relations

18

Ljiljana Simic

1 Introducing the Sofa-Gate Incident: Implications for EU External Image, Gender Dynamics, and Diplomatic Protocol

The EU's external image is influenced by interaction with non-European partners and consequently affected by the self-image narrative. Above all, it is political and impacted by emotions. Regarding emotions, the link with Sofa-Gate (SG) involved embarrassment, frustration, or even anger, depending on one's perspective. For Ursula von der Leyen (Ursula VdL), European Commission, it might have evoked feelings of disrespect, isolation, and sidelines. The incident provoked emotions in the broader public of the political circles, with discussions about gender dynamics, power structures, and diplomatic etiquette.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan—Turkey (Recep E.) received the President of the European Council, Charles Michele (Charles M.), and the President of the European Commission, Ursula VDL, for a high-level meeting in Ankara on 7 April 2021. The room had only two chairs prepared for the three leaders. While Charles M. seated himself in the chair beside Recep E., Ursula VDL was offered a seat on a sofa across

from the Turkish Foreign Minister. The SG incident occurred during a critical meeting to improve EU-Turkey relations, which strained migration, human rights, and territorial disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. The incident provoked considerable criticism in the media and EU institutions.

SG became more than just a seating arrangement issue. It symbolised deeper societal and political tensions between Europe and Turkey, particularly regarding the perception of gender equality and protocolar representation in leadership positions. This article will focus on several theoretical implications on gender equality, EU institutional dynamics, and international diplomacy. The incident has been widely interpreted as a manifestation of gender discrimination, highlighting the persistent issues of sexism and unequal treatment of women in high-level political and diplomatic contexts. It potentially symbolised the marginalisation of women's faces. The incident revealed the structural flaws and ambiguities in the EU's external representation, as the Lisbon Treaty does not give the roles of the European Commission President and the European Council President in such contexts. It led to power struggles and Ursula VDL's emotional confusion. It showed the lack of EU protocol coherence, which impacted credibility on the international stage. It raised questions about the respect and treatment of EU representatives by third countries. The incident brought back tradi-

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tional notions of male political authority, where women are often sidelined or not given equal respect and recognition.

2 Cultural Dimensions and Diplomatic Interactions: A Multi-faceted Analysis

The literature review highlights the importance of five relevant research aspects for analysing SG: cross-cultural biases, cross-cultural management, emotions as bias, cultural diplomacy, and values differences.

The first aspect brings research questions and their outcomes from various fields connected to SG, such as the importance of misunderstanding due to a lack of cultural sensitivity, biases, and emotional intelligence. In cross-cultural biases and diplomatic interactions, two authors, Lee and Park (2020, p.73), investigate why cultural biases affect negotiation outcomes in diplomatic contexts by analysing the impact of cultural biases on decision-making processes and how they lead to misunderstanding in diplomatic interactions. For instance, negotiators may misinterpret actions or intentions due to cultural preconceptions. Smith et al. (2002, p. 197) examine the role of emotional intelligence in diplomatic interactions, focusing on why diplomats should recognise, understand, and manage emotions in cross-cultural contexts. It discusses the importance of empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation in promoting constructive dialogue. Garcia and Smith (2019, p. 532) brought the importance and place of emotional intelligence into diplomatic contexts.

The second aspect is the cross-cultural management aspect, addressing “cultural values as concepts” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 44). Geert Hofstede has researched cultural values as fundamental concepts that shape behaviour and attitudes in societies and organisations. His work is based on the notion that culture can be understood through a set of core values identifying several critical dimensions of culture, including individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-

femininity. By conceptualising masculinity-femininity as underlying constructs, we can analyse how these values manifest in various aspects of SG, such as protocolar questions and leadership power struggles in diplomatic negotiation. This approach emphasises the universality of cultural values while recognising that their expression may vary across cultures. From this perspective, the incident is analysed by considering those underlying specific cultural values (EU/Turkey) that may have influenced the actions and perceptions of the individuals involved.

The third aspect is identifying emotions as a bias, which was brought up in research by Mercer (2005, p. 45) with the concept of “emotional beliefs”. He argued that emotions influence how and what one believes, adding value to facts (Mercer, 2010, p. 6). As Mercer noted, if established norms are essential in international relations between countries, all disrespect may trigger emotional reactions. The non-verbal and visual dimensions of discourse need to be considered, although they can become an essential area of research. Furthermore, Chen and Kim (2017, p. 13) investigate the influence of emotions on diplomatic negotiations, drawing on theories of emotion regulation and cross-cultural psychology. It explores how cultural differences in emotional expression and interpretation can impact negotiation dynamics and the impact of suppressing emotions.

Jones and Nguyen (2021, p. 57) examine how cultural biases and gender norms contributed to the misunderstanding and explore the implications for EU-Turkey relations and diplomatic protocol. In the context of EU-Turkey relations, cultural biases from both sides have led to a cycle of mistrust and miscommunication. The EU’s perception of Turkey’s political and social norms often clashes with Turkey’s view of European standards and expectations. Finally, Wang and Garcia (2022, p. 5) focus on the role of cross-cultural biases in shaping perceptions and behaviour as it is discussed in Barrett (2017, 90). They discussed the challenges of navigating cultural differences in diplomatic interactions and recommended improving cross-cultural communication and cooperation in international relations.

The fourth aspect emphasises cultural diplomacy and identifies the link between emotions in international relations and cross-cultural interactions. Nye has seen diplomatic interactions as “power as the capacity to do things” and “the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants” (Nye, 2008, p. 53). He says that soft power nowadays means everything (*idem*). He continued developing the concept by saying, “Hard power is pushed; soft power is pulled”. Nye responded that soft power is part of a more complex strategy that includes the interchange of soft and hard power, what he called “smart power”. He distinguished that soft power is an “unbearably light concept in external cultural relations”, which is why merging the concepts of hard, soft, and smart power would be one of the reasons to continue this research from cultural diplomacy aspects (Simic, 2023, p. 41). Dervin (2016, p. 88) discusses interculturality and adds its relevance between cross-cultural communication and diplomacy. He views interculturality as challenging and critical, suggesting it involves navigating complex interactions. In diplomacy, interculturality underscores the importance of understanding diverse perspectives and values and the complexities of cultural dynamics in international relations. Finally, he emphasises individual similarities “between people, not cultures and nations”, suggesting that commonalities exist at the personal level regardless of cultural or national identity. This perspective challenges essentialist notions of culture and nationality together with Crawford (2000, p. 124).

Furthermore, Hakanson (1995, p. 62) argues that diplomacy involves navigating differences and finding common ground through dialogue, negotiation, and relationship-building. Diplomats engage in intercultural interactions with counterparts from diverse cultural backgrounds, requiring sensitivity and adaptability to bridge cultural divides and achieve diplomatic objectives.

Finally, the fifth aspect is brought by Richter (2019, p. 132), who examines value differences between nations, emphasising the importance of understanding how cultural values vary across different countries and regions. Richter identifies

patterns of similarity and divergence that shape those interactions. This perspective highlights the dynamic nature of contextual factors influencing their expression. It acknowledges that while specific values may be universal, their importance and interpretation can vary depending on cultural context.

Lastly, both perspectives contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural incidents. While Hofstede focuses on cultural values as concepts that underlie cultural differences, Richter emphasises insights into the practical implications of managing cultural diversity in certain circumstances.

In the case of SG, one could examine how cultural differences in communication styles, protocol, and gender norms between European and Turkish cultures may have contributed to the misunderstanding. Differences in communication norms and protocol expectations regarding hierarchical seating arrangements could have played a role in interpreting the situation by the individuals involved. This literature review highlights existing research on cross-cultural biases and emotions in diplomatic interactions (Clément & Sangar, 2018, p. 70). It draws on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies that are helping the analysis of SG within its impact implications of cross-cultural differences and international diplomacy.

3 Research Methodology: Examining Cultural Biases, Protocol, and Emotions in EU–Turkey Diplomatic Relations

This research approaches the issue from and through different dimensions. It regards the discourse on gender equality in international relations and expects that cultural differences have also biased it.

The first hypothesis assumes that the EU and Turkey did not address the need for more protocol planning during the meeting and, therefore, questioned the presence and role of women in their external diplomatic relations.

The second hypothesis assumes that the incident might also be due to cultural differences that provoke an emotional reaction during and after the meeting.

EEAS is one of the critical institutions that manages the EU's external relations. It incorporates a network of 145 delegations and offices worldwide. Based on the EU's normative understanding as a promoter of gender equality and leader by example, it can be assumed that the EEAS has included female management positions and pays attention to their presence.

Both hypotheses are addressed firstly through desk research, which involves analysing the content of research papers and official documents on how the incident has been perceived in and outside European institutions and secondly through interviewing the staff of European institutions individually.

The desk research with semi-structured interviews was conducted between December 2023 and April 2024 (on the following dates: 13.12.2023, 19.3.2024, 15.3.2024, 24.4.2024). The data was collected through semi-structured thematic group interviews with EU institution staff who might not necessarily be involved in EU external relations but are working for different EU institutions and on other jobs. 7 out of 52 are working in EEAS (participants in the training). There were 52 participants from 19 EU Member States involved in various Intercultural training (Intercultural competence building, Diversity and inclusion, Unconscious Biases in people management). All participants are working in multicultural and multilingual working environments. Countries represented are IT 5, CRO 1, ROU 22, FR 4, Slo 3, GR 3, AUS 2, DE 2, Spain 4, SLO 2, BE 5, Malta 3, Lit 3, PL 5.

Participants from different cultural backgrounds, nationalities, and professional roles and responsibilities have been chosen to ensure a range of perspectives and insights. They were conducted in English and French for approximately 15 min. During the training hours, their thoughts were shared. The focus group discussion received the research question, and all data provided were anonymised and confidential.

The results are based on interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Brussels when the

training occurred onsite and in other countries when the training occurred online. Desk research was added by analysing web resources and selected media appearances of Ursula VDL and Charles M. Several social media platforms (Twitter et al. #Giveheraseat) have been analysed.

The interview design helped to gain in-depth insights into individuals' experiences, group perceptions, and interpretations of the incident and its broader implications. The outline of the interview design defined the research objectives for understanding the role of cross-cultural biases and emotions in shaping perceptions and behaviour during the SG incident. Questions were created to explore participants' experiences, attitudes, and reflections on cross-cultural interactions, biases, and emotions in diplomatic contexts.

Developing a semi-structured group interview consisted of open-ended questions that explore critical themes related to SG cross-cultural biases and emotions. They included questions about participants' perceptions of the incident, their interpretations of the cultural dynamics, and their reflections on the impact of emotions in diplomatic interactions. Participants shared their perspectives openly in smaller subgroups during the training. Listening techniques and potential follow-up questions have been used to probe deeper into participants' responses, looking to uncover underlying themes and insights.

Questions have been clustered into four categories (perceptions, cultural dynamics, emotions, and implications), each with two subquestions:

Perceptions of the incident:

- (a) Describe your initial reaction to the SG incident.
- (b) How do you think different local and international stakeholders perceived the incident?

Cultural dynamics and biases:

- (a) How do you think cultural biases and stereotypes may have influenced perceptions and behaviour in this situation?
- (b) Were there any cultural misunderstandings or misinterpretations you experienced during diplomatic interactions related to the incident?

Emotions and diplomatic interactions:

- (a) What emotions were at play among the individuals involved in the incident?
- (b) How do you believe emotions, such as frustration, embarrassment, or anger, impacted the dynamics of the situation?

Implications and lessons learned:

- (a) How can we improve cross-cultural understanding and cooperation in diplomatic relations?
- (b) How can organisations or policymakers address cross-cultural biases and emotions to promote more effective communication and collaboration in international affairs?

These questions aimed to elicit the interviewer's perspectives on various aspects of the incident and its implications for diplomatic interactions. They provided insights into the role of cultural biases and emotions in shaping behaviour and perceptions in international relations.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns, themes, and trends in the data related to cross-cultural biases, emotions, and diplomatic interactions. The data was analysed by looking for insights and connections, followed by interpreting and connecting the findings with broader themes related to cross-cultural management and international diplomacy.

The research further explores the importance of different perceptions of the image and video of the lack of chairs for Ursula VdL. SG is constructed through social media and cross-cultural interactions, which are added with political and other connotations such as cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Some patterns in representing different cross-cultural messages, such as gender, biases or power dynamics, have been done through content analysis, especially in Ursula VdL and Charles M speeches.

The following section will summarise the key findings, discuss their implications for theory and practice, and offer recommendations for addressing cross-cultural biases and emotions in diplomatic relations, using specific insights

drawn from participants' perspectives on the SG incident.

4 Analysis of Sofa-Gate

4.1 Perceptions of Diplomatic Missteps

In Ankara, Ursula VdL was placed on a sofa behind Recep E. during their meeting, and Charles M. was placed in an armchair beside the Turkish President's chair. EU ambassadors spoke about this "incident" and the Commission President's requests, which would ultimately amount to reinterpreting the European treaties. The analysis will start by bringing up the reaction from written media platforms and later by members of the EP.

The New York Times considers this episode to illustrate the "cultural gap separating Erdogan's Turkiye from the EU regarding the status of women" (Stevens-Gridneff & Gall, 2021). Several MEPs saw it as a new Turkish provocation. The Politico criticises Charles M.'s lack of reaction during the meeting: "He has no excuse. He had no obligation to play musical chairs and submit to Erdogan's rules without supporting von der Leyen. Liberal MEP Sophie in 't Veld pointed Erdogan seated equally with two EU presidents" (male) (Herszenhorn, 2021).

"No, it was not a coincidence. It was deliberate," quoted by Stroobants (2021, April 26): "Why did the president remain silent?" she asks.

To support her tweet, the MEP attached photos of the Turkish president in the company of the two former EU leaders, Donald Tusk—ex-president of the Council and Jean-Claude Juncker—ex-president of EC, treated on an equal footing (Lasserre, 2021, April 12). Iratxe Garcia Perez, leader of the social democrats in the EP, expressed anger by reminding that "they withdraw from the Istanbul Convention" which was in fact, defending women's rights (Hutchinson, 2021, April 8). They leave Ursula VdL without a seat on an official visit, she continued, and it was ashamed. Some more reactions from social media: Hannah Neumann, a German Green MEP,

said, “Von der Leyen is not the problem. The problem is the two other guys who put her in that position” (Neumann, 2021, April 8). Kern, a social democrat, tweeted: “You cannot expect anything else from Erdogan. The fact that the EU Council President degraded himself was a bitter joke” (Kern, 2021, April 7).

