

**CHR**

---

## **Communications in Humanities Research**

Proceedings of 3rd International Conference on  
Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies

Boston, USA

November 29 – December 6, 2024

Editor  
**Heidi Gregory-Mina**  
Northeastern University

ISSN: 2753-7064  
ISSN: 2753-7072 (eBook)

ISBN: 978-1-83558-713-3  
ISBN: 978-1-83558-714-0 (eBook)

Publication of record for individual papers is online:  
<https://www.ewadirect.com/proceedings/chr/home/index>

**Copyright © 2024 The Authors**

This work is fully Open Access. Articles are freely available to both subscribers and the wider public with permitted reuse. No special permission is required to reuse all or part of article, including figures and tables. For articles published under an open access Creative Common CC BY license, any part of the article may be reused without permission, just provided that the original article is clearly cited. Reuse of an article does not imply endorsement by the authors or publisher. The publisher, the editors and the authors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the editors or the authors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This imprint is published by **EWA Publishing**  
Address: John Eccles House, Robert Robinson Avenue, Oxford, England, OX4 4GP  
Email: [info@ewapublishing.org](mailto:info@ewapublishing.org)

# Committee Members

*ICIHCS 2024*

## General Chair

Heidi Gregory-Mina, *Northeastern University*

## Organizing Chair

Nafhesa Ali, *Northumbria University*

## Organizing Committee

Kwasu Tembo, *Lancaster University*  
Enrique Mallen, *Sam Houston State University*  
David T. Mitchell, *The George Washington University*  
Kurt Buhring, *Saint Mary's College*  
Roberto Di Ceglie, *Pontifical Lateran University*  
Andrea Aguti, *University of Urbino*  
George Lazaroiu, *Spiru Haret University*  
Muhammad Idrees, *University of Agriculture, Faisalabad*  
Ni Lu, *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*  
Yue Qian, *Hong Kong Baptist University*  
Xiao Ma, *Peking University*  
Wenliang Lin, *Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications*

## Technical Program Chair

Sara Mashayekh, *The University of New South Wales Sydney*

## Technical Program Committee

Javier Cifuentes-Faura, *University of Murcia*  
Aquasia Shaw, *University of Texas at Austin*  
Abdullah Laghari, *Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering, Science and Technology*  
Matilde Lafuente-Lechuga, *University of Murcia*  
Yuanyue Hao, *University of Oxford*  
Yuanyuan Fan, *Academy of Art and Design, Tsinghua University*  
Luke Qiu, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
Liang Guo, *Zhejiang University*

Yue Qi, *Renmin University of China*  
Xiaoyu Xiahou, *Chinese Conservatory of Music*  
Yuzhou Sun, *Fudan University*  
Ruichang Ding, *Beijing Normal University*  
Shaohang Liu, *University of International Business and Economics*

## **Publicity Committee**

Nasir Mahmood, *University of Sialkot*  
Hira Iftikhar, *University of Agriculture, Faisalabad*



## Preface

The 3rd International Conference on Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies (ICIHCS 2024) is an annual conference focusing on research areas including literary studies, art history, philosophy, sociology and communication. It aims to establish a broad and interdisciplinary platform for experts, researchers, and students worldwide to present, exchange, and discuss the latest advance and development in all facets of literary studies, art history, philosophy, sociology and communication.

This volume contains the papers of the 3rd International Conference on Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies (ICIHCS 2024). Each of these papers has gained a comprehensive review by the editorial team and professional reviewers. Each paper has been examined and evaluated for its theme, structure, method, content, language, and format.

Cooperating with prestigious universities, ICIHCS 2024 organized three workshops in Boston, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and Sydney. Dr. Heidi Gregory-Mina chaired the workshop “Communication in the Age of Artificial Intelligence”, which was held at Northeastern University. Dr. Nafhesa Ali chaired the workshop “Researching Symmetrically to Explore Exclusion, Othering and Whiteness in Local Policy Making”, which was held at Northumbria University. Dr. Sara Mashayekh chaired the workshop “Transforming Education: The Sociological and Pedagogical Impact of Generative AI and Learner Autonomy”, which was held at The University of New South Wales.

Besides these workshops, ICIHCS 2024 also held an online session. Eminent professors from top universities worldwide were invited to deliver keynote speeches in this online session, including Dr. Heidi Gregory-Mina from Northeastern University, Dr. Nafhesa Ali from Northumbria University and Dr. Sara Mashayekh from The University of New South Wales. They have given keynote speeches on related topics of literary studies, art history, philosophy, sociology and communication. On behalf of the committee, we would like to give sincere gratitude to all authors and speakers who have made their contributions to ICIHCS 2024, editors and reviewers who have guaranteed the quality of papers with their expertise, and the committee members who have devoted themselves to the success of ICIHCS 2024.

Dr. Heidi Gregory-Mina  
General Chair of Conference Committee



# Workshops

## **Workshop – Boston: Communication in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**



November 29th, 2024 (UTC-5)

D'Amore-McKim School of Business, Northeastern University

Workshop Chair: Dr. Heidi Gregory-Mina, Professor in Northeastern University

## **Workshop – Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Researching Symmetrically to Explore Exclusion, Othering and Whiteness in Local Policy Making**

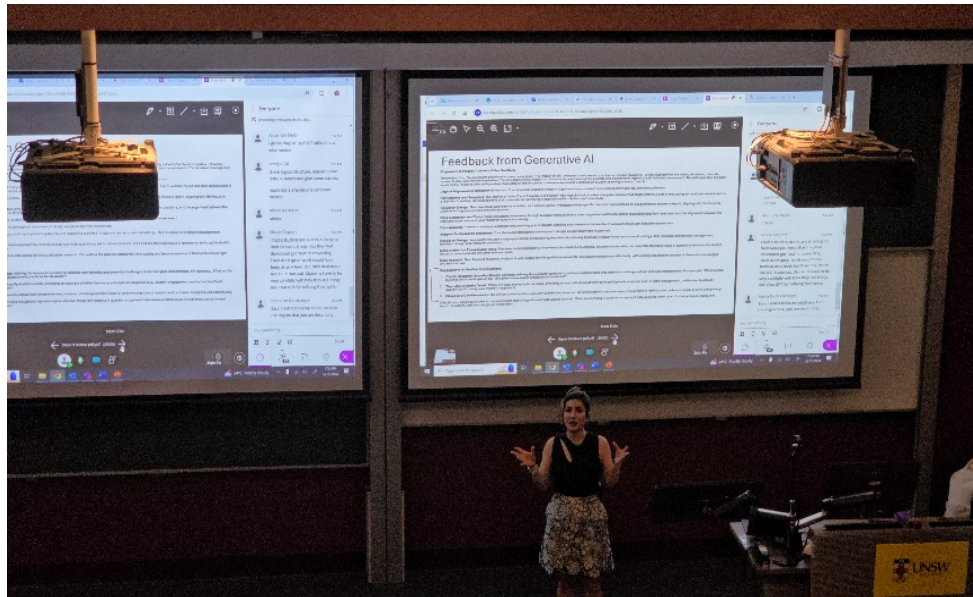


September 23th, 2024 (GMT+1)

Department of Social Sciences, Northumbria University

Workshop Chair: Dr. Nafhesa Ali, Professor in Northumbria University

## Workshop – Sydney: Transforming Education: The Sociological and Pedagogical Impact of Generative AI and Learner Autonomy



October 28th, 2024 (UTC+11)

School of Education, The University of New South Wales

Workshop Chair: Dr. Sara Mashayekh, Researcher in The University of New South Wales

# The 3rd International Conference on Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies

## ICIHCS 2024

### Table of Contents

<b>Committee Members</b> .....	
<b>Preface</b> .....	
<b>Workshops</b> .....	
The Relationship Between the Levels of Motivation and Learning Strategies of Aspiring Teachers at the Higher Education Level .....	1
<i>Hui Li</i>	
An Analysis of the Role of Psychosocial Interventions in the Management of Chronic Diseases .....	9
<i>Weiming Xu</i>	
Preventing and Managing Sports Injuries in Adolescents: Strategies and Practices .....	15
<i>Jinshuo Zheng</i>	
Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Double Reduction Policy in Alleviating Student Pressure .....	21
<i>Xinyan Chen</i>	
Analyze Fake News Based on the Missing of Kate Middleton .....	27
<i>Jingqi Chen</i>	
Parasitic Approach to the Development of Modern Cosmetic Industry .....	32
<i>Zhengrong Zhu, Dariusz P. Skowronski</i>	
The Effect of Chinese Stand-up Comedy Shows on the Formation of Z Generation's Own Narration of Reality .....	39
<i>Haoran Zhu</i>	
Globalization and Social Class Inequality: The Impact of Capitalist Economic Structures on Social Stratification in Nation-States .....	44
<i>Yinzhou Chen</i>	
The Dual Construction of Symbolic Imagery and Double-voiced Discourse: The Hierarchical Order in A Rose for Emily .....	50
<i>Wenxin Sun</i>	
Analyzing Tinder's "It Starts with a Swipe" Campaign .....	56
<i>Xinyao Wang, Xinyao Cao, Jingrui Yu</i>	
Chinese Audiences' Perceptions of Social Reality in the Comedy Film Successor .....	60
<i>Quan Gu</i>	
Understanding and Treating Major Depressive Disorders among Adolescents .....	66
<i>Yiting Wang</i>	

Gender Inequality in China's Education System.....	72
<i>Xinze Shang</i>	
Research on Lacan's Theory of Desire.....	78
<i>Xiongzheng Teng</i>	
Literature Review on Second Language Acquisition: Looking at the Impact of Bilingual Education at Different Times on Intercultural Competence.....	85
<i>Jiahong Guo</i>	
Analysis of the Psychosocial and Cognitive Effects of Stigma on Bipolar Disorder-A Literature Review.....	91
<i>Xuan Wu</i>	
Homogenization: Reasons for the Limited Development of Chinese Traditional and Minority Music.....	100
<i>Junyi Lu</i>	
Impact of Chinese Dialects on Language Transfer in Second Language Acquisition .....	107
<i>Tianqi Zhao</i>	
Understanding Gender Beyond Sex: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives on Equality and Justice .....	113
<i>Zichun Zhou</i>	
The Atypical Neural Processing of Reward in Bipolar Disorder.....	118
<i>Yiran Yuan</i>	
Negative and Positive Emotions of Individuals Worldwide During COVID-19 .....	125
<i>Xiya Wang</i>	
A Review on Psychological Factors of Eating Disorders .....	130
<i>Menghan Ren</i>	
Psychodrama: Mechanisms, Applications, and Future Prospects in Treating Depression ....	136
<i>Boqian Wang</i>	
AI Love: An Analysis of Virtual Intimacy in Human-Computer Interaction.....	143
<i>Tingying Wu</i>	
History or Dream: A Comparative Study of “Tom Jones” and “Honglouloumeng” on Authorially Claimed Fictionality.....	149
<i>Wanying Guo</i>	
A Conversation Analysis of Dialogues in “Young Sheldon” from the Perspective of Politeness Principle.....	157
<i>Sixuan Sui</i>	
An Analysis of the Subaltern Narrative in A Tale of Two Cities.....	164
<i>Yunying Wang</i>	
Identity Recognition of Immigrants in European Countries.....	170
<i>Like Wang</i>	
Cultural Variations in Parenting Styles and Their Impact on Child Development .....	176
<i>Beiyi Cai</i>	
Research on the Changing Perspectives on Romantic Love among Chinese International Students at the University of Toronto.....	183
<i>Jinlu Meng</i>	

# ***The Relationship Between the Levels of Motivation and Learning Strategies of Aspiring Teachers at the Higher Education Level***

Hui Li<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom*

*a. 1364085120@qq.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The motivation levels of potential teachers in higher education and the learning strategies they use are contrasted in this study. A student's learning style and, therefore, their academic performance, are heavily influenced by their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Strategies for learning might range from memorisation to analysis and synthesis. This impacts students' academic achievement. Therefore, the primary objective of this research is to examine the relationship between intrinsic motivation and the effectiveness of various learning strategies among future educators. Understanding these relationships can enable teachers to better support student engagement and academic success. By highlighting the role of educational psychology in shaping effective teaching methods, this study aims to enhance teacher training programs to better address students' diverse learning needs and promote improved study habits through intrinsic motivation.

**Keywords:** motivation, learning strategies, intrinsic motivation.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

According to Bustato et al., students' study habits and the amount of intrinsic motivation have a significant impact on their academic performance. [1] Motivation may have a significant effect on how a student approaches learning. Factors from inside and outside the organisation are included in this. Curiosity and a desire to achieve one's own goals are examples of internal motivators. Rewards and praise are examples of extrinsic motivation that operate in a different way. From rote memorisation to more sophisticated strategies like analysis and synthesis, students' methods of learning may vary greatly. This is crucial when the students' deadlines draw near. Future educators would do well to prioritise learning about the relationship between students' intrinsic drive and effective teaching methods. Educators may foster a better learning environment by being aware of their interdependencies. Teachers might motivate student engagement and development in this manner. For instance, educators who fully understand these dynamics may better tailor their classes to each student's individual needs. The standard for academic success may be increased. Finding out what drives and how people learn best for university teaching positions is the driving force behind this study. In order to further our understanding of educational psychology, this research aims to



identify patterns and correlations between different motivating factors and preferred learning styles. This essay does double duty by drawing attention to the importance of these psychological aspects and by using recent research results to investigate their possible consequences for educational policy and practice moving forward. In addition, the results of the research might shed light on how teachers can better differentiate their lessons to meet the requirements of their pupils. This may lead to classrooms that are more welcoming and productive for everyone.

## 1.2. Importance of the Topic

An internal drive to achieve a goal is what really motivates individuals to take action based on Bandhu et al. [2] Achieving one's objectives requires this kind of inner motivation. It propels people to work tirelessly towards them. How seriously and persistently pupils take their academic pursuits is determined by its implementation in the classroom. [3] If pupils aren't interested in learning, they won't be able to absorb and remember what they learn, no matter how good the teacher is. Methods of learning, on the other hand, refer to the many ways in which students absorb, process, and retain information. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning are all possible approaches, along with more advanced tactics like active learning, self-reflection, and critical thinking. For students to achieve their full academic potential, it is crucial to understand how their individual learning styles intersect with intrinsic motivation. Students who actively engage with the content via strategies such as self-testing, spaced repetition, and elaborative questioning are more likely to have a thorough grasp of it. When combined with intrinsic motivation, it results in better grades. Motivation and efficient study methods are the two most important factors in academic achievement. [4]

The learning environment, the significance of feedback, and the topic's relevancy are additional crucial considerations for enhancing teaching approaches and student accomplishment. Students' desire and ability to study are both boosted when they can understand how their coursework relates to the actual world, according to research. [5] How to best foster and support students' motivation and learning techniques in educational contexts might be better understood by investigating the relationship between these variables. This matter is most prominent when it comes to enhancing educational outcomes and methods of teaching, as these aspects work together to build a classroom climate that encourages students' academic and personal growth over the long run.

Research indicates that students with high levels of motivation are more inclined to employ efficacious study techniques, which subsequently contributes to enhanced academic performance within the classroom setting [6]. This correlation underscores the importance for educators to not only foster effective study habits but also actively cultivate students' intrinsic motivation to achieve. This information should be highly valued by programmes that train educators. Therefore, these programmes may be tailored to inspire future educators to create an atmosphere that boosts students' intrinsic motivation and to use a range of learning strategies to meet the demands of their diverse student bodies. [6] Therefore, schools should perform more studies on how different learning strategies relate to students' intrinsic motivation in order to enhance their teacher training programmes. To make sure that the next generation of teachers has what it takes to inspire their pupils to learn and succeed in the classroom, this kind of study is essential. It will also influence educational policy more generally. Teacher preparation programmes may build educators who can create dynamic, engaging, and supportive classroom settings where students are both motivated and empowered to excel academically by incorporating these findings into their curriculum. [7]

## 2. Relevant Domains of Psychology

Some branches of psychology may hold the key to unlocking the mysteries of intrinsic motivation and learning. Researchers in the field of educational psychology have long been curious in the effects



of various classroom settings on students' want to learn and retention of course material. Krapp states that educational psychologists study different classroom dynamics to better grasp how children learn and remember things. [8] Their goal in doing this study is to identify what makes students more motivated to learn and how they can best support their learning. Teachers need to know their students' learning styles and interests in order to design lessons that engage all types of students. A fundamental objective of cognitive psychology is to comprehend the brain's learning process. Intrinsic motivation significantly influences many cognitive functions, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving ability. [9] Students who are very intrinsically motivated are more likely to carry out the critical thinking tasks—such as analysing, synthesising, and evaluating—required for deep learning. Because of this, cognitive psychology is an essential discipline for comprehending the learning process and the factors that motivate students to succeed in the classroom. Research on individual preferences in learning, however, is heavily dependent on these mental operations. Research in this area is complex in and of itself. These preferences could help shed light on the intricate relationship between cognition and personalised learning.

Personalised lesson plans take into account each student's cognitive style, which is their strategy for absorbing, organising, and interpreting new knowledge. A student's cognitive style is the manner in which they approach assignments, solve issues, and comprehend new information. [10] Each person's own blend of these cognitive styles plays a major role in shaping their preferred learning style. One example is the need of tailoring lessons to each student's unique learning style. [11] Because of this, their ability to absorb new knowledge is impaired. There are primarily three ways in which our senses of sight, sound, and touch are processed. Also, it is essential to understand how children learn is the idea of metacognition. The capacity to analyse and assess one's own mental processes is what this skill entails. The methods that students use to comprehend course information are greatly affected by their degrees of metacognition and self-regulation. [12] Abilities to organise, track, and assess one's own learning are included in this group. Students who are good at reflecting on their own learning and coming up with ways to improve their own performance in school are more likely to succeed academically. It is essential for educators to have a deep comprehension of the psychological components of learning if they are to design lessons that encourage students to improve their metacognitive abilities and intrinsic motivation. A person's cognitive type includes their abilities in processing and interpreting information. Their chosen learning techniques are greatly impacted by this. Students' performance on standardised tests may increase dramatically with personalised lessons. [13] Online course personalisation to meet student needs was emphasised by Lo et al. [13] Schools should prioritise developing a curriculum that is adaptable and focused on the needs of individual students in order to meet the needs of students with a wide range of learning styles.

A new angle might be revealed by taking a look at learning and motivation through the lens of developmental psychology. Intrinich and Zusho examined how different stages of development and formative experiences affect people's intrinsic drive and learning style over the long run. [14] Students' participation in learning activities that enhanced their academic performance was much higher among those who reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation determines how a person learns best. Their own life experiences, both in and out of school, have an impact. This changes as time goes on. The relationship between intrinsic motivation and specific learning patterns has been the subject of much study, with a heavy emphasis on studies involving prospective teachers. To back up their claim, Algharaibeh used a correlational study to elucidate how prospective teachers' intrinsic motivation correlated with their preferred learning strategies. [15] With the exception of seeking help, the study indicated a positive correlation between high levels of intrinsic motivation and the majority of learning strategies. These numbers show that students with a strong desire to learn independently are more likely to seek out and employ study methods that encourage independent study. To conduct the study, Artino created the Motivated Strategies for

Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). It looked at the relationship between intrinsic motivation and various learning strategies. [16] Students with high levels of intrinsic motivation often initiate the process of developing, executing, and evaluating their strategies for learning. [17] These findings further accentuate the significance of self-regulation and metacognitive strategies in the learning process. The observed connection between intrinsic motivation and the development of innovative learning approaches suggests that students' internal drives can play a pivotal role in their academic performance and classroom engagement. In light of these observations, it would be highly beneficial for aspiring educators to comprehend the interplay between intrinsic motivation and various learning methodologies.

### 3. Research Findings

Motivated students had a higher propensity to use tactics that enhanced their academic performance. [6] Among these skills are the ability to plan ahead, practice until flawless, think critically, organise children's study space and time wisely, exert self-control, and learn from other peers. Students' motivation determines how much effort they put into their studies and what strategies they use to enhance their understanding and retention of material. Highly motivated students are likely to demonstrate traits like planning ahead, applying critical thinking to complex problems, and establishing a conducive environment for focused learning. Students' engagement with the material increases, and their grades go up, when they use these strategies. On the other hand, different techniques have different relationships with different degrees of motivation. An example of this is the strategies like elaboration and rehearsal tend to be connected with moderate levels of motivation. Students who are moderately driven to study still make use of strategies like outlining topics to help them completely grasp them or practicing material to help them memorise them. However, they may not be as proactive as students who are highly motivated. At the same time, measures such as organisation and peer learning may still be beneficial for individuals who lack motivation. These approaches give quick and controllable solutions to improve learning without requiring as much personal drive. [18] These results highlight the significance of encouraging future educators to make good use of their time by giving them incentives. Enhancing students' intrinsic motivation allows instructors to empower them to embrace a diverse array of tactics that enhance learning efficiency and long-term retention.

A student's capacity to learn is highly related to their level of intrinsic drive. If an educator wants the lesson plans to be effective, Brophy mentioned that the teacher needs to know the students' motivations. Educators can better engage their students and inspire them to learn on an intrinsic level when they have a firm grasp of what drives their pupils. [19] Teachers may find this data very helpful in improving their students' learning since engaged and successful students are intrinsically driven to do well in class. Key indications of academic achievement have long been acknowledged, as Coates pointed out, as students' enthusiasm and engagement with academic subject. [20] Consequently, encouraging learning is essential for both short-term results and the development of a lifelong love of learning and intellectual development.

According to studies on learning methods and motivation, students' strategies for studying and how they perceive their own motivation greatly influence their actual learning results. [6] [21] [22] In general, students' academic performance improves when they report higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Conversely, students who lack motivation are more likely to choose ineffective tactics. This might exacerbate their learning difficulties. Fostering a development mindset and promoting self-reflection among students is crucial. It demonstrates the value of motivation and learning methodologies working in tandem. Learning methods include everything that students do to understand more, retain more, or transfer what they've learned. [23] Taking notes and summarising are examples of elementary techniques. At the same time, applying ideas to real-world situations and

integrating new information with old frameworks are examples of more complicated methods. Another way to look at it is that children's learning methods are different combinations of activities. The variety of these techniques tends to grow as pupils go through school. According to Thomas and Rohwer, students' learning strategies are fundamentally their plans of action and mental processes that help them achieve their educational goals. [24] Students freely use these tactics to enhance their learning processes and develop self-awareness. Learning strategies should be given top priority in studies that try to understand students' motivation and learning approaches. This is because students' capacity to describe and enhance their own strategies is highly dependent on their grasp of these ideas. [25] According to Bordios et al., most students' learning approaches may be adjusted to meet their goals in a short amount of time. [26]

Keller & Suzuki, Harandi, Puspitarini & Hanif, and Hsu are just a few of the many research that have looked at students' learning motives and tactics in different topics utilising different kinds of teaching and multimedia. [27] [28] [29] Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that having strong learning skills is essential for excelling in academics and the workplace. [30] Whether via time-honored practices or cutting-edge technological innovations, one of the primary aims of empirical research is to determine the optimal means by which students acquire knowledge. Biggs, Williams and Williams, Barkley and Major, Dart and Clarke, and Nativa all agree that university professors can do a better job of teaching and mentoring their students if they have a better grasp of their students' learning styles and motivation levels. [31] [32] [33] [34]

The three primary types of learning strategies that Bahri and Corebima uncovered were cognitive, resource management, and metacognitive. [35] Some examples of cognitive tactics include making idea maps. This underlines important points, and summarising material. Strategies for managing resources include making the most efficient use of available time, resources, and settings for learning. In contrast, metacognitive techniques centre on self-regulation, which includes keeping track of one's progress. This hanging the people's learning tactics as needed, and commenting on one's own learning experiences. The significance of self-awareness in learning has been highlighted by researchers who have shown that students' self-reported learning habits strongly correlate with their actual academic achievement. [36] Numerous studies have now shifted their attention to students' motivation and learning approaches, with the overarching goal of understanding how these factors interact to impact students' overall academic achievement.

Howard et al. conducted a meta-analysis that found many ways in which learning techniques, such as self-efficacy, effort control, and time and study management, are linked to student motivation. [37] What students put into their studies and how well they manage their time are both influenced by their self-efficacy, or their conviction in their potential to achieve. Learners also need to be able to regulate their effort. This means keeping their attention and moving on even when things seem tough. Improving academic performance requires effective time management skills. The example includes creating reasonable objectives and organising study sessions. All of these things show how interdependent motivation and learning methods are. More and more people are starting to see self-regulation as a viable learning strategy in the last few years. Soydan, Misra & Misra, and Mannion all agree that this method is effective since it gets students involved in the process of learning. [38] [39] [40] Duckworth argues that instilling learning strategies in kids is insufficient to guarantee their academic achievement. [41] Motivating students to put those techniques into action in ways that boost their intellect and tenacity is more important. Looking at it from this angle, the importance of intrinsic motivation for successful learning becomes clear. Bandhu et al. assert that "motivation" is a fundamental human quality that drives individuals to fulfil their desires and achieve their goals. [2]

Zimmerman and Schunk looked at the link between intrinsic drive and self-control. [42] A strong correlation between self-regulated learning traits and most motivating factors was found in their study. These findings suggest that students who are enthusiastic about their education are more likely to take

initiative, such as developing a study schedule, adhering to it, and adjusting their strategy as needed. Ultimately, students' learning capacities are enhanced and they have agency over their educational trajectory when they are motivated.

#### 4. Implications for the Future

In particular, this study has the potential to enhance teacher preparation programmes in the future. According to Kusrkar et al., a curriculum that includes tactics to motivate students might help future teachers develop a strong desire to achieve academically. [43] Their capacity to develop diverse learning styles will determine their academic and career success. In order to track how learning strategies and intrinsic motivation change over time, future research should primarily use longitudinal studies. Research on how technology influences learning processes and the cultural and environmental factors that influence motivation is essential for elucidating this relationship. [44]

#### 5. Conclusion

To sum up, educational psychologists need to devote more time and energy to studying how college students' intrinsic drive and their chosen methods of learning interact with one another. By better comprehending this connection, the future research may improve educational procedures and results. This can set up the next generation of teachers for great success. Institutions of higher learning may improve the quality of education they provide by encouraging students to learn and disseminating information about successful study techniques. Improving educational processes and expanding our understanding requires ongoing study and practical work.

#### References

- [1] Busato, V. V., Prins, F. J., Elshout, J. J., & Hamaker, C. (2000). Intellectual ability, learning style, personality, achievement motivation and academic success of psychology students in higher education. *Personality and Individual differences*, 29(6), 1057-1068
- [2] Bandhu, D., Mohan, M. M., Nittala, N. A. P., Jadhav, P., Bhadauria, A., & Saxena, K. K. (2024). Theories of motivation: A comprehensive analysis of human behavior drivers. *Acta Psychologica*, 244, 104177.
- [3] Allen, D. (1999). Desire to finish college: An empirical link between motivation and persistence. *Research in higher education*, 40(4), 461-485.
- [4] Stover, J. B., Freiberg Hoffmann, A., de la Iglesia, G., & Fernandez Liporace, M. M. (2014). Predicting academic achievement: The role of motivation and learning strategies.
- [5] Amerstorfer, C. M., & Frein von Münster-Kistner, C. (2021). Student Perceptions of Academic Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(12). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057>
- [6] Ames, C., & Archer, J. (1988). Achievement goals in the classroom: Students' learning strategies and motivation processes. *Journal of educational psychology*, 80(3), 260.
- [7] Kiefer, S. M., Ellerbrock, C., & Alley, K. (2014). The role of responsive teacher practices in supporting academic motivation at the middle level. *RMLE Online*, 38(1), 1-16.
- [8] Krapp, A. (1999). Interest, motivation and learning: An educational-psychological perspective. *European journal of psychology of education*, 14, 23-40.
- [9] Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive science*, 12(2), 257-285.
- [10] Miller, A. (1987). Cognitive styles: An integrated model. *Educational psychology*, 7(4), 251-268.
- [11] Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., & Bjork, R. (2008). Learning styles: Concepts and evidence. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 9(3), 105-119.
- [12] Winne, P. H. (1996). A metacognitive view of individual differences in self-regulated learning. *Learning and individual differences*, 8(4), 327-353.
- [13] Lo, J. J., Chan, Y. C., & Yeh, S. W. (2012). Designing an adaptive web-based learning system based on students' cognitive styles identified online. *Computers & Education*, 58(1), 209-222.
- [14] Pintrich, P. R., & Zusho, A. (2002). The development of academic self-regulation: The role of cognitive and motivational factors. In *Development of achievement motivation* (pp. 249-284). Academic Press.

- [15] Algharaibeh, S. A. S. (2020). *Should I ask for help? The role of motivation and help-seeking in students' academic achievement: A path analysis model*. *Kıbrıslı Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 15(5), 1128-1145.
- [16] Artino Jr, A. R. (2005). *Review of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire*. Online Submission.
- [17] Azevedo, R., F. Behnagh, R., Duffy, M., M. Harley, J., & Trevors, G. (2012). *Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning in Student-Centered Learning Environments*. In S. Land & D. Jonassen (Eds.), *Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments* (pp. 171–197).
- [18] Lin, L. J. (1992). *Self-improving reactive agents based on reinforcement learning, planning and teaching*. *Machine learning*, 8, 293-321.
- [19] Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating students to learn*. Routledge.
- [20] Coates, H. (2005). *The value of student engagement for higher education quality assurance*. *Quality in higher education*, 11(1), 25-36.
- [21] Garcia, T., & Pintrich, P. R. (1996). *Assessing students' motivation and learning strategies in the classroom context: The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire*. In *Alternatives in assessment of achievements, learning processes and prior knowledge* (pp. 319-339). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- [22] Mauludin, L., Sefrina, L., Ardianti, T., Prasetyo, G., Prasetyo, S., & Putri, C. (2023). *An Investigation of the Students' Perceptions of Motivating Teaching Strategies in English for Specific Purposes Classes*. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 20(6).
- [23] Schmeck, R. R. (Ed.). (2013). *Learning strategies and learning styles*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- [24] Thomas, J. W., & Rohwer Jr, W. D. (1986). *Academic studying: The role of learning strategies*. *Educational psychologist*, 21(1-2), 19-41.
- [25] Claxton, C. S., & Murrell, P. H. (1987). *Learning Styles: Implications for Improving Educational Practices*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 4, 1987. Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1 Dupont Circle, Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036.
- [26] Bordios, R., Demafiles, T., Baylosis, T. C., Omotong, K., & Gumobar, N. (2023). *Adaptability of Blended Learning among the Education Students of Notre Dame of Midsayap College*. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 15(10), 1120-1132.
- [27] Keller, J., & Suzuki, K. (2004). *Learner motivation and e-learning design: A multinationally validated process*. *Journal of educational Media*, 29(3), 229-239.
- [28] Harandi, S. R. (2015). *Effects of e-learning on Students' Motivation*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 181, 423-430.
- [29] Hsu, K. C. (2016). *Social gamification in multimedia instruction: assessing the effects of animation, reward strategies, and social interactions on learners motivation and academic performance in online settings*.
- [30] Fazey, I., Fazey, J. A., & Fazey, D. M. (2005). *Learning more effectively from experience*. *Ecology and Society*, 10(2).
- [31] Biggs, J. (1999). *What the student does: Teaching for enhanced learning*. *Higher education research & development*, 18(1), 57-75.
- [32] Williams, K. C., & Williams, C. C. (2011). *Five key ingredients for improving student motivation*. *Research in higher education journal*, 12, 1.
- [33] Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2020). *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [34] Dart, B. C., & Clarke, J. A. (1991). *Helping students become better learners: a case study in teacher education*. *Higher Education*, 22(3), 317-335.
- [35] Bahri, A., & Corebima, A. D. (2015). *The Contribution of Learning Motivation and Metacognitive Skill on Cognitive Learning Outcome of Students within Different Learning Strategies*. *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 14(4), 487-500.
- [36] Baird, L. L. (1976). *Using Self-Reports to Predict Student Performance*. Research Monograph No. 7.
- [37] Howard, J. L., Bureau, J. S., Guay, F., Chong, J. X., & Ryan, R. M. (2021). *Student motivation and associated outcomes: A meta-analysis from self-determination theory*. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(6), 1300-1323.
- [38] Soydan, D. (2018). *Adult learners' experience with immediate intervention in a self-regulated learning environment*. Capella University.
- [39] Misra, P. K., & Misra, P. K. (2021). *Strategies for Learning*. *Learning and Teaching for Teachers*, 59-80.;
- [40] Mannion, J. (2018). *Metacognition, self-regulation, oracy: A mixed methods case study of a complex, whole-school Learning to Learn intervention*.
- [41] Duckworth, E. (2006). *The having of wonderful ideas and other essays on teaching and learning*. Teachers College Press.
- [42] Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (2012). *Motivation: An essential dimension of self-regulated learning*. In *Motivation and self-regulated learning* (pp. 1-30). Routledge.

- [43] Kusurkar, R. A., Croiset, G., Mann, K. V., Custers, E., & Ten Cate, O. (2012). *Have motivation theories guided the development and reform of medical education curricula? A review of the literature. Academic Medicine, 87*(6), 735-743.
- [44] Pintrich, P. R. (2003). *A motivational science perspective on the role of student motivation in learning and teaching contexts. Journal of educational Psychology, 95*(4), 667.

# ***An Analysis of the Role of Psychosocial Interventions in the Management of Chronic Diseases***

**Weiming Xu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>School of psychology, The University of Auckland, Auckland CBD, 1010, New Zealand  
a. 17819679322@qq.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, are leading causes of death globally that require long-term management. At present, the dominant approach to treatment typically prioritizes the relief of physical symptoms, with less attention given to addressing the emotional and psychological needs of patients. Therefore, the paper delves into the critical role of psychosocial interventions in the management of chronic diseases, particularly in addressing the emotional, psychological, and social challenges. In addition, it evaluates the efficacy of psychosocial interventions through a comprehensive systematic review of relevant studies, including systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials. The results show that interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and social support networks significantly improved patients' mood, self-management behaviors, and quality of life. However, individual response differences and issues of accessibility of interventions, especially in resource-poor settings, remain important challenges. This paper concludes that integrating psychosocial support into traditional medical care can significantly enhance the comprehensive management of chronic diseases, but further optimization and replication of interventions are needed to maximize their effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Chronic Diseases, Psychosocial Intervention, Healthcare, Integrated Care.

## **1. Introduction**

The treatment of chronic diseases has always been a major issue worldwide, which has led to a growing realization that it is important to address not only the physical symptoms, but also the emotional, psychological and social aspects of the patient's life. Recent studies have underscored the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions in combination with traditional medical therapies, demonstrating their capacity to mitigate psychological distress and enhance the overall quality of life for patients afflicted with chronic disease. Despite these advancements, gaps remain in fully understanding the long-term effectiveness of these interventions in different patient populations and at different levels of disease severity. Thus, the study aims to explore the impact of psychosocial interventions on chronic disease management by examining their effects on emotional support, self-management behaviors, and the use of electronic health tools. Through a comprehensive review of the existing literature, this research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions and identify strategies for optimizing their application in clinical settings. In short, this study contributes to the advancement of knowledge in this field and provides insights to enhance the holistic care of chronically ill patients, with the ultimate goal of improving their well-being and health.



## **2. Conceptual Framework of Psychosocial Interventions**

Broadly speaking, chronic diseases, defined as illnesses of one year or more duration that require ongoing medical care or limitations in daily living, cause 41 million deaths annually, accounting for 74% of global deaths. Heart Disease, Stroke, Respiratory Disease, Chronic Obstruction Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Diabetes are known as the top five chronic diseases, which are often difficult to cure and may worsen over time. In recent years, the proportion of deaths due to chronic diseases has also been gradually increasing. In 2010, 67% of deaths worldwide were attributed to chronic diseases, and this rose to 74% in 2019 [1]. Traditional medical treatment focuses mainly on the physiological level, relying on drugs, surgery and other medical interventions to control symptoms and slow the progression of the disease. Although these methods are effective in relieving physical symptoms, they often ignore the emotional and psychological pressure of patients, causing many patients to face problems such as anxiety, depression and social isolation in the process of managing the disease. Recently, psychosocial interventions have received increasing attention, which combine traditional medical treatments with psychosocial interventions to comprehensively improve patients' emotional well-being, social support, and quality of life through psychological counseling, support groups, stress management, and educational programs.

Psychosocial interventions are defined as any program that incorporates techniques designed to reduce psychosocial distress by reducing anxiety and depression and increasing social activity [2]. This intervention not only address individual psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression and stress, but focus on the impact of their social environment and relationships. In the treatment of chronic diseases, commonly used psychosocial intervention methods include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), cognitive restructuring, and communication development, with the main aim of identifying and changing negative thoughts or enabling patients to focus on their own strengths and expand their positive emotions [3]. Through these methods, patients can receive emotional support and practical coping strategies to better manage their condition and reduce the stress and negative emotions caused by the disease. The extant literature demonstrates a robust correlation between optimism and hope and a diminished impact of chronic disease, particularly in individuals with heart disease [4]. Psychosocial interventions that enhance patients' mental health, cultivate positive attitudes toward life, and facilitate patients' collaboration with their families and healthcare teams, thereby optimizing treatment outcomes.

## **3. Effectiveness of Psychosocial Interventions**

Psychosocial interventions play a crucial role in the management of chronic diseases by addressing the comprehensive needs of patients beyond just physical symptoms. These interventions focus on improving patients' emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which is often neglected in traditional medical treatments. They provide essential support to patients by helping them cope with the emotional impact of chronic illness, building psychological resilience and encouraging positive behavioral change. The effectiveness of psychosocial interventions can be seen in three main areas: providing emotional support and building psychological resilience, enhancing self-management behaviors, and using e-health interventions to improve patient prognosis.

### **3.1. Emotional Support and Psychological Resilience**

Psychosocial interventions provide important emotional support to patients with chronic illnesses to help them cope with emotional challenges such as fear, anxiety, depression, and anger arising from their condition. These emotional supports help alleviate psychological stress and enhance patients' confidence and self-efficacy. In a recent study, Dear et al. conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to assess the efficacy of a brief recall-based psychosocial intervention in reducing



psychological distress in cancer patients. The study systematically searched the Cochrane Library, PubMed and Scopus databases for randomized controlled trials (RCTs) published in English up to November 27, 2022, and included 20 studies involving 1,744 cancer patients in the analysis. The interventions primarily focused on enhancing patients' mental health by prompting them to reflect on positive life experiences through various reminiscence methods. The data indicated statistically significant improvements in levels of hope, anxiety, and depression immediately post-intervention and at one month follow-up, demonstrating lasting effects of the interventions. The meta-analysis revealed that brief reminiscence-based psychosocial interventions significantly reduced anxiety and depression symptoms, with pooled standardized mean differences (SMDs) of  $-0.67$  (95% CI:  $-1.05$  to  $-0.29$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) for depression, and  $-0.51$  (95% CI:  $-0.93$  to  $-0.10$ ,  $p=0.015$ ) for anxiety at post-intervention. Furthermore, improvements in hope were evident with an SMD of  $1.14$  (95% CI:  $0.70$  to  $1.58$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) after interventions, and these effects were sustained at one month follow-up, supported by similar findings for well-being. The results of the studies emphasize the potential of incorporating brief recall-based psychosocial interventions into routine cancer care to address significant psychosocial distress, which not only enhances psychological resilience, but promotes improvements in emotional and mental well-being in cancer patients, thereby demonstrating its effectiveness as a non-pharmacological treatment option [5].

### 3.2. Improvement in Self-Management Behaviors

Psychosocial interventions can greatly improve patients' self-management behaviors and health outcomes by fostering robust social support networks, including family, friends, and community resources. The provision of adequate social support can serve to mitigate feelings of isolation and psychological distress, whilst simultaneously enhancing patients' coping abilities. Martire et.al conducted a meta-analysis to assess the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions involving family members compared to standard medical care on various patient and caregiver outcomes, including depression, anxiety, relationship satisfaction, disability, and mortality. They selected randomized controlled trial studies published through October 2002 focusing on chronically ill patients and their family caregivers, ultimately identifying 70 eligible studies from an initial pool of 235 studies. Findings showed that patient-specific interventions significantly reduced depressive symptoms when only spouses were involved (effect size  $d=0.33$ ), while no substantial effect was found in mixed family interventions ( $d=0.02$ ). Additionally, these family interventions positively affected caregivers, yielding modest effects on reducing their depressive symptoms ( $d=0.10$ ) and anxiety ( $d=0.14$ ), particularly effective in populations without dementia ( $d=0.17$ ). For patient mortality, the meta-analysis indicated a slight marginally significant effect ( $d=0.08$ ), suggesting potential benefits, particularly among non-dementia patients ( $d=0.13$ ). The main findings stated that engaging family members in therapeutic interventions can enhance not only the emotional well-being of patients but also relieve the burden on caregivers, underscoring the significant role families play in chronic illness management. Thus, targeted psychosocial interventions, especially those focused on spousal relationships, can lead to meaningful improvements in mental health outcomes for patients and their caregivers, leading to the proposal of a strategic approach to incorporating family involvement into chronic disease treatment programs [6].

### 3.3. Adoption of Electronic Health Interventions

Psychosocial interventions, particularly those that utilize electronic health tools, can guide patients in actively changing their behavior and improving self-management by providing personalized psychological support and lifestyle guidance tailored to their specific needs. And research has shown that electronic health interventions can also provide personalized psychological support and lifestyle

guidance for patients, effectively improving their physical and mental health. Zhang et.al conducted a randomized controlled trial to assess the efficacy and acceptability of an internet delivered transdiagnostic psychological intervention designed for individuals with chronic health conditions. A total of 676 participants were randomly assigned to either an 8-week treatment group or a waitlist control group, with treatment consisting of five core lessons, homework tasks, additional resources, and weekly contact with a psychologist. Primary outcomes included changes in depression, anxiety, and disability at multiple time points: pre-treatment, post-treatment, and follow-ups at 3 and 12 months. Results indicated significant improvements in the treatment group, with depression decreasing by 3.61 points (between-group effect size  $d=0.47$ ), anxiety decreasing by 1.97 points ( $d=0.32$ ), and disability reducing by 3.71 points ( $d=0.17$ ) compared to the control group, with all differences statistically significant ( $p<0.001$ ) at post-treatment. These improvements were generally maintained at the follow-ups, showcasing high treatment satisfaction with 86% of participants reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program and a notable treatment completion rate of 69% among those who started the intervention. The results of the studies indicate that transdiagnostic interventions delivered via the Internet are an effective method for addressing the psychological adjustment of individuals with chronic illnesses. This is achieved by providing them with accessible and tailored support, which has been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety while improving overall life satisfaction and health-related quality of life. As such, the potential of online therapeutic approaches to improve mental health outcomes for individuals facing the double burden of chronic diseases and psychological distress [7].

#### 4. Challenges and Strategies in Implementing Psychosocial Interventions

The above analysis highlights the significant impact of psychosocial interventions on improving the well-being of people with chronic diseases, which provide a complementary approach to traditional medical care by addressing the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of health. The practical effects of these interventions are multifaceted, demonstrating substantial improvements in mental health, emotional resilience, and social support networks. However, despite these positive outcomes, there are limitations to the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions.

Firstly, a major challenge is the variation in individual responses to these interventions. Factors such as the severity of the illness, the patient's psychological state, and the level of social support available can all influence the efficacy of the intervention. a study by Li et al found that patients with less severe symptoms of heart disease showed significantly more improvement from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) compared to those with more advanced conditions, highlighting the need for tailored interventions based on individual health status [8]. The possibility exists that the advantages gained in the short term may be lost over time unless continued assistance is provided, as sustained behavioral and emotional change requires continuous reinforcement. It is essential that interventions facilitate a transition from the initial phase of change to the maintenance phase, thereby supporting long-term health behaviors [9]. According to research, although psychological interventions can improve quality of life in the short term, only some of them maintain their effectiveness after 12 months [10]. Finally, the accessibility and scalability of these interventions represent a significant limitation. In resource-poor settings, there is often a critical shortage of mental health professionals. This makes it difficult to find sufficient personnel to deliver these specialized interventions [11]. In addition, comprehensive psychosocial programs require significant funding and resource support, which are often limited in resource-poor settings [12].

To optimize the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions, several strategies are recommended. First, intervention programs tailored to the severity of the patient's condition, psychological state, and social support system can improve treatment outcomes [3], which requires consideration of the patient's unique psychological, social, and cultural context and can enhance the relevance and impact

of the intervention. For example, according to a study of Hispanic breast cancer patients, a culturally adapted positive mindfulness program resulted in notably lower anxiety levels compared with a standard intervention [13]. Second, the advancement of integrated care models that integrate medical treatment with psychosocial support is vital to addressing the heterogeneous needs of patients with chronic diseases. For example, people with diabetes receive both medical treatment to control blood glucose and weekly sessions with a psychologist to manage stress and anxiety and improve overall health through a holistic approach. Additionally, by utilizing mobile applications or remote therapy technologies, it is possible to overcome geographical and resource limitations and provide remote support, monitor progress, and implement interventions in an economically efficient manner [14]. For example, innovative integrated health and social care models in Italy utilizes mobile APPs to facilitate coordination and enhance quality of life and treatment adherence for patients with chronic diseases [15]. These online platforms should be designed to be user-friendly and culturally sensitive to ensure that the needs of different patient groups are met.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, psychosocial interventions play a pivotal role in the comprehensive management of chronic diseases. While traditional medical treatments effectively address the physiological aspects of these conditions, psychosocial interventions provide essential support by addressing emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of health. And the integration of these interventions has been shown to significantly enhance overall patient well-being, strengthen emotional resilience, improve self-management behaviors, and reinforce social support networks. Despite these evident benefits, challenges such as individual variability in response, the need for sustained interventions, and issues of accessibility and scalability persist. Addressing these challenges requires strategic measures, including the development of personalized intervention plans, integrated care models, and the application of technology to broaden the reach of these interventions. The continuous improvement and expansion of psychosocial interventions can facilitate the delivery of more effective and comprehensive care for individuals with chronic diseases, which has the potential to improve the quality of life and treatment outcomes for these patients.

## References

- [1] Thomas, S.A., Browning, C.J., et al. (2023) *Transforming global approaches to chronic disease prevention and management across the lifespan: integrating genomics, behavior change, and digital health solutions*. *Frontiers in public health*, 11.
- [2] Bessell, A. and Moss, T.P. (2007) *Evaluating the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions for individuals with visible differences: a systematic review of the empirical literature*. *Body Image*, 4(3): 227-238.
- [3] Akyirem, S., et al. (2022) *Psychosocial interventions for adults with newly diagnosed chronic disease: A systematic review*. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 27(7):1753-1782.
- [4] Schiavon, C.C., et al. (2017) *Optimism and Hope in Chronic Disease: A Systematic Review*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7: 2022-2022.
- [5] Dear, B.F., et al. (2022) *The Chronic Conditions Course: A Randomised Controlled Trial of an Internet-Delivered Transdiagnostic Psychological Intervention for People with Chronic Health Conditions*. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 91(4), 265-276.
- [6] Martire, L. M., et al. (2004) *Is It Beneficial to Involve a Family Member? A Meta-Analysis of Psychosocial Interventions for Chronic Illness*. *Health Psychology*, 23(6): 599-611.
- [7] Zhang, S., et al. (2024) *The effectiveness of brief reminiscence-based psychosocial interventions for cancer patients: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 33(7): 2775-2796.
- [8] Li, Y.N., et al. (2021) *Effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy-based interventions on health outcomes in patients with coronary heart disease: A meta-analysis*. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, 11(11): 1147-1166.
- [9] Raihan, N. and Cogburn, M. (2023). *Stages of Change Theory*. National Library of Medicine.

- [10] Anderson, N. and Ozakinci, G. (2018) *Effectiveness of psychological interventions to improve quality of life in people with long-term conditions: rapid systematic review of randomised controlled trials*. *BMC Psychology*, 6(1): 11-11.
- [11] Bird, V.J., et al. (2022) *Implementing psychosocial interventions within low and middle-income countries to improve community-based care for people with psychosis-A situation analysis*. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13: 807259-807259.
- [12] McGinty, E.E., et al. (2024) *Scaling Interventions to Manage Chronic Disease: Innovative Methods at the Intersection of Health Policy Research and Implementation Science*. *Prevention Science*, 25: 96-108.
- [13] Juarez-Reyes, M., et al. (2024) *A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Culturally Adapted, Community-Based, Remotely Delivered Mindfulness Program for Latinx Patients With Breast Cancer is Acceptable and Feasible While Reducing Anxiety*. *Global Advances in Integrative Medicine and Health*.
- [14] Cardol, C.K., et al. (2021) *Detecting and Treating Psychosocial and Lifestyle-Related Difficulties in Chronic Disease: Development and Treatment Protocol of the E-GOAL eHealth Care Pathway*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18/
- [15] Gavalda-Espelta, E., et al. (2023) *Innovative Health and Social Integrated Care Model Effectiveness to Improve Quality Care for Chronic Patients: A Single Group Assignment Clinical Trial*. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 23(4): 2-2.

# ***Preventing and Managing Sports Injuries in Adolescents: Strategies and Practices***

**Jinshuo Zheng<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Capital Normal University High School, Beijing, 100048, China*

*a. zhengcr70904@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** With the proportion of adolescents participating in sports increasing year by year, the problem of sports injuries is of increasing concern, and this study aims to investigate its main causes and effective prevention strategies. The adolescent population is at an elevated risk of sports injuries at a developmental stage when their physical maturation is not yet complete. Thus, comprehensive studies are imperative to elucidate the associated factors and effective interventions. This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze the common causes of injuries, including over-training, improper technique, and lack of protection, as identified in the existing literature. The results show that the risk of injury can be greatly reduced by enhancing the pre-exercise warm-up, imparting proper technique instruction, developing individualized training programs, and reinforcing safety education in both home and academic settings. This study may serve as a reference for preventing sports injuries in adolescents, thereby providing preliminary recommendations, aiming to support healthy growth and athletic development in adolescents.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Sports Injuries, Prevention Strategies, Physical Training.

