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Submission Deadlines
International Psychology Bulletin
Vaishali V. Raval, Editor, ravalvv@miamioh.edu

For smaller articles (op-ed, comments, suggestions, etc.), submit up to 200 words. Longer articles (e.g., Division reports) can be up to 3,000 words (negotiable) and should be submitted to the appropriate section editor. Guidelines for submission to peer-reviewed research article or theoretical review sections, please see the next page.

- Book Reviews, Current Issues Around the Globe, Division 52 News, and Peer-Reviewed Research Articles: Vaishali V. Raval ravalvv@miamioh.edu
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Summer issue June 30th
Fall issue September 15th
Winter issue December 15th

Issues typically will be published about 4 weeks after the deadline.
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Submission Guidelines for Peer-reviewed Articles

International Psychology Bulletin

The IPB publishes peer-reviewed research articles and theoretical reviews that focus on important issues related to international psychology. The review process takes approximately two months.

Please submit the following three documents in Microsoft Word format to Dr. Vaishali Raval at ravalvv@miamioh.edu:

A cover letter
A title page with the title of the manuscript, author names and institutional affiliations, and an author note that includes name and contact information of corresponding author
A blinded manuscript that does not include authors’ names or any identifying information

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In your cover letter be sure to include the author’s postal address, e-mail address, and telephone number for future correspondence
State that the manuscript is original, not previously published, and not under concurrent consideration elsewhere
State that the manuscript adheres to APA Ethical Principles (Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct), and all co-authors are in agreement about the content of the manuscript
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This is the Year for International Leadership

Jean Lau Chin, Ed.D.
APA 2016 Division 52 President
chin@adelphi.edu

I begin my year as President of Division of International Psychology with enthusiasm as I see the increased attention by psychology to international issues. It is time for psychology to be less ethnocentric and examine psychology and psychologists can become more global and diverse, and take leadership on things that matter. Psychology must begin to think about how we train, credential and license psychologists not only in the US but throughout the world. And yet, we do not yet have a common standard or agreement about what this ought to be. We must think about how we practice, teach, research, and address policy in psychology to remain true to being a helping profession and knowing about human behavior. We must collaborate across differences and be relevant to the groups with whom we work.

This is made evident in August 2015 when the APA Council of Representatives almost unanimously passed a landmark resolution to prohibit psychologists from participating in national security interrogations following the release of the Independent Review commissioned by the APA Board of Directors. The controversy that ensued about the Hoffman Report dominated our collective consciousness and business of governance during all of last year while I was president-elect. While the APA leadership was uniformly opposed to torture, the 2005 PENS Report approved as APA policy defined the term “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” in accordance with the 1994 US definition used by the Bush administration to justify harsh interrogation techniques rather than the UN Convention Against Torture to ensure protection to everyone. In doing so, it permitted psychologists to work in US military and security settings to ensure that interrogations were “safe, legal, ethical, and effective”. The allegations of APA’s collusion to support torture were raised in James Risen’s book in 2014 Pay any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War after dissident views had been silenced for over a decade. While the Hoffman report concluded that while APA did NOT collude with the CIA and Dept of Defense to support torture as alleged, it did collude with the DoD to curry favor to promote psychology. The report named many psychologists, APA senior staff and leaders as having violated ethical principles of enabling torture, failing to disclose conflicts of interest, or remaining in dual roles; APA had allowed the interests of the profession to take precedence over its ethical principles. The report claimed that some had assumed positions of willful blindness by not asking questions about what was occurring at the detention centers of Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.

Why is this so important to Division 52? Without discussing the extensive controversy, divergence of opinions, criticism, anger and dismay raised by the release of this Independent Review, the image of the profession and APA as a helping profession with high standards of quality had been tarnished. There was and still is disagreement over what our next course of action should be. Some called for healing and change; some called for retribution while others cautioned against a rush to judgment and called for due process. All called for transformation and change, and agreed that APA needed to reset its moral compass. As the international division of APA, this has major implications for international policy being front and center in defining human rights violations. Also noted was how Muslims were marginalized by implicit biases. We need to ask if there was a failure of leadership, and whether APA and its leaders had privileged advancing the profession of psychology over its ethical principles of avoiding harm. The Hoffman and APA resolution provides us with the opportunity to examine what it means to live and work in a global and diverse society. How do we set policy to be consistent with international law on human rights? How do we recognize that psychologists are also human beings subject to the social influence, attitudes and feelings which may drive us to bad decisions and justify actions inconsistent with our ethical and moral principles (e.g., fear of terrorism, anger and need for retribution, reliving of past trauma, scapegoating).

I hope to lead Div 52 members this year in this dialogue to build and shape the future of our International Division in our actions, activities, and policies for an increasingly global and diverse society. I am working to firm up and clarify our infrastructure of committees and activities outlined in a revised organizational chart and the beginning of a strategic planning process. Neal Rubin, appointed as chair of a Task Force on Div 52’s identity begins that process which we will continue in our midwinter meeting at the Eastern Psychological Association in New York City, March 2-6, 2016. I hope many members can join us there. Lucio Forti, our new webmaster, will keep us informed on the website while Stuart Carr and Judith Gibbons will keep us scholarly as our Journal Editors.

For my presidential initiative, I hope to develop an International Leadership Network for Division 52 for mutual exchange and collaboration on diverse and global leadership. I hope this network will 1) provide a forum for shared concerns about leadership and leadership development, 2) expand the pipeline for global and diverse leaders, 3) convene and collaborate on leadership training, policy, education and research. I firmly believe that as society and our institutions become increasingly diverse and global, our views of leaders and leadership need to be inclusive and relevant to the 21st century. Yet, our leadership theories have largely remained silent on issues of equity, diversity, and social justice; our leadership studies have been Eurocentric with cross-cultural studies often using the U.S. as the norm.
It is time to expand our scope of leadership and leadership training. Global and diverse leadership may reflect diverse leadership styles, cultural adaptations, and different world views. I hope to 1) promote mutual exchange on leadership and leadership development at various international meetings, 2) to build web-based activities and resources to promote an international perspective on leadership access, development, and scholarship, 3) offer training institutes or educational exchanges to develop leadership and mentoring opportunities, and 4) address international policy on issues such as violence against women, sex trafficking to name a few.

We created an International Leadership Network within: www.PsychWire.org and https://www.researchgate.net/topic/global_leadership as two vehicles to build a database where members can self-register, set up a profile, search for others with shared interests and expertise, and find opportunities to share international experiences and build collaborations. Nancy Sidun and Linda Sheldon-Garcia will work with me on developing some educational exchanges. Richard Velayo will work with me to plan several virtual and face-to-face planning/development meetings at the International Congress of Psychology in Yokohama, Japan and at the upcoming Eastern Psychological Association in NYC while Natalie Porter and Craig Shealy will work with me on a meeting for the 2016 APA Convention. Afshan Ladha will assist in setting up these activities. I welcome all to join PsychWire and/or ResearchGate, and to connect with me on your interest in this network.

Lastly, I would like to welcome our new 2016 officers. I thank Mark Terjesen, our past president for a terrific year, and welcome Craig Chealy, our president-elect as he works to plan for our 25th anniversary in 2017. Sayaka Machizawa ably manages our communications and meetings as Secretary while Martha Ann Carey manages our money as Treasurer. All of our Committees and liaisons are contributing to the vibrancy of the division in their activities. I would like to give a shout out to our ECP and Student Committees, chaired by Cidna Valentin and Mercedes Oromendia respectively, who are actively engaging our newer and younger members central to the growth and advancement of our division.
Division 52’s 2016 Ursula Gielen Global Psychology Book Award Given to Zaynep Ayacan, Rabindra Kanungo, and Manuel Mendonca’s ‘Organizations and Management in Cross-Cultural Context’

Renée Goodstein and Uwe P. Gielen
The Institute for International and Cross-Cultural Psychology
St. Francis College, New York City

Division 52’s Ursula Gielen Global Psychology Book Award was established in 2007 to recognize the author(s) or editor(s) of a recent book that makes the greatest contribution to psychology as an international discipline and profession. The recipients of this year’s award are Zeynep Ayacan, Rabindra N. Kanungo, and Manuel Mendonca for their book Organizations and Management in Cross-Cultural Context. The recipients have been invited to give an address in Division 52’s Hospitality Suite at the August APA 2016 APA Convention in Denver, Colorado.

Organizations and Management in Cross-Cultural Context is a text focused on Industrial-Organization Psychology internationally. Using numerous global examples, the book integrates a variety of cross-cultural perspectives on topics ranging from leadership, to communication, to training. The book provides many useful insights into the complex issues facing present-day organizations around the world, and should prove of value to graduate students and practitioners alike.

The books submitted for the 2016 Award were reviewed by experts, who weighed the merits of the book based on specific criteria such as:

- How creative and novel are the ideas expressed in the book?
- How large and significant a contribution does the book make to psychology as a global discipline and profession?
- Are the book’s contents international or global in nature?
- Is the book scientifically rigorous and logically sound? Are its theoretical bases well supported and translatable into sound and ethical practice?
- What is the literary quality of the work? Is it interestingly and well written? Is the audience for whom it is written explicitly stated and does it reach that audience?
- Does the book maintain a clear focus on psychology as a science and practice?

The Ursula Gielen Global Psychology Book Award Committee includes the following members: Renée Goodstein (Chair), Florence L. Denmark, Juris G. Draguns, Michael J. Stevens, Harold Takooshian, and Uwe P. Gielen (ex officio).
Sponsor: APA Division 52 (International Psychology) http://www.div52.org

Publisher: Information Age Publishing, http://www.infoagepub.com

George F. Johnson, President & Publisher

Website for Book Series: http://intpsychbookseries.weebly.com

Editors:

Uwe P. Gielen (St. Francis College)
Senel Poyrazli (Pennsylvania State University- Harrisburg)
Harold Takooshian (Fordham University)

Information Age Publishing (IAP), a well-known publisher of academically oriented books in the areas of education, psychology, and management, has begun a new book series entitled International Psychology. It is being published under the auspices of APA Division 52 (International Psychology). Division members Uwe P. Gielen, Senel Poyrazli, and Harold Takooshian are serving jointly as the series editors. The IAP website can be found at http://www.infoagepub.com/.

The series will include volumes that address a broad variety of psychological topics as seen from global, international, cross-cultural, cultural, and multidisciplinary perspectives. The contributors to the series will be asked to place psychological findings and issues in their sociocultural context and to provide theoretical frameworks that encourage readers to understand better the influence of global and local sociocultural forces on human lives.
Division 52 News and Updates

All incoming book proposals and manuscripts will be evaluated by members of the advisory board and outside referees. The target group for the proposed series includes a broad spectrum of psychologists, social scientists, professionals, and graduate students interested in psychological theory, research applications, practice, and pedagogy as seen from an international and sociocultural point of view. Most volumes in the series will be about 275–325 pages in length.

Manuscripts of potential interest to the series editors include those focused on psychology as a globally and cross-culturally oriented science. Also of interest are international analyses and discussions of professional service issues, consulting and advocacy, and pedagogical considerations related to “going global.” Manuscripts must have been carefully edited by the authors/editors before they are accepted for final inclusion in the series. Preliminary inquiries by potential authors and editors should be directed to:

Uwe P. Gielen (ugielen@hotmail.com),
Senel Poyrazli (poyrazli@psu.edu), and
Harold Takooshian (Takoosh@aol.com).

Subsequently, prospective authors will be asked to submit a detailed book proposal. A sample book proposal can be found on the website (http://intpsychbookseries.weebly.com).

In recent years, the number of psychologists and psychology students around the world has increased steadily, with most of the increase taking place outside the United States. Responding to these trends while helping Division 52 to fulfill its mission, the volumes in the book series are expected to contribute to a broader and more international base on which a global and culture-inclusive psychology of the future can be erected.

Pathfinders in International Psychology

Edited by Grant J. Rich, Consulting Psychologist, Juneau, Alaska and Uwe P. Gieien, St. Francis College

A volume in International Psychology
Series Editors: Uwe P. Gieien, Seren Poyrazli, and Harold Takooshian
(sponsored by APA International Psychology Division, Division 52)

This book provides a global overview of pioneers in international psychology with contributions from distinguished authors from representative nations around the world. Chapters offer biographical profiles describing the personal histories and professional contributions of leading figures in psychology from across the globe that represent the diversity of psychology. This volume can serve as a core or supplemental text for a broad range of courses in psychology, international studies, and education, with particular interest to those teaching international psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and history of psychology.

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Associations between Preschooler’s Behavior Regulation and Emerging Academic Skills in Kosovo

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University of Freiburg, Germany
Private Bearer of Higher Education “Qeap-Heimerer” Kosovo

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New York University Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Abstract

Behavioral regulation has been identified as an individual key process that affects children’s learning. However, these specific relations might vary from kindergarten entry to the time when children make the transition to first grade. The present study examined bidirectional associations between behavioral regulation and emerging math and vocabulary skills among kindergarten children from Kosovo. A sample of 150 children (1: 50% girls, M_{age} = 4.58 years, SD = .08) participated in three waves of data collection every six months. At each measurement point, behavioral regulation was assessed with the Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders task (HTKS) and math and vocabulary with subtests from standardized achievement tests. Using autoregressive cross-lag path models, we found evidence for strong concurrent associations between behavioral regulation and math skills at each time point but not for bidirectional associations across time. For vocabulary, findings provide preliminary evidence for longitudinal bidirectionality. Our findings suggest differential associations between developing behavioral regulation and emerging academic skills over the kindergarten period. The findings also suggest that emerging vocabulary skills might be a possible pathway for improving behavioral regulation skills in young children.

Keywords: HTKS, behavioral regulation, early academic skills, kindergarten, Kosovo

The emphasis on behavioral regulation in school readiness has advanced our understanding of critical skills for children’s early academic success (Blair & Raver, 2015). Behavioral regulation refers to multiple, interrelated cognitive processes such as the ability to focus and maintain attention, inhibit actions and reactions, and remember single- and multi-step information (McClelland et al., 2007). By the time children enter formal schooling, usually when they are five or six years old, substantial individual differences in behavioral regulation exist that tend to persist over time (Vaszonyi & Huang, 2010). For example, kindergarten teachers report that half of their class or more had difficulties on following directions, difficulty working independently, and a lack of academic skills (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Notwithstanding the achieved insights that led to increased efforts to promote early behavioral regulation skills, recent research identified important gaps in the literature that could potentially help improving the success of such

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Emerging Evidence for Bi-directionality in Behavioral Regulation and Academic Skills

Numerous studies showed that behavioral regulation skills are positively associated with concurrent and later academic skills (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). For example, one study found that higher levels of behavioral regulation in the fall of kindergarten predicted higher fall and spring levels of math and vocabulary skills (Cameron Ponitz, McClelland, Matthews, & Morrison, 2009). Moreover, McClelland and colleagues (2007) reported that growth in behavioral regulation predicted growth in math and vocabulary skills over the prekindergarten year. These findings suggest that there might be overlapping developmental processes (Fuhs et al., 2014). Indeed, it has been argued that growth in behavioral regulation may also depend on growth in academic skills. Children who learn academic skills quickly might be more attentive and focused on challenging tasks and activities which in turn have a positive impact on the development of their skills (Fuhs et al., 2014). Another study found that children with higher vocabulary skills showed greater growth in behavioral regulation in comparison to their peers with lower vocabulary skills (Ayoub, Vallotton, & Mastergeorge, 2011). Bohlmann and colleagues (2015) provide further support for the assumption that vocabulary might serve as a leading indicator of behavioral regulation skills. Another study found bidirectional associations between measures of behavioral regulation and emerging math but not literacy skills (Fuhs et al., 2014). Together, these results suggest differential associations dependent on the academic content area. Despite initial support for bidirectional associations, more research is needed to determine whether the relationship between behavioral regulation and academic skills is causal, whether the strength of the associations changes when children grow older, and whether effects are specific to an academic content area.