Charles M. justified himself, explaining that “at the moment, while perceiving the regrettable nature of the situation, we chose not to aggravate it with a public incident and to prioritise at the start of the meeting the substance of the political discussion that Ursula and I were going, to begin with, our hosts” (Herszenhorn, 2021).

The incident took on a whole new dimension the day after the meeting. On Wednesday, April 7, senior officials of the EC reacted to the episode by reminding the media that the protocol rank of the EC president is the same as that of the President of the European Council. In that case, Ankara has only applied the protocol strictly since the treaties provide that the European Council’s President ensures representation of the EU’s external affairs at the level of heads of state and government generally alongside the EC President.

It is not clear what Erdogan’s interest would have been in humiliating the President of the Commission when, as a German close to Angela Merkel, she is his best ally. Turkey has also confirmed this thesis, affirming that “the arrangement of the seats was carried out at the request of (the Europeans)” (*ibid.*)

Ursula VdL humiliated Charles M. for his reaction to the SG scandal that embarrassed her on a diplomatic visit to Turkey. It was uncomfortable that Ursula VdL, the first woman as President of EC, explained her feelings as such:

“I felt hurt, and I felt, I felt alone, as a woman and as a European.”

The status of women is the status of democracy. I am the first woman to be President of the European Commission. I am the President of the European Commission, and this is how I expected to be treated when visiting Turkiye two weeks ago as a Commission President. However, I was not. I cannot find any justification for how I was treated. So, I have to conclude that it happened because I am a woman. Would this have happened if I had worn a

suit and a tie? In the pictures of previous meetings, I did not see it. Is there any shortage of chairs? However, then again, I saw no women in these pictures either. I felt hurt.

Moreover, I felt alone. As a woman. And as a European. Because it is not about seating arrangements or protocol. It goes to the core of who we are. It goes to the values our union stands for. Moreover, this shows how far we must go before women are treated as equals. Always and everywhere. When I arrived at the meeting, there were cameras in the room. Thanks to them, the short video of my rival immediately went viral and caused a worldwide storm. There was no need for subtitles. There was no need for translations, and the images spoke for themselves. However, we all know. Thousands of similar incidents go unobserved, most far more serious, and no one ever sees them or hears about them. After all, there is no camera because nobody is paying attention. We have to make sure that these stories are told, too. (de La Baume, 2021)

Identifying the linkages between discourses requires analysing several EU narratives. Based on different studies, research, and documents, among those dealing with the EU being a peace-keeper, democratiser, or good neighbour, the EU is also seen as a security provider and well-being entity that provides it to its citizens. EU values are as European as global and belong to non-Europeans too commonly shared. Therefore, when Ursula VdL calls upon feelings about not being treated as European and as a woman, it might also be a value shared in non-European cultures, such as democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law.

It was surprising when the interviewees discussed feeling European. Thinking of the EU image and European identity did not go too in-depth, as the participant (P4) commented: “It was a misunderstanding. It is not a cultural difference. Equality is good in Turkey.” The discussion did not bring longer or more elaborate responses, and it often ended with the following example (P12): “She should have a seat. It was done on purpose. It was attentional.” One of the participants (07) replied, “In my vision, it was a diplomatic scandal, but not a big deal, and rather a protocol issue.”

Intercultural encounters mean different things to different people. Although many interviewees

cope well with multicultural working environments with acceptance and tolerance, they might only sometimes celebrate other forms of diversity. SG was often seen as only a protocol issue. Most participants (18 out of 27) replied, “It was a protocol issue. They did not do the job.” They had a similar number of those for whom “they” represented Turkey and both EU institutions equally.

Following on two primary perceptions of “it was done on purpose” (P11) and “it was lack of protocol planning” (P23), it could be connected with the broader EU aim to promote, among other values also, the well-being of its citizens while ensuring equality between men and women and promoting non-discrimination across various domains. Gender equality as a value was introduced in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Only since 2010 has the EU developed three 5-year Gender Action Plans to improve the implementation of gender mainstreaming in its external relations. Therefore, the EU narrative and discourse on the place and role of women and their realistic presence is relatively new.

On the other side, the reply from Charles M. was:

I have publicly expressed my regret over this protocol incident. I apologise to the Commission President and all those who felt offended. Naturally, I heard the criticism, but at the time and without the insight we all have today, I decided not to react further so as not to create a political incident. It was at a European level.

The images will have offended many women, and I would like to reaffirm my complete and absolute commitment to supporting women and gender equality. (Michel, 2021, as cited in Hutchinson, 2021)

The pertinent question should be whether the failures are due to a lack of attention to procedure and protocol, as “protocol is politics”, and why seating arrangements were not discussed. The situation also highlighted the role of the EU delegation to Turkey, as it might also be their role to implement intercultural assessment strategies regarding protocol when high representatives visit the country where they are placed, as politics and policy are not separable.

Ursula VdL handled the situation despite the uncomfortable circumstances. After the incident, she addressed the issue publicly, emphasising the importance of gender equality and expressing her disappointment at the lack of protocol. VdL’s response resonated with many who viewed the incident as emblematic of broader challenges women face in male-dominated environments. The incident prompted discussions within the EU about the need for more explicit protocols and respect for all leaders, regardless of gender. The dynamic of the replies and the way they have been handled positions one side on expressing her emotions (Ursula VDL) and the other on excusing himself (Charles M.).

SG is deeply connected to emotions on multiple levels, primarily due to the perceived slight and the broader implications of gender equality (women/men) and diplomatic respect (cross-cultural aspects). The critical emotional connections can be divided into personal and public on one side and diplomatic and political on the other. There is also one more aspect that belongs to symbolic emotions.

From personal emotions, Ursula VDL felt disrespected and hurt. She pointedly blamed sexism for her being relegated to a sofa while her male counterparts took the prominent chairs. Her audible “Ahem” and body language, with arms outstretched in apparent disbelief, highlighted her immediate emotional response to the situation. What belongs to the public expression is displeasure and frustration. The incident sparked criticism and emotional reactions from various publics. Many saw it as a symbol of gender inequality and a diplomatic faux pas, which might be recognised as broader public emotional criticism. The incident resonated emotionally with many women who advocate for gender equality, who saw it as a reflection of the ongoing struggle for equal treatment in the EU and abroad (Simić, 2020, p.11–28).

On the other hand, Charles M. expressed regret and sadness over the incident, acknowledging that it offended many and overshadowed the substantive geopolitical work intended for the meeting. It does represent diplomatic as political emotion but

also as embarrassment and regret. Turkish officials see it as accusations and defensiveness in blaming the EU for the seating arrangement, which adds to the emotional tension and diplomatic strain between the EU and Turkey.

Finally, the incident became a symbol of disunity within the EU, as it highlighted internal political wrangling and the need for better coordination and respect among EU institutions, which we can present as symbolic emotions.

The incident also touched on local cultural sensitivities, with some viewing it as a deliberation done by Turkey, especially in the context of the recent withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention on preventing violence against women, as it could be seen as cultural sensitivity.

In summary, SG is connected to emotions through Ursula VDL's personal feelings of disrespect and hurt, the public and political outcry over perceived sexism and diplomatic missteps, and the broader symbolic implications for gender equality and EU unity. The seating arrangement displayed a power imbalance, with the two male leaders given prominent chairs while the sole female leader was offered a sofa seat. It reinforced traditional gender roles and hierarchies, with men occupying positions of power and authority over women by being treated as subordinate to the male leaders despite holding an equal rank. It reflected gender norms and expectations about the perceived superiority of men over women in leadership and decision-making positions. It perpetuated the stereotype of women being less deserving of respect, recognition, and equal treatment compared to their male counterparts.

Ursula VDL's muted response at the time was "ehm"; taking the sofa seat could be seen as a more diplomatic communication style than an assertive reaction. She expressed feeling "hurt and alone, as a woman and as a European". This sense of humiliation, frustration, and anger at the gender discrimination likely influenced her muted reaction at the time, as she chose not to escalate the situation further at that moment. However, her emotions of hurt and anger later drove her impassioned speech to the EP, where she powerfully condemned the incident as symptomatic of broader gender inequalities women face globally. Her emotional response amplified the incident's significance beyond just a protocol breach.

In contrast, Charles M.'s perceived lack of emotional awareness or empathy towards VDL's mistreatment drew criticism. His failure to recognise and respond to the sexist optics of the seating arrangement was seen as a "terrible example of macho culture" by some MEPs. Michel's unemotional, matter-of-fact approach suggested he did not fully grasp the emotional weight and symbolism of the incident for women.

4.2 Cultural Dynamics of Emotions

Analysing the wording of "feeling European" appears to be sensitive. The interviewees' discomfort sometimes caused them to give short responses. Interaction with non-European partners influences the EU self-image, as described in this response: "It is also a question of respecting cultural differences. It can be that your freedom stops where mine starts."

This collective emotional response from civil society, amplified on social media (#GiveHeraSeat), put immense pressure on EU leaders to acknowledge and condemn the unacceptable treatment of Ursula VDL. Turkish officials such as Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, appeared to react defensively and with anger at being accused of sexism, claiming the seating was based on EU requests. Their emotions went from a desire to protect Turkey's image and refuse criticism over deeply-rooted patriarchal norms. In summary, the intense feelings of humiliation, anger, and outrage experienced by VDL, the public, and women's rights groups contrasted with Charles M.'s lack of emotional intelligence and the defensive reactions from Turkish officials. These clashing emotional undercurrents amplified the perceived sexism of the incident and influenced the subsequent behaviour and rhetoric from all parties involved. Terms in different emotion discourses are helpful for the analysis of the metaphors and analogies. Nouns

like anger and shame, adjectives like unpleasant and angry, or adverbs like sadly and regrettably are the words that refer directly to emotions. The semantic variation of emotion terms varies across different cultures and languages.

Interpreting emotional meanings comprises contextualising them across various discourses, normative, legislative, or, in other words, rational or emotional. Words such as “alone” or “being the first woman as President” or being treated as such are linked to emotions such as fear or discomfort.

In cultures with high power distance, hierarchical structures are more pronounced, and such seating arrangements might be more accepted. The incident highlighted a perceived inequality in treating Ursula VDL, which could reflect Turkey’s higher power distance culture compared to the EU’s expectations of equality among its leaders. The EU, which tends to emphasise individual rights and gender equality (more individualistic values), clashed with the perceived collectivist norms of Turkey, where traditional roles and hierarchical structures might be more emphasised. The sidelining of Ursula VDL could be seen as a failure to recognise her status and authority, reflecting a collectivist approach that prioritises established hierarchies over individual recognition. The incident has been widely criticised as sexist, highlighting issues related to the masculinity vs. femininity dimension. In more masculine cultures, traditional gender roles are more pronounced, and the incident could be seen as an example of such a culture not recognising the equal status of a female leader. The EU’s reaction, emphasising gender equality and criticising the seating arrangement, reflects a more feminine cultural value prioritising equality and sensitivity to gender issues. The EU’s protocol expectations needed to be met, leading to ambiguity and discomfort. High uncertainty avoidance cultures prefer clear structures and protocols, and the failure to adhere to expected diplomatic norms created a situation of uncertainty that needed to be better managed, leading to diplomatic friction.

Analysing how emotional expressions refer to the Other in various already mentioned dis-

courses is to search for the construction of connotations between words or different concepts and their emotional meaning. Developing specific criteria for studying emotions via speech acts is essential. Emotions are unique in their expression and relate to similar emotions expressed in other cultural narratives on emotions, what they express across cultures, and what their effect is. Emotions built into discourse could reveal motives and attitudes in constructing the power relationships shown in certain behaviours.

Emotions are not distinct from cognitions (Barrett, 2017, p. 11), which suggests that emotion dimensions are not self-explanatory phenomena. It is not a linear mechanism with behavioural impact taken from a cultural context. Emotions matter because they are social phenomena and should be understood as essential signifiers in EU international and cross-cultural research. For example, neuroscientist Damasio (2006) claims that it is impossible to prioritise without emotions. Emotions give importance to an issue when sharing an opinion or a debate. In SG, emotions were crucial in their societal resonance when the European and Turkish public only got involved and invested if the issue became connected with another issue of their political interest. For instance, an angry and sad statement from two emotionally invested EU high-position civil servants engendered an emotional response in colleagues, their political opponents, and citizens from both sides. Furthermore, SG has been seen as an emotion management project that has impacted EU/Turkey international relations.

Moreover, the meeting in question also requires distancing emotions that are not shared or identified and experienced as inappropriate or inappropriate. Cultural theories see emotions not as mere biological responses but as social feelings. These feelings are conditioned by the culture of a society, its norms, values, ideas, and beliefs that emerge in patterned social interactions and are learned through a socialisation process. Societies have an emotional culture and vocabulary (Hochschild, 1979, 1983, p. 565). However, although culture conditions emotional experiences and expression, it does not determine whether individuals can strategically manipulate

emotions and expression (Goffman, 1959, p. 124).

Scholars challenge this and explore further if and when political (individual) emotions become public (group) and, therefore, shared as collective group phenomena. When emotional responses occur in international relations discourses, they are a subject of political interpretation.

One more element should be added, and that is the power of revisiting the image that was taken during SG. Images allowed viewers to return to the same time and place as when the image was taken. Images became symbolic and iconic because of their relationship to a cross-cultural set of different moral perceptions. SG had implications for diplomatic and political cross-cultural biases due to perceptions of various ongoing dynamics. More precisely, SG involved male and female leaders from the EU and Turkey with different cultural norms, power dynamics, and statuses. Cultural biases influenced how each party interpreted the situation and their subsequent reactions. Emotions have been heightened due to perceived disrespect and unequal treatment. The perceptions of women in leadership roles differ because gender norms vary across cultures. It has been seen as a severe breach of protocol for EU officials, but it was not considered significant for some other cultures. In some, it was a gender equality question; in others, it was female solidarity and substantial media attention internationally with their cross-cultural interpretations (Manners (2014, p. 267). SG illustrates how cross-cultural biases and emotions can intersect with diplomatic incidents, impacting immediate relations and broader perceptions and, consequently, influencing long-term diplomatic strategies. Images situated in a sociocultural context would constitute a structural-theoretical contribution of EU image studies to existing cross-cultural communication paradigms (Simic, 2023, p. 112). Images have grammar, language, and dimensions. Clarifying the political images could help us understand social norms shaped by attitudes and behaviour (Nesbitt-Larking et al., 2014, p. 89). SG can be viewed as an incident with political implications, as it involved not only diplomatic protocol but also symbolic gestures

and visual representations that conveyed messages about power dynamics between gender roles and cultural identities and how reality is constructed and contested in current political and social contexts.