## **1. Introduction**

The rising prevalence of young people engaging in sports activities has led to a notable increase in the incidence of sports injuries, which have emerged as a significant concern affecting their health and sports performance. The statistical evidence indicates a continued increase in the number of adolescents receiving medical treatment for sports injuries on an annual basis. This not only negatively affects their physical development but may also diminish their enthusiasm for participating in sports. Research indicates that the incidence of sports injuries among young people is as high as 20%, of which injuries caused by inappropriate training techniques and plans account for a large proportion. These injuries not only affect the physical health of young people, but may also affect their long-term sports participation. Therefore, implementing scientific preventive measures can effectively protect the physical and mental health of young people and promote their physical and mental health development [1]. This study aims to deeply analyze the causes of sports injuries among young people and evaluate the effectiveness of current prevention measures. Specifically, it reviews relevant literature to identify the main causes of these injuries, assesses the efficacy of various preventive strategies, and proposes recommendations for improvement. Moreover, it provides an overview of the current prevalence of adolescent sports injuries and associated statistical data,

analyzes the key factors that contribute to these injuries, and evaluates existing preventive measures to help identify directions for future research and improvements.

## **2. Factors Influencing Sports Injuries in Adolescents**

### **2.1. Physiological Factors**

The elevated prevalence of sports-related injuries among adolescents is closely associated with their physiological developmental stage, during which their skeletal and muscular systems are still maturing. In particular, the growth rate of bones often exceeds the development level of surrounding tissues. This imbalance makes adolescents prone to ligament and muscle strain during exercise. Also, adolescents have higher hormone levels and relatively lower bone density, which further increases the risk of sports injuries. Unbalanced development of the skeletal and muscular systems and incorrect posture during exercise are particularly prone to fractures and other injuries. For example, an 18-year-old male school sports athlete developed lumbar pain during exercise. The pain initially developed slowly and was not formally diagnosed or treated. It usually occurred after exercise (running) and was accompanied by soreness, but no obvious pain in the lower limbs. Although the symptoms were relieved after bed rest and acupuncture treatment, the patient's symptoms gradually worsened in the past three months, and he now has bilateral anterior and lateral thigh soreness and needle-like pain [2]. Thus, adolescents are in a rapid stage of bone and muscle development, with low bone density, coupled with incorrect exercise posture, which can easily lead to lumbar pain. This further illustrates that the risk of sports injuries increases significantly during this stage of physiological development, and highlights the importance of developing appropriate training plans and preventive measures for adolescent athletes.

### **2.2. Psychological Factors**

Adolescents exhibit distinctive psychological characteristics, including significant mood swings and elevated stress levels, which greatly influence their susceptibility to sports injuries and their coping behaviors. Due to their immature cognitive abilities, adolescents often underestimate the risk of sports injuries and lack effective prevention awareness and skills. During self-identification, adolescents may engage in risky behaviors that heighten their injury risk. Additionally, social pressure and a competitive mindset can lead them to ignore warning signs from their bodies and persist with intense training. High levels of psychological stress can also contribute to distraction and muscle tension, further increasing the likelihood of injuries. For example, some studies have pointed out that the fear of sports injuries is one of the main psychological factors that prolong treatment time [3]. Factors such as sport type, athlete experience, injury type and location can affect recovery time. Athletes who have been engaged in professional sports for a long time often have a better understanding of their bodies, leading to varied recovery durations. These findings indicate that adolescent athletes' perception and response to sports injuries are significantly affected by psychological factors. Thus, individual differences and the role of psychological factors should be thoroughly considered when designing prevention and rehabilitation.

### **2.3. Environmental Factors**

Environmental factors significantly impact the incidence of sports injuries in adolescents. The safety of sports venues and equipment directly influences the severity of injuries. Poorly maintained facilities, outdated equipment, or the absence of essential safety measures, such as gymnastics mats and crash pads, can increase the risk and severity of injuries. In addition, extreme weather conditions, such as heat or cold, can elevate the risk of injury. Inadequate training plans also pose a risk, as



improper guidance and plans that do not account for the physiological characteristics of adolescents can result in both acute injuries and chronic fatigue or overuse injuries. For example, in extreme heat conditions, adolescents may be at risk of heat stroke, while inclement weather conditions may lead to slip accidents. Training plans that lack scientific basis and inappropriate guidance can easily lead to excessive exercise, which in turn increases the chance of injury. To mitigate the risk of sports injuries and ensure the safety of sports venues and equipment, it is essential to design training plans that align with the physiological characteristics of adolescents and to adjust activity content based on weather conditions.

### **3. Prevention Strategies for Sports Injuries in Adolescents**

#### **3.1. Enhancing Awareness of Injuries and Self-Protection**

Young athletes are particularly prone to injuries in high-intensity sports such as basketball. And these injuries can adversely affect their competitive performance and pose significant risks to their long-term health and development. Therefore, it is essential to enhance athletes' awareness of injuries and their self-protection strategies. First, athletes need to recognize the prevalence of sports injuries and their impact on their sports careers. For example, survey data showed that 132 out of 160 basketball players had experienced sports injuries. Finger and knee joint injuries are particularly prevalent, comprising 66.7% and 69.7% of cases, respectively. These injuries mainly occur during actions such as dribbling, layups and dunks, and the fingers and knee joints are under greater pressure during intense exercise. In addition, wrist and ankle injuries are also prevalent, with 57.6% and 49.2% of athletes reporting experiencing these problems, respectively. Despite the relatively rare occurrence of the most severe injuries, they still significantly impact athletes' performance and recovery. And muscle strains are also common in basketball training, affecting 44.7% of athletes and significantly impacting training plans [4]. The survey of U16 youth basketball players in Jiangsu, China revealed that many athletes have insufficient knowledge of sports injuries and self-protection strategies. Therefore, coaches need to strengthen the cultivation of injury awareness in theoretical and practical training. Athletes should fully understand the risks of sports injuries and effective preventive measures through detailed explanations, demonstrations and practical operations, which includes the use of appropriate protective equipment, such as knee pads, elbow pads and wrist guards, to reduce the incidence of sports injuries. Improving athletes' self-protection awareness will help reduce the occurrence of sports injuries and ensure their health and sports performance [4].

#### **3.2. Optimizing Technique and Training Methods**

Standardized technical movements play a key role in preventing sports injuries and improving sports performance. Standardized technical movements not only help reduce the occurrence of sports injuries, but also improve sports efficiency and maintain the persistence of skills in training and competition. To ensure the standardization of technical movements, a systematic teaching method must be adopted, including detailed explanations, demonstrations, continuous practice, and timely feedback. Tools such as video analysis, mirror exercises, and peer reviews are crucial for helping athletes identify and correct technical deficiencies, which enable athletes to gain a clearer understanding of their movements and make the necessary adjustments. Moreover, developing a personalized training regimen is an effective strategy for optimizing sports performance. Training intensity should be incrementally increased to avoid overtraining. The regimen should be customized based on the athlete's age, physical condition, and recovery capacity. Implementing the principle of periodic training and reasonably arranging high-intensity and low-intensity training courses can effectively avoid the monotony of training. At the same time, the fatigue and recovery of athletes need to be carefully monitored. Timely adjustment of training plans and attention to the value of rest

and recovery, which includes adequate sleep and nutritional supplements, are also important measures to prevent sports injuries. Regular physical examinations and adjustment of training intensity based on test results can further improve the training effect. Athletes should also be educated to recognize signs of overtraining syndrome and proactively communicate their physical condition to facilitate early identification and intervention. Employing these strategies to optimize technique and training methods can significantly reduce the incidence of sports injuries, enhance athletic performance, and safeguard the health and long-term well-being of young athletes [5].

### **3.3. Implementing Effective Protective Measures**

In order to prevent sports-related injuries, adolescents participating in sports should be equipped with appropriate protective gear and adhere to safety precautions, including providing suitable protective equipment during training and competition, such as helmets, knee pads, and elbow pads. Each piece of equipment should be selected based on the specific requirements of the sport, so as to ensure optimal protection. Coaches and parents need to ensure that athletes understand how to select and use the equipment and perform regular inspections and adjustments before each game. Besides, proper warm-up and stretching exercises should be included, and cool-down exercises should be performed after the activity. At the same time, continuous safety inspections of the competition venue and equipment are required, including venue consistency, equipment fixation, and the presence of harmful objects. It is also critical to ensure that all facilities meet safety standards and repair or replace faulty equipment in a timely manner. And establishing safety rules and response plans, which include prohibiting hazardous activities, ensuring adequate rest periods, and providing first aid services, are essential components of a comprehensive safety strategy. These extensive preventive measures can significantly lower the risk of injury for young athletes and encourage them to participate in sports activities in a safer way, thereby enhancing the sports experience and promoting long-term exercise habits [6].

### **3.4. Considering Nutrition and Recovery**

A balanced diet is essential to maintaining health and optimizing athletic performance. Adolescents should consume sufficient carbohydrates to serve as their primary energy source, high-quality proteins to support muscle growth and repair, and healthy fats to maintain hormonal balance. It is recommended that adequate energy intake be consumed two to three hours before training or competition to maximize results. Therefore, the diet should include a variety of food sources such as brown rice, lean meats, fish, eggs, beans, and a variety of fruits and vegetables. In addition, timely hydration before, during, and after exercise is also key to ensure the body's water balance. Proper training and rest patterns are also essential to an athlete's recovery process. It is recommended that athletes get eight to ten hours of restorative sleep each night so that the body has enough time to recover and produce growth hormones. Appropriate rest days should be included in the training plan, especially after high-intensity training, and a recovery period of 1-2 days is recommended. It is important to avoid overtraining, so the intensity and frequency of training should be adjusted according to individual needs. Active recovery measures, such as light aerobic exercise, stretching, or yoga, can also help ease the recovery process. By eating a balanced diet and getting enough rest, young athletes can not only stay healthy but also optimize their performance and minimize their risk of injury [7].



## **4. Management of Sports Injuries in Adolescents**

### **4.1. On-Site Management of Acute Injuries**

The initial treatment of acute sports injuries in adolescents should strictly follow the PRICE principle to ensure effective injury reduction and recovery. First, protection require immediate cessation of all sports activities to prevent further deterioration of the injury. Next, rest is crucial, and the injured part must rest completely to avoid additional injury and promote healing. Then, ice treatment should be performed within 24 to 48 hours after injury, for 15 to 20 minutes each time, repeated every one to two hours to reduce swelling and pain. Compression is also key, and moderate pressure applied by using an elastic bandage can help further control swelling. Finally, elevating the injured part above the level of the heart can promote venous return and reduce local edema. In the process of dealing with acute injuries, it is also necessary to continuously monitor the patient's overall health and immediately seek professional medical intervention in the event of serious injuries (such as fractures or dislocations), rather than rushing to transfer the injured to other locations. In addition, specific treatment plans should be provided according to different types of injuries (such as abrasions, sprains, etc.), and ensure that the injured part is cleaned and bandaged to prevent infection and promote healing [8].

### **4.2. Rehabilitation Training and Recovery Strategies**

Rehabilitation training should be based on the principle of gradual progress, starting with low-intensity exercises and gradually increasing the intensity and difficulty to adapt to the recovery process of the injured part. The development of an individualized rehabilitation plan must take into account the specific nature, severity and stage of recovery of the injury [9]. Rehabilitation training should include joint range of motion recovery exercises and enhanced proprioception training. The former aims to restore the normal range of motion of the joint, while the latter strengthens the muscles around the injured part by gradually increasing the load, improving overall stability and function. Improving proprioception ability can help enhance the athlete's balance and coordination. In addition, flexibility training should be combined with aerobic training during the rehabilitation process to fully promote recovery. It is essential to closely monitor the athlete's pain responses and prevent overtraining, particularly during this stage. Psychological rehabilitation is also a critical aspect of the recovery process Incorporating team activities or competitive elements into the rehabilitation process is recommended to sustain the athlete's motivation and self-confidence. These comprehensive strategies can facilitate a faster recovery, enhance sports performance, and promote the long-term health and well-being of young athletes [10].

## **5. Conclusion**

The results show that the prevention and management of sports injuries in adolescents is a complex and multidimensional task. Effective prevention strategies involve increasing athletes' awareness of self-protection, standardizing technical movements, implementing appropriate protective measures, and ensuring balanced nutrition and adequate rest. In terms of injury management, on-site treatment of acute injuries should follow the PRICE principle (protection, rest, ice, compression, elevation), while rehabilitation training needs to follow the principles of gradual and personalized. These strategies can not only reduce the incidence of sports injuries, but also improve sports performance and long-term health. Future research should focus on refinement and personalization, particularly in analyzing injury patterns across different age groups and sports, so as to develop more targeted and effective prevention strategies. At the same time, attention should be paid to the impact of psychological factors on sports injuries and a comprehensive physical and mental health management

program should be developed. In terms of technology, the use of wearable devices and artificial intelligence in real-time monitoring and early warning should be explored. In terms of education, safety awareness training for coaches, parents and athletes should be strengthened to establish an effective injury prevention and management system. Interdisciplinary collaboration will be a key trend in the future, combining insights from fields such as sports medicine, nutrition and psychology to form a comprehensive care for young athletes.

## References

- [1] Yang, L. and Cheng, R.R. (2024) *Sports Injuries and Prevention Strategies in Adolescent Physical Development. Science & Technology of Stationery & Sporting Goods*, 15: 117-119.
- [2] Zhao, X.Q., , Zhang, X.R. and Luo, S.F. (2023) *A case of intervertebral discogenic low back pain due to sports injury in adolescents [J/OL] . China Clinical Case Outcome Database*, 05(1) : E00101-E00101. .
- [3] Lee , Y.S., et al. (2020) *Sports injury type and psychological factors affect treatment period and willingness-to-pay: Cross-sectional study. Medicine (Baltimore)*, 99(50):e23647.
- [4] Hu, J.L. (2023) *Research on the Investigation of Injury Damage and Prevention Methods of U16 Youth Basketball Players in Jiangsu Province. Sports Vision*, 2023(23):103-105.
- [5] Guangdong Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023) *Preventing Sports Injuries in Children: Risks and Strategies for Running, Jump Rope, and Ball Games. [http://cdcp.gd.gov.cn/jkyy/jkzt/hjyxxws/content/post\\_4250699.html](http://cdcp.gd.gov.cn/jkyy/jkzt/hjyxxws/content/post_4250699.html)*
- [6] Nyland, J., Kaya, D. and Wessel, R.P. (2015). *Injury Prevention in Different Sports. In: Doral, M.N., Karlsson, J. (eds) Sports Injuries. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.*
- [7] Kaufman, M., et al. (2023) *Popular Dietary Trends' Impact on Athletic Performance: A Critical Analysis Review. Nutrients.*, 15(16): 3511.
- [8] Trebinjac, S. and Nair, M.K. (2020). *Current Practices in Sports Injury Rehabilitation. In: Regenerative Injections in Sports Medicine. Springer, Singapore.*
- [9] Shrier, I. (2015) *Strategic assessment of risk and risk tolerance (StARRT) framework for return-to-play decision-making. Br J Sports Med.*;49: 1311–1315.
- [10] Dhillon, H., Dhillon, S. and Dhillon, M.S. (2017) *Current Concepts in Sports Injury Rehabilitation. Indian J Orthop.*, 51(5):529-536.

# ***Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Double Reduction Policy in Alleviating Student Pressure***

**Xinyan Chen<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>St. Aidan's College, Durham University, Durham, DH1 4DH, UK*

*a. chenxinyan0118@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The Chinese government launched the Double Reduction Policy in 2021, which aims to reduce the excessive academic burden on primary and secondary school students by limiting homework and regulating extracurricular tutoring. The policy was implemented in response to growing concerns about the immense academic pressure students face, which has led to widespread anxiety, sleep deprivation and mental health problems. This paper explores the effects of the double reduction policy on students' academic stress and its limitations. The findings show that although the double reduction policy has achieved some success in reducing students' learning burdens both in and out of school, increasing sleep time, and alleviating anxiety and depression, its effectiveness is limited by the variability of after-school services in schools and the persistence of parents' demand for tutorials. In addition, social prejudice against vocational education and the competitive nature of higher education admissions have not alleviated students' academic pressure. This paper argues that more efforts are needed in the equitable distribution of educational resources, increased recognition of vocational education, and adjustment of parental expectations to reduce students' pressure further.

**Keywords:** Double Reduction Policy, Social Policy, Student Pressure, Shadow Education.

## **1. Introduction**

Private supplementary tutoring, also known as shadow education, not only hinders educational fairness and prevents the country from selecting truly innovative talents but also creates excessive academic pressure on Chinese families. Since the enactment of China's Double Reduction Policy, there has been a significant reduction in the burden of both in-school coursework and out-of-school or after-school training on students. This policy aims to maintain equity in education by restricting private tutoring while reducing the existing financial burden on families and the physical and psychological burden on students. However, despite the clear restrictions given by the Government, its implementation still needs to improve its effectiveness. In this paper, the pressures students face in pursuing higher education are categorized into three groups: pressures exerted by schools and institutions, pressures exerted by parents and families, and pressures exerted by social structures. Then, based on previous government documents and studies, the paper will use overview studies and qualitative analyses to discuss the extent to which the Double Reduction Policy has been effective in alleviating students' stress and to identify factors that may influence the policy's effectiveness in alleviating students' burdens.

## 2. Literature Review

Shadow education is a product of the neoliberal wave of educational reforms created in response to intense standardised testing in a dynamic marketplace. McChesney suggests that neoliberalism is the policy and process of allowing a relatively small number of private interests to control as much as possible the life of a society in order to maximise their profits [1]. As a result, private supplementary tutoring has proliferated in an increasingly marketised educational environment and has become one of the substantial service industries in China. China, on the other hand, is imbued with Confucianism, which values education and personal diligence and believes that learning is the most essential way to change the existing class. The combination of cultural beliefs and neo-liberal ideology has prompted families to invest heavily in private supplementary tutoring to ensure their children stay ahead of tough competition [2].

The majority of the curriculum in shadow education is modelled on what is taught in schools and changes as schools change[3-4]. Corporations or individuals provide shadow education for profit, and this privatisation renders it unfairly inaccessible as a commodity. It also means that families from more advantaged backgrounds have access to more educational resources through the channel of shadow education, in which case the continuing widening of the gap between the rich and the poor makes the disparity in education between different classes of families more and more apparent as the socio-economic development of the society grows. Wealthy families have access to better educational resources and better teachers, causing the fairness of education to be invaded [5]. Conversely, for less affluent families, the rising costs of private supplementary tutoring become a financial burden, leading to significant resource waste. Not only that, surveys have shown that the extracurricular private supplementary tutoring that Chinese students engage in has further lengthened their study time. In 2018, Chinese students in Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang spent up to 57 hours a week studying, the second longest among the 79 participating countries or economies[6]. This is a side note that heavy academic tasks encroach on students' extracurricular time, exacerbating the physical and mental burdens. Studies have shown that students' academic stress or anxiety comes from excessive coursework, exams, time pressure, and parents' and teachers' expectations [7]. In China, traditional Confucian values contribute to greater academic stress compared to students in Europe and the United States, with potential adverse effects on their well-being [7-8].

Such a state of affairs goes against the original intent of China's educational selection and has led the Government to resolve to implement the Double Reduction Policy. Since 1949, the Chinese Government has attempted to alleviate the problem of overburdening students with schoolwork by issuing several documents. However, the Double Reduction Policy is the most restrictive of them all in terms of extracurricular training organisations, with requirements that include measures to reduce the burden of schoolwork on students both in and out of school, to shift the focus of teaching and learning away from the outside of the institution, and to set up a series of mechanisms for after-school services in schools to supplement teaching and learning.

## 3. Effectiveness of the double-decrease policy in reducing sources of student stress

### 3.1. Pressure exerted on children by academics

After implementing the Double Reduction Policy, students' learning load in and out of school was significantly reduced. The Double Minus Policy played a role in alleviating students' anxiety and depression, agreeing that less homework, more extracurricular activities, more time spent with parents, and less academic stress were protective factors against poor mental health. Chinese adolescents show a higher prevalence of symptoms of depression and anxiety relative to adolescents in other regions. Comparing students' depression and anxiety levels reported before and after the policy's

implementation, there was a slight reduction in students' mental stress, as evidenced by a decrease in the percentage of depression from 9.9% to 9.4%, and a decrease in the percentage of anxiety from 7.4% to 7.1% [9]. Although surveys have shown that the proportion of students with depression and anxiety disorders has decreased since the implementation of the double-decrease policy, some students continue to experience persistent or new-onset mental health issues, expressing concerns about potential regressions in their grades or inability to maintain their previous performance levels due to the lack of private supplementary tutoring [10].

Schools have taken up the responsibility of after-school counselling for students, such as evening study sessions and after-school care services, to alleviate the burden on parents. Although they no longer need to take private tuition, their learning hours are shifted to within-school hours, and the lengthening of school hours may enhance students' sense of burnout towards school. Schools have a certain amount of independence in the content and form of their after-school services, and the double reduction policy will not interfere with or restrict this independence too much but only to ensure the individualisation of schools and students [11]. This means that not all schools can provide the same quality after-school services. Even under the influence of teaching schedules and the pressure to advance to higher education, after-school services may still be centred on curriculum tutorials, causing stress to students. In fact, family spending on private tutoring outside of school has remained high, and private tutoring institutions have adopted different forms of providing parents with subject training, which makes government supervision more complicated [12]. Therefore, students are likely to continue to participate in these underground extracurricular tutoring without reducing the extracurricular burden, and the cost is higher than before the double reduction policy.

While the Double Reduction Policy has somewhat alleviated the superficial pressure on students' academic performance, it does not fundamentally address the underlying competitive pressures driving students to higher levels. The policy's provisions for after-school services, although well-intentioned, face limitations. Not all schools have the resources to provide high-quality extracurricular activities, and inadequate arrangements could extend students' school hours unnecessarily, potentially increasing their stress. The restriction on extracurricular organisations in the policy has caused parents and students to remain anxious and actively seek underground private supplementary tutoring.

### **3.2. Pressure exerted on children by parents**

Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes not only the transformative role of education in altering social class but also the filial piety that children owe to their parents, which includes meeting parental expectations. Due to the influence of China's one-child policy in the 1980s, most Chinese parents put all their expectations and pressures on one child, which puts a heavier burden on the only child to fulfil their parents' expectations [13]. Parents value the need for education and consider entry into higher education crucial to their children's future. Consequently, the primary expectation of parents is that their children achieve excellent academic results and gain admission to prestigious universities. Surveys show that 90% of parents in China want their children to be able to enter university, with 65% wanting their children to be able to enter 985 and 211 universities. However, according to the results of China's education statistics in 2021, while the acceptance rates for 211 and 985 universities are approximately 5% and 2%, respectively, which shows that there is a vast reality gap between the expectations of Chinese parents' goals and the acceptance rate [13].

The double reduction policy has kept the competitive nature of the college entrance examination the same. As long as the college entrance examination continues to be judged solely based on scores, the fundamental issue of excessive stress among parents and students is unlikely to be resolved. Peng and Dang argued that parental investment in out-of-school tutoring is not the leading cause of students' academic burden but rather the intense academic competition among students [14]. Without



private supplementary tutoring to compensate for the lack of classroom learning, the academic burden after school is shifted to the students themselves. In order to meet their parents' expectations, students can only spend longer time after school to make up for the lack of shadow education.

The academic gap between students due to socio-economic disparities is likely to widen following the implementation of the double reduction policy. The policy aims to bring the learning needs of students back to school and home and to make the cooperation between teachers and parents more critical. As pointed out in the policy document, the Government should assist in building up the concept that "the family is the first school in life and parents are the first teachers of their children" and guide parents to establish a scientific concept of child-rearing and set appropriate expectations. However, even if parents lower their expectations, their demand for after-school programmes will remain high. Surveys show that 87% of parents are unwilling to give up after-school training, and 37% are willing to hire private tutors to tutor their children. Before implementing the Double Reduction Policy, most parents accepted external training providers for their universality, and some low- and middle-income families could afford to pay the fees. As after-school tutoring shifts to private tutoring, the differences in educational resources brought about by differences in family income widen [11].

For students with higher socio-economic backgrounds, the pressure from parents may be heavier than for students from other backgrounds. Firstly, parents have a persistent need for shadowing education and are likely to opt for one-to-one live-in tutors for their children's schooling. Secondly, parents with high socio-economic status have higher academic expectations of their children. The more educated parents are, the more they recognise the importance of education and relatively higher academic expectations for their children [15].

### **3.3. Pressure exerted on children by society**

One of the objectives of the Double reduction policy is to promote educational equity by allowing for the natural streaming of students. The proper functioning of society requires human resources in different fields, so educational streaming is necessary. The reasons why most Chinese families are reluctant to send their children to vocational education when they have other options can be categorised into several.

Firstly, there is the social status factor, where vocational education is still regarded as an inferior form of higher education, an informal version of higher education, and a higher education exclusively for low-scoring students [16]. This perception fosters a stereotypical view of vocational education students as individuals who do not study hard enough or lack the intelligence to succeed in academic settings, leading to limited career prospects. These labels form a kind of invisible discrimination, and most families are unwilling to accept such stigmatisation and thus require their children to study harder in order to avoid entering vocational education.

The second is the impact of income factors. Nowadays, China's labour market is flooded with many fresh graduates every year. At the same time, the supply of jobs exceeds the demand, and the limited number of positions makes it difficult for fresh graduates to find a job that matches their abilities. On the other hand, employers believe that employees with academic degrees have better trainability and learning potential [17]. This makes it easier for graduates with academic degrees to secure white-collar positions that require high skills and receive higher salaries. The academic thresholds set by companies for hiring make parents and students further aware of the importance of education. The increasingly strong link between high academic performance and employment prospects leads many families to continue pressuring their children to gain admission to prestigious universities. This transfers the anxiety created by the social structure to the child in the form of the family.

Finally, the poorer learning environment and educational resources of vocational schools are also a reason for parents' resistance. On the one hand, society generally holds a stereotypical view of

vocational schools, associating them with students who exhibit poor behavior and lack motivation, and parents are worried that their children will be adversely affected by such an environment; on the other hand, compared with ordinary high schools, vocational schools generally have problems of loose management and lack of resources, and insufficient teachers, equipment, and practical training opportunities, which make it difficult to provide high-quality vocational courses [18]. These issues contribute to the perception that vocational schools are less organized than ordinary high schools.

Before the double reduction policy, China's education system required approximately 50% of students to enter vocational schools based on their rankings in the secondary school examination—a policy that was widely resisted by parents [19]. The desire to enter regular high schools and the prejudice against vocational schools have pushed more and more students to participate in shadow education. It may be worthwhile for policymakers to consider the experience of vocational education development in Germany, where the main reason for the popularity of vocational education is the even distribution of income. In Germany, the average annual salary of university graduates is around 30,000 euros, while skilled workers earn about 35,000 euros [20]. Suppose the salary and social status of vocational education graduates can be improved. If the salaries and social status of vocational education graduates in China could be improved, public perceptions of vocational education might shift, influencing the preferences of parents and students. This change could enhance the effectiveness of the double reduction policy in achieving its original goal of reducing pressure on students.

#### 4. Conclusion

To sum up, the double reduction policy has partially succeeded in reducing students' academic burdens and alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety to a certain extent. However, its effectiveness is still limited by several aspects. Firstly, the quality and form of school after-school services cannot be standardised. The services provided by some schools have failed to reduce students' stress effectively, and on the contrary, they may increase the sense of burnout brought about by school hours. Second, the high expectations of parents and the fierce competition in education have led to the continued demand for tutorials outside schools, resulting in a thriving underground tutorial market, which not only undermines the effectiveness of the policy but also exacerbates the inequality in education resources. In addition, the social stereotype of vocational education and the unequal income distribution have made parents and students more inclined to pursue higher academic education, further increasing their pressure on the competition for higher education. Therefore, while the double reduction policy has alleviated some superficial academic pressures, further improvements are needed in the equitable distribution of educational resources, the enhancement of vocational education's social status, and the adjustment of parental expectations to address the root causes of students' psychological burdens.

#### References

- [1] McChesney, R.W. (1999) 'Noam Chomsky and the Struggle Against Neoliberalism', *Monthly Review*, 50(11), p. 40.
- [2] Zhang, W. and Yamato, Y., 2018. Shadow education in East Asia: Entrenched but evolving private supplementary tutoring. In *Routledge international handbook of schools and schooling in Asia* (pp. 323-332). Routledge.
- [3] Bray, T.M., 1999. *The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners*. UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.
- [4] Bray, T.M., 2009. *Confronting the shadow education system: What government policies for what private tutoring?*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; International Institute for Educational Planning.
- [5] Zhao, X. (2015) *Competition and compassion in chinese secondary education* [Preprint].
- [6] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019) 'Pisa 2018 results (volume I)', PISA [Preprint].
- [7] Leung, G.S., Yeung, K.C. and Wong, D.F. (2009) 'Academic stressors and anxiety in children: The role of paternal support', *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(1), pp. 90-100.

- [8] Jiang, W. and Saito, E. (2022) 'Lightening the academic burden on Chinese children: A discourse analysis of recent education policies', *Journal of Educational Change* [Preprint]. doi:10.1007/s10833-022-09470-6.
- [9] Wang, D. et al. (2022) 'Has the "double reduction" policy relieved stress? A follow-up study on Chinese adolescents', *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 16(1). doi:10.1186/s13034-022-00530-6.
- [10] Liu, H. et al. (2018) 'Anxiety in rural Chinese children and adolescents: Comparisons across provinces and among subgroups', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(10), p. 2087. doi:10.3390/ijerph15102087.
- [11] Xue, E. and Li, J. (2022) 'What is the value essence of "double reduction" (Shuang Jian) policy in China? A policy narrative perspective', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55(7), pp. 787–796. doi: 10.1080/00131857.2022.2040481.
- [12] Zhou, X. (2021) 'Family Capital and Academic Anxiety: parents Anxiety Caused by "Double Reduction" Policy', *J Guangxi Normal Univ*, 57(6), pp. 96-106.
- [13] Dello-Iacovo, B. (2009) 'Curriculum reform and "quality education" in China: An overview', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29(3), pp. 241–249. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2008.02.008.
- [14] Yu, X. (2020) 'Parents' social background, educational values and expectations', *J Nanjing Normal Univ*, 4, pp.62-74.
- [15] Chen, G. et al. (2022) 'Parents' Educational Anxiety Under the "Double Reduction" Policy Based on the Family and Students' Personal Factors', *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 15, pp. 2067–2082. doi: 10.2147/PRBM.S370339.
- [16] Ling, M. (2015) '"bad students go to vocational schools!": Education, social reproduction and migrant youth in Urban China', *The China Journal*, 73, pp. 108–131. doi:10.1086/679271.
- [17] Thurow, L.C. (1975) *Generating inequality: Mechanism of distribution in the US economy*. New York, US: Basic Books.
- [18] Yan, M. (2023) 'The impact of "General-Vocational Education Stratification" on parental education anxiety among Chinese junior high school students and strategies research', *Frontiers in Educational Research*, 6(29). doi:10.25236/fer.2023.062929.
- [19] Li, S. (2023) 'Education investment "rat race" in China: How income inequality shapes family investment in shadow education', *Asia Pacific Education Review* [Preprint]. doi:10.1007/s12564-023-09852-2.
- [20] Yu, S. et al. (2022) 'The transformation of parents' perception of education involution under the background of "double reduction" policy: The mediating role of education anxiety and perception of education equity', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.800039.



# *Analyze Fake News Based on the Missing of Kate Middleton*

Jingqi Chen<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Penn State University Abington campus, Willow Grove, 19090, United States*

*a. jbc6602@psu.edu*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Based on the rapid development of the internet and the widespread use of social media, fake news has gradually become an inseparable part of our daily life. People nowadays are constantly exposed to all kinds of fake news online and easily become either the witnesses or even the disseminators of rumors. This situation contributes significantly to expanding their influence and brings about unexpected and often negative results. Therefore, scholars and professionals have begun to pay close attention to this phenomenon and draw some valuable conclusions. This research thoroughly explains fake news and conducts a detailed analysis of disinformation, which is purposefully fabricated fake news, using the event of the missing of Kate Middleton as an example. The analysis encompasses the emergence, spread and far-reaching impact of disinformation, thereby emphasizing the crucial significance of accurately recognizing fake news.

**Keywords:** Fake news, disinformation, the missing of Kate Middleton, spread of fake news, impact of fake news.

## 1. Introduction

There are many ways to obtain information, including words, audio, images, and the internet, with the latter becoming increasingly prevalent in people's daily lives. With the development of internet, nowadays people have easier access to a variety of medias like Facebooks, Instagram, Twitter. However, as more and more people begin to share information online, people raise questions about the news that posted by the public, mainly focusing on the authenticity of news. This false information always has a professional term--fake news. But what is fake news exactly? And how fake news spread and what is the impact? This essay will first state the definition of fake news, then discuss its development, and finally analyze one kind of fake news—disinformation—using the case of the missing Kate Middleton as an example. So the research is expected to help people have better understanding of fake news, thus promoting the awareness of distinguishing fake news and preventing its spread and resulting negative impacts.

## 2. The definition of fake news

Fake news has a similar meaning on the universal scale. [1] The Cambridge Dictionary defines fake news as “false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke.” Because of its only limit on authenticity and form of the information, this broad definition is likely to contain a lot of contents. [2] Authors Xichen Zhang and Ali A. Ghorbani listed rumors, satire news, fake reviews, misinformation, fake

advertisements, conspiracy theories, false statement by politicians when mentioning the variety of fake news. However, instead of discussing every kind of fake news, this essay is going to focus on the disinformation and misinformation, which are divided by fake news according to their difference in the intention. [3] Misinformation is often spread in the lack of any intent to mislead. (Stephan Lewandowsky, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, Collen M. Seifert, Norbert Schwarz and John Cook) [4] Misinformation is unintendedly inaccurate, false, or misleading. (Sille Obelitz Søre) While [5] “Disinformation is nonaccidentally misleading information”, which distinguishes it from honest mistakes or overly subtle satire, said by Don Fallis in the article what is disinformation[6].

It is a consensus that 2016 US presidential election contributes to the increasing popularity of fake news and disinformation. After that, false stories on the internet have a uniform name and people begin to pay attention to this kind of information. When taking about the reasons behind the rapid growth of fake news, [7] an article (Yariv Tsfati, H. G. Boomgaarden, J. Strömbäck, R. Vliegenthart, A. Damstra & E. Lindgren) states the role that mainstream media play in the dissemination. [8] A USC study (Pamela Madrid) also relate it with social media, and it researches on the users’ behaviors such as their lack of critical thinking skill and their strong political beliefs. In fact, fake news is not totally a new thing. [9] “False information has reached a crescendo, but it’s hardly a new phenomenon. Fake American journalism is older than the country itself”, argued by journalism Barry Yeoman as the subheading of the article “That’s Fake News”. This article traced to the earliest newspaper in the American colonies that published a false report about the death of King Louis XIV of France and explained subsequent influenced public perception. This early piece of false news have already revealed the appalling and shocking characteristics of fake news, which is proved to be a vital factor of the existence of it. Therefore in the following time, fake news never stops. New communication way like social medias allow it to be created and spread in a new way. More and more people engage in sharing and spreading informations in Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. For the future of fake news, [10] Christoph Dornan believes that “It is not possible to purge falsehood from the information ecosystem”, which means that fake news is likely to constantly appear online.

### 3. Case study—The Missing of Kate Middleton

It is clear that fake news has surged recently and will continue being a problem in the future. But how a specific piece of false information spread? The Missing of Kate Middleton can be a great example for studying the spreading process of fake news and disinformation. The event of Kate Middleton can be divided into 4 periods in total, which are “Last Official Public Appearance”, “Sixty Days of Silence & Suspicions”, “Suspected Appearance” and “Mystery Behind Royal Family Photo”.

The story began on Dec 25, 2023, when Kate Middleton attended royal Christmas with Prince William and their children at Sandringham. On that day, [11] TOWN&COUNTRY magazine used “lovely” to describe Kate. However, a surprising statement issued by Kensington Palace on Jan 17, 2024, reported that Kate was admitted to the London Clinic for [12] “planned abdominal surgery” and had “successful” surgery. Rumours and conspiracy theories spread immediately, especially on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. The major discussion focused on the question, “Where is Kate Middleton?” Some people post online saying that Catherine faced serious complications after surgery, requiring drastic actions to save her life. And someone believed that Kate and Prince William were getting divorced. A X account also showed his seemingly logical speculation, “Seeing #KingCharles thank for all the cards & good wishes he’s had following his cancer diagnosis it seems very odd that #PrincessofWales #KateMiddleton hasn’t thanked for all the cards & good wishes she’s undoubtedly had. Just total silence. They’re surely hiding something??”. Or all the guesses were total nonsense? The result was that people did not get any official and direct answer at that time, so concerns about the health of Kate still grew. Until March 4, 2024, the event developed into the third part. Kate and her mom Carole Middleton were photographed by paparazzi

in Windsor, England, where Kate and her family live. Instead of alleviating the suspicion, this blurred image contributes to added confusion from the public. Articles or posts on social media were shared with increasing clicks and likes. An important point came on Mother's Day (Mar 11, 2024) when Kate posted her first official photo with children since abdominal surgery. However, hours after it was released by Kensington Palace, four major photo agencies issued "kill notices," expressing concerns it had been edited. Kate admitted this point and she wrote on X: "Like many amateur photographers, I do occasionally experiment with editing. I wanted to express my apologies for any confusion the family photograph we shared yesterday caused." This performance helped confirm what people had suspected. Again, "where is Kate Middleton?" This time, "Katespiracy", a term the internet has dubbed speculation about Kate Middleton's whereabouts, has taken another bizarre turn. There was a wide variety of speculations and arguments on the internet. And this time the main focus was on the theory that the missing Kate is somehow connected to William, saying that William had an affair with Sarah Rose Hanbury, the Marchioness of Cholmondeley, who is a friend of the Wales' with ancestral ties to the royal family. Other rumors suggested that Kate had been abused by William or even murdered. Some accounts even wrote that Princess is growing out bangs or recovering from a Brazilian butt lift. All the rumors seriously influenced the life of the two main characters Kate and William. Finally, Princess Kate made appearance in video in front of the public and explained that she is having cancer treatment, putting rumors to rest.

By that time, people realized that rumors about Kate Middleton's disappearance had persisted for nearly half a year, prompting efforts to uncover the reasons behind this phenomenon and its impact on the online environment. Some people said it is due to the policy of the royal family, which is "never complain, never explain". Others think that people have created their own theories in an information vacuum. Consequently, the fake news about Kate Middleton was identified as disinformation. [13] BBC news explained that this news was created by Russia deliberately for its military and political purpose. "Their messaging around Kate appears wrapped up in their ongoing campaigns to attack France's reputation, promote the integrity of the Russian elections, and denigrate Ukraine as part of the wider war effort," said Professor Innes. Innes explained that the spread of these rumors was achieved by using a master account, which was then supported by a network of other accounts responding to it.

#### 4. Discussion

By looking at the whole event, it is evident that both Kate and William were troubled by the online rumors, which seemed to force them to clarify the truth. The Prince of Wales, 41, was [14] "upset and angry" over the gossip surrounding the Princess of Wales. Not only disinformation, but any kind of fake news can have a big impact over people or even society. For instance, in the age of COVID-19, there was a viral spread of fake news online. [15] Article "Tracking COVID-19 using online search" presents that the spread of false information on social media has accelerated the urgency of finding treatment for the Covid-19 and led to the panic among the public. Besides the fake news in disease, others can also bring impact. [16] Since of the intentions of fake news like gaining political or economical advantages, drawing attention (Alexander P. Sukhodolov and Anna M. Bychkova), fake news can decide what people are watching or listening, thus affecting their behaviors and minds. For example, [17] article Exploring the Threat of Fake News: Facts, Opinions, and Judgement argues that "fake news is a threat to our democratic order."

#### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, research indicates that fake news fundamentally lacks authenticity. It can be divided into disinformation and misinformation, which are false because of intentional purposes and lack of

information respectively. This study analyzed the case of Kate Middleton's missing to understand how fake news spreads and its impact. From December 2023 to March 2024, rumors swirled online about Kate Middleton's alleged disappearance, fueled by misleading social media posts and fake news websites. Fabricated stories suggested Kate had been kidnapped or was in hiding due to a scandal, which quickly gained traction all over the world and influenced the normal life of Kate. Though these fake news were finally proved to be wrong by Kate, researchers found that they were disinformation that created by Russia for military purpose. The incident highlighted the dangers of disinformation and the rapid spread of fake news, illustrating the huge impact of fake news. Other fake news can also bring negative influence to individuals, even the whole society. To help people distinguish fake news from real news, some recommendations are provided. In fact, this paper lacks a detailed analysis of misinformation and the process by which fake news spreads. It is hopeful that future research will emphasize a case study of misinformation and research how misinformation spreads.

## References

- [1] Cambridge Dictionary, [https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fake-news#google\\_vignette](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fake-news#google_vignette)
- [2] Xichen Zhang, Ali A. Ghorbani, *An overview of online fake news: Characterization, detection, and discussion*, Science Direct, Volume 57, Issue 2, March 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306457318306794>
- [3] Stephan Lewandowsky, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, Collen M. Seifert, Norbert Schwarz and John Cook, *Misinformation and Its Correction: Continued Influence and Successful Debiasing*, Sage Journals, Volume 12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612451018>
- [4] Sille Obelitz S  , *A unified account of information, misinformation, and disinformation*, Springer Link, Volume 198, p.5929-5949, 23 October 2019, <https://philpapers.org/rec/SEAUA>
- [5] Don Fallis, *What Is Disinformation*, Library Trends, Volume 63, pp. 401-426, Winter 2015, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/579342/pdf>
- [6] Meital Balmas, *When Fake News Becomes Real: Combined Exposure to Multiple News Sources and Political Attitudes of Inefficacy, Alienation, and Cynicism*, Sage Journals, p.430-454, April 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/0093650212453600?src=getfr>
- [7] H. G. Boomgaarden, J. Str  mb  ck, R. Vlieg  nhart, A. Damstra & E. Lindgren, *Causes and consequences of mainstream media dissemination of fake news: literature review and synthesis*, The Annals of the International Communication Association, p.157-173, 19 May 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23808985.2020.1759443>
- [8] Pamela Madrid, *USC study reveals the key reason why fake news spreads on social media*, USC Today, January 17, 2023, <https://today.usc.edu/usc-study-reveals-the-key-reason-why-fake-news-spreads-on-social-media/>
- [9] Barry Yeoman, *'That's Fake News!'*, The Saturday Evening Post, July 6, 2022, <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2022/07/thats-fake-news/>
- [10] Christoph Dornan, *Dezinformatiya: The past, present and future of fake news*, Series of reflection papers, March 2017, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christopher-Dornan/publication/335881115\\_Dezinformatiya\\_The\\_past\\_present\\_and\\_future\\_of\\_'fake\\_news'\\_A\\_Reflection\\_Paper\\_for\\_the\\_Canadian\\_Commission\\_for\\_UNESCO/links/5d81a738a6fdcc12cb989feb/Dezinformatiya-The-past-present-and-future-of-fake-news-A-Reflection-Paper-for-the-Canadian-Commission-for-UNESCO.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christopher-Dornan/publication/335881115_Dezinformatiya_The_past_present_and_future_of_'fake_news'_A_Reflection_Paper_for_the_Canadian_Commission_for_UNESCO/links/5d81a738a6fdcc12cb989feb/Dezinformatiya-The-past-present-and-future-of-fake-news-A-Reflection-Paper-for-the-Canadian-Commission-for-UNESCO.pdf)
- [11] Sophie Dweck, *Kate Middleton Looks Festive in Royal Blue for Christmas Day Church Services in Sandringham*, Town & Country, DEC 25, 2023, <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/tradition/a46132186/kate-middleton-christmas-day-2023-photos/>
- [12] Katie Kindelan, *"Kate Middleton: A timeline of her cancer diagnosis, surgery and absence from public duties"*, ABC News, July 15, 2024, <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Culture/kate-middleton-surgery-photo-timeline/story?id=108017783>
- [13] Sean Coughlan, *Marianna Spring, Kate rumours linked to Russian disinformation*, BBC News, March 26, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-68637136>
- [14] Tamartha Ryan, *Prince William felt 'upset and angry' over online rumors about Kate Middleton, ex-staffer reveals*, Page Six, May 11, 2024, <https://pagesix.com/2024/05/11/royal-family/prince-william-felt-upset-and-angry-over-online-rumors-about-kate-middleton-ex-staffer/>
- [15] Vasileios Lamos, Maimuna S. Majumder, Elad Yom-Tov, Michael Edelstein, Simon Moura, Yohhei Hamada, Molebogeng X. Rangaka, Rachel A. McKendry & Ingemar J. Cox, *Tracking COVID-19 using online search*, mpj

*Digital Medicine*, 08 February 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41746-021-00384-w#auth-Vasileios-Lampos-Aff1>

- [16] Alexander P. Sukhodolov and Anna M. Bychkova, *FAKE NEWS AS A MODERN MEDIA PHENOMENON: DEFINITION, TYPES, ROLE OF FAKE NEWS AND WAYS OF COUNTERACTING IT*, *Theoretical and Practical Issues of Journalism*, 2017, vol. 6, p. 143–169, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/fake-news-as-a-modern-media-phenomenon-definition-types-role-of-fake-news-and-ways-of-counteracting-it>
- [17] Ilan Zvi Baron and Piki Ish-Shalom, *Exploring the Threat of Fake News: Facts, Opinions, and Judgement*, *Sage Journals*, Vol 77, February 19, 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10659129241234839>

# ***Parasitic Approach to the Development of Modern Cosmetic Industry***

**Zhengrong Zhu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>, Dariusz P. Skowronski<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Psychological Studies, Temple University Japan Campus, Tokyo, 154-0004, Japan  
a. tun22750@temple.edu*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** This is a literature review study focused on the connection between parasite stress and the development of the modern beauty industry. It is hypothesized that parasite stress may consequently result in contributing to females' consumption of cosmetic products and plastic surgeries. The research begins with how natural selection theory, sexual selection theory, and parasite stress theory are contributing to the shaping of human mate preferences. Two types of consequences of parasitic infections are introduced: facial-benefitting and facial-disrupting. These two types of impact on female faces all result in increasing and reinforcing social comparison among females. The social comparison evolved throughout time contributing to mate selection and modern times manifestations in the cosmetic industry. It is suggested that future research in this field can explore the connection between parasite stress and differences in self-esteem between males and females.

**Keywords:** Parasite stress, natural selection, sexual selection, social comparison, cosmetic industry.

## **1. Introduction**

Why are women often the consumers of the cosmetic industry? Compared to men, women seem to pay more attention to and put more effort into their appearance in most researched societies. They often invest in their appearance by purchasing makeup products and undergoing plastic surgeries and tend to spend significant amount of time using digital filters and photoshop applications. What led to these common behaviors, and how did they develop in modern society? To explain the phenomenon, this study approaches the above-mentioned phenomena by using concepts of the natural selection theory and parasite stress theory through literature review. The study explores the relationship between the evolutionary hypothesis and modern cosmetic industry development. It is hypothesized that the parasite theory may have shaped women's beauty standards and indirectly contributed to the growth of modern society's beauty industry.

## **2. Natural Selection Theory and Parasite Stress Theory**

As explained in Thornhill and Fincher's [1] article, natural selection theory hypothesizes that those with survival inherited traits will most likely pass on genes to succeeding generations. For successful survival and reproduction, humans must adapt to the environment to avoid existential risks. In fact, parasite diseases were one of the essential causes of death throughout the human evolutionary process



[2]. Therefore, according to natural selection theory, to ensure the survival rate of the current and next generation, humans had to build certain mechanisms in their regular life. Fincher and Thornhill [3] developed the parasite stress theory to further explore this. The theory explains the adaptation strategies humans developed to combat parasitic diseases, and they focused on its contribution to family ties and religion. They state that regions with higher prevalence of parasitic disease stress correlate positively with stronger family ties and religiosity. The results of their study revealed that it is possible for parasite stress to have an influence on human relationships, behaviors and society.

### 3. Mate Selection and Parasite Stress Theory

Many known phenomena related to mate selection can be explained by parasite stress theory. Based on the parasite stress theory, DeBruine et al. [4] expanded to explore the correlation with human mate preferences. They used Fincher and Thornhill's measures of parasite stress and conducted a linear regression with women's preferences for men's masculine and healthy facial features. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between parasite stress and both masculine and healthy facial characteristics, which indicates that parasite stress seems to be a determinant of mate selection. One possible explanation for the results seems to be various parasites' effects on human facial features and health conditions. In research conducted by El-Beshbishi et al. [5], showed that parasite infections could cause skin inflammation, cutaneous lesions, and facial polymyositis. Akst et al. [6] reported a case of dirofilariasis infection in their article that presented a symptom of a long-term facial mass on a female patient's right cheek. Such a facial mass can influence a patient's facial averageness and symmetry. Facial averageness and symmetry seem to be important characteristics of attractiveness [7]. Researchers collected data from eight male volunteers; they were required to evaluate the attractiveness of 62 female faces. Then, researchers measured the female faces for their averageness and symmetry. Finally, they conducted a test to examine the correlation between facial averageness and symmetry with attraction. The result indicated that there is a significant negative correlation; when the female face is more asymmetrical, males evaluate it as less attractive. Females showed a preference for symmetry in male faces as well [8]. This research used 15 pairs of asymmetrical and symmetrical male faces, and female participants were asked to judge their faces on scales of attractiveness. A one sample t-test was conducted to reveal the relationship between female preference and male facial symmetry. The results pointed out that there is a significant relationship, which states that females have a strong preference for symmetrical male faces. Referring these results back to instances of parasite infection, facial skin may present symptoms that would affect their averageness and symmetry. These unfavorable facial traits may negatively influence attraction to the opposite sex and lead to less sexual access [9]. This connection may add weight to the potential correlation of parasite stress theory to mate selection.