Measuring Behavioral Regulation

Over the past two decades, research has produced an extraordinary range of measures used to assess behavioral regulation (Duckworth & Kern, 2011). Until recently, however, the availability of measures that reliably tap the key components of behavioral regulation and show predictive validity for school readiness has been limited (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Among other newly developed measures (e.g., Smith-Donald, Raver, Hayes, & Richardson, 2007; Willoughby, Pek, Blair, & the Family Life Project Investigators, 2013), the Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders task (HTKS; Cameron Ponitz et al., 2009) is a quick, easy-to-use, and direct measure of behavioral regulation suitable for children aged 4-8. The HTKS assesses behavioral regulation by requiring children to pay attention, use working memory to remember the instructions while responding, and demonstrate inhibitory control by controlling an initial response and initiating a correct, but unnatural response (Cameron Ponitz et al., 2009). Numerous studies show that HTKS scores were significantly correlated with teacher ratings of children’s behavioral regulation (Cameron Ponitz et al., 2009; McClelland et al., 2007) and performance-based measures of executive functions (McClelland et al., 2014). In addition, HTKS scores predicted achievement levels and gains (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Despite a growing body of research using the HTKS in different countries (Cadima et al., 2015; Gestsdottir et al., 2014; Wanless et al., 2011), it seems critical to further investigate the applicability of the measure internationally, particularly in regions around the world in which research is still scarce and children are at risk of developing low behavioral regulation skills.

The Early Academic Environment in Kosovo

Although the Serbian-Albanian conflict has been solved and Kosovo became an independent country, remaining tensions continue to shape children’s experiences. Kosovo is among the poorest regions in Europe (UNICEF Kosovo, 2011). This is reflected, for example, in inadequate public services such as the education system. The public education sector operates with very limited resources resulting in low-quality instruction (Sommers & Buckland, 2004). This has led to an increase in the demand for private education. Although the majority of children enrolled in private education programs do not come from high-risk family backgrounds, they still might grow up under conditions that may adversely affect their development. This is due to economic stress caused by the high costs for education that may negatively influence parents’ functioning and well-being. In Kosovo, parents spend up to 20% of the monthly family income for their child’s school tuition fees. Consequently, efforts failed to significantly increase the number of children enrolled in education programs (UNICEF Kosovo, 2011).

The Present Study

In the current study, we examined bidirectional associations between behavioral regulation and academic skills. Although there is growing evidence suggesting that the HTKS captures individual variation in behavioral...
regulation among young children in different European countries (Cadima et al., 2015; Gestsdottir et al., 2014), translating and using the measure in other countries without examining its psychometric properties is not recommended and might bias the interpretation of results (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Therefore, the first goal of this study was to replicate prior findings on the applicability of the HTKS in a sample of young children from Kosovo. We expected to find that HTKS scores would reflect variability and growth in children’s behavioral regulation. The second goal was to extend previous research on the bi-directionality in behavioral regulation and academic skills. Based on prior studies (Bohmann et al., 2015; Fuhs et al., 2014), we predicted that there would be, in addition to concurrent associations, bidirectional associations between behavioral regulation and academic skills across time.

**Method**

**Participants**

Children participating in the present study were recruited from 20 early childhood education centers in three cities of Kosovo: Pristina, Mitrovica and Vushtrri. At the first measurement point, 150 children between 4 and 5 years of age participated ($M_{age} = 54$ months, $SD = 3.7$; 52% girls). At the time 2, children ($N = 145$) were on average 61 months old ($SD = 4.1$), and at time 3, children ($N = 105$) were on average 68 months old ($SD = 4.8$). To address the high drop out at the third wave of data collection, we conducted $t$-tests to compare those who completed all assessments to those with missing data and found no significant differences in behavioral regulation and early academic skills.

At time 1, parents completed a demographic background questionnaire. Results showed that all parents were married. Half of the parents held a university degree (56%). Although most of parents (88%) were employed, the majority (66%) reported a monthly family income of < 800 Euros. The average time that children spend in education centers was 7.2 hours, with many children (79%) staying 7 or more hours per day in educational institution.

**Procedure**

All participants were tested individually during a normal school day in a quiet area in their school. Data was collected at three different time-points with approximately 6 months between the measurements (time 1: spring preschool; time 2: fall kindergarten; time 3: spring kindergarten). The assessment took approximately 45 minutes per child. Children were tested in Albanian language. All measures were translated into the Albanian language following the procedure of translation and back-translation suggested for cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1970). Data was collected by 10 psychology students from the local university who were trained prior to the data collection by the first author. A MANOVA showed no significant differences between scores obtained by different experimenters.

**Measures**

**Behavioral Regulation.** The *Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders Task* (HTKS) was used to measure behavioral regulation (Cameron Ponitz et al., 2009). The HTKS consists of two parts with 10 items each. In the first part, two commands are given, “Touch you head” and “Touch your toes”. The second part introduces two additional paired commands, “Touch your knees” and “Touch your shoulders”. Children are asked to do the opposite of what the experimenter says. For example, when asked to touch their head, the correct response is to touch their toes. Items are scored with 0 for incorrect responses, 1 for self-corrected responses (initially responding incorrectly, but then correcting him/herself), and 2 for correct responses. Scores range between 0 and 40 with higher scores indicating higher levels of behavioral regulation. Internal consistency was high in the present data (Cronbach’s alpha = .91). In total, 20% of children were double coded. Interrater agreement measured by Cohen coefficient was good, $k = .78$.

**Vocabulary Skills.** The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (PPVT; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) was used to assess children’s vocabulary. The PPVT contains 228 test items. Children are asked to point to the correct picture out of 4 options presented after the experimenter says its name (e.g., pen, ball, doll). The total score represents the total number of correct answers with higher scores reflecting higher vocabulary. Internal consistency was good (Cronbach’s alpha = .85).

**Math Skills.** The math subtest of the *Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children*, Second Edition (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004) was used to assess children’s ability to solve arithmetic problems, such as counting and comparing quantities. The task consists of 25 items (for example, “There are six elephants in the zoo. If four of them left how many elephants would remain?”). The total score represents the total number of correct answers with higher scores reflecting higher math skills. Internal consistency was acceptable (Cronbach’s alpha = .70).

**Statistical Analysis**

We began our analyses by examining descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 21). For all subsequent analyses we used the Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) method in Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010) to deal with missing data. The advantage of FIML is the flexibility to handle missing data when data from at least one measurement point is available which was true for all children in our sample (Acoc, 2012).

Two separate autoregressive cross-lagged path models were conducted in Mplus Version 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010). Prior behavioral regulation and academic skills predicted later behavioral regulation and academic skills simultaneously. We allowed behavioral regulation
and early academic skills to be correlated at each of the three
time points. The maximum-likelihood ratio-test statistic and
indices of model fit, i.e., The Root-Mean-Square Error of
Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and
Standardized Root-Mean Square Residual (SRMR) were used
to test the model fit. RMSEA values of .08 or lower are con-
sidered to indicate an acceptable model fit. CFI of values of
>.90 and SRMR values of <.08 were used to indicate an ac-
ceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kelloway, 1998).

Results

Individual Variation of Behavioral Regulation

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard
deviation are provided in Table 1. On average, children
scored below the halfway mark (20 out of 40 points) on the
HTKS at time 1, but within the task range. Twelve percent
received scores of zero and 2% received scores of 40. Six
month later (time 2), the majority of children (73.5%) scored
above the halfway mark, with 3.4% receiving scores of 0 and
7.5% receiving scores of 40. At time 3, the number of chil-
dren scoring above the halfway mark increased to 85.3%,
with only 2% receiving scores of 0 and 10.8% receiving
scores at ceiling. Children made significant gains in behav-
ioral regulation across three time points, improving from 16.6
points on average at time 1 to 26.3 at time 2 and 30.9 points
at time 3, \(F(2, 107) = 22.66, p < .01\). There were no signif-
cant differences between boys’ and girls’ behavioral regula-
tion. In addition, we calculated skewness (Time 1: .18, Time
2: -.89, Time 3: -1.67) and kurtosis (Time 1: -1.08, Time 2: 
- .33, Time 3: 2.02).

Path Analyses of Longitudinal Associations between Be-
havioral Regulation and Academic Skills

The autoregressive cross-lag path models testing
the bidirectional associations between behavioral regulation
and academic skills fit the data well (Figure 1a and 1b). Re-
sults showed that all autoregressive paths were significant,
indicating that children’s skills at the previous assessment
were positively associated with their respective skills at the
subsequent assessment. The model testing associations be-
tween behavioral regulation and vocabulary (Figure 1a)
showed that behavioral regulation and vocabulary were sig-
ificantly related at time 1. All other concurrent associations,
however, were not significant. Further, results indicated that
behavioral regulation at time 1 was significantly associated
with vocabulary at time 2. The path from vocabulary time 2
to behavioral regulation time 3 was also significant, support-
ing a bidirectional association between behavioral regulation
and vocabulary. For math, concurrent associations with be-
havioral regulation were significant at all three time points
(Figure 1b). However, the only significant cross-lag path was
from math time 2 to behavioral regulation time 3 which did
not support bidirectional associations between behavioral
regulation and math skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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\(N = 135\), \(M = 16.64\), \(SD = 12.22\)
Peer-Reviewed Articles

The current findings provide evidence for the applicability of the HTKS when used with young children from Kosovo. In line with our expectation, HTKS scores reflected variability and growth in children’s behavioral regulation. Thus, results are consistent with another recent study using the HTKS with low-income European children suggesting that the HTKS may be appropriate for use with children being at risk of developing low behavioral regulation skills across different cultures (Cadima et al., 2015).

The second goal was to extend previous research on the bidirectionality in behavioral regulation and academic skills in different academic content areas. Results provided some support for bidirectional associations between behavioral regulation and vocabulary skills. However, full bi-directionality as it has been found in the study reported by Bohlmann and colleagues (2015) could not be established. It might be that patterns of bi-directionality also depend on the specific language domain tested. Bohlmann and colleagues (2015) focused on expressive language whereas our study tested receptive language skills. Interestingly, however, our results regarding concurrent associations between behavioral regulation and vocabulary replicated findings by Bohlmann and colleagues (2015). Consistent with earlier research (Cadima et al., 2015; McClelland et al., 2014; Wanless et al., 2011), higher levels of behavioral regulation were associated with higher levels of math skills at all three time points. However, results did not support our assumption for bidirectional associations between behavioral regulation and math skills. Thus, the pattern of bi-directionality between behavioral regulation and academic skills found in our sample of children from Kosovo differs from the pattern reported for a sample of young American children (Fuhs et al., 2014).

Discussion

The current findings provide evidence for the applicability of the HTKS when used with young children from Kosovo. In line with our expectation, HTKS scores reflected variability and growth in children’s behavioral regulation. Thus, results are consistent with another recent study using the HTKS with low-income European children suggesting that the HTKS may be appropriate for use with children being at risk of developing low behavioral regulation skills across different cultures (Cadima et al., 2015).

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Figure 1

Cross-Lagged Models of Behavioral Regulation and Early Academic Skills

Note. a) Vocabulary Skills CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.81, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.05), b) Math Skills (CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.05, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.02), ** p < .01. Solid lines indicate significant paths. Dashed lines indicate non-significant paths.

Estimates provided are standardized coefficients. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; T3 = Time 3.
More research is needed to disentangle the bi-directionality between these developing skills, particularly because results on different academic content areas remain inconsistent. An alternative explanation for the current findings however could be that results reflect specific (and possibly overlapping) characteristics that are inherent to the measures used in the present study. For example, shared measurement variance may have influenced the pattern of results.

With regard to practical implications, our findings suggest that both behavioral regulation and early academic skills are important aspects of children’s school readiness. However, current education in Kosovo has a strong focus on promoting emergent academic skill whereas teachers do not see the importance of behavioral regulation for children’s school readiness. Consequently, the findings may be used for curriculum development in Kosovo to promote early behavioral regulation skills among young children. Recent studies show that behavioral regulation can be improved in kindergarten with circle time games that help children practice behavioral regulation skills (Tominey & McClelland, 2011). Moreover, training children with different strategies, such as “making if-then plans”, has been found to benefit behavioral regulation among children with impulse control deficits (Gawrilow, Gollwitzer, & Oettingen, 2010). More research is needed to identify the time needed to benefit from behavioral regulation trainings and the effectiveness of such training for children with behavioral problems.

Limitations

When interpreting the findings, some limitations should be noted. First, the sample was not representative because children could only be recruited in private education programs. Consequently, only children from families that could afford private education were included. Future studies should also recruit children who cannot attend early education programs. Moreover, results regarding the third time point should be interpreted with caution due to the large drop out that could have limited the power of the analyses. Also, the study could not control for school and home environment variables, such as class size, teaching strategies, or parents’ involvement, which have an effect on the development of behavioral regulation and early academic skills. In future studies, it is important to include a wider range of variables spanning different developmental contexts when investigating children’s academic skills trajectories.

Despite these limitations, the results confirm that the relationship between behavioral regulation and early academic skills is complex. Importantly, results show that not only behavioral regulation contributes for academic skills, but also academic skills may serve as possible pathway for improving behavioral regulation skills in young children in Kosovo.

References
The Association between Parental Support and Mental Health Outcomes among Adolescents in 17 Countries: Moderating Role of Country Socioeconomic Development

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Jia He  
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*Tilburg University, Netherlands*

**Abstract**

Adolescents in low and middle income countries (LAMICs) as well as emerging economies experience high rates of poor mental health outcomes. Yet, there is limited research on risk and protective factors in these high risk environments. We set out to examine the extent to which parental support is positively associated with mental health outcomes among adolescents in 17 LAMICs and emerging economies. The study involved more than 40,557 (Females = 19,335; 47.7%) adolescents aged 12-15 years. The data was part of the Global School Health Survey project. Using Multiple Indicator Multigroup Analysis we observed that parental support was positively associated with mental health outcomes across contexts (fit indices being: $\chi^2 (32, N = 40,557) = 125.25, p < .001, \chi^2/ df = 3.91$, TLI = .913, CFI = .973 and RMSEA = .008). The relationship between parental support and mental health outcomes was significant in all countries with the exception of Mauritania. A multilevel analysis to test the moderating role of country socioeconomic development indicated that poor mental health was predicted by individual-level parent support ($\beta = -.15$), and the interaction between country-level socioeconomic development (as measured by the Human Development Index) and individual-level parental support ($\beta = -.05$). The significant cross-level interaction illustrates that the association between parent support and mental health was stronger in more socioeconomically developed countries, compared with less socioeconomically developed countries in these LAMICs and emerging economies. From the perspective of international psychology, our study illustrates how existing large scale datasets can be used to evaluate theoretical propositions which have been previously tested on a limited sample size. Additionally, research and policy implications are discussed in this article.