5 Implications of “Sofa-Gate”: Cross-Cultural Management and Diplomatic Dynamics in EU External Relations

The SG had significant implications for the EU’s external relations, particularly in cross-cultural management and diplomatic interactions. From a cross-cultural management point of view, the incident exposed the EU’s need for more cultural awareness and sensitivity when engaging with partners from different cultural contexts. It highlighted the need for the EU to enhance cross-cultural training (on D&I) and preparation for its representatives, especially when dealing with countries with distinct cultural traditions and potentially different gender norms. From diplomatic interactions, the conflicting narratives between the EU and Turkish sides over who was responsible for the seating arrangement exposed breakdowns in communication and coordination during diplomatic preparations. The public finger-pointing that the EU representatives Ursula VDL and Michel C. projected an image of disunity and lack of cohesion, potentially undermining the EU’s credibility as a unified diplomatic actor (Juncos & Pomorska, 2014, p. 317). It demonstrated the EU’s challenges in upholding its stated values of gender equality and women’s empowerment when engaging with partners that may have different cultural norms and perspectives on these issues. It does link the ethical aspects mentioned in Lahno (2001, p. 179) as moral practice with the emotional character of trust.

Three components enable us to explore those elements together with research findings. The first component is the perception of SG images through discourse and the established iconography of the woman and two men. It is shown how responses ranging from surprise to anger occur

from the first social media circulation. The second component identifies discourses with opposite perceptions of Ursula VdL. The third component shows how the emotions have been perceived around the SG of “men” and “women” versus the roles they played as presidents of different entities and their power dynamics.

Human beings may be overwhelmed by emotions, but politicians must be able to control themselves, especially in public spaces. It has been shown with the choice of emotional adjectives in Ursula VdL’s speech compared to Charles M.’s reply. How diplomats handle such incidents, including their crisis management techniques and adherence to diplomatic protocol, can shape perceptions of their institution’s professionalism, competence, and effectiveness. While incidents like SG may have immediate repercussions for institutional image, their long-term impact depends on how institutions address and learn from such events. The connection between developing diplomatic career skills, contributing to institutional image, and the SG incident lies in how diplomats’ actions and decisions during high-profile incidents can influence perceptions of their institution’s professionalism, competence, and effectiveness in international relations.

6 Conclusion: Navigating Cultural Biases, Protocol, and Emotions in EU External Relations

I investigated whether and, if so, to what extent the cultural biases, protocol, and emotions in external EU relations are connected. I focused on the different aspects of the SG meeting, which led to the conclusion that female representation in decision-making positions on the international scene still has a cross-cultural biased interpretation.

Firstly, it was assumed that SG shows how emotions play a role in shaping foreign relations outcomes and how emotions are addressed with cross-cultural biases. Furthermore, such an interaction with non-European partners is influenced

by the EU intercultural image narrative that brings the central EU values, such as gender equality.

Secondly, it was hypothesised that the representation of female leaders in politics is increasing, but the challenges of implementing equal opportunities remain. When different high-ranking politicians meet, there is cause for potential cross-cultural misunderstandings when emotions play an essential part.

Thirdly, it was assumed that the gender discourse on equal representation would correlate positively with the share of female staff. Based on the presented analyses, it can be concluded that there have been improvements regarding gender equality in both dimensions: for the EU, public discussion around the SG phenomenon and the place and role of women in international meetings and, on the Turkish side, public explanation on the importance of the protocol planning.

The limited scope of this research needed to offer more evidence to show other causal links. Presenting these findings may initiate future research on the topic. An expanded discourse analysis and a more comprehensive empirical analysis may serve as a foundation to investigate the EU’s steps in becoming a normative gender power in external relations. Credible global D&I, specifically gender actors, needs to lead by example. The analysis has shown that there is still much room for improvement in the EU’s internal and external perception.

However, macro approaches also face micro conceptual challenges. The interpretative analysis touched upon macro approaches and was conducted through focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Data was collected from sources such as social media, online articles, and interviews with training participants. Micro conceptual approaches could bring the future direction of the emotional side of EU external relations in the cross-cultural set-up domain, another layer in the research on visual political communication, but also on European identity conception with emotional replies from eurocentric, eurosceptics, and eurofils especially nowadays when the right-wing political choices could impact the new reading of

high representatives and gender at international relations.

While Ursula VdL's treatment highlighted broader concerns about gender equality, including representation and respect for women in leadership roles, the incident also raised questions about diplomatic protocol and respect for all leaders, regardless of gender. While gender played a significant role in the conversation surrounding SG, it is essential to consider the incident within a broader context of professionalism, respect, and inclusivity in diplomatic interactions. The sources might be quantitative and qualitative, including measurable, checkable data and intangible storytelling records of people's cross-cultural perceptions. It can reinforce national (or supranational) and local values by creating and strengthening the current narratives. The incident sparked discussions about gender dynamics, but it is essential to recognise that the issue extends beyond gender alone.

Ursula VdL took a public position to seek help in recognising her situation and to help change the position of women in the international landscape. Observing how she regulated her feelings by seeking social support and recognition afterwards has been interesting because it has been based on her diplomatic career, position, cultural norms, and emotional expectations.

We can then conclude that several political issues have been identified in SG. The first is the protocol issue between the two EU institutions and the EU and Turkey. The next one is connected with local politics and the use of both sides of the actors to bring the issues to a much higher level. It can be seen as an opportunity to reach potential electoral bodies in their political agenda.

Gender cross-cultural biases affect the SGG perception and interpretation—cross-cultural norms shape which reactions and their recognition are valued or discouraged in international relationships. SG's incident triggered emotions like anger and humiliation for Ursula VDL, which influenced her strong condemnation of the sexist treatment of gender inequalities. Differing cultural norms around gender roles, respect for authority, and valuation of social harmony versus

individual assertiveness contributed to conflicting perspectives on the incident. The findings highlight how emotions and cross-cultural differences in norms/biases can significantly affect perceptions, public communication, and diplomatic interactions in EU external relations with diverse partners. Concerned about the future direction of the emotional side of EU external relations in the cross-cultural set-up might tackle dynamic conception of identity and emotional replies (example of eurocentric, eurosceptics, and eurofils) through various indicators, as mentioned previously on tangible and intangible people's cross-cultural perception record. It can emphasise several EU values such as inclusivity, cultural diversity, social cohesion, and strengthening democratic values. From a policy implications aspect, training diplomats, protocol officers, and officials on cultural sensitivity, gender awareness, and emotional intelligence are necessary for inclusive engagement. Critically evaluating existing protocol guidelines and rules from a D&I perspective could identify and address inherent gender biases or inconsistencies that enable discriminatory treatment.

Another implication could be formulating proactive public diplomacy strategies leveraging digital platforms to effectively communicate values, shape narratives, and mitigate reputational damage from such incidents. While SG was an embarrassing episode, it presents opportunities for introspection and reform to enhance the EU's cross-cultural competence, gender sensitivity, and credibility as a moral global actor in its external relations.

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Political Emotions: On Populism, Pandemic, War and the Opportunity of Vulnerability

19

Hans-Jürgen Wirth

1 Introduction

Psychological and sociological studies and theories of populist movements agree that these movements are characterised by an enormous affective excitement with which political actors present their concerns (Wirth, 2022). While emotions are fundamental to all human behaviour, emotional leitmotifs that can be described as negative, aversive and hostile play a central role in populist movements, in particular anger, hatred, revenge, indignation, disgust, envy, jealousy, fear and resentment (Frevert, 2020). The fact that these emotions have negative connotations does not mean that they should be regarded as deficient, pathological or morally reprehensible. Interdisciplinary emotion research (Demmerling & Landweer, 2007; Döring, 2009; Lewis et al., 2008; Roth, 2003) agrees that emotions are psychological tools for orientation in the network of human relationships. The advantages of the emotional system—compared to the cognitive system—are the short reaction time and the communicative significance in groups. When collectives are gripped by a storm of emotions or a mood, *Powerful Feelings* (Frevert, 2020) influence social development. *Emotions make History* (Ciompi & Endert, 2011), Emotions make

Politics (Wirth, 2022) and *Emotion Politics* (Frevert, 2012) are deliberately used by those in power to control the masses.

This chapter attempts to discuss some of these central emotions, their psychological function for the individual and their socio-psychological function in the political field.

2 Methodological Considerations

In terms of methodology, this chapter is based on the grounded theory methodology, as originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967 [1998]) and since further refined (Mey & Mruck, 2011). The starting point is the latest findings in emotion research (Lewis et al., 2008) and their significance in political contexts (Nussbaum, 2014). Based on these theories, new hypotheses on the psychological and socio-psychological background of right-wing populism are developed using empirical data, observations and the analysis of significant scenes. The methodological approach is designed to ensure that the phenomenon of right-wing populism can be examined in all its breadth, diversity and complexity. In order to provide the most comprehensive view of the research topic possible, reference is also made to theoretical approaches from various scientific disciplines, such as empirical social science, sociology, psy-

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choanalysis, philosophy and myth theory. Particular attention is paid to the subjective significance of actions, perceptions, attitudes, emotions (Szanto & Slaby, 2020) and moods (Osler & Szanto, 2024) that are directly or only loosely related to right-wing populist phenomena. The interplay of empirical data, social science-oriented participatory observation, philosophical perspectives and psychoanalytical interpretations should ultimately lead to new insights and hypotheses that can be tested in further studies.

3 The Importance of Emotions

The differentiation and complexity of the inner emotional world is a characteristic basic feature of the human species (Lewis et al., 2008). Feelings are—alongside cognitive abilities—the substitute for instincts or their complement (Slaby, 2008). They enable orientation in the social and cultural environment, which humans must constantly create for themselves (Döring, 2009).

Humans communicate their feelings to others, primarily through facial expressions, but also through gestures, posture, tone and volume of voice and many other non-verbal signals, and finally also through language.

The decisive factor for the effectiveness of the emotional system is its coupling with cognitive functions. According to the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2000), feelings only unfold their “complete and lasting effect” (*ibid.*, p. 50) when they are made conscious, when we not only have feelings but also know that we have them and what they express and mean: “Consciousness makes feelings accessible to cognition and ... enables them to penetrate the thinking process through the mediation of feeling” (*ibid.*, p. 74). These aspects are conceptualised in more detail by Peter Fonagy’s mentalisation theory (Fonagy et al., 2004; Fonagy & Nolte, 2023).

Emotions also have a self-reflective function, which is particularly clear in the case of shame and guilt.

Emotions are neurobiologically anchored in the individual, but the content of the individual emotions and how they react to which communicative and cultural signals is largely determined by the cultural values acquired biographically (Assmann, 2018). What we are ashamed of, what we are disgusted by and what triggers our feelings of guilt is essentially determined by society. In this respect, our emotions are “inextricably linked to the idea of good and evil” (Damasio, 2000, p. 72). Accordingly, moral consciousness, which only humans possess, is not based exclusively on cognition, but also fundamentally on emotions. As the philosopher David Hume (1751 [1929]) pointed out is a morality that is based exclusively on abstract principles and seeks to abstain from any emotional foundation therefore often characterised by a coldness that turns into inhumanity.

Feelings are our constant companions. More or less all objects, social situations and atmospheres in our surroundings trigger more or less strong emotions and moods in us. We can’t help but react emotionally (LeDoux, 2001). As we cannot escape our physicality and its signals constantly influence our emotional mood, we are also more or less passively at the mercy of our emotions.

Feelings are characterised by a “*Widerfahrnis-Charakter*” (Prütting, 2015, p. 224). We must first experience and recognise them in order to be able to process and influence them. And if Sigmund Freud formulated “The ego is above all a physical one” (1923, p. 253), one could also say: “The ego is above all an emotional one”. The counter-experiential character of feelings refers to the same phenomenon that Hartmut Rosa (2020) describes as “unavailability”. Our feelings are only partially available to our conscious will.

In the philosophical discussion about the meaning of feelings, the position has been repeatedly taken since Aristotle that negative feelings such as envy, jealousy, arrogance, avarice and greed are harmful and ethically reprehensible. The Christian doctrine of virtue has even declared them to be mortal sins. In fact, negative feelings, especially when they occur frequently, are asso-

ciated with a reduction in self-esteem, social conflicts and health impairments (Ryff & Singer, 2001). Meanwhile, emotion research (Lewis et al., 2008) has recognised the importance of negative feelings and freed them from moral condemnation.

As feelings serve to regulate relationships and closeness to other people, it is not surprising that feelings are contagious. “Emotional inheritances” can also be passed on transgenerationally (Lohl & Moré, 2014) or lead to the founding of political parties and movements. The enormous affective excitement with which populist actors present their concerns also plays a central role in populism. The affective furore of bitterness, resentment, anger, hatred, envy, disgust, shame and embarrassment, feelings of persecution, moral outrage, desire for revenge and refusal to empathy is the actual motivational ferment that drives populist movements (Wirth, 2021).

In the following section, I will take a closer look at a few selected emotions that play a central role in populism.

4 Hate

Metaphorical expressions such as “killing with looks” and “spewing venom and bile” make it clear in their drastic nature that hatred is a radical, intense and destructive emotion. It primarily occurs in exceptional situations but is probably familiar to all people—also from their own experience.

However, even with this intense and destructive feeling, it is part of the anthropological emotional make-up of human beings and can also have a positive function. Hatred can be an appropriate affective reaction to certain events.

In the case of lovers, for example, love can immediately turn into hate after the experience of betrayal and treachery. In this case, hatred is an expression of the disappointment and helps, to distance oneself from the previously loved object.

The adjective “ugly” is derived from the German word “Hass” [hate] (Kliche, 2010 [2001], p. 28). In romanticism, the aesthetic concept of ugliness was revalued (ibid., p. 41ff.).

Ugliness can be understood as a criticism of beautiful appearances, which are experienced as all too smooth and superficial. Ugliness can appear more authentic and genuine than artificial beauty. Punk, for example, has developed an “anti-aesthetic” (Thiel & Wirth, 1986, p. 152) that uses ugliness as an expressive stylistic device. But right-wing extremist groups also use forms of expression that symbolise brutality, aggression, ruthlessness and violence and make a mockery of the prevailing notions of normality and even beauty (Decker & Brähler, 2021; Zick & Küpper, 2015).

If hatred persists for a longer period of time, it takes possession of thinking and feeling and ultimately of the person as a whole. The hatred falls back on the hater and develops a self-destructive dynamic (Wirth, 1989).