Nevertheless, researchers found that not all parasite infections would result in negative impact. In fact, some parasites may enhance one's attractiveness in order to ensure their survival. According to Thornhill and Fincher's study, natural selection theory [1], evolution always favors those who adapt successfully to the changing environment. If humans who carry parasites' attractiveness is negatively impacted, they may have a lower possibility of mate access and off-spring reproduction. Consequently, parasites may have fewer transmission routes and fewer potential hosts which could affect their survival rate. Therefore, it seems reasonable to theorize at least some types of parasites increase the hosts' attractiveness to improve their survival and transmission rates as well as raise the chances of reproduction for the next generation of parasites. Borráz-León et al. [10] confirmed toxoplasma is one of the parasites that may positively alter hosts' appearances and behaviors to achieve their transmission and reproduction objectives. In their research, 35 toxoplasma-infected and 178 non-infected participants reported their perception of their attractiveness, number of sexual partners, body weight, and facial fluctuating asymmetry. Another different group of participants is

asked to judge infected and noninfected participants' attractiveness and perceived health. Researchers conducted a multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to explore the relationship between infected and noninfected participants' facial and health characteristics and evaluation given by the judging group. The results revealed that infected males have lower fluctuating asymmetry compared to non-infected males, infected females have lower body weight, lower facial fluctuating asymmetry, and higher number of sexual partners compared to non-infected females. In addition, infected males and females were generally valued as more attractive and healthier than non-infected. Therefore, it seems predictable that toxoplasma-infected people would have a higher possibility of mating success [9]. This research finding contributes to the adaptation hypothesis that parasites may manipulate hosts' appearance to "help" them increase their access to sexual partners, therefore creating an environment that is beneficial for their survival and reproduction.

According to previous analyses, the results may initially seem to be contradictory to each other. On the one hand, some parasites can negatively alter hosts' facial symmetry and averageness to reduce their attractiveness, therefore leading to less access to sexual partners. However, on the other hand, some parasites can enhance hosts' attractiveness by increasing their facial symmetry and perception of health to make their hosts more desirable to the opposite sex. Although parasites may alter hosts' appearance in both directions, they are all contributing to increase women's tendencies to compare with each other and are indirectly encouraging the modern cosmetic industries.

#### 4. Parasites Leading to Social Comparison

Parasites may negatively or positively impact hosts' facial attractiveness but regardless the changes consequently lead to social comparison among females. Martin and Kennedy's [11] research focused on the influences of attractive female images on adolescents' beauty standards and comparison tendencies. The research participants were 145 female adolescents; their levels of self-esteem and perceptions of attractiveness were self-reported using questionnaires. They also provided attractiveness ratings for beautiful female images selected from various advertisements. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between the exposure to beautiful female images and participants' self-esteem level, beauty standards, and tendency to compare. The results indicated that these exposures raised participants' beauty standards and dropped their self-esteem. Furthermore, the more the participants had aged, the greater the tendency for them to compare themselves with the beautiful models from the photos. Based on these findings one could conclude that there may be a connection between parasite stress theory and social comparison. Females' faces being negatively and positively impacted by parasitic infection may all result in increasing the tendency of social comparison among females. On one hand, females who experience negative impact from parasites on their attractiveness may form an upward social comparison towards other females who are healthy or infected by beauty enhancing parasites. Upward social comparison happens when an individual is comparing oneself with someone judged to be better than oneself. As previous mentioned research findings confirm, females who are exposed to extremely attractive female images may result in the increase of tendencies to compare themselves with these models. On the other hand, females infected by beauty enhancing parasites may affect other females due to their increased attractiveness. Females may raise their beauty standards when surrounding attractiveness benefiting parasite-infected peers, and then, likely to form the tendency to compare themselves with these peers.

Not only those females who felt less attractive than other females may lead to the forming of social comparison, but also those who are more attractive. Kowal et al. [12] and Wagstaff and Sulikowski's [13] research findings support this. Kowal et al. found that there is a U-shape relationship between one's physical attractiveness and time spend on enhancing their beauty. To be specific, females who perceive themselves as attractive and not very attractive tends to spend more time displaying cosmetic behaviors, and those who perceive themselves as average attractive spend the least amount of time



on beauty enhancing. Females who are confident in their attractiveness tend to be more aware of their own and other females' appearance. Wagstaff and Sulikowski's [13] research further revealed that females who are more intrasexually competitive and have higher level of self-attractiveness perception, may be more influenced by other females' appearances because they would desire to confirm their social standing by comparing with others. In the case of parasite-infected females, they may raise their awareness toward other female faces.

## **5. Social Comparison Evolved from Facial-Disrupting Parasites Promoting Modern Cosmetic Industry**

Some parasites which negatively alter one's attractiveness may increase social comparison, and result in stimulating the demand in the modern cosmetic industry. As mentioned in Pazhoohi and Kingstone's [14] research, according to sexual selection theories, individuals who present traits that are related to good health and fertility seem to have more access to the opposite sex. Before anti-parasite medications were developed, parasitic infections were one of the most common factors leading to death [2]. Humans would benefit from presenting themselves as parasite-free in order to have greater access to mating opportunities. In regions with more intensive parasite stress, humans tend to develop combat strategies against parasitic infections to ensure their reproduction chances. One of the strategies that males use to show their health condition is to emphasize their facial masculinity [15]. Pazhoohi and Kingstone [14] focused their research on the relationship between male beardedness and parasite prevalence. Researchers interviewed 14,032 participants from 25 countries about their bearded status and used Fincher and Thornhill's [3] pathogen prevalence to conduct a multiple regression model. The results reveal that parasite prevalence is one of the significant predictors of beardedness. In other words, males from regions with high parasite stress are more likely to sport beards compared to those from low parasite stress regions. The researchers explained that the beard is used as an ornament to present males' health condition, vitality, and is an indicator of the ability to resist parasitic infections.

However, typically females have less body hair than males, so they cannot apply this strategy. Females developed other methods to combat parasitic infections throughout time. Prokop and Fedor [16] introduced in their article about the idea developed by Newton-Fisher and Less that grooming was one of the combat strategies against parasites used by various animals, and primates are one of the classic examples of this. Primates show a significant increase of amount of time in grooming when they are parasite infected. Grooming can be considered both self-care and enhancing attractiveness behaviors. Human females may use the same strategies to promote their physical attraction to potential partners. Kowal et al. [12] conducted a study to examine the predictors of time spent to enhance one's appearance, they aimed to research from 5 perspectives: mating market, pathogen prevalence, biosocial role, cultural media, and the individualism-collectivism continuum. The research included eight beauty enhancing behaviors: applying makeup, managing bodily hygiene, using cosmetic products, exercising, hair grooming, picking outfits, following specific diets, and others. The research collected data from ninety-three countries and 93,158 participants. The results indicated that females tend to spend more time on beauty enhancing behaviors with an average of 23 minutes more time spent per-day than males. This can probably be explained by females having less body hair than males which they lack natural attractiveness enhancing factor, therefore, they need to spend more time for active self-beautification. The results further revealed that there is a positive correlation between countries' pathogen prevalence and time spent on enhancing attractiveness, meaning the higher a country's pathogen prevalence index is, the higher amount of time participants reported spending on their appearance. Importantly, participants who have had severe pathogen-infected history show they spend more time on enhancing beauty then those who have not. All the

research findings discussed above seems to align with each other; they all contribute to explain the connection between parasitic infection and the modern cosmetic industry.

## **6. Social Comparison Evolved from Facial-Benefitting Parasites Promoting Modern Cosmetic Industry**

Females with facial-benefitting parasitic infections may promote the modern cosmetic industry. Wagstaff and Sulikowski's [13] research about the connection between intrasexual competition and cosmetic purchases contributes to this idea. In the study, 220 female participants self-reported their makeup use attitudes, intensity of Instagram use, and intrasexual competitiveness. Then, participants were placed in a hypothetical makeup purchasing task to value their tendency to buy beauty items. The results of the multiple regression test indicated that the intensity of Instagram use and intrasexual competitiveness predict the purchase of products. Furthermore, the research reported that females who rated themselves higher on the physical attractiveness scale tend to invest more time in Instagram use. They may reaffirm their social standing by using social media platforms. With more exposure to ideal female images in social media, females may be motivated more to purchase cosmetic products to strengthen their appearance competitiveness further. Females who carry facial benefiting parasites may have a high perceived physical attractiveness due to their increased beauty. Therefore, according to the research findings, they may raise their awareness of their own and other females' appearances and invest more money into makeup products. Consequently, this will benefit the cosmetic industry.

Facial-benefitting parasites may promote the modern beauty industry by reinforcing the upward social comparison among females. In the previous "Parasites Leading to Social Comparison" section, it was mentioned that females who carry facial-benefitting parasites are likely to raise other females' beauty standards and promote upward social comparison from other females. This reinforcement of upward social comparison can contribute to the high demand of cosmetic industries. In addition, females who have less attractive faces tend to have lower self-esteem, are more likely to undergo cosmetic surgeries. Research shows that high exposure to upward social comparison may result in low self-esteem, leading to the stimulation of the modern cosmetic industry [17, 18]. Vogel et al.'s [17] research examined the relationship between upwards social comparison and self-esteem. Researchers developed an experimental website for participants and presented "ideal" human images to participants. Participants completed a self-esteem scale before and after viewing the website. Results indicated that there is a significant drop in self-esteem after exposure to such ideal human images. Brown et al. [18] focused their research on perceived physical attractiveness and the likelihood of accepting cosmetic surgery. Participants were asked to rate themselves' on their physical attractiveness and the likelihood of undergoing a range of 49 popular plastic surgeries. A regression was conducted to test the predictors of undergoing plastic surgeries. They found that low perceived physical attractiveness is one of the significant predictors of the high possibility to undergo plastic surgery. One may conclude that females with facial-benefitting parasitic infections are contributing to the cosmetic industry by reinforcing their social standing and upward comparison among females.

## **7. Conclusion**

In modern society, although parasites seem controllable due to the developments of parasite tests and medications [19], the evolutionary legacies may still have an influence even now in the modern times. As the Natural Selection Theory, Sexual Selection, and Parasite Stress Theory suggest, parasites may have shaped humans' mate preferences and beauty standards. Due to the fact that parasitic infection was one of the top factors leading to death before, humans tend to choose mates whose faces are symmetrical and look healthy. Humans developed their own combat strategies to make their faces seem more parasite-free. Males sport beards to ornament their faces so the parasitic infection

symptoms are covered; however, females cannot apply this strategy. Therefore, they developed their own adaptation method to fit the sexual selection rules. They used hair grooming as one of the ways to protect themselves from infections when makeup and plastic surgeries were not invented. Another stimulative factor of the modern industry that evolved from parasite stress is the results of parasitic infections. Parasitic infections can impact an individual's facial appearance one either of the directions, disrupting or benefitting. These two directions consequently lead to social comparison and finally contribute to the modern cosmetic industry. For facial-disrupting parasites, females may form upward social comparisons due to their decreased physical attractiveness, leading to lower self-esteem. Infected females may seek cosmetic products and surgeries to improve their lowered attractiveness. For facial-benefitting parasites, they tend to increase hosts' facial symmetry and attractiveness, encouraging females to be more aware of their faces and reinforcing the upward social comparison among females. This research contributes to the understanding of the connection between parasite stress theory and the development of the modern cosmetic industry. Future studies in this field may dive deeper into the connection between parasites stress and differences in male and female self-esteem. Based on forementioned evidence from past research, males' "natural makeup" such as beard may encouraged males' belief in their ability to resists parasitic infection, therefore contributing to their confidence in attraction, leading to a stronger self-esteem in having access to more sexual partners.

## References

- [1] Thornhill, R., & Fincher, C. L. (2014). *The parasite-stress theory of sociality, the behavioral immune system, and human social and cognitive uniqueness*. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, 8(4), 257–264. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ebs0000020>
- [2] Wolfe, N. D., Dunavan, C. P., & Diamond, J. (2007). *Origins of major human infectious diseases*. *Nature*, 447(7142), 279–283. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature05775>
- [3] Fincher, C. L., & Thornhill, R. (2012). *Parasite-stress promotes in-group assortative sociality: The cases of strong family ties and heightened religiosity*. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 35(2), 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0140525x11000021>
- [4] DeBruine, L. M., Little, A. C., & Jones, B. C. (2012). *Extending parasite-stress theory to variation in human mate preferences*. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 35(2), 86–87. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0140525x11000987>
- [5] El-Beshbishi, S. N., Ahmed, N. N., Mostafa, S. H., & El-Ganainy, G. A. (2012). *Parasitic infections and myositis*. *Parasitology Research*, 110(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00436-011-2609-8>
- [6] Akst, L. M., Dipasquale, B., Berho, M., Greene, D., & Roberts, J. (2004). *Dirofilarial infection presenting as a facial mass: Case report of an emerging zoonosis*. *American Journal of Otolaryngology*, 25(2), 134–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjoto.2003.09.005>
- [7] Baudouin, J.-Y., & Tiberghien, G. (2004). *Symmetry, averageness, and feature size in the facial attractiveness of women*. *Acta Psychologica*, 117(3), 313–332. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2004.07.002>
- [8] Little, A. C., Jones, B. C., DeBruine, L. M., & Feinberg, D. R. (2008). *Symmetry and sexual dimorphism in human faces: Interrelated preferences suggest both signal quality*. *Behavioral Ecology*, 19(4), 902–908. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arn049>
- [9] Rhodes, G., Simmons, L. W., & Peters, M. (2005). *Attractiveness and sexual behavior: Does attractiveness enhance mating success?* *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 26(2), 186–201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2004.08.014>
- [10] Borráz-León, J. I., Rantala, M. J., Krams, I. A., Cerda-Molina, A. L., & Contreras-Garduño, J. (2022). *Are toxoplasma-infected subjects more attractive, symmetrical, or healthier than non-infected ones? evidence from subjective and objective measurements*. *PeerJ*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.13122>
- [11] Martin, M. C., & Kennedy, P. F. (1993). *Advertising and social comparison: Consequences for female preadolescents and adolescents*. *Psychology & Marketing*, 10(6), 513–530. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220100605>
- [12] Marta Kowal et al. (2022). *Predictors of enhancing human physical attractiveness: Data from 93 countries*. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 43(6), 455–474. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2022.08.003>

- [13] Wagstaff, D. L., & Sulikowski, D. (2023). *The impact of sexual strategies, social comparison, and Instagram use on makeup purchasing intentions*. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, 17(3), 307–321. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ebs0000285>
- [14] Pazhoohi, F., & Kingstone, A. (2020). *Parasite prevalence and income inequality positively predict beardedness across 25 countries*. *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology*, 6(2), 185–193. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40750-020-00132-6>
- [15] Thornhill, R., & Gangestad, S. W. (1999). *Facial attractiveness*. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 3(12), 452–460. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1364-6613\(99\)01403-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1364-6613(99)01403-5)
- [16] Prokop, P., & Fedor, P. (2013). *The effects of parasites on human behaviour: An evolutionary perspective*. *Problems of Psychology in the 21st Century*, 5(1), 46–65. <https://doi.org/10.33225/ppc/13.05.46>
- [17] Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R., & Eckles, K. (2014). *Social Media, social comparison, and self-esteem*. *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e512142015-699>
- [18] Brown, A., Furnham, A., Glanville, L., & Swami, V. (2007). *Factors that affect the likelihood of undergoing cosmetic surgery*. *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, 27(5), 501–508. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asj.2007.06.004>
- [19] Stephenson, I., & Wiselka, M. (2012). *Drug treatment of tropical parasitic infections*. *Drugs*, 60(5), 985–995. <https://doi.org/10.2165/00003495-200060050-00002>

# *The Effect of Chinese Stand-up Comedy Shows on the Formation of Z Generation's Own Narration of Reality*

Haoran Zhu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Beijing National Day School, Beijing, 102218, China

a. jackywxu@163.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** The stand-up comedy shows recently thrived in China both out of the development of the internet and the following accessibility brought to it and also the risen interest of the youth population in this genre's ability of providing comments on things. The generation Z, often described as being abandoned, is especially in favor of this kind of entertainment and shows strong resonance with it. Recently, more and more Z generation comedians are speaking from the perspective of the Z generation in the show. This research investigates the relationship between Chinese stand-up comedy shows and the formation of the social narrative of the Z generation. The methods that this paper mainly uses are literature review in the process of finding a theoretical base for the problem and case analysis on the shows of a stand-up comedian when comes to the analysis part. The findings of this research indicate that Chinese stand-up comedy contributes to the shaping of Generation Z's social narratives by providing a narrative structure that addresses the challenges faced by young people, by constructing storylines and causal relationships between the dissonance of labor and employment, and by affirming a value system that prioritizes secure employment and the enhancement of living standards.

**Keywords:** Stand-up comedy, social narrative, Z generation.

## 1. Introduction

Stand-up comedy is a genre of show that features a comedian talking with humor entertaining the audience. It was originally from the west, and has afterward been introduced to China [1]. Thanks to the powerful internet which can increase the audience basis and the spreading rate significantly, this genre of popular culture is now widely accessible to the public and is creating a big impact by discussing complex social issues. Many researchers have focused on how the rising stand-up comedy in China has showcased the perspective of feminism, including how women are striving for equality and rights as comedians and also how female comedians break social taboos and start confrontational discussion [2-3]. Additional research has investigated the specific diction and linguistic codes employed by Chinese comedians in discussing identity conflicts [4]. However, there are comparatively fewer researchers doing studies regarding the intersection between Z generation and the Chinese stand-up comedy show, and also to see this intersection from a social narration perspective. The comedy stage serves as a critical forum for Generation Z to articulate their perspectives, enabling them to construct narratives that contribute to their subjectivity as social observers. They can construct their own narratives, contributing to their subjectivity as observers.

This is also the reason this paper conducted research on this topic because this voice that stand-up comedy provides for the Z generation was relatively lacking before. This research investigates the impact that the stand-up comedy show has on the construction of the narratives of Z generation. This paper mainly reviews other academic journals and uses a case study as the research method. The findings may enhance comedians' awareness of the narrative-building potential in their scriptwriting, prompting a more active and responsible contribution to this narrative.

## **2. The background of stand-up comedy show**

### **2.1. The rise of stand-up comedy shows in China**

Stand-up comedy is a performance art wherein a comedian delivers verbal routines to a seated audience. Through carefully crafted script, the comedians deliver humorous monologues. It usually contains two parts as its basic structure which are the setup and the punchline, the former serves for the unfunny part of a joke that serves as the building up of the plot, and the latter stands for the funny part of the joke [5]. It was originally from the west, and has afterward been introduced to and thrived in China. Because of the powerful internet which can increase the audience basis and the spreading rate significantly, platforms like "ROCK & ROAST" increase the accessibility of comedy shows to the audience a lot, with the number of shows and clubs rising significantly [6]. Especially the youth population has seen a huge rise in popularity for this medium, who view them as a way of giving commentaries on social issues. The increasingly sedentary lifestyle brought by the rise of the internet and more online classes for students specifically promoted the popularity of stand-up comedy, because streaming comedies have gained a lot of popularity out of the decreasing attractiveness of other offline entertainment.

### **2.2. The background of the stand-up comedy show used in the case study and the comedian**

The case study selected for this paper pertains to the works of a renowned Chinese Generation Z comedian, Xiangyu Yu, who holds a philosophy degree and has performed on "The King of Stand-up Comedy". The topics that he often talks about revolve around experiences that youth would face in social media and family life, which are all highly related to Z generation. The case that this paper will pick is in a show in which he specially discusses the experiences that Z generation faced when applying for jobs or dealing with problems related to work experiences.

## **3. Generation Z**

### **3.1. The definition of and the situation faced by Z generation**

Generation Z (often shortened to Gen Z), also known as Zoomers, is the demographic after Millennials and before Generation Alpha, with the generation most frequently being defined as people born from 1997 to 2012. Contrary to societal prejudices, research suggests that members of Gen Z are adept at deferred gratification and exhibit greater concern for academic performance and future employment prospects than their elders. Also, they are the first generation to grow up with the access to internet and portable digital technology from a young age. The access to the internet made them both encounter with and connect to the rise of stand-up comedy shows better because the internet contributes to the rise of the stand-up comedy show for the large user base and the easy accessibility [6]. Platforms such as YouTube have been instrumental in both the proliferation of stand-up comedy and in enabling young people to access this content.



### **3.2. The relationship of Z generation with their humor**

Besides, Z generation generally has a strong and powerful usage of their unique humor as a way to laugh at their pain and desperation, and to regain hope [7]. This is evident in memes that Z generation is using, and also in the lines of stand-up comedians. The humor, although serves a different role rather than laughing off pain in this specific research, also contributes to the Z generation for its ability to build up narratives.

## **4. The main building parts of social narratives**

In the realm of scholarly discourse, the transparency of facts is not intrinsic. People use different narratives to interpret and understand the facts and provide it with significance in forming perceptions of the world. Also, the narratives are really important because people can give facts different kinds of interpretations, indicating and showcasing the different perspectives of people.

Narratives are made up of four main parts. They first give their own frame of the events and set of facts that they are going to mainly focus on, rendering analyzing the issues in their own particular way; they identify specific characters corresponding to either classes or groups of people as winners and losers, or villains and victims; then, they provide a chronology of events and the causal mechanisms that precipitate a particular outcome; and they suggest moral of their constructed story, including what has happened, whether these things are good or bad and what should be done about that. Through this process, narratives afford a window into the proponents' experiential insights, concerns, and value orientations, as well as potential policy and legal inclinations. The cases of stand-up comedy in China contribute to the forming of these four building blocks to a very high degree for Z generation's narration, including both their frame of social events and their unique value standard. The genre of stand-up comedy has played a pivotal role in shaping the narrative discourse of Generation Z to a considerable extent. The stand-up comedy show that is picked specifically here today, is related very deeply to the job experiences of young people and starts the building of narration from there [8].

## **5. Case study of the relationship between the stand-up comedy show of Yu and the formation of social narration of Z generation**

### **5.1. The creation of frame brought by discussing the experiences of Z generation**

The content of the comedy show, by drawing the focus of discussion to the experiences of Z generation, creates a frame of events for narration that is special and authentic to the youth. In his show, he mocks the idea of being a "fresh graduate" by saying that "even if I am starving to death, I am still a fresh graduate".

As a background, fresh graduates are supported in the job application process for the society wants a higher employment rate of college graduates. This is the reason why being a fresh graduate is deemed prestigious and desirable. The joke made by this comedian here is that he is still proud of himself for being a fresh graduate when he is not able to use that identity to gain a job. The "starving to death" is a hyperbole but it indicates some existing problems with the quality of living of fresh graduates brought on by the absence of a job. The disparity between the expected good living identity of "fresh graduates" and the reality highlight even more the economic difficulties faced by the himself on the life quality induced by the absence of jobs.

Also, the comedian presents a conversation between himself and one of the rich students that he teaches when he wants to persuade that student to study. He recalls saying, "Please study for your teacher so he can earn some money" and "He would not spend the money but would accumulate that for you so that he can rent your houses in the future". The joke here lies in that the comedian considers



the money that he earned from the student as something that he would eventually return to the student rather than something that he can keep and make his life more desirable. This definition of earned money points to the expense of rent prices faced by him. If he is rich enough to buy a house, then he would not have to struggle to pay the intolerable high rent every month.

The permutation of this challenge arises due to the individual's occupational deficit or the engagement in a vocation characterized by under-compensation. The experiences described by the comedian share huge similarities with other members of Z generation for they both have constrained budgets when comes to life quality and also high rent when comes to residue places. Thus, the experience shown in the lines forms a unique frame for the narration of Z generation that stresses events showcasing the difficulties they brought by their lack of work.

### **5.2. The account giving and story construction provided by the comedian**

The comedian provides an account of the happening events featuring the perspective of Z generation, including the causal mechanisms underlying the events and also a constructed story plot with identified characters. Initially, the orator establishes a metaphorical parallel between newly minted college graduates and a particular variety of mooncakes that proliferate on store shelves. He mocks that college graduates like him are like those mooncakes that have fresh ingredients, and a close production date, but just with nobody touching and buying. Despite nobody touching it, every year a new group of them is being produced and given away to employers who already have a large supply of these "mooncakes". By using the large amounts of mooncakes to parallel that of the employees who are being sent into the labor market, the mismatch of the amounts of workers and the amount of jobs opening is shown vividly.

Noting that the comedian is talking about his experiences of not being employed in the labor market before he makes this parody, it can be concluded that he is trying to provide an account for the low employment rate of college graduates including himself, which is what the last paragraph focus on as the events being framed by the narrative of Z generation, that the mismatch of labor supply and labor demand is causing the difficulties faced by the college graduates induced by the absence of jobs. There are too many people applying for jobs, so there would definitely be somebody not being employed.

Furthermore, the orator constructs a narrative with defined characters—those of fortune and misfortune—within this causal sequence. The mismatch of the labor force and the opening job positions has made the employees, mainly corresponding to the Z generation as the narrator, into the unlucky figure, fitting the roles of the narrators themselves into the story, and also the boss of the companies as the lucky ones for the huge amount of the supply of workers can lower the wage down and also increase the quality of labor.

### **5.3. The confirmation of value standard that belongs to Z generation**

The comedian helped discover and celebrate a value standard that belongs to Z generation as the source of judgment of their narratives. After discussing some instances when the companies break the offer with Z generation, the comedian claims that the thing that nearly everybody wants is the sense of assurance, the assurance that one's life is progressively aligning with a predetermined trajectory, free from disruption. As an add up to the background, the desire for a stable job that the employees would not be mentioned in the narratives of the company which the employees would normally listen to, for the company would want the employees to accept the arrangement of companies, rather than bringing up with possible disagreement.

As a result, the comedian here is helping the Z generations to recognize one of their important desires and the accompanied value that they give to the stability of jobs. This value standard being

regained by the Z generation here is really important for it has strong potential underlying for them to use it on commenting on social events they are encountering but also on guiding their path when they need to be clear about what is meaningful to them.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper discusses the effect that the Chinese stand-up comedy show has on the building up of the narratives of Z generation. The findings of this study suggest that Chinese stand-up comedy is instrumental in shaping the narrative framework of Generation Z, as it facilitates the structuring of events, the provision of accounts, the development of narrative arcs, and the establishment of value standards. This paper also has some weaknesses in the type and scope of materials that it used for analysis. It only includes a single case study of the comedian Yu Xiang Yu without picking the comedy show held by other comedians, this narrow focus may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader spectrum of stand-up comedy. Also, the materials that this paper picked are mainly that of the lines spoken by the comedian, but not with the reaction of that of the audience. As a result, the realm of analysis is only limited to that of the comedians and might not be able to figure out whether or not the intention of the comedian is being successfully realized by inducing the effect on the audience. Future analysis might focus on the reception analysis of the comedy show, which might focus more on the reaction of the audience.

## References

- [1] Tang, S. (2024). *Political In Between: Streaming Stand-Up Comedy and Feminist. Reckoning in Contemporary Mainland China*. *Global Storytelling: Journal of Digital and Moving Images*. 3(2), 5. <https://doi.org/10.3998/gj.4211>
- [2] Zhang, T., & Zhou, K. (2023b). *Fun young ladies — Modern feminism and China's stand-up comedy*. *Women S Studies International Forum*, 99, 102788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102788>
- [3] Ma, Y. (2023). *A comparative and acceptance study of women's discourse in Chinese-American online stand-up comedy*. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 174, 02014. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202317402014>
- [4] Tsang, W. K., & Wong, M. (2004). *Constructing a shared 'Hong Kong identity' in comic discourses*. *Discourse & Society*, 15(6), 767–785. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926504046504>
- [5] Kurniadi, Y., Mujiono, M., & Alvin, S. (2023). *Humor and Gen- Z: A Reception Study of Bintang Emon's Stand- Up Comedy in Somasi Content*. *DINASTI INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCE*, 4(6), 860–868. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>
- [6] Ma, Y., Keawsuwan, C., & Numthong, K. (2024). *On the Speech Style and Humour Effect of the Chinese Stand-up Comedy "ROCK & ROAST"*. *Journal of Liberal Arts Prince of Songkla University*, 16(1), 275052. <https://doi.org/10.14456/jlapsu.2024.8>
- [7] Gilbert, C. (2021). *A comic road to interiors, or the pedagogical matter of Gen Z humor*. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 21(4). <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v21i4.32749>
- [8] Kunczer, V. (2024). *The six faces of globalization: who wins, who loses, and why it matters*. In *Journal of International Business Policy* (pp. 23–24). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-023-00179-8>

# ***Globalization and Social Class Inequality: The Impact of Capitalist Economic Structures on Social Stratification in Nation-States***

**Yinzhou Chen<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Guangzhou Yinhao School, 61 Tangliao Street, Conghua District, Guangzhou, China*

*a. Cyz2007rider@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The twenty-first century has brought forth fast globalization, more technological advancement, and better transportation, all of which have contributed to a continually changing environment for international trade. Although social inequality has increased, capitalism structures have been stabilized by this process. Disparities have grown as a result of labor market change, altered employment patterns, and technology breakthroughs. For low-skilled workers, job stability is being threatened by the transition from manufacturing to service sectors and the disintegration of global supply networks. Meanwhile, elites now own a larger share of the wealth due to increased capital flows. Diverse national responses are needed to address these issues, with a focus on robust social welfare initiatives and sensible laws. Improving social security, controlling financial flows, and guaranteeing moral labor practices are some of the solutions. Future initiatives ought to prioritize social welfare and economic fairness, encourage international cooperation, and promote equitable globalization.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Capitalist Economic Structures, inequality.

## **1. Introduction**

In the 21st century, globalization refers to the increasingly close interdependence between the economies, cultures, and populations of countries around the world. With the increasing flow of people, capital, goods, services, and information across borders, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected [1]. Globalization has a profound effect on practically every facet of modern life, from social and cultural exchanges to technical advancement and economic growth, which is why it is so significant in today's society.

The foundation for contemporary globalization was established by the historical processes of colonization, industrialization, and the Age of Discovery. Global trade networks were initiated during the Age of Discovery, and the capitalist economy was established throughout the 18th and 19th centuries during the process of industrialization [2]. By exploiting labor and resources, European colonialism aided in the growth of global capitalism and made economic inequality worse. The bourgeoisie gained money by forsaking the interests of the aristocracy, while possibilities for the working class and peasants deteriorated. These changes had an impact on the social class structure. Since then, the creation of a transnational bourgeoisie and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few number of individuals worldwide have caused globalization to alter the conventional class

structure. Social inequality has increased as a result of changes in how possibilities for global economic growth are distributed.

This essay will examine how nation-state social class disparities are made worse by the capitalist economic system, which also encourages globalization. The research will thoroughly examine how globalization affects labor exploitation, wealth concentration, and the authority of the welfare state, demonstrating how it modifies and intensifies the inequalities of modern social stratification. This essay examines these particular processes in detail in an effort to clarify the intricate connection between globalization and the growing class divide in contemporary society.

## **2. Capitalist Economic Structures and Globalization**

A capitalist economy is characterized by private ownership and control of property, where individuals and businesses operate in their own self-interest to make a profit. Prices are determined by the forces of supply and demand in the market, which helps allocate resources efficiently. Capital assets like factories and railroads are privately owned, labor is exchanged for wages, and profits are retained by private owners. Unlike socialism, where the state owns the means of production and prioritizes social good, capitalism relies on voluntary exchanges driven by rational self-interest to foster economic prosperity [3]. Multinational companies (MNCs) are vital to this capitalist system because they propel the enormous cross-border capital flows and greatly influence the world economy. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are significant forces behind the expansion and development of the world economy. They promote local economies by generating large amounts of job possibilities, promoting economic development, and drawing large amounts of foreign direct investment. MNCs open up markets and promote global business by integrating markets through imports and exports. Their R&D and technology transfer investments foster innovation and increase the competitiveness of regional industry. Furthermore, MNCs are essential to environmental sustainability because they employ energy-saving, water-saving, and carbon-reduction strategies. By assisting with initiatives related to sustainable development, healthcare, education, and global value chains, they also promote cooperation in the pursuit of common sustainability objectives [4].

The strong influence of multinational corporations on a global scale is closely linked to the widespread dissemination of capitalism through globalization, which mainly relies on the expansion of free markets and the implementation of neoliberal policies. Neoliberal policies such as privatization, deregulation, and reduced government intervention [5], have enabled multinational corporations to operate more freely in the international market. The global capitalist process has been further aided by this policy change, which has increased the movement of capital, goods, and services across international borders. Higher levels of foreign investment, economic expansion, and more economic integration of these nations into the global economy are generally the results of neoliberal policies [5]. Therefore, the growth of multinational corporations is closely related to the global spread of capitalism, and the two are mutually reinforcing, strengthening the increasingly close global economic ties under neoliberal reforms.

The focus placed by capitalism on privatization, deregulation, and less government assistance has resulted in changes to the national economy. Reducing benefits is consistent with the capitalism idea of depending on the market, but privatization also improves market efficiency by transferring management of state-owned businesses to the private sector and loosening rules. These policies may increase economic development, but by decreasing the role of the state in social security, they may also worsen economic inequality and erode social safety nets.

There are notable distinctions between state-led and large firm capitalism [3] when examining how capitalism affects regional labor markets and domestic industries. Under a state-led capitalism system, the government creates regulations, offers subsidies, and puts protective measures in place to help local businesses. The objectives of this intervention are to support the growth of important industries

and improve the competitiveness and economic stability of domestic industry. Government assistance can boost the economy and give stability, but because it lessens the strain of market competition, it may also result in poor efficiency and little innovation. In contrast, a few number of very big companies control a huge portion of the market in large company capitalism. This tendency of market concentration may result in economies of scale, which will propel technical advancement and industrial growth. However, this concentration may also suppress market competition and limit the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. However, their hegemony has the potential to stifle competition, drive out smaller businesses, and stratify the labor market so that salaries and job security are concentrated in the hands of big businesses, while smaller businesses and displaced workers suffer more volatility. Therefore, even if each model has benefits, local labor markets and domestic businesses face unique obstacles as a result of these models.

### **3. Impact on Social Stratification within Nation-States**

#### **3.1. Labor Market Transformations**

Globalization and capitalism economic systems have changed labor markets, resulting in notable changes in social stratification. The deverticalization or fragmentation of industrial processes is one of the most noticeable shifts. Vertically integrated companies used to handle all facet of production in-house, from raw materials to finished items. On the other hand, in recent years, non vertical manufacturing (i.e. outsourcing different production stages and component procurement to different countries) has become increasingly common. This approach has led to extreme fragmentation of the global supply chain. For example, the memory of an Apple iPhone may be manufactured in Korea, the display screen in Japan, the processor in Taiwan, and the final assembly in China. In order to support these complex and decentralized supply chains, strong logistics and transportation networks have significantly expanded global trade.

Paul A. Samuelson, the winner of the Nobel Prize, devised the Factor-Price Equalization Theorem, which helps explain the economic effects of these changes. According to the theorem, in a world of unrestricted free trade and no transportation costs, the costs of similar production inputs, such unskilled labor, will eventually equalize across nations and converge at the lowest possible level [6]. For low-skilled labor, this has very serious ramifications as it implies that, as a result of global competition, their salaries would not only remain stagnant but may potentially decrease.

Throughout the past few decades, this dynamic has become more and more apparent. While the earnings of trained professionals, engineers, and information technology workers have increased dramatically, blue-collar wages have often stagnated or even fallen [6]. Unskilled workers in industrialized nations have been disproportionately affected by the globalization and free trade-driven equalization of salaries at lower levels, which has exacerbated income inequality. This pattern demonstrates the increasing polarization of the labor market, in which people with more education and skill enjoy increased pay and job security, while individuals with less education and skill suffer stagnant or decreasing pay and increased financial insecurity.

#### **3.2. Capital Mobility and Wealth Concentration**

Globalization-induced capital movement allows businesses to outsource services and manufacturing to nations with less labor costs, which has a significant effect on the labor markets of high-cost nations. For instance, a large number of manufacturing jobs in Europe have been moved to Bangladesh and Vietnam, which has resulted in lower wages and increased unemployment for those who were formerly employed in these sectors. However, in the once-wealthy industrial communities like Manchester saw a spike in unemployment and widespread plant closures as a result of numerous manufacturing companies moving their production lines to less expensive locations.



Furthermore, developing economies in East Asia have become the new center of gravity for the global economy, replacing established superpowers like the United States and Western Europe. China's swift economic expansion, for example, demonstrates this change. Just 3.1% of the world's GDP came from China in 1970; by 2015, that percentage had risen to 14.8% [7]. This change emphasizes how the dynamics of power and money are shifting globally, which adds to the accumulation of wealth within a global elite that gains from these economic changes.

#### **4. Role of the Nation-State in Mitigating or Exacerbating Inequality**

##### **4.1. State Policies and Social Welfare**

Social and economic inequality can be greatly influenced by a nation's laws and welfare policies. Nordic nations, like Sweden and Norway, have successfully lowered economic inequality and encouraged social mobility by enacting high taxes and offering generous social services. Their governments also provide free public healthcare, universal public education, and generous unemployment benefits, which have significantly reduced the social wealth gap and given all citizens equal opportunities.

The Anglo American model countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, generally reduce government intervention and taxation, which frequently results in growing economic disparities and decreased social mobility. For instance, in the United States, income inequality is still very severe despite the country's robust economic development, with the wealth of the wealthy increasing at a rapid rate while the growth of middle-class and lower-class incomes is relatively slow. The country's flawed social security system, in addition to the high costs of healthcare and education, make it more difficult for low-income families to receive the support they need.

##### **4.2. State Responses to Global Economic Pressures**

While different nations have taken different approaches to the challenges posed by globalization, some favoring free trade, others enacting restrictive measures. Investing in healthcare, education, and social services is essential for reducing social inequality regardless of a nation's stance on economic globalization. For instance, Germany has successfully countered the negative effects of globalization on social classes by instituting a robust social security system, universal healthcare, and a high-quality education system, actions that not only provide social security in the short term but also yield long-term economic and social benefits by raising labor standards and boosting labor skills. Similar to this, Denmark's welfare system efficiently closes the socioeconomic divide by promoting social mobility and offering all citizens access to sufficient medical, educational, and social support.

#### **5. Case Studies**

##### **5.1. United States**

The United States provides a clear illustration of how globalization and capitalism worsen economic inequality and the fall of the middle class. Globalization has led to a large number of manufacturing jobs being moved to nations with cheaper labor costs, including China and Mexico. As a result, American manufacturing workers are experiencing more unemployment and lower wages. Meanwhile, although the rapid growth of the service industry has created job opportunities on the surface, these new positions often have lower salaries and lack stability, such as part-time positions in the retail and catering service industries. With the financial and technological industries dominating the economy and class structures, wealth has grown concentrated among the top 1% of earners. The gains of overall economic expansion have not been properly dispersed, which has resulted in a

growing divide between the rich elite and the general populace. While the wealthiest 5% of Americans control over 60% of income and possess one-third of the nation's wealth, their proportion has been gradually rising over the past few decades [8].

## 5.2. China

Although millions of people have been lifted out of poverty by China's fast economic growth in recent decades, social inequality has also increased, notably between urban and rural areas. Significant economic advantages have resulted from the nation's integration into the global economy, which has been fueled by industrialization and urbanization. However, these benefits have primarily benefited those with access to education and skills as well as those living in coastal cities. However, inland rural communities have not kept up with this development, which has resulted in significant differences in living conditions and income.

The imbalances caused by globalization are intimately related to this phenomena. China has imposed policies that have promoted the quick growth of the southeast coastal areas in order to take use of their advantages, geographic, human, and financial, ever since economic reforms were instituted. Although export-oriented economies have benefited greatly from these policies, they have also highlighted the regional disparities exacerbated by globalization by widening the development gap between interior and coastal communities, especially in the western regions.

## 6. Conclusion

The twenty-first century has seen a rapid development of globalization, which, combined with the speed at which technology is developing and the ease of transportation, has resulted in a constantly shifting global trade structure. As globalization has steadily progressed, the capitalist economic structure has become more stable, which has had a profound effect on social inequality; under globalization, the labor market has undergone transformation, the employment pattern has been reshaped, and technological advancements and capital flows have further exacerbated this impact. The shift from manufacturing to service industries and the disintegration of global supply chains have weakened the employment stability of low-skilled workers, while the growth in capital flows has further concentrated wealth in the hands of a small number of elites.

While various nations have responded to these difficulties in different ways, ensuring people's living standards through strong social welfare programs and practical legislative guarantees should be the shared objective. A variety of tactics, such as bolstering the social security system, controlling capital flows, and guaranteeing ethical labor practices, are required to solve these problems. In order to create a more just and inclusive society, future efforts should concentrate on developing a more equitable globalization, giving social welfare and economic justice first priority, and encouraging international collaboration.

## References

- [1] Kolb, M. (2018). *What Is Globalization?* [online] Peterson Institute for International Economics. Available at: <https://www.piie.com/microsites/globalization/what-is-globalization>.
- [2] Vanham, P. (2019). *A brief history of globalization.* [online] World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/how-globalization-4-0-fits-into-the-history-of-globalization/>.
- [3] Jahan, S. and Mahmud, A.S. (2023). *What Is Capitalism?* [online] International Monetary Fund. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/Capitalism>.
- [4] thatfolk (2023). *The Significance and Influence of Multinational Corporations on the Global Economy.* [online] Rônesans. Available at: <https://ronesans.com/en/news/the-significance-and-influence-of-multinational-corporations-on-the-global-economy>.
- [5] Connell, R. (2010). *Understanding Neoliberalism.* McGill-Queen's University Press eBooks, pp.22–36. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773581050-004>.



- [6] Rassekh, F. and Thompson, H. (1993). *Factor Price Equalization: Theory and Evidence*. *Journal of Economic Integration*, 8(1), pp.1–32. doi:<https://doi.org/10.11130/jei.1993.8.1.1>.
- [7] Washington, D.C. (2015). *People's Republic of China: 2015 IV Consultation - Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for the People's Republic of China; Country Report No. 15/234; July 7, 2015*. [online] Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15234.pdf>.
- [8] Horowitz, J., Igielnik, R. and Kochhar, R. (2020). *Trends in U.S. Income and Wealth Inequality*. [online] Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/01/09/trends-in-income-and-wealth-inequality/>.

# ***The Dual Construction of Symbolic Imagery and Double-voiced Discourse: The Hierarchical Order in *A Rose for Emily****

Wenxin Sun<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Translation Studies, Shandong University, Weihai, Shandong, 264209, China*  
*a. Sundahai0102@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Social structure and hierarchical order, as the key issues throughout human history, continue to stimulate the academic community to deeply explore the relationship between social form and individual destiny. With its unique artistic perspective, William Faulkner's masterpiece, *A Rose for Emily*, vividly shows the social landscape of a specific historical period, which has aroused a wide range of academic discussions. This paper focuses on the subtle symbolism in the novel, and at the same time takes the narrative strategy of two-voice discourse as a clue to deeply analyze how the two work together to construct a complex and profound social hierarchy order framework in *A Rose for Emily*. This analysis not only highlights the diversity and innovation of novel techniques but also reveals the intricate correspondence between them and the background of social reality at that time, providing a new perspective and insight for understanding how literature reflects society and criticizes reality.

**Keywords:** William Faulkner, *A Rose for Emily*, symbol, double-voiced discourse, hierarchical order.

## **1. Introduction**

William Faulkner, an outstanding writer in the history of modern American literature, is known for his deep insight into American Southern life and his unique narrative style. Born in 1897, Faulkner's works mostly focus on American Southern society, especially the rise and fall of his family and the struggles and resistance of his characters in the changing times. *A Rose for Emily*, one of his masterpieces of short fiction, has been widely acclaimed since its publication in 1930, not only for its exquisite literary skills but also for its profound revelation of social hierarchy and the complexity of human nature.

In the field of domestic and international literary studies, *A Rose for Emily* has been the focus of scholars' attention. Foreign scholars have earlier conducted in-depth analyses of the novel, exploring the rich connotation of symbolic imagery in the novel and its unique use in the text, showing Emily's persistence and nostalgia, and also reflecting the solidification and impenetrable social hierarchical order. At the same time, the use of double-voiced discourse makes it possible to present the voices of different social classes in the novel, further highlighting the contradictions and conflicts of the hierarchical order. However, although many scholars have conducted in-depth studies on *A Rose for*

*Emily*, there is still some research space in the construction of double-voiced discourse and its correlation with symbolic intention. This paper attempts to explore from this perspective how the symbolic imagery in the novel interacts with double-voiced discourse to construct a hierarchically ordered world jointly. The current research mostly stays on the surface of the text and lacks in-depth theoretical support when exploring the correlation between symbolic imagery and double-voiced discourse. Therefore, based on previous studies, this paper will utilize the relevant theories to interpret the novel more in-depth.

This paper will first analyze the symbolic imagery in *A Rose for Emily* divided into characters and objects to clarify its significance and role in the novel. Subsequently, the paper will examine in detail the correlation between symbolic imagery and double-voiced discourse in *A Rose for Emily*, and explore how they work together to build up the hierarchical order. This paper not only reveals how literary works reflect and criticize the social hierarchical order through the interweaving of symbolic imagery and dual-voice discourse, providing a new perspective for understanding the complexity and contradictions of Southern society in William Faulkner's writings, but also providing a reference for subsequent studies exploring the themes of power structures, identity, and cultural critique.

## **2. Main Character Imagery - Discourse of the Narrator: "We"**

Faulkner's narration in the "first person plural, collective, across multiple generations of narrators" [1]. The novel portrays the two main characters, Emily Grierson and Homer Barron, revealing the contradictory feelings of the townspeople towards the fallen aristocrats, who are both revered and pitied, familiar and strange at the same time. It is also through the discourse of the narrator, that the novel reflects the American Civil War, in the social and historical transition of the American southerners on the one hand, unhesitatingly into the reconstruction of the new South, on the other hand, but still stubbornly stay in the former glory of the American South and the splendor of the look back in the remembrance of the contradictory situation.

### **2.1. Emily Grierson**

The North was the victor of the American Civil War, and the Southern aristocracy was doomed to decline with the collapse of the plantation economy. Emily, the fallen Southern aristocrat, represents the traditional morals and values of the Old South. In the eyes of the townspeople, she is not able to pursue happiness the way she wants to because "Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care" [2]. When they think about Emily killing herself with arsenic, they all think that it would be the best thing. For them, Emily's life is not as important as the dignity of the last generation of Griersons, because the preservation of this dignity is a "tradition" in the town.

Meanwhile, the "duty" in the sentence is reflected in the fact that when Emily falls in love with the soon-to-be-married Northern foreman Homer Barron, no one in the town gives her blessing, but rather sees her behavior as a disgrace to the town, a bad example to the young people and even asks the pastor and Emily's cousins to stop her. Because in the minds of the townspeople, Emily should be a monument that will always represent the last dignity of the Old South, and they don't care if Emily is happy or not. This monumental role is evident in the beginning of the essay, "our whole town went to her funeral" [2]. It uses a "Defamiliarization" perspective to give the reader room to think and reflect, i.e., to force the reader to understand and experience the story in a new light by breaking away from the conventional plot development and gender role stereotypes [3]. This breaks the traditional narrative of the story and the reader's expectations by allowing reacquainting oneself with the identity position of the monument, thus deepening the reader's knowledge of the social order of the time.

It is also because of the above-mentioned "tradition" and "duty", that "we" as the discourse of the narrator gives Emily a sense of "care": Colonel Sartoris feels that he has a hereditary obligation to

help Emily maintain her aristocratic dignity and to relieve her financial stress, so they find an excuse to exempt her from paying taxes. This “care” also reveals the role of Southern values, which makes Emily a victim of the clash of old and new civilizations. Through this image, the author reveals that the conflict and struggle between the North and the South of America at that time brought great pain to the hearts and minds of the innocent people, and also suggests to the reader the background of the South's defeat at that time.

## 2.2. Homer Barron

The conflict between Emily and Homer is rooted in the clash between the plantation economy of the South and the capitalist society of the North [4]. Homer, who comes from the North with the construction crew, embodies the expansion of the advanced Northern civilization, i.e., capitalism: he is the foreman of the construction crew, who seeks financial gain; he indulges in drinking and enjoying himself and living in the moment; he is in love with Emily and dates her but does not want to be tied down by marriage; he is enthusiastic and energetic and makes good friends and is always in the center of the group. All of these illustrate the great attraction of the emerging Northern civilization that the Southern civilization is far from being able to resist, and the tension between capitalism and plantation economy is further intensified.

Emily, as a representative woman of traditional southern society and the standard of traditional southern morality, was raised with traditional moral standards and values instilled in her by her father, like the society she lived in, Emily lived in a closed space, craved a stable married life, and refused to accept change. She is unable to resist the charm and intrusion of the northern civilization. When the two social values collide in an irreconcilable contradiction, Emily, though traumatized, finally chooses to defend her dignity and nobility without hesitation, and lets Homer end his life with himself in the form of a dead body. Under the patriarchal dictatorship of the Old South aristocracy, she is both a victim and an unconscious defender, and the hold of the Old South culture is something that no one in it can get rid of.

The discourse of the narrator is also deeply reflected in it. As witnesses to the story of Emily and Homer, “We” also find it difficult to break the shackles of the conflict between the South and the North. “We” are attracted to the northern civilization while unable to break free from the cage of the southern civilization, and sometimes they even point their fingers at the behavior of the two men they are counting on Emily, the monument of social civilization, to remain standing. This kind of social mass's general being shaken but still relying on authority reflects the incomplete collapse of the Southern civilization and the inevitable impact of the clash of old and new cultures on the mass's psyche.

## 3. Main Object Imagery – Authorial Discourse: “I”

In addition to the narrator's perspective, the writer is equally ubiquitous in his Authorial Discourse, the idea of the hidden “I”. The writer tends not to express his opinion directly, but to reflect his inner world by depicting objects and things. With the help of the house and rose, two typical images in the text, the writer's intention is reflected in the plot and details in a roundabout way, leaving the reader a wide space for thinking.