**Keywords:** Parental support, Mental Health, Adolescents, Cross-national

Due to exposure to high risk factors such as chronic poverty, ill-health, war and conflict, adolescents in low and middle income countries and economies (LAMICs) and emerging economies are especially vulnerable to poor mental health outcomes (Flisher et al., 2012). The lack of adequate epidemiological studies in this age group implies that the real burden of mental health problems in these economies remains largely unknown (Patel, Flisher, Nikapota, & Malhotra, 2008). Though limited, there is a growing body of evidence showing that adolescents in low and middle income countries carry a significant burden of mental health problems. For instance, a systematic review by Kieling and colleagues (2011) indicates 10-20% prevalence of mental health problems among children and youth (Kieling et al., 2011). These high rates have been associated with exposure to a wide range of factors (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; Kieling et al., 2011). In another literature review, it was noted that “poverty, low education, social exclusion, gender disadvantage, conflict and disasters are the major social determinants of mental disorders” (Patel, 2007). Other causes noted include infectious diseases, self-inflicted injuries, and alcohol abuse among others (Patel, 2007). Additionally, research shows that parenting behaviours including parenting styles, parental monitoring and support do contribute to better mental health outcomes in many settings (Abubakar, Van de Vijver, Suryani, Handayani, & Pandia, 2014; Alonso-Arbíol, Abubakar, & Van de Vijver, 2014; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Nguyen, 2008; Steinberg, 2001).
However, what is missing in the literature is a number of systematic comparative studies where we can look at the generalizability of the effects and estimate the extent to which the same patterns can be observed when using the same methodological and measurement approaches. In recent times, there has been a proliferation of large scale international data which can be used to evaluate some of the areas of interest. We therefore set out to use one such dataset to contribute toward filling the knowledge gap. Understanding the importance of the association between parenting behaviour and mental health problems is salient because it may contribute towards developing evidence-based programmes to tackle the risk factors of poor mental health outcomes, which is an important public health concern.

Earlier studies have provided evidence of the risk and protective factors for mental health functioning. Most of these studies have been guided and have largely confirmed the theoretical propositions of the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), which postulated that human development results from the interactive effects of both biological factors and ecological influences. Existing empirical evidence indicates that risk and protective factors for mental health outcomes are multilevel (i.e., functioning at different ecological settings such as family, school, community and national levels) (Hurd, Stodard, & Zimmerman, 2013; Mallery, 2011). However, most of what we know about adolescent’s development and its correlates comes from data based on North America and Western European samples. These data cannot be directly extrapolated to guide the thinking in other parts of the world, since factors such as cultural patterning of child rearing, different value systems especially as it relates to authority, differences in social support systems, socio-economic conditions and differences in constellation of risk imply that the relationship between risk and protective factors and outcomes may be moderated by other contextual factors. It is therefore important to carry out studies of adolescent development and its correlates in different contexts to allow for the development of evidence-based programmes in underresearched settings.

Various aspects of parental characteristics and behaviors have been associated with adolescent mental health outcomes (Smokowski, Bacallao, Cotter, & Evans, 2014). Adolescents who perceive their parents as being supportive, involved and monitoring their activities report better mental health outcomes (Manongdo & Ramírez Garcia, 2011; Smokowski et al., 2014) and this has been reported in different cultural contexts (DeVore & Ginsburg, 2005; Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003). Sociodemographic factors such as age, gender and socioeconomic status (SES) have been associated with both parenting behavior and mental health (Lee, Wickrama, & Simons, 2013). For instance, adolescents from low SES families are more likely to report poor mental health outcomes and low parental monitoring and involvement (Conger et al., 1992; Lee et al., 2013). Similarly, adolescents living in communities and countries with low social and economic development are more likely to experience stress which in turn contributes to poor mental health outcomes (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996; Dashiff, DiMicco, Myers, & Sheppard, 2009).

Given the existing knowledge gap and the reviewed literature, we set out to investigate the associations between parental support and mental health outcomes among adolescents in 17 economies. Our main research questions were: 1) Is the relationship between parental support and mental outcomes invariant across contexts? 2) Is the relationship between parental support and mental health outcomes moderated by country level factors especially socioeconomic conditions? We postulated a partial mediational model where age and gender directly and indirectly influence mental health outcomes. The indirect effects would be observed through parental support (see Figure 1 for the hypothesized model). Specifically we set out to test the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a negative association between parental support and poor mental health outcomes across cultural contexts.

**Hypothesis 2:** Age and gender are associated with parental support and mental health outcomes. Females and younger adolescents are expected to report receiving higher levels of parental support.

**Hypothesis 3:** The association between parental support and mental health outcomes is moderated by country-level socioeconomic development, with adolescents from more developed countries showing a stronger association between parental support and mental health outcomes.

![Figure 1: Hypothesized Model](image-url)
Results

Parental Support and Mental Health Outcomes

As we were interested in examining the extent to which the relationship between parental support and mental health outcomes is invariant across cultural contexts, we carried out a multiple indicator multiple group analysis with country as the grouping variable. Since we were interested in the pattern of relationship between variables, we focused on the structural weights model. The results indicated that our initial model had a poor fit to the data. The fit indices were $\chi^2 (80, N = 40,557) = 518.71, p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 6.484$, TLI = .806, (recommended > .90), CFI = .848 (recommended > .90), and RMSEA = .012 (recommended < .080). We examined the modification indices and looked at those that had a large amount of residual value in many countries and identified these as potentially problematic paths. Based on this inspection, we released the path between parental support and mental health, gender and mental health, and gender and parental support. The resulting model had a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (32, N = 40,557) = 125.25, p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 3.91$, TLI = .913, CFI = .973, and RMSEA = .008. The relationship between parental support and mental health outcomes was significant in all countries with the exception of Mauritania ($\beta = -.032, p = .242$; see Table 1 for further details). Additionally, the amount of variance explained per country varied significantly and in most cases relatively small ranging from 0.0% to 15.5%.

Country Socioeconomic Development as a Moderator

A multilevel analysis was performed in HLM 6.6 to test the moderating role of country socioeconomic development in which individual-level mental health (standardized) was predicted by individual-level parent support ($\beta = -.16, p < .001$). The average of Human Development Index from 2007 to 2010 as an indicator of country socioeconomic development did not show a significant effect ($\beta = .00, p = .99$), possibly due to the limited variation on this factor across these countries and economies; yet the interaction between the two was significant ($\beta = -.05, p < .001$). The significant cross-level interaction illustrates that the association between parent support and mental health was stronger in more socioeconomically developed countries, compared with less developed countries in our sample.

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Notes: Country codes: 1- Antigua and Barbuda; 2- Argentina; 3- Benin; 4- British Virgin Island; 5- Costa Rica; 6- Ecuador; 7- India; 8- Indonesia; 9- Jamaica; 10- Maldives; 11- Mauritania; 12- Occupied Palestinian Territory; 13- Pakistan; 14- Peru; 15- Suriname; 16- Thailand; 17- Tunisia. Gender code: 0- females; 1- Males. Highlighted coefficients are those coefficients that were non-significant.
Discussion

We set out to investigate the extent to which parental support has similar protective effects across different contexts. In line with our hypothesis, our results indicate that in general, adolescents with parents providing more support report fewer mental health problems. This result confirms our first hypothesis and is consistent with earlier empirical findings (Wight, Botticello, & Aneshesnel, 2006; Wills & Cleary, 1996). In line with our third hypothesis, it is also clear that the impact of the parental support on mental health outcomes is moderated by the contexts in which children are growing up. In general, it seems that parental support was more likely to have a stronger positive impact in socioeconomically more developed countries and economies than in less developed countries and economies.

Two important things are noteworthy here. First, our results are in line with prepositions from the bioecological model which indicates that children’s developmental and mental health outcomes are affected by the home environmental conditions and the larger ecological contexts in which children live in (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Second, an important question that may arise here is why is the impact of parental support less strong in low income countries and economies? We do not have sufficient data to provide a firm response to this question; however, we speculated that this may have to do with the number of risk factors adolescents have to face or alternatively it may have to do with the cultural norms of how parental support is expressed, perceived and reported among adolescents. Future work investigating sources of these differences are recommended.

Our dataset indicates that gender is an important variable when looking at the parental support and mental health outcomes among adolescents. However, the strength of the association varies across contexts. Our hypothesis is that this differential influence would arise largely as a result of variation in gender role differentiation across cultural contexts. It is likely that in societies that gender role differentiation has become less of an issue, gender difference in patterns of parenting on mental health problems are slowly fading.

Implications

Our study has both research and practical implications. First, most of the research on parenting has focused largely on the family, whereas few if any studies look at multilevel influences especially country-level correlates. Our findings indicate that there is a need for more research that takes a multilevel perspective. With the existence of many large-scale international datasets that have collected data in a similar manner across contexts, more multilevel research is feasible. From a practical perspective, our study shows that the positive association of parental support with mental health outcomes is largely universal. Given the large burden of disease attributable to mental health problems (Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, & McGorry, 2007) in LAMICs and emerging economies, there is a need to invest in large-scale interventions aimed at enhancing parenting skills and the relationship between adolescents and their parents.

Limitations

Our findings provide new insights into how parental support and mental health outcomes are associated across different settings and factors that moderate this relationship. However, the study has its limitations, in particular the quality of our measures. Being part of a large scale survey, the use of brief measures is inevitable; this choice comes with the likely consequences of low reliability of the measure and the danger that we do not adequately measure the construct of interest. Despite this shortcoming we believe that the study provides sufficiently novel insight.

Conclusion

Adolescents who report higher parental support also report better mental health outcomes, although the relationship between the two is moderated by country level socioeconomical development. There is a need to implement parenting programmes among adolescents as an approach to deal with the large public health problem of poor mental health in many LAMICs and emerging economies.

References


Peer-Reviewed Articles


Challenges of Collecting Attachment and Maternal Sensitivity Video Data in Zambia: An Insider’s Commentary

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The use of video as data collection tool has been widely used in several research studies within psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education (Jewitt, 2012). In the psychological and attachment research fields, video data have been and continue to be a significant resource for measuring dyadic relationships (e.g., infant attachment patterns and sensitivity). For instance, there are several measurement tools of attachment quality such as the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978, 2014) being the first and among the most robust measurement tools of attachment quality. Yet, SSP relies on video footage of the dyadic interaction to measure attachment. One advantage of video/observational data, as opposed to questionnaire/quantitative data is the fact that video data offers researchers access to naturally occurring data (Jewitt, 2012) as well as laboratory data, which further aids in assessing dyadic relationship patterns. However, in spite of video being useful investigative tool, there is paucity of narratives on how researchers experience the use of video in a research context and the response of research participants towards this tool. This commentary represents an attempt to report the use of video recording as a useful data collection tool in Zambia and the challenges that confront researchers based on the experiences of two early career young scholars.

Data for this study were collected in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Zambia is located in the southern region of Central Africa, with a population of 14 million inhabitants and a land area of approximately 750, 000 square kilometers. It has 10 provinces. Zambia is a highly urbanized country, with the majority of the population living in the Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces (Central Statistics Office, 2012). Zambia is a multi-lingual society with 73 ethnic groups. Religion has always occupied a significant place in the Zambian family system, with the majority of people being Christian (Central Statistics Office, 2012). Zambia has a rich cultural heritage, with deep-rooted collectivistic tendencies that are closely knit together, common in most African societies. This helps preserve cultures but can also hinder the acquisition and assimilation of new ideologies. The participation of kin (e.g., siblings, grandparents, close relatives) in parenting is a common feature. Child rearing is considered a collective responsibility. However, in spite of its rich culture, very few studies have assessed quality of childcare and attachment in this context.

The paucity of research on child-care in Africa and other minority (under-represented in parenting research) cultures is well acknowledged in the literature. Research on parenting is dominated by studies conducted in Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), although it is widely recognized that human behavior in general, and parenting and child development in particular are influenced by cultural contexts (Harkness & Super, 1992). When it comes to attachment research, van IJzendoorn and Sagi (2008) rightly acknowledged that attachment research output in non-Western contexts is absurdly small. This reality inspired our research in Zambia on ‘sibling and grandparental childcare’ to investigate infant attachment patterns and the emotional availability of diverse caregivers. We instituted an ambitious inter-generational study targeting 80 families (80 infants, 80 siblings, 80 mothers, and 80 grandmothers) to obtain at least 93 hours (5,600 minutes) of video footage. We were interested in measuring infant attachment to the mother and to the sibling (3,200 minutes of the SSP; Ainsworth et al., 1978) and assess infant attachment. In addition, we also measured the emotional availability of siblings, mothers and grandmothers to the infant (2,400 minutes of video-recorded free play sessions).

Before the actual data collection, the authors observed and trained in the procedural aspects of collecting SSP data (Ainsworth, et al., 1978). The SSP (Ainsworth et al., 1978, 2014) is a laboratory procedure that consists of a series of two separation and two reunion episodes of the attachment figure and the infant with the goal of heightening infant attachment behavior (e.g., proximity seeking, contact maintenance). In this study, the SSP was conducted twice, once with mother and infant and once with sibling and infant. Based on the infant’s behavior during the SSP, infant-caregiver relationships were assigned to one of four attachment relationship classifications: secure (B); insecure-avoidant (A); insecure-resistant/amibivalent (C); and disorganized/disoriented (D) (Ainsworth et al., 1978, 2014; Main & Solomon, 1990). This was coupled with an extensive literature review of attachment and infant and maternal sensitivity data collection procedures, while gaining access to the research context and different ways of engaging with participants by also ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study. In addition, we equipped ourselves with information on the various ethical issues that we would potentially encounter in the field, such as confidentiality, storage of video data and protection of participants from harm.
In spite of the rich insight and orientation from accomplished scholars and available literature, we found ourselves ill-prepared for the field realities of collecting video data in a Zambian context, a context we could loosely generalize as African, because it shares several characteristics common in many other African countries. This experience did not only challenge what we had learned and read but also called for re-strategizing. We found ourselves stranded for eight months without a single video observation of a family. We contacted churches, community centers, schools, and embarked on massive explanations on the study and the benefits. These meetings managed to elicit excitement among potential participants and many were willing to participate but only if we limited our inquiry to collecting questionnaire, not video data. We found ourselves going back and forth and when we realized that we were not making progress, we decided to camp in two communities in Lusaka (the capital of Zambia) working with community institutions who might have helped us with the recruitment process. We invested a lot time explaining the purpose of the research, procedure, and ethical issues. In spite of building trust with these institutions and groups of women recruiters, this did not remove the skepticism and discomfort concerning our video recordings. This situation was exacerbated by a further requirement to invite participants at the University laboratory for the SSP as to assess infant attachment to both mothers and siblings. This procedure required a video recording of 20 minutes interaction between infant and mother/sibling. We were in a situation where explanations to participants were not enough and we had to invite the community recruiters to the University laboratory to acquaint them with the procedural aspects of the SSP, with what the SSP involved and what the participants were required to do. Having community recruiters assured the participants in the lab and knowing the procedure bolstered some confidence in the whole process of data collection. Nevertheless, the fact that we did not allow participants going into the laboratory with their mobile phone (this is un-procedural) heightened the suspicion of the motive on the part of the researcher. The separations in the strange situation procedure which require mothers to leave the baby with the stranger or alone during the procedure were also received with skepticism.