Hatred is driven by a thirst for revenge and aims to humiliate, abuse and ultimately destroy the opponent. “Yes, the deepest hatred can pursue the enemy even beyond death” (Fuchs, 2021, p. 327f.). In this way, hatred can become a “strategic object” that is pursued with persistence and rational planning over a long period of time. The combination of an “unconditional will to destroy and coolly disciplined planning” (*ibid.*) manifests an attitude that appears to be the “epitome of evil”. Putin’s war of annihilation against Ukraine is also characterised by hatred and the will to destroy. Putin signalled this shortly before he ordered the invasion of Ukraine at a press conference with Emmanuel Macron (Holm, 2022). Quoting a Russian song, he said: “Whether you like it or not, you will have to submit, my beauty” (*ibid.*, p. 2). This threat of rape was directed at Ukraine. Putin underpins his military threat of force with a sexual fantasy of rape, which he has taken “from obscene Russian folklore” (*ibid.*, p. 2), “which likes to depict sexual acts as happy rape” (*ibid.*, p. 2).

This provided an affective underpinning for his claim to power and emotionally fuelled it with a sadistic impulse. The incident also shows symptomatically how strongly a vulgar language fascinated by violence has poisoned the thinking of the Russian elite, including Putin (Baberowski, 2022).

With his remark, Putin virtually incited his soldiers to unrestrainedly live out their absolute power of disposal in the occupied territories. The sexual violence, the terror against the civilian population and the torture chambers that have since become known to the world, public show that the excesses of violence are used as a strategic tool of war to humiliate the enemy and destroy their self-esteem and identity (Wolochnjuk, 2022). The deeper background to Russia's plight is the unresolved history of violence, which reached its peak under Stalinism and is now being continued under Putinism (Medwedew, 2022).

5 Shame

Shame is a feeling that is directly linked to a person's self-awareness. Shame depends on the fact that "a person can really look at oneself in a self-reflective way" (Seidler, 2000, p. 625). Shame is a self-reflective feeling. Shame is usually only felt when another person is actually present.

As Erich Fromm (1963, p. 367) explains in his work on disobedience, one result of the expulsion from paradise is that Adam and Eve, after eating from the tree of knowledge, look at themselves from an "eccentric point of view" (Plessner, 1975 [1928], p. 96). In doing so, they discover their nakedness and cover their shame. Becoming aware of one's own nakedness, corporeality, instinctuality and mortality on the one hand and the difference to God on the other evokes a feeling of shame. One's own imperfection, even inferiority, can only be experienced in comparison with one's own ideals, with God, but also in the eyes of one's fellow human beings.

The shame that we passively suffer is joined by the shame that we actively inflict on others, also to ward off our own fear of shame.

The feeling of shame curbs narcissism, the desire to be omnipotent and god-like, as well as impulsiveness and selfish motives (Hilgers, 2012).

When we are ashamed, we become vulnerable because we become aware of our weak sides and, above all, because this happens in front of others. Conversely, our vulnerability is also the source of

our shame. We are ashamed of our weak and vulnerable sides (Tiedemann, 2010).

From a socio-psychological perspective, shame is an affect that is closely linked to the psychodynamic relationship between narcissism and power (Wirth, 2002). Shame is an expression of inadequate or humiliated self-esteem in the face of another person who has more power (Neckel, 1991).

Conversely, active shaming reinforces one's own claim to power. Ridiculing another person, shaming them, is a means of underpinning one's own superiority, one's own power.

Shamelessness can arise as a defence against low self-esteem and a great fear of being shamed. Instead of exposing oneself to the danger of being shamed, one permanently switches to attack mode. Being potentially always ready to actively shame any other person protects you from being passively exposed to your own feelings of shame. People who stand out due to their aggressiveness and urge to present themselves often also have a tendency towards shamelessness. Clinically, this also includes people who exhibit narcissistic or antisocial personality traits (Wirth, 2017).

6 Envy

In the biblical book of Genesis, two stories are told in which envy is significant: The serpent that tempts Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge is envious of God's omniscience (Fromm, 1963, p. 367). Envy therefore has a strong narcissistic component: Anyone who is envious has the feeling of coming up short and not receiving something that they are actually entitled to, and is therefore narcissistically offended. At the same time, the desire to be like God reveals human hubris, i.e. narcissistic presumption.

The second biblical story that directly follows the fall of man is that of Cain and Abel: Cain, the farmer, is envious or jealous of his younger brother Abel, the shepherd, because God prefers his offering. Out of envy and narcissistic resentment, Cain kills his brother Abel. Envy thus plays an ominous but fateful role at two central points in the history of mankind in the Old Testament.

As Melanie Klein (1962 [1957], p. 226) explains in her classic text “Envy and Gratitude”, the feeling of envy refers to “the fact that another person possesses and enjoys something that is longed for in the eyes of the envious person. The envious impulse is to take away, take possession of or spoil this possession”. The elements of envy and hostility are significant.

Ego and self-psychological concepts also see envy as an influential “developmental motivator” (Lohmer, 2000, p. 483). Envy can motivate achievement endeavours. Envy also incites people to denounce injustice. Rolf Haubl (2012) has pointed out that the special power of the feeling of envy is to sharpen the sense of justice. Envy thus becomes an important “pacemaker of a moral consciousness” (Demmerling & Landweer, 2007, p. 196).

Envy is not only an individual feeling, but can also be felt collectively (Haubl, 2012). A group, a party or a social movement can develop the common feeling that the members of the group are not getting what they are entitled to by law. Right-wing populist movements are characterised by the fact that they are envy-driven. Their motto could be something like: *The refugees are getting the material and immaterial support and recognition that we are entitled to and that we are being denied.*

Donald Trump even elevated envy to a political leitmotif when he claimed that America was being ripped off, treated unfairly, etc. Trump’s envy-driven rhetoric made his supporters feel understood with their own envy problems (Lee, 2017).

Envy often goes hand in hand with the cultivation of a victim role. Eternal victimhood is savoured with “masochistic pride” (Haubl, 2012, p. 117). There are often real injustices, so that the “indignant-right-wing envy” (ibid., p. 116) becomes “anchored in reality” (Mentzos, 1976, p. 127) and thus solidified.

7 Disgust

Although disgust is categorised as a basic emotion in emotion research (Miller, 1997), it has hardly been considered in psychoanalysis Disgust

has a strong physical foundation. We perceive disgust as an affect that is so closely linked to physical reactions that we would almost be inclined to interpret it as a purely physical, instinctive, natural stimulus-response mechanism that does not require any cultural moulding. But the Brothers Grimm (1984 [1854], vol. 3, p. 394) already speak of disgust as a mental aversion that is suitable for making “fine distinctions”. With their talk of “subtle distinctions”, the Brothers Grimm anticipate a formulation that Pierre Bourdieu (1982, p. 31ff.) will summarise in his theory of “subtle differences”.

The philosopher Aurel Kolnai (2007 [1929]) also emphasises in his multifaceted phenomenology of disgust that disgust, despite being “body-bound” (ibid., p. 9), is a feeling that plays a role in all areas of the human psyche and to which, as “moral disgust”, an “irreplaceable and legitimate ethical-cognitive function” (ibid., p. 58) must be ascribed. Here we encounter the phenomenon that the two elementary aversive and socially frowned upon feelings of envy and disgust play a key role in the development of moral and ethical awareness. However, it is widely recognised that the feelings of guilt and shame have a similar function.

In the vast chorus of emotions, disgust takes the place of aversion, aversion, turning away, pushing away and refusing contact (Ngai, 2005). In direct contact with our fellow human beings, the feeling of disgust takes on the function of protecting us from unpleasant, harmful and invasive closeness (Vogt, 2010). Disgust is about rejecting and expelling the “bad object” that is about to violate the intimate boundaries of the self. Clinically, massive feelings of disgust occur as a result of experiences of sexual violence. In my experience, when feelings of disgust are reported in the therapeutic situation, this is usually an indication of boundary violations (Wirth, 2010).

Like all feelings, disgust also occurs in both passive and active forms: We are disgusted by something or someone, but we can also disgust someone. One is a feeling, the other is an action whose aim is to evoke a strong feeling in the other person (Vogt, 2010). The philosopher

Martha Nussbaum (2014) sees the disgusting of social groups as an extremely destructive political strategy to devalue groups of people and portray them as disgusting. They are ascribed characteristics that arouse disgust and revulsion, such as sliminess, stickiness, bad odour or dirtiness. It is a classic anti-Semitic motif that addresses and dramatises deeply rooted resentments.

The demonstrative staging of feelings of disgust towards other people can be an attempt to intimidate and devalue them so that they feel ashamed. When shamed people then begin to adopt the negative attributions in their own self-image, they gradually transform themselves into disgusting monsters that they want to turn their fellow human beings into (Erikson, 1966 [1959], p. 29). Kafka's story *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 1995 [1915]) shows how such a process can take place and ultimately lead to self-disgust and the loss of human identity. The protagonist Gregor Samsa gradually transforms into an insect, which the rest of the family turns away from in disgust.

Right-wing populists also systematically work with the creation of feelings of disgust towards their opponents (Nussbaum, 2010). This also applies to the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) (Jensen, 2017). AfD deputy leader Jörg Meuthen, for example, used the term "green-alternative filthy milieu" to defame the Greens as disgusting scum. Trump labelled his critics within his own (Republican) party as "human scum". AfD leader Alexander Gauland also used a term that was intended to create disgust when he spoke of "bird shit" in connection with National Socialism and the Holocaust. It is the anal connotation of insidiousness that gives his formulation the odour of disgust. Gauland only appears to be distancing himself from Hitler and the Nazis. On the one hand, the term "Vogelschiss" (bird shit) as a moral condemnation of National Socialist crimes represents a grotesque trivialisation. Secondly, it is the superficially flippant, but in reality infamous character of this formulation that makes it so malicious (Wirth, 2019). By indirectly quoting a National Socialist hate slogan, Gauland recalls

it, rehabilitates it and makes it socially acceptable again (Wirth, 2022).

8 Resentment

The philosopher Max Scheler (1955 [1915]) takes up Friedrich Nietzsche and describes resentment as a poisoning of the social climate that goes hand in hand with "mental self-poisoning" (ibid., p. 48f.). The metaphor of poisoning is intended to express the fact that it is a process that proceeds insidiously, can go unnoticed for some time, but ultimately penetrates all the pores of emotional and social life. In resentment, the aggressive qualities are hidden behind demonstrative bourgeoisie, conformity to convention, tradition and reactionary attitudes that masquerade as conservatism, upholding tradition and love of one's homeland. Resentment therefore has an insidious, insidiously corrosive, malicious and insidious character Scheler (1955 [1915], p. 110).

People and groups who cultivate and publicise resentment regularly use lies, betrayal, unfair tricks and insidiousness. And while they practise all these behaviours themselves, they accuse others of precisely this immoral behaviour. This perpetrator-victim reversal is evident in Trump, the AfD and Putin. Such actors stage themselves as victims of the perfidy that characterises their own actions and try to put themselves in a position of moral superiority (Reckwitz, 2019b, p. 46).

For Léon Wurmser, at the centre of this resentment is a "relational trauma of shame and humiliation" (Wurmser, 2008, p. 963), which culminates in the feeling of having been "betrayed in one's innermost being" (ibid.). There is a feeling of powerlessness, helplessness and the conviction that the "principle of justice" has been violated.

Resentment is a complex structure that always encompasses several, very strong negative feelings and is cognitively held together and justified by an image of the enemy (Weißgerber, 2019, p. 229). Resentment is therefore not a "pure" feeling such as disgust, hatred or contempt, but a

cognitive construct, an attitude, an attitude that is, however, characterised by strong affects and associated with strong negative evaluations. The hostile devaluation of the other is the actual goal of resentment (*ibid.*, p. 227).

Resentments know in advance, so to speak, what the associated feelings mean, what they are fuelled by and how the social event to which they refer is to be evaluated—or more precisely—devalued. Feelings are instrumentalised in resentment in order to substantiate and justify the already preconceived hostile attitudes and negative evaluations. A person whose feelings and thoughts are characterised by resentment is no longer open to new experiences in social contact, and he also loses contact with his own inner emotional world. He is “neither sincere, nor naïve, nor honest with himself [...] His soul is cross-eyed”, as Friedrich Nietzsche (1968 [1887], p. 286) aptly put it.

The biographical and cultural background on which resentment develops is generally characterised by experiences of injustice, disadvantage, humiliation and narcissistic offence. As Andreas Reckwitz (2019a, b) points out, it is not only economically disadvantaged groups that become characterised by right-wing populism, but also those who have suffered a loss of social and cultural status. Formerly privileged groups from the industrial workforce and trades suffer economic, social and cultural declassification in the context of globalisation and the digital revolution, which they experience as “culture shock” and “loss of prestige” (Koppetsch, 2019, p. 143). Such narcissistic offences are causally involved in the development of resentment. What one has painfully experienced in terms of humiliation and injustice is now felt by others.

9 The Anti-corona Movement in Germany

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, people in Germany have joined together to form a social movement that describes itself as “lateral

thinkers” because they see their thinking and value orientations as being lateral and in opposition to the scientific beliefs and political value orientations of the established parties, media and social institutions. The movement of the lateral thinkers was taken up, supported and partly appropriated by right-wing populism, but also has a strong following from left-wing and esoteric-oriented milieus. What both social movements have in common is a pronounced mistrust of established institutions and media (“lying press”), which are considered corrupt and controlled by dark forces. The movement of the lateral thinkers is characterised by conspiracy theories, anti-vaccination and anti-institutional sentiment.

A study published in December 2020 by sociologist Oliver Nachtwey and his team entitled *Politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste* (Nachtwey et al., 2020) shows that the anti-corona movement in Germany, which is called *Querdenken-Movement* is not a genuinely authoritarian movement, as is the case with right-wing populist movement but that its followers are largely recruited from the former left-wing and alternative milieu. As a result, many from this milieu had to experience that during the coronavirus crisis, people they trusted suddenly became coronavirus deniers, vaccination sceptics or even conspiracy theorists (Amlinger & Nachtwey, 2021, p. 193).

Many of these people come from progressive milieus in the tradition of the emancipation and protest movements of the 1960s–1980s, for whom a “striving for autonomy and self-realisation over social paternalism, restriction and alienation is decisive” (*ibid.*).

The *Querdenken-Movement* is characterised by “a strong alienation from the institutions of the political system” (Nachtwey et al., 2020, p. 52), which it greatly distrusts. Conversely, the actors see themselves “misjudged and ostracised in their deviation from the mainstream; at the same time, they value themselves and their expertise in comparison to the mainstream” (*ibid.*, p. 65). Topics such as spirituality, anthroposophy,

naturopathy and esotericism are very popular with them. Almost 90% agree with the statement: “Our self-healing powers are strong enough to fight the virus” (*ibid.*, p. 33f.). This emphasises their autonomy and self-empowerment—even in the face of the virus. Self-empowerment turns into overconfidence.