### 3.1. House

The house, the only legacy left to Emily by her father, symbolizes alienation, decay, and degradation, as well as the gradual decline of the Southern plantation order. It is undoubtedly a paradoxical imagery that the large, square log house set on what had once been their most select street, is now an ugly old mansion in disrepair and out of place in its surroundings. It is in this house that Emily

accompanies her father when he is alive, but in other words, Emily is imprisoned in it by the authoritarian patriarchy. When she meets Homer, she comes out of the house and is happy and free. The house was supposed to be a warm home for them after their marriage, but it ended up being her and Homer's grave. For the past forty years, Emily has lived in the house like a dead woman, isolated from the world. Anything that lacks care and enclosure fades and ages with time, just as Emily and the defeated Southern culture have lost their colors to the constant onslaught and scrubbing. The authorial discourse is highlighted in this sense of contradiction, as the author isolates herself and the townspeople from both systems, as a bystander, but also as a clear stream independent of social strife.

### 3.2. Rose

The rose is a symbol of love, representing romance and the beloved, but in the author's writing, its meaning is even more profound. As a synonym for love, the rose symbolizes Emily's desire for marriage. Emily breaks through all the barriers and goes out with Homer despite the world's expectations. In love, Emily is brave and determined, alive and happy. With Homer, she is no longer "Miss Emily Grierson" or "Poor Emily", but just Emily. Homer is the only love of Emily's life, and she thinks she's met a precious love, even preparing a rose-colored room for marriage. But Homer's insistence on leaving is tantamount to taking away Emily's life and destroying her last illusion of happiness. At this point, the rose takes on a deeper meaning, symbolizing death and destruction. Emily in her youth is like a rose in full bloom, but roses are destined to fade. Under the suppression of traditional morality in the American South and the betrayal of her lover, Emily suppresses her desires and distorts her humanity. The withering of the rose means the end of love. In order to keep her love fresh, Emily even goes so far as to make a specimen of her lover and store it, accomplishing a permanent companionship. At the same time, the rose symbolizes the author's sympathy and compassion. Throughout Emily's life, she was never able to get rid of the influence of traditional Southern values and aristocratic identity and eventually became a victim of the conflict between the North and the South of the United States. The sense of alienation and contradiction brought by this symbolism is an indirect manifestation of the order of the American South and a further manifestation of the authorial discourse.

## 4. Double-voiced Discourse

As an important argument for Bakhtin's polyphonic novel, double-voiced discourse is famous for its complexity in the construction of the structure of the text's content and the diversity of perspectives in literary-critical discourse [5]. It distinguishes the discourse of the narrator from authorial discourse, aiming to avoid the singularity of the text's ideas and the monotony of its assertions. It is also through these two discursive perspectives that Faulkner creates an idealized breeding ground for the construction of the novel's intentions, characterization, and even context.

### 4.1. Discourse of the Narrator

The Narrator, "We", is a collective personality that is both the narrator and the participant of the story. The fact that the novel begins with the statement that "our whole town" came to Emily's funeral seems to indicate that the Narrator is a collective of all the townspeople and thus tries to use the collective voice to prove the objectivity of his standpoint and the credibility of the narrative, but it is sometimes full of loopholes in the text. This is because the narrator and the older generation of townspeople have markedly different attitudes toward Emily. The narrator mocks the older generation's blind defense of Emily while gloating that "we" the new generation are more enlightened than the older generation. In the case of the odor incident, "we" try to use the law or punishment to blame Emily, regardless of her ladylike status and aristocratic decency. In addition, "we" are not interested in Emily's china

painting class. When the students grow up, they do not send their children to Emily to learn painting. In these ways, the new generation of townspeople, as a group, has become significantly less dominated by Old South culture and has emerged from its shadows to a greater extent, accompanied by reflection. They do not treat Emily with the same respect as the older generation of townspeople and try to rely on the power of law and authority to remove her unreasonable privileges. However, the narrator's related reflections remain more limited. "We" dare to dispute Emily's privilege, but not confront it head-on. Before visiting Emily's home, "we" spend three months sending Emily a notice, and even hold an overnight meeting to send a delegation to demand taxes after she ignores them. In the face of public office, the law, and the authorities, she defused the situation with a few simple words. In fact, "we" were not defeated by Emily as a person, but by the power of Old South culture. As a descendant of the aristocracy, she symbolizes the spirit of the Old South, and it seems only natural that she should be privileged, and the narrator seems to subconsciously agree with Emily. Therefore, the narrator goes further than the older generation and dares to reflect on the irrationality of the existing system, but in terms of deeper cultural structure and deeper emotions, "we" ourselves still have greater limitations and are unable to change the status quo.

#### 4.2. Authorial Discourse

Faulkner skillfully utilizes core images such as house and rose to profoundly embody his Authorial Discourse, that is, the idea that hides behind the text and silently guides the reader to think about the author. These images not only enrich the background of the story as a physical presence but are also important tools for the author to convey deeper meanings and support his narrative intentions. By portraying the changing values of the house and the hearts of the characters represented by the roses, the author reflects the American Old South's obsession with past glories and its resistance to change and also reveals the repression and bondage of individuals under the hierarchical system, as well as the helplessness and struggle of individual destinies in the midst of social change.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that establishing contradictory narratives is also an important means of enriching the authorial discourse. The narrator "we" embodies the voice of the new generation of townspeople, but a more detailed reading reveals that "we" also includes the former "I," the former author. In addition to glimpsing the authorial discourse through the depiction of the object imagery of the previous text, the text implicitly includes the author's reflection on and critique of the former "I," the "we" that merges with the group of narrators (i.e., the new generation of small-townners). It is in this critique that Faulkner truly realizes the transcendence of self-limitation. The narrator describes Emily in terms of "monument," "a tradition," and so on, giving her a veil of nobility, but also revealing her vulnerability from time to time. People seem to care about Emily, saying that everything about her is a big deal in the town, but there is another implication in the narrative. People emphasize the nobility of Emily's family line while repeatedly alluding to her family's "insanity" lineage; they are happy for Emily's romance while despising Homer and waiting to see what happens to her. This inconsistency and discrepancy in the narrator's account is the very object of the author's satire. The author creates "partial unreliability" in individual words and phrases, individual paragraphs, and individual parts of the text within an overall reliable narrative [6]. This results in the narrator sometimes disagreeing with the author's values. By setting up these points of contradiction, the author implies the unreliability of the narrator and separates his values from those of the narrator.

#### 5. Conclusion

Through rich symbolic imagery and complex dual discourse structure, *A Rose for Emily* profoundly reveals the deep-rooted hierarchical order of American Southern society and the intense collision and fusion between the old and new civilizations. The novel is not only a depiction of a woman's tragic

fate, but also a profound reflection on the power structure, moral concepts, and struggle of human nature in the social changes at that time. However, there is still room for improvement in this study, for example, by comparing similar works across countries to reveal their cultural significance more comprehensively. With the help of postcolonial theories, future research could explore the Southern American society in the novel as an “internal colonization” phenomenon, reflecting the marginalization of the South after the American Civil War and its impact on the identity and cultural resistance of the locals.

## References

- [1] Melcazarek, Nick. *Narrative Motivation in Faulkner's A Rose for Emily*[J]. *The Explicator*, 2009(67):237-239.
- [2] Faulkner, William. *A Rose for Emily*. Perfection Learning, 1990.
- [3] Shklovsky, Viktor. *Art, as Device*. Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 2016.
- [4] Zhang, Dan. “Where to Find Roses - Analyzing the Symbolism of Roses Based on Character Conflicts in *A Rose for Emily*.” *Journal of Hubei Open Vocational College*, no. 15, 2022, pp. 191-95.
- [5] Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- [6] Zhao, Yiheng. *General Narrative*. Sichuan University Press, 2013.



# *Analyzing Tinder's "It Starts with a Swipe" Campaign*

Xinyao Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>, Xinyao Cao<sup>1</sup>, Jingrui Yu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

a. mumwxy1@163.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** Designed specifically for the Generation Z audience, Tinder's 2024 campaign showcases a remarkable brand transformation. It is transitioning from being merely a casual encounter network to becoming a significant maker of meaningful relationships. This report thoroughly examines how the campaign ingeniously leveraged romantic comedy tropes and captivating user-centric stories to deeply connect with this highly relationship-focused demographic. By integrating user-generated content, infusing humor, and presenting relatable scenarios, Tinder aspires to forge an emotional bond with its users and establish a strong sense of credibility. Through integrated marketing communications, it effectively employs social media platforms and engaging videos to firmly reinforce its powerful message of brand repositioning. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. For instance, it could be enhanced by highlighting a broader range of relationships, encompassing diverse forms of connections beyond the traditional. Additionally, embedding more interactive features would enable deeper engagement with users. As a result of this comprehensive analysis, although Tinder has made substantial progress in enhancing its brand image, it still needs to implement some further adjustments to remain relevant and appealing in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape. Only by continuously evolving and adapting can Tinder truly thrive and meet the ever-changing expectations of its users.

**Keywords:** globalization, cultural hybridization, nationalism, K-Pop, "America First".

## 1. Introduction

Tinder's 2024 campaign, "It Starts with a Swipe," emphasizes real connections over casual encounters, especially targeting Gen Z. This ad, created with Mischief @ No Fixed Address, uses romantic comedies to rebrand Tinder as a platform for genuine partnerships [1][2]. To portray this new brand identity, the campaign's writing and visual methods use a variety of techniques to engage and resonate with a younger, relationship-focused audience. Structure, language, tone, clarity, precision, engagement methods, and consistency will be examined to determine the campaign's efficacy and areas for improvement.

## 2. Analysis

### 2.1. Structure

The campaign's language style is structured to guide readers through a familiar and compelling story. Campaign tools including press releases and social media posts include "Real Messages, Real

Romance" and "A New Relationship Starts Every Three Seconds" to grab attention [3]. The marketing is immediately linked to common romantic situations by these headlines. The plot follows a romantic comedy arc, introducing a scenario, developing it with relevant humor, and ending with a happy ending. This framework engages the viewer and discreetly supports the campaign's premise that Tinder starts real, meaningful connections. Furthermore, this campaign's structure includes storytelling depending on the region. The difference reflects diverse cultural backgrounds and international perspectives on relationships. For example, the campaign's video uses a song by Vijay Benedict, a popular Indian singer with a dancing scene [4]. This characteristic fits for Indian. By changing the way of promotion depending on countries, Tinder positions itself as a platform that facilitates "meaningful connections" for people across the globe, resonating with a broader, global audience.

## 2.2. Language and Tone

The campaign uses informal, approachable language and playful, sincere tones to appeal to Gen Z's desire for authenticity and relatability. The campaign uses Tinder members' first texts in a funny, endearing way. In replicated romantic scenes, "IDK, shrug emoji," and "So hot," resonate with the target audience's communication style [2]. It strengthens emotional resonance by using language that deepens emotional connections, making the user experience more engaging and personal. To promote Tinder as a modern "meet-cutes." platform, the tone is lighthearted and positive. This tone demystifies online dating, making it more human and less transactional [5].

## 2.3. Clarity and Precision

The campaign's aims and strategies are clearly stated in all materials. Tinder repeatedly emphasizes that it fosters genuine relationships, eliminating the uncertainty that plagues dating app promotion. Statistics, such as "a new relationship starts every three seconds on Tinder," provide the campaign clarity and establish its romantic tale in truth [3]. Clear language and exact facts boost the campaign's credibility, making the narrative more convincing for a skeptical audience that values transparency and sincerity. In addition, the campaign's advertisement shows the process of younger who use Tinder to meet their partner and make a relationship. By doing so, the campaign emphasizes and reinforces Tinder as a reliable platform for building authentic relationships.

## 2.4. Engagement

The campaign uses multiple engagement tactics to keep viewers' interest. These attempts focus on storytelling, using romantic comedy clichés to evoke nostalgia and relatability. The campaign capitalizes on audiences' love of rom-coms by starring Lana Condor and Evan Mock in scenes that mimic them and making them laugh with unexpected twists like digital communication's awkwardness. Real user messages and other persuasive methods make the advertising more relatable and engaging. Calls to action, such as invites to Tinder's Single Summer Series, increase engagement by pushing users to join outside the app [3]. Young adults today are eager to explore new experiences, forge connections, and embark on journeys of self-discovery [6]. They're all about finding the right vibe, meeting up, and navigating situations. The campaign's visual design and messages imply that Tinder can continue to inspire these daters by showing how thrilling it can be to take a chance on someone or something new.

## 2.5. Consistency

The "It Starts with a Swipe" campaign emphasizes consistency, with the writing style, tone, and language remaining uniform across digital ads, social media, and press releases. This uniformity reinforces the campaign's primary ideas and brand identity across various touchpoints, which is crucial for building a strong brand presence [7]. The integration of written information and visual elements contributes to a unified narrative, aligning with the principles of integrated marketing communications, which suggest that cohesive messaging across platforms enhances brand recall and reduces consumer confusion [8]. Unified messaging not only minimizes confusion but also boosts the campaign's credibility [5][9]. This consistent branding strategy ensures that users continuously recognize Tinder's core values, a key component of brand equity [10]. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the in-app experience aligns with the campaign's message, thereby creating a seamless user experience. Recognizing Dating Sunday as the busiest day of the year for online dating, the campaign effectively launches related sub-campaigns that focus on specific target groups or themes, all while maintaining a consistent brand message, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of the campaign.

## 3. Recommendations for Improvement

The "It Starts with a Swipe" marketing campaign has been somewhat successful, though there is room for improvement. One recommendation is to increase the diversity of relationships represented in the campaign. Currently, the campaign effectively portrays heterosexual partnerships in romantic comedies, but integrating LGBTQ+ couples could broaden the campaign's appeal and underscore Tinder's inclusivity [1]. The inclusion of diverse relationships aligns with the growing consumer demand for representation in media, which is increasingly recognized as a factor in brand loyalty and engagement [11]. While romantic comedy themes are effective, the campaign could benefit from employing more inventive storytelling strategies to appeal to a broader, more diverse audience that may not connect with rom-coms [12]. Another area for improvement is the expansion of interactive features. While social media challenges and influencer partnerships have proven effective, incorporating more user-generated content or interactive storytelling could further boost engagement [2]. For example, allowing users to narratively share their Tinder success stories could personalize the campaign and make it more relatable, enhancing user engagement and fostering a sense of community [13].

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Tinder's 2024 "It Starts with a Swipe" campaign has demonstrated the power of strategic writing and content design in transforming brand identification. Through its well-structured writing, relevant language and tone, clear and precise messaging, engaging storytelling, and consistent brand voice across various platforms, the campaign has successfully repositioned Tinder as a platform for meaningful connections, particularly among Gen Z users. However, there is still room for improvement. For instance, increasing the diversity of relationships represented in the campaign and expanding interactive features could further enhance its appeal and effectiveness. By incorporating these recommendations, Tinder can better meet the evolving needs and expectations of its diverse user base, captivating a broader target audience and continuing to change brand perception in today's digital landscape.

## References

- [1] PAPER Magazine. (2023). *Tinder's "It Starts With a Swipe" Campaign Helps Redefine "Hookup Culture"*. PAPER Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.papermag.com>
- [2] Design Rush. (2024). *Tinder Channels Romcom Tropes In Three New Spots*. DesignRush. Retrieved from <https://www.designrush.com>
- [3] Tinder Pressroom. (2024). *Real Messages, Real Romance: Tinder's New Campaign Inspired by Couples' First Chats*. Tinder Pressroom. Retrieved from <https://www.tinderpressroom.com>
- [4] [Tinder India]. (2024, January 4). *It Starts with a Swipe | You up? | Zindagi Meri Dance Dance | Tinder India [Video]*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K4wElOJjVI>
- [5] Campaign Middle East. (2024). *Tinder expands brand platform with new creative ads*. Campaign Middle East. Retrieved from <https://www.campaignme.com>
- [6] *Tinder launches its global brand campaign, 'it starts with a swipe' (2023)*. Mumbai: Athena Information Solutions Pvt. Ltd. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/other-sources/tinder-launches-global-brand-campaign-starts-with/docview/2780400453/se-2>
- [7] Kapferer, J. N. (2012). *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking (5th ed.)*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- [8] Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (2018). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective (11th ed.)*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- [9] Latterly.org. (2024). *Tinder Marketing Strategy 2024: A Case Study*. Latterly.org. Retrieved from <https://www.latterly.org>
- [10] Keller, K. L. (2013). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity (4th ed.)*. Pearson Education.
- [11] Aaker, D. A. (2014). *Aaker on Branding: 20 Principles That Drive Success*. Morgan James Publishing.
- [12] Gummesson, E. (2017). *Total Relationship Marketing (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- [13] Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). *The Future of Competition: Co-Creating Unique Value with Customers*. Harvard Business Review Press.

# *Chinese Audiences' Perceptions of Social Reality in the Comedy Film Successor*

Quan Gu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Drama and Film Studies, Nanjing University of The Arts, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 210013, China*

*a. guquan@ldy.edu.rs*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Comedy films continue to thrive in China's film market, and the genre is breaking out of its original form with innovative reforms. In addition, the market for realistic films is further expanding in China. The film *Successor*, which was released in mainland China this summer, became a hot topic during its release. This paper examines Chinese audiences' reactions to social realities reflected in *Successor* through the survey. The audience is the most important factor in determining the success of a film, so it is extremely important to pay attention to the audience's comments and reactions to a film. Comedy films are the audience's favorite genre and realism is a popular theme at the moment, combining the two produces a surprising effect. Social media is an important channel for film distributors to promote their films, but some issues are discussed more negatively on the internet. The film, as a relatively pure vehicle, can better reflect the real situation.

**Keywords:** Chinese Audience, Social Reality, Comedy Film, Social Media.

## 1. Introduction

The film *Successor* is directed by Yan Fei and Peng Damuo, and starring Shen Teng and Ma Li. The film releases in China in the summer of 2024. The story is about a wealthy couple who hide their wealth from their son in order to motivate him to study hard and create a "Truman's world" for him, which he eventually discovers. In the end, the son chose a lifestyle that he really enjoyed and forgave his parents. *Successor* promoted and marketed on numerous social media platforms, such as TikTok, Weibo, and Little Red Book. Officials posted teasers, bloopers, and other content on platform accounts to attract viewers to cinemas. As of 14 August 2024, *Successor* has grossed a total of 3.071 billion yuan in its 30 days of release. Compare this to the other films in the same time frame, such as *A Place Called Silence*, *The Traveller*, *Deadpool & Wolverine* and *Despicable Me 4*, where *Successor* ranked number one at the box office.

Previously, Yan Fei and Peng Damuo have collaborated many times in directing the stage play *Crazy Stone*, the film *Goodbye Mr. Loser* and *Hello Mr. Billionaire*, etc. One of the film's producers, Mahua Funage, was founded in 2003 and has created more than a hundred comedy stage plays that have been performed across China. Their team has also performed many sketches on the stage of the Chinese New Year Gala. In 2015, Mahua Funage produced its first comedy film, *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, which was a film adaption of the stage play. Once the film was released it became popular throughout China and became a phenomenal film at the time. Since then, this company produced a succession of

comedy films, such as *Mr. Donkey*, *Never Say Die*, *Hello Mr. Billionaire*, etc. Not to mention *Almost A Comedy*, which was nominated for the Golden Rooster Award. All of these films were well-received in the industry.

Unlike other films produced by Mahua Funage, *Successor* incorporates more social realities. While making people laugh, it also triggers the audience's thoughts. The depiction of Chinese education in *Successor* caused a lot of discussion among audiences. There have been comments on many social media platforms about the educational issues reflected in this film. Of the film's many plot points, the most discussed are the hidden rich identities of the parents, the vast underground surveillance space, and the fake grandmother who has been with her grandson for years. There is also the ironic image at the end of the son participating in a marathon race where he starts picking up plastic bottles due to childhood memories. The audience laughed and laughed at most of these plots. Although there are some discussions and reflections on social issues such as education, most of them are rather one-sided and negative.

Comedy films are an important part of the Chinese film industry. In recent years, the subject of realism has also attracted a lot of social attention, and comedy films have begun to incorporate this subject into them, such as *Successor*. In the past four years, comedy films have appeared in the top three of China's total box office list. *YOLO*, *Pegasus 2*, *Successor* in 2024, *Full River Red* in 2023, *MOON MAN*, *Too Cool To Kill* in 2022, and *Hi, Mom* and *Detective Chinatown 3* in 2021. All of the above films are classified as comedies, and all were in the top three of the year.

Nowadays, the majority of people rely on online promotional content and reviews or recommendations from friends to go to the cinema, so researching the audience's attitudes towards the main themes of a film is an effective way to help create a commercially successful film.

## 2. Literature Review

Comedy films play an extremely important role in the overall market of Chinese cinema, and many scholars and experts have made studies in the field of comedy films.

Through the releases of *Johnny Keep Walking!* and *If You Are the One III* in 2023, it can be seen that Chinese comedy films show the characteristics of "comedy + reality" or "comedy satirizing reality". The technique of using comedy to carry reality and thus express it in depth can be successful [1]. Zhang Yan and Yang Xuetao point out that comedy films in 2023 have not only added a variety of elements to the genre but also added subjects such as history and reality. Using comedy as a medium to criticize social reality and dissolve the pain of reality in a comedic way [2]. Wang Yuan also find that comedy innovated its creative style and presentation. It began to try to incorporate elements of black humor to satirize and reveal social reality. Thus deepening the connotation of comedy films and making them more diversified, three-dimensional, and personalized [3].

While the studies found the trend of adding realistic elements to comedy films, Zhang Rongkai found in his study that comedy films precipitated its tragic core by adding realistic grief through spectator perspective and abstraction. *Hi, Mom* used comedy to reflect the impermanence of life and wrote about a tragic life that ended up creating a 5.4 billion box office record [4]. *Too Cool To Kill* is an absurd comedy film by Mahua Funage. The film portrays its protagonists with subtlety and vividness and uses dislocation and parody of old films to present absurd realities, thus provoking the audience to deeper thoughts [5]. Meng Qi points out that comedy films have a rich expansion of genres because they are not limited by fixed patterns. The tragic undertones that are added to comedy films are better able to show sadness because they are set off by joy. Most of the tragic plots in comedy films nowadays are inspired by the conflict between the pressures of the real world and people's desire for a better life. The tragedies in the films have also evolved with the times [6]. Yu Fan considered *Successor* as a creative attempt at transformation, a continuation of Mahua Funage's established model of comedic construction and commercial operation. In addition, the challenge of



*Successor* interprets poignant social issues in a comedic framework with a critical gesture, allowing the audience to laugh while experiencing the sting and distress beyond the genre's experience [7].

B Palmer argues for a new definition of comedy by Chaplin, Keaton, and the Marx Brothers based on analyses of the camera styles, narrative manipulations, and audience constructions of their films, as well as their distinctive approach to chaos, that is, the signature that allows a film to elicit feelings of pleasure and good humor is laughter while discussing the specificity of comedic films in engaging the audience in reflection [8].

VN Bedenko considers modern comedy cinematography as one of the manifestations of the culture of laughter. This genre of cinema has been combined with the laughter culture of earlier historical periods, thus creating a counter-cultural form that reflects the dark side of the surrounding world. Most of them focus on social aspects [9]. In W Costanzo's research, it was found that African comedy cinema has evolved from the rich oral history tradition of Black Africa, with several prominent African filmmakers, such as Flores Gomes and Adama Drabo, shaping a cinema that reflects the way in which the local people see themselves and their place in the world, while at the same time incorporating social realities, such as social satire and political humor, into their films [10].

Although there is a lot of literature on comedy films, most of the studies focus on the development and structure of comedy films. There are relatively few studies exploring the effects of presenting social reality issues in comedy films. There has not been much attention paid to the way films are promoted the marketing strategies, and the important role of social media in film promotion. Moreover, few studies have focused on audience acceptance of a film's content and theme. But a film's popularity with the audience is the key to the box office and the main criterion for a film's success.

The purpose of studying Chinese audiences' attitudes towards the social realities presented in comedy films is to help film producers understand the psychology of the audience and the channel through which the audience obtains information about their films, so as to create films that are more in line with the audience's preferences and to carry out highly effective film promotion. In addition, this study will enable the Chinese and even global film markets to better understand the trends in film themes and to innovate more diverse film genres to cater to the audience's preferences. In order to realize the expected results of this research and to make the key findings of the research genuinely available to the film industry. This study will examine Chinese audiences' reflections on the social realities presented in comedy films by means of a survey.

### 3. Methodology

In this thesis, a survey was used to design 20 questions about the evaluation and opinion of the film *Successor* and other films with similar themes on Questionnaire Star. It also compares several other films in the same time frame as the film *Successor*.

After the survey was designed, it was posted on Weibo and Little Red Book to collect samples. The survey distribution cycle was 5 days, and 76 questionnaires were collected, of which 74 were valid. Two of the questionnaires were invalidly filled out, with multiple-choice questions showing obvious patterns and fill-in-the-blank questions filled in with irrelevant content. The criteria for invalid questionnaires were that all the answers were the same, had answers that were not relevant to the question, or that there was a clear regularity in the answers.

### 4. Result

Among the 74 valid questionnaires were 35 males and 39 females respectively, and most of them were concentrated in the age group of 20 ~ 45 years old.

With 72.37 per cent of people having watched *CJ 7*, this option is the most popular among the options for films with educational themes. Meanwhile, 52.63 per cent of people have watched *Successor*, and 50 per cent of people have watched *Les Choristes*. In addition, 39.47 per cent have watched *No One Less*, and 34.21 per cent have watched *Looking Up*. Of all the options, fewer people chose *Song Of Youth*, *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers*.

Among Stephen Chow's films, people's favorites are *Hail The Judge* and *Kung Fu Hustle*. More than half of those who participated in the questionnaire had watched the film *Successor*. And of those, 82.93% chose to watch the film because of its cast, another 58.54% went to watch the film because they were curious about the plot. Most of the audience knew about *Successor* through social media such as TikTok, Weibo, and Little Red Book. Others saw the posters and schedules of the cinema, others got recommendations from their friends. Three-quarters of people with positive attitudes towards how and what films are promoted on social media, and they would be interested in going to the cinema.

The most popular words in reviews of *Successor* are 'education', 'comedy', 'kids', 'realistic' and 'Shen Teng'. However, the discussion on social media on the issues of Chinese education is rather negative. Of the films from the same production company as *Successor*, people are more likely to watch *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, *Hello Mr. Billionaire*, and *Never Say Die*. 23 people in the questionnaire have watched *A Place Called Silence*, which was released at the same time as *Successor*. 19 people have watched *Deadpool & Wolverine*, while 16 people have watched *Despicable Me 4* and 11 people have watched *I Am Nobody*. 47.37% of audiences are glad to watch films that include educational issues and support the inclusion of plots reflecting social realities in comedy films.

## 5. Discussion

The most-watched film in the educational genre in this survey was *CJ 7*, and the second most-watched film was *Successor*. There is a time span of nearly twenty years between these two films, which is explained by the fact that there have been fewer educational films created by China in recent years. And as the education level of the Chinese people increases, people's concern for education and other social issues is also on the rise, so now more people are willing to go to watch educational films. In addition, films with broad content focusing on educational issues lack entertainment, and the main reason for the public to watch films is to be entertained and relaxed, so commercial films are more popular. Such a phenomenon may lead to the homogeneity of film genres, and the audience is tired of watching assembly-line-produced films. Moreover, this will cause the Chinese film market to fall into a slump and the aesthetic level of the audience to decline. Therefore, Chinese film should seek innovative changes to integrate social realities such as education with other genres such as comedy films. Producers should adopt an edutainment approach to give the comedy film a deeper meaning.

Although *CJ 7* is the most watched of the educational films listed. However, the number of people who chose *CJ 7* among several of Stephen Chow's famous films was low, and most of them chose comedy films such as *Hail The Judge* or *Kung Fu Hustle*. Though *CJ 7* is a sci-fi comedy film, it's largely about a father and his son getting along, and the father teaching his son. So, compared to Stephen Chow's other relaxing and absurd comedy films, *CJ 7* does not have a large audience. But film for the audience is not just a tool for fun, it carries the ideas and expectations of its creators. A good film can be thought-provoking and inspiring. The success of a film is measured not only by the box office but also by whether the content of the film is thought-provoking and captures the pain points of society. A comedy film that only talks about laughter is superficial. A comedy film should go from shallow to deep and use laughter as the surface but actually reflect the current social situation.

*Successor* has achieved 3.304 billion yuan at the box office in the two months since its release, which is undoubtedly another success for commercial cinema. The phrases that appear most frequently in the *Successor* review word are 'Shen Teng's humour', 'The film is interesting', 'The

plot is good', 'Chinese education' and so on. This shows the importance of casting and plotting for a film. The popularity of *Successor* is not only due to the tacit cooperation between Shen Teng and Ma Li but also because of the film's satirical view of Chinese education and parental manipulation of children's lives. Although Mahua Funage is just one of the participants in *Successor*, the main producer of *Successor* is Xihongshi Film. But Mahua Funage's publicity radiates to Xihongshi Film. This film is a transformation of Mahua Funage, refracting the social reality while maintaining the usual density of laughs. Even though the method of presenting and dealing with Chinese family and education issues in *Successor* is not mature, this attempt offers a new possibility for Chinese comedy films. Furthermore, a great cast is a huge plus for a film. But the creative team cannot just rely on familiar faces, they should actively cultivate the younger generation of actors and actresses to pass on Chinese comedy.

The most popular of the films contemporaneous with *Successor* is *A Place Called Silence*. This film is a crime thriller about a tragedy caused by school violence. Although these two films are of different genres, their contents reflect different social realities. This shows that audiences nowadays pay more attention to realistic films. Another film with a high number of viewers was *Despicable Me 4*, a comedy animated film. As can be seen from the genres of several high-grossing films this summer in China, the most popular films with audiences are comedies and realism. Moreover, in the questionnaire survey, most people supported the reflection of social realities in the film. So, combining these two forms of screenwriting is the next creative idea that film producers can focus on.

Digital gadgets are an indispensable item in today's society. The vast majority of people use social media on their mobile phones to keep up with social information including film information. People often get information about the film from social media to go to the cinema and post reviews and feelings on social media after watching the film. That is why film distributors should focus on the operation and management of the film's official accounts on social media. Compared to social media, film as a relatively independent and undisturbed vehicle may be able to better carry some social realities. If a film's initial buzz comes from the film's cast and plot setup, the film's ability to stay in the heat depends on whether audiences rate it as good or bad. For example, *Formed Police Unit*, which was released on May 1 this year, initially attracted a lot of viewers because of the star power of YiBo and Johnny Huang. However, due to the lack of script and acting skills and many other aspects, it only ended up with 511 million yuan at the box office. And it lost to *Twilight of the Warriors: Walled in*, which collected 684 million yuan in the same period of time. Therefore, the producer should keep an eye on and collect audience reactions after the release of the film. In order to accumulate experience and lessons for the preparation and production of the next film, so as to achieve its success.

## 6. Conclusion

This study takes Chinese audiences' reflections on the social realities in *Successor* as a starting point to examine content innovation and promotional channels for Chinese comedy films. According to the survey results, comedy films are still perennial winners in the Chinese film market. *Successor* was a commercial success by adding social realities about education and family to comedy. At the same time, the film has generated widespread public discussion on Chinese education and family because of its theme.

Most people in this study support the inclusion of mapping of social issues in comedy films. People are no longer satisfied with watching purely superficial comedy films but seek deeper and more meaningful film art. This phenomenon also proves that the public's level of artistic aesthetics has risen and that there are higher requirements and standards of judgment for films. This enhancement requires film producers to change the current homogeneity of commercial films, no longer downward

compatibility but strict standards for their own team to seek longer-term survival. Additionally, producers cannot just go for a lavish cast and give up polishing the script. Such behavior may lead to momentary success, but in the end, it will surely be defeated.

With social media being used much more frequently, the promotion of the film is almost exclusively on this. The majority of audiences are informed by social media. *Successor* has a total reach of 15.234 billion on Weibo, TikTok, Little Red Book and WeChat Channels. Also, audiences are mostly positive about what publishers are marketing on social media, so publishers should craft and innovate video or graphic content to attract more viewers. Producers should also take advantage of the audience's reaction to the film on social media to improve subsequent productions accordingly.

## References

- [1] Chen, X. and Zhang, M. (2024) *The Diversified Development of 'Reality-oriented' Cinema and the Imaginative Consumption of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture: An Analysis of Chinese Cinema Art in 2023*. *Film Reviews*.
- [2] Zhang, Y. and Yang, X. (2024) *Reality Writing - Hero Shaping - Genre Exploration - Report on Chinese Film Artistic Creation in 2023*. *Film Literature*, 4, 3-14.
- [3] Wang, Y. (2024) *Exploring the Aesthetic Transformation of Domestic Comedy Films--A Review of Research on Emerging Subgenres of Chinese Comedy Films in the 21st Century*. 3, 104.
- [4] Zhang, R. (2023) *From Subject Extraction to Going Beyond Joy and Sorrow: The Tragic Nature Of Contemporary Chinese Comedy Films*. *Contemporary Film*, 08, 61-66.
- [5] Zhao, X. and Li, M. (2022) *Too Cool To Kill: The Realistic Connotation And Significance Of Absurd Comedy Films*. *Film Reviews*, 15, 35-38.
- [6] Meng, Q. (2021) *Tragic Expression Strategies And Cultural Implications Of Current Domestic Comedy Films*. *Film Reviews*, 19, 19-24.
- [7] Yu, F. (2024) *"Successor": Comedy Production and Meaningful Expression in the Context of Consumer Culture*. *Cinematography*.
- [8] Bedenko, V. N. (2020) *Comedy film as a modern embodiment of the culture of laughter*. *Философия и культура*, 8, 1-10.
- [9] Costanzo, W. V. (2020) *When the world laughs: Film comedy East and West*. Oxford University Press.
- [10] Palmer, B. (2021) *Chaplin, keaton, and the marx brothers: film comedy as the collaboration of camera, narrative, and the viewer*. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

# ***Understanding and Treating Major Depressive Disorders among Adolescents***

**Yiting Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Dalian American International School, Dalian, China*

*a. angel2music@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The purpose of the paper is to review and introduce the issue of Major Depressive Disorders among teenagers, including its possible cause and treating methods. The paper also reviews and depicted several research and reviews done to date regard to the topic. Based on the findings and results of studies done to date, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is discovered as one of the most effective treatments in treating major depressive disorders nowadays. Other treatments nowadays are also depicted in the paper, each with different level of effectiveness, including Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) and Family Therapy (FT). Regardless of the actual treating methods after being diagnose, initial steps to took and possible prevention interventional programs are also depicted below. As more experiments and research expect to be done in the future, drawbacks of other treatments regarding to the topic will be revised, whereas various types of efficient methods could be free to choose from by patients.

**Keywords:** Major Depressive Disorders, Adolescents, Treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Therapy.

## **1. Introduction**

The adolescent and teenage developmental stage is of paramount psychological significance, as it represents a critical period that considerably impacts an individual's life trajectory [1][2]. Specifically, adolescents are very likely to experience various types of mental disorders while confronting stresses and pressures at a young age. In particular, Major Depressive Disorder is one type of mental or psychiatric disorders that most commonly emerge in adolescence. The symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder include persistently depressed mood, lack of interest in everyday activities, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fatigue, suicidal thoughts, sleep disturbance and etc. Based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (DSM-5), the diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorders requires an individual to exhibit five of the listed symptoms, which must include a depressed mood or lack of interest or pleasure leading to social or occupational impairment [3]. According to statistics, "As many as 8% of adolescents diagnosed with MDD have completed suicide by young adulthood, making suicide the second leading cause of death among adolescents 12-17 years of age" [4]. As shown from the factual data, a respectable percentage of teenagers are suffering from Major Depressive Disorders, and it truthfully leads to life threatening impacts and consequences if it is not well diagnosed and managed within adolescence. Regard to MDD in adolescence, factors that contribute to the psychological disorders in teenagers vary, including but



not limited to poor school performance, parental pressures, physical or emotional trauma, interpersonal challenges in later life and etc [4]. Not a single factor or cause will lead to Major Depressive Disorders among teenagers, various types of factors play a role in the causal relationship.

## **2. The Fields of Psychology that Associates with the Topic**

Developmental and Clinical Psychology are the 2 fields or domains of psychology that could relate to the topic of treatments and management methods of Major Depressive Disorders among teenagers in western countries. Clinical Psychology refers to a field of psychology concerned with evaluating and treating mental illness, abnormal behaviors, and psychiatric problems. And Major Depressive Disorder is defined as one serious type of psychiatric disorders or mental illness that need to be treated with therapies and treatments. Therefore, the topic of treating teenage MDD is evidently relevant to the domain of clinical psychology based on the definition of both MDD and clinical psychology. Furthermore, the topic of treating Major Depressive Disorders among teenagers seems to have less direct association with the field of developmental psychology comparing to its relevance with clinical psychology. However, the topic particularly concentrates on MDD among teenagers, as an important age stage as human develop throughout lifetime, most changes and difficulties can occur and experienced in young adulthood or adolescence. According to Erik Erikson's stage of development, the Adolescence stage from age 12-18 is where teens develop a sense of self and personal identity, the failure in this stage will lead to a weak sense of self and role confusion. Meanwhile, young adults from age 12-18 also confront new pressures and stress that they need to learn to deal with, which fail to cope with these challenges might lead to mental disorders such as Major Depressive Disorders [1]. Understanding the psychological changes and difficulties that adolescence experience will assist the finding of MDD treatments that specifically target young adulthood. As a result, learning developmental psychology also plays a crucial role in studying the topic of treatments and prevention of MDD targeting teenagers.

## **3. The Analysis and Clarification of the Keyword "Adolescent"**

The age range for the word "Adolescents" is varied among different papers and reviews. Based on the definition of World Health Organization (WHO), adolescents refer to anyone who is between the age of 10 to 19 [5]. Meanwhile, other resources may also suggest that 10-24 years is more in line with the growth of adolescents instead of the age 10-19 [6]. Specifying the age range of adolescents seems to be less significant and resourceful in discovering the most effective treatment of Major Depressive Disorders among them. However, the changes that could happen in nearly a decade can significantly impact adolescence's future life in certain degrees as they go through the process. The changes or maturation will occur not only physically, but also mentally, socially, morally, and etc., especially after puberty. It is the official transition from children to young adults, achieve sexual maturity and other physical changes. More importantly, emotions and mindsets are easily influenced during this period while it stabilized and established. Emotions will be affected by hormones, pressures from outside environment can easily cause mental or emotional break down of adolescents [7]. Due to the fact that this is the stage where significant changes occur in short term of time, specifying the treatments down to even shorter period of time could improve efficiency in a great level. A 10 year old girl has a complete different level of maturity and beliefs as a 19 years old girl. It would evidently to claim that the same treatment methods or process might not be applicable for both of them. Consequently, clarifying and specifying the certain age interval for adolescence would be a great initial process to ensure more accurate results of the efficacy of treatments.



## **4. Treatments and Management Strategies targeting Major Depressive Disorders among Adolescents**

### **4.1. Initial Actions and Management**

Based on the advises of the GLAD-PC guidelines, primary care physicians to educate families and patients about depressions and establish a treatment or management plan with certain goals associating school, home, and social functioning. For instance, the proposal could include objectives like being respectful to others, engaging in activities with supportive and encouraging peers, participating in family or friend's mealtime, and maintain academic accomplishments. Furthermore, a plan that ensure safety should also be considered, for the purpose of restricting the use of lethal means or dangerous items that could lead to suicidal actions. Presenting ways for patients in communicational purpose during crisis is in need, including but not limited to: offer emergency contact number if suicidal thoughts emerge, teaching parents to recognize signs and signals of self-harm or dangers to other, and listing coping strategies and management [8]. The listed management methods are more of preventing life threaten danger caused by the Major Depressive Disorder and trying to resolve the negative thoughts by integrate into normal and encouraging social activities. As the fact the severity of the symptoms of Major Depressive Disorders is especially high, these activities and preventions would not be enough to eradicate the injurious impact of the psychiatric disorder. In particular, losing interests in everyday activities, as one of the symptoms of Major Depressive Disorders, the severity of the disorder highly supports the difficulty in patients participating in the above activities from GLAD-PC Guidelines. As a result, more and various types of therapy and treatment method is necessary in managing Major Depressive Disorders.

### **4.2. Cognitive – Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**

To date, numbers of research and reviews have been done on understanding and treating Major Depressive Disorders in Adolescents. In the study done by The Treatment for Adolescents with Depression Study (TADS) Team in 2011, they have found that “88 of 189 adolescents (46.6%) who have recovered from depression, had recurrence within 63 months” [9]. Based on the findings of the study, the possibility of relapse and reoccurrence of Major Depressive Disorders in adolescents are respectively high, demonstrating the need of effective treatments to reduce the probability of relapse. Concentrating on the possible treatments and managements, as Méndez et al. suggested in their review, effective management involves a multimodal approach including psychoeducation, lifestyle interventions, psychotherapy, and medication. To be specific, main psychological treatments nowadays include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Family Therapy (FT), and Psychoanalytic (PT). Among these approaches, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been evidently proved as a well-established and effective method in treating Major Depressive Disorders in adolescents compared to various active and control conditions, for both group and individual format. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a type of psychological therapy based on treating and altering unhelpful mindsets (cognitive) and behaviors, and based on the principles that the individual with psychological issues can adopt more healthier coping strategies, thus alleviate the impact of the symptoms, and strengthen their overall effectiveness in life [10]. Strategies involving altering unhelpful cognitive patterns include but not limited to: Utilize problem solving ability to overcome challenging circumstances and establish stronger sense of confidence. And methods in altering unhelpful behavioral patterns include but not limited to: Learn to confront own fears and practicing role playing for possible challenging interactions with others. Not all strategies will be used by each therapist, creating a trustful and collaborative atmosphere with patients and to establish a useful strategies and understandings of the issue would be more effective [10]. Back in

1997, studies have done to show that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy demonstrate more efficacy in treating MDD among teenagers than Family Therapy and non-directive supportive therapy (NDST). Brent and colleagues have conducted an experiment to evaluate and comparing the effectiveness of CBT with FT and NDST. By the end of the treatment period, statistics have shown that only 17.1% of the adolescents in the CBT group continued to exhibit depressive symptoms, in contrast to 32.3% and 42.4% in the FT and NDST group [11]. Nowadays, CBT still demonstrate strong credibility in treating Major Depressive Disorders in adolescents, suggested in the review done by Korczak et al. [12]. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has made significant advancement and changes in treating the disorder in both research and clinical practices area. The effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is still being proven and revised into better versions in treating Major Depressive Disorder among teenagers through more research and studies.

#### **4.3. Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)**

Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) has also been demonstrated as a well-established efficient method compared to clinical monitoring and routine care, however, not for both group and individual format. Group Interpersonal Therapy may be as effective as CBT yet requires more sufficient evidence to prove its effect. Interpersonal Therapy is a type of psychological treatment that focuses on improving patients' interpersonal relationship and social functioning [13] [14]. This type of therapy was originally established to treat Major Depressive Disorders, yet it could be adopted in many other disorders nowadays [13]. Back in the late 1990s, Mufson and colleagues adapted the Interpersonal Therapy to treat Major Depressive Disorders among adolescents, concentrating in common teenager problems like conflicts with parents and peer pressures. And according to the results of their study, "75% of the IPT adolescents had recovered from depression, scoring 6 or less on the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression, whereas only 46% improved in the control condition" [9]. The effectiveness of Interpersonal Therapy targeting Major Depressive Disorders among teenagers have already been shown back in early years, further research also was done in proving its credibility comparing with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Based on the studies that Rosselló and Bernal have done, there were no significant differences in the effectiveness of Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Both showing great changes and advancements in treating teenagers who suffer from Major Depressive Disorders [8].

#### **4.4. Family Therapy (FT)**

Adolescents experiencing major depressive disorders frequently report serious problem in several areas of family functioning. In particular, as teenagers go through the sensitive and developmental stage of their life, the supports and communication among become very significant in influencing their mental health. Therefore, family therapy seems to be an important approach in improving the issue of teenagers suffer from major depressive disorders. Family Therapy can be defined as a psychological approach that concentrates in ameliorating the relationship and interactions between individuals and family members [15]. However, recent systematic reviews of family therapy alone or against other control methods for teen major depressive disorders still lack even until 2023 [15]. Considering the significant associations of family functioning with teen major depressive disorder, the review of Waraan et al. done in 2023 proves the effectiveness of family therapy with other treatment methods now been actively used. Based on the results of their review, the outcomes of family therapy and other treatments shows no significance variance or difference through their meta-analysis. The only differences occur in the effect of family therapy in adolescents who suffer from suicidal thoughts, it demonstrates how family therapy appears to have greater effect in treating these teens comparing with other methods. Parental factors take up a great amount of percentage in causing

major depressive disorders among teenagers, especially in countries in East Asia. The education within the family can substantially effect the develop of adolescents' mental health, influencing and shaping their internal values. Thus, contributing to the fact of how major depressive disorder might be caused by not only genetic factors, but also environmental factors. Family therapy is a psychotherapeutic approach being widely used in treating major depressive disorders among teens, yet still lack of evidence in proving its efficacy.

## 5. Prevention for Major Depressive Disorders among Teens

Not all articles have stated the possible prevention of major depressive disorders for teens to utilize, where the statement of no current prevention targeting this issue also appears. However, based on report of Institute of Medicine in 1994, there are 3 types of prevention interventions. And the review of Gladstone et al. done in 2012 explains the preventive interventions targeting major depressive disorder among adolescent [16]. Universal preventive intervention, as one type of preventive approach, concentrates in activities that faces normal community or public regardless of possible risks. Example of this type of prevention include establish a course that educate the negative risks of substance abuse to high schoolers. Another type refers to selective preventive intervention, target different community, as to people who are in great risk of the disorder. Indicated preventive program, as the last type of intervention, focus on people who demonstrates symptoms of the disorders [16]. The different between these 3 types of preventive intervention is their target audiences. Gladstone et al.'s review also depicted several successful examples of each type of preventive intervention programs. Starting with Universal prevention program, the evaluation of Spence and colleagues determined the success of the program targeting 1500 students in Queensland, Australia [17]. Problem Solving for Life (PSFL) refers to a 40- 50 minutes activities eight times a week, concentrating in lecturing the reconstruction of cognitive and problem-solving ability. The schools that were randomly assigned to implement the Problem Solving for Life (PSFL) intervention display decreasing symptoms of major depressive disorder comparing with schools who goes through regular condition, and some high risks students are also not categorized as high risks as well. However, the difference only appears in short amount of time, it starts to reduce after longer period of time, suggesting the significance to long term intervention. Moreover, for selective preventive intervention, Penn-Resiliency Program (PRP) refers to 90 – 120 minutes of teaching students about the association between their life events and their belief towards it. This program has been evaluated and proved to decrease symptoms of major depressive disorders of teens, yet no preventive effect was discovered for this program. The depicted studies and program were about decade ago, whereas even these preventive programs show how they can reduce symptoms of major depressive disorders for adolescents, not all display the function of preventing such disorder to appear or emerge. And based on the data of teens who suffer from major depressive disorders, the number of teens experiencing such pain are still increasing around the world. Thus, demonstrating the lack of effective preventive programs and interventions, in order to stop the pain from the root. Although there are many active treatment methods targeting the issue, yet it would still be an unhealthy memory for children to go through and trying to overcome. Therefore, not only more treatment methods will emerge in the future, the need of valid preventive interventions is also urgent and helpful regard the issue itself.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, as the topic became a common issue that the world concentrates on, more research and studies will be implemented, the number of effective treatments and diagnosis will be discovered. The number of teens who still suffer from major depressive disorders are still increasing and rising globally, they might encounter incomprehension and discrimination from people around them.

Adolescence is a very crucial stage of human throughout a course of lifetime, severe mood disorders like Major Depressive Disorders must be properly treated, to avoid future risks factors that could negatively impact their life. Occasionally, adults assume the discomforts psychologically are normal and common for young adults who just started facing new pressures and stress in their life. Nevertheless, psychological illness during this specific stage of life will not just impact this specific stage of life and assume to be overcome as the next stage of life approaches. Most often, the reason why Major Depressive Disorder still being the most prevalence mental disorders among teenagers in the current time, is how the issue has not been taken seriously as it should be. From successful prevention to active treatment methods, all steps need to be taken in solving the current issue. Proper and appropriate guidelines in diagnosing and treating MDD among teenagers should be put into more real-world practices and collectively learn from each case.