Though the benefits of caregiver sensitivity and attachment are well acknowledged by childcare institutions in Zambia, it was surprising that many of these institutions that we contacted to help with the recruitment were reluctant to the idea of using videos to record interactions between caregivers and infants. This is in spite of the research having been approved by the University of Zambia School of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Committees. We were fortunate enough when two community centers agreed and allowed us access to their team to help with recruitment of participants. With the help of this team, we managed to recruit over 100 families. We managed to administer questionnaires in these families, collecting background variables and family characteristics (e.g., age, education, ethnicity etc.), parenting beliefs to more than 88 families.

On the verge on our breakthrough, more challenges emerged. We encountered not only cultural but religious and superstitious barriers to our work in the field. When we started working in the field, word started going around that we were satanists, exacerbated by a recent incident of a ritual murder that took place in our city. This led many families that had already enrolled on the study to withdraw. Sadly, even those who had visited the laboratory for the first observation (the study involved two University lab visits) were affected and withdrew on account of their suspecting neighbors or family members. Even the use of well-trained recruiters who were known in these communities, understood their language and culture did not ease the suspicion of the use of videos among the participants.

Our study experience helped us realize the importance of contextual methodologies and enlightened us on issues that researches (should expect to) face when collecting video data in a context characterized by different beliefs. Further, in hindsight, this research experience opened up the truth about ethical practice in relation to research participants. The skepticism, we later came to learn, is based on past experiences with other researchers, especially those funded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) using video data to obtain larger funding to benefit themselves and not the participants. They claimed that these researchers often post pictures and videos for fundraising without their consent. Therefore, academicians and scientists no longer have it easy as many potential participants are reluctant to be video recorded. Thus, even if a researcher explains the benefits of the study, it does little to change participants’ views on video data recording. Whilst Western contexts such as the United States and the Netherlands have benefited from research informed by observational video data, Zambia remains behind because of participant’s reactions to the use of video as a means for data collection. Perhaps, this situation can in part explain the low output of studies using observational data in Zambia and Africa as a whole, as researchers prefer the use of questionnaires and surveys as popular data collection tools, accepted by available samples.

Unfortunately, behavioral researchers in Zambia still face an uphill challenge to convince participants on the use of video data. Video data remains among the most important resources of data to behavioral scientists if they are to answer many challenges related to parenting, stress, attachment, poverty and prove their relevance to society. Our field experience in the use of video as a tool for data collection opened up questions related to cultural beliefs and technology in research. This experience opens a significant ethical question and reminds researchers about the need to be ethical when collecting video data. Unfortunately for researchers conducting research in Africa, besides the ethical issues, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to instill trust in participants. Particularly, assuring them that the data collected will be used for the purposes it was meant to. In addition, early career researchers need to prepare themselves to negotiate with cultural/religious beliefs.

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Perhaps, the real questions that confronted us and continue posing a challenge in Zambia when collecting video data are:

1. How can researchers transcend cultural and religious beliefs that stifle the use of video tools in data collection?
2. How can behavioral researchers convince communities that the good of video data outweighs the harm?

There is no denying that the advent of the smartphone and other video technologies have changed the way research, particularly data collection, is conducted around the world. African early career researchers, particularly in Zambia, cannot lag behind in this technological age due to religious-cultural beliefs and other misgivings from participants, hence the need to answer the questions posed above. The questions demand real answers, if video technologies can be used to provide answers to questions relating to parenting relationships, best captured within the context of the dyadic interaction. It should be noted that the advent of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa has witnessed an increase in the number of children living in institutional care under non-biological caregivers. Thus, video as a data collection tool that can capture dyadic interaction better than most tools, provides a more credible resource in an empirical attempt to assess the quality of care, attachment patterns, and caregiver sensitivity.

References

Greek Early Career Psychologists in Academia

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Introduction

Greece is experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis especially pronounced since 2009 (European Commission, 2009), which has forced higher education institutions to impose severe cuts in teaching, research, staff, and infrastructure (European University Association, 2015). The purpose of this article is to present the many challenges alongside some opportunity such crisis presents for early career psychologists in academic settings. First, I present the current economic and social conditions in Greece in order to explain the living standards for early career psychologists. Second, I describe the impact of the Greek economic crisis on higher education by underlining the function of public and private institutions that make pursuing of an academic path quite challenging for early career psychologists. Third, I discuss the consequences of the reduced government spending on research activities with a negative effect on the opportunities for early career psychologists to engage in research. Fourth, I present the particular struggles that Greek early career psychologists face in the above conditions. Last, I discuss the opportunities that could arise from a constitutional and educational reform in public and private higher education for early career psychologists in Greece.

Current Economic and Social Conditions in Greece

Greece is in southeastern Europe at the point where the Balkan Peninsula juts into the Mediterranean Sea and forms a land-based connection to Anatolia and the Middle East (Sutton, 2001). Greece shares borders in the north with Turkey, Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Albania, and is member in the European Union since 1979. The global economic crisis that began in the summer of 2007 had a devastating impact across Europe, especially the euro area (European Commission, 2009). Greece, for example, has faced a considerable economic, political, and social turmoil since 2009, as the country’s debt was (and still is) enormous. Greece has been in the media spotlight internationally and under strong critique and pressure by its co-member states of the European Union to implement strict austerity measures and balance its deficits. Inevitable results of such pressures have been the continuous economic recession and the significant reductions in government spending in various sectors, the tax boost, and a skyrocket increase in unemployment (at 24.6% in August 2015; Eurostat, 2015). The country is currently under the supervision and financial assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European governments to implement structural reforms. Even though these reforms are considered necessary in order for Greece to balance its financial deficits, their rapid implementation is challenging, as they are unpopular to the Greek population (OECD, 2012). These tough economic times have created a stressful, insecure and unstable personal and working environment for early career psychologists.

Early career psychologists have to adjust to the new reality: Lower incomes, deterioration of their working and living conditions, and reduced benefits of the social welfare systems. Moreover, they have to live with a constant threat that the country will bankrupt with significant consequences not only for their everyday lives but also their future. Studies that have examined the mental health of the Greek population by asking the participants to self-rate their health before and during the economic crisis have confirmed the negative pervasive impact of this reality on their mental health (Zavras, Tsiantou, Pavi, Mylona, & Kyriopoulos, 2012). For example, there was an increase in prevalence rates of major depression in the Greek population from 3.3% in 2008 to 8.2% in 2011 (Economou, Madianos, Peppou, Patelakis, & Stefanis, 2013), and a significant association between major depression and economic hardship. Thus, there has been already evidence that the continuous recession and severe austerity measures have negatively influenced the health and well-being of the Greek population. These economic hardships can be a particular stressful life experience for early career psychologists as they can disrupt their transition from trainee to academic faculty member.

The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Academic Settings

The economic crisis has had a tremendous effect on higher education systems internationally. Public expenditure on educational institutions decreased between 2010-2012 as a response to the economic crisis globally (OECD, 2015). Public funding in the European universities on average represents close to 75% of financial structures (European University Association, 2011). Hence, it is noteworthy that few higher education systems have been left unaffected by the reduction in public spending across Europe. The type and level of influence on higher education institutions in each country depends on the damaging impact of the financial and economic crisis in their respective national economies. The decrease public funding in the Greek universities and the general economic hardships have limited the academic opportunities for early career psychologists. Early career psychologists struggle to keep their academic positions, experience significant wage cuts and deteriorating working conditions, and battle to achieve tenure as the available positions in academic and research settings are shrinking.
The Public Higher Education in Greece

Greek higher education is fully regulated by the state and is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The Greek Constitution of 1975 (Article 16) states that higher education is free for all citizens (Kremmyda, 2013). The underlying idea is to provide an egalitarian and free access to all citizens in the universities. Although Greece is a small country, its 22 universities and 14 technological institutes are spread over a huge geographical area (including many islands), often established for local political and economic reasons rather than real academic needs (European University Association, 2011). A free higher education provides the opportunity for studying with no tuition and without the accumulation of an educational depth for early career psychologists. At the same time, Greeks spend privately more than the state in order to prepare for the public university entrance examinations and while studying at the university (Psalcharopoulos & Papakonstantinou, 2005). It is also important to note that the funding for the public tertiary institutions comes and depends only from the central government. Thus, the reduction in public spending for higher education institutions has had a tremendous impact on early career psychologists’ present and future working conditions and opportunities in academia.

The European University Association (2015) that monitors the impact of the economic crisis on public funding for universities in Europe reports that since 2008 Greece has implemented the highest cuts in public funding from the European countries. Specifically, the Greek government cut by almost 50% the higher education budgets (European University Association, 2015). These reductions do not include the 30% decrease of staff costs - university employees are civil servants - which have been implemented in the universities as part of the cuts in the entire public service (European University Association, 2011). The wage cuts of the early career faculty members and researchers have threatened their ability to support their living. At the same time, the conditions of their working environment have deteriorated. For example, the public universities’ buildings often function with no heating in the winter months, are not cleaned properly and lack appropriate electronic tools (e.g., computers, projectors) and technical support.

In addition, there is an increasing demand for higher education as more people seek education as a remedy to the rising unemployment with the goal to improve their competitiveness, retrain and redefine their career goals (European University Association, 2011). Higher education institutions are challenged to balance the growing student numbers and reduced spending in order to maintain high quality of their education. Despite the high demand for higher education the public funding cuts have limited the wages of the early career psychologists or the opening of new faculty positions. Another frequent phenomenon is for early career psychologists to get paid months later or even a year later after they had completed their work in academic settings. This can disrupt their family’s present and future economic planning and compile debt as they lack the financial means to support their living.

More so, due to the constant strikes and great amount of protests evoked by the economic situation and the educational reform that is underway, public universities often do not operate for a significant amount of days during the academic year. For example, during 2013-2014 the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens was closed for three months. Faculty and students were not allowed to enter the university offices and buildings, missed a lot of classes and the academic semester was either shortened (so some of the sessions were entirely lost) or extended during the summer months. These events can jeopardize the work of early career psychologists, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in public universities. Managing teaching, research and publications in their departments can be a challenge for early career psychologists as access to the university’s buildings and research facilities is confined, often for an indefinite time, and the entire academic year gets delayed postponing and disrupting even their probability for academic tenure.

The Private Higher Education in Greece

Even though the Greek constitution prohibits the recognition of foreign and private higher education institutions within Greece, there are around 40 private tertiary colleges (Kremmyda, 2013). The majority of these private colleges offer programs through collaborations, partnerships, and monitoring of foreign universities, mostly from the United Kingdom and the United States (Kremmyda, 2013; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). Students that have not passed the public university entrance examinations or have entered undergraduate programs that were not their first choice, study in private colleges. The Greek government or Greek public education institutions do not recognize the qualifications and degrees of these non-state institutions within the public sector. These limit the educational and professional aspirations of students from private degree-granting colleges in Greece as its graduates cannot apply for employment in the public sector, obtain professional license, or continue their postgraduate studies at public universities (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). Early career psychologists’ employment in private colleges cannot count as previous work experience when hired or promoted in academic ranks by public universities. The European Union has pushed for the accreditation of the professional qualifications of graduates from private colleges since 2005 (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). The Greek government also introduced a law to monitor and legalize the establishment and operation of private colleges in 2008. However, due to the political and academic stir that it provoked, such amendments have not been fully implemented (Kremmyda, 2013). The economic hardship of the Greek population has also affected negatively these private institutions. Their student enrollment has decreased and their academic and maintenance budgets have been reduced. Early career psychologists employed in private colleges experience workload intensification as new faculty members are not hired, reduced income and social benefits and uncertainty about their future career development.
Research Activities

The vast majority of research activity is carried out in higher education sector and public-funded research centers in Greece. As the government and university budgets are shrinking research spending is also decreasing and relies primarily on sources from the European Union (EU). Greece spent just 0.8% of its gross domestic product on research in 2013, which is far below the European Union average of 2.6% (General Secretariat for Research and Technology, 2015). The percentage is even lower for conducting research in social sciences. The budget cuts in scientific research have also other replications for universities and research institutes. Specifically, Greek scientists, especially early career psychologists who work as adjunct faculty, have limited to no access to scientific journals and many publications are likely to disappear from the university libraries (Trachana, 2013). A common practice is for many Greek early career psychologists to contact friends and colleagues abroad to send them the latest publications in order to be informed about international contributions in their field as personal subscriptions to journals are not affordable to them (Trachana, 2013). Thus, there are fewer opportunities to engage in research for early career psychologists under these conditions. At the same time, early career psychologists are challenged to follow up the latest psychological research, which is a necessary condition for their academic aspirations.

Challenges for Early Career Psychologists

These unfavorable conditions have created a hostile academic and research environment for young scholars and researchers of psychology in Greece. Despite the academic staff shortages, there are limited opportunities for early career psychologists to pursue an academic career due to the reduction of the new entrant positions in the public universities. The early career psychologists teach mainly as adjunct faculty in public universities and even those who are elected in one of the few permanent full time positions need to wait even years until they are appointed due to the budget deficit (Trachana, 2013). However, due to the need of early career psychologists to acquire experience and enter the field they decide to accept part-time teaching positions even when they frequently do not come with a salary. Failure to renew the university personnel with younger scientists and scholars can act as a barrier towards a culture of continuous innovation that the entire university community needs.

The reduced funding has also affected the research opportunities, especially in the area of social sciences (General Secretariat for Research and Technology, 2015). There are limited funds for research projects in the field of psychology, and mainly through the European Union. The available research positions are poorly paid and financed research careers are unattractive for novice career psychologists. Under these conditions, it is difficult for early career psychologists to focus on publishing, procuring funds, and presenting research. Engaging in research has almost become a hobby endeavor. A big number of early career psychologists conduct research projects in their free time with minimum to no existent compensation in order to be able to follow their research interests and advance their academic career.

Early career psychologists are also employed part-time in the private colleges. However, these few available positions focus mainly in teaching and there are not funds to support their research. The economic restrictions also make challenging for early career psychologists to continue their career development. For example, it is extremely difficult to acquire the funds to attend conferences and advance their international training abroad. Early career psychologists rely mainly on personal funds for professional development and networking. They are under a lot of stress to pursue an academic career, balance their finances and stay optimistic.

The economic crisis poses a challenge at a personal level as well for early career psychologists. They need not only to cope with everyday economic adversities but as young scholars to balance personal and professional life. Some early career psychologists may face unique challenges such as starting a family, parenting, finding work and providing a sustainable income. Greek early career psychologists have to manage the risk of unemployment, wage cut and loss of economic independence as well as cope with the stress, anxiety, frustration and disappointment. They need to be resilient against the economic hardships and continuous changes and to adjust in flexible and versatile working conditions.

Brain Drain

The financial, professional and social pressures have led a lot of early career psychologists to move abroad and pursue better life conditions. This brain-drain, migration of highly educated population, has considerable implications as highly skilled workers who represent the human capital of a country depart (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis, 2013). The majority of the graduates (74.0% hold a masters’ degree and 51.0% a doctoral degree) move to the United Kingdom and the United States (General Secretariat for Research and Technology, 2015). Early career psychologists move to countries where the field of psychology is very developed and their skills and expertise are valued. Thus, Greece is losing its most highly educated generation who could play a leading role in improving the economic and social conditions.