Overall, this movement formulates a form of “alternative” and “green” social criticism that emerged in the 1970s. In the lateral thinking movement, however, this “alternative” orientation has taken on an esoteric, anti-scientific and anti-rationality character and is characterised by an exaggerated claim to autonomy. Carolin Amlinger and Oliver Nachtwey (2022) therefore also speak of “libertarian authoritarianism”.

I would like to formulate the following socio-psychological thesis: The esoteric, spiritual, anthroposophical and left-alternative corona denial represents the split-off irrational part of the left-green-alternative movement. When the “fundies” still formed a faction within the Greens, this irrational, partly esoteric, partly conspiracy-mythical thinking was still bound up in the Green Party. It was more or less well integrated there, but caused enormous tensions and curious disputes. Since the “realos” have prevailed, the esoteric, persecution-mythical and “fundamentalist” alternatives no longer have a political home. In the anti-corona protests, these groups have found an opportunity to regroup and generate public resonance on the political stage.

I will try to place these considerations in a more general psycho-historical context. In the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the authoritarian emotional armouring of the older generation came into conflict with the expressive, hedonistic and experimental lifestyle of the younger generation in all Western industrial societies (Inglehart, 1977). To the extent that the constant consumption of goods and services moved to the centre of economic and social life, the old patriarchal and authoritarian character formation, which relied on the virtues of order, thrift and authoritarian orientation, lost its social and socio-psychological functionality. In the consumer and service society, other character traits

such as flexibility, consumerism, hedonism and a permanent willingness to learn and innovate were increasingly in demand. The authoritarian character, as first described by Erich Fromm (1936) and subsequently developed further by Theodor W. Adorno et al. (1950), was increasingly replaced by a “social character”, which Fromm (1947) characterised with the term “marketing orientation”.

This social change formed the socio-psychological background for the global youth and emancipation movements of the 1960s–1980s. The post-materialist value orientations of the protest movements gradually seeped into the “culture of late modernity and its new middle class” (Reckwitz, 2019a, p. 290) and developed a culture that Ulrich Beck (1986) characterised with the term “individualisation” and Andreas Reckwitz (2019a) with the term “singularity”. The subject shaped by this culture “assumes itself to be capable and entitled to self-realisation; it [...] claims a moral right, so to speak, to develop in a way that corresponds to its particularity. This sense of entitlement is associated with a correspondingly high sense of self-worth” (*ibid.*, p. 290). For the late modern subject, the free development of the self has top priority. It is, so to speak, a natural right.

The “self-realisation revolution” (Reckwitz, 2019b, p. 151) and the sexual revolution triggered by the youth, student and emancipation movements in the 1960s–1980s also led to a profound cultural and socio-psychological transformation in the structures of social character.

The lateral thinking movement is also a product of these “self-awareness and self-actualisation movements”. However, it has exaggerated the once emancipatory orientations into a caricature. Socially responsible freedom has been replaced by the egocentric freedom of the individual. Alternative ideas become alternative facts, and on a theoretical level, the shift from constructivism to radical constructivism leads to a denial of the principle of reality. Failure to achieve the self-imposed exaggerated goals is perceived as humiliation and narcissistic offence, which is fended off in resentment (Amlinger & Nachtwey, 2021, p. 193).

10 The Opportunity of Vulnerability

Both the coronavirus pandemic and the climate crisis have raised public awareness of the vulnerability of human life on this planet. It is noticeable that the term vulnerability has been used more frequently in recent years, both in politics and in the sciences, than was previously the case (Wirth, 2022, p. 241). The concept of resilience is often seen as a cure for vulnerability. This short-circuit misses the opportunity to utilise the emerging insight into the vulnerability of all life—and human life in particular—for a new image of humanity and a new view of the world (Wirth, 2023). This will be attempted by analysing the complex levels of interpretation of the concept of vulnerability in the following. The question will be what the term could mean from a psychoanalytical perspective and what it can contribute to a reorientation of the human image.

11 “Vulnerability” and “Trauma”

The term “vulnerability” comes from the Latin: *Vulnus* means “wound”, *vulnerare* means “to wound”. “Vulnerability” therefore means “vulnerability” or “vulnerability”. The concept of vulnerability has not (yet) found its way into psychoanalysis, although the issue of psychological injuries is thematised there using a different term, namely trauma. “Trauma” comes from the Greek and also means “wound”, so it describes the same situation as “vulnerability”.

But what are the differences between vulnerability and trauma?

A “trauma” is a shock-like, extraordinary event that overwhelms the psychological processing capacities (Hirsch, 2011). Traumas tend to be rare events, whereas vulnerability refers to a prolonged state of increased irritability, endangerment, permeability, susceptibility, sensitivity and sensibility, which increases the risk of actually experiencing a trauma. The term trauma refers to an injury that has already taken place. Vulnerability, on the other hand, refers to the possibility of being injured or traumatised.

Trauma refers to a negatively assessed situation, as traumas regularly lead to mental illnesses and disorders. Vulnerability, on the other hand, refers to circumstances that are open to judgement. They contain both risks and opportunities.

12 Vulnerability as a Characteristic of Living Things

All life, whether plant, animal or human, is vulnerable. Every human and animal cell is enclosed by a cell membrane that is selectively permeable in both directions. Permeability, fragility and thus vulnerability are basic characteristics of life. Vulnerability is one of the basic “facts of life” (Money-Kyrle, 1971, p. 103).

My thesis is that human vulnerability is particularly pronounced. It relates to the body, the psyche, social relationships and cultural works and forms of social organisation. The vulnerability of the body manifests itself in particular in prematurity and the naked skin of the human being.

13 The Prematurity of the Human Being

As early as 1926, in “Inhibition, Symptom and Anxiety” (Freud, 1926 [1925]), Freud explicitly named the extreme helplessness of the human being as a consequence of prematurity: “The biological factor is the protracted helplessness and dependence of the small human child. The intrauterine existence of the human being appears relatively shortened compared to most animals; it is sent into the world more unfinished than these. This intensifies the influence of the real outside world” (ibid., p. 186).

This increased vulnerability, need for protection and help has far-reaching consequences for the psychosocial development of humans. The high learning capacity of the psyche, the plasticity of the brain and the ability to adapt to historically changing circumstances are the prerequisites for the development of typically human cultural achievements.

14 The Vulnerability of Bare Skin

The vulnerability of the human body is particularly evident in the nakedness of the skin. While most animals are protected from harmful environmental influences by fur, scales, horn armour or a plumage, the enormously sensitive human skin is almost defencelessly exposed to external influences. These enormous disadvantages in the direct confrontation with nature must be offset by far greater evolutionary advantages (Jablonski, 2006).

The evolutionary advantage of a hairless face is obvious. It raises the communicative exchange with conspecifics to a much higher level.

But what is the advantage of the almost completely hairless human body? From a psychological point of view, the naked, soft, sensitive, delicate and stimulus-sensitive human skin is an organ that exponentially increases the communicative, emotional and sensual exchange with our fellow human beings. The sensitivity of the skin has the evolutionary function of enormously intensifying tender and pleasurable body and skin contact. In neurobiological terms, intensified skin contact stimulates the development of the neuronal structure and the brain (Cozolino, 2007).

The sensitivity of bare skin leads to the sexual sensations of pleasure being extended and potentiated from the genitals to the largest human organ, the skin. Sexuality is liquefied, as it were, penetrating all the pores of psychological and social life, flowing around and influencing all expressions of life. Sexuality is omnipresent in human life. The enormous surplus of energy, the increase in pleasure and the quality of experience that goes hand in hand with specifically human sexuality opens up an almost unlimited space for experience, but also harbours the risk of excessive demands, failure and thus vulnerability (Fisher, 1993).

15 Psychological Vulnerability

The developmental psychological foundations for the formation of the human self and the ability to self-reflect have been worked out through

attachment and infant research (Fonagy et al., 2004). The act of self-distancing is not a purely cognitive process. Rather, cognitive and emotional processes are interwoven in its realisation. In the feeling of shame, the self looks at itself through the eyes of others. It feels and imagines the gaze of others and feels humiliated and humiliated. In the feeling of guilt, the self's own knowledge looks at the self and reproaches it. In pride, the narcissistic megalomaniac looks at the self and pays it admiration (Wirth, 2023).

However, with self-awareness, self-reflection and self-regulation comes not only a positive self-reference, but also a self-critical, negative self-reference (Fuchs, 2020). Self-doubt, self-punishment, self-deception, self-exaggeration, self-hatred, self-harm and suicide become a way of relating to one's own self. Being self-aware therefore also opens up a whole spectrum of vulnerabilities, including the knowledge of one's own mortality. In addition, self-reference enables self-control and self-determination and thus the freedom of will and one's own decision, but this can also be one of evil, destruction and self-destruction.

16 Conclusion and Outlook

I have tried to show that feelings serve, among other things, to establish or limit relationships and closeness with other people. Particular attention was paid to the functioning of negative feelings, as these are of great importance in collective social processes, especially in populist movements. The psychosocial function of emotions was elaborated, in particular their influence on political attitudes, their instrumental use to influence political moods, their ability to recognise cultural meanings, and their ability to evaluate social processes.

The spread of populist movements, the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and the war in Ukraine have heightened awareness of human vulnerability. The French philosopher Marc Crépon (2014) speaks of vulnerability as an "inevitable dimension of all human life" that "unites all people across cultural or religious dif-

ferences” and creates “a sense of belonging to the world”.

The distinction I propose between the terms trauma and vulnerability allows for a creative development perspective. While the concept of trauma denotes an exclusively deficient or even pathological state of affairs, the concept of vulnerability opens up the opportunity for sensitivity. This also includes a political sensitivity to social issues such as injustice, oppression, devaluation, xenophobia and a lack of recognition. Taking the perspective of vulnerability into account can establish a new image of humanity that also offers orientation for the sciences of man.

Future psychological research should not only focus on the analysis of defence mechanisms and regressive political movements and ideologies such as populism and conspiracy theories, but also examine the conditions under which people develop an awareness of their own vulnerability and that of the entire planet, as well as a willingness to engage in social action.

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Changing Cultures of Collective Narcissism

20

Zsuzsanna Agora

1 Introduction

Although the title sounds rather imposing, seemingly aiming for “grandiose” goals, I would like to avoid from the beginning the impression that I’m attempting some kind of ideological utopia and offering an “absolute” solution to serious and current social problems. That alone would be to go the way of narcissism. Instead, starting from the ground of reality, I will first show why we think collective narcissism is such a negative phenomenon, where the discourse started and where it is today. Understanding this is important because it helps us to position oneself in this field of discourse. Indeed, collective narcissism has been part of the discourse of fascism since the birth of the term.

In this paper, I attempt to clear the term from the “ideological burden” of the past and take a step towards an integrative understanding of the phenomenon. I will therefore approach the phenomenon from several scientific perspectives (historical, philosophical, psychological). Although it is a multifaceted phenomenon, I will only deal with narcissism in historical large groups such as nations, ethnic, or religious communities. The

members of historical large groups share not only a common history, but a special form of social identity since the symbols, stories, customs defining the identity of these groups are acquired from early childhood on. Hence Vamik and Fowler (2009) use the metaphor of a “second skin” of a person for large group identity.

I argue that collective narcissism manifests not only as a belief (Cf. Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) but also in emotion regulation processes. Of course, the emergence of collective narcissism can be examined from different perspectives, from a mass psychological point of view (see Adorno, 1955) and in relation to a particular group (see Fromm, 1964) or organization (Brown, 1997; Duchon & Drake, 2009). In this paper, I present a case of collective narcissism that emerges in the wake of a collective narcissistic trauma, a humiliating experience of a large group committed by “others” (Volkan, 2003). The collective narcissistic trauma of the German large group was a humiliating peace treaty (1919), the memory representation of which I investigate in terms of emotion regulation through a psychological analysis of narratives in history schoolbooks.

Finally, in the closing section I reflect on how the findings presented here can provide new insights to help us find a way out of the “narcissistic world” of communities and cultures shaped by national grievances. I hope that these reflections start a new discourse on what narcissism

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really is, what its cultural sources can be, and how we can help our nations and communities achieve a more mature and stable identity.

2 Interpretations in Historical Change

Over the last hundred years a variety of concepts of narcissism have been developed. The discourse on narcissism was initiated by Sigmund Freud (1914). Apart from primary narcissism, the term “narcissism” is usually used to describe some problem in a person’s or group’s relationship with themselves and others. In everyday language, “narcissism” often means inflated self-esteem, selfishness, vanity, or conceit. When applied to a social group, it is sometimes used to denote elitism, collective arrogance, or indifference to the plight of others. However, the term has found its way into the world of science.

Today, the phenomenon of collective narcissism is mainly discussed in the social psychology literature. Golec de Zavala et al. (2009) define collective narcissism as “*an emotional investment in an unrealistic belief about the in-group’s greatness,*” in the “*belief that the in-group’s exceptionality is not sufficiently appreciated by others*” (Golec de Zavala, 2019). This concept approaches the phenomenon of narcissism linked to group membership from the perspective of the social identity paradigm, for the measurement of which the Collective Narcissism Scale (CNS) was developed. The items of the scale were selected from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) (Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the items of Millon’s Multiaxial Clinical Inventory (MCMI-III) personality psychology test and transcribed to the group level (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

Current empirical research has shown that individuals who share a belief in collective narcissism often hold nationalistic principles (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Golec de Zavala et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2010), tend to blind patriotism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Schatz et al., 1999), and glorify their own group (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala, 2011). The belief of collective

narcissism is often associated with right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981; Hodson & Dhont, 2015) and social dominance (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016; Pratto et al., 1994). In the context of intergroup threat, collective narcissism is a stable predictor of intergroup conflict (Golec de Zavala, 2011).

Collective narcissists tend to accept conspiracy theories (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2022; Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2019), and within a European or Western context, often hold anti-Semitic views, have difficulty forgiving (perceived or real) injustices committed against their group, do not shy away from retaliation and the use of military aggression (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2019). Individuals high in collective narcissism demand closure regarding the past to attenuate collective guilt (Kazarovychska & Imhoff, 2022) and they tend to gravitate towards ideologies and systems that provide them with power and dominance (Cichocka et al., 2024).

From this set of empirical studies, a personality emerges that bears a striking resemblance to the concept of authoritarian character or authoritarian personality, which was initiated by Wilhelm Reich (1933) as part of a psychological discourse on fascism in the 1930s and later developed in the work of the philosophers of the Frankfurt School (Erich Fromm; Adorno and his colleagues). In the following chapter, I will therefore also discuss in detail the historical-philosophical roots of the concept to highlight the little reflected fact that we as researchers are also part of a particular (sometimes collective narcissistic) culture. We can only reflect this if we consider the perspective of other periods and other cultures in the process of theorizing. A multi-perspectival analysis of the phenomenon of narcissism helps us to identify the structural features of collective narcissism, in addition to the infinite variety of surface traits.