## References

- [1] Bodicherla, K. P., Shah, K., Singh, R., Arinze, N. C., & Chaudhari, G. (2021). *School-Based approaches to prevent Depression in Adolescents*. *Cureus*. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.13443>
- [2] Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people. (2009). In *National Academies Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.17226/12480>
- [3] Bains, N., & Abdijadid, S. (2023, April 10). *Major depressive disorder*. *StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559078/>
- [4] Mullen, S. (2018). *Major depressive disorder in children and adolescents*. *Mental Health Clinician*, 8(6), 275–283. <https://doi.org/10.9740/mhc.2018.11.275>
- [5] Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2024, September 11). *Adolescence | Definition, Characteristics, & Stages*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/adolescence>
- [6] Sawyer, S. M., Azzopardi, P. S., Wickremarathne, D., & Patton, G. C. (2018). *The age of adolescence*. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 2(3), 223–228. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642\(18\)30022-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(18)30022-1)
- [7] Professional, C. C. M. (2024, September 5). *Puberty*. *Cleveland Clinic*. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/puberty>
- [8] Selph, S. S., & McDonagh, M. S. (2019, November 15). *Depression in Children and Adolescents: Evaluation and treatment*. *AAFP*. <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2019/1115/p609.html#:~:text=The%202005%20to%202014%20National%20Surveys%20on%20Drug,are%20not%20receiving%20needed%20care%20for%20depression.%201>
- [9] Méndez, J., Sánchez-Hernández, Ó., Garber, J., Espada, J. P., & Orgilés, M. (2021). *Psychological Treatments for Depression in Adolescents: more than three decades later*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(9), 4600. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094600>
- [10] *What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?* (2017, July 31). <https://www.apa.org>. <https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral>
- [11] Brent, D. A. (1997). *A Clinical psychotherapy trial for adolescent depression comparing cognitive, family, and supportive therapy*. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 54(9), 877. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.1997.01830210125017>
- [12] J. Korczak, D., Westwel Roper, C., & Sassi, R. (2023, May 29). *Diagnosis and management of depression in adolescents*. *CMAJ*. Retrieved September 16, 2024, from <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/195/21/E739>
- [13] *Interpersonal Psychotherapy*. (2022, December 28). *Psychology Today*. Retrieved September 16, 2024, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/interpersonal-psychotherapy>
- [14] Silva, S. (2021, June 10). *All about Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) for Depression and Relationships*. *Psych Central*. <https://psychcentral.com/lib/interpersonal-therapy-ipt#ipt-therapy>
- [15] Waraen, L., Siqveland, J., Hanssen-Bauer, K., Czjakowski, N. O., Axelsdóttir, B., Mehlum, L., & Aalberg, M. (2022). *Family therapy for adolescents with depression and suicidal ideation: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 28(2), 831–849. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13591045221125005>
- [16] Gladstone, T. R. G., Beardslee, W. R., & O'Connor, E. E. (2011). *The prevention of adolescent Depression*. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 34(1), 35–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2010.11.015>
- [17] Spence, S. H., Sheffield, J. K., & Donovan, C. L. (2005). *Long-Term outcome of a School-Based, Universal Approach to Prevention of Depression in Adolescents*. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(1), 160–167. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006x.73.1.160>

# *Gender Inequality in China's Education System*

Xinze Shang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, Manchester, M13 9PL, United Kingdom*

*a. xinze.shang@student.manchester.ac.uk*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** This study discusses the persistent issue of gender inequality in education within the context of Chinese society, where traditional gender roles have been deeply influenced by Confucianism. Historically, the Confucian emphasis on male dominance and female submissiveness has led to significant gender disparities, particularly in the realm of education. Despite significant progress over the years, women in China still encounter disparities regarding educational opportunities and resources. The essay focuses on understanding the historical and contemporary factors contributing to this educational inequality and assessing the severity of the problem in the current context. The study utilizes a combination of literature analysis and case studies to explore the underlying causes of gender inequality in education. Literature analysis helps in reviewing existing research, case studies provide detailed insights into specific instances of educational inequality, highlighting how these disparities reflect in real-world settings. This research draws data from academic publications, historical records, and educational statistics. The findings show that despite policy reforms and efforts to promote gender equality, deep-rooted cultural beliefs and structural barriers continue to impede women's access to equal educational opportunities. This study concludes that achieving gender equality in education requires a multifaceted approach, including policy interventions, cultural shifts, and targeted support for disadvantaged groups. These findings offer practical recommendations for policymakers and educators.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, education, Urban-rural gap, Cultural biases, Confucianism.

## **1. Introduction**

In traditional Chinese society, gender roles were deeply influenced by Confucianism, which emphasized the dominance of men and the submissiveness of women [1]. Gender differences have consistently posed challenges within China's educational environment from the past to the present, and women frequently find themselves at a disadvantage regarding access to educational opportunities and resources. Examining the educational disparities experienced by Chinese women is essential for enhancing their social status and fostering gender equality within Chinese society. This study aims to explore the historical and contemporary factors that have led to gender inequality in education in China and the occurrence of this phenomenon, and to evaluate the severity of the problem. The main goal is to identify the core issues and offer solutions to promote gender equality in education. This study will use methods such as literature analysis and case studies to fully understand this problem and provide effective and practical suggestions for policy and practice.



## 2. The Education Status of Chinese Women

Education is not only a basic right of residents, but also a key factor in the economic development of any society. In China, despite significant progress in increasing access to education, gender gaps still exist, especially in some rural areas. These gaps are reflected in various aspects, including low female enrollment rates, high female dropout rates, and significantly less basic and higher education for women than for men.

Gender disparity in education is mainly due to the urban-rural gap. Studies have shown that girls in rural areas, especially in the northwest, have lower enrollment rates than boys and are more likely to drop out of school at an early age. In some regions, such as Gansu, the dropout rate for junior high school girls reaches as high as 50%, which indicates that a significant number of girls are unable to complete their junior high school education [2]. This trend is caused by a variety of factors, including economic constraints, low quality of education, and deep-rooted cultural biases that favor boys over girls.

In the case of urban-rural differences, the difference in financial situations plays an important role. In poorer areas, families often cannot afford to send all their children to school. When forced to make a choice, they will prioritize boys' education over girls. In rural areas, it is common to raise multiple children in a poor family. In large families with more rare resources, girls' education is more likely to be ignored. Although primary education is free of charge in China, other related expenses, such as books and uniforms, are still a financial burden for these families. Therefore, girls are more likely to be left at home to help with housework or be sent to work to supply the family income [2].

The challenges faced by rural girls are not limited to basic education. Even if they find ways to overcome these barriers and complete primary education, their chances of getting higher education are significantly lower than those of boys. This is largely due to economic pressures and cultural norms that devalue female education. Additionally, those entering higher education often face gender bias in their choices of study and future career opportunities. Women are severely underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. This phenomenon arises not solely from individual choices, but also reflects the influence of gendered expectations that have been present since childhood.

For example, women studying STEM fields often lack encouragement from educators and colleagues, which can undermine their self-confidence and make them hesitant about furthering their education or pursuing related careers. Research shows that female students in male-dominated subjects may face discrimination and a lack of tutor support. These factors are critical for academic success and career advancement. This environment may lead to higher dropout rates among women, as they may feel isolated or unwelcome and lose the confidence to continue studying. Furthermore, as Hill, Corbett, and St. Rose explain that gender stereotypes in society and gender bias in academic environments have exacerbated the inequality of women in STEM fields [3]. Furthermore, women who enter these fields often experience a "leaky pipeline," where the number of women decreases as they advance academically and professionally [4]. While the number of women earning undergraduate degrees in STEM has increased, very few women hold lifelong professorships or leadership roles in these fields. Society's expectations of family and caregiving responsibilities often weigh more heavily on women, further increased their difficulties in career advancement. In addition, women's work in academia is often underrecognized, with studies showing that their research is cited less frequently than that of their male counterparts. This lack of visibility can hinder their career advancement and widen the gender gap in leadership positions in academic institutions. The cumulative effect of these barriers makes it difficult for women to reach the upper rungs of their academic and professional careers in STEM fields, further exacerbating the vicious cycle of gender inequality [5].



Girls' education in rural China, especially in the northwest, is hampered by a complex interaction of economic, cultural and systemic factors. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that not only provide financial support but also work to change deep-rooted cultural attitudes. Ensuring equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of gender, is essential for the sustainable development of society.

### **3. Causes of Educational Inequality**

#### **3.1. Historical and Cultural Roots of Gender Inequality in Education**

China's educational inequality, especially gender-based inequality, is deeply rooted in socio-cultural factors that have evolved over centuries. The traditional cultural concept of "male superiority and female inferiority," which originated from Confucianism, has specified gender roles in both the family and society, positioning women in a subordinate role. Men were seen as the primary contributors to society, while women were relegated to roles within the family, preventing their visibility in public life. Confucian scholars like Confucius emphasized this idea, which was deeply embedded in Chinese society and even incorporated into legal practices.

This cultural view directly influenced how educational resources were allocated within the family. Boys were viewed as the primary heirs and family successors, receiving the most educational opportunities. Girls, on the other hand, were seen as temporary members of their families who would marry into another household. As a result, their education was often neglected, and they were taught domestic skills such as cooking and child-rearing, rather than receiving opportunities to develop themselves or achieve economic independence.

#### **3.2. Persistence of Educational Inequality in Contemporary China**

In contemporary Chinese society, the impact of these traditional concepts remains significant. Rural areas, in particular, still cling to the idea of favoring boys over girls in education. Families in these regions often invest more in boys' education and ignore girls' educational needs. Although contemporary Chinese legislation, including the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, seeks to promote gender equality, vestiges of traditional cultural norms persist as obstacles to achieving meaningful progress.

Despite the existence of legal protections, a cultural preference for sons remains prevalent, especially in underdeveloped areas, leading to a disparity in educational resources allocated to girls. While urban areas have seen more progress due to economic development, gender inequality in education is still observable, particularly in rural regions where traditional values hold more sway.

Even with legal measures in place to promote gender equality in education, cultural resistance continues to hinder progress. This observation is particularly pertinent in rural regions, where conventional beliefs regarding gender roles continue to be deeply ingrained.

#### **3.3. Consequences of Gender-Based Educational Inequality**

Gender inequality in education has far-reaching consequences for both individual women and society. Limited educational opportunities restrict women's career choices and development. In societies where women have fewer opportunities for education, they are often confined to low-paying, unstable jobs in the informal sector, such as domestic work. This not only affects their income and economic independence but also exacerbates cycles of poverty. King and Hill contend that education serves as a crucial element in empowering women to transcend traditional roles, thereby facilitating their access to a broader range of diverse and higher-status employment opportunities.

Educational inequality also negatively impacts women's confidence and self-identity. Education is not just a tool for economic advancement; it is essential for personal empowerment and the development of self-worth. Women who are deprived of educational opportunities often experience lower self-esteem, which can hinder their ability to assert themselves in both personal and professional environments. This lack of confidence reinforces gender disparities and perpetuates existing social hierarchies.

The impact of gender-based educational inequality extends beyond individual women, affecting the entire society. Gender differences in education limit the overall growth potential of a country's economy. King and Hill emphasize that educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic productivity. When a large segment of the population is undereducated, the labor market experiences a deficiency in skilled workers, which impedes economic growth. Moreover, educated women tend to have fewer and healthier children and invest more in their children's education, contributing to better outcomes for future generations.

Gender-based educational inequality not only limits women's economic opportunities and self-empowerment but also imposes broader costs on society, including reduced economic productivity and intergenerational effects on health and education.

### **3.4. Breaking the Cycle: The Need for Policy and Attitudinal Shifts**

Achieving genuine gender equality in education requires not only continued policy formulation but also effective implementation. Strengthening the enforcement of laws promoting gender equality is crucial. In particular, rural areas need targeted policies to ensure girls receive the same educational opportunities as boys.

Beyond policy considerations, it is essential to address the evolving cultural attitudes toward women's education. Educational reforms must address cultural biases, promoting awareness of the value of educating girls, particularly in rural areas. Changing deep-rooted beliefs about gender roles requires widespread societal efforts, including media campaigns and educational programs that challenge the traditional view of women's roles.

Global organizations and NGOs play a pivotal role in advocating for gender equality in education. By providing resources and technical support, these organizations can aid China in overcoming the cultural and institutional obstacles that hinder the attainment of gender parity in education.

Breaking the cycle of gender inequality in education requires a comprehensive approach, including policy reforms, cultural shifts, and international support. Only through combined efforts can China close the gender gap in education and ensure equal opportunities for future generations.

## **4. Strategies to Improve Educational Inequality**

One of the most important steps to address educational inequality is to develop and strengthen policies that promote gender equality in education. Governments should prioritize the development of clear and comprehensive education policies aimed at reducing gender gaps. These policies should not only provide for equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, but also establish clear and reasonable strategies for implementation and monitoring of gender equality within schools.

In addition, it is also imperative to enhance government investment in women's education, especially in rural areas. Rural areas frequently lack adequate educational infrastructure and resources, which disproportionately affects girls. Governments should allocate increased funding to improve schools and provide scholarships for girls, thereby expanding educational opportunities. Such targeted investments are essential for fostering an equitable educational environment and ensuring that rural girls have access to the same opportunities as their urban counterparts.

Furthermore, it is vital to strengthen gender equality training for educators. Teachers serve as front-line workers in the education system, and their attitudes and behaviors significantly influence students' perceptions of gender roles. By equipping teachers with the skills to identify and challenge gender stereotypes, they can more effectively support the development of all students, regardless of gender.

Except the education system, broader social and cultural changes are necessary to support educational equality. Promoting social recognition and support for women's right to education plays an important role. In many communities, especially in rural areas, entrenched cultural norms and biases continue to devalue women's education. Engaging local leaders can facilitate a transformation in these attitudes and build broader support for girls' education. These efforts are critical to creating an environment that encourages and supports girls' education. In addition, efforts must be made to change gender biases within families and communities. The family is the first social institution where children learn about gender roles. It is vital to encourage parents to assign equal importance to their daughters' education as they do to that of their sons.

In conclusion, tackling educational inequalities, especially those related to gender, necessitates a multifaceted approach that includes policy reforms, changes in the education system, and broader social and cultural shifts. As Kabeer critically analyzes, achieving gender equality in education and women's empowerment is not only about access to education, but also helps to improve inequalities in society [6]. By adopting these strategies, societies can progress towards the attainment of genuine educational equality, thereby ensuring that all individuals, irrespective of gender, have the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examines persistent gender inequalities in education in China, a society deeply influenced by Confucian cultural norms. Despite advances in educational opportunities, Chinese women, especially those in rural areas, continue to face significant barriers due to traditional attitudes, economic disparities, and systemic biases. These factors limit women's career opportunities, undermine their self-confidence, and hinder broader social and economic development.

Key findings suggest that cultural preferences for male education and gender bias in academic settings are central to these inequalities. The study also highlights the importance of reforms such as comprehensive policy reforms and increased investment in rural education to promote gender equality.

However, this study also has limitations. While it offers a broad overview, it lacks an in-depth analysis of specific regions and does not consider the role of non-formal education. Future research should focus on these areas and the long-term impact of education reforms to develop more targeted strategies to achieve true educational equality in China.

## References

- [1] Shang, X.J., Li, Y.J. (2008) *On the Legal Expression of the Concept of "Men are Superior and Women are Inferior" in Ancient China, Legal system and Society*, 592:254-256
- [2] Wang, Y.X, Gao, J.H. (2009) *Reasons of Low Enrollment Rate of Rural Girls in Northwest China, Inner Mongolia Agricultural Science and Technology*, 06:20-22
- [3] Hill, C., Corbett, C., & St Rose, A. (2010). *Why so few? Women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. American Association of University Women. 1111 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.*
- [4] Clark Blickenstaff\*, J. (2005). *Women and science careers: leaky pipeline or gender filter?.* *Gender and education*, 17(4), 369-386.
- [5] Cao, W. (2022). *Improvement of Legislation System of Protecting Women's Rights and Interests in China-Taking the Amendment of the Law of the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests as an Opportunity.* *J. Hum. Rts.*, 21, 553.

- [6] Kabeer, N. (2005). *Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1*. *Gender & development*, 13(1), 13-24.

# *Research on Lacan's Theory of Desire*

Xiongzhen Teng<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Seaver College, Pepperdine University, 24255 Pacific Coast Highway Malibu, CA 90263, USA

a. Xiongzhen.teng@pepperdine.edu

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** Jacques Lacan was, inarguably one of the most important psychoanalysts to live during the 20Th Century and his ideas surely have reverberated throughout Psychology as well as Philosophy and Literature. Lacan thought of desire as being at the center of his academic work and even went on to say that "Desire is man's essence". This theory becomes especially important in postmodern society, where longing is a key element of consumer culture. Hailing from France, Jacques Lacan was born in 1901. He entered medical school and then psychiatry, after which he pursued a career as psychoanalyst. Lacan was largely influenced by Freud, but he also significantly re-read the theory of him through linguistic and structural interpretations. Lacan, who said that the human unconscious is structured like a language and desire leaves itself marks not only in our minds but also reproductions of culture and clinking symbols. According to Lacan, desire is the primary originating impulse from which all subsequent subjects are constructed; it's the motivational force of what runs a subject. Lacan also argues that like the Libido in Freud, desire is what motivates human behaviour and development of psyche.

**Keywords:** Lacan , Desire, Ego.

## 1. Introduction

Jacques Lacan's theory of desire occupies an important position in the field of psychoanalysis, especially his discussion of subject identity and desire formation is particularly profound. In the section on "The Occurrence of Lacan's Theory of Desire," Lacan suggests that the human subject's consciousness undergoes three key phases: the real world, the mirroring phase, and the symbolic phase. There, in addition to those details could obtain some idea of what the desire might then originate from and how it would further grasp its subject along with different phases that interweave or intersect through which subjects are composed. The mirror stage is one of the fundamental stages in the construction of self and desire for a Lacanian subject. However, as opposed to Freud who sees desire just another name for suffering with a result that is less than predictive — Lacan looks upon it as something of higher psycho/philosophical order. He differentiates desire as Need, Demand and Desire. These include need (foods and water). The need — which is the form a fundamentally linguistic demand assumes, simply because it is necessarily made to be heard by someone else and articulated following "It", what Lacan refers to as The Other in one of its constitutive aspects for human subjectivity (its aspect of pure language)—is nothing other than this material situation or state that must answer towards another's love. Desire is a more specific need and requirements beyond the representation of an infinite subject's inner pursuit. [1]

## 2. Three Stages of Lacan Theory

### 2.1. Mirror stage and Self

The first stage in Lacan's theory is the realm of the real, the place where people are when they are born, or during the happiness of their life's best moments, or even in their mother's womb. At this stage, there is no clearly defined sense of self. An individual is one with the outside world that is the other, as it was written above, and the subject has not yet learned to divide the I-oneself and the other. As Lacan puts it, in the realm of the real the subject is nothing else but a natural body in a wild, impulsive, and complete obscurantist state. In the realm of the real, the infant is fully merged with its mother. They don't not know that the mother is a separate personality, and even the breast of his mother is considered by the infant as part of its own body. The subject at this stage is ordinary and natural, their needs and desires are immediate and unformatted. The mirror stage is the second key stage in Lacanian theory and usually takes place when the infant is 6 months old. This stage concerns the formation of human self-consciousness regarding external images. Lacan says, "the infant calls an external image of himself to recognize this image in the mirror." Initially, the infant gets to know the image in the mirror regarding his self-image. It is not only "a revealing of an incomplete picture", but also the first ever beginning of forming its subject. In the mirror stage, a child starts to realize that they are disunited with the mother. The infant starts to realize what the image in the mirror is with it belonging to the infant's body, but it is not his entire body. The whole identification process is developed with a series of complex psychological specifics as well as with the manner of understanding a fragmented self through a view of the outside image. According to Lacan, this identification with the image in the mirror is actually a kind of "false self-error", that is, the subject takes the false image in the mirror as the real self, thus beginning the first step of the subject's self-identification. The false self-identification apparent in the mirror stage is not limited solely to the identification with the body image. The experience of intimacy with the mother comes to characterize both boys and girls in the mirror stage and accounts for a gradual realization of gender differences. At the same time, Lacan comments that "everywhere and always [in this stage], misrecognition is at the root of the dialectic of identification". Evidently, this remark implies that the process of identification involves a good deal of illusion. As such, it is an illusion to think that the subject effectively creates a unified self by identifying with the other through an image.[2]

The symbolic phase, the third phase in Lacanian theory, in which the subject enters the symbolic systems of language and culture in which he understands and expresses his or her desire. In the Symbolic Phase, the subject's process of identification changes from the visual to the linguistic and is able to construct a self through the relationship of the able and the referent. On top of everything being the bearing instrument of the symbol, language determines the position of the subject and the role of the able reference. It is the existence of language that determines the subject's figural position and role within nature and allows the subject to not be out of place in the family, and culture. In the symbolic period, the subject's expression of desires and the development of a self-identity was determined by the Big Other. The Big Other is the social-cultural order, patriarchy, the order of language, etc., and is the process of alienation in the substitution of the subject's desires. However, through the interaction with the big other, the subject develops a self-identity and the process of desire. This shows the development and interaction of the mirror staged subject within a child and the symbolic stage. The mirror stage functions not only as a process of Libido energy betting, but also involves the formation of the subject's identity and narcissistic identification. During this stage, the infant's self-identity is formed through external images and is complemented by the interaction of the self and the Other. According to Lacan, the process of identification indicates the objective aggressiveness of the subject, i.e. from the moment of narcissistic identification within the subject



there already exists, “the inner malignant substance”, pushes him, her to be identified in another and in the same process identification triggers a reaction of taboo and flight. [3]

Lacan also gives a vivid illustration of the extreme manifestation of this aggressiveness by analyzing the story of Oedipus. It turns out that the subject is only instinctively responding to the desire for self-preservation, while on the other hand, this process of identifying is already a repressive mechanism. It is the repressive mechanism that leads to an increase in desire, to its logical extreme, that alienated through war. For example, Lacan’s mirror stage theory is particularly relevant in modern society. In today’s advanced media society, the subject and expression of desire are identified through media. In other words, the identification of the person in today’s communication society is a far more complex social relationship. In the mirror stage, the subject identifies not only with his or her own psychological level of identification, but also with social interaction and cultural expression. People can thus see that Lacan’s theory shows how the lack and cracks within the subject affect human desire and identification, and these cracks in turn give us an important perspective in understanding modern culture and social structure. Lacan shows through the mirror stage the complex task of how the subject’s identity and desire become “ I, ” as well as the fact that the process of identification causes these subjects to be delusional and misunderstood about their image.

It is necessary to note that in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, language is assigned a key position which is believed to play a decisive role in the construction and development of the subject. Lacan notes that by entering into dialogue, the individual ultimately receives and then internalizes socio-cultural rules and laws. “Completing the inauguration of the function of speech, subordinated to the biological development of the child by the instrumental reality of the world of objects around it, the individual arouses in this function the subject that will shape the individual’s reality”. First, it should be noted that language is seen here as a means of communication. On the other hand, language is a way in which an individual can enter the symbolic realm. There is a certain system comprising language and culture. It is at this stage that the individual begins to interpret the world. Thus, the use of language shapes the inner world of the subject. During this stage, it is important that language establishes a connection between the subject and reality. In other words, a person, by learning a system of rules and meanings between the objects of the world understood by them and entering the symbolic system using language, actually separates from their initial system of perceptions and connections.

Lacan uses Fort/Da game to illustrate how language is affecting the psyche of a child. Sigmund Freud's name for a game played by his 18-month-old grandson involving a cotton reel which the boy would repeatedly throw out of his cot, exclaiming ‘Oo’ as he did so, forcing his mother to retrieve it for him, at which he would utter an appreciative ‘Ah’. Freud interpreted these noises as babyish approximations of ‘*fort*’, meaning ‘gone’, and ‘*da*’, meaning ‘there’.[4] According to Freud, his grandson played self-invented Fort/Da game on the spool when his daughter was not nearby. He interpreted the child’s resentment of the mother’s absence in this game. But for Lacan, it is important to see in this game two acts of speech actually. They include “O” in the first case (“O” – the mother departed) and “da” in the second case. A child always thinks that his mother, who left, will be back. Both the emergence of language and the reality of language production are reflected in this game. Instead, the fact that the reality of language generation is reflected in the game means the separation of the language process from the subject’s practical experience. Thus, the subject uses the act of symbolization to enter the reality of symbols, while the construction of subjectivity proceeds through the generation of language. It should be added, however, that in the analyzed case, language is not a medium of the act of symbolization. It should be considered here that language is an instrument for the construction of subjectivity.

## 2.2. The unconscious in relation to language

Furthermore, Lacan advanced Freud's theory of unconsciousness, saying that the wordpress to the unconscious and language is a close one. Freud thought that the unconscious mind is the area of the mind where our desires and urges have been suppressed. Those suppressed desires somehow manifest themselves as dreams, slips of the tongue, and so forth. However, through the whole edifice of structuralist linguistics, it turned out that the operation of the unconscious is susceptible to the same rules as the metaphors that look inevitable in their ability to turn a thing into another or to create an analogy and the metonymies of language which designate one thing by another. Freud's own definition was that the unconscious is structured like a language, by which he meant that it is created not by the subject but by the outside order of the language that bequeaths to him outlets of self-expression. Thus, it is Lacan's statement that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other." Even our unconscious desires are, in other words, organized by the linguistic system that Lacan terms the symbolic order or "the big Other." [5] The unconscious is the product of something else, namely, the ordered system of signs and symbols.

Lacan explicates the relationship between the unconscious and language on the basis of two propositions: one, "the unconscious is structured like language" and second, that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Big Other". In the first proposition, viewing the two split domains – the energetic and the referential in Saussure's linguistic formulas through a cycle of re-writing. Lacan argues that the unconscious operates by rules similar to the two mechanisms of language – metaphorical and metonymic. Metaphor tends to create new meanings by placing able referents, whereas, on the other hand, the referents are placed in chains of the able in metonymy and the unconscious desires are expressed in both ways. In the second proposition, influenced by structural anthropology, Lacan views the symbolic systems which form the socio-cultural structures as constitutive of subjectivity. Furthermore, the unconscious pierces the confined embodied discursive consciousness of the subject and hence belongs to an important part of its discourse, yet, it cannot be under the control of the subject's consciousness. Accordingly, When the functioning of the linguistic structure allows me to communicate an idea, it is the linguistic structure, the symbolic order, the Other or the unconscious, which allows me to communicate the idea, and my presence or existence as a speaking subject is negated. [6]

Freud argues that the human psyche goes through two internal and external differentiations dominated by pleasure. In the first, the subject tends to associate itself with as an object of pleasure and to view the external world as an object not related to pleasure. In the second, people internalize the pleasure and project the unpleasantness of unhappiness on the external objects, in order to stay congruent to the pleasure. Lacan developed this theory further and proposed that the unconscious is not a naturally differentiated agency, but created by the external linguistic/symbolic systems. He relied on structuralist linguistics and demonstrated that the rules governing the operation of representations in the unconscious are the same that govern the rules of metaphor and metonymy all languages possess. [7] Lacan also made a significant contribution by arguing that the mother's desire is an important factor in the formation of the unconscious. The mother satisfies the needs of the individual through language and the symbolic, but this satisfaction always remains incomplete and leaves the desire open. So, this satisfaction and the incompleteness are the propellant for the beginning of the child's desire. According to Lacan, it is the mother's desire that initiates the child's desire in the name of the "biological necessity". So, Lacan argues that the formation of the unconscious has nothing to do with biology, but is a creation of language and symbolic systems. This turn in Lacan's theory made the psychoanalysis closer to humanities/social sciences away from limiting biologism and underscored the determinative role of sociocultural elements in the construction of the

psychological. So, in this way, Lacan furthered his understanding of the unconscious, and gave a broader application and theoretical depth to psychoanalysis.

### 3. Desire and others

At the crossroads of linguistics and psychoanalysis, Lacan replays Saussure's theory of language, revealing the complex mechanisms by which language works through the concepts of permutation and metaphor. He complements these linguistic concepts with Freud's psychoanalytic theories to model the expression of desire. The sketch will be divided into three attempts: Lacanian waves of Saussure, the rules by which language is spoken, and the relationship between metaphor and condensation, permutation and displacement. Saussurean linguistic theories represent the linguistic sign as a bivalent structure of signifier and signified, that is, the sound image associated with it. Say to the slave, a sound that is called a slave. According to Saussure, the signifier is a sound image or writing; the sign is what is referred to as an apple. The author reminds us that Saussure also drew attention to the fact that the relationship between the sound image and the element it denotes is unfounded and agreed upon by physical groups. That is, the sound of the word tree will be drawn from the plant not naturally. There will be a contract of a social community. [8]

Lacan built on Saussure and redefined the relation between the energetic and the referential. He claims that the relation between the energetic and the referential is not simply parallel or direct, but repressive. As a result, People cannot identify what will be constructed by reference. Therefore, the referential is informed by the action of the energetic reference. The first aspect is the "repressive wall" Lacan, which is essentially a barrier between the energetic and the referential. The function of the barrier is two-fold: the repression of the referential by the energetic and the resistance of the unconscious of the subject toward the conscious and the onslaught of the referential. According to Lacan, the network of energetic reference is infinite and ever-changing; however, it is only through this network that People can grasp the referent in the unconscious.

Lacan's thesis about meaning is that meaning is generated only when the energy refers to its object. Lacan does not assert that the referential actualizes the referent: the notion that the relationship is always based on the actual is implausible. Instead, he suggests that the flow and substitution of the energetic referents are the exteriorization of the unconscious. In the reading of Freud's interpretation of dreams, Lacan concludes that the Ideas of the unconscious are expressed through a chain of energetic referents, and the expression is always indirect. This theory is decidedly not Saussurian, as it suggests that the referential is informed by the action of the energetic reference.

In linguistic operations, commutative metaphors and metaphors are two basic mechanisms that correspond to two different ways of symbol manipulation. Metonymy is a symbol-to-symbol transfer of meaning based on contiguity or association between two symbols. For example, 'White House' refers to 'U.S. government' and 'red scarf' refers to 'elementary school students'. The center of metonymy is substitution, that is, the relationship between the two symbols is such that one is exchanged for the other. In Lacan's theory, metonymy corresponds to the mechanism of displacement in the unconscious. Displacement is the expression of an implicit in a dream by a shift or transformation, e.g., an implicit thought that is not directly related to itself and therefore does not turn into it, is expressed in something else. Metaphor is the transfer of meaning to a word closer to another word in both similarity and dissimilarity. Metaphor is the use of a word or expression to refer to another object or concept with which it is similar in properties and characteristics. For example, a "peony flower" may refer to "richness," referring to the similarity of a peony flower to richness. Metaphors are used in Lacanian language, and metaphor in Lacan's theory corresponds to the mechanism of condensation in the unconscious. Condensation is a process where several unconscious contents are compressed into one and formed a symbolic imagination in the dream images. For example, another latent image in one dream image is an image expressing, for simplicity's sake, many

various and complex emotions and memories that confluence and condense into one simple image where the expression is an event or a photo.

According to Lacan, both commutative metaphors and metaphors are not only the mechanism of language but also an essential way for the unconscious. Wishes and longing in the unconscious are often expressed through permutation and metaphor. The permutation and metaphor are subtle and rhetorical. On the one hand, the object of desire is constantly changing in permutation, which leads to a situation that can never be satisfied. On the other hand, metaphor expresses deeper desires by gracefully avoiding social taboos. Lacan makes use of Freud's psychoanalytic theory and explores the links between metaphor and condensation and between permutation and displacement. The process of metaphor is to replace one already used for reference with another, accompanied by the creation and change of meaning. Freud believed that the mechanism of condensation in the dream is that it is the combination of multiple unconscious objects into one significant symbolic phenomenon with sufficient intensity in the dream. Consider the following dream: In an image, there are extremely numb feelings that do not consciously feel ashamed. A dream about this numb event indicates that there may be a shocking catastrophe. A sophisticated and extremely elusive device is a trap that ensures the survival of the animal and the trapper. There are many complex emotions and memories hidden in the dream, but only such a clear and very simple numb thing and related images and episodes can substitute for it. The process of metaphor is very similar to the mechanism of condensation. It can be condensed in one or several objects in the unconscious into an image with hints and dreams, and metaphor creates a brand-new meaning. In condensation, there is a place for metonymy, which allows the already used reference to the object of desire to bypass social foreshadowing and act as a surrogate. Permutation is substitution and transfer through proximity between symbols. The transposition occurs when the unconscious content is expressed in the dream through transfer or transformation. Freud mentions that the mechanism of transposition in the dream is to replace and transform important emotions and thoughts into either a second or irrelevant thing. There are also such dreams: The wide-slapped sinkable mud is nearly impossible to clean, and even then it is not filthy, but slightly dirtied. In the dream about the slightly dirty and mud-stained front door, there are emotions about this box where more at ease than at home, and not have to take off my dirty shoes when I go in, only clean my feet. The clean front door wipe off every week, externality to people. The dreaming front door is an expression of the door where more relaxed and at ease. Disgusting of lint and dirt is an internal thing that don't want anyone to know. The slight dirt may come across to others. The clean lint contains the desperateness and air. The process of transposition is very similar to the mechanism of displacement. It is the displacement of one specific reference to another. In the dream, a dreamer who dreams of riding a bicycle down the street and has a dog chasing him and noticing the heel of his shoes actually declares his love of the woman he has chosen. In other words, the dreamer's subconscious transfers his emotions and thoughts to the dog and the old ladies through transposition and displacement.

#### 4. Conclusion

According to Lacan, desire can never be satisfied because it always refers to some type of lack. Language and other cultural symbols enable people to represent their desire, but they can never fulfill the emptiness. In postmodern society, consumption is not a primary mode of satisfying needs but an important way to express desire and construct identity. This is because goods and services in consumer culture do not only have use value but also another type of value called symbolic meaning. As such, they give addition pleasure because they refer to the signified, which is why modern consumer goods such as Coca-Cola 's taste involves the determinant that you are drinking soda . This type of pleasure goes beyond the taste of the products into a symbol itself. This means that the lack represented by the object is unsatisfied. Lacan's theory of desire is effectively represented in

postmodern society. In modern society, consumption is used a mode of expression, and shopping, leisure, and entertainment activities and socializing are ways to satisfy the desire. However, as Lacan stressed, because of the stringent definition of desire, such activities can only temporarily fill the void and unnourished the subject. Therefore, desire becomes inextricably linked with dissatisfaction in the form of a paradox where the subject is both desiring and not desiring it during the process of obtaining residual pleasure. The representation of the taste of Coca-Cola is an example of this paradoxical emergence. As such, modern society does not merely engage in the Western cultural equilibrium signified through several consumer activities, but it is also the object of desires in several ways.

Lacan's theory of the unconscious is to some extent an elaboration and break ahead of Freud's theory; first, he abandoned Freud's reliance on biology and stressed the use of language and symbolic systems. When explaining sexual urges and psychic structures, Freud often began with biological assumptions: the physiological basis of sexual urges & cetera.. However, Lacan believed that the occurrence of the unconscious and forms of psychic structures does not come from biological needs. Still, it is conditioned by symbolic systems and linguistic interactions. In other words, the newborn subjective "feels" an unnamed dissatisfaction of the life environment that occurs after birth. This dissatisfaction does not occur because the baby is hungry, for example, having definite dissatisfaction of non-interaction with the mother; the mother satisfies the individual's needs with the help of language and other symbolic systems. However, this satisfaction occurs only partially, and the person's desire ensues. The fact that desire cannot be satisfied and the interaction of symbolic systems form the basis of the unconscious.

## References

- [1] Liu Ling.(2006).*Official Assessment of Chinese subtitles. Dissertation from Sichuan University.*
- [2] Li Ge.(2022).*Official Assessment of Chinese subtitles. Dissertation from Sichuan University*
- [3] Lu Yi.(2019). *The Evolution French philosophy of the modern philosophy of desire. Publish in Social Science, Vol.8, 14-54.*
- [4] Buchanan, I. (2010). *A dictionary of critical theory (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.*
- [5] Ju Fei.(2016). *The unconscious: Internal or External. Publish in World Philosophy 2016, Vol 6, 40-49.*
- [6] Huang ZaiZhong.(2018). *Breaking the Illusion of "Self". SHANTOU UNIVERSITY JOURNAL (HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES MONTHLY), Vol.34.No.1 2018, 74-79.*
- [7] Ma YinHui.(2018). *Desire and the Construction of Subject. Social Science, No.7, 116-122.*
- [8] Guo Lingyun.(2012). *Official Assessment of Chinese subtitles. Dissertation from Lanzhou University.*

# ***Literature Review on Second Language Acquisition: Looking at the Impact of Bilingual Education at Different Times on Intercultural Competence***

**Jiahong Guo<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto St. George, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A1, Canada*

*a. jasmineguo004@gmail.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** With the prevalence of globalization, more and more parents are caught in a state of anxiety — they want to give their children a bilingual education as early and as well as possible so that in the future they can send their children to study abroad. Hence comes the existence of bilingual schools. However, parents are increasingly choosing bilingual kindergartens because they believe they will enhance their children's linguistic and intercultural competence. This literature review aims to illustrate the distinct impacts of attending a bilingual kindergarten versus a bilingual high school on students' intercultural competence, enlightening readers about the distinctions between the two, and highlighting the importance of early enrollment in a bilingual education system. This article concludes that bilingual kindergartens could subtly let students learn the language and its culture, and bilingual high schools would focus more on the practical way of learning a language but less on the cultural aspects. They both have their advantages and promote intercultural competence in different ways.

**Keywords:** Second language acquisition, Intercultural competence, Bilingual kindergarten, Bilingual high school, English learning education.

## **1. Introduction**

This topic of second language acquisition has various related articles published in the field, but they rarely touch on the comparison of bilingual kindergarten and bilingual high school. As the economy continues to grow and progress, more and more parents want their children to attend bilingual schools. They believe that attending a bilingual school will allow their children to adapt to foreign education at an earlier age so that they will be better able to adapt to the local living environment when they go abroad to study in the future. The article discusses how, due to the development of a globalizing economy, bilingual education in Colombia has evolved to accommodate this shift in Colombian society. In specific, parents begin to send their children to bilingual schools at earlier stages. Parents believe bilingual schools and programs highlight the increasing international opportunities and foreign education [1]. In the past, parents used to send their children abroad to study at university, but nowadays, with the prevalence of globalization, some parents send their children to receive a bilingual education at an earlier stage (e.g., junior or senior high school). For example, one article



examines the growing tendency of parents to select top-tier bilingual education to help their kids get prepared for chances abroad, highlighting the impact of globalization on this choice. It focuses on how bilingual education is intended to support students' global environmental adaptation [1]. In some cases, children go to bilingual schools as early as kindergarten, where they learn about English and foreign cultures. This literature review aims to provide a comparison of bilingual kindergarten and bilingual high school students' competence in cross-cultural education and integration. This article will review previously published literature (mostly recent 10 years, but some recent 20 years' published articles are also included) to show whether earlier bilingual education, such as in kindergarten, would be more helpful for students to integrate into life and learning abroad. Therefore, this literature review finds different cases of bilingual schools starting in kindergarten and then starting in high school in an attempt to draw a conclusion through comparison. This paper will get a touch on outlining the characteristics of bilingual kindergarten and bilingual high school first and provide a comparison between them. This is aimed to point out this literature review's influence on the academic field and society, which is to give more thoughts and inspiration on how to make bilingual education progress and advance.

## **2. Bilingual Education in Kindergarten: Building the Foundation for Intercultural Competence**

### **2.1. The Impact of Early Bilingual Education on Cultural Understanding and Cognitive Flexibility**

Bilingual education in kindergarten plays a key role in helping young children develop the skills to understand and connect with people from different cultures. Bilingual programs that introduce children to multiple languages in their childhood can create an immersive environment for children. In specific, children do not just learn new lexicons; rather, they start to absorb the cultural values and behavior, that are aligned with these languages. In places like the Samoan-English bilingual kindergarten in Queensland, for example, children are exposed to both language and cultural diversity at the same time. As they hear and use different languages, they naturally begin to understand other ways of living and thinking [2]. Additionally, Lipner and his colleagues demonstrated that bilingual kindergarten children developed the breadth and depth of vocabulary when offered bilingual environments, which again reinforces the notion of smoother adoption of new cultures with early bilingual education [3]. This early language exposure to children helps them to be more flexible in how they think and interact with others, fostering good qualities such as open-mindedness, which are qualities that are essential for globalization.

### **2.2. Immersive Bilingual Learning: Fostering Language Proficiency and Cultural Identity**

This paragraph will demonstrate how children are immersed in bilingual learning systems using two examples. In this way, early bilingual experience not only improves language capability but also enculturates children in deeper ways. Firstly, the children appeared to have an easy transition into the use of Samoan and English languages in most of their activities. Whether it was during group work or small talk, these children did not only learn how to articulate in at least two languages. For instance, when they greet each other and perform cultural songs and dances, they are gently guided to understand and master these values subtly [2]. Such positive experiences provide one with the most support needed; thus, they are, when older, able to withstand adjustments from one cultural background to another. Besides, the author highlights that the issue of bilingualism could promote the formation of cultural identity and belonging, such as children becoming more confident not only in speaking Samoan but also in understanding its cultural significance. Secondly, Cha and Goldenberg highlight how non-English-speaking children, who lived in a bilingual English & Spanish home, were

more proficient in both languages and understood the cultures of different languages in relation to one another in more complex ways [4].

### **2.3. Cognitive Flexibility and Empathy: How Early Bilingualism Enhances Intercultural Competence**

Furthermore, some research compared bilingual and monolingual children, and the result suggested that bilingual children from an early age were better at tasks that involved the flexible switching of strategies and solving problems, and these qualities were closely tied to cross-cultural competence. For instance, in one study that researched 302 kindergarten children, the researchers found that bilingual children were more flexible in different verbal and cultural settings than monolingual children, such as oral expression and acceptance of culture. These advantages help children foster empathy, and this ability to switch between different contexts helps them develop a deeper understanding of others' perspectives [5]. In this case, bilingual children shall comprehend that the world is filled with different ways of thinking and communicating, which is essential for their intercultural competence.

## **3. Bilingual High School Programs: Cultivating Advanced Intercultural Skills**

### **3.1. Bilingual High School Programs: Enhancing Language Proficiency and Intercultural Competence for Global Success**

Bilingual high school programs are critical not only in improving language abilities but also in equipping students with skills to adapt to different cultures. They not only emphasize the learning of a second language but also concentrate on the application of that second language in the culturally rich environment outside the classroom, which nurtures a high level of intercultural competence among students. Because bilingual learners are now cognitively capable of engaging in discussions about culture in a balanced way through both active and passive participation, students will be able to delve deeper into topics related to culture, identity, and cultural practices. As de Mejía observed, elite bilingual schools, are schools designed to give children sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge to thrive in international markets and multi-cultural settings. One case study from Colombia explains how bilingual high school students, who studied both English and Spanish, are more prepared for cross-cultural communication and working in global settings. The learners in these programs learn languages as tools for understanding and engaging with such perspectives, making them ready for global opportunities. Bilingual education of this type is especially useful for enabling students to put their language into practice across cultures, which is an essential aspect of intercultural competence [1].

### **3.2. Limitations of Late Bilingual Education: Challenges in Cultural Integration and Internalization**

Despite the fact there are clearly some advantages to attending bilingual high school, there are also some limitations for students when opting for bilingual education only at the high school level, particularly when it comes to internalizing cultural behaviors. In contrast to kindergarteners, secondary school students frequently have to actively learn how to adjust to new cultural environments. Studies on Bilingual Education Programs, including Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE), indicate that although students can be able to speak proficiently in two languages, the culture behind the languages is not effectively embedded into their way of life as quickly as children who have been brought up in a bilingual environment [6]. Moreover, students who studied in Cantonese-English bilingual high schools showed higher competence in academic and peer settings,

and this is closely tied to their ability to flexibly use multiple languages and navigate different cultures. These students exhibited better cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills, which are critical to success in various cultural backgrounds [6]. However, even though high school students may achieve high linguistic proficiency, they may lack the intuitive cultural understanding that is attained naturally in younger bilingual learners. This suggested that early immersion in languages and cultures is the key to deeper cultural integration.

#### **4. Comparing Kindergarten and High School Bilingual Education: Divergent Paths to Intercultural Competence**

Based on the data, it is clear that kindergarten and high school bilingual programs have a distinct, and frequently different, impact on students' intercultural ability. First, immersion and some form of natural language learning are attained. Here, children get to absorb cultural norms and linguistic structures through everyday language use. Such children are then able to take in the rules of the culture and the language through practices where they do not have to be taught to be bilingual. For example, the fluent bilingual behavior of preschool teachers in Finnish-Swedish as well as those in Russian-Finnish contexts attests to the immersion policy prevalent in early childcare bilingual programs that foster both cultural appreciation and acquisition of languages [7]. Such a situation provides for a very rich cultural context which in some cases may be hard to cultivate later in life.

In contrast, bilingual education at the high school level is mainly about explicit and deliberate learning of the language and culture. In high school, students are more involved in the study of the language's grammar and syntax with an exploration of cultural aspects. For example, as Feng notes, limitation comes in when there is too much structure in teaching since it restricts the learners from adopting culture via natural observation. When it comes to high school programs, speaking exercises and academic performance are often the main priorities. Students are rarely exposed to the cultures in which their languages have been ingrained, which results in a shallower understanding of the cultural contexts than students who are raised in a bilingual environment from an early age [8]. Though the high school has these shortcomings, students at this level are old enough to talk about cultural practices and hence use their language skills more critically in several situations [8].

Although both kindergarten and high school bilingual education promote aspects of intercultural competence, particularities of influence differ. Young learners, particularly preschoolers through kindergarten learning can master both language and culture in their minds subconsciously, while high school exposure facilitates more critical and practical use of language through a high level of cultural exposure. However, Schwartz argues, that the success of bilingual education at both levels is very much constrained to the structure of the programs and how well they accommodate students' variety of needs [5]. Instead, even though high school children may find it difficult to grasp culturally acceptable practices as might younger learners, they use a systematic approach that equips them with adequate skills in essential and higher-level cross-cultural interaction.

#### **5. Resolution of Limitations and Prospects for the Future Development of Bilingual Education**

##### **5.1. Challenges in Bilingual Education: Resource Limitations, Sociopolitical Barriers, and Linguistic Imbalance**

The constraints associated with bilingual education are often tied to the lack of resources, sociopolitical barriers, and the complexities of language status in different regions. As an example, O'Laoire points out that in Ireland, the power imbalance between English and Irish caused the bilingual education system to lack sustainable development, because parents understood that opting for Irish medium education would make their children remain locally globalized and detached from

English English-dominated economy. Furthermore, it seems that this is a frequent problem in many bilingual programs: the public's preference for dominant languages (English in this example) over minority languages (Irish in this case) may be endangering linguistic diversity [9]. Another major limitation of various bilingual education systems is the appeal to balance linguistic proficiency with diverse cultural contexts. Schwartz and Palviainen highlight preschool bilingual education as found in multicultural societies encounters difficulties in addressing issues of the school children's diverse language backgrounds [5]. Here again, since many programs assume a "one size fits all" approach, the complexity of children coming from bilingual or multilingual backgrounds is completely overlooked. Overall, this constrains the scope and application of bilingual education addressing the development of language as well as cultural proficiency.

## 5.2. Advancing Bilingual Education: The Need for Flexibility, Policy Support, and Cultural Integration

To address these aspects, the area of bilingual education, which is still in its early stages, needs to be directed towards flexibility. Bilingual schooling is the ideal approach because according to Schwartz, there is no need to stick to the existing structures of bilingual programs. This would aid in the divide using a minority language and enhancing cultural integration [5]. Therefore, to improve the current bilingual education system, there might need to be changes in the current teaching mode, such as hiring more native speakers as teachers and synchronizing foreign learning materials. Additionally, there is a need for more policymakers in support of the extension of bilingual education. O'Laoire showed that even when supporting such ambition, seeking the provision of these resources and training does not work when the government is not involved [9]. Given policies such as effective mother-tongue education and linguistic minorities' rights being promoted, it is faced that policies not only consider foreign language promotion but also language minorities' integration, culture appreciation, and mobilization through the economy.

## 6. Conclusion

Bilingual kindergartens can let students study in an immersive environment, so the learners can learn how to speak English easily and also learn its culture and society subtly, while bilingual high schools emphasize more on the syntax and grammar part of English. In this case, students will learn how to master using English but also get in touch with its culture. Overall, they both have their advantages, and both can improve students' intercultural competence to a certain extent. However, there are still limitations presented in the bilingual education system, such as the need for structural change for some bilingual high schools and the appeal for policymakers to promote bilingual schools. Parents should consider all aspects before deciding when to expose their children to a bilingual education system. However, this article also has some shortcomings. The literature and research results based on the review are mainly previous studies, and future research will combine the latest era background, refer to the latest literature, and add the latest research results.

## References

- [1] De Mejia, A.-M. (2002). *Power, prestige, and bilingualism : international perspectives on elite bilingual education (1st ed.)*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853595929>
- [2] Taylor-Leech, K., & Tualalelei, E. (2021). *Knowing Who You Are : Heritage Language, Identity and Safe Space in a Bilingual Kindergarten*. *TESOL in Context*, 30(1), 63–83. <https://doi.org/10.21153/tesol2021vol30no1art1581>
- [3] Lipner, M., Armon-Lotem, S., Walters, J., & Altman, C. (2021). *Crosslinguistic Influence (CLI) of Lexical Breadth and Depth in the Vocabulary of Bilingual Kindergarten Children – A Bilingual Intervention Study*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 671928–671928. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.671928>

- [4] Cha, K., & Goldenberg, C. (2015). *The Complex Relationship Between Bilingual Home Language Input and Kindergarten Children's Spanish and English Oral Proficiencies*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(4), 935–953. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000030>
- [5] He, S., Yang, L., Leung, G., Zhou, Q., Tong, R., & Uchikoshi, Y. (2022). *Language proficiency and competence: upper elementary students in a Dual-Language Bilingual Education program*. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 43(6), 502–517. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1987443>
- [6] Palviainen, Å., Protassova, E., Mård-Miettinen, K., & Schwartz, M. (2016). *Two languages in the air: a cross-cultural comparison of preschool teachers' reflections on their flexible bilingual practices*. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 19(6), 614–630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1184615>
- [7] Feng, A. (2007). *Bilingual education in China : practices, policies, and concepts (1st ed.)*. *Multilingual Matters*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599934>
- [8] Schwartz, M., & Palviainen, Å. (2016). *Twenty-first-century preschool bilingual education: facing advantages and challenges in cross-cultural contexts*. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 19(6), 603–613. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1184616>
- [9] Laoire, M. (2008). 9. *Educating for Participation in a Bilingual or a Multilingual Society? Challenging the Power Balance between English and Irish (Gaelic) and Other Minority Languages in Ireland*. In C. Hélot & A. de Mejía (Ed.), *Forging Multilingual Spaces: Integrated Perspectives on Majority and Minority Bilingual Education* (pp. 256-264). Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847690777-010>

# ***Analysis of the Psychosocial and Cognitive Effects of Stigma on Bipolar Disorder***

## ***-A Literature Review***

**Xuan Wu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*School of Law, Zhejiang Wanli University, 8 South Qian Hu Road, Ningbo, Zhejiang, China*

*a. heyelliana@gmail.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Beyond the distress of the disorder, individuals with bipolar disorder also endure long-term stigma. Stigma reflects attitudes towards specific groups without objective evaluation. Certain groups are perceived as unable to meet societal norms due to their limitations. It stems from misconceptions and fear, leading to discrimination, exclusion, and deep shame. Stigma has long posed a significant barrier to the survival and recovery of individuals with mental disorders, including bipolar disorder. Therefore, addressing and reducing the stigma these patients face should be a key focus of our research. Stigma further marginalizes individuals with bipolar disorder, delaying care, damaging relationships, and eventually lowering quality of life. Modern society should adopt a more supportive attitude and work to improve bipolar disorder treatment outcomes. The key approach is eliminating misunderstandings, promoting awareness, and building an inclusive society with the necessary resources. Above all, the most important thing is to correct people's long-held misconceptions about bipolar disorder.