From Crisis to Opportunity

Reform of higher education systems appears to be a priority in the context of globalization and continuous economic crisis across Europe (OECD, 2012). The European Union (EU) through the Bologna Agreement (1999) attempted to link the educational systems of its members and create a common framework and European standards (Kremmyda, 2013). The member countries need to adapt their policies, curriculum, learning objectives and economic and administrative function of their higher education institutions.
This common framework will benefit the mobility of students among European universities (Kremmyda, 2013). A constitutional and educational reform is necessary in order to recognize private colleges and universities in Greece. This would have several economic and social benefits for Greece (Kremmyda, 2013; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). Local private colleges will gain university status through an organized and well-defined quality assurance system (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). It will also attract foreign universities to establish transnational partnerships and branch campuses in Greece (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). Public universities would have the opportunity to explore the possibility of private funding and advance partnerships with foreign higher education institutions. New employment opportunities for teaching and research staff would develop for early career psychologists (Kremmyda, 2013).

The establishment of non-state non-profit universities could not only cover the high need for education and continuous training for students in time of the economic crisis but could also attract international students. Greece could attract a number of students from the Balkans, Europe, Africa, Asia and even the United States and Australia and become an international academic center in the South of Europe. Its geographical position, the nice climate and long history can place her at the front end of education in the 21st century.

There is a high value of education in Greece as it is obvious in the large pool of graduates with tertiary education (General Secretariat for Research and Technology, 2015). Greek students have also a long tradition of pursuing their undergraduate and graduate studies abroad (Persianis, 2000). A number of these scholars after completing their doctorate degrees in different areas of psychology have returned and are currently living in Greece. These highly educated and trained scholars could be valuable asset for higher education institutions, for knowledge production and economy as well. They can offer their international experience in teaching, research and funding in psychology departments of higher education institutions and research establishments. This could lead to further development of the psychology as a discipline as well as its subfields in Greece.

Nevertheless, as the economic recession continues to prevail in Greece more research is needed on the immediate and long-term impact of recession on health and well-being. There is an impetus need for scientific-based research on how Greek adults, adolescents and children cope with adversity in these challenging times. At the same time, there is a high need to address the mental health inequalities that have emerged as a consequence of the financial crisis and identify interventions to mitigate its effects (Zavras, Tsiantou, Pavi, Mylona, & Kyriopoulos, 2012). It is important to note that despite the unfavorable conditions early career psychologists collaborate and have formed research teams to conduct research in their fields through private funds and the exploitation of opportunities for the development of research institutions, for example in the form of non-governmental organizations or other forms of non-for-profit organizations. Nevertheless, these efforts should be coordinated and further expanded through interdisciplinary research among public and private higher education institutions and research centers.

Early career psychologists could play a leading role in this research-based knowledge era, inform social, health and economic policy and prepare for the post-crisis world.

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Teaching Psychology in Zambia

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Experiences and Challenges Teaching Psychology in Zambia

Lecturing in psychology and conducting behavioral research are the core duties for many psychologists employed in higher learning institutions. This is not different from my core duties at the University of Zambia (UNZA). Although, lecturing and conducting research are my main duties, lecturing is almost 80% of my workload. While research is one of the output measures that is used by the university administration to promote a lecturer, the environment is not enabling because there is no clear percentage allocation to research and teaching. In addition, the Ministry of Education and the University do not have reliable research funds that researchers can apply to. To place this paper into context, a brief background of higher education in Zambia will be discussed.

Background of Higher Education and Psychology in Zambia

UNZA is the oldest and biggest public university in the country and was founded in 1966. In 1987, Copperbelt University was established followed by Mulungushi University in 2008 (Kanyengo, 2009). Since then, four colleges, Palabana, Kwame Nkrumah, Kitwe Teachers College and Chalimbana colleges have been upgraded to universities and two other universities are currently being built namely Paul Mushindo and Robert Makasa Universities. UNZA is the only public university that offers psychology as a program of study. Except for a few private universities, all other public universities offer psychology as a subject within another program.

Psychology at UNZA started with the Human Development Research Unit (HDRU) at the Institute for Social Research (later renamed the Institute for African Studies, and then the Institute of Economic and Social Research - INESOR), shortly after the Institute was incorporated within the University at its inception in 1965. Dr. Alastair Heron, from the United Kingdom who was Director of the Institute, was UNZA’s first Professor of Psychology. Over a decade and a half ago when I was an undergraduate student, an average of five undergraduate students graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in psychology from this department. Today approximately 50 students graduate with a degree in psychology each year. The increase in the number of graduates is a result of an increase in the number of faculty members and awareness about what psychology is and the job prospects available in the country.

My Teaching Experiences and Challenges

I joined the University in 2009 as a lecturer of psychology at the Department of Psychology. Prior to my appointment, I served as a tutor in the department following receiving an award of a staff development fellowship which enabled me to pursue a master degree in child and adolescent psychology. When I joined the teaching staff, I used to take undergraduate students in developmental psychology (formerly known as child and adolescent psychology). A year after, I also taught psychology of sensation and perception, and test and measurement. Currently I am teaching research methods and psychometrics. Throughout my six years of experience teaching undergraduates, I have learnt that most of these students think psychology is unnecessarily difficult compared to other social sciences in the school that also happen to be more marketable in the country than psychology. Students also complain that psychology is too statistical in nature and has a lot of psychological report writing tasks. Students think psychology is too systematic (methodical) and bulky especially during the first two years of the program. As a result of these perceptions, some sections of the university are advocating that psychology should be placed under the school of natural sciences as opposed to social science.

Teaching psychology in a third world country requires creativity so that students can see the direct application to industry and life. Psychology is seen as the top most level of the pyramid of relevance (important but not pressing needs of society) compared to economics and development studies that are often seen as the courses at the bottom of the pyramid (pressing needs for surviving economy) that can drive the economy from its doldrums. Although the picture is gradually changing, this change is slow and undermines the most important thing that any human being or employee should have which is good mental health. Creativity is often applied by discussing current issues in our country that can be solved by psychological applications given that there are very few Zambian publications on psychology. It is for this reason that the Department introduced two applied courses; Community Psychology and African Psychology so that students can begin to appreciate psychology within our context. Experiments are important in the field of psychology, however, students are often not exposed to such due to lack of facilities. Therefore, teaching psychology courses with experiments requires creativity. For example, when I was teaching sensation and perception, I conducted an experiment of detection threshold using the following materials: one teaspoon of...
sugar in two gallons of water, a drop of perfume diffused in one cubicle of the three with equal size, a tick of a wrist watch hidden between text books in one of the three cubicles of equal sizes. Students were then asked to detect sugar from three containers with one containing sugar, detect perfume and tick of the wrist watch from one of the three cubicles. The observer recorded response from which students were given a task to write a psychological report on stimuli detection. Variables were controlled to make sure the experiment was a success. For example students were not allowed to take sweets or food stuff for two hours before the experiment, to wear a wrist watch and perfume before and during the experiment in order to reduce sensory adaptation.

The biggest challenge that I face, like my other lecturer colleagues, is lack of teaching material. The library is mostly stocked with outdated books. In cases where we have up to date reading materials, the numbers are not adequate to meet the demands of students. Kanyengo (2009) observed that owing to the increased student population, the library at UNZA has been forced to remove some of the popular reading materials from the open shelf to a reserve collection and devise a system that would allow every student equal access to the information resources. The reserve collection only allows reading materials to be borrowed for use within the library for periods of two and half hours. Further, UNZA has subscribed to the Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), but very few students and teaching staff are able to access them due to weak internet connection and lack of information literacy skills on the part of the users (Kanyengo, 2009). Access to hard copy journals are closed to undergraduate students due to increased incidences of mutilation of journal articles. This situation is compounded by limited research output by the universities and other research institutes in the country. Limited research output is a result of a lack of reliable and sustainable sources of funding and in some cases lack of skills and clear terms of reference for lecturers with regards to research and development. In my case, I share the collection of my articles with students especially those relating to the courses I teach and they are often related to or helpful to the task from the course. Although about 70% of students get a small book allowance, students do not use that money to buy books or when they do buy books, the money can only get one book compared to the demand of books from other courses. An average student takes four courses. Whatever the case, my students are encouraged to cite at least 70% of their work using journal articles. Although my students are encouraged to cite journal articles, many students do not follow this (especially because it is not a rule) and their work is marred with website links.

Conclusions

Teaching psychology and conducting behavioral research in a third world country remain a challenge. More reading and teaching materials, advanced laboratories and clinics are needed. More importantly, there is a need to increase awareness on the importance of psychology as a sub-

References

Reflections: Teaching Abroad

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I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Stockholm University. I am a lifespan developmental psychologist. I teach several courses in human development and culture. I have taught and conducted research in the United States and Sweden for several years.

I found it extremely challenging to write this reflection. What, if anything could be useful to share with colleagues new to teaching in a different country or culture? After questioning the wisdom of my own judgment for taking on this assignment and after a great deal of hand wringing, two ideas materialized. I remembered that as I start a new semester, I often center my attention as a teacher where my passions and strengths are as a scientist. I am interested in culture and human development.

Students that I have worked with, regardless of their nationality, are usually excited to consider topics which differ from their own position. They are often very good at lifting themselves to a global perspective. Supporting this change of perspective involves my reflection and choice of internationally relevant readings as well as designing activities that encourage reflection regarding the meaning of “culture” and how it may impact or have importance to our development (Cohen, 2009; Jensen, 2012). Taking a global viewpoint of a given scholarly topic has some obvious as well as subtle advantages (e.g., Miglietti, 2015). These include achieving greater correspondence to the actual phenomena under consideration, and a way to understand the limitations of all of our perspectives, everyone in the classroom. A global perspective is in some ways a great equalizer as we are all novices from this profound standpoint.

There is much to be said about this topic, but to pick one other point to emphasize, I would say that all teachers face opportunities which they may find to be distinct challenges at particular moments. Teaching in a new country or context that you do not have an insider’s perspective to, expect to make some mistakes (Albaum, 2011). You may also have unique opportunities/challenges (Albaum, 2011; Donald, 2007). For example with respect to language, what is respectful and fair, what is humorous, are attempts at humor in the classroom even appropriate, the selection of topics to discuss and values as they are reflected in the course content (e.g., gender, sexuality, social privilege and marginalization), how to engage students in class, after class names and titles, or finding pedagogical methods that students can live with or even thrive. Taking the perspective as a teacher that this – the course you are teaching – is a work in progress, that it is unfinished, that it can be better, I have found to be helpful in meeting many of the likely fumbles and puzzles into sincere, actual opportunities to reach, connect, and learn from one’s students.

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The Ecuador Professional Preparation Program: Training Scientist-Practitioners through Immersion in Culture

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**Abstract**

The current article describes a unique training opportunity for graduate student trainees and mental health professionals to immerse themselves in the culture of Quito, Ecuador while obtaining further training in psychology. As part of the Ecuador Professional Preparation Program, trainees and their academic advisers may elect to conduct IRB-approved research. Reported herein is a small-scale qualitative analysis of psychologists’ use of empirically based assessment and treatment with children and adolescents in Quito, Ecuador.

*Keywords:* multi-cultural psychology, evidence-based practice, empirically supported treatments, psychology in Ecuador, training issues

Given that Spanish is the second-most widely used language globally, there is an increasing need for bilingual and culturally competent mental health care and education professionals. The Ecuador Professional Preparation Program (EPPP) provides a unique opportunity to obtain cross-cultural professional experience in mental health care or as an education professional while traveling to Quito, Ecuador, South America. The third author and Anton Robert Berzins, Psy.D. organized and have been coordinating the EPPP for 8 years, establishing close connections with communities in Quito, Ecuador and fostering development of cultural competencies in Clinical and School psychology trainees. The program is open to trainees who have been admitted to graduate programs in mental health or education as well as professionals in these areas.

The EPPP offers programs of varying length depending on the amount of time an individual wants to be immersed in a different culture. The EPPP offers three programs in Quito: A four-week immersion, a two-week cultural boost and a one-week snapshot of cultural immersion. All of these programs offer trainees the opportunity to improve their Spanish-speaking skills or proficiency, with the goal of increasing confidence in using these skills in a professional setting, increasing knowledge of a different culture, and developing cultural competency. Specifically, trainees acquire an intimate knowledge of the culture of Quito, Ecuador, including the mental health care and educational policies and practices in Quito via the provision of one-on-one Spanish language instruction along with the opportunity to volunteer in either a school, hospital or other clinical setting four days a week throughout the duration of the program.

Participants in the EPPP develop an increased proficiency of written and verbal Spanish through one-on-one Spanish language instruction with certified Spanish language instructors, residence with a host family and work in a public setting. One-on-one Spanish instruction occurs for 16 hours per week (four hours a day across four days) and allows trainees the opportunity to tailor their instruction to meet their personal and professional goals. For example, participants interested in educational psychology can learn to conduct parent consultations in Spanish. An individual interested in clinical or counseling psychology can tailor their individual instruction to learn more advanced vocabulary or acquire skills in conducting intake assessments in Spanish. In addition to the private instruction, trainees develop increased proficiency by living with families whose primary language is Spanish. Living with a ‘host’ family in Quito not only provides participants in the EPPP with additional opportunities to advance their Spanish-speaking proficiency, but also with the opportunity to learn more in depth about the culture of Quito, Ecuador. This full immersion approach allows trainees to develop a more intimate knowledge of daily life in a different culture, and allows the development of personal connections with citizens living in Quito, Ecuador.

A major component of the EPPP is that trainees work in a school, hospital or clinical setting to advance their Spanish-speaking proficiency and develop increased cross-cultural competencies working with these populations. The participants work daily in the mornings at their assigned sites based on training area, and most of these settings serve underprivileged populations. In addition to providing either educational or clinical services, trainees work in a team at their site to develop a project to give back to the community. For example, in a school setting, school psychology trainees may provide reading, writing and mathematics assessments for children and develop an after-school program for children whose parents may work in the evenings. In the clinical setting, clinical psychology trainees provide psychological services for community members who may otherwise be unable to afford such services. Trainees may develop projects, for example, that include community gatherings for the purpose of psychoeducation regarding common mental health concerns (e.g., problematic substance use, identifying symptoms of depression or anxiety) or a social skills workshop for children in the community. Not only does this work to increase Spanish-speaking proficiency, but it also increases cultural competence working in a professional setting and increases knowledge of the mental health care and educational policies in Quito.
In addition to the already-described opportunities, the directors of the EPPP, Tara C. Raines, Ph.D. and Anton Robert Berzins, Psy.D. provide academic opportunities for participants and encourage research that is IRB-approved by the trainee’s ‘academic adviser’s’ academic institution to be conducted as part of the EPPP experience. For example, participants engage in weekly intellectual discussions of relevant topics, such as developing cultural empathy, training of mental health care providers in Ecuador and dissemination or adaptation of common therapeutic techniques from the U.S. to South America. One of the research projects on the dissemination of empirically based assessment and treatment in Ecuador recently undertaken as part of the EPPP will now be discussed.

Introduction

The dissemination of empirically-supported treatments within and outside of the United States has garnered a significant amount of attention in recent years (McHugh & Barlow, 2010; Steele, Elkin, & Roberts, 2007). However, to date, the majority of research regarding this topic has examined whether it is possible to successfully disseminate specific interventions, primarily for adults, outside of the United States as opposed to whether general evidence-based therapeutic techniques (e.g., exposure-based treatments) have been disseminated within the context of therapist training (Neuner et al., 2008; Rawson et al., 2013; Verheul, Van Den Bosch, Koeter, DeRidder, Stinjnen, & Van Den Brink, 2003).