The reasons for the negative image of narcissism, according to Kohut (1972), are to be found in the Western Christian culture’s view of man, which condemned the egoistic aspirations of the individual and made altruism the norm to be followed. The negative value judgments of individ-

ual narcissism have also had a significant impact on the academic discourse of collective narcissism; so much so that it has been seen as social “evil” and the counter term of democracy (Goehr, 2015) since its very birth. Although it is essentially a psychological concept, the notion of “collective narcissism” or “group narcissism” was not born in psychology but in philosophy in the 1950s, in the critical writings of the Frankfurt School.

Erich Fromm, Theodor W. Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse agreed that the mass emergence of narcissism in the twentieth century was linked to the change in the socio-economic environment and the specific functioning of the late capitalist production system. However, their conceptions differed in terms of whether narcissism was seen as a phenomenon of mass society (in which case the adjective “collective” would be appropriate) or as a group-based phenomenon (in which case the term group narcissism or group-based narcissism would be more appropriate). Marcuse (1956) dealt with progressive and regressive forms of individual narcissism in late capitalist societies, Fromm exclusively with group narcissism (1964), and Adorno (1955) with both aspects of narcissism.

3 Sources and Impact of Collective Narcissism

The Frankfurt philosophers and social psychologists took it as a premise that the capitalist mode of production and the modern social system based on it created a new situation in the individual’s relation to himself and to the socio-economic system. According to Adorno (1955), it is in the vital interest of the individual to subordinate himself to the social conditions of self-preservation, because if he does not, he risks his social status, his relations, and the maintenance of his material existence. But the more the individual submits to the total (i.e., pervasive) demands of the capitalist system of production, the more he renounces his own “rational” needs. The ego is therefore left with two alternatives: One is to actively change real circumstances

(which it cannot do), the other is to banish its instinctual needs into the unconscious. The “price” of repression is the weakening of the ego. This dynamic is what makes the subjects of the late capitalist system so vulnerable to narcissistic hurt. The narcissism of the individual is evoked by the system, but it is also destroyed by it—in Weyand’s (2001, 136) terms, this is the “*dialectic of narcissism*.”

The dynamics of collective narcissism are fueled by negative emotions such as existential fear, disappointment, guilt, shame, and above all helplessness, since the narcissistic disappointments of everyday life and the social insecurity of self-preservation are subjectively experienced as existential fear (Adorno, 1951). Although his fear is not real, as a realistic fear is one that has a known source, it can evolve into one at any time. In Adorno’s theory, the only way for the modern individual to compensate for their weak sense of self is through connection to the mass. Lacking positive reinforcement from their environment, which often provides minimal or negative feedback, individuals seek solace in the (imagined) perfection of an idealized leader or group. They amplify their self-worth through group membership, finding a sense of identity and validation within the collective. (Schraven, 2014).

According to Adorno (1959), collective narcissism provides an opportunity for the individual to compensate for his own damaged individual narcissism. Since modern man experiences guilt and helplessness due to the course of his destiny (*I am not where I should be and I am not who I should be*), collective narcissism helps him to compensate for these negative emotions. By integrating them into a larger bond that has what you do not have, you can benefit from the added value. The subject of the late capitalist system of production would be infinitely vulnerable to narcissistic injuries if he did not have the opportunity to find a substitute for his own perfection by identifying with the greatness of power and the group. The magnification of the self’s worth helps to endure the painful feeling of inadequacy.

The main advantage of group narcissism, according to Fromm (1973), is that it raises the self-esteem of members and strengthens group

cohesion. From the individual's point of view, group narcissism can therefore be attractive because the individual can experience an increase in self-worth simply by being a member of the group. Individuals who over-idealize their group may claim that their group is the best, most valuable or most special of all, while other groups may emphasize negative qualities. Since there is a consensus in the group that it is the group membership that makes the individual valuable, they also find the exaggerated value of their own person to be plausible and correct. Group members cling to this subjective belief above all else because their sense of their own worth and identity is based on it.

Collective narcissism has the additional advantage that, because it appeals to positive social values (e.g., patriotism, faith, loyalty, commitment) it can be expressed freely and without limit. The environment not only tolerates, but also recognizes and admires the individual's above-average social commitment (see filial piety, loyalty, patriotism, community involvement, all socially recognized behaviors) (Fromm, 1964). The beneficial effect of collective narcissism is that its schematic character helps everyday people to navigate a complex world. It provides a framework for interpreting social reality and offers strategies and patterns of action to help maintain one's self-worth in a society that undermines it every day (Adorno, 1955).

However, Fromm (1964) also pointed out that this dynamic creates communities with excessive self-esteem and is particularly attractive to social strata where people have suffered some form of negative social discrimination. For them, narcissistic pride provides satisfaction and can serve as a compensation for grievances in societies where there is a high level of dissatisfaction. That means group narcissism may function for a while as a "collective opiate" (term of the author) to soothe the painful feelings accumulating in the system (e.g., inadequacy, helplessness, shame, humiliation) and may also give shape to the source of the troubles (malevolent external/internal groups) through projection, but emotional compensation is not a realistic solution to the problems and does not lead to lasting psychological well-being.

Since collective narcissism as a schema for interpreting the world (Adorno, 1955) offers a quick and easy way of navigating a complex world, it can have a life- and identity-protecting effect at critical times. Although group narcissism may, according to Fromm (1973), help group members to turn their fantasy of themselves into reality, in the long run (when it takes the form of a cultural schema) it is counterproductive, since it makes group members believe that problems will disappear without real efforts to solve them. Such promises were made by nationalist propaganda and are still made by populist parties on the left and right. It is a psychological gain for the individual if a political party, a religion or a community perceives and talks about his or her suffering.

As the historical introduction to the origins of the concept has shown, collective narcissism became to a socially dangerous force in modern societies which could turn into "fascism" at any time. However, the theoretical insights of the Frankfurt School did little to address the phenomenon in its depth. Although system-oriented approaches to narcissism had already emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (more on this in the following chapters), it had no echo in academic discourse. The study of narcissism in identity processes opened up a new dimension in the understanding of the phenomenon.

4 **Narcissism in Large Group Identity Processes**

Heinz Lichtenstein (1964) defined narcissism as a balancing engine of identity, which plays a crucial role in maintaining the positive value of identity (Resch & Möhler, 2015). In line with this, Stolorow (1975) interpreted narcissism as a regulatory system responsible for maintaining self-esteem. Metaphorically, he likened it to a thermostat, whose function is to regulate temperature (i.e., self-esteem) by maintaining a balance between the external and the internal world. According to this concept, any mental activity that serves to maintain the structural cohesion, temporal stability, and positive emotional tone of

self-representation is narcissistic (Stolorow, 1975). Self-evaluation is thus an integral part of the identity structure and is formed in interactions with the social environment.

Psychological conceptions describe the role of narcissism in identity processes primarily as a defensive and maladaptive (Brown, 1997; Kohut, 1972; Wurmser, 1993) strategy for maintaining a positive identity. Similarly, the current social psychological concept of collective narcissism posits a defensive and insecure social identity behind the phenomenon of collective narcissism (Cichocka, 2016). However, it is also evident that narcissism, as a mechanism for protecting the value of identity, plays a crucial role in maintaining the sense of belonging to a group and the positive meaningfulness of group identity, and some theories even attribute more importance to it.

According to Becker (1973), narcissism defends us against the terror of death. Terror Management Theory proposes that self-esteem and cultural worldviews work together to protect the individual from the threat of existential terror. The need for self-esteem as an existential anxiety buffer is universal but the specific way self-esteem is acquired and maintained is culturally determined (Greenberg et al., 1997; Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Solomon et al., 1991). In a world perceived as potentially threatening, community, group, and culture serve as existential identity and value supports (see Saroglou, 2002; Scott, 2007; Webber et al., 2018). Group membership also reinforces self-worth in ways that reflect the individual's own cultural worldview, providing ongoing confirmation of one's belief system and personal acceptance.

It also follows that people who question other people's basic beliefs, despise, devalue, or ridicule their culture (for example, ridiculing the Almighty in caricatures) evoke existential fears in the injured victims (Pyszczynski et al., 2004), because such acts are symbolic annihilations. In large groups, destructive narcissism is likely to emerge when the group's previous position of power, status, and value is drastically eroded. Narcissistic trauma can lead to feelings of anger

and empowerment for members to retaliate and to reassert their own group's status in the large group hierarchy (Volkan, 2004). One set of historical examples of this are the peace treaties that ended the First World War, which not only obliged the losers to pay reparations, as was the case in all previous wars, but also deeply humiliated them as defeated nations (see Krumeich, 2001).

During quieter, less stressful periods, people typically do not attach much importance to identity issues until they are under threat (Breakwell, 1986; Volkan, 2003). Crises accompanying the process of identity formation can occur in the lives of both individuals (Marcia, 1966) and groups (László, 2014; László & Vincze, 2004) and have lasting consequences. Perceived threat or violation of group image is a crucial factor in intergroup conflicts that develop on the ground of collective narcissism and may involve overt or covert aggression (Golec de Zavala et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2010).

In life situations where members of one group force another group to give up their culture and belief system (e.g., by occupation, dehumanization, or expulsion), the victim group experiences *narcissistic trauma* (Volkan, 2003). This type of trauma is often invisible to the outside eye, yet it has a significant impact on the structural stability of identity (Triest, 2003). Like individuals, groups are prone to respond to perceived humiliation with rituals of collective self-praise and even destructive aggression (Mentzos, 1994). One of the most telling signs of narcissism in large groups is the emergence of a belief that one's own group has a significant superiority over external groups. In the hierarchical order of large groups, the own group will be the first: e.g., "Deutschland über alles" or "les français d'abord."

In the state of malignant collective narcissism, the emergence of defense mechanisms is indicated by the fact that the own group does not bear any responsibility for the loss, occupying the moral position of the victim. The perceived harming intentions of external groups are often used as an explanation for why aggressive action must be taken against them.

However, when the discourse is already about the need to take active action against the intrigues of external or internal enemies, otherwise the group is threatened with total annihilation, narcissism takes over, because this already indicates a state of collective paranoia. These processes can also be traced in the processes of emotion regulation.

The mechanisms of narcissistic regulation can manifest themselves at several levels: There are group-level narcissistic strategies that spread top-down through communication channels in group or organizational cultures (Bar-On, 2007; Brown, 1997; Duchon & Drake, 2009), and group members themselves may also use narcissistic self-protection strategies to maintain the positive value of their personal and social identity. The main advantages of narcissistic defense mechanisms are that they can compensate for emotional instability, *prevent the experience of negative emotions such as helplessness, shame, and fear* (Wirth, 2015) associated with the loss of an idealized object, *strengthen group cohesion, and help maintain a sense of belonging to the group* (Volkan, 2004). However, this does not imply that psychological coherence (see Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010) between identity parts accompanied by positive and negative emotions is restored.

Large groups react to narcissistic trauma by reorganizing their identity. A symbolic way of doing this may be for a large group to strip away the markers of failed identity, e.g., by removing the invaders' coat of arms or flag from official buildings. But the outbreak of war marks the end of symbolic thinking (see Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1996). The specificity of national and ethnic wars is their "total" character, which expects absolute achievement in terms of both the soldier's identification and his combat performance, as well as the defeat of the enemy (Brunner et al., 1982, 592). The psycho-social function of this type of war, in addition to seeking to restore the status of the larger group, is to satisfy the need of group members for recognition, identity, and belonging to the group. The defeat of the enemy always evokes intense feelings of pleasure and satisfies

not only pathological but also healthy narcissistic needs, i.e., security and self-confidence (Bene, 2010; Mentzos, 1994).

For the loser, however, mourning the loss is often an overwhelming task. Therefore, from a psychological point of view, every war is a continuation of a previous war (Vinnai, 2011). In large groups, the way in which returning soldiers are received after a war is also crucial. In losing countries, such as Germany, the policies of the Weimar Democracy after the First World War reflected negatively on these veterans. Krumeich (2018) details the shame that returning soldiers had to deal with. To process trauma, a supportive and compassionate social environment is needed to help the returning soldier mourn the painful loss of comrades, relatives, and ideals. Where the social environment is unable or unwilling to do so, the suffering of war trauma can turn to anger (Shay, 1994). If the coldness and denial of the social environment prevents the expression of grief, the grieving process does not begin; shame and pain become taboo emotions, replaced by narcissistic pride, heroic honor, hatred of the enemy, and scapegoating. *The emergence of "militarized grief" (Shatan, 1983) is always an indication that victims have not received victim recognition and emotional support in the community.*

After long and stubborn intergroup conflicts, the success of large group identity reconstruction in the post-conflict period depends on the ability of the group to self-reflect and initiate dialogues between its own (positive and negative) identity parts and between ingroup and outgroup (Bar-On, 2007). However, the consequence of this type of intergroup conflict is precisely that it does not initiate dialogical but monolithic identity construction processes. Monolithic identity construction means that the group formulates its own identity in opposition to another group that is declared the enemy and projects all its evils onto this group. The emergence of malign narcissism is characterized by absolute aspirations (Alper, 2003; Wurmser, 1993), which are also reflected in communication processes (Agora, 2022).

5 The Impact of Narcissistic Trauma on Emotion Regulation

Just as in the case of individual emotions, group-based emotions can be influenced by regulatory processes (Goldenberg et al., 2016). Emotion regulation involves attempts to change an existing emotion into a desired emotion. Recent empirical studies revealed that collective narcissism is related to negative emotionality and a lack of prosocial emotions (Golec de Zavala et al., 2019). Collective narcissists have deficits in the ability to downregulate and soothe negative emotions (Golec de Zavala, 2024; Molenda et al., 2022), their perception of intergroup situations are biased and may react to threats to the ingroup's image hostile, with *anger, contempt, and aggression* (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016, 2019).

However, historical research on emotions has also drawn our attention to the fact that the construction of emotions, their displaying, or tabooing, is determined by the culture (see Frevert, 2013; Plamper, 2015). When examining the emotion regulation processes that characterize collective narcissism, we must start from the premise that we are dealing with a specific set of emotions that cannot be separated from the history and culture of the larger group in which they are generated. According to László (2014), in a historical large group, normative emotions specific to the group are formed along the historical trajectory, a narratively organized form of collective memory, which entails emotional and cognitive consequences for experiencing and elaborating current intergroup conflicts.