**Keywords:** bipolar disorder, mental illness, stigma, social support.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Overview of Mental Disorders**

Mental disorders encompass conditions that disrupt brain function, impairing cognition, emotion, behavior, and volition [1]. Bipolar disorder is marked by extreme mood, energy, and activity fluctuations. Individuals with bipolar disorder experience alternating periods of mania (elevated mood, hyperactivity, and decreased need for sleep) and depression (prolonged sadness, loss of interest, and fatigue). Bipolar disorder significantly disrupts daily life and requires accurate diagnosis and treatment for effective management. Although the global prevalence of bipolar disorder is estimated at 0.6%, this figure may be understated.

### **1.2. Stigma and its Consequences**

Mental illness stigma involves negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward those with mental health conditions [2]. It arises from a misguided understanding and fear of these illnesses, leading to



discrimination, exclusion, and a profound sense of shame among those affected. This stigma has wide-ranging consequences, hindering treatment access, damaging social relationships, and lowering quality of life.

### **1.3. Research Gaps**

In the internet age, studies on bipolar stigma often overlook the hidden impact of social media stigma. The impact of cultural differences on stigma and recovery in bipolar patients remains underexplored. The impact of family stigma, especially in East Asian cultures, on recovery, treatment compliance, and follow-up, has been under-researched globally. Research on stigma-reduction interventions, like education programs and support groups, across various populations is limited.

### **1.4. Purpose of the Study**

Although the mechanisms and principles behind this are not yet clear, the obstacles that stigma poses to the recovery of people with bipolar disorder are not vague. This article, based on research related to bipolar disorder, helps clarify the information behind one of the major obstacles in the recovery process of bipolar disorder patients. In addition to exploring the extension of the application to alleviate the widespread stigma faced by mental disorders, it is more hopeful that it can accelerate the rehabilitation progress of bipolar patients in the future and effectively lessen the pain of bipolar patients.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Historical and Cultural Context of Mental Illness Stigma**

Mental illness stigma has existed for centuries, varying across cultures and historical periods. From medieval asylums to modern-day, stigma has long impacted the lives and treatment of bipolar patients. In recent years, people with bipolar disorder have experienced more severe stigma than those with other mental illnesses. Because of this unequal treatment, the situation of people with bipolar disorder is not optimistic.

### **2.2. Prevalence and Impact of Stigma on Bipolar Disorder Patients**

Stigma is a significant challenge for bipolar disorder patients. Approximately 70% of people with bipolar disorder report experiencing stigma [3], and over 60% delay or avoid treatment due to fear of stigma [4]; More than half of people with bipolar disorder have experienced discrimination in the workplace due to the stigma of mental illness [5], and about 90% of people with bipolar disorder consider that society's negative perceptions and prejudices about them affect their self-esteem and mental health [6].

### **2.3. Theoretical Perspectives on the Etiology of Bipolar Disorder**

So far, the pathogenesis of bipolar disorder is not fully understood. Various medical and psychological theories attempt to explain its causes and mechanisms. From different schools of thought to various theories, it might be possible to speculate and explore different angles as to why bipolar disorder exists and afflicts 0.6% of the world's population [7].

#### **2.3.1. Genetic Theory**

Genetic theory suggests that bipolar disorder has a significant familial predisposition [8] show that first-degree relatives of bipolar patients have 7 to 10 times higher risk than the general population.

Specifically, first-degree relatives of people with bipolar disorder have a risk of about 15 to 30 percent, compared to about 1 to 3 percent in the general population [9]. When one identical twin has bipolar disorder, the chance of the other developing it is between 40 and 70 percent, compared with about 10 to 20 percent for fraternal twins [10].

### **2.3.2. Neurobiological Theory**

Neurobiological theory suggests that bipolar disorder may be related to an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain [11]. For example, manic episodes may be associated with increased dopamine activity [12], while depressive episodes may be associated with decreased activity of these neurotransmitters. Brain imaging studies reveal structural or functional abnormalities in areas like the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus, which regulate emotions [13].

### **2.3.3. Neurodiversity Perspective**

Neurodiversity is a concept that considers neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, and other conditions, are natural variations of the human brain rather than disorders that need to be cured. This perspective emphasizes the value and strengths of individuals with these conditions, advocating for societal acceptance, inclusion, and support tailored to diverse neurological needs. [14]. From this perspective, the reason for the existence of mental disorders such as bipolar disorder is nothing more than the normal and diverse manifestations of the nervous system. According to this, in a time when diversity and inclusion are increasingly important, society should gradually accommodate those with mental disorders who were previously marginalized, not otherwise. Modern society should have the ability to adapt to the diversity of individuals.

## **2.4. Stigma in Media and Society**

### **2.4.1. Public Misconceptions and Social Discrimination**

"I have been mentally sick for a long time. I hope not to frighten you because this is also part of the true selves of the universe." This is what a we-media blogger suffering from mental illness said when he posted a video documenting his psychotic state. Recent data shows that people with mental disorders face different stigma compared to those with other illnesses. According to a report by the World Health Organization, 80% of people with mental disorders have experienced stigma at some point in their lives [15].

### **2.4.2. Stigma in Legal Systems and Law Enforcement**

Stigma arises from misconceptions, leading to unfair treatment. In justice systems that strive for fairness, there is the potential for injustice due to a lack of understanding of mental health. A real case is Bryce Joseph Gowdy, an American who suffered from bipolar disorder. He was arrested and wrongly perceived as a dangerous person due to his out-of-control behavior during his manic phase and was unfairly treated. There is no coincidence. The cases of Daniel Prude, Anthony Hill, Saheed Vassell, and others remind us of the importance of raising awareness of mental health among law enforcement officers in the justice system.

### **2.4.3. Celebrity Stigma and Media Representation**

Stigma affects not only ordinary people but also celebrities with bipolar disorder. Mariah Carey, Britney Spears, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Selena Gomez, and other artists who suffer from bipolar disorder have all been affected to varying degrees by negative media coverage. Among celebrities,

American actor Robin Williams eventually took his own life due to bipolar disorder. People with bipolar disorder have a suicide rate of 10-20% [16], and a suicide attempt rate of 20-60% [17], higher than the general population. It is obvious that stigmatization puts the lives of countless people of different classes, countries, occupations, etc. in a less satisfactory state. These statistics and stories raise the question: why are suicide rates so high among people with bipolar disorder? How much stigma is acting as a catalyst behind this? Why are mental illnesses currently separated from other illnesses?

## **2.5. The Psychological Impact of Stigma on Individuals with Bipolar Disorder**

Stigma can come from ignorance. Fear of the unknown [18] often fosters false impressions of others. In contrast to the heightened awareness and public discourse surrounding depression and anxiety in recent years, bipolar disorder appears to have received comparatively less attention and remains relatively obscured from public view. According to previous statistics, about three-quarters of people around the world can correctly identify depression, while only one-quarter can identify the symptoms and causes of bipolar disorder [19]. Most people do not understand the pathogenesis or symptoms of bipolar disorder [20], often mistaking it for poor emotional control [21] [22]. Limited public awareness of bipolar disorder increases stigma [23]. People with bipolar disorder have a 74.2% chance of being negatively labeled and misunderstood in public, compared to 69.8% for depression and 30-50% for anxiety [24].

One study showed that the probability of bipolar disorder patients experiencing unpleasant mental states due to stigma was as high as 58%, compared to 39% for people with depression and 31% for people with anxiety [25]. The extreme symptoms of bipolar disorder may amplify stigma. Limited awareness often causes confusion between bipolar disorder and mood swings. When people witness emotionally uncontrollable or socially deviant behavior from those with bipolar disorder, they often form negative and inaccurate impressions. Moreover, the media often exaggerates or misrepresents bipolar disorder, fueling prejudice. An example is the sensational portrayal of bipolar patients in the news. When someone with bipolar disorder dies by suicide, headlines often state ‘This person killed themselves’ rather than ‘This person died of bipolar disorder.’ Of the two, the former may lead the viewer to believe that the person with bipolar disorder is so dangerous and unstable that he or she may even kill himself or herself in a sudden outburst of emotion. The latter states that the person died from an illness, similar to how cancer causes death. From a cognitive psychology perspective, stigmatized attitudes lower self-esteem and worsen the condition of people with bipolar disorder. Especially for people with bipolar disorder who are amid a depressive episode, the effect of stigmatized attitudes is even more pronounced. During depressive episodes, patients may show significant cognitive dysfunction, such as inattention, memory loss, and slow thinking. Their emotional cognition is significantly dysfunctional, unable to accurately identify, express, and manage their emotions, and may fall into extreme sadness and despair during depression. In addition, their self-knowledge will also be impaired to varying degrees. In other words, during this time, individuals with bipolar disorder often adopt a more pessimistic view, amplifying external negative voices, which worsens their condition. It is not surprising, then, that people with bipolar disorder are vulnerable to stigma.

## **3. Discussion**

### **3.1. Internalization of Stigma in Bipolar Disorder**

The internalization of stigma in bipolar disorder involves gradually accepting societal prejudices, affecting self-perception and behavior. Society’s negative stereotypes of people with bipolar disorder (e.g., emotionally unstable, dangerous, uncontrollable) are spread through media and social

interactions. People with bipolar disorder in prolonged negative environments tend to internalize societal biases and negative perceptions [26]. Through this process, the societal label of ‘abnormal’ is internalized by people with bipolar disorder. Under this influence, individuals with bipolar disorder may begin to see themselves as ‘defective’ [27].

### **3.2. Consequences of Internalized Stigma**

Internalized stigma leads to shame and reduced self-efficacy in people with bipolar disorder. And to avoid ridicule and rejection, people with bipolar disorder may self-isolate. These responses cause emotional distress, reduce treatment compliance, and impair social functioning, lowering quality of life.

### **3.3. Invisible Mechanisms of Stigmatization**

Stigmatization is a complex process often driven by invisible mechanisms like unconscious bias and discrimination. These mechanisms are ingrained in our cognition and social interactions, making them hard to identify and address.

Hidden from these mindsets, ignorance, prejudice, and fear have the opportunity to transform into unequal treatment.

Fear of the unknown is a natural evolutionary survival response [18]. For example, suppose a person who does not have a basic correct understanding of mental disorders is confronted with a person who is dealing with severe mental illness. In that case, the patient’s words and actions will naturally be seen as unacceptable, incomprehensible, and frightening, and he/she will be seen as dangerous by this person.

### **3.4. Misconceptions about Danger in Bipolar Disorder**

While it is true that some people with mental disorders act dangerously and endanger others, those with bipolar disorder are more likely to harm themselves than others. Studies show that without other factors (e.g., substance abuse or social pressure), people with bipolar disorder are less likely to exhibit violent behavior, have rates of violent crime that are not different from those of the general population, and their violence is more often directed at themselves than at others (such as acts of self-harm, suicide, etc.) [28]. Therefore, the belief that people with mental disorders are dangerous is broad and biased.

### **3.5. Social and Cultural Influences on Stigma**

While stigmatization can come from any individual or group, certain groups are more prone to engaging in this behavior due to their position of power, social norms, or cultural beliefs. Among them, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge of mental health and the mechanisms of bipolar pathology [29]. These people, due to their limited education and lack of knowledge [30], are unable to understand the plight of others. In addition, cultural and social background and the conservative or traditional values hidden behind it also affect people's perspective on bipolar patients [31]. In general, people with bipolar disorder in Eastern cultures face greater resistance to recovery than those in Western societies.

## **4. Conclusion**

### **4.1. The Power of Education and Social Interaction**

The issue of stigma has persisted throughout history. Fortunately, the issue can now be addressed, allowing us to explore ways to improve living and healing environments for people with bipolar disorder. While the stigmatization of mental disorders remains a serious problem that will likely continue for some time, I believe that proactive measures can significantly mitigate the challenges faced by those with mental health conditions. Eliminating ignorance and prejudice improves education and helps individuals recognize and address their biases. This can improve well-being, recovery, and survival for people with bipolar disorder by enhancing social support.

Contact theory states that, under the right conditions, direct contact between different groups can reduce prejudice and hostile attitudes. So, in order to ensure that people with bipolar disorder are stable and not getting worse, that they are not at risk of attacking others, and that they are not attacked by others, organizing interactive activities to provide the public with direct contact with people with mental illness may help the community truly understand bipolar disorder. As a key information source, social media must play a pivotal role in reducing stigma. Social media should promote diversity and inclusion in its content, advertising, and algorithms. The media can apply decentralization by shifting focus from individuals or minority groups to diversity and universality, thereby leading the public to reduce the level of rejection of people with mental illness. Using its influence, the media can be effective in changing public attitudes and reducing stigma through targeted awareness and education campaigns, especially by providing personal stories and scientific evidence related to mental illness. It also helps to shift social perceptions. Education and accurate mental health information can help reduce stigma [32]. Social media companies should implement stronger moderation and enforcement policies to combat cyberbullying, hate speech, and stigmatizing behavior. Additionally, advocacy groups and individuals can leverage social media platforms to raise awareness about stigmatization and advocate for positive change.

### **4.2. The Role of Technology in Stigma Reduction**

#### **4.2.1. Virtual Reality Experiences**

In the 21st century, AI and VR technology could merge with healthcare to treat bipolar disorder and reduce stigma. As mentioned earlier, ignorance and fear contribute to increased stigma. And the best way to crack it is to experience it. VR is one of the most effective tools to help people feel what it's like to have bipolar disorder without affecting the physical and mental health of the experimenter. Using virtual reality technology to create simulated experiences of people with bipolar disorder, along with assessing the effect of such immersive experiences on changing public attitudes and reducing stigma. Interactive scenarios can be created to let people 'experience firsthand' the symptoms of bipolar disorder. As VR technology advances with sensory inputs like smell and touch, creating realistic experiences of life with bipolar disorder may soon be possible. This technology will enhance understanding, showing that bipolar disorder symptoms are neither voluntary nor socially deviant.

#### **4.2.2. AI and Social Media Analysis**

Researchers can also use AI technology to analyze emotional expressions on social media to detect emotional tendencies and changes in bipolar disorder. They can use natural language processing (NLP) techniques to track and understand the dynamics of public attitudes. This approach can contain stigmatizing cyberbullying at its source. Big data analytics can be used to mine stigmatization patterns about bipolar disorder, identify stigmatization characteristics in different social groups and online

communities, and predict and intervene in the emergence of these patterns. In the future, more detailed research on stigma can explore the characteristics of stigma made by different groups and their communities and further analyze the solutions to various types of stigmas based on understanding the mechanism of stigma.

### **4.3. Biomarkers and Psychological Stigma**

For people with bipolar disorder themselves, future research could target potential relationships between biomarkers (e.g., genes, hormone levels) and psychological stigma, exploring whether there are biological factors that influence social attitudes toward bipolar disorder. If this relationship holds, the researchers could further explore the use of drugs similar to insulin injections for people with bipolar disorder who face changes in chemical levels after stigma. In this way, the discomfort of patients can be reduced, thereby reducing the impact of stigma on people with bipolar disorder.

### **4.4. Anti- Stigma Interventions**

In addition, anti-stigma interventions targeted at specific groups, such as educational programs, peer support groups, and community initiatives, have also helped to improve the plight of people with bipolar disorder.

#### **4.4.1. Educational Programs**

Educational programs are designed to reduce misconceptions and negative stereotypes by increasing public understanding of bipolar disorder. It can be conducted through different formats and channels, such as online courses, seminars, videos, and social media campaigns. Young people are more likely to accept social media-based education, while older people are more likely to prefer traditional forms of lectures or written materials. In the face of different groups, educators should choose the education methods suitable for their educational objects.

#### **4.4.2. Peer Support Groups**

Peer support groups create a supportive environment by connecting individuals with similar experiences and reducing feelings of shame and isolation. Peer support groups are often effective in helping patients and their families who have been diagnosed or have related experiences. In addition to sharing similar experiences to reduce feelings of isolation and enhancing mutual emotional support to enhance self-esteem, peer support group members can also learn practical advice during group activities to improve coping skills with stigmatized events. Such activities can help patients construct a positive self-identity and realize that illness does not diminish their value. And then build a healthy awareness of their disease and reduce negative emotions.

#### **4.4.3. Community Initiatives**

Community initiatives (such as public awareness campaigns, open houses, involvement of local organizations, etc.) aim to change society's attitudes toward bipolar disorder through collective participation. Community initiatives often focus on eliminating the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. In the practice of different time nodes and different regions, the results of communities with high community economic background are better than those of communities with low community economic background, urban areas are better than rural areas, and the results of communities with diverse cultures are better than those with strong traditional cultural background.



#### 4.5. Building a Compassionate Society

In conclusion, modern society must adopt a more tolerant attitude toward people with mental disorders. In an era that celebrates diversity, there is no justification for treating individuals with mental health conditions differently. Embracing this change is not just beneficial for those affected but also essential for building a more inclusive and compassionate society.

#### Acknowledgment

This article is dedicated to those moments hurt to recall and those salvations that have been generously offered to me.

There's this female I need to say thank you to, but I don't want to invade her privacy the way she invaded mine, so I'll use "she" instead. She's the one who put me through hell I could never have imagined from May 2024. She was the one who made me, after being lucky enough to be a survivor of the stigmatization of bipolar disorder (which I am currently suffering from) then, question about stigma like, "Why is that?" "Why is there always some sort of people who are more likely to stigmatize people with mental disorders?" These doubts motivate the decision of this paper's topic. It is the suffering she has given me that has led to the academic achievements I am now able to present to you. It was what she gave me that made me realize for the first time how strong a person I could grow up to be, even though the negative thoughts that occurred because of her were a sign that my spiritual core was not strong enough, and I still have a long way to go in terms of growth. In the process of writing this paper, by constantly exploring the mechanism behind the stigma, my feelings towards her have gradually changed from unprecedented pure hatred to understanding and gratitude. My essay might have called it quit at the topic selection stage without her and what she did. When I recalled the scene countless times during the writing process, the frozen reaction and trembling gradually eased. Therefore, compared with academic achievements, I think the greatest significance of this academic activity for me is to help me gradually recover from this trauma. Although I still feel helpless looking back on the incident, I believe that one day, I will finally be able to laugh about it. I can do it, and someday I will.

We celebrate love and happiness. It is this passion that saves all absurdity and loneliness in the world.

But we will not forget suffering and despair. Those painful doubts will be the courage to shake the shackles and the hope to break through ignorance and bondage.

#### References

- [1] American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing; 2013.
- [2] Corrigan, P. W., & Watson, A. C. (2022). *The Paradox of Self-Stigma and Mental Illness*. *Curr. Psychiatry Rep.*, 1-7.
- [3] Dinos, S., Stevens, S., Serfaty, M., Weich, S., & King, M. (2004). *Stigma: The feelings and experiences of 46 people with mental disorders. Qualitative study*. *Br. J. Psychiatry*, 184, 176-181.
- [4] National Institute of Mental Health. (2021). *Stigma*. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/stigma/index.shtml>
- [5] Stuart, H. (2006). *Stigma and employment discrimination associated with mental illness*. *Can. J. Psychiatry*, 51(10), 631-634.
- [6] Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. (2020). *Workplace Discrimination*. Retrieved from <https://www.dbsalliance.org/workplace-discrimination>
- [7] World Health Organization. *Depression and other common mental disorders: Global, regional and country incidence, prevalence estimates and projections*, 2017. World Health Organization; 2017.
- [8] Craddock, N., & Jones, I. (1999). *Genetics of bipolar disorder*. *J. Med. Genet.*, 36(8), 585-594.

- [9] Smoller, J. W., & Finn, C. T. (2003). Family, twin, and adoption studies of bipolar disorder. *Am. J. Med. Genet.*, 123C (1), 48-58.
- [10] Kieseppa, T., Partonen, T., Haukka, J., Kaprio, J., & Lonnqvist, J. (2004). High concordance of bipolar I disorder in a nationwide sample of twins. *Am. J. Psychiatry*, 161(10), 1814-1821.
- [11] Belmaker, R. H. (2004). Bipolar disorder. *N. Engl. J. Med.*, 351(9), 476-486.
- [12] Cousins, D. A., Butts, K., & Young, A. H. (2009). The role of dopamine in bipolar disorder. *Bipolar Disord.*, 11(Suppl 2), 134-151.
- [13] Brambilla, P., et al. (2001). Anatomical MRI study of bipolar and unipolar non-psychotic major depression: subtle and subclinical prefrontal and temporal grey matter reductions. *Psychiatry Res.*, 106(2), 149-159.
- [14] Aschwanden, C. (2020). Neurodiversity: How diversity in the brain leads to diversity in the mind. *Scientific American*. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/neurodiversity-how-diversity-in-the-brain-leads-to-diversity-in-the-mind/>
- [15] WHO. Mental Health and Stigma: Data and Resources. World Health Organization; 2019.
- [16] Hawton, K., Sutton, L., Haw, C., Sinclair, J., & Harriss, L. (2005). Suicide and attempted suicide in bipolar disorder: A systematic review of risk factors. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 66(6), 693-704.
- [17] Novick, D., Swartz, H. A., & Frank, E. (2010). Suicide attempts in bipolar I and bipolar II disorder: A review and meta-analysis of the evidence. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 125(1-3), 10-15.
- [18] Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., & Pyszczynski, T. (2004). The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In: Baumeister, R. F. (Ed.), *Public Self and Private Self*. Springer US, Boston, MA, pp. 189-212.
- [19] Pescosolido, B. A., Medina, T. R., Martin, J. K., & Long, J. S. (2013). The "backbone" of stigma: Identifying the global core of public prejudice associated with mental illness. *Am. J. Public Health*, 103(5), 853-860.
- [20] Reavley, N. J., & Jorm, A. F. (2011). Recognition of mental disorders and beliefs about treatment and outcome: A national survey of Australian mental health consumers and the general community. *Aust. N. Z. J. Psychiatry*, 45(4), 306-314.
- [21] Parker, G., McCraw, S., Hadzi-Pavlovic, D., & Fletcher, K. (2013). Recognition and attitudes towards depression and mania: An Australian community survey. *Soc. Psychiatry Psychiatr. Epidemiol.*, 48(3), 445-453.
- [22] Henderson, C., et al. (2016). Mental health stigma in the 21st century: Five key themes for a targeted, person-centred intervention strategy. *Behav. Sci.*, 6(2), 17.
- [23] Hirschfeld, R. M. A., et al. (2002). The National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association consensus statement on the undertreatment of depression. *JAMA*, 287(3), 363-370.
- [24] Cooper, A. E., Corrigan, P. W., & Watson, A. C. (2003). Mental illness stigma and self-esteem: A comparison of a recovery-oriented internet social network and a traditional support group. *Community Ment. Health J.*, 39(5), 405-414.
- [25] González-Blanch, C., et al. (2018). The impact of stigma on mental health: A comprehensive review. *Psychiatr. Q.*, 89(4), 701-713.
- [26] Johnson, S. L., Gershon, A., & McMaster, K. J. (2017). Environmental risk and protective factors in bipolar disorder. In R. J. DeRubeis & D. R. Strunk (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of mood disorders* (pp. 132-141). Oxford University Press.
- [27] Ironside, M. L., et al. (2020). Identity in bipolar disorder: Self-worth and achievement. *Journal of Personality*.
- [28] Large, M. M., Smith, G., Sharma, S., Nielssen, O., & Singh, S. P. (2011). Systematic review and meta-analysis of the clinical factors associated with the suicide rate in schizophrenia. *Acta Psychiatr. Scand.*, 124(3), 171-183.
- [29] Corrigan, P. W., & Watson, A. C. (2002). Understanding the impact of stigma on people with mental illness. *World Psychiatry*, 1(1), 16-20.
- [30] Read, J., Haslam, N., Sayce, L., & Davies, E. (2006). Prejudice and schizophrenia: A review of the 'mental illness is an illness like any other' approach. *Acta Psychiatr. Scand.*, 114(5), 303-318.
- [31] Kleinman, A., & Good, B. (1985). *Culture and depression: Studies in the anthropology and cross-cultural psychiatry of affect and disorder*. University of California Press.
- [32] Corrigan, P. W., Morris, S. B., Michaels, P. J., Rafacz, J. D., & Rüsch, N. (2012). Challenging the public stigma of mental illness: A meta-analysis of outcome studies. *Psychiatr. Serv.*, 63(10), 963-973.

# ***Homogenization: Reasons for the Limited Development of Chinese Traditional and Minority Music***

Junyi Lu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Music, College of Fine Arts, Boston University, Boston, MA, 02215, USA*

*a. junyilu@bu.edu*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** A considerable impact has been made on the inheritance and development of traditional and ethnic music in China as a result of the homogeneity of culture. The purpose of this article is to investigate the ways in which globalization, commercialization, and government policies have resulted in cultural inequality, the loss of authenticity, and the suppression of traditional music in favor of hybrid forms. This paper is accomplished through a method of a literature review and case studies. According to the findings of the article, homogenization dilutes the distinctive qualities of traditional music, making it increasingly difficult to maintain cultural authenticity and legacy. Furthermore, the study highlights how the pressures of modern society often overshadow local traditions, leading to a diminished appreciation for cultural diversity. People are able to construct more effective tactics to preserve the traditional culture of China and the rest of the globe as a result of this study, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage in an ever-globalizing world.

**Keywords:** Chinese Traditional Music, Cultural Exchange, Homogenization, Hybridization.

## **1. Introduction**

The rapid development of society has led to technical and cultural exchanges and integration among various countries and ethnic groups around the world, significantly influencing the global cultural landscape, including Chinese traditional music and other ethnic music. A new generation of musicians is creating new musical styles by combining music from different genres. For example, Chinese musicians, influenced by Western music, have innovatively created their own styles by carefully integrating features from both their cultural heritage and Western traditions [1]. After being accepted and loved by the masses, this new kind of music gradually expanded its influence. But there are two sides to this integration. On the one hand, cultural convergence exposes traditional and ethnic music to a wider audience, providing opportunities for publicity and innovation. On the other hand, the homogenization that accompanies globalization tends to dilute the true nature of these musical forms. People's attention to old music will be shifted to new music; and what's even more problematic is that many traditional music genres face the challenge of reshaping to suit mainstream tastes, often losing their unique cultural context and deep-rooted meanings. This process of cultural homogenization often leads to cultural inequality and hinders the transmission and inheritance of "authentic" traditional music.

Several studies have explored the impact of globalization and cultural homogenization on the development of Chinese traditional music. Lau's research illustrates the transformation of traditional Chinese music through the incorporation of Western instruments, resulting in a redefining of "national music" and a dilution of its cultural validity [1]. Wang asserts that while "music of mixed forms" integrates contemporary elements and preserves the fundamental principles of traditional styles, these modifications result in a diminished cultural depth, particularly due to commercialization aimed at attracting tourists, distancing the music from its original cultural and social context [2]. Tuohy argues that Chinese nationalists often use music as a tool for cultural preservation and political purposes. However, this promotion sometimes leads to the standardization of local traditions, thus compromising their cultural uniqueness [3].

This paper will use literature review and case study methods to analyze the impact of homogenization caused by social development on Chinese traditional music and reveal how homogenization and commercial pressure suppress these cultures and affect cultural inheritance.

It is crucial to explore how globalization and cultural homogenization affect the preservation and performance of traditional Chinese music today. It can expose the cultural disparities resulting from homogenization and offer valuable perspectives for tackling cultural inequality and cultural extinction. This study aims to demonstrate the need to balance commercial interests and establish a sustainable framework that respects the integrity of traditional music, and to provide inspiration and suggestions for the preservation of traditional music heritage.

## **2. Literature Review**

The limited development of Chinese traditional music and ethnic music can be traced to cultural homogenization caused by natural exchange between cultures, commercialization, and the influence of national policies. This paper will explore three key themes: cultural inequality caused by natural cultural exchange, loss of authenticity caused by commercialization and mixed forms, and the impact of policies on cultural inheritance.

### **2.1. Cultural inequality caused by natural cultural exchange**

Cultural exchanges promoted global understanding but also contributed to the unequal development of traditional Chinese music. Starting in the 19th century, the influx of Protestant missionaries from the United States and Britain into China, coupled with Chinese students who studied in Japan and Europe and returned with knowledge of Western music, contributed to the popularity of Western music in China [1]. The ubiquity of Western music globally has led some individuals to perceive it as superior, prompting some Chinese composers to incorporate Western musical aspects into their compositions. The introduction and widespread impact of Western musical components have led to the marginalization and alteration of local music traditions [4]. This exchange leads to an unbalanced ecology as local traditional music is forced to adapt to global tastes, which dilute its original uniqueness. As diverse genres of world music rise in prominence, numerous traditionalists express concern that traditional music may gradually diminish, leading to a substantial cultural disparity [1]. This means that cultural exchange, while conducive to cross-cultural understanding, may also exacerbate cultural inequality because it favors dominant cultures over local traditions.

### **2.2. Loss of authenticity caused by commercialization and hybrid forms**

The emergence and commercialization of hybrid music forms has further accelerated the decline of the authenticity of traditional Chinese music. The hybrid music forms discussed here include music that combines different musical genres, such as those combining elements of Western and Eastern music. Composers such as Chou Wen-chung, recognized as a pivotal figure in music created outside

China, focused on the fundamental principles and essence of Chinese music, whereas most others primarily utilize superficial elements—such as folk melodies or the pentatonic scale—to produce what they term “national music” [1]. Nowadays, almost all contemporary Chinese music incorporates elements of Western music [5]. Some have taken the step of reworking traditional music to align with Western sonic ideals and aesthetics, which includes creating new types of ensembles by combining instruments, altering their sounds, and standardizing tuning systems and compositional methods [1]. Moreover, as this hybrid musical genre gains popularity among the audience, the influence of commercial elements has further solidified its preeminence in the Chinese music landscape. This genre of music infiltrates various industries, including advertising, film, fashion, and architecture [6]. Driven by commercial interests, more and more musicians are committed to creating this kind of non-traditional Chinese music. However, while the hybrid music integrates contemporary elements and preserves the fundamental principles of traditional styles, these modifications result in a diminution of cultural depth, particularly due to its commercialization aimed at attracting tourists, distancing the music from its original cultural and social context [2]. Simultaneously, the inadequate comprehension of traditional culture by certain songwriters often results in the misrepresentation of that culture [6]. Thus, while mixed forms may promote wider recognition, they often come at the expense of authenticity and cultural depth.

### **2.3. The impact of policies on cultural inheritance**

Yet, commercialization and cultural exchange are not the only forces at play; government policies and national interventions also influence the development of traditional music. While national policies aim to protect and promote cultural heritage, they can also have unintended negative effects on the inheritance and development of traditional music. The legislative and policy actions designed to preserve intangible cultural assets in China are commendable; nonetheless, they face significant problems due to their fundamentally state-centric nature [7]. The idiosyncrasies of China's historical and social framework have consistently underscored unity and harmony; thus, while several programs seek to safeguard cultural diversity, they occasionally favor political objectives. This has led to standardization of some cultures, especially those of ethnic minorities. For example, since the late 20th century, township industry and tourism have been vigorously developed and prospered in rural China, bringing an increase in economic income and improvement of living standards for local farmers. This has changed the living space and mind of the farmers [2]. Numerous inhabitants forsook their traditional, rudimentary lifestyle or departed from their hometown, resulting in the decline of the indigenous musical culture, which is closely tied to agriculture and religion among various ethnic minorities. Governments that recognize these problems have actively instituted policies to protect minority cultures, such as the creation of cultural performance groups and the support of musical practices through funding and colleges [8]. However, the problem is not the intention behind the policy, but the implementation of the policy and the occasional lack of sensitivity to local conditions.

## **3. Case Studies**

### **3.1. Hybrid Music in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Traditional Chinese music is quite different from western music, among which the most obvious features include the pentatonic and heptatonic scales, the use of Chinese instruments like the erhu, pipa, and guzheng, and the emphasis on melody and timbre rather than harmony [9-10].

However, with the advent of Western influence in the 19th century, Western musical elements were gradually integrated into Chinese music, which led to the emergence of hybrid musical forms that combined elements of both musical traditions. Chinese musicians began to incorporate Western instruments, such as pianos and orchestras, into their works, mixing them with traditional Chinese

instruments to create new sounds [1]. They also added more harmonic progressions to their compositions, which are commonly found in Western music. Take “Jasmine Flower” as an example, the prototype of this song is an episode from a show during the Qianlong period, which was later written by Italian composer Puccini into his opera and widely spread in the West [11]. There are countless versions of “Jasmine Flower” today, and one of the most famous versions incorporates Western musical elements, including the pentatonic mode of Chinese singing and melody, as well as the symphonic accompaniment and complex harmonic trends of Western music. “Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto” is another example. This instrumental music created in the 20th century is based on Chinese traditional Yue opera “Liang Shan-bo and Zhu Ying-tai.” It is a violin concerto rich in traditional Chinese elements and Chinese musical idioms. It’s just that the song is performed by a pure orchestra, emphasizing sounds of flutes, violins, harps, brasses, and so on. This piece is also different from the single melodic lines with subtle variations common in traditional music, incorporating layered melodious periods, harmonic accompaniments, and different melodic segments, generating a rich tapestry of transitions in mood.

Despite these shifts, the incorporation of Western elements into Chinese music did not completely erase traditional forms but created a complex cultural landscape. Admittedly, in some cases, this cultural exchange has even revitalized traditional music. However, it cannot be ignored that the phenomenon of “loss of authenticity” brought about by this phenomenon.

### 3.2. Trend of Modern “Chinese Style” Music

Modern “Chinese-style” music represents an attempt to blend traditional Chinese elements with contemporary pop music to create a unique cultural expression on the global music scene. The genre often incorporates traditional instruments, melodies, and themes into popular musical frameworks, seeking to establish a distinct Chinese identity.

A key characteristic of modern “Chinese-style” music is its hybrid nature, which often involves the use of traditional Chinese instruments within modern compositions. A typical example is “Blue and White Porcelain,” which was written by Fang Wen-shan and composed and sung by Jay Chou. The song uses the composition and melody of modern pop music while adding elements of traditional instruments like guzheng and lyrics blending ancient and modern cultures. The lyricist Fang borrows elements from ancient Chinese poetry in terms of rhetoric, rhythm, mood, and wording, and covers cultures full of classical charm such as “blue and white porcelain,” “Peony,” and “Ladies’ Pictures” [12]. However, it is worth noting that some traditional cultures spread in this song seem to be different from the truth in history. For example, there is a line in its lyric stating that “in the bottom of the blue and white porcelain vase, there lay the Han Li font of the Han Dynasty, mimicking the elegance of a previous dynasty,” but in history, the Han Li font was never written on the bottom of the Chinese blue and white porcelain vases. This mistake may be because of the lyricist’s ignorance of traditional culture, leading to the erroneous spread of traditional culture. Therefore, some scholars believe that this modern form of music is not sincere enough [6].

But as this style of music has taken off in China, the market and consumers are desperate for fresh songs with Chinese characteristics. In addition, with the push of celebrities and the media, many songwriters, driven by commercial interests, arbitrarily attached some traditional cultural elements as gimmicks to attract listeners [6,13]. A lot of “Chinese-style” songs gained great popularity through dramas, shows, and Tik-Tok, while the authenticity of the musical and cultural elements they adopted has yet to be studied and discussed. But clearly, abuse of traditional music and cultural elements could cause listeners to misunderstand or simplify the profound historical and cultural connotations contained in traditional music, and eventually lead to the formation of stereotypes. Additionally, commercialization may also push musicians away from more authentic cultural explorations as they are catering to the masses.



### 3.3. Development of Li Ethnic Music

The music of the Li ethnic group, a musical culture developed mainly on Hainan Island in China, reflects the challenges faced by the musical traditions of China's ethnic minorities under the influence of modernization and national policies. With a history of more than 3,000 years, this ethnicity has formed its own unique art and musical culture. What is worrying, however, is that what was once a rich and diverse musical cultural tradition is now in a state of rapid degradation and extinction [14].

Due to the development of transportation, the ties between Li ethnicity and Han ethnicity (the largest ethnic group in China) have also become closer and closer, leading to the so-called "sinicization," that is, the non-Han society is influenced by and assimilated into the Han dominated society [15]. Today, the lives of the Li people are basically the same as that of Han people. Their musical activities and tastes also gradually shifted from traditional music to the modern music flourishing in the Han regions.

Because of the Han ethnicity's advanced agricultural means and technology and the central government's policy of unifying agricultural technology throughout the country during the Tudi Gaige (Land Reform) period, the "slashing songs" of the Li ethnicity, which used to be sung while farmers slashing and ploughing together and which is one of the most common types of Li songs, are now hard to be heard in Li farms dominated by automated equipment [16]. Similar loss of music is also occurring due to changes in people's other living habits, such as beliefs and customs.

In addition, the younger generation is increasingly attracted to modern types of music. Some elderly Li singers expressed their disappointment that young people are disinterested in learning the Li songs, fearing that they will be completely lost after their passing [16]. This is because the government and society have always emphasized rapid development and the unity needed to achieve rapid development, causing the ethnic minority people to have a mentality of worship for the advanced development of the Han nationality in many aspects, which finally leads to a lack of self-identity and self-confidence. This makes the Li people, while respecting the Han lifestyle, abandon their original culture and art.

Han cultural standards or popular music trends have adapted or changed parts of Li music. For example, the famous modern Li song "Wuzhishan Song" uses synthetic sound effects and electronic music elements based on the melody trend with Li characteristics to tell a story about the Wuzhi Mountain in the Li region. Such moves have made Li musical culture more acceptable to the masses, but at the same time, it often loses the distinctive texture of traditional instruments.

Therefore, Li music faces great challenges due to modernization, sinicization, and national policies that may inadvertently stifle the development of its authenticity.

## 4. Discussion

The three cases discussed provide unique insights into the influence of social dynamics on traditional Chinese music. The hybrid music of the 19th and 20th centuries shows how cultural exchange altered Chinese musical landscape. Modern "Chinese-style" music reflects an attempt to combine traditional elements with popular music, but this can lead to superficial uses of traditional culture. Finally, the development of Li music underscores the challenges faced by China's ethnic musical traditions amid modernization, cultural assimilation, and state-led policies. Despite occurring in different periods and regions, three cases share common themes: cultural exchange, commercialization, hybridization, and, notably, homogenization.

As hybrid forms gain popularity, they are often adapted to market needs, which further diminishes their traditional elements. Traditional music in the 19th century entered Western markets using Western elements; modern "Chinese-style" music uses traditional cultural gimmicks to cash in on listeners; the Li music is more accepted by the market using modern adaptations. While

modernization and commercialization have helped broaden the audience for these musical forms, they often simplify or misrepresent complex cultural or historical contexts.

In all three case studies, homogenization plays a central role, diluting the unique qualities of traditional music to cater to mainstream preferences. Incorporating new sounds leads to a “loss of authenticity,” obscuring the original characteristics of traditional Chinese music.

To address these challenges, one essential strategy is documenting and archiving existing traditional music cultures. This includes recorded performances, oral histories, and the practical context of these musical traditions. Digital archives and audio-visual recordings could help reserve cultural heritage for future generations.

Another strategy is increasing awareness of traditional Chinese music’s cultural significance through educational programs at schools and universities curricula. This could counteract inaccurate portrayals in popular music and encourage musicians to engage with traditional elements more accurately and cautiously, so that “Chinese-style” music could effectively support the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture.

In deciding whether to prioritize “original ecology” or “innovation,” one could refer to the development of Australian aboriginal music amidst commercialization. Australia’s approach involves maintaining “original” practices while acknowledging “innovation.” Australian aboriginal music retained its “sacred” functions and restrictions while combining with western modern music elements to create a new form of “indigenous rock.” “Indigenous rock” is not recognized as traditional aboriginal music, but it does introduce indigenous music to the public [17]. Similarly, ethnic groups in China, like those practicing Li music, can preserve their cultural heritage through local musicians while adapting to social trends.

Finally, empowering local communities and artists to own their own forms of cultural expression is significant. By supporting community music groups and involving elders and practitioners in decision-making processes, cultural practices can remain authentic while adapting to modern environments. By fostering pride and ownership of their cultural heritage, these communities could effectively resist the forces of homogenization.

## 5. Conclusion

This article discusses the evolution of traditional Chinese music in different historical and social contexts. The essay examines hybrid music from the 19th and 20th centuries, contemporary “Chinese-style” music, and Li ethnic music, elucidating the cultural homogenization resulting from cultural interaction, hybridization, and commercialization, along with its effects on traditional music. These instances demonstrate that within the framework of globalization, the issues confronting traditional music mostly revolve around the erosion of its distinctiveness and cultural significance. Consequently, cultural preservation is essential in the context of globalization, applicable to both Chinese culture and other global cultures, and it is imperative to honor and maintain their authentic cultural identities.

One limitation of this study is that the number of cases is limited and cannot cover all the complexities of traditional Chinese music. In the future, more research could be extended to music forms of other ethnicities or other art forms, such as Chinese traditional opera.

In the future, traditional Chinese music may achieve broader international exposure via internet platforms, cross-cultural exchanges, and educational initiatives. At the same time, through a parallel approach of innovation and conservation, traditional music can evolve within the contemporary context while preserving its cultural heritage and distinctiveness, so enhancing global cultural variety.

## References

- [1] Lau, F. (2008). *Music in China: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. Oxford University Press. [https://bu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma99185923990001161&context=L&vid=01BOSU\\_](https://bu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma99185923990001161&context=L&vid=01BOSU_)

INST:BU&lang=en&search\_scope=MyInst\_and\_CI\_NoLondon&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any, contains, Music%20in%20China:%20experiencing%20music, %20expressing%20culture&offset=0

- [2] Wang, Y. (2014). "A Study on Measures of Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Chinese Folk Music." <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/icelaic-14/12593>
- [3] Tuohy, S. (1999). "The Sonic Dimensions of Nationalism in Modern China: Musical Representation and Transformation." *Ethnomusicology*, 43(1), 89-106. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/231245319/fulltextPDF?parentSessionId=o5CqcFReOvI7ceXs4DdIWZ%2BzYZLCgu1m0mOjp6jY2So%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=9676&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>
- [4] Rees, H. (2000). "Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China." Oxford University Press. [https://bu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma99208808361601161&context=L&vid=01BOSU\\_INST:BU&lang=en&search\\_scope=MyInst\\_and\\_CI\\_NoLondon&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any, contains, Echoes%20of%20History:%20Naxi%20Music%20in%20Modern%20China&offset=0](https://bu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma99208808361601161&context=L&vid=01BOSU_INST:BU&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI_NoLondon&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any, contains, Echoes%20of%20History:%20Naxi%20Music%20in%20Modern%20China&offset=0)
- [5] Lin, Y. (2023). "The westernization of Chinese traditional music and an investigation of Chinese contemporary piano music." <https://open.bu.edu/handle/2144/46225>
- [6] Si, H. (2010). "The Traditional Aesthetic Vision of "Chinese Style" Music." "Chinese style" music from the perspective of traditional aesthetics. <https://d-wanfangdata-com-cn.ezproxy.bu.edu/periodical/ChlQZXJpb2RpY2FsQ0hJTmV3UzIwMjQwNzA0EhdoYnNsc2R4eXhiLXNrYjIwMTAwNDZMxOIMWRkaDE2d2Q%3D>
- [7] Xu et al. (2022). "China's emerging legislative and policy framework for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage." <https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.bu.edu/c/ydyra3/viewer/pdf/d5qs6gosyz?route=details>
- [8] Wang, W. (2006). "Theory and strategy for sustainable growth for traditional music of ethno-minorities." <https://d-wanfangdata-com-cn.ezproxy.bu.edu/periodical/ChlQZXJpb2RpY2FsQ0hJTmV3UzIwMjQwNzA0EhJ6aG9uZ3VveXkyMDA2MDMwMTUaCGplcDhkanNh>
- [9] Witzleben, J. L. (1995). "'Silk and bamboo" music in Shanghai the jiangnan sizhu instrumental ensemble tradition." Kent State University Press. <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/epubs/z029p744c?locale=en#page=60>
- [10] Jones, S. (1995). *Folk music of China : living instrumental traditions*. Clarendon Press.
- [11] Ashbrook, W. & Powers, H. (1991). "Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition." Princeton University Press.
- [12] Yu, X. & Wu, N. (2015). Fang Wenshan's lyrics under the perspective of ancient and modern "Chinese style"[J]. *Journal of Suzhou University*, 2015(6):66-69, 99. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1673-2006.2015.06.018. <https://d-wanfangdata-com-cn.ezproxy.bu.edu/periodical/ChlQZXJpb2RpY2FsQ0hJTmV3UzIwMjQwNzA0Eg9zenN6eGlyMDEIMDYwMTGaCDJva3FndjQ2>
- [13] Liu, F. (2011). *Research on Fang Wenshan's "Chinese Style" Lyrics*[D]. Hunan: Xiangtan University, 2011. DOI: 10.7666/d.D384159. [https://xueshu.baidu.com/usercenter/paper/show?paperid=1w4p0a60gb5r0ak05q0m0xu0h0610314&site=xueshu\\_se](https://xueshu.baidu.com/usercenter/paper/show?paperid=1w4p0a60gb5r0ak05q0m0xu0h0610314&site=xueshu_se)
- [14] Cao, L. (2020). "LIZU YINYUE ZHI". Southern Publishing House.
- [15] Yang, F. (2021). "Sinicization or Chinafication." *The Sinicization of Chinese Religions: From Above and Below*. <https://brill.com/downloadpdf/edcollbook/title/59330.pdf#page=26>
- [16] Mu, Y. (1995). *Music Loss among Ethnic Minorities in China -- A Comparison of the Li and Hui Peoples*. Asian Music. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/stable/834498?seq=5>
- [17] Zhang, Y. (2014). "The development of Australian music has implications for the inheritance of Chinese folk music." *Journal of Mudanjiang Normal University*. <https://s-wanfangdata-com-cn.ezproxy.bu.edu/periodical?q=%E6%BE%B3%E5%A4%A7%E5%88%A9%E4%BA%9A%E9%9F%B3%E4%B9%90%E7%9A%84%E5%8F%91%E5%B1%95%E5%AF%B9%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E6%B0%91%E6%97%8F%E9%9F%B3%E4%B9%90%E4%BC%A0%E6%89%BF%E7%9A%84%E5%90%AF%E7%A4%BA>

# ***Impact of Chinese Dialects on Language Transfer in Second Language Acquisition***

**Tianqi Zhao<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*School of Foreign Language Studies, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, Hangzhou, 310018, China*  
*a. 2021336711050@mails.zstu.edu.cn*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The phenomenon of language transfer has long been a core topic of investigation in the fields of applied linguistics, second language (L2) acquisition, and language teaching. Due to the vastness of China, there is a wide variety of dialects that are spoken throughout the country, each with distinctive traits that set them apart from standard Chinese in terms of vocabulary, phonology, and syntax. It is evident that these dialects, such as Cantonese and Hokkien (Min dialects), exhibit notable differences in phonology and pronunciation. Moreover, they are distinguished by their unique expressions, grammatical structures, and idioms. In the process of learning English as a second language (ESL), native Chinese speakers studying English are susceptible to the influence of dialects, which may result in either positive or negative language transfer effects. In this paper, through the method of literature review, the development and current status of transfer theory in second language acquisition are discussed in depth, with emphasis on the positive and negative transfer effects of dialects in the process of second language acquisition. Furthermore, the paper explores the practical impact of the transfer phenomenon on students' English phonological learning and teachers' English phonological teaching, aiming at optimizing learning strategies and helping learners to enhance their language learning ability and improve the efficiency of language learning.

**Keywords:** Positive Transfer, Negative Transfer, Chinese Dialects, Second Language (L2) Acquisition.

## **1. Introduction**

The role of language transfer has consistently been a significant area of inquiry within the field of second language acquisition. In recent years, with the rapid development of the economy, politics, culture, and the increasingly frequent international communication, coupled with the improvement of English education, English learners pay more attention the mastery of English pronunciation and pursue “standard” English pronunciation. However, China is a vast country with a large number of Chinese dialects , which are generally divided into seven categories: Mandarin dialects, Cantonese dialects, Min dialects, Wu dialects, Hakka dialects, Gan dialects, and Xiang dialects. And Mandarin dialects encompass Beijing Mandarin, Northeastern Mandarin, Lanyin Mandarin, Southwestern Mandarin, and other eight regions, each with different and deep cultural connotations. English learners from different dialect areas exhibit distinct features in English pronunciation. Many studies have focused on and investigated the negative transfer effect of different regional dialects on second

language phonological acquisition, and proposed corresponding solutions and effective teaching methods. Nevertheless, most of the studies only dealt with the negative transfer effects of different dialects on English pronunciation, and how to avoid these effects and related teaching strategies and methods. Only a few studies have explored the positive transfer effects in this regard. Therefore, the paper considers it necessary to sort out and summarize the positive and negative transfer effects of dialects on second language speech acquisition, clarify the different effects of different dialect areas on learners, and generalize and classify them, so as to provide a basis for subsequent experimental studies, theoretical discussions, and the implementation of related teaching strategies and methods.