Knowledge regarding the dissemination of evidence-based psychotherapy in Latin American countries is quite sparse, although recent large-scale efforts regarding empirically supported assessment in Spain and Latin American Countries have been noted (Caballo et al., 2010). The dissemination of behavior therapy to Ecuador began in the 1970s (Ardila, 1982), although psychological services are typically provided by therapists based in the city who serve primarily upper-class citizens (Smith & Valarezo, 2013). In contrast, in rural areas, mental health treatment is provided by local healers whose goal is to eliminate the spirit and use psychic energy to heal (Smith & Valarezo, 2013). The limited extant research and disparities in the receipt of mental health services raise the question of how common evidence-based practice is in Ecuador. Therefore, we conducted a small-scale qualitative analysis to examine the treatment techniques employed by a sample of clinicians in Ecuador for common disorders of childhood.

Method

Participants

Participants included 4 licensed psychologists (2 male, 2 female) with a range of approximately 4 to 30 years post-training practice experience working in therapeutic settings in Quito, Ecuador, South America.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via electronic contact or through word-of-mouth. Therapists participated in a brief interview of no longer than 45 minutes duration that consisted of questions about their formal training, typical courses of treatment and techniques used for childhood anxiety, childhood depression, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and basic demographic questions. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The text was then translated from Spanish into English, although back-translation from English to Spanish was not completed. Participants’ responses were coded by one clinical child psychology faculty member and one graduate student. Coders read each description of therapeutic techniques and approaches used with the aforementioned disorders and matched the descriptions to empirically supported or non-supported practices in the U.S. Inter-rater agreement was 98%.

Results

The treatment of anxiety and ODD were the most evidence based of the disorders inquired about, with exposure-based treatments and behavioral parent-training interventions being utilized (McMahon & Kotler, 2008; Silverman, 2008). However, not all treatments nor assessment methods reported were evidence based (anxiety: e.g., hypnosis, catharsis, personality assessment) and (ODD: e.g., biofeedback, MRI, neuropsychological assessment) represent evidence-based practices (EBPs). Depression appeared to be the least empirically-supported as none of the therapists reported using Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy or Interpersonal Therapy (Guerry, Prinstein, Van Meter, & Southam-Gerow, 2015). However, the approaches mentioned, such as improving self-concept, were not inconsistent with findings in the developmental psychotherapy literature (Renouf & Harter, 1990). Examples of non-evidenced based depression treatments were homeopathy (for exception, see St. John’s Wort, Gaster & Holroyd, 2000) and inferring personality traits from play. Treatment of ADHD was consistent across therapists, regardless of theoretical orientation. The approach for ADHD was comprised of multiple treatment approaches that included: non-supported (e.g., physical activity), probably efficacious (e.g., neurofeedback training), well-established (e.g., pharmacological, behavioral parent training), and experimental techniques (e.g., technology-based interventions to improve concentration, such as games) (Evans, Owens & Bunford, 2014).

Discussion

Evidence-based assessment appeared to be lacking with unstructured clinical interviews, IQ, and personality tests being noted for anxiety, depression, and oppositional defiant disorder. However, there was strong agreement among therapists for the need for neuropsychological testing to diagnose and treat ADHD.
Mixed results regarding EBPs, which include assessment methods/measures and treatments, were reported for anxiety disorders and ODD. These results imply that limited progress in disseminating EBPs has been made, and imply that further progress is needed, most notably in the areas of depression and ADHD. Obviously, further study with larger sample sizes is warranted before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Dissemination of EBPs may be a challenge given the shorter length of training in Ecuador (5 years post high school, Smith & Valarezo, 2013) and the fact that training psychologists are schooled in a single theoretical orientation. Given that empirically supported treatments (ESTs) are implemented based on psychiatric diagnosis, further study of the accuracy of diagnosis in Ecuador is necessary, given the lack of empirically supported assessment practices. In addition, acceptability of ESTs should be studied given anecdotal evidence regarding the importance ascribed to single-session cathartic sessions, at least by adults. In addition, client expectations regarding the use of ESTs in Ecuador should be explored given the large literature demonstrating that expectancies impact therapeutic outcome (e.g., Kirsch, 2014; Kirsch & Lynn, 1999).

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The third author received authorship for her contributions to the description of the EPPP program as opposed to the research described herein.
Current Issues Around the Globe

Positive Youth Development of Immigrant Children and Youth: Why Bother?

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Immigrants represent one of the fastest growing segments of several host nations across the globe, currently making up nearly 232 million people (Global Migration Group & UNESCO, 2009). Immigrant children and youth are particularly vulnerable to challenges related to discrimination, social exclusion and poor well-being (Dimitrova, Chasiotis, & van de Vijver, 2015). These challenges have led to increased attention to the psychological welfare of immigrants in developmental, educational, mental health, and political fields as well as efforts to promote their well-being. Yet, much of the current research on immigrants has primarily focused on mental ill-health or on the lack of academic success from a deficit perspective. Nevertheless, there are notable efforts to document positive adaptation. For example, the so-called “immigrant paradox” is a population-level phenomenon in the US wherein foreign-born (or less acculturated) immigrant youth have more optimal developmental outcomes than host country born youth (Dimitrova et al., 2015; Garcia Coll, & Marks, 2012).

The aim of the initiative described in this paper was to generate new insight on explanatory mechanisms on what is presently known about positive youth development (PYD) and positive adaptation of immigrant youth from a global perspective. The mission statement presented in this paper has been discussed in the framework of a meeting involving top acculturation and PYD researchers in a global context gathering an international, multidisciplinary and multisectorial panel of experts to address the explanatory mechanisms in complexities of immigration contexts in a variety of countries. The meeting entitled Explaining Positive Adaptation of Immigrant Youth across Cultures was held on the Island of Hydra, Greece, September 16-20, 2015 and was organized by Radosveta Dimitrova on behalf of Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Racial and Ethnic Issues Committee and Frosso Motti-Stefanidi on behalf of SRCD International Affairs Committee in collaboration with the European Association of Developmental Psychology (EADP) and the European Association for Research on Adolescence (EARA). The meeting was funded by the SRCD in line with the SRCD Strategic Plan Initiatives to generate new insight on explanatory mechanisms on what is presently known about positive youth development (PYD) and positive adaptation of immigrant youth from a global perspective. The organization of this meeting has provided a venue for collaboration between SRCD with the European Association of Developmental Psychology (EADP) and the European Association of Research in Adolescence (EARA). The mission statement working group was represented by Cynthia García Coll (Carlos Albizu University, Puerto Rico), Frosso Motti-Stefanidi (University of Athens, Greece), Brit Oppedal (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Norway), Vassilis Pavlopoulos (University of Athens, Greece), Dagmar Strohmeier (University of Applied Sciences of Upper Austria, Austria) and Fons van de Vijver (Tilburg University, The Netherlands). All members of the experts’ meeting adopted the mission statement, including Amina Abubakar Ali (Lancaster University, UK), Jens Asendorpf (Humboldt University Berlin, Germany), Radosveta Dimitrova (Stockholm University, Sweden), Gail M. Ferguson (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA), Laura Ferrer-Wreder (Stockholm University, Sweden), Jennifer Lansford (Duke University, USA), David Lackland Sam (University of Bergen, Norway), Emilie Phillips Smith (University of Georgia, USA) and Peter F. Titzmann 8University of Zurich, Switzerland). Martyn Barrett (University of Surrey, UK) and Amy Marks (Suffolk University, USA) had also provided helpful input and comments on issues of immigrant youth adaptation and well-being. Below is the summary of the mission statement developed during the meeting.

Positive Development of Immigrant Children and Youth: Why Bother?

It is in the best interest of Europe and other receiving countries to have successful adaptations among their immigrant populations. The current refugee influx renders this a particularly timely and pressing issue. However, the successful adaptation of immigrants to new lands is also all the more important in light of increasing life expectancies and decreasing birth rates in receiving societies. According to recent reports of the World Bank (2015), despite a world population growth rate of 1.2 %, Western industrialized societies are seeing lower population rates, usually below 10% and birth rates substantially lower compared to developing countries (Akkoc, 2015). Immigrant populations residing in these countries, contribute to increase both overall birth rates and economic benefits. In fact, in rapidly ageing countries, the contribution into the social security system of immigrant is much larger than their cost (Peri, 2011). As a result, for example, nonimmigrant senior citizens’ retirement pensions partly depend on the economic contribution of immigrants. In this context, immigrants are expected to become in the next decades an important force in the economies of receiving societies and also to contribute to the care and support of the aging nonimmigrant, as well as immigrant, populations (Hernandez, 2012). It is therefore of utmost importance to promote well informed policies and practices for immigrant children and youth based on evidence showing that:

- Children's positive adaptations and well-being provide the foundation for healthy and productive adult lives (Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chryssochoou, Sam, & Phinney, 2012; UNICEF, 2013). Investing in childcare, education, and health related prevention and intervention programs comes with multiple economic and social returns, including more labor participation and reduction of crime (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Lundberg & Wuerml, 2012). For some host societies without such programs,
immigrant youths’ well-being and educational prospects may deteriorate as they age and acculturate to their new environments.

- Providing immigrant families with economic opportunities and reducing barriers to obtain adequate employment equips parents to raise well-adjusted and productive citizens (Stoessel, Titzmann, & Silbereisen, 2011). It has been shown that immigrants in many countries pay more in taxes over their life course than they receive from the social benefits (Dustmann & Frattini, 2013). Without economic opportunities, citizenship documentation, or a clear path to citizenship, children and families suffer in their health and well-being (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011).

- Policies toward immigrants are important for the successful adaptation of immigrant youth (Filindra, Blanding, & Garcia Coll, 2011). However, countries differ in their policies toward immigrants (Helbling, 2013; Huddleston, Niessen, Chaoimh, & White, 2011). Immigrant youth do better in countries with more integration-oriented policies; assimilation policies can be counter-productive (Yağmur & Van de Vijver, 2012).

- Immigrant youth adopting the host cultures and languages while also maintaining the heritage culture and language, do better and contribute more to society than youth who learn only one language or cultural orientation (Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

- Discrimination, racism and exclusion have deleterious effects for positive youth development (Marks, Ejesi, McCullough, & Garcia Coll, 2015) and social cohesion, and are risk factors for radicalization (Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014). In contrast, feelings of belonging and being accepted by the receiving society strengthen youths’ ties to the host society (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006; Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopoulos, Obradović, & Masten, 2008).

The members of the working group at the meeting on Positive Adaptation of Immigrant Youth across Cultures therefore recommend that policies and practices in receiving countries concerning immigrants should:

- Be informed by research and interventions that have been shown to have beneficial results.

- Promote non-segregated, welcoming environments and opportunities for intercultural communication and collaboration at all ages.

- Provide economic and job opportunities to ensure that immigrant families do well and contribute to the country.

- Provide early childcare, education, and health-related prevention and intervention programs to ensure that immigrant youth have the basis for successful integration.

- Create public campaigns that show the contribution of immigrants to the host countries as well as respect to the diversity and needs of various ethnic groups.

- Incorporate these considerations as part of choosing where to resettle refugees in addition to the availability of spaces.

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Identity and Diversity: Muslims in the USA and Europe

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The European attitude towards immigration is often contrasted with the American. In the US, assimilation is said to be easier, immigrants made to feel more quickly at home (leaving aside of course the illegal immigrants streaming in from Mexico). The second and third generation of immigrants are Americans, sometimes "hyphenated" (e.g., Italian-Americans) but still Americans. They are no longer "immigrants," as they are in Europe. This observation about the US has become a common side bar of the 'Muslims in Europe' debate. Further, the makeup of America's Muslims is frequently compared favorably to its European counterpart. In the United States, the income of Muslim Americans parallels that of the average American and ranks higher than the income of African Americans or Hispanics. Sometimes prosperous middle-class neighborhoods are pointed to - for instance, the town of Fremont in the San Francisco Bay Area is a rather comfortable suburban settlement of tens of thousands of Afghan Americans who live contentedly in their small-town setting. And while not prosperous, the city of Dearborn, Michigan, numbers tens of thousands of middle class Arab-Americans.

Once in a while radical activity manifests itself in such far-flung places as Florida or upstate New York, but these can be considered exceptions that prove the rule. Several reasons for the difference between Europe and the US come to mind. Immigrants came to the US of their own volition. Once the masses swept over Ellis Island in the nineteenth century they had to fend for themselves. The government did not protect them or otherwise care for them. It wished them well, but that was about it. After all, they were not asked to come. This rather hard attitude toward the newcomer has not gone away -- while difficult for some, especially from a group-oriented culture, it actually favored the individualist, the adventurer, the entrepreneur.

Many Muslim immigrants in America have a middle class background and arrived here neither penniless nor illiterate. The differences with Europe are striking, since most Muslims came to Europe either as guest workers or political refugees. The former, of course, were solicited, asked to come to work in European factories. They were ideal for the assembly line and not selected from their brain power. Thus, many Moroccans who came to northern Europe were actually Berbers from the Rif Mountains, impoverished and illiterate. The consequence to this day is that European Muslims are socially less prominent and frequently ghettoized. Another difference between America and Europe in the reception of Muslims brings us closer to the subject of identity. American culture is less circumscribed in what it regards as American behavior. There are many ways to be an American. If Ahmed and Yasmina have jobs, live in a nice house, raise a few reasonably well-behaved children who go to school and don't get into major trouble, then it does not diminish their Americanness in the least if they celebrate Ramadan, or go to the mosque -- or wear whatever, including a head scarf.

The looseness of what it means to be American goes along with a belief that American culture is powerful enough to overcome other influences and maybe other identities. We know that American fashions, pop culture, the English language will rise to the globalized top. Considering the pervasiveness of American culture worldwide, that is realistic enough. There is of course at times a culture clash, a disaffinity between the old and the new - legendary historic quarrels between parents and children -- but this appears to smooth itself out in time. The new identity, precisely because of a certain easy lack of insistence by the prevailing culture, emerges without major birth pangs.

In the large American family with so many odd members, one more odd member would not stick out. In Europe, the family is smaller and more homogeneous, hence more exclusive. To stay with the family metaphor: the US can be said to behave like a strict father, urging his children to fend for themselves, be independent, solve their own problems, and see to the future. Europe plays the role of the mother, who tries to protect the children, do as much for them as possible, watch over their needs and ward off some of life's problems. She also has a somewhat narrower view of the values she would like her children to uphold: some behavior is out of bounds. Europe is more restrictive about its identity, whereas America's relative looseness about how to behave (e.g., what constitutes an American) allows for easier entry into the society. Norms and values are not as constrained or narrowly defined as they are in Europe. Perhaps one way of reconciling these two parental attitudes is that the father needs to exercise a little more care and patience, while the mother should show a little more understanding of the children's independence and display greater flexibility about their norms and values. America could be a little less distant and more caring, Europe less protective and more easygoing.
Balkanizations across the Globe: Regional Conflicts, Broken Identities and Syrian Refugees

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Abstract

In this study, starting from an imaginary survey, the author moves to the reality of the balkanization phenomenon. The term balkanization broadly refers to processes starting with hatred and anger between different ethnic and religious groups then turning into the evolution of the identities and creation of new smaller states. Firstly, balkanization specific to the Balkans is explained both from the historical perspective and from the author’s own experiences in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. Secondly, the current conflict in the Middle East is associated with the balkanization phenomena with a specific focus on Syrian Civil War and refugee crisis. Also, the author tries to attract attention for new research on culture and identity in the age of ongoing balkanizations on global scale and invites intellectuals, authorities and especially academia to develop an academic rhetoric against to the great actors of balkanization.