The concept of group-based emotions is grounded in the idea that individuals may experience certain emotions as members of a social group. These emotions can contribute to the self-definition of both groups and their members, becoming particularly salient in situations where group membership is significant (Doosje et al., 1998; Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993). People are motivated to experience group-based emotions if they believe these emotions increase or decrease their sense of belonging to their group (Porat et al., 2020).

Among group-based emotions, some take on a normative character. The expectation that individuals should feel a bond to their nation through *love* for their country emerged in the nineteenth century (Dömök, 2019; Stukenbrock, 2005). For Herder (1744–1803), love for one's national culture was a natural inclination that allowed a people to express its distinctive character (Koselleck, 1992, 317). From the nineteenth century onward, love for the nation became a normative emotion, the expression of which served as a sign of one's identification with one's nation. The experience of normative emotions not only strengthens an individual's sense of belonging, but also indirectly contributes to the cohesion of larger groups.

When members of a large group experience narcissistic trauma, this also affects the processes of emotion regulation. Indeed, humiliation has a highly destructive effect on identity, as it deprives the victim of his or her positive value (Frevert, 2017; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999) and therefore rightly sees him- or herself as a victim. According to Trumbull (2008), humiliation should be distinguished from shame, because in humiliation the loss of self-worth is interpreted as a malicious intent to harm others, and the consequence may be a sense of *revenge* or *aggression*. The consequence of chronic humiliation is extremely damaging to one's self-esteem system. Members of the humiliated group experience intense *anger*, which is associated with low levels of *guilt* and intense feelings of *helplessness* (Leidner et al., 2012). Anger plays a central role in helping individuals to maintain and strengthen their self-esteem (Lazarus, 1991). An unjustly perceived low group status can provoke intense anger, strengthen identification with one's group, and lead to competitive intergroup behavior, depending on the stability of group identity (Ellemers et al., 1993).

As a consequence, traumatized groups are not able to function as accepting and safe social environments, in other words for *containing*. At the same time, understanding and reflecting the feelings of others is essential not only in early mother-child relationships and in the development of a healthy personality but is also neces-

sary for the personality to function cohesively throughout life. The birth of a sovereign self, capable of symbolization and mentalization, depends not only on the container capacity of the mother or parent, but also on the container capacity of the social environment. A containing environment acts like a mother in an early relationship. It helps to temporarily contain, digest, and then integrate negative experiences into the self that cannot be processed alone. A traumatized society, however, is not able to function as a “good enough” environment, so the individual loses a sense of security and predictability (Bakó & Zana, 2020). In such social environments narcissistic and borderline defense mechanisms help individuals maintain their self-coherence.

6 Empirical Research on Group-Based Emotions

People’s bond to their homeland can be expressed in the form of patriotism and nationalism (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). While both represent forms of positive attachment, significant differences exist in the emotions experienced towards ingroups and outgroups. In patriotism, authentic attachment emotions such as *joy, love, and hope* occur (Viki & Calitri, 2008). In contrast, individuals high in collective narcissism tend to experience intensified feelings of *pride* in their nation and are more likely to react with *anger* and hostility to perceived insults or threats and they tend to *glorify* their nation (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala, 2011). Narcissism is inherently associated with a hierarchical and comparative outlook (Cichocka et al., 2024).

Recent research has revealed that the robust link between collective narcissism and intergroup hostility is underpinned by deficiencies in emotional regulation (Golec de Zavala, Dyduch-Hazar, & Lantos, 2019). However, there has been lack of studies specifically examining group-based status emotions (Steckler & Tracy, 2014) in relation to collective narcissism. Furthermore, the role of emotions in nationalism continues to be underappreciated in nationalism studies (Cox,

2021). The aim of the empirical research presented here was to investigate the emotions associated with national group status in a historical large group (Germany).

6.1 Methodology

In the empirical study presented here, I investigated the role of status emotions in historical narratives. My premise was that when members of a large group perceive the loss of their group’s status as a narcissistic trauma (as seen with the Treaty of Versailles), collective narcissism emerges. In the communication process, this is indicated by the exaggeration of intergroup differences. *I assumed that this reaction influences the emotions attributed to both the ingroup and outgroup, suggesting that in the identity state of collective narcissism status emotions should be more dominant than authentic group-based emotions.*

In this research, I examined the narrative construction of group identities using the method of Narrative Categorical Analysis (NarrCat), which allows for an empirical exploration of the relationship between narrative composition and the psychological state of the narrating group (László et al., 2013). I investigated the attribution of 12 emotions, including 6 positive and negative status emotions (honor, pride, glory, contempt, envy, and humiliation) as well as 6 emotions reflecting authentic attachment (joy, love, hope) and negative basic emotions (fear, sadness, and anger) in the context of ingroup and outgroup relations.

The corpus material for the analyses was compiled from German-language history textbooks’ narratives ($N = 61$) about the Peace Treaty of Versailles,¹ which ended the First World War, and

¹The Treaty of Versailles was the main peace treaty to end World War I. It was signed in 1919 at the Palace of Versailles in France and officially ended the war between Germany and the Allied Powers. The treaty was seen as harsh and punitive by many people in Germany. The German delegation was not allowed to participate in the negotiations and was forced to accept the terms dictated by the Allies. The treaty placed the blame for the war solely on Germany and its allies.

many Germans considered it as a “*humiliation of the nation*” (Krumeich, 2001). The textbook sample was selected to include textbooks from five different publishers in each decade except for GDR textbooks, as there was only one state textbook publisher. Four sample units were developed, to investigate group-based emotions longitudinally in the historical narrative of the Treaty of Versailles (the GFR sample was further divided into seven subsamples at 10-year intervals, enabling longitudinal studies):

- Sample 1. Nazi history schoolbooks (1939–1945).
- Sample 2. GFR history schoolbooks (1945–1989).
- Sample 3. GDR history schoolbooks (1949–1989).
- Sample 4. GFR history schoolbooks after the reunification (1989–2016).

I analyzed the emotions that textbook writers attribute to in- and outgroup (the ingroup was consistently defined as the narrator’s own national ingroup, while the outgroup varied depending on the historical context). The codes for the word-level content analysis were adapted from the Regressive Imagery Dictionary, developed and validated by Colin Martindale (1975). For variables where adaptation was not feasible (envy and contempt), I employed thematic coding using Atlas.ti 8. The codebook was tested for reliability

with two independent native German coders. The quantified content analysis data were processed using SPSS 22.0. To examine the narrative construction of intergroup emotions, I utilized an exact binomial test (see Agresti, 2019). This statistical method was selected to assess the differences between the ingroup and outgroup regarding the attribution of certain emotions, specifically in relation to an imaginary 50-50% distribution.

6.2 Results

From the six positive emotions examined in the textbooks, *glory* dominated among positive emotions in every narrative (see Fig. 20.1). In Nazi history schoolbooks, *honor* also appeared, and in the GDR (occupied by the Soviet Union), it was the only positive emotion represented in schoolbook texts. In contrast, the emotion *love* has not appeared at all in any textbook.

For negative intergroup emotions, the findings were more differentiated. However, *humiliation* as an indicator of collective narcissistic trauma (Volkan, 2003) appeared in all textbook narratives from 1939 to 2016 (see Fig. 20.2), the proportions of other negative emotions presented a more nuanced picture.

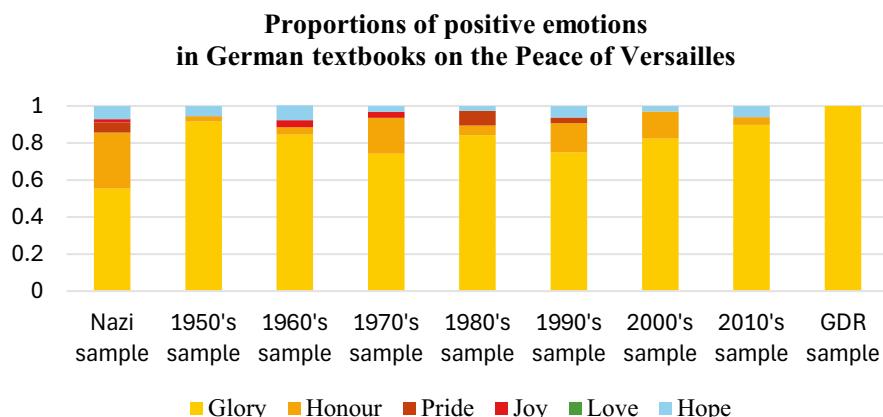


Fig. 20.1 Proportions of positive intergroup emotions among all positive emotions in German history textbooks on the Peace Treaty of Versailles (1939–2016)

Proportions of negative emotions in German textbooks on the Peace of Versailles

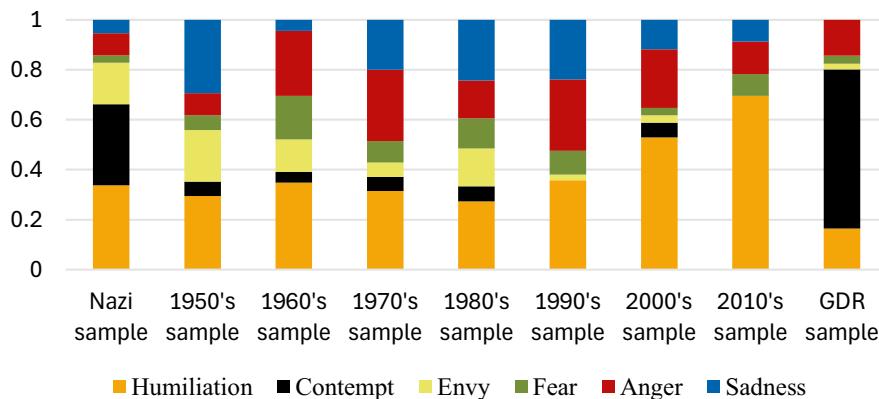


Fig. 20.2 Proportions of negative intergroup emotions among all negative emotions in German history textbooks on the Peace Treaty of Versailles (1939–2016)

The proportion of the emotion *contempt* was very high in Nazi and GDR narratives but minimal in post-war GFR schoolbooks and has fully disappeared today from the German history schoolbooks, as did *envy*. The proportion of *fear* among the negative emotions was very low, yet it was present in all samples. *Anger* appeared in the samples in varying proportions, with the highest value recorded during the decade of reunification (28.57%). Notably, it emerged in the narratives not only as an emotion of the ingroup but also frequently as an emotion of the outgroup. Interestingly, *sadness* was completely absent in the GDR sample.

Results of exact binomial tests showed significant differences in the dimension of positive intergroup emotions, particularly for the status emotion of *glory* in two samples: in Nazi schoolbooks, glory was significantly attributed to the outgroup (74.2%; $p < 0.001$), while in GFR schoolbooks from the 2000s, it was attributed to the ingroup (28.6%; $p < 0.05$). In contrast, more significant differences were observed among negative emotions. *Humiliation* was significantly attributed to the ingroup in nearly all samples, except for GFR schoolbooks from the 1950s. Significant differences were also noted for *contempt* in Nazi and GDR schoolbooks. This negative status emotion was significantly attributed to the outgroup in Nazi textbooks (90.9%; $p <$

0.001) and in GDR textbooks (100.0%; $p < 0.001$), indicating that these authors strongly devalued the winning countries. Furthermore, the third negative status emotion, *envy*, was significantly attributed to the ingroup in Nazi textbooks (100.0%; $p < 0.001$).

6.3 Discussion and Implications for Future Research

The research confirmed the hypothesis that, in the narratives of a national narcissistic trauma, status emotions were more prominent than authentic group-based emotions. In the dimension of positive emotions *glory* dominated in all samples. However, in the dimension of negative emotions, the samples showed significant differences: While the indicator emotion of narcissistic trauma—*humiliation*—was present in all textbook narratives, *contempt* appeared in high proportions in Nazi and GDR textbooks. This emotion was found in much smaller proportions in GFR textbooks and disappeared after 2010. An interesting finding was that in the samples from the two totalitarian dictatorships (Nazi Germany and the GDR), status emotions dominated, with *contempt* prevailing over *humiliation*. In contrast, the GFR samples exhibited the opposite pattern, where *humiliation* was dominant over *contempt*.

These results suggest that we are observing different qualities of collective narcissism, which warrant further research. The longitudinal findings indicate that while trauma processing began, it did not involve consistent elaboration and was interspersed with regressive periods of varying intensity. This observation is supported by additional results from the author's doctoral research (Agora, 2022). Based on the research findings presented here, we can conclude that collective narcissism can manifest in various forms, which can be effectively modeled along the lines of attributed intergroup emotions. These findings support Volkan and Ast's (1994) thesis that narcissism is a dimensional variable: At one end of the spectrum are aspirations that seek to display the uniqueness and value of the group, while at the other end are paranoid, absolutist aspirations that manifest in the most destructive intergroup conflicts.

While social psychological research provides a wealth of useful and empirically supported knowledge, it would be beneficial to include historical context into the studies, since collective narcissism may not only manifest in individuals' social identities but can also influence the overall functioning of a culture. The results presented here also draw attention to the fact that collective narcissism has its own historical dynamics and is a multifaceted phenomenon. The differentiated exploration of its forms will be a task for future researchers. Future research on collective narcissism should focus on the distinctions between collective narcissism and collective paranoia, as well as the role of the emotion of contempt, which may serve as an indicator of malignant collective narcissism. I am confident that research into collective narcissism will yield many exciting and surprising insights.

7 **Changing Cultures of Narcissism**

One of the main aims of this paper is to highlight the multifaceted nature of collective narcissism, as existing literature primarily focuses on its darker aspects. Recent research indicates that collective narcissism is negatively associated

with psychological well-being and undermines the welfare of the ingroup (Golec de Zavala, 2024). However, very little is known about strategies to overcome collective narcissism. Golec de Zavala (2024), a leading expert in the field, has conducted successful experiments involving participants with high levels of collective narcissism who engaged in mindful gratitude practices. This intervention aims to enhance the ability to experience positive emotions while downregulating negative ones. The present article serves as the next step in this ongoing research.

In order to think about the possibilities of change, it is necessary to examine the conceptual foundations, because if we were to assume that collective narcissism is "just" a belief, then in this chapter I would like to make the reader think about the cognitive possibilities of attitude formation. It is possible to grasp the structural characteristics of narcissism if we approach the problem from a systems perspective, i.e., by examining it *in relation to identity processes*. On the conceptual basis of Stolorow (1975) and Lichtenstein (1964), I start from the premise that narcissism is *a motor of identity stability, in other words, a regulatory system responsible for maintaining the structural cohesion, temporal stability, and positive affective coloring of self-representation*. This symbolic "thermostat" (Stolorow & Lachmann, 1980) operates and ensures that the temperature of the inner world is optimal or at least tolerable.