## **2. The Theory of Transfer in Second Language Acquisition**

Language transfer refers to a phenomenon where learners utilize the linguistic rules (such as pronunciation, word meanings, etc.) of their native language to express themselves when learning a second language [1]. The acquisition of a second language is generally based on the learner's first language. Linguistic research has shown that learners often apply the knowledge of the previously acquired language system to the new language learning process during second language acquisition [2]. Lado first introduced the concept of "language transfer" in 1957 [3]. In 1969, Selinker officially proposed the language transfer [4]. Due to the similarities and differences between languages, native language habits often have various effects on the process of second language acquisition in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, which are often referred to as language transfer effects. In terms of pronunciation, it is generally recognized in related studies that the mother tongue affects second language learners' perception and production of second language pronunciation. However, due to the different understanding of the nature of language itself and second language speech acquisition, research contents, methods and theoretical analysis are different [5]. In this process, classical theories of language transfer have emerged, such as behaviorist theory, contrastive analysis theory, Chomsky's theory of transformational generative grammar, as well as markedness theory. In language transfer, it can be divided into positive and negative transfer. When the linguistic rules of the learner's native language are the same or similar to the rules of the second language they are learning, the native language rules will have a positive impact on the learning of the target language, which is known as positive transfer. In contrast, this is referred to as negative transfer.

## **3. Analysis of Positive Transfer Phenomena**

### **3.1. Positive Transfer Impact of Different Dialects in Second Language Acquisition**

Extensive research on the positive transfer effects of different Chinese dialects on second language acquisition has revealed that Chinese English learners tend to utilize the syllable-initial /l/ (i.e., light /l/) in their second language speech production [6]. In the Gan dialect region, previous studies have shown that English learners from the Poyang dialect area exhibit little difference in pronunciation when learning vowels /i/, /ε/, /Λ/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/ compared to native American speakers [7]. Additionally, in the Ji-Lu dialect area of the Mandarin dialect region, the monophthongs of Shandong dialect have also exerted a positive transfer impact on the learning of English monophthongs. Specifically, the /a/ sound in Shandong dialect is close to the /ɑ/ and /Λ/ sounds in standard English, resulting in varying degrees of positive transfer on the intermediate English /ɑ/ and /Λ/ [8]. Furthermore, Shandong dialect also facilitates the learning of vowels /i/ and /æ/ [9]. In studies focusing on other dialect regions, English learners from the Fuzhou dialect area do not significantly differ from American English learners in their pronunciation of /i/ and /Λ/, indicating a positive transfer effect of Fuzhou dialect in the learning of /i/ [10]. Prior research has focused on analyzing the similarities between dialect and English vowels in an effort to elucidate how these similarities positively contribute to positive transfer



during the acquisition of English pronunciation. Although the current focus is on the positive transfer effects arising from phonemic similarity, future research avenues could be broader and more diverse.

### 3.2. Relevant Causes and Case Studies

First, the tendency of Chinese English learners to utilize the syllable-initial /l/ in second language speech production is attributed to the existence of such a pronunciation in Mandarin Chinese, which facilitates second language phonological acquisition and produces a positive transfer effect. Second, English learners from the Poyang dialect area in the Gan dialect region exhibit little difference in pronunciation when producing vowels /i/, /ε/, /Λ/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/ compared to native American speaker, as these vowels are also found in the Poyang dialect. The learning mechanisms and processes that learners use to acquire their native language can still be used for second language acquisition, thus producing a positive transfer effect on the second language speech production of English learners in this region. Third, Wang conducted a descriptive analysis of the vowel learning situation of English learners from the Shandong dialect area and found that Shandong dialect has a positive transfer effect on the learning of vowels /i/ and /æ/ [9]. Sun analyzed the learning of English monophthongs by English learners from the Fuzhou dialect area and discovered a positive transfer effect of Fuzhou dialect in the learning of /i/ [10]. The positive transfer effect of dialects on English pronunciation is primarily manifested in the similarities between their respective pronunciations. When learners have already become accustomed to certain pronunciation patterns in their dialects, these similarities can potentially facilitate their quicker mastery of corresponding English pronunciations. Furthermore, most students, when initially encountering English, are often intrigued by the novelty of the language, and the similarities between their dialects and English pronunciation may stimulate their interest and motivation in learning, alleviating anxiety associated with acquiring a wholly new language. As learners discover similarities between their dialectal pronunciation habits and English pronunciation, they may experience greater self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment, thereby motivating them to engage more actively in the learning of English pronunciation.

## 4. Analysis of Negative Transfer Phenomena

### 4.1. Negative Transfer Caused by Different Dialects in Second Language Acquisition

In academic research, the discussion of the negative transfer effects of Mandarin dialects in the process of second language acquisition has become a topic of profound interest to many scholars, leading to numerous significant research outcomes. In the Ji-Lu Mandarin dialect region of the Mandarin dialect group, Wang Yuting found that when subjects pronounced the sounds /e/ and /ə/, they were negatively influenced by their dialects compared to RP English vowels [11]. Additionally, in the Beijing Mandarin dialect region, Chinese English learners exhibit significantly different phenomena in pronouncing the high vowels /i/ and /u/ compared to native English speakers [12].

Southern Shanxi belongs to the Central Plains Mandarin dialect region, while a small area in Shanxi Province belongs to the Jilu Mandarin dialect region. Research has shown that the consonants in Shanxi dialects have a negative transfer effect on English consonants, including the inability to distinguish between nasal sounds /n/ and /ŋ/, pronouncing both as the latter, confusion between /ʃ/ and /s/, /tʃ/ and /c/, unclear distinctions between level and retroflex consonants, and confusion between alveolar consonants /θ/, /ð/, and apical consonants /s/, /z/. There is also confusion between /n/ and /l/, and between /f/ and /h/, with /f/ often replaced by /h/. Additionally, confusion between /t/ and /tʰ/ occurs. The vowels in Shanxi dialects also have a negative transfer effect on the learning of English vowels, resulting in the inability to distinguish between /ai/ and /ei/, /au/ and /ə/, /e/ or /æ/ and the central vowel /ə/, and the overemphasis of the central vowel /ə/ [13]. When English learners of Chongqing dialect in the Southwest Mandarin area pronounce /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, there are significant



differences from native English speakers, specifically in duration and spectral centroid [1]. In the Poyang dialect of the Gan dialect region, there are significant differences in the pronunciation of vowels /ɪ/, /æ/, and /ɑ/ between English learners in this area and native American speakers [7]. Similarly, English learners from the Nanjing dialect region of the Wu dialect area are also influenced by their dialect to varying degrees. This is mainly reflected in the inability to distinguish between nasal sounds /n/ and /ŋ/, pronouncing both as the latter, confusion between /n/ and /l/, both pronounced as /l/ in the dialect, and confusion between /θ/ and /s/, /p/ and /b/, /v/ and /w/, pronouncing /r/ as /z/ or /l/, and confusion between /tʂʰ/ and /tʃ/ [14]. Many of these phenomena are similar to the negative transfer effects observed in the Shanxi dialect mentioned earlier.

#### 4.2. Reasons for and Case Studies of the Negative Transfer of Different Dialects in Second Language Acquisition

First, in the Ji-Lu dialect area of the Mandarin region, Chinese English learners tend to produce /e/ and /ə/ with a more forward and lower tongue position. Similarly, in the Beijing Mandarin region, Chinese English learners exhibit significantly lower tongue positions for the high vowels /i/ and /u/ compared to native English speakers. Furthermore, in Shanxi dialect, due to the absence of the /n/ sound and the rarity of retroflex consonants, the central and northern regions tend to pronounce both anterior and posterior nasal sounds as posterior nasal sounds, namely /ŋ/, and to pronounce both level and retroflex initials uniformly as level initials, specifically /s/ and /c/. Since Shanxi dialect lacks dental-alveolar fricatives, for English learners in Shanxi, apical consonants are the most common examples of negative transfer. In the central region of Shanxi, the distinction between /f/ and /h/ is blurred, with /f/ often being replaced by /h/ in the dialect. Shanxi English learners often confuse /t/ and /tʰ/, struggling to differentiate between them. The negative transfer effect of finals in Shanxi dialect on English vowel pronunciation primarily stems from the dialect's pronunciation habits. Specifically, in the northern part of Shanxi, both /ai/ and /ei/ are uniformly pronounced as /ei/, while the indistinction between /au/ and /ə/ arises from different mouth shapes during pronunciation, leading to pronunciation deviations. The inability to distinguish /e/ or /æ/ from the central vowel /ə/ is attributed to the fact that these three sounds are similar in Chinese pronunciation, albeit with slight differences. In Chinese, they are habitually pronounced as the final a, which corresponds to the central vowel /ə/ in English. Additionally, in some Shanxi dialects, there exists the phenomenon of stress on the central vowel /ə/. In analyzing the consonant systems of English and Chongqing dialect, it is evident that the fricative sound /ʃ/ and the affricate sound /tʃ/ are absent in Chongqing dialect. Consequently, speakers of Chongqing dialect may substitute /ʃ/ with sounds of similar articulation positions, such as /ç/ or /s/, and /tʃ/ with sounds like /tʂʰ/ or /tɕʰ/, which occupy adjacent articulation positions. Lastly, in the Poyang dialect of the Gan dialect region, when pronouncing the vowel /ɪ/, the tongue position is more anterior and higher compared to native American speakers. When pronouncing /æ/, the tongue position is higher, and for /ɑ/, the tongue position is lower and more anterior. Consequently, this characteristic is also manifested in the English pronunciation of English learners from the Poyang dialect area.

Not only in the Nanjing dialect within the Wu dialect region, but also in most southern dialect regions of China, it is difficult to distinguish between the sounds /n/ and /l/. Furthermore, due to the absence of the sound /ŋ/ and the alveolar voiceless fricative /θ/ in the Nanjing dialect, learners tend to replace /ŋ/ with /n/ and erroneously equate /θ/ with the similar sound /s/ in their dialect during second language acquisition. Additionally, one of the primary characteristics of the Nanjing dialect is the devoicing of initial voiced consonants. Influenced by this dialect, learners often substitute the phonemes /b/, /d/, and /g/ with their unaspirated counterparts /p/, /t/, and /k/, respectively, and this tendency also manifests in their second language acquisition process. Besides, due to the absence of the initial consonant /v/ in the Nanjing dialect, English learners from this dialect area tend to replace

the target language phoneme /v/ with the similar phoneme /w/ found in their dialect. Additionally, the lack of the phoneme /r/ in the Nanjing dialect leads to pronunciation deviations among English learners from this background. The English phoneme /tʃ/ shares a similar pronunciation with the Chinese phoneme /tʂʰ/, thus under the influence of their dialect, Nanjing dialect English learners may substitute the encountered /tʃ/ with the similar phoneme /tʂʰ/.

## **5. The Implications of Transfer Phenomena for Instruction**

The fact that many errors in second language acquisition can be attributed to the transfer effect of dialects reveals the complexity of language learning and provides valuable insights into its underlying mechanisms. Second language acquisition is not a simple imitation, but a profound cognitive process that involves reorganizing the first language model and adjusting linguistic cognitive connections, which requires learners to have a keen ability of language perception and mind shift in order to build an effective bridge between the two languages.

### **5.1. Adjustment of Teaching Strategies**

In the teaching of English phonetics, teachers should utilize the phenomenon of positive transfer to promote its effects and encourage students to transfer beneficial elements from their dialects into their second language learning. At the same time, teachers must be vigilant against negative transfer and avoid its impacts and correct pronunciation errors caused by dialect interference in time. Firstly, teachers should gain a thorough understanding of students' dialect backgrounds, find out the similarities between students' dialects and English phonetics, as well as other aspects of dialects that positively influence English phonetic learning, and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. The commonalities, such as the possible similarity between the vowel pronunciation of certain dialects and English vowels, can be utilized to help students pronounce the sounds accurately, facilitating positive transfer. In addition, teachers can guide students to discover the positive connections between dialect and English phonology to increase confidence and interest in learning. By emphasizing the positive cases, students can realize that dialects can be a resource rather than an obstacle in learning English. Meanwhile, teachers need to be aware of the negative transfer effects of dialects on English speech. Systematic explanations of the organs of articulation and methods of pronunciation, as well as distinguishing the similarities and differences between dialect and English pronunciation, enable teachers to help students develop an accurate perception of English speech. To mitigate the negative effects, teachers should regularly assess pronunciation, correct errors in a timely manner, and provide accurate examples. Designing targeted comparison exercises will help students consolidate correct pronunciation habits [15].

### **5.2. Innovation in Teaching Methodology**

Educators need to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of migration and its effects in order to innovate teaching methods. First, teachers can adopt situational language teaching method to create real contexts in combination with students' daily life to help them practice pronunciation and oral expression. Second, multimedia-assisted teaching can provide standardized pronunciation models and rich speech materials through audio and video resources, which are convenient for students to imitate, practice and evaluate, so as to improve students' participation and pronunciation accuracy. Third, teachers should make individualized teaching plans for the dialect characteristics and pronunciation habits of students in different dialect areas. Fourth, teachers should pay attention to students' individual differences and provide personalized guidance and assistance to each student's pronunciation strengths and weaknesses. For students who struggle with pronunciation, additional attention and support should be provided via extra pronunciation drills, individualized instruction,

and psychological counseling to help them overcome these difficulties and improve the accuracy of their pronunciation. In addition, students' phonological awareness should be cultivated to promote self-monitoring and correction of pronunciation and enhance independent learning. Group discussion and peer-assisted learning can also enhance mutual support and progress among students.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper delves into the positive and negative transfer effects of dialects on the second language phonological acquisition process among Chinese learners, noting that these effects vary across different regions. Based on a review of relevant theoretical and empirical studies both domestically and internationally in recent years, and a thorough understanding of the development and current status of transfer theory in second language acquisition, this paper discusses the implications of the transfer phenomenon for students' English phonological learning and teachers' English phonological teaching. By promoting positive transfer effects, avoiding negative transfer effects, cultivating English phonological awareness, and enhancing autonomous learning abilities, this paper aims to assist learners in better mastering English learning capabilities. However, there is limited research on the individual differences in the effects of dialects on English phonological acquisition among Chinese English learners. Future studies can further explore the in-depth relationship between dialects and second language acquisition, pay attention to individual differences in the process of second language acquisition, and provide more scientific theoretical support and practical guidance for second language teaching.

## References

- [1] Wu, L.K. (2020). *A Study on the Acquisition of English Fricative and Affricate of Chongqing Native Speakers — Taking /f/ and /tʃ/ as examples*. Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai.
- [2] Du, C.C., Guo, Y. P., Gong, J. W., Jiang, C. R., Zhu, J. Z. (2022). *A Comprehensive Review of Native Language Transfer in Second Language Acquisition Processes*. *English Square*, 8: 53-56.
- [3] Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics Across Cultures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- [4] Selinker, L. (1969). *Language transfer*. *General Linguistics*, 9: 67-92.
- [5] Li, F.F. (2020). *A Review of the Studies on Transfer in Second Language Speech Acquisition*. *Nankai Linguistics*, 1: 138-144.
- [6] Chen, S.W. (2023) *Theories and New Development of Second Language Speech Production*. *Contemporary Linguistics*, 4: 541-561.
- [7] Jiang, L.P. (2019) *An Acoustic Study on Poyang EFL Learners Vowels Acquisition*. Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou.
- [8] Tian, M. (2022). *A Study on Dialect Transfer in English Monophthongs Learning — A Case of Undergraduates from Shandong Province*. Shandong Normal University, Jinan.
- [9] Wang, F.F. (2016). *An Experimental Phonetic Study on Acquisition of English Vowel Segments: A Case Study of Front Vowels /i/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/ by Learners of Shandong Dialect*. Shandong Agricultural University, Taian.
- [10] Sun, H. (2019). *An Experimental Study on Learners' Acquisition of English Vowels in Fuzhou Dialectal Area*. Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou.
- [11] Wang, Y.T. (2020). *The Impact of Northeastern Dialect on ESL Learners' Acquisition of English Phonology and Its Coping Strategies*. *Overseas English*, 14: 102-104.
- [12] Xu, L., Wang, Y. (2020). *An Experimental Study of Vowel Acoustic Features and Speech Errors by Chinese Mandarin-Speaking EFL Learners*. *Chinese Journal of Phonetics*, 14: 114-122.
- [13] Bai, C.Y., Hao, F.L. (2020). *An Analysis of the Causes of Negative Transfer of Shanxi Dialect in Second Language Acquisition*. *Chinese Character Culture*, 10: 17-18.
- [14] Sun, Y., Sun, Z. B. (2021). *Influence and Inspiration of Initial Consonant System in Nanjing Dialect on the Negative Transfer of the Second Language Acquisition*. *Journal of Chuzhou University*, 23: 37-41.
- [15] Song, Y., Wang, H. X., Wang, S. Q. (2020). *The Impact of Dialects on English Phonology from the Perspective of Migration Theory: Taking Shandong Dialect as an Example*. *English Square*, 1: 66-67.

# ***Understanding Gender Beyond Sex: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives on Equality and Justice***

**Zichun Zhou<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Beijing National Day School, Beijing, China*

*a. oliviazhou0801@gmail.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** In a world where more diversified voices are being heard, people tend to mix up important concepts. Misunderstanding often cause problems: stereotypical impression, incorrect behaviors and reactions, discrimination and inequality, and even warfare and hatreds. As the term feminism getting a higher frequency of use, and as more and more women winning their power, people start to reflect on this social group. They fight for gender equality, pursuing their aims of social justice. But when referring to gender equality, it is often that people mistakenly link it to the equality between biological female and male. That is, separating gender from sex, and view social problems through the idea of gender instead of sex is still something in need of discussion. This essay tends to clarify such misunderstanding, discusses how gender is different from sex and why is gender important from both philosophical and historical perspectives. In these analysis, this essay also includes the discussion of femininity and masculinity, making a point on the proper use of these descriptive words. In the end, this essay also tries to give practical political and societal solutions to achieve a higher level of social equality and justice.

**Keywords:** Sex, gender, equality, social justice.

## **1. Introduction**

Defines by the World Health Organization [1], gender refers to “the characteristic of men, women, boys and girls that are socially constructed.” It further explains that “as a social construct including associated norms, behaviors and roles, gender varies from society to society and change over time.” This definition might confuse a lot of people. Indeed, it is common to think gender as a nature of human being that we are born to be men or women. Seems to be misleading, this concept actually effectively distinguish the human-made social concept “gender” from another biological characteristics “sex”. Also defines by WHO, sex, on the other hand, refers to “the not mutually exclusive biological characteristic” distinguishing male and female. Primarily used as the short of sexual activity, sex is indeed the concept that physically differentiate people. Whatsoever, nowadays’s people tend to think of gender as sex, mixing up two concepts that are not even inconsistent with objectivity and subjectivity.

Misunderstanding gender as sex brings huge problem to both the people and the society. Prior to the invention of gender, male and female are just phrases to diversify people base on their natural biological characteristics, which is similar to categorizing animals into species base on their biological traits. However, with the emergence of gender, people started to take this concept as

something making one sex superior than the other, taking the difference between gender as that has been granted by the distinctions in sex. In other word, it is the existence of “gender” that assigns a group of people as “gender minorities” and brings them problem such as unable to access human right.

The main problem that this essay wants to discuss is how gender bounds the minority from accessing human rights and how we could break the limitations and reunite people. In order to discuss the problem cause by the misinterpreting gender as sex and gender minorities, this essay will focus on mainly three big perspectives to analyze the development and strengthening of the problematic understanding of gender. Starting on the philosophical perspective, this essay will explore the reason of creating “gender” and the pros and cons of generating any concept similar to that. Moving on to the second perspective, history and gender study, this essay will further elaborate on how our understandings of gender have bring limitations and inequality to certain group of people using historical evidences. Besides, this part will also bring up an associated discussion of masculinity and femininity to assist the analysis of gender. And at the very end, this essay will look from the view of politics and talk about the mutual effect between gender and political structure, political power, and policies. Finally after the analysis from three fields of study, this essay will try to provide efficient solutions to break limitations.

## **2. Philosophical Perspective: why we have the concept “gender”?**

First and foremost, the discussion of how and why the concept gender was generated is important. From a philosophical point of view, this part will talk about the formation of this concept and the pros and cons of developing such categorical idea.

As Joan Scott [2], an historian with outstanding contributions in the fields of gender history and intellectual history, stated in her book *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, back in 1986, feminists have adopted the term gender for differences in social sex construction, and at the same time theorists have applied gender as an analytic category similar to race. That is, gender in the field of academics has always been used as a term for distinguishing the different social roles of distinct sex.

Some may argue that since we already have differences in sexes, why we still generated the concept gender to further distinguish people? Harriet Bradley’s [3] analysis of three positions of gender in the society gives answers to this question. As he claimed, gender should be taken as a social construct, a politically deployed construct, and a live experience. As a social construct, gender, instead of being a fixed construct, “varies according to time, place, and culture”. Bradley also points out that gender has been serving as an indicative political implication for a long time, strengthening the political structure and social structure. Additionally, he claims that gender is something “formed” and “gained”, but not something natural. The above analysis clearly lay out why a related term gender should exist along with sex: unlike sex which is naturally fixed and given, gender could be generated according to time, space, and culture, and can be attain by people’s experiences and political believes, further push the social structure and atmosphere to form. It is a more comprehensive and subjective way to distinguish people, leaving spaces for the boundaries to not just form based on physical characteristics.

Whatsoever, the existence of gender is a debatable thing due to the pros and cons it brings. A positive influence that gender brings is that for people who’s not satisfied with their born sex, gender gives them an opportunity to redefine their social role. In fact, there are more than 80 genders in the world, leaving people spaces to explore their true self and help them to establish their values. On the other hand, gender is also strengthening some sort of stereotypes, limiting people’s behaviors. According to a research done by Madeline E. Heilman [4], both descriptive gender stereotypes and



prescriptive gender stereotypes give rise to biased judgements and decisions, impeding women's advancement.

### 3. Historical Perspective: Consequences of Limitations of Gender Inequality

For a better overview of how this concept has changed the world, this part will use historical evidences to further explain the consequences of limitations, and will also introduce a correspondent idea of masculinity and femininity from the field of gender study to widen the discussion of gender and its barriers.

As Kendall Oswald stated in his 2023 [5] published essay, "gender discrimination has been a significant issue throughout history. Women have been denied the right to education, employment, and political participation based solely on their gender." Many historical events support Oswald's claims. For example, in the novel *Life on a Mediaeval Barony, chapter XVI* [6] tells stories about peasants in ancient society. Something noticeable is that "every girl looks toward to her marriage as the climax of life", indicating the fact that women are surviving under a feudal society that their human rights are somewhat suppressed. Another important evidence is women's suffrage. At the very beginning when democracy first developed and used, women hold no suffrage. Take the U.S as an example, it was not until 1910 that states had extended the right to vote to women. Before that, women took a decade to fight for their human rights and voting rights. As stated in the essay *History of Women Suffrage* [7], the story of how women have formed their egotism throughout the process of fighting for suffrage is presented. The essay further justifies the truth that suffrage was a big barrier for women all around the world. Furthermore, the 2021 report published by the International Monetary Fund provides evidence for Oswald's [8] claim. In the report, IMF points out that "gender inequality in the context of structural transformation and rebalancing in China is an ongoing problem." They find out the unexpected declines in women's relative wages and labor force participation in China during the period when China had rapid growth in economics. Besides, they also point out that "labor market barriers for women have increased over time". All the above phenomena reveal the truth that gender, throughout in the long history, indeed creates barriers. The new category that it creates put certain groups of people, for example women, into the minority circle, bounding away them from those who are considered superior.

At the same time, gender is closely related to masculinity and femininity. Or in other words, masculinity and femininity seems to be aligned with gender, serving as the description of genders. This is somehow true since, according to a French intellectual Simone de Beauvoir [9], "one is not born but rather becomes, a woman." In these words he clearly expresses what kind of things femininity should describe: a state or a set of attributes closely related to women. Femininity, similar to gender, depicts the characteristic of the overall image of women. However, it is never the best to think of women and femininity, men and masculinity as the same thing. One significant example is the LGBTQs. Gays and lesbians, not always the case but, are the best examples of femininity on men and masculinity on women. In the movie *The Wedding Banquet* [10] produced by director Ang Lee, a gay couple Wei-tung and Simon encountered pressures from Wei-tung's family and decided to form a marriage of convenience with their tenant Wei-wei. While almost all the characters in the movie got more negative comments, Simon is widely praised by the audiences for his personality and behaviors. Simon, the feminine side in the relationship, is caring, graceful, thoughtful, kind. But it was always him making the sacrifices. He suggested Wei-tung to marry Wei-wei, and after Wei-wei accidentally got pregnant, he agreed to the birth of the child and eventually raised him. Besides, in *A Letter to My Nephew*, James Baldwin reveals the hardness of minority people. As a homosexual himself, Baldwin deeply understands how his trait as black and gay build huge barriers in front of him, delinking his connection to the rest of the world. As a man, he also encounters problems and limitations, suggesting that it is not simply gender that categorize people into different "levels", the



idea of masculinity superior than femininity is also an issue. That is, gender minority might not only be the barriers in front of women, instead, it limit people with great femininity.

The stereotypical ideas of women and femininity has been rooted in the society for too long that it's hard to make changes in a short period of time. It might not be effective for the government to make changes. Instead, the approaches of shortening the gender inequality should start from the public: public education. The society could erase the misunderstanding of gender by educating little kids of what gender really do and how we can treat the differences between masculinity and femininity properly. Education would be able to plant the correct thinking deep inside people's mind, and therefore changes, as much as possible, the social values about women and femininity.

#### **4. Political Perspective: Political Influences on Gender Problems**

It is never just the formation and widespread of the misunderstanding that lead to all these limitations, indeed, the political structure and political powers also play an important part in strengthening the misleading idea about gender.

Some ancient approaches of political structures were formed based on stereotypical understanding of gender and femininity. Democracy, the well-known political structure, was first generated in ancient Greece and republican Rome. As an approach that give right to human to decide how they want the country to be regulated, democracy is a praised political approach. However, it exclude women at the very beginning. In ancient Athena, all adult citizens were required to take an active part in the government. What they meant by all adult is only including white men. This is a valid example telling how the formation of political structure was based on gender inequality.

Then, those political structures, political powers, and related policies solidified the gender misconception at the same time. The exercising of those discriminated political approaches left no space for the minorities to stress their dissatisfaction. Without any other ways, the minority started their movements and rebellions. Rebellions put women on the position of minority because it's always the weak who has no control and can make changes only outside the regulation; worse, no response doesn't even give women the position of minority because they would never be the "adult citizens" who can have the right they should have.

#### **5. Solutions**

The formation of political structure and the solidification of political approaches mutually affect each other, making gender inequality a huge thing in the field of politics. To solve this problem, one necessary approach is to regulate political structure. For democratic countries, the government should pay effort in raising the proportion of minorities who are involved in democratic decision making, best avoiding the circumstance of minority group holding no right to vote; and for other government types such as authoritarianism, government should balance gender's political power as equal as they can when making decisions. By making changes from the origin, gender inequality would be able to alleviate.

#### **6. Conclusions**

Gender issue is never something easy to address: it has exists for a long time, and has been misunderstood by many people. It is important that we are able to recognize this misunderstanding between sex and gender, and it is also crucial that we put effort in correcting those misunderstandings and achieving higher equality. Identity should never be a frame that limit people from being powerful and thoughtful. By clarifying this concept and analyzing the negative influences of such misconception, the society would be able to achieve a higher level of justice.

## References

- [1] World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Gender and health*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender>
- [2] Scott, J. (1986). *Gender: A useful category of historical analysis*. *The American Historical Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/91.5.1053>
- [3] Bradley, H. (2013). *Gender*. Wiley.
- [4] Heilman, M. E. (2012, November 20). *Gender stereotypes and workplace bias*. *Research in Organizational Behavior*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191308512000093>
- [5] Hussin J. Hejase, A. J. H. (2020, November 24). *Gender discrimination: The gender wage gap*. *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research*. <https://www.abacademies.org/articles/gender-discrimination-the-gender-wage-gap-9746.html>
- [6] Davis, W. S. (2014). *Life on a mediaeval barony*. Perlego.
- [7] Stanton, E. C., Anthony, S. B., & Gage, M. J. (2018). *History of woman suffrage*. Seltzer Books.
- [8] Brussevich, M., Dabla-Norris, E., & Li, B. G. (2021, May 11). *China's rebalancing and gender inequality*. IMF. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2021/05/11/China-s-Rebalancing-and-Gender-Inequality-50250>
- [9] Beauvoir, S. de. (1986). *La Deuxieme Sexe*. Gallimard.
- [10] Lee, A. (1993). *The Wedding Banquet*.

# ***The Atypical Neural Processing of Reward in Bipolar Disorder***

Yiran Yuan<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Beijing No.35 High School, Beijing, China

a. a84363960@tzc.edu.cn

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** There are still many unanswered questions regarding bipolar disorder among researchers. Understanding the characteristics of a particular area and neuroeconomics can aid in a more thorough examination of reward dysfunction and the reward process. Because changes in reward are undoubtedly one of the most prevalent signs of psychopathology in humans, researchers try to understand the prevalence of these diseases as well as the importance of reward in the manifestation of these conditions. Research indicates that different biological entities with comparable phenotypic symptoms make up bipolar illness. Finding the primary and secondary rewards connected to the functioning resting-state of bipolar illness patients' brain circuits is the goal of another investigation. On the other hand, using a reward task that begins with the expectation and consumption of rewarding and nonrewarding outcomes and progresses through fixation point, target, and outcome screen, researchers hope to better understand the connections between healthy individuals and BD patients' reward processing and striatal responses. This review can provide some suggestions to the development of prevention and intervention programs for individuals at risk of BD.

**Keywords:** Bipolar Disorder, neural processing, reward processing, stress.

## **1. Introduction**

In psychopathology, abnormal reward processing has a feature that transdiagnostic. Nowadays, because almost any similar case which has a little bit difference are diagnosed as bipolarity, it shows limitations in articulating integrate opinion on bipolar disorder [1]. As a result, considering different aspects of reward processing and neuroeconomics field that can aid to understanding reward process. To better understand reward dysfunction, researchers need to find characteristics of specific region, like hedonics, reward anticipation, facilitation and so on [2]. In recent years, there has been a "unified field theory" of diseases that begin early in life, get worse with time, and involve neurodevelopmental problems such as bipolar illness that are associated to functional abnormalities. Several research investigations have already indicated a number of processing impairments that may cause different kinds of selective modifications in reward-related behavior. These investigations addressed signaling from positive prediction errors, cost variables and reward dysfunctional weighting, (mal)adaptive scaling and anchoring, and concluding valuation systems. Moreover, cellular research has shown that fast shrinkage of brain regions is required for cognitive function and mood regulation; as a result, bipolar disorder is associated with disturbance of glial-neuronal interactions. In the euthymic state, sometimes referred to as drive inflammatory activation, the body will revert to normal in accordance

with modifications in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. Research also shows that both the manic and depressed stages of the illness, inflammation rises, and hyperactive microglia are present in bipolar individuals. In conclusion, etiology and onological state cannot be combined by a single gene, pathway, or aberrant brain activity to produce complete knowledge. Researchers therefore strive to explore the possibility that this perspective could lead to the discovery of other related forms of bipolar disease and have a major impact on treatment outcomes, which is why researchers need to expand and enhance treatment.

Repeated mood episodes, no matter how small, have been shown in epidemiologic studies to cause significant volumetric changes in the brain that are linked to impairment in numerous functional domains. Research indicates that bipolar disorder is a destructive and violent syndrome. Researchers now know that neuropsychological deficiencies consistently maintain that patients with the illness are in a euthymic state. Regretfully, rather than precisely defining causal pathways, the existing diagnostic criterion for bipolar disorder only relies on descriptive nomenclature [1]. Furthermore, the current pharmaceutical therapies suffer from worsening metabolic conditions. Additionally, negative effects impair cognition in those who already struggle in this area. Consequently, difficulties associated with treatment and polypharmacy often result in less-than-ideal treatment adherence. Thanks to advancements in genetics, neuroimaging, biochemistry, and other fields, bipolar disease may now be seen from various angles. Finally, a deeper understanding of the neurobiological distinctions across bipolar subtypes is necessary to enhance treatment success and minimize adverse effects. According to studies, there are several biological entities that make up the diagnostic entity known as bipolar disorder, all of which share comparable phenotypic characteristics. Improved knowledge of the connection between the phenotypic signs of bipolar illness and microscopic and macroscopic brain abnormalities (such as modifications in cellular and subcellular signaling) should result in less disruptive and more successful treatment approaches. Because the sickness is diverse in terms of both hereditary and neurological makeup, researchers are attempting to investigate probabilistic relationships between the pathophysiological bases and clinical presentations of the illness.

Take into account the frequency of these diseases as well as the importance of reward in the manifestation of these conditions [2]. It is arguable that one of the most prevalent signs of psychopathology in humans is reward modification. These symptoms might potentially be a factor in the comorbidity of the two mental illnesses. This is because a variety of distinct disorders are listed as having similar symptoms in the official diagnostic standards. Furthermore, because the formation and appearance of various forms of psychopathology are fundamentally impacted by comparable or related reward processing problems. These days, scholars try to establish a conceptual framework for reward abnormalities and to summarize the existing understanding of reward processing in psychopathology. Particularly, they are drawn from the emerging domains of neuroeconomics and behavior. Recent research has yielded novel insights into the mechanisms involved in decision-making and valuation.

## **2. The Complications of Reward Processing in BD**

### **2.1. Reward Processing in BD and At-Risk Populations**

This study looks at how reward prediction errors in the prefrontal brain of bipolar illness patients and their family members progress abnormally [3]. It is believed that differences in impulsiveness and pleasure-seeking impact how the brain interprets rewards, predicts mistakes, and links susceptibility in families. The study uses a financial card game to compare functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) data from BD patients and their unaffected first-degree relatives with those from healthy people. Studies look at how the prefrontal cortex, ventral striatum, and midbrain behave differently

while predicting errors or valuing rewards. Because of this, the prediction error signal is reduced in the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex and the supplementary motor area in both BD patients and their unaffected relatives. In comparison to healthy controls, there is no correlation observed between the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex prediction error signal and the out-of-scanner motor inhibition measure in patients with BD and their unaffected relatives. As expected, the study finds that prefrontal inhibitory control deficits are linked to reward processing anomalies in BD patients. However, insufficient planning movement activation seems to suggest a connection to the family history of BD patients.

The first 10 volumes of each subject were removed in order to reduce the impacts of magnetization disequilibrium and participant acclimation to the scanning noise. Spatial realignment was therefore omitted for head motion correction (mean head motion,) greater than 0.2 mm/degree [4]. The 17th slice was used as the reference for slice time calculations. Following the removal of one patient from the BDM group from the statistical analysis, there was no significant difference between the two groups' numbers of outlier volumes. The composite average and maximum assessments of head motion did not differ between the two groups. Following this, each patient's segmented, high-resolution T1-weighted anatomical images were registered to their fMRI scans, and regression analysis was performed on the signals originating from their cerebral spinal fibers and white matter. After normalization, an isotropic, 6-mm full-width at half maximum Gaussian kernel was used to spatially smooth the fMRI images. Ultimately, respiratory and cardiovascular noise was eliminated using temporal band-pass filtering and detrending.

This work investigates the relationship between the resting-state function of brain circuits and main and secondary rewards affected by bipolar disorder. There are sixty BD patients in this study; twenty-one of them have depressive episodes (BDD), and the remaining forty have manic episodes. When BD patients' secondary reward circuit is compared to that of normal participants, researchers find that rsFC at the orbitofrontal cortex and left ventral striatum is smaller. Additionally, rsFC shows a lowest level in BDD and a highest level when situated between the OFC and right striatum, or amygdale in BDM. Researchers use resting-state functional connectivity (rsFC) to calculate participants' interest-wise analyses area. These findings suggest that BD patients may exhibit unusual patterns of rsFC at these locations during second reward and in relation to their mood states.

A monetary incentive delay (MID) task is one in which participants are aware that, upon completion of the training session, they will receive a monetary reward [5]. Participants in the task are thus presented with five distinct amounts of money (500,100), including the option to gain no money at all (0,{0}) or lose some money (-100). In addition to one trial where participants are prompted to press a button to indicate success, there is another with no incentive or feedback (0). The crossbar will be presented after a configurable delay of 1500–2000 ms, during which participants must wait. After that, they pressed a button to react for varying lengths of time (between 100 and 700 ms) to a white target square. To keep participant hit rates between 60 and 70 percent, researchers modified the target square's presentation duration based on each participant's performance. For instance, the target's display length was decreased by 30 ms if participants "hit" it in all except the "0" or "[0]" trials over the last three trials. With the exception of "0" or "[0]" trials, people's time to "miss" the target was increased by 30 milliseconds if they failed to do so on two or more trials. Participants can view comments regarding their task performance following each trial. Participants that perform well will receive financial compensation as a reward. Each cue was delivered ten times during the task's two runs of fifty trials, with the cues' order being pseudo-random each time. Before the initial run, there will also be a quick practice run. Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants evaluated the level of tension and joy connected with each reward at the conclusion of each run. A higher score indicated a higher level of stress or joy.

Few studies explore the difference of reward system abnormalities in remitted states, however, in this study by using functional MRI in Monetary Incentive Delay task. In this research there are 65 patients in total. 33 of them are BD patients, 32 of them are MDD patients, 33 of them are healthy controls [6]. Researchers also test the difference between the dimensional effect of depression in brain and normal condition. As a result, researchers found out BD patients decreased activation a lot in anterior cingulate cortex, anterior insula (AI) and putamen, when there is reward compared to healthy people. MDD patients have decreased lots of activation in AI and brainstem. There are serious trend-level differences in BD patients and MDD patients in right brainstem. In this study shows there are difference depression effect on reward system between BD patients and MDD patients. To conclude, in future studies the reward system may should distinct MDD and BD patients' depressive phase.

There is a study to distinguish healthy youth at bipolar disorder familial risk and youth at a major depressive disorder familial risk to find out their neural correlations of reward processing. That is because youth at BD-risk and MDD-risk have characteristics of abnormal reward processing. By comparing 45 healthy participants, 41 MDD-risk, and 40 BD-risk through the MID Task in monetary game to find out their activation and connectivity. In the study, it focusses behavioral and clinical outcomes in around 2.08 to 6.66 years by MID task. Researchers find that BD-risk have lower activation in cerebellum when compare to HC and MDD-risk. In monetary gain games, researchers use region-of-interest (ROI) analyses in ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, thalamus, putamen seeds and nucleus accumbens. To BD-risk, MDD-risk has higher connection in left-superior temporal gyrus, thalamus, cerebellum, left middle frontal gyrus, by psychopathological interaction analyses. When there is reduced thalamic activation in reward process with decrease in prosocial behavior and increase impulsivity, researchers then can distinguish familial risk for BD with MDD familial risk indicated that social dysfunction during adolescence.

## 2.2. A Developmental Perspective

Studies have shown that it is effective in identifying abnormal expected value (EV) and reward prediction error (RPE) signals in people with BD [7]. There were three steps in each of the 48 trials in this exercise: guessing, anticipation, and outcome phase. Players must click the button to indicate whether they thought the value of the card that will be shown later would be higher or lower than three or five seconds during each guessing phase. Then, a sign showing an upward, downward, or no arrow will be displayed and will jitter for a few seconds to indicate the probability of winning, losing, or nothing changing during the waiting period. A feedback screen with three distinct dollar symbols will therefore appear after the real number on the card (500 ms) appears. The dollar symbols are a green dollar symbol with an upward-pointing arrow (500 ms) indicating gain (6 DKK), a red dollar symbol with a downward-pointing arrow (4.5 DKK), or a yellow circle indicating no change (0 DKK). Consequently, anticipating a loss will result in a loss outcome (i.e., loss trials) or a no change outcome (i.e., relief trials); on the other hand, anticipating a victory will result in a win outcome (i.e., win trials) or a no change outcome (i.e., disappointment trials). The trials were randomised, with twelve appearances for each condition. They won't share information or exert influence. The exercise took seven minutes overall since the intertrial intervals were jittered with a fixation cross (0.5–1.5 s). A practice task was completed by participants before the scan. They had no idea that after the fMRI procedure, they had been paid a set amount of 30 DKK (\$4.5).

The study is used to explore the special path of reward processing in bipolar disorder patients. Researchers invited both remitted BD patients and healthy people (HC) for a card guessing task and test by fMRI. 41 BD patients and 36 HC will be tested again after 16 months to explore the relation of neuronal response to reward and compute influence of mood relapse [8]. As a result, patients have lower RPE than normal people signal in ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (vlPFC) and decrease EV signal in occipital cortex, which means feature of dysfunctional reward-based learning or habituation.



Some patients normalize EV signal over time, which means normalization of reward anticipation activity. HC has decreased in RPE signal which patients do not show. There are still some limitations, fMRI scan needs to reflect varied of process from primary to diagnosis of BD patients' illness duration, follow -up time and medication status, but fMRI cannot do that now.

This study for the first time explored bipolar disorder patients' longitudinal brain activation changes when there are win and loss anticipation to find out their special anticipatory processing. Researchers chose 34 depressed and euthymic BD-I patients and 17 healthy people to participate in study. By using fMRI six months begin and after researchers find out when healthy participants predicting possible money loss their right lateral occipital cortex reduce activity in longitudinal. Subthreshold hypo/mania symptoms are elevated in 12.5% of BD patients at baseline as abnormal longitudinal patterns of neural activity. Overall, there is likely a correlation between increased negative emotional arousal and increased occipital brain activity when bad outcomes are anticipated. That is because BD patients cannot learn and realize money loss is less than money gain. BD patients also cannot have less emotional arousal for at least 6 months.

### 2.3. Stress as a Relevant Factor

Processing reward under stress is likely to be different compared to without. Use a modified version of the Trier Social Stress Test (TSST) in this study to measure psychosocial stress. Fifty minutes after the start of the TSST, the incentive task was completed in the MRI scanner. The reward task in this study starts with the expectation and intake of both nonrewarding and rewarding outcomes. It then moves through the target, the outcome screen, and the fixation point. During the target presentation, participants were to hit a button as quickly as they could, regardless of the type of cue. This trial was marked as a hit if the button was touched within the allotted time.

This study explored the connect of healthy people and BD patients' reward processing and striatal responses [9]. Stress has influenced BD patients' mood episodes and healthy participants' reward processing system which depend on time to distinguish. In the study, after stress researchers using fMRI to test participants' brain responses when there is reward processing for 50 minutes. They also set up two prerequisites for the participants: the Trier Social Stress Test and the no-stress condition. In healthy individuals, ventral striatal responses and cortisol levels increase in response to stress or reward outcomes. BD participants will also increase cortisol levels when they feel stress. To conclude, there is no difference between participants when they are feeling stress but there is difference between participants with their ventral striatal to reward outcome. This study first shows when BD patients recover from stress, how change reward processing and reduce neural flexibility of hedonic signaling. Let more researchers realize the susceptibility to environmental challenges.

### 3. The Effectiveness of Intervening the Reward System in BD

In order to examine neural activity during reward or loss and expectation, the study's reward task required participants to complete two event-related card-guessing games in eight minutes each. Twelve possible outcomes (16 for a loss, 12 for a win, and 12 for neutral) were included in each of the two blocks' trials, and the reward expectancy regressor was calculated from all of the trials. To guarantee that every participant felt their performance influenced the outcome, trials were given in pseudorandom order, with 75 minutes removed for a loss and one dollar awarded for a win. In fact, each trial's outcome was predetermined, with \$6 won.

This study is unique in that the anode was extracephalic (EC), located on the contralateral shoulder, was stimulated [10]. During the 16.5-minute reward task, transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) was used, with a 30-second ramp up at the beginning and a 30-second ramp down at the end. Participants will receive a constant 1 mA current while they are in fMRI. One week apart, participants

underwent two counterbalanced scans: the first used the F7-EC montage, which targets the left vIPFC as previously described, and the second used the CP1-EC montage, which targets the left somatosensory cortex. The participants in each group had the two scans in a counterbalanced order to reduce the possibility of practice effects on behavioral and brain interest measures. Participants also didn't know the order of the montage. The left somatosensory cortex serves as the investigation's control region. This is due to the fact that cathodal tDCS over the left vIPFC, as opposed to cathodal tDCS over the left somatosensory cortex, produced a more concentrated and potent electric field at (and current flow to) the left vIPFC, according to earlier research using eurotargeting. Somatosensory cortex tDCS has minimal effect on vIPFC and subcortical areas.

The effects of targeted cathodal transcranial current stimulation on bipolar disorder patients' reward systems are investigated in this study. The purpose of the research is to determine whether cathodal tDCS affects left vIPFC functional and activity linkages to other regions in bipolar disorder patients as well as healthy people. Consider how tDCS impacts, not the control area, but the left vIPFC's reward system and hypo-/manic episodes. Participants in a card-guessing game monitor brain activity associated with expectancy, reward, and loss perception. They are made to believe that the result is determined by how well they do, yet this is untrue. Every week, the participants will get two scans, one of which will focus on the left vIPFC and the other on the left somatosensory cortex. Selecting the left somatosensory cortex as the control region will guarantee that the cathodal tDCS over the left vIPFC have a stronger and more concentrated electric field than those over the left somatosensory cortex. To avoid confusion about the possible montage, affect result, two scans across their order and calculations made before and after each scan using the Positive and Negative Affect schedule are required. Left BA24, right BA24, and left BA32 are impacted by this, since cathodal tDCS over left vIPFC are less active than left somatosensory cortex. Post-scan affect is reduced after cathodal tDCS over left vIPFC by controlling other parameters, compared to left somatosensory cortex.

#### 4. Conclusion

Bipolar disorder participants showed the difference between reward system activation and major depressive disorder participants in the monetary incentive delay task. And researchers have already known that both BD patients and their unaffected relative's lower prediction error signal in different regions. Thus, researchers found that BD patients reward processing have related deficits in inhibitory control of prefrontal regions. There is also a study that showed there are probably unusual patterns of rsFC at OFC and LVS in second reward and different mood states of BD patients. One of the research's results show there is no different between participants when they feel stress but has difference between participants with their ventral striatal to reward outcome, when BD patients in recovery of stress how change reward processing and reduce neural flexibility of hedonic signaling and more researchers realize the susceptibility to environmental challenges. There is one study distinguishing healthy youth at bipolar disorder familial risk and youth at a major depressive disorder familial risk to find out their neural correlations of reward processing. There probably have connection with familial vulnerability to BD patients. Also, BD patients must have a feature of dysfunctional reward-based learning or habituation. Some patients' normalization of EV signal over time, which means normalization of reward anticipation activity, but there are still need more studies. What's more, BD patients cannot learn and realize money loss are less than money gain and cannot have less emotion arousal in short time. Furthermore, a card-guessing game is used to evaluate brain activity associated to expectation and earning rewards or losses in a study examining the impact of focused cathodal transcranial current stimulation on the reward system in bipolar disorder patients. Overall, by adjusting for other variables, post-scan effect was found to be lower after cathodal tDCS over left vIPFC than over left somatosensory cortex.

## References

- [1] Maletic, V., and Raison, C. (2014). *Integrated neurobiology of bipolar disorder*. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 5, 98.
- [2] Zald, D.H., and Treadway, M.T. (2017). *Reward processing, neuroeconomics, and psychopathology*. *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 13(1), 471-495.
- [3] Macoveanu, J., Kjaerstad, H.L., Chase, H.W., Frangou, S., Knudsen, G.M., Vinberg, M., and Miskowiak, K.W. (2020). *Abnormal prefrontal cortex processing of reward prediction errors in recently diagnosed patients with bipolar disorder and their unaffected relatives*. *Bipolar Disorders*, 22(8), 849-859.
- [4] Shi, J., Guo, H., Liu, S., Xue, W., Fan, F., Fan, H., and Tan, Y. (2020). *Resting-state functional connectivity of neural circuits associated with primary and secondary rewards in patients with bipolar disorder*. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 15(7), 755-763.
- [5] Wakatsuki, Y., Ogura, Y., Hashimoto, N., Toyomaki, A., Miyamoto, T., Nakagawa, and S., Kusumi, I. (2022). *Subjects with bipolar disorder showed different reward system activation than subjects with major depressive disorder in the monetary incentive delay task*. *Psychiatry and clinical neurosciences*, 76(8), 393-400.
- [6] Nimarko, A.F., Gorelik, A.J., Carta, K.E., Gorelik, M.G., and Singh, M.K. (2022). *Neural correlates of reward processing distinguish healthy youth at familial risk for bipolar disorder from youth at familial risk for major depressive disorder*. *Translational Psychiatry*, 12(1), 31.
- [7] Macoveanu, J., Stougaard, M.E., Kjaerstad, H.L., Knudsen, G.M., Vinberg, M., Kessing, L.V., and Miskowiak, K.W. (2022). *Trajectory of aberrant reward processing in patients with bipolar disorder—A longitudinal fMRI study*. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 312, 235-244.
- [8] Manelis, A., Stiffler, R., Lockovich, J.C., Almeida, J.R., Aslam, H.A., and Phillips, M.L. (2019). *Longitudinal changes in brain activation during anticipation of monetary loss in bipolar disorder*. *Psychological medicine*, 49(16), 2781-2788.
- [9] van Leeuwen, J.M., Vink, M., Joëls, M., Kahn, R.S., Hermans, E.J., and Vinkers, C.H. (2019). *Reward-related striatal responses following stress in healthy individuals and patients with bipolar disorder*. *Biological Psychiatry: Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuroimaging*, 4(11), 966-974.
- [10] Bertocci, M.A., Chase, H.W., Graur, S., Stiffler, R., Edmiston, E.K., Coffman, B.A., and Phillips, M.L. (2021). *The impact of targeted cathodal transcranial direct current stimulation on reward circuitry and affect in Bipolar Disorder*. *Molecular psychiatry*, 26(8), 4137-4145.