Keywords: Balkanization, Balkans, identity, conflict, Post-emotional society, Syrian refugees, Middle-East.

Balkanization from Imagination to Reality

It is traditional to start with definitions regarding the subjects of the articles. However, here I will start with an imaginary survey carried out by Maalouf (2000) on Sarajevo streets in his famous book “Les Identités Meurtrières”. By means of this imaginary survey, the author invites us to think about how individuals reconstruct and rename their identities, cultural characteristics in accordance with the historical and social problems around them. For his readers, Maalouf draws in minds an imaginary Sarajevo street where we come across a man of about fifty years old. We want to learn how he defines his identity in 1980 or thereabouts and what aspects of his identities are superior to the others.

...he might have said proudly and without hesitation, I'm a Yugoslavian! Questioned more closely, he could have said he was a citizen of the Federal Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, incidentally, that he came from a traditionally Muslim family (Maalouf, 2000, p.12).

In the following lines, the author keeps on questioning and imagining the same man’s identity after twelve years (in 1992) when the war was at its height he might have said; “I'm a Muslim! He might even have grown the statutory beard. He would quickly have added that he was a Bosnian, and he would not have been pleased to be reminded of how proudly he once called himself a Yugoslavian (Maalouf, 2000, p.12).

Maalouf keeps on questioning:

If he was stopped and questioned now [The book was published first in 1998], he would say first of all that he was a Bosnian, then that he was a Muslim. He'd tell you he was just on his way to the mosque, but he'd also want you to know that his country is part of Europe and that he hopes it will one day be a member of the Union (Maalouf, 2000, p.12).

No need to quote the rest of the story. Once, within its body, Yugoslavia or Federal Republic of Yugoslavia used to include different ethnic and religious groups such as Croats, Macedonians, Turks, Romans, Serbians, Slovenes, Bosnians, Albanians, Hungarians and Montenegrins under the Yugoslav identity. In time, as Verdey (2000) argues, modern state-making project pressed towards the single identities instead of a “broader” Yugoslavian identity which was helpful to avoid from the possible problems stemming from confusion in making a choice between two different ethnic identities especially for people whose parents had mixed marriages.

Here, extra explanation is required in order to avoid from blessing the upper Yugoslav identity. If to read from a different perspective, it can be argued that sometimes an upper identity is created at the cost of denying some different characteristics regarding the identity, culture and religion. So it was a challenging task to melt different identities in one pot in Balkans. Indeed, even the famous leader of Yugoslavia, Tito admitted this challenging task. Once he was asked about his political failure two years before his death in his last trip to America, “Tito answered that his greatest failure was to have failed to bring together the peoples of Yugoslavia in a real community” (Meier, 1999). Declarations of independence started in 1991 confirmed him. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and lastly Kosovo (in 2008) declared their independence. Thus, Yugoslavia split into seven states. This situation was exactly the practice of Balkanization.

Grubačić, who considers himself as a Yugoslav and an anarchist, defines two sides of Balkanization (Grubačić, 2012). On one hand Balkanization is a project which he describes as ‘Balkanization from above’. It “…is a historical project of breaking inter-ethnic solidarity and regional sociocultural identity, violent incorporation into the nation-state system and capitalist world-economy, and more recently, imposing neoliberal colonialism.” This side of the phenomenon makes people as the objects of a project implemented by great powers for gaining economic and geopolitical interests. On the other hand, ‘Balkanization from below’ “…stresses social and cultural affinities, customs in common resulting from mutual aid and solidarity and fostering inter-ethnic self-activity.”
This side of the phenomenon hints for a voluntary federation once it was realized in Balkans and makes people as the actors of the project. However, Grubačić discusses that this kind of Balkanization “was largely severed by Euro-colonial intervention” as well. Definitions may sound a little bit provocative because of the author’s feelings filled with ‘Ugonostalgia’ which is a state of yearning for the old days in Yugoslavia. Grubačić’s emphasize on colonial interventions may sound overemphasized and exaggerated since there were some other problems which prepared the end of Yugoslavia. In addition to the colonial interventions in the region, what is missing in the afore-cited definitions for the reasons of the balkanization may be explained with the leadership problem, irredentist, national desires and lack of economic and political stability. Old irredentist nationalisms for establishing Greater Albania, Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia were the realities of the region against the unity. Especially after the death of Tito in 1980 not only the leadership problem but also economic problems emerged in Yugoslavia (Meier, 1999). At the same time, national ideal of Greater Serbia densely motivated by the Serbian leader Milosevic was an important factor of the conflicts in Yugoslavia (Anderson, 1995).

Consequently, the reasons of the balkanization practiced in Yugoslavia may be explained not only with economic problems but also with cultural matters regarding the identity, ethnicity, religion and nationalism. As mentioned above, leadership problem for a stable political atmosphere and colonial interventions may be very important factors, as well. Whatever the reasons were, after the bloody wars in the last decade of the twentieth century, a lot of people were killed in the name of identity and Yugoslavia was balkanized and split into seven countries. After all these reconstructions regarding the state, national borders and identity, is it possible to tell about a genuine peace in the Balkans? As Demirtaş (2013) states “The western Balkan countries have not yet reached a durable peace since there are still frozen conflicts waiting to be solved”. Briefly, The Balkans is still a challenging region in terms of possible conflicts based on cultural, religious and ethnic identities.

**Balkanization in My Personal Experience**

I had a chance to travel to some cities in Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. Kosovo and Macedonia are younger countries if compared to Albania in terms of national sovereignty and independence from a state. Albania never became a part of Yugoslavia but it is a common point for three countries that they were all under the Ottoman rule until the Balkan wars (1912-1913). The percentage of the Albanian population in Kosovo and Macedonia is very interesting for the ones who are not familiar with the issues in the region. About ninety percent of the population in Kosovo and twenty-five percent in Macedonia consist of Albanians. Besides, Kosovo which declared independence from Yugoslavia in 2008 has still not been recognized by some countries like Serbia and Russia. Additionally, psychological and sociological effects of balkanization in the form of hatred and anger among different ethnic groups such as Serbs, Albanians, Macedonians and Turks living in those countries are possible to observe through personal experiences. During my travels, I met people of different ethnicities like Bulgarians, Albanians and Macedonians. We discussed issues on history and their perceptions regarding the Ottoman rule in the region. I spent a lot of time with Turks living in the region and tried to understand their problems.

During the Ottoman rule in Balkans, the word “Turk” was almost synonymous with “Muslim”. Turks, that is Muslims were the mainstream culture and identity in the region but they were turned into ‘others’ as the target of Christian ethnic nationalism and tried to be exterminated or assimilated especially by the Bulgarian and Serbian racist nationalism which was stimulated by Russia. In order to utilize them for its own imperial policies Russia intended to establish states of which majorities were consisting of Orthodox-Slav peoples. Orthodoxy was the source of the legacy for the Russian policy in Balkans. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) and Balkan Wars (1912-1913) one million Muslims-Turks were killed and more than two millions were forced to migrate. Balkan Muslims-Turks suffered a lot from the bloody wars which broke out because of the hatred and anger based upon racist nationalism and religious conflicts. (Karpat, 2013).

During my travels, I carried out real surveys to see how balkanization affected people in terms of their identities and culture. I observed that it was not much different from the imaginary survey carried out on Sarajevo streets by Maalouf (2000). Even though religious identity, a sense of belonging to the same “ummah”, the same religious community or sharing very similar cultural characteristic, was an important factor in the past – I think it is still important– for the peace in the region, I witnessed and grasped the implicit hatred and anger prevailing in the region among different ethnicities. What I grasped actually was that modernity cut individuals of their traditional ties and created “rootless” identities having no links with past (Tatar, 2008). Thus, it was easy to conclude that modern state making project especially in Balkans exactly failed because of the ongoing implicit anger among different ethnicities (Serbs, Albanians, Macedonians and Turks). After my experiences in the region, I thought it is worth studying the ongoing influences of balkanization among Balkan Turks comparatively in two young countries of the Balkans, Macedonia and Kosovo. Title of my study is “Balkanization and Turkish Identity in Balkans (Case of Kosovo and Macedonia)”. My central question is “As a minority, how Balkan Turks maintain their culture and identity in Kosovo and Macedonia?” “How Turks in Balkans define their identities and what aspects of their identities are superior to others?” “What are the characteristics of the socio-political structure and social institutions presented by the hosting countries for Balkan Turks?” will also be the matters of discussion in order to see the threats or opportunities for the maintenance of Turkish identity and culture. For both qualitative and quantitative analysis, I am going to spend
some time in Macedonia and Kosovo, especially in some cities which are densely populated by Balkan Turks in order to collect data by means of surveys and in-depth interviews. In order to understand Turkish identity, balkanization and its effects in Balkans, there are a lot of things to learn about the Ottoman period and the period after the collapse of Ottoman rule in the region, so Ottoman History in the Balkans will be dealt with in details within the study. In addition, from both psychological and social psychological perspectives, acculturation orientations and cultural relationships of the Balkan Turks (as a minority culture) with mainstream culture and other ethnic groups will be discussed, as well.

**Euro-Asian Balkanization and Syrian civil war**

State making projects, imperial interventions, neocolonialisms and ‘Balkanizations from above’ have not ended yet on global scale. While the influences of balkanization in the Balkans are continuing among different ethnic groups, new balkanizations are about to be triggered in different geographies especially in the Middle East. This prediction can be theoretically grounded by Brzezinski’s views (1997) related to the geopolitical power struggles in Euro-Asia particularly dominated by the USA. As he argues, like “Balkans” the region described as Euro-Asia reminds of ethnic conflicts and interests of the great powers in the region. This means that there is Balkans specific to Euro-Asia, as well. However; when compared to the Balkans, “Eurasian Balkans are much larger, more populated, even more religiously and ethnically heterogeneous.” This geography covers a huge land including the portions of southeastern Europe, Central Asia and parts of South Asia, the Persian Gulf area, and the Middle East. In addition, Brzezinski draws attention for the “economic prize” in the region. In his words “Balkans are infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves is located in the region, in addition to important minerals, including gold” (Brzezinski, 1997). It can be predicted from the ongoing conflicts that countries like the USA, Russia, France, the UK, Germany, Iran and Turkey which are actively involved in the resolution process in Syria may compete for the mentioned ‘economic prize’ or just because of their geopolitical needs in the region. For example, some may commercialize guns, weapons and military equipment. Some may grab the underground sources and also keep their unquestionable leaderships up-to-date in the near future.

What about broken psychologies and sociologies remaining after balkanizations?

Syrian crisis was just a problem out of their borders for many people in Turkey and Europe when it first started. Actually inspired by “sociological imagination”, I would like to say it was just a problem out of their borders for “ordinary men”. What does “ordinary men” mean? Ordinary men are the ones who are “seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history” (Mills, 2000). The course of the world history forced people to migrate and regional problems turned into global ones. Terrorist attacks spread from the Middle-East to Europe. We learn from the media that European countries increased the security measures after terrorist attacks in Paris (Makortoof, 2015). And far-right party, Front National which is known with its anti-immigration and anti-Islamist stance scored the highest vote it has ever had in France in the regional elections (Chrisafis, 2015). Additionally, the bargain between Turkey and Europe to stop the refugee flow to Europe is meaningful to understand the challenges of Syrian crisis in Europe. The course of the world history may add new problems to the list. It is possible to conclude from all these events that when a problem out of our national borders affects our societies, problems out of borders may turn into our psycho-social horrors which we have never considered before.

**In conclusion: How to react against new Balkanizations?**

In conclusion, new balkanizations may spread new problems and new refugees across the globe. New ethnic conflicts, broken psychologies, Balkanized identities and societies may emerge especially in the Middle-East in the near future for the “economic prize” pointed out by Brzezinski (1997). The question is how should we react to stop new possible Balkanizations?

According to Mestrovic “Action assumes a connection between the emotions and intellect” and this connection between emotions and intellect was lost in today’s ‘post emotional society’. Therefore, genocides may be manipulated as natural disasters in post-emotional society. “For example, the response to genocide in Bosnia was not an attempt to stop it, but involved the sending of humanitarian aid to the victims of genocide who survived, as if they had survived a hurricane” (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 63). New colonial interventions and new balkanizations for ‘economic prize’ and geostrategic advantages may be manipulated as natural disasters or ordinary practices of the daily routine, as well.

At least intellectuals shouldn’t let themselves to be manipulated and they need to deconstruct the manipulating rhetoric of the colonial interventions. By means of the new studies on refugees in Turkey and Europe social scientists especially sociologists and psychologists should raise concern for the miseries of the humankind caused by wars and balkanizations. They should study on how to put the necessary connection between emotions and intellect into practice for the ideal action. For intellectuals, it is a heavy responsibility to teach the ideal action; at least attention should be drawn to be sensitive for the miseries of the humankind.

Secretary General of United Nations, Ban Ki-moon draw attention on being sensitive for the miseries of the humankind in his speech on August 30, 2012 in Tehran, he quoted the following lines from the great poet, Sadi;

> All human beings are members of one frame,
> Since all, at first, from the same essence came.
> When time afflicts a limb with pain
The other limbs at rest cannot remain.
If thou feel not for other’s misery
A human being is no name for thee.

The lines sound great but what about the action? Global organizations like NATO, UN and great powers have official meetings to discuss about solutions to the problems across the globe as they did during the G20 summit held in Turkey in November, 2015. How are they going to manage the Syrian conflict and refugee crisis? Are they going to serve for uniting or disuniting the societies? Or, will we witness another World War (WW III)? We need some more time to see the performance of the great powers. We will watch the processes and test their role again. We will see whether they will serve for the peace. Let us hope that their meetings will not turn into ‘post-emotional’ rituals.

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The Wangu Kanja Foundation: Improving Lives of Survivors of Sexual Assault in Mukuru Slum, Kenya

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One of the best perks, for me, of working at a college counseling center (Sacramento State University) is the lengthy summer vacation. As someone who has an interest in both adventure travel and the development of psychology abroad, particularly in developing nations, I’ve tried to use my summers as an opportunity to combine the two.

This past summer, I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to volunteer at the Wangu Kanja Foundation in Mukuru slum, Nairobi, Kenya. I’ve become pretty adept at sniffing out such opportunities online and during one of my searches I stumbled upon the foundation’s website (www.wangukanjafoundation.org) and directly contacted Wangu herself, who, in spite of there being no formal therapy volunteer program in place, turned out to be the most gracious and accommodating host.

Wangu’s story, as I read about on the website, is a very painful but unfortunately not entirely uncommon one. In the early 2000’s, Wangu was carjacked on the streets of Nairobi and subsequently raped. As one can imagine, the experience knocked her down for some time, but as I came to learn about Wangu she is not one to stay down for long. From the terrible ashes of Wangu’s experience arose the impetus for her foundation, located in a slum of Nairobi called Mukuru. The slum was built by homeless people one shack at time on what was a landfill at the time. During my nearly 3 months at the Foundation, I worked with 13 of these women individually, 8 of whom were regular weekly therapy clients. For clients who did not tend to physical ones need to be addressed, Wangu’s foundation provides free education and the larger Ruben Center, of which the Foundation is a part.