There are productive forms of collective narcissism (e.g., group formation, fostering a sense of belonging) and there are malignant forms, where members of a group devalue, despise, infra- or dehumanize members of groups considered to be outgroups. The thermostat therefore works both ways, but the historical discourse of narcissism has evolved to refer only to phenomena of excessive valorization and devaluation as narcissistic. *This insight provides an opportunity to move from "malignant" forms to productive forms*. As shown in the previous chapters, although in the case of collective narcissism the perceived threat is to the group identity, narcissistic defense mechanisms are manifested in the social identity of individuals. Their source, however, may not only stem from the individual's

genetic or biological endowments (cf. Golec de Zavala, 2019), but the culture itself may also generate these reactions.

In the Frankfurt School's interpretation, collective narcissism (i.e., narcissism affecting many people) is induced by the socio-economic characteristics of the late capitalist system. Moscovici (1985) and Kernberg (2003a, 2003b) later argued that mass media re-produce collective narcissism in our everyday lives. However, it has also become clear from research that collective or more precisely "group-based" narcissism in historical large groups can also arise as a result of collective unelaborated traumas suffered by members of the large group due to aggression by other groups (Agora, 2022; Bar-On, 2007; Volkan, 2009). Massive traumas at the hands of "others" lead to *shared humiliation, shame, fear of being assertive, and difficulty mourning* for historical large groups. *Narcissistic trauma* in such groups may lead to a corresponding defensive increase of shared narcissism linked to large group identity (Vamik & Fowler, 2009). The present study focuses on these cases.

Constructive Narcissism

The emergence of collective narcissism in historical large groups indicates a lack of group cohesion and is most pronounced when the challenge exceeds the psychological capacity of the group members. Political leaders have a special opportunity to resolve ambivalences about group membership in a top-down way, to help integrate the positive and negative aspects of group identity, to provide strength in difficult times. It is therefore not at all surprising that narcissistic groups often choose a narcissistic leader who is expected to restore meaning and value to the group identity. But a narcissistic leader can be both reparative and destructive (Vamik & Fowler, 2009).

Reparative or constructive narcissism (such as Kemal Atatürk's political reforms) is indicated by the fact that the emphasis on the value of one's own group reinforces group cohesion and is reparative in nature; in contrast, destructive collective narcissism reacts to loss and threat in a

reactive and defensive way and is characterized by a devaluing and aggressive attitude towards external groups (Vamik & Fowler, 2009). The reparative narcissistic political leader, despite possessing narcissistic personality traits, does not incite hostility against "others," does not devalue, and does not destroy political opponents, even symbolically. Knowing just this much about political narcissism gives us a more nuanced picture of the politicians who shape our daily lives.

Reflecting Real Strengths of the Group

One of the main problems of group narcissisms is that they create communities with exaggerated, unrealistic self-esteem, argued Fromm (1964). In cultures of collective narcissism, it is therefore necessary to place group identity on a realistic value basis. The construction of the pillars of identity of communities and large groups is the result of a construction process, which can be an unreflected "tradition" or a reflected, conscious, and active process in which members of local or regional communities themselves contribute to the redefinition of values. To facilitate this, we launched the project *Identity and Locality* in the Ormánság (Hungarian Cultural Region) at the University of Pécs (Agora & Rab, 2015), where we developed a board game model for reflecting on the values of local and personal identity together with students. Since then, the game development has become a small movement as residents of several settlements started to develop their own "village game." The role of the trainer or teacher in these collaborative creative processes is to facilitate the process of cultural self-reflection.

Accepting Cultural Beliefs

We must attach particular importance to commonly shared beliefs, since they define group identity in a specific and formal way. They explicitly express the essence of the group, provide a rational basis for a positive sense of belonging to the group, establish the group's *raison d'être*, and they define group boundaries (Bar-Tal, 2000). If we accept the fact that beliefs play a pivotal role in the construction of national

identities, we must also accept that they have an existential sense for the group members, contributing to the value of their social identity. Kohut (1972) has rightly noted that intolerant critiques launched in the name of enlightenment can themselves provoke narcissistic reactions. In other words, anyone who wants to work against narcissism must first shed the narcissistic belief that the world can only be as we imagine it to be.

This is not to argue for a return to the world of state religions or nineteenth-century national romanticism, but merely to point out that there *is no royal road to change without acknowledging the beliefs and feelings of others*. The denial and devaluation of identities can trigger a narcissistic backlash in individuals and groups where identity coherence has been weakened for one reason or another. This can be a temporary or permanent phenomenon, which means that anyone can be narcissistic, it is not a special “type of character.” Identity is a dynamically changing system, and there can be storms in history that can shatter or destroy any identity. Collective narcissism indicates that members of a large group are or were not able to cope with actual or past challenges.

Making Problems Visible

The emergence of collective narcissism also informs us about the state of a society, that society does not reflect or reflects negatively and therefore deprives its members of what all people need. When the typical reactions of collective narcissism in a society are intensified, it is a sign that many people feel “invisible” because their problem is not important to the majority society or the elites. This experience, in addition can evoke existential fears, anger, and resentment. For Becker (1973), narcissism is the ineradicable yearning for self-esteem, the *basic sense of self-worth* that all human beings require.

One way of coping with “social invisibility” is to display normative group-based emotions, which enhances the members’ sense of self-worth and belonging to the group (Porat et al., 2020). The display of normative emotions of collective narcissism (such as glory, pride, contempt, etc.) is thus paraphrased as follows: *Even if I don’t feel like a valued member of my nation, no*

one loves my country more than I do—and that is what makes me truly valuable.

One of the potentials of identity politics is its ability to exploit these unnamed and unreflected emotions, as they (seemingly) give people back their missing self-worth. Identity politics typically does not use cognitive persuasion but appeals to the emotions and unconscious fantasies of its potential voters. Today, nationalist populism brings together people who feel angry and unheard (Rowland, 2019). In cultures of collective narcissism, identity politics are popular because individuals are often left alone to solve their problems. However, people cannot thrive without affirmation and social acceptance (Bakó & Zana, 2020; Cohen & Sherman, 2014); they need to feel valued and appreciated as members of a community.

8 Towards Cultures of Appreciation

Axel Honneth (2014) argues that people need recognition, which is fundamental to identity. Recognition means that people mutually recognize each other as people in need, with equal rights and unique individuals. When people experience denial of recognition (e.g., cultural devaluation, contempt, rape, humiliation), this can become a source of social conflicts. However, if we draw on insights from narcissism research, it seems that people do not need recognition, but appreciation. Recognition is linked to some specific achievements or contributions; it acknowledges that something is well done, a milestone was reached, and motivates good performance. *Appreciation fosters positive relationships and focuses on the person themselves and their overall value. It expresses gratitude for their effort, attitude, or simply their presence.*

Recognition and appreciation are often used synonymously, although there is a substantial difference between the two in terms of narcissism. Although both emotions depend on the judgment of others, recognition refers to the performance of the individual and appreciation to the person. One longs to see oneself reflected in

the other person, to be appreciated. But appreciation for achievement is really for the achievement and not for the person of the individual, who really needs it and does not get it from his social environment. When the individual sees himself in the perspective of others (in other words, alienated from his own desires, his own personal essence), he experiences feelings that are similar to appreciation but that embody the expectations of others.

However, these processes are not the result of the individual's intrapsychic regulatory processes but are the result of cultural construction. To be born into a culture means to believe what others believe, to feel what others feel. The dominant actors in a culture therefore themselves use the strategy of keeping emotions under normative control in the processes of attitude formation, determining which emotions are taboo and which emotions are allowed to be expressed instead (more on Frevert, 2013; Plamper, 2015) and even regulating why and to whom recognition is due and who does not deserve it. Humiliation, shame, contempt are social constructs that also regulate the value of social status, but in a negative way.

9 Concluding Remarks

When we think about changing cultures of collective narcissism, this insight is the essence of the nature of narcissism: We should understand that it protects the inner core of the individual. Humiliation, exclusion, stigmatization, and other forms of negative social mirroring deeply violate this core. Moreover, when an individual feels invisible, his or her feelings are not reflected by society. These insights are fundamental for education, as schooling in many countries of the world today is often humiliating and mortifying for both learners and teachers (Singer, 2000).

In terms of a coherent self-experience (Marks, 2010) in early childhood, acceptance and appreciation, i.e., to be visible and to be smiled at, is of pivotal importance. We grow up in the gaze of our fellow human beings. Changing a negative mirroring culture is not a financial issue, but a

clear decision that could be exercised by all people, anytime and anywhere. While we do not solve all of humanity's problems with a culture of appreciation, we do reflect on a problem that is created at the very center of human functioning. Appreciation is also a form of communication that can work wonders.

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Catharsis

21

Lolo Jacques P. N. Mayer,
Nicholas Derek Robinson, Sarah Ashleigh Naidoo,
and Nkenda Baghana

1 Anger¹

Nicholas Derek Robinson

It was supposed to be fun! Why didn't you stop me. You were always the responsible one. You could have taken the bottle away from me. Heck, YOU COULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE DRIVING THE CAR! The chaos, the screams, the smoke. It all could have been prevented if you just stopped me! All I got was hurt, but you had to (sigh) you had to DIE. And I had to watch the life fade from a motionless body. The hospital was no good either. They just kept on telling me to stay calm. HOW CAN I STAY CALM! YOU LOST YOUR LIFE AND THEY WANT ME TO STAY CALM. They forgot about you. No one

offered a hand. Why did no one offer a hand? Society thinks that it is well put together, but it's not! They do not care about anyone accept themselves.

Oh, how I wish that someone could have taken your hand before the final moments, but I was too stupid. I was dumb, because of that poison, resulting in the loss of your life. You always said that I had a problem, but I never listened. This is the result of my actions. This had to happen to ME. Why did this happen to me. WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO YOU. You were the one that was supposed to live. To get a job and be a success. This is all my fault.

2 Grief

Lolo Jacques P. N. Mayer

Have you ever lost something? Something so dear, that losing it feels like dying? That's what grief is.

They say that love is a promise? So is grief. It's a promise to make it through. But I'm not sure if I'll make it. See, grief is like glitter; sticky and cold. And I know I'll never forget the pain. I'll wake up screaming every morning because I can't bear it. Every day it'll be the first thing I think of. Until one day, it's the second thing.

See, grief isn't a wound. It's a river, whipped up by cutting winds, and crossing it feels like dying.

¹This drama play was written for the Helen O'Grady November 2023 play by the four writers and actors.

The online play version can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/av1ET-zojwo>

Lolo Jacques P. N. Mayer (✉)
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N. D. Robinson
Hoërskool Waterkloof, Pretoria, South Africa

S. A. Naidoo
Irene Primary School,
Centurion, Gauteng, South Africa

N. Baghana
Wilson's Learning Academy,
Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa

Because no matter how you hurt, and cry, it feels like it's never going to end. But if you don't cross it, you never will.

You were my best friend, and I killed you, my mind full of poison. Rage, regret and guilt. But grief most of all. A river, where my tears seem tiny and every crack of thunder paralyses. But thunder quiets. Scars must fade. And one day, it will be the second thing you think of.

3 Regret

Sarah Ashleigh Naidoo

You were my best friend, my pride, my joy, my confidence...and now you are dead. It's all my fault for your death, but it's because of them not wanting to spend 50 bucks on a ride back home. Yes, it's their fault.

I spent weeks inside my apartment, not eating and not sleeping a single wink. It took me months to recover but it's taken me years to stop regretting. You most likely detest me. You told me not to drive, but I still did. I knew it was against the law but hey we were final year students right? And our house was so close from the party right? And no one wanted to pay for the uber right? I was being so dumb.

I now sit on the bathroom floor, thinking about our memories together. Grade 7 graduation, us starting high school, joining the choir together in varsity and then our last moments with each other at the hospital. I can't get your voice, your raspy dying voice saying "carry on without me sister" out of my head. We were so close that we were practically family. We knew each other since we were four.

I know I have to heal and live. Begin to feel my scars close. Regret is like a scab you keep picking and peeling—it will eventually leave a scar, but if you let time do its job, it will heal completely. This can also apply to the loss of someone special. You can't forget about them, but you'll stop thinking of their death and more

the life they enjoyed with you. Time heals all things; you just have to leave it to work its magic.

4 Acceptance

Nkenda Baghana

Losing something is painful. It always is. But you always find something too. And that's... always happy. Be happy. Time heals all things; even me. And when your heart gets torn out, and you have to smile through it all, it hurts. Until one day, that smile turns real. You see, grief is like glitter. Because even though it's hard to just... get off, and cleanup is a mess, when you've managed it, you feel yourself again. And yourself is all you need to be.

Yes, the accident did happen, but from every bad situation there is an opportunity to learn from our mistakes. I will never forget the chaos and the screams, I will never forget that it was my fault, I will never forget him—but I know I had to forgive myself to not forget. I know he was not alone that night, I know the doctors did the best they could, I know he forgave me for making a terrible mistake, I know that I will always remember the best of him and me.

I will always miss him. Always love him. Always honour him...I have peace, knowing that, I have served my time and changed my ways, and change can only be for the better if we make better choices. I needed some time to heal from the anger, grief and regret. It's been 5 years. Some days are harder than others, but I still wake up knowing that my closest friend was the best gift ever!

Lolo Jacques P. N. Mayer is a BSc student in Psychology at the University of London, London, UK. He is interested in the human mind, abnormal psychology, smart technologies and the medical field. Besides his academic career, he is also a writer and writes poetry and monologues. He is further an actor and model and won several acting, modeling and singing awards in the US and in South Africa.

Nicholas Derek Robinson is a budding scientist, author and film maker. At his school, Höerskool Waterkloof, he has distinguished himself in science fairs and debate competitions. Nicholas has been engaged in numerous projects, such as shooting several of his own films and organizing community clean-up events. His interests include writing short stories, hiking and advocating for sustainable living practices.

Sarah Ashleigh Naidoo, is a blossoming public speaker, writer, artist and actress. She attends Sutherland High School, where she has had success in hockey. She has been involved in many projects, namely Public Speaking

Nationals, some writing projects and a few painting commissions. Her interests include drawing, painting, listening to music and baking.

Nkenda Baghana is an aspiring entrepreneur, musician and athlete. She is currently a student at Wilson's Learning Academy, where she has excelled in both academics and swimming events. Nkenda has been actively involved in various initiatives, including founding a small startup focused on sustainable products and participating in regional athletic competitions. Her passions include playing the guitar, songwriting, running and environmental conservation.

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