The Ruben Center (www.rubencentre.org) is run and funded by a number of not-for-profit agencies and various branches of the Kenyan government. The compound houses a large primary school, a basic medical and dental clinic, an HIV counseling program, various vocational programs, and a microfinance program amongst other services, all offered free of charge to the community. It really is an oasis of assistance for people who otherwise would not have access to such services.

Acknowledging that before emotional needs can be tended to physical ones need to be addressed, Wangu’s foundation emphasizes the economic empowerment of the (mostly) women it serves. For most of the women who use the services of the Foundation, providing food, shelter, and clothing for themselves and their families is an ongoing, daily struggle. So, in addition to providing trainings on economic matters, the Foundation has trained women from the community to be able to make peanut butter onsite from scratch, package it, and sell it to supplement their own inconsistent and meager incomes.

The economic and emotional caretaking for the family often seems to fall upon the females in Mukuru, who, in addition to these pressures often have to deal with histories of abuse, HIV diagnoses of themselves and/or their children, alcoholism and drug abuse of family members, sickness and death of their children, and so forth. Many of the women I worked with were in their 50’s but were tasked with raising their grandchildren due to their children’s inability to find work or provide for their own families. Men in the slum are disproportionately involved in substance addiction, crime, or early death. Or they may leave the slum to look for work elsewhere.

During my nearly 3 months at the Foundation, I worked with 13 of these women individually, 8 of whom were regular weekly therapy clients. For clients who did not speak English (Kiswahili and a multitude of tribal dialects are commonly spoken), I would rely on one of Wangu’s volunteers or employees to translate. Often, finding a private and suitable space to conduct therapy was a challenge but we always found a way to make do. Yet in spite of these challenges and psychotherapy being quite a novel and foreign concept, I found the women were quick to open up and made very good progress, in general.

Part of the culture for women in Mukuru involves being stoic, putting others first, and rarely if ever complaining in spite of nearly unfathomable obstacles. So, the opportunity to actually talk to someone about life’s difficulties must’ve seemed like a drop of water in the desert to some of the women. And, far from being a barrier, I found that my status as a foreigner was actually quite advantageous, as I presented very little risk of divulging their personal information to the larger community.

Their experiences with extreme poverty were largely uniform. Their histories of abuse, illness, PTSD, and familial stress varied, and some of their stories were horrific.
One such story that will always stay with me is that of an adolescent girl who sustained defensive wounds to her hands and her face from warding off a machete attack by her sister’s husband in a tragic and ultimately fatal incidence of domestic violence. She was tragically unable to save her young niece, who was wrested from her arms by the man and killed in front of her, as he had also attempted to do to each one of the surviving family members. Although she escaped the situation with her life, the whole ordeal understandably left the girl with PTSD and emotional scars much more serious than the visible ones on her skin.

To complicate matters, by the time I saw her she was not only dealing with untreated PTSD and social isolation as a result of having been removed from school, but she was also preparing to become a young single mother in the coming months, an experience about which she had very little to say. But then, coaxing a word or two out of her at all was for several weeks a great challenge. But week after week she continued to trudge through the muddy streets to see me. Gradually she shared with this stranger from a different world, sitting there in front of her, some of the most painful and heart-wrenching words I think I’ve ever heard spoken in a therapy session.

It was the humbling privileg(e) of working with such resilient and amazingly strong women that made this experience at the same time so intense and so intensely rewarding. Therapy conducted anywhere with anyone is a rewarding experience when the client improves and regains his or her functioning. But the experience takes on additional power (and urgency) when you realize that essentially, “you’re it”; that there’s no other therapist in the community that your client can see at a later time, no other opportunity for healing than that which presents itself before the client in that very moment.

I am happy to report that this particular client made great strides during our time together, but I’m also aware that I left her with a lot of work yet to be done, and that her case is a drop in the bucket of need for that community. Part of the reason I have written this brief description of my experience is to encourage others who may be like-minded and who may have both the desire and time to help, through the Wangu Kanja Foundation, to do so.

Lest anyone be discouraged by the conditions I described, I must emphasize that my own accommodations were comfortable and safe, and not located in the slum. And, again, I felt not only safe but also welcomed in Mukuru, and was by no means the first or only volunteer to have spent time in the community or at the Ruben Center. This was probably the most rewarding therapy experience thus far in my young career, and I encourage anyone who may be interested in finding out more information about how you can help to please contact me (darrenkensmith@gmail.com) or Wangu Kanja (wangukanja@gmail.com).
Current Issues Around the Globe

Wangu Kanja, founder of the Wangu Kanja Foundation
Fostering Readership of Children’s Literature in Arabic

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Abstract

Arabic is the official language in over 20 countries. Despite the prevalence of the Arabic language, there are relatively few offerings in children’s literature in comparison to other languages such as English, German, and Afrikaans. Moreover, the children’s literature that is offered is often translated from other languages. The reasons behind the lack of children’s literature vary from discrepancies between spoken and written language to cultural preferences in the Middle East and North Arabic. There is a need for more children’s literature in Arabic, particularly stories in which children can identify. Proposed future directions to overcome the barriers in reading literature in Arabic include transcribing traditional oral stories and creating holistic programs to encourage reading for pleasure.

Keywords: children’s literature, Arabic, oral story-telling, reading

Reading is Fundamental, Reading First, and Ready Readers are all ongoing programs which support children’s literacy and enhance children’s exposure to literature in the United States. Through both fundraising and government funding, these organizations facilitate youth readership across the United States. Still, instituting such programs would have been fruitless if there was not already an adequate book selection in place. While bookstores are largely out of favor in the United States, children can still access stories through E-Readers and the Internet. Amazon.com, for instance, offers over 1,143,322 children’s books in English (Amazon, 2015). However, children’s access to and the diversity of literature is not equal around the globe. For instance, while Amazon.com ships to 76 countries, the literature selection in alternative languages is rather minimal. Some languages, such as German and French, have nearly 20,000 book offerings, a figure significantly less than what is offered in English. In Chinese, almost 12,000 titles are offered and in Afrikaans nearly 2,400 titles are offered. However, in Arabic, the official language of 26 countries (10 of which Amazon ships to), less than 650 titles are offered for children.

Similar to Arabic, other retailers have fewer offerings. For instance, Jarir Bookstore, a Saudi Arabian bookstore with almost 40 locations across Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates offers over 670 young adult books in English online but zero young adult books in Arabic (Jarir Bookstore, 2016). Another company, Al Maya Group, has merged with Borders bookstore and its mission is to support knowledge and entertainment in the Gulf Region (Al Maya Group, 2015). Since 2006, six stores have been opened, all of which are located in the United Arab Emirates. However, the Boarders location on Yas Island, 30 minutes from Abu Dhabi, has only two book cases with children’s books in Arabic. Also, aside from the occasional Islamic stories, many of the books offered are direct translations of traditional Western stories such as Masterpieces of World Tales by the Brothers Grimm (Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone by J.K. Rowling), and Peter Pan (Peter Pan) (Amazon, 2015). Therefore, not only is there an insufficient quantity in children’s literature in Arabic, but there is also a deficiency in culturally relevant books.

Storytelling in MENA Countries

Perhaps one of the reasons behind the lack of children’s literature in Arabic is because of the perception of reading. According to the Anna Lindh Foundation (2011), reading is less prevalent in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) due to the perception that reading for enjoyment is a luxury. Another possibility is that children in MENA countries rarely read stories aside from textbooks. A third reason may be that the distinction between spoken and written Arabic leads to difficulties in reading among children. However, that does not infer that storytelling is devalued in MENA countries. Rather knowledge may be shared in an alternative method: oral storytelling (Raven & O’Donnell, 2010).

The prevalence of storytelling may be one explanation for why there has not been a major movement toward producing more children’s literature in Arabic. Oral narratives are highly valued in the Arab Region and storytelling can even serve as a profession called الحكايات (Al hakawati) (Christie, 1988; Raven & O’Donnell, 2010). However, storytelling does not contribute to the same developmental outcomes in children. Isbell, Sobel, Lindauer, and Lowrance (2004) conducted a study in which 38 children 3- to 4-years old were either read or told 24 stories across 12 weeks by a researcher. Then, children were asked to tell two retell stories and create a new story when provided with a picture book. From pre- to post-test, Isbell et al. found that children in the story reading condition were better able to form narratives about new stories than children in the storytelling condition. In contrast, children in the storytelling condition, performed better on describing the ending and setting, as well as explaining themes and morals of stories that were recalled. Thus, Isbell and colleagues suggest that, while storytelling may improve children’s story recall, story reading improves children’s spontaneous creation of new stories.
Importance of Children’s Literature

Story reading provides visual information that storytelling cannot match. Both books’ pictures and content are crucial to children’s developmental outcomes. For instance, Wege, Gonzalez, Friedmeyer, Mihalca, Goodrich, and Corapi (2014) examined ten popular children’s stories from the U.S., Romania, and Turkey and found that culture-specific norms about emotions were demonstrated in characters’ emotional expressions. In another study Dryer, Shatz, and Wellman (2000) examined 90 children’s books suited to the ages of 3- to 6-year-olds and found that regardless of which age group the story was written for, stories posed as a source of mental state knowledge for children. Moreover, the combination of pictures and text together conveyed irony in over 30% of the books. Thus, regardless of story reading being a shared experience or an independent adventure, children receive knowledge about culturally appropriate emotions and learned about social contexts through the visual information provided in books.

Stories’ pictures and content also provide opportunity for story reading to be a shared experience in which children can interact. Yaden, Smolkin, and Conlon (1989) found that when children were read stories they most frequently asked questions about pictures, inquired about the story’s meaning the second most, and questioned words’ meaning the third most. Oral storytelling does not support two out of the three most frequently asked forms of questions because it is missing images and content. Thus, in contrast, story reading, may provide more opportunity for conversation and home language development.

Reading children stories may foster vocabulary development. For instance, Robbins and Ehri (1994) conducted a study in which 33 kindergartners who had no reading experience were read a story twice. After the reading sessions, children’s understanding of vocabulary words was tested. Children significantly recognized the meanings of more words that were in the story than words that were not in the story. In another study by Bus, Ijzendoorn, and Pellegrini (1995), a meta-analysis was performed on 29 papers about pre-schoolers’ reading. Parent-child reading was related to both children’s language growth and reading achievement. In addition, general reading impacts children’s acquisition of written language. In short, developing more illustrated stories in Arabic for children may provide children with a better platform for gaining knowledge about emotions and language. It may also provide an interactive context for them to acquire new vocabulary and apply what they have learned.

It could be disputed that merely increasing the selection of children’s literature in Arabic will not impact children’s developmental outcomes in MENA countries; however, there is merit in suggesting that quantity is important. Evans, Kelley, Sikora, and Treiman (2010) examined the amount of books that family households owned across 27 nations. Researchers found that regardless of the country, children growing up in houses with many books were more successful in education. Having books in the home was twice as important as the fathers’ level of education. In addition, children growing up in households with 500 books received as much as 7 more years of education than children in bookless homes. While 500 books may appear excessive, families in each of the 27 nations reported owning at least 500 books. In the Czech Republic, for instance, 33% of the families indicated owning at least 500 books. Although non-western countries such as South Africa, China, and Chile were included in this study, no MENA countries were investigated. Unfortunately, the poor selection of books in Arabic may pose as an obstacle when trying to replicate a similar study.

Current Efforts

The lack of children’s literature in Arabic, especially culturally relevant stories, has not gone unrecognized. The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation created a program in the MENA region called the Arab Regional Children’s Literature and Reading Program. This program promotes Arab children’s enjoyment of reading and offers over 220 original titles in Arabic for youth from infancy to adolescence (Anna Lindh Foundation, 2011). It has also endorsed the importance of publishing companies selecting an illustrator that represents the country where it publishes (Bizri, 2011). Finally, they promote an inclusive reading culture by creating stories for marginalized children in MENA countries (i.e., special needs, girls, and poverty-stricken) (Anna Lindh Foundation, 2011). The program is currently being implemented in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon (Anna Lindh Foundation, 2011); however, the program has yet to extend its outreach to the Arab Gulf Countries (e.g., Yemen, Bahrain, and Oman).

There needs to be a greater momentum in the Arab Gulf in developing cultural appropriate children’s stories in Arabic. One such effort has been pioneered by Thuraya Batterjee. Batterjee established Kadi and Ramadi Publishing House in 2006, one of the few publishing firms which specializes in children’s literature in Saudi Arabia (Kadi & Ramadi Publishing House, 2015). While part of its mission is to revive its heritage and encourage literacy habits in children, Kadi and Ramadi has also worked in transcribing oral stories into children’s literature.

Future Directions

Currently, the production of children’s literature in Arabic is behind books written in other mediums. The books that are in Arabic are often translations of popular international classics and stories from the United States. The barriers behind the lack of publications may be a result of the perception of children’s literature as unimportant, the differences in written from spoken Arabic, and the prevalence of oral storytelling. One way in which families could overcome these barriers with the books already published would be to read stories aloud (Al-Mansour & Al-Sherman, 2011). Reading stories aloud may serve as a bridge between oral storytelling and reading and support children’s transition from spoken language to written language. While reading aloud is not a new concept, it is unclear at this point how frequently Arab families read together.
In addition to addressing reading at the family level, system level changes need to take place. Perhaps, a first step in overcoming the barriers at the system level would be to take an approach observed in Saudi Arabia and transcribe popular native oral stories into children's literature. This approach may increase the appeal of story reading amongst the family because it would preserve cultural and historical fables. A next step would be to create stories that are relevant to children's lives today and develop a series with which children can identify. According to Dutro (2001), school-aged children gauge their book selection based on identifying characteristics with the characters or storyline. Even if children are compelled to seek out stories outside of their identification, children become increasingly conscious of their book choice when in public or when others may observe them read. Although Dutro was referring to gender, one possible explanation for why children in MENA countries have demonstrated little interest in reading for pleasure is because they are not able to relate to and connect with the characters in stories that translated from other languages. Creating characters, which share the same names, heritage, and daily struggles as real children within a given country, may foster interest in reading.

A third step in encouraging Arabic readership would be to institute more programs, such as the Arab Regional Children's Literature and Reading Program, especially in the Arab Gulf. Fostering children's reading through a holistic approach by targeting funders, parents, and teachers to come together and support children's readership will encourage a sustainable approach to support children's reading habits and utilize Arabic books. However, without first having a proper selection of literature which fosters children's interest in reading programs, such as those in the United States, cannot be instituted.

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Announcements

Upcoming Conferences of Interest to International Psychologists

Society for Cross-Cultural Research Conference 2016
Feb. 17-20, 2016
Portland, Oregon, USA

8th World Congress of Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies 2016 (WCBC)
June 22-25, 2016
Brisbane, Australia

24th Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development
July 10-14, 2016
Vilnius, Lithuania

31st International Congress of Psychology
July 24-29, 2016
Yokohama, Japan

2016 Conference of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP)
July 30-Aug. 3, 2016
Nagoya, Japan

APA Annual Convention
Aug. 4-7, 2016, Denver
Current Issues Around the Globe

20th European IAAH Congress
“SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADOLESCENTS’ HEALTH”

Pristina, Kosovo
September 14 - 17th 2016

Abstract submission deadline:
March 31st 2016

Confirmation of abstract acceptance:
April 30th 2016
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