# ***Negative and Positive Emotions of Individuals Worldwide During COVID-19***

**Xiya Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>School of Psychology, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S1 4DP, The United Kingdom  
a. xwang392@sheffield.ac.uk*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The mental health of individuals has received widespread attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is still a lack of unified explanations for the emotional responses of different countries and regions during the pandemic. Therefore, this study analyzed the changes in negative and positive emotions among people from different countries during the epidemic from a cross-cultural perspective. This study found that people experienced higher levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness during the quarantine period than before the pandemic. Studies reveal that the imposition of quarantine restrictions has made mental health issues worse by restricting social interactions and elevating emotions of despair and dissatisfaction. Despite the increase in negative emotions, the study also found that people during the epidemic promoted positive emotions in a number of ways. Prior studies suggest that engaging in prosocial behaviors—such as helping others—can enhance individuals' emotional well-being. Moreover, physical activity (PA) and mindfulness meditation have been identified as effective strategies for mitigating NE and fostering PE. This study explores the situation of individual emotional responses globally and provides theoretical support for the management of future public health crises.

**Keywords:** Emotions, Worldwide, COVID-19.

## **1. Introduction**

The COVID-19 epidemic has a great impact on people's lives around the world and seriously endangers people's health. The weekly report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) shows a total of 109,206,497 cases and 2,407,469 deaths in 219 national, territorial and international transport vehicles as of 18 February 2021 [1]. COVID-19 has not only harmed people's physical health but has also had a serious impact on mental health (MH). Santomauro et al. found that global cases of major depression increased by 27.6% in 2020 during the epidemic, while global cases of anxiety disorders increased by 25.6% [2]. The global quarantine of people at home is an important strategy to combat the outbreak and reduce the spread of the virus. Some studies showed that compared with before the outbreak of the epidemic, people's anxiety and depression are generally increased during the epidemic quarantine, which has a significant impact on college students [3-6]. Although negative emotions (NE) have increased significantly, research has also found that practices such as prosocial behavior (PB), physical activity (PA) and meditation can help improve people's emotional stability and happiness during the epidemic [7-9].

This study will analyze and summarize the emotional impact of quarantine on people during the epidemic and the reasons for it, based on the research reports during the epidemic. This study will combine the research findings from multiple countries and regions. The present study offers a new and integrate insight into the impact of the epidemic on the positive and negative emotions of individuals around the world.

## **2. The Impact of Epidemic on Individual Negative Emotions (NE)**

Liu et al. showed that quarantine during an epidemic could lead to adverse MH consequences and increase the likelihood of depression [10]. Tang et al. studied the association between PA and anxiety and depression in college students under closed management during the pandemic [3]. This study recruited a sample of 479 college students aged 17-26 from a university in Jiangsu Province, China. The study used four self-assessment measures. The research results of Tang et al. show that although participation in sports activities helped alleviate NE, the management of campus closures during the pandemic led to an increase in overall NE among college students. For example, they are more likely to be nervous, anxious and angry, have persistent low moods, and have poor sleep quality. This means that locking down schools during the pandemic has restricted the freedom of college students to enter and leave the campus, so some of their personal needs cannot be satisfied. Campus lockdowns can also lead to fewer extracurricular activities and make it difficult to relieve the pressure of learning. In addition, Cao et al. found that during the pandemic, taking online classes and having uncertain exam schedule would further aggravate students' anxiety [4]. Meanwhile, it is difficult to establish connections with the outside world when living with roommates for a long time, and interpersonal pressure will also increase.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, not only did the NE of college students in China increase, but this also happened in the United States and European countries. Hagen et al.'s study found that levels of NE among American adults increased significantly during the epidemic [5]. The study had a very broad sample coverage, with data from about 80,000 adults in all 50 states and one district. Respondents were randomly selected every day to ask whether they had experienced NE such as sadness or loneliness the day before. Later inquiries also included whether they had experienced depression or anxiety. The analysis showed that early stress and worry were the most prominent NE. As the epidemic continues, feelings of depression, anxiety and loneliness are increasing. Compared with 2019 (data for 2019 was collected through a Gallup World Poll survey of 1026 United States respondents), the prevalence of worry and anger increased significantly, being 11.3% and 9.1% higher respectively [5]. This means that the negative emotional stress brought by the epidemic period is much higher than the normal period, reflecting the serious impact of public health crisis on the MH of residents. In addition, Oliverira Carvalho et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 13 research reports on NE among students in European countries during the pandemic, involving 18,220 participants from 9 different European countries [6]. These data showed that more than half of the samples had anxiety and depression during the lockdown period, which fully demonstrated the significant impact of COVID-19 on anxiety and depression among students.

Li and Zhao found that COVID-19 led to an increase in individuals' NE, which in turn affected their judgment of risks, causing them to perceive risks as higher and assess benefits as lower [11]. The study recruited 373 Chinese participants and divided them into areas severely affected by the epidemic and areas less affected. Participants rated 12 specific risk events (in terms of risk and benefit), and then measured their fear and anxiety about the risk events. The results showed that people in the severe area increased their judgment of risk and reduced their judgment of benefit; The study did not detail the extent to which participants in less affected areas were affected in their judgments of risk and benefit. However, the findings suggest that the severity of the epidemic has an important impact on an individual's judgment of risk and benefits. Meanwhile, Li and Zhao shown



that NE played a mediating role in the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on risk and benefit judgment [11]. This means that people who have experienced severe epidemics tend to overestimate the risks of events and reduce the benefits of events due to their fear and concern about risk events.

The commonness of the above studies is that they all show a significant increase in people's NE during the COVID-19 pandemics, especially anxiety, depression, and loneliness. This phenomenon is widespread among different countries and groups. All studies used scales or self-assessment tools to measure changes in mood, but they had different emphases. Tang et al. emphasized that PA could alleviate NE in university students, while Cao et al. focused on study pressure aggravating anxiety [3,4]. Li and Zhao further explored the impact of NE on risk and benefit judgment, revealing how emotions affect cognition [11]. Hagen et al.'s study covers a broader scope, showing the mood swings of United States residents during the epidemic [5]. Similarly, a study by Oliverira Carvalho et al. analyzed NE among students in nine European countries during the pandemic [6].

### **3. The Impact of Epidemic on Individual Positive Emotions (PE)**

However, in addition to triggering NE, COVID-19 can also have a positive impact on an individual's emotions. Varma et al. showed that PB during the COVID-19 epidemic increased positive effects and promoted people's emotional health [12]. PBs during COVID-19 include helping others by donating money, blood and protective gear [12]. Varma et al.'s experiment 2 had 1,421 participants, of which 664 were female, with a relatively balanced gender ratio. Participants were randomly assigned to different conditions. The study surveyed participants about COVID-19 related and unrelated purchases and measured their positive and negative feelings through self-reports. The results of the study found that both conditions boosted PE, but the positive benefits were higher when people made purchases unrelated to COVID-19. This means that when people are under closed management of the epidemic, PB will bring greater happiness and sense of meaning. All the people are united for one goal - to fight the epidemic, which enhances the interaction and connection between people and the individual's sense of belonging to society.

Exercising during quarantine can also boost an individual's positive mood. Carriedo et al. found that elderly people who often insisted on exercise during isolation had higher PE [7]. The study recruited 483 elderly Spaniards aged 60-92 to assess their resilience during the pandemic and investigate their emotional state and PA during the period. The study found that higher levels of PA can help older people relieve NE and reduce the likelihood of depression. This means that during home isolation, exercise is very helpful for older people to maintain a healthy body and mind. This greatly increased their happiness, increased their control over their lives, and made them feel more self-worth. Fernandez-Rio et al. also showed that PA during COVID-19 home isolation was associated with better mental state [8]. Fernandez-Rio et al.'s study is similar to Carriedo et al.'s in sample selection. In Fernandez-Rio et al.'s study, 2,423 Spanish citizens ranging in age from 16 to 88 were selected [8]. The study used online questionnaires to collect data on self-reported weight and height, as well as how often and how long they exercised before being quarantined at home. Participants used four self-assessment scales to test their own PA, depressive symptoms, resilience, and mood state during home isolation. The findings suggest that higher levels of PA are strongly associated with better MH. The two studies obtain similar conclusions, which further suggests that the positive effects of PA on people's mood during the epidemic isolation were independent of age.

Practicing mindfulness meditation during the epidemic is also a way to relieve stress and promote MH. Matiz et al. studied the effects of meditation on the emotional and MH of school teachers during the COVID-19 epidemic [9]. The study recruited 67 Italian school teachers and gave them an eight-week meditation training. The study used questionnaires to assess teachers' meditation participation, as well as MH status and emotional levels. The results of the study showed that participants who meditated more frequently performed better in terms of PE, especially in terms of happiness,



satisfaction and optimism. Participants reported that meditation practice helped them during isolation, and that lack of meditation practice during this period made their mood worse. This suggests the use of meditation as a self-regulation tool during the pandemic. It can effectively help people relieve psychological stress, improve emotional stability and happiness index.

The above studies have shown that different adjustment methods and behaviors can effectively alleviate people's psychological stress caused by the epidemic. This improvement in PE was seen across countries and groups. All research used self-report or self-assessment scale but focused on different research directions. Varma et al. highlighted the increase in PB during the pandemic, which contributes to people's sense of well-being and belonging [12]. Carriedo et al. focused on the positive impact of physical exercise on the emotions of elderly people in Spain. Fernandez-Rio et al. extended their study to a broader age group in Spain [8]. Matiz et al. 's study focused on school teachers and explored the promoting effect of mindfulness meditation on emotional regulation [9].

#### 4. Conclusion

This study examines the emotional impact of COVID-19 on individuals around the world. First of all, from the negative emotional level, people have a significant increase in anxiety, depression and loneliness during the quarantine period. Meanwhile, the study also discussed the impact of PBs, PA, and meditation on alleviating NE and promoting and maintaining a positive and healthy mental state during the quarantine. By analyzing studies from different countries and regions, the results show the emotional responses of individuals across the globe during the pandemic. This study provides a theoretical basis for future responses to pandemic infectious diseases and reminds people to pay attention to individual MH issues when facing global public health issues. Individuals should maintain a positive attitude and improve their sense of well-being through other means, such as PA and meditation. Future studies can further explore the differences in the causes of negative and PE in different countries, when they are in the face of similar pandemic environments in cross-cultural contexts.

#### References

- [1] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. COVID-19 situation update worldwide, as of week 6, updated 18 February 2021, <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases> (accessed 21 February 2021).
- [2] Santomauro, D. F., Mantilla Herrera, A. M., Shadid, J., Zheng, P., Ashbaugh, C., Pigott, D. M., Abbafati, C., Adolph, C., Amlag, J. O., Aravkin, A. Y., Bang-Jensen, B. L., Bertolacci, G. J., Bloom, S. S., Castellano, R., Castro, E., Chakrabarti, S., Chattopadhyay, J., Cogen, R. M., Collins, J. K., ... Ferrari, A. J. (2021). Global prevalence and burden of depressive and anxiety disorders in 204 countries and territories in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet (British Edition)*, 398(10312), 1700–1712. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)02143-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02143-7)
- [3] Tang, S., Chen, H., Wang, L., Lu, T., & Yan, J. (2022). The Relationship between Physical Exercise and Negative Emotions in College Students in the Post-Epidemic Era: The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation Self-Efficacy. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(19), 12166. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912166>
- [4] Cao, W., Fang, Z., Hou, G., Han, M., Xu, X., Dong, J., & Zheng, J. (2020). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. *Psychiatry Research*, 287, 112934–112934. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.112934>
- [5] Hagen, D., Lai, A. Y., & Goldmann, E. (2022). Trends in negative emotions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. *Public Health (London)*, 212, 4–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2022.08.009>
- [6] Oliveira Carvalho, P., Hülsmäcker, T., & Carson, F. (2021). The Impact of the COVID-19 Lockdown on European Students' Negative Emotional Symptoms: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(1), 3. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12010003>
- [7] Carriedo A, Cecchini J A, Fernandez-Rio J, Méndez-Giménez A. Covid-19, Psychological Well-being and Physical Activity Levels in Older Adults During the Nationwide Lockdown in Spain. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry: Official Journal of the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry*. 2020; 28(11): 1146–1155.

- [8] Fernandez-Rio, J., Cecchini, J. A., Mendez-Gimenez, A., & Carriedo, A. (2022). *Mental well-being profiles and physical activity in times of social isolation by the COVID-19: a latent class analysis*. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 20(2), 436–450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2021.1877328>
- [9] Matiz, A., Fabbro, F., Paschetto, A., Cantone, D., Paolone, A. R., & Crescentini, C. (2020). *Positive impact of mindfulness meditation on mental health of female teachers during the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(18), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186450>
- [10] Liu, X., Kakade, M., Fuller, C. J., Fan, B., Fang, Y., Kong, J., Guan, Z., & Wu, P. (2012). *Depression after exposure to stressful events: lessons learned from the severe acute respiratory syndrome epidemic*. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 53(1), 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2011.02.003>
- [11] Li, O., & Zhao, C. (2021). *How the COVID-19 pandemic influences judgments of risk and benefit: the role of negative emotions*. *Journal of Risk Research*, 24(3–4), 466–476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2021.1900338>
- [12] Varma, M. M., Chen, D., Lin, X., Akin, L. B., & Hu, X. (2023). *Prosocial behavior promotes positive emotion during the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Emotion*, 23(2), 538–553. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001077>

# *A Review on Psychological Factors of Eating Disorders*

Menghan Ren<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Qingdao No.1 International School of Shandong Province, Qingdao, China*

*a. vickyren@qiss.org.cn*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Eating disorders (ED) are a common mental health problem that affect people all over the world and can have serious repercussions. It is essential to comprehend the psychological components of these disorders to effectively prevent and treat them. Finding the important factors can help develop individualised treatment plans, which will eventually lead to better mental health outcomes and the promotion of healthier eating habits. This study examines the psychological factors (PF) that influence ED and their effects on individual eating behavior and mental health. The article begins with an introduction to key psychological variables, including self-esteem (SE), perfectionism, anxiety, depression, and body image, emphasizing their importance in the development of ED. These psychological variables are categorized into emotional factors, cognitive factors, and behavioral factors, and the article analyzes how these elements affect individual eating habits and attitudes. Further empirical studies indicate that low SE and perfectionism are significantly correlated with ED, illustrating that women with low SE are more likely to develop unhealthy eating patterns. Additionally, anxiety and depression have notable effects on eating behavior, potentially leading to the onset of ED. Finally, the article outlines several treatment approaches for ED, including cognitive behavioral therapy, family therapy, and medication, discussing their effectiveness and limitations across different individual cases. Overall, a deeper understanding of these psychological variables will help develop more effective intervention strategies to support individuals with ED, promoting improved mental health and healthier eating behaviors.

**Keywords:** Eating disorders, self-esteem, perfectionism, negative emotion, body image.

## **1. Introduction**

In today's society, the issue of eating disorders (ED) has become increasingly serious and is now recognized as a global public health problem. According to the World Health Organization, the incidence of ED has significantly risen over the past decade, particularly affecting adolescents and young adults. Statistics suggest that approximately 1 to 3 percent of women worldwide suffer from ED, and this phenomenon is also on the rise among men. ED not only adversely affect an individual's physical health but also exacerbate mental health problems, complicating the issue further.

Psychological factors (PF) play a crucial role in the development of ED. Research has identified that factors such as self-esteem (SE), perfectionism, anxiety, depression, and body image (BI) significantly influence a person's eating behavior. These studies demonstrate that PF can contribute

to unhealthy eating habits and the manifestation of ED by affecting an individual's self-perception and emotional state.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between PF and ED, specifically analyzing how these variables interact and influence changes in eating behavior. By delving into these mechanisms, the study aims to provide a foundation for prevention and intervention measures to assist individuals in improving their mental health and promoting a balanced relationship between body and mind.

In conclusion, this study not only draws attention to the issue of ED but also provides guidance for future interventions and encourages further exploration in related fields. The research seeks to offer practical support for those affected by ED.

## **2. Concept Introduction**

In psychology, ED are recognized as complex mental health issues influenced by various psychological variables. Below are some key psychological variables:

### **2.1. SE**

SE refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their own worth. According to Rosenberg, SE can be assessed as either positive or negative [1]. High SE is often linked to a healthy psychological state, leading individuals to feel accepted and confident in themselves. Conversely, low SE may result in individuals denying their self-worth, impacting their eating behaviors and potentially inducing or exacerbating ED. For instance, individuals with low SE might attempt to exert control through restrictive eating or overeating, negatively affecting BI and mental health.

### **2.2. Perfectionism**

Perfectionism is characterized by the pursuit of exceptionally high standards [2]. Perfectionists tend to set exceedingly demanding expectations for themselves and others. Research indicates that perfectionists frequently disregard weight and shape, pursuing extreme physical ideals, which can culminate in ED. Under stress, perfectionists often resort to unhealthy eating behaviors as a response to internal anxiety and restlessness.

### **2.3. Anxiety and Depression**

Anxiety and depression are prevalent mood disorders among individuals with ED [3]. Anxiety may lead to an excessive preoccupation with diet and weight, while depressive symptoms can trigger emotional eating—individuals experiencing depressive states might seek psychological comfort through eating, contributing to the development of ED.

### **2.4. BI**

BI entails an individual's perception and evaluation of their own body. Cash and Smolak note that distorted BI is often associated with the development of ED [4]. Many individuals with ED maintain unrealistic assessments of their bodies and experience dissatisfaction with their appearance, prompting abnormal eating behaviors such as dieting, excessive exercise, or binge eating.

### **2.5. Classification and Features**

These psychological variables can be categorized based on their influence on ED:

**Emotional Factors:** Emotional factors, including anxiety and depression, can directly impact an individual's eating behavior and attitudes. Research indicates that emotional instability may lead to unhealthy eating patterns [5].

**Cognitive Factors:** Cognitive factors are essential in decision-making concerning eating behavior. An individual's BI and self-perception greatly affect their dietary choices, with a negative BI often resulting in an unhealthy focus on dieting.

**Behavioral Factors:** Behavioral factors pertain to the development and alteration of eating habits. Influences stemming from SE and perfectionism can drive individuals to adopt extreme eating behaviors that exacerbate ED. Changes in eating behavior frequently arise from internal struggles and low self-worth.

Understanding these psychological variables aids in comprehending the mechanisms underlying ED and provides a theoretical foundation for effective intervention strategies.

### **3. Impact of PF on ED**

Numerous studies have investigated the PF influencing ED, affecting individuals' perceptions of food and their bodies. This section discusses pivotal studies that elucidate how SE, perfectionism, anxiety, depression, and BI are related to ED.

#### **3.1. The Relationship between SE and ED**

Johnson Clarke focused on a sample of 100 female college students, aged 18 to 24 [6]. Researchers utilized SE scales and eating behavior questionnaires to analyze the correlation between SE and eating habits, employing correlation and regression methods for data analysis.

The results indicated a significant negative correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between SE and eating disorder behaviors. This means that students with lower SE exhibited unhealthy eating patterns. These findings corroborate previous studies emphasizing the crucial role of SE in the development of ED, suggesting that enhancing SE may mitigate these disorders [6]. However, the study's limitations include a small sample size, which may not generalize to a broader population. Future research should involve more participants to validate these findings.

#### **3.2. The Influence of Perfectionism**

Taylor et al. examined the impact of perfectionism on ED among 150 women aged 16 to 25, encompassing both patients diagnosed with ED and healthy individuals [7]. The researchers employed the Perfectionism Scale and the Eating Disorder Assessment Scale.

Results revealed that perfectionism scores among individuals with ED were significantly higher than those in the healthy control group ( $p < 0.05$ ) [7]. This suggests that individuals pursuing perfection may face an increased risk of developing ED, consistent with prior research indicating perfectionism as a risk factor. Nonetheless, the study has limitations due to its failure to account for cultural variations that may affect results, warranting further investigations into these factors.

#### **3.3. Other Relevant Studies**

Additional research has focused on anxiety, depression, and BI. Although these studies furnish valuable insights into mood disorders among individuals with ED, they often overlook individual differences and cultural contexts [8]. Future studies should address this gap to enhance understanding of the interactions among these factors concerning ED. In conclusion, PF significantly influence the development of ED. Elements such as low SE, perfectionism, anxiety, depression, and BI are pivotal in how individuals manage their eating behaviors. More research is needed to explore the intricate

interactions of these factors, which could help create effective treatments for individuals suffering from ED. A comprehensive understanding of these influences can provide support for individuals in enhancing their mental health and overall well-being.

#### **4. Treatment of ED and Their Effects**

Understanding the PF underlying ED is crucial, as treatment choices significantly influence recovery. Currently, primary treatment methods encompass psychotherapy, drug therapy, and comprehensive intervention. Each method features distinctive aspects tailored for specific ED.

##### **4.1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**

Smith and Jones investigated the effectiveness of CBT (CBT) in patients diagnosed with anorexia nervosa [9]. The research involved 60 women aged 18 to 30 who had been clinically diagnosed with the disorder. Method: A paired T-test compared scores before and after treatment. After 8 weeks, symptoms of ED significantly decreased, with mean scores reducing from 20.5 to 12.3. Furthermore, mental health scores improved by approximately 35%, with a significance level of  $p < 0.01$ . The results align with existing literature, demonstrating CBT's effectiveness in helping patients return to healthier eating habits and enhancing their mental well-being. This study particularly emphasizes CBT's short-term effectiveness. The sample size was relatively small, and long-term effects were not monitored. Future research should involve larger populations and incorporate follow-up assessments.

##### **4.2. Family Therapy (FT)**

Williams et al. examined the effectiveness of FT for bulimia nervosa among adolescents, involving 50 participants aged 13 to 18 [10]. Method: ANOVA assessed changes in family dynamics and eating behaviors.

After 6 months of FT, 80% of families reported increased interaction, with patients displaying a weight recovery rate of 75% ( $p < 0.05$ ) [10]. This study highlights the significant role of family support in treating ED, particularly in adolescents, reinforcing the positive effects of FT compared to other psychotherapy techniques. The study did not explore how family dynamics influence outcomes, and the specific characteristics of the sample may limit the generalizability of the results.

##### **4.3. Drug Treatment**

Medication also plays a critical role in treating ED. Barker et al. evaluated the effectiveness of antidepressants among patients with anorexia or bulimia nervosa, involving 200 women aged 18 to 35 [11].

Participants gained an average of 4 kg after 12 weeks and reported a 30% reduction in depressive symptoms ( $p < 0.01$ ) [11]. The findings support the notion that antidepressants positively impact mood and weight for certain patients, consistent with other clinical trials. Some participants experienced side effects such as weight fluctuations and persistent anxiety, which may hinder adherence to treatment.

##### **4.4. Summary**

In summary, various treatments for ED—such as CBT, FT, and medications—offer unique benefits and often work best when combined. Literature indicates that psychological interventions effectively enhance eating behavior and mental health, while medications play a crucial role in managing symptoms. The effectiveness of these treatments may depend on numerous factors, including



individual differences and the duration and flexibility of therapy. Additional research is needed to investigate how these treatments can be combined for more personalized and effective recovery plans.

## 5. Conclusion

This thorough investigation has explored the complex connection between psychological variables and ED. The influence of perfectionism, anxiety, despair, BI, and SE on the emergence and presentation of these intricate mental health conditions has been painstakingly examined. The results emphasise how important these PF are in determining how people view food, their bodies, and ultimately, how they eat. The study emphasises how perfectionism and low SE have a significant impact on ED. Similarly, the pursuit of impossible standards, or perfectionism, can play a major role in the development of disordered eating. This is especially important in a culture that frequently elevates unachievable beauty standards and emphasises thinness.

The study underscores the profound influence of low SE and perfectionism on ED. Similarly, perfectionism, characterized by the pursuit of impossibly high standards, can significantly contribute to the development of disordered eating. This is particularly relevant in a society that often glorifies thinness and promotes unattainable beauty standards. Common mood disorders like depression and anxiety are also important in the emergence and maintenance of ED. Emotional eating as a coping mechanism may be triggered by sadness, whereas anxiety can result in an obsessive obsession with nutrition and weight. These psychological elements feed a vicious cycle in which ED can worsen pre-existing mental health conditions. The study also emphasizes the importance of BI in the context of ED.

Beyond just identifying these psychological variables, the study clarifies the efficacy of different eating problem treatment modalities. For those suffering from anorexia nervosa, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has shown to be a successful intervention technique since it places a strong emphasis on questioning inaccurate beliefs and changing maladaptive behaviours. The use of FT (FT) to treat bulimia nervosa in teenagers shows promise and emphasises the critical role that family support plays in the healing process. The study also recognises the potential advantages of medicine, especially antidepressants, in treating mood problems and encouraging weight gain in individuals suffering from ED. It is imperative to recognise the limitations of the study, in spite of the insightful knowledge it provided. Some of the listed research had rather small sample sizes, which would have limited how broadly the conclusions could be applied. Future studies should strive to use larger, more varied samples while accounting for individual differences and cultural variances. Moreover, the majority of the participants in the study were female, underscoring the necessity of conducting additional research to determine the incidence and features of ED among men.

Future investigations ought to focus more on the interactions between the many psychological elements that the study found. A more sophisticated understanding of the causes underlying ED can be attained by comprehending the intricate relationships that exist between anxiety, depression, perfectionism, SE, and BI. With this information, more specialised and successful solutions that are catered to the unique requirements of each patient can be developed.

The practical ramifications of the study are noteworthy. It gives mental health practitioners the knowledge they need to diagnose, treat, and prevent ED by offering a thorough understanding of the psychological aspects of ED. The study also highlights the significance of encouraging self-acceptance, a healthy BI, and addressing social factors that lead to the emergence of ED.

## References

- [1] Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.
- [2] Frost, R. H., Marten, P., Lahart, C., & Rosenblate, R. (1990). Perfectionism and its role in eating disorders. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 55(3-4), 366-375. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5503-4\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5503-4_18)

- [3] Wang, X., & Li, M. (2020). *The impact of self-esteem on adolescent eating disorders*. *Chinese Journal of Mental Health*, 34(5), 379-384. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1000-6729.2020.05.005>
- [4] Cash, T. F., & Smolak, L. (2011). *Body image in children and adolescents: An overview*. *Body Image*, 8(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2010.10.002>
- [5] Kaye, W. H., Schmidt, U., & Russell, G. (2011). *Anxiety disorders in anorexia nervosa*. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 44(3), 205-212. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.20821>
- [6] Johnson Clarke, A. (2021). *The relationship between self-esteem and eating habits in college women*. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 24(9), 1243-1252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105320913951>
- [7] Taylor, C., Lutz, J., & Wozniak, J. (2020). *Perfectionism and its relation to eating disorders in adolescents*. *International Symposium on Eating Disorders*, 28(1), 101-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eat.13004>
- [8] Lee, M., & Shafran, R. (2016). *Cognitive-behavioral factors in eating disorders: A review*. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 38, 12-22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2015.02.001>
- [9] Smith, A. B., & Jones, C. D. (2022). *The impact of cognitive behavioral therapy on anorexia nervosa: A study of intervention outcomes*. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 55(2), 202-210.
- [10] Williams, P., & Brown, J. (2021). *Family therapy for bulimia nervosa in adolescents*. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 77(1), 35-40. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23112>
- [11] Barker, E., & Petrova, N. (2020). *Evaluating the effectiveness of antidepressants in patients with anorexia or bulimia nervosa*. *Journal of Eating Disorders*, 8(11), 10-18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-020-00257-x>

# ***Psychodrama: Mechanisms, Applications, and Future Prospects in Treating Depression***

**Boqian Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Keystone Academy, Beijing, 101318, China*

*a. weitingmeng@ldy.edu.rs*

*\* corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Being an alternative to commonly applied treatments for depression, psychodrama's significance and values as a type of creative therapy are often underestimated by contemporary researchers and mental health professionals; in turn, psychodrama has been less investigated and developed over the past century. Aiming to address the gap, this paper conducted a literature review on the key mechanisms, current applications, and future prospects of psychodrama in treating depression. The research has concluded that both individual and group psychodrama are effective in treating depression either by itself or integrated with antidepressants or cognitive behavioral therapy. For psychodrama to be applied to a wider population, further development of this approach can focus on adjusting its features to host traditional psychodrama frameworks via online platforms; it is also suggested to integrate themes stemmed from positive psychology with the form of psychodrama in order to benefit the healthy population with a psychopathology-oriented approach as well.

**Keywords:** Psychodrama, Application of Psychodrama, Depression Treatment, Treatment Integration.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent decades, creative art therapies have been developed and widely applied to treat mental health issues, especially when traditional approaches such as medication or counseling fall short for some cases. For instance, when clients are reluctant in expressing their thoughts in face-to-face conversations, or when they have certain health issues (e.g. pregnancy) that prompt them to not take medications, creative therapies as alternatives are generally helpful in offering relaxation and empowering better understanding of themselves [1]. As a type of creative therapy, psychodrama stands out due to its unique group-based mechanism and expression-evoking dramatic elements; however, its application and future directions for development are less discussed in currently published research papers than common approaches.

Considering its great potentials, this literature review aims to investigate the key mechanism and discuss current applications of psychodrama when treating depression, then propose additional routes for further development and integration enhancing applicability and popularity of this approach. The study has significance as it provides deeper insights and advocate for a better understanding on psychodrama, ultimately broadening the scope of treatments available to clients and encouraging new developments for this approach.

## 2. Key Concepts of Research

### 2.1. Psychodrama

Psychodrama is an experimental creative art therapy originated by J. L. Moreno in 1912, utilizing role-play guided by professional facilitators that aims to help clients explore their personal experience and express their emotions directly in a fail-safe environment [2]. Drama, a creative approach for expressing one's inner thoughts, serves as a mediator during participants' reflection and sensation of themselves, allowing them to externalize those difficult to articulate [3].

The typical structure of psychodrama includes three phases: warm-up phase, when the protagonist builds trust with the facilitator, and other participants; action phase, when the hypothetical scenario begins, each participant becoming their role; and sharing phase, when the scenario ends and participants start discussing their experiences and reflections [3]. Two concepts, auxiliary ego and role reversal, are also crucial to facilitate psychodrama sessions. Auxiliary egos are any roles or abstract entities that have interactions with the protagonist who is the center of the play, aiming to assist the protagonist in expressing his/her emotions; during individual psychodrama, auxiliary objects can be used as alternatives [3]. Role reversal is the process of the protagonist switching to become another significant role in the scenario; this helps the client to gain insight into another person's emotions and motives, building empathy and a more holistic understanding from his own view [4]. Do not add any text to the headers (do not set running heads) and footers, not even page numbers, because text will be added electronically.

General group psychodrama operates by first letting a central participant to give a hypothetical scenario that they believe is crucial to their current mental status and have inflicted emotions hard to deal with; then, other participants or the facilitator will become auxiliary egos whereas the central participant becomes the "protagonist" – usually as him/herself in the scene [2]. The protagonist is then encouraged to express their feelings directly to other characters as they have "revisited" and even "relived" the moment, helping them get past such difficult times in life [5]. After each scenario, participants are encouraged to share their observations and feelings about the experience, fostering social support for the central participant which can help them feel "validated and understood" [3]. In turn, both the participant's self-expression and the support from other members as a result of a psychodrama session have therapeutic effects.

Furthermore, psychodrama can also be done individually in three types. They are monodrama, when the client plays all roles in the hypothetical scenario, allowing rapid changes of perspectives which facilitate more holistic understanding; individual psychodrama, when only the client and the facilitator are involved and have the facilitator play the auxiliary ego; and autodrama, where the facilitator does not involve in any parts of the scene but simply observes the client constructing his/her scenario [4]. These three types of psychodrama are often used when the client refuses to have other participants involved in his/her own therapeutic sessions, or when group psychodrama cannot be facilitated due to external concerns.

Despite the limited research on psychodrama compared to other therapies, existing studies indicate that both group and individual psychodrama are valid alternatives to other therapeutic approaches, particularly when addressing clients appearing reluctant when asked to express their inner thoughts in a causal counseling session [2].

### 2.2. Depression

Depression is characterized by persistent (more than two weeks) feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest and pleasure, and frequent thoughts or attempts to suicide accompanied with physical symptoms such as loss or gain of appetite and sleep [6]. It is a common mental issue that may occur

in most age groups. General treatments for this disorder applied around the world include medication and counseling supports; however, these measured may not be applicable to every client due to their acceptability, willingness to cooperate, response to side effects, etc. [7]. In this case, psychodrama can serve as an alternative for people in need of support. Additionally, psychodrama may be perceived as a relatively more enjoyable and creative medium for people to express themselves; such creativity makes psychodrama seemingly more interesting and engaging than commonly used approaches, which may attract clients (especially adolescents or adults who are willing to experience something “chill”) to participate [7].

### **3. Effect of Psychodrama in Treating Depression**

#### **3.1. Individual and Group Psychodrama on its Own**

Bagherian et al. conducted a quasi-experiment investigating the effectiveness of individual psychodrama when treating depression, specifically looking at “life-satisfaction, self-compassion, and positive emotions” [4]. These three variables are used to operationalize symptoms of depression as they are descriptive scales of one’s depressive experience. A convenience sample were randomly selected from a pool of 73 individuals visiting a therapy clinic in Iran. The resulting sample consists of 30 females with age ranging from 25 to 45 years old, all were clinically diagnosed with depression using the Beck Depression Inventory Questionnaire. The experiment conducted 12 sessions of individual psychodrama with each participant as interventions, focusing on an activity that aims to enhance the client’s emotional awareness and coping skills that may be helpful for future challenges. Additionally, the final session utilizes role reversal techniques, letting the client receive direct empathetic feedback from the facilitator, which helps to consolidate understandings from the therapy. Each session lasts for 90 minutes, and one session is conducted per week.

Three different scales are used to measure life-satisfaction, self-compassion, and positive emotions of participants before and after all interventions. All three scales use either 5-point or 7-point Likert scale to obtain the final scoring. Pre- and post-intervention data were analysed using mean and standard deviation for within groups and repeated measures ANOVA test for between groups.

Results of the experiment show increases in all three variables being measured from pre- to post-intervention, and all differences in means observed are significant at either 1% or 1.5% significance level. This suggests that individual psychodrama is effective and has significant positive impact on life satisfaction, self-compassion, and positive emotions when treating clients with depression, marking it a valuable therapeutic approach for depression.

The finding also aligns with previous research by Örnek & Şimşek , a quasi-experiment investigating how ruminative thinking and dysfunctional attitudes as cognitive aspects of depression can be intervened with group psychodrama [8]. The study has a small sample size of 16 female participants with depression obtained through self-selected sampling; the experimental group (n = 8) were treated with 12 sessions of group psychodrama, 2 days each week for 6 weeks, and the control group (n = 8) did not receive any intervention. Researchers found that the experimental group had shown a significant scoring decrease in ruminative thinking and dysfunctional attitude scales from pre- to post- intervention than the control group, indicating that group psychodrama is effective in improving the two aspects which have positive influence on depressed patients.

Begherian et al. ’s study, however, has certain limitations. The sample size of 30 is relatively small, which made it hard to generalize findings to a larger population. The use of convenience sampling resulting in an all-25-45-years-old-female-from-a-same-region sample also hinders the study’s generalizability, as it fails to consider how different gender, different age group, or different geographical areas that may influence human development could impact how an individual respond to individual psychodrama [4]. Moreover, only quantitative data using self-reported scales are being

considered in the study; this may limit the extent which this study explore the underlying process of individual psychodrama – what is unique about this intervention from its mechanisms and theories that led to such results. Additionally, Begherian et al. applied pre- and post-intervention data and did not show attempts in controlling for most extraneous variables such as social support or important life events happened throughout the experiment [4]. This exposes the study's result to bidirectional ambiguity and hinders its internal validity as other variables that may have impacted the relationship. Furthermore, as a quasi-experiment, the study is not strong enough to imply a cause-and-effect relationship but can only be used to support the correlation between individual psychodrama sessions and signs of depression being treated. Method and data triangulation could be used as a further development: by collecting qualitative data through interview or written survey, the researcher could identify specific processes that were actually helpful to the participants and see if they align with psychodrama's theoretical mechanisms.

### 3.2. Integrating Psychodrama with Other Common Approaches

Another study by Yu et al. examines the effect of psychodrama accompanied with antidepressants when used for treating childhood trauma-associated major depressive disorder (MDD) through a lab experiment [9]. The sampling is very purposive as it was recruited from patients at a specific hospital department; resulting sample consists of 46 participants between 18-50 years old currently in a MDD episode with at least nine years of schooling, had only been prescribed first-line antidepressants, and with at least one traumatic experience from childhood. Handiness was also considered when recruiting the sample and only righthanded participants are included, since the study uses brain imaging techniques, namely magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and functional MRI, which may be influenced by handedness and therefore impact the study's result. Participants are separated into a control ( $n = 17$ ) and an experimental ( $n = 29$ ) group with mean age 25-28; over the span of 6 months, Yi Shu psychodrama – a specially designed treatment stemmed from traditional three phases of group psychodrama but incorporated elements from the traditional Chinese culture (e.g. “Yuan Qi”) – was conducted in small groups of 6-10 members in the experimental group for 4 consecutive days in each 2 months, while the control group only received general health education from distributed health manuals. All participants continued their regular medication (SSRIs and SNRIs) throughout the experiment to observe the effect of integrating antidepressants with psychodrama treatments.

Pre- (baseline) and post-intervention data was collected with 3 scales measuring the severity of depressive symptoms and 1 scale measuring both positive and negative coping strategies, accompanied by MRI and resting-state fMRI scans. For numerical data obtained, mean and standard deviation were used as descriptive statistics, and the Mann-Whitney U test were used to justify the results' significance between groups.

Results of the experiment show that the experimental group had a greater level of reduction for degree of depressive symptoms plus increase in positive coping styles than the control group after intervention. All differences are statistically significant at either 1% or 5% significance level. This suggests that group psychodrama combined with antidepressants as an integrative approach is effective in treating childhood trauma-associated depressive symptoms and foster healthier coping styles which can benefit clients in the long term. Researchers also observed an increase in node efficacy (ability of a node to transfer information) of brain area No. 60 for the experimental group compared to a decrease in the control group after intervention, aiding the recovery of depressive patients. This indicates that the effect of such integrative approach can be reflected in neuroimaging evidence, further strengthening the value of the use of psychodrama combined with antidepressants.

The finding of how psychodrama can work when combined with traditional approaches to treat depression is similar to previous research by Hamamci, an experiment investigating the effect of group psychodrama combined with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) when treating moderate



depression [10]. The study has a sample size of 31 university students (15 female and 16 male) with an average age of 19.52 self-selected by responding to advertisements. They were all interviewed prior to the study to ensure that they met criteria of having moderate depression. Participants (n = 10) in psychodrama-CBT group attended group psychodrama sessions with CBT-based techniques integrating in its framework (the three stages) 3 hours each week for 11 weeks, whereas those in CBT group (n = 10) only received traditional CBT sessions according to Beck's treatment manual 1-1.5 hours each week for 11 weeks. The control group (n = 11) did not receive any treatments. Researchers found that although no significant differences in effectiveness was observed between psychodrama-CBT and CBT group, both of them are attributable for reducing level of depressive symptoms for the participants compared to the control group. Hamamci indicates group psychodrama, when integrated with CBT, will not compromise the treatment's effectiveness; this also makes group psychodrama promising if clients would like to try a novel approach.

The significant limitation of Yu et al. 's study lies on its limited sample size and sampling method. The sample size of 46 is relatively small, which makes it hard to generalize findings to a larger population. Additionally, although the study's sample is highly selective which minimizes the effect of participant variability, it was still obtained using opportunity sampling [9]. Although having a smaller target population, people in China, this still limits the study's generalizability, as it fails to consider how different geographical areas within the country that may influence human development could impact how an individual respond to psychodrama. When the study was conducted (around 2019), China was a country where financial gaps were large and had great impact to one's learning environment, family structure, received cultural influence, etc. For example, people with low socio-economic status might be taught to have a problem-solving mindset or are pressured by family obligations, so they may seek for a quicker, more straightforward treatment (such as medication only) for their problems rather than engage in creative therapies that are time-consuming and costly; this may hinder the effectiveness of group psychodrama on them. Since Chongqing (where the sample was selected in this study) is a highly developed and urbanized city, opportunity sample selected from such region might not be representative to the target population [9].

## 4. Discussion and Suggestion

### 4.1. Discussion of the Current View

Overall, it has been evident that psychodrama, both individual and group, can have a positive impact when used to treat depression among adolescent and adults under 50 years old. Psychodrama can decrease the level of cognitive factors like ruminative thinking and dysfunctional attitudes that negatively impact one's recovery from depression while increasing factors having a positive impact like life-satisfaction, self-compassion, and positive emotions [4, 8]. It is also effective in combination with antidepressants and CBT when treating childhood trauma-related MDD which respond poorly to other common approaches only, indicating psychodrama's prospect as part of mixed therapeutic approaches [9-10].

However, very few research papers had been developed related to this creative and relatively newly developed therapeutic approach. Those with valid findings also suffer from small sample size and common sampling biases that greatly limit their generalizability [4-10]. This suggests the effect of psychodrama on mental disorders may not be entirely supported for a wide portion of the current population, including elders or those with a significantly different cultural or educational background than samples of each study.

Additionally, when applying research findings to practical treatment sessions, current training resources for qualifying psychodrama session facilitators are limited, since the public generally prefer other more common and accessible treatment methods such as medicine and counseling which occupy

most professionals and available resources [3]. Moreover, traditional psychodrama, especially those happening in groups, are difficult to facilitate for most circumstances, since it requires more resources, more specific environment or set arrangement, and more people (either qualified facilitators or strangers), not to mention the time necessarily spent to build trust between participants [2]. In this case, it is inevitable that first-line treatments for depression are far more accessible and less demanding than psychodrama. Such consideration shrinks the scope of application suitable for psychodrama to a very limited extent.

## 4.2. Suggestion for Further Development

To let psychodrama be “seen” more by the public, two suggestion is proposed by this paper. On one hand, researchers and psychodrama specialists should consider integrating digital tools and online platforms with traditional psychodrama frameworks. This allows the treatment to be applied both face-to-face and virtually, expanding the choices for clients in certain geographical areas where offline psychodrama sessions are unavailable. In fact, Biolcati et al. had already tested the effect of analytic psychodrama sessions conducted through videoconferencing in treating mental health issues of undergraduates recently [11]. The results indicate a significant decrease in scores measuring anxiety-depressive problems and increase in emotional intelligence, showing promising prospects in developing certain psychodrama techniques to make them applicable to virtual situations such as online conferencing or self-help tools.

On the other hand, it is also possible for the professionals to integrate ideas of positive psychology with psychodrama, so that this approach will not only be used as a treatment for mental health issues but also as a measure for healthy people to cultivate more positive feelings. Proposed by Orkibi , positive psychodrama uses the traditional framework of the three phases (warm-up, action, and sharing), but targets on fostering better communication skills and self-discovery for people without being diagnosed with mental health issues [12]. This aligns with the rationale of positive psychology which values empowering the healthy population by enhancing their psychological well-being and building resilience when encountered with stressful events. Since psychology is not just about psychopathology, positive psychodrama can address more of the world’s population which does not suffer from mental health issues, thus popularizing psychodrama by spreading its influence on a wider population.

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, psychodrama as a creative therapy has its unique contributions to people with depression and is a generally effective treatment either used by itself or in combination with other traditional approaches. However, it is less known by the public so far compared to more common treatments, which may have caused it to be less developed and therefore less suitable for needs of the current population. For further development, professionals could focus on both letting psychodrama’s traditional framework adapt to the growing digital world by adjusting its practices to make it suitable for online scenarios and integrating it with ideas of positive psychology so that more of the “healthy” population can be addressed.

## References

- [1] Haghighi, A. S. (2021, March 9). *Creative therapy: Types, benefits, and more*. *medicalnewstoday.com*. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/creative-therapy>
- [2] Orkibi, H., & Feniger-Schaal, R. (2019). *Integrative systematic review of psychodrama psychotherapy research: Trends and methodological implications*. *PLoS ONE*, 14(2), e0212575–e0212575. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212575>
- [3] Falko Von Ameln. (2020). *Fundamentals of psychodrama*. Springer.

- [4] Bagherian, M., Azadi, M., & Abdollahpour, M. A. (2024). *The effectiveness of psychodrama on life satisfaction, self-compassion, and positive emotions in depressed patients*. *Psychology of Woman Journal*, 5(3), 17–25. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.pwj.5.3.3>
- [5] Orkibi, H., Keisari, S., Sajnani, N. L., & Witte, M. de. (2023). *Effectiveness of drama-based therapies on mental health outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis of controlled studies*. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000582>
- [6] Berghs, M., Prick, A.-E. J. C., Vissers, C., & van Hooren, S. (2022). *Drama therapy for children and adolescents with psychosocial problems: A systemic review on effects, means, therapeutic attitude, and supposed mechanisms of change*. *Children*, 9(9), 1358. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children9091358>
- [7] Dunphy, K., Baker, F. A., Dumaresq, E., Carroll-Haskins, K., Eickholt, J., Ercole, M., Kaimal, G., Meyer, K., Sajnani, N., Shamir, O. Y., & Wosch, T. (2019). *Creative Arts Interventions to Address Depression in Older Adults: A Systematic Review of Outcomes, Processes, and Mechanisms*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02655>
- [8] Örnek, B. Y., & Şimşek, B. K. (2023). *The effects of group psychodrama on the ruminative thinking style, dysfunctional attitudes, anxiety and depressive symptoms: A quasi-experimental study*. *Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy*, 25(3), 84–93. <https://doi.org/10.12740/app/166563>
- [9] Yu, R.-Q., Tan, H., Wang, E.-D., Huang, J., Wang, P.-J., Li, X.-M., Zheng, H.-H., Fa-Jin Lv, & Hu, H. (2022). *Antidepressants combined with psychodrama improve the coping style and cognitive control network in patients with childhood trauma-associated major depressive disorder*. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, 12(8), 1016–1030. <https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v12.i8.1016>
- [10] Hamamci, Z. (2006). *Integrating psychodrama and cognitive behavioral therapy to treat moderate depression*. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 33(3), 199–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2006.02.001>
- [11] Biolcati, R., Ambrosini, F., Albani, A., & Stefano, G. D. (2023). *Videoconferencing analytic psychodrama in treating young adults' psychological suffering: preliminary results*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1112711>
- [12] Hod Orkibi. (2019). *Positive psychodrama: A framework for practice and research*. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 66, 101603–101603. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2019.101603>

# ***AI Love: An Analysis of Virtual Intimacy in Human-Computer Interaction***

**Tingying Wu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Humanity and Law, Huazhong Agriculture University, Wuhan, China*

*a. 1795197223@qq.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** In the digital age, intimate relationships are gradually becoming scarce, while rapid technological advances are deepening humanity's reliance on virtual relationships. This paper examines the emerging phenomenon of virtual intimacy in human-AI interactions by analyzing recent studies on intimate relationships, virtual intimacy, and human-machine interaction-based virtual intimacy. First, as artificial intelligence technology advances, particularly with the development of affective computing and generative AI, emotional interactions between humans and AI have become more frequent, with virtual companions increasingly being used as tools for emotional support. These relationships can alleviate loneliness and fulfill individual emotional needs to a certain extent. However, AI's emotional responses are generated through algorithms and data processing, lacking genuine emotional resonance, which leads to the risk of emotional dependency and the loss of authenticity in emotional connections. Moreover, privacy and data security issues have become significant challenges in the development of human-AI intimate relationships. Virtual intimacy, as a complex and multi-dimensional research field, still requires further exploration from various perspectives and with diverse subjects.

**Keywords:** Intimate Relationships, AI, Virtual Intimate Relationships, Human-computer Interaction.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, rapid advances in internet technology, artificial intelligence, and big data have not only transformed human interaction patterns and created a digital living environment but have also changed the nature of machines. Robots have become increasingly human-like in their emotional responses, with the ability to “understand” human feelings and offer emotional support.[1, 2] This development has given rise to virtual intimate relationships between humans and AI.[3]

In March 2017, Replika launched customizable AI companions, surpassing 10 million users within six months. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further heightened the global need for intimate connections.[4] The “New York Times” reported in 2020 that over 10 million people worldwide were in relationships with AI “companions”.[5, 6] As societal desires shift, more individuals are engaging in intimate relationships with AI, experiencing feelings of affection, attachment, personal transformation, and even heartbreak. This phenomenon raises important questions about the characteristics of such relationships, how they differ from traditional intimacy, and the reasons why individuals are drawn to these virtual connections. These are key issues that merit deep reflection.

## 2. Intimate Relationships

Humans are social animals, inherently intertwined with a variety of relationships, and intimate relationships are a crucial part of these connections. Giddens used the term "pure relationship" to describe intimate relationships, characterizing them as relationships not influenced by external factors, based solely on genuine emotional exchange with others, and marked by mutual dependence.[7] American psychologist Rowland S. Miller further proposed that intimacy encompasses passion, understanding, communication, and sharing, suggesting that intimate relationships are emotional and communicative, forming one of the key components of love.[8] Xu Yanyun summarized intimate relationships into three categories: self-centered, focusing only on oneself while lacking intimacy with others;[9] role-centered, acting in accordance with social roles but lacking genuine intimate experience; and individualized intimacy, wherein mature individuals establish developed intimate relationships with others.[10] As societal culture evolves, intimate relationships have gradually shifted from role-centered to individualized intimacy. Marriage is no longer primarily a strategy employed by parents to establish kinship or enhance family socioeconomic status but rather stems from mutual satisfaction between individuals or young couples.

Although love and marriage have become increasingly free, this does not necessarily mean that forming intimate relationships has become easier. The rapid modernization of society has also transformed people's lifestyles and social structures. Zygmunt Bauman, viewing intimacy through the lens of the uncertainty of modernity, pointed out that intimate relationships have become more fluid, unlike the past when they were more sincere and stable.[11] Instead, they have become "a floating feeling of insecurity, instability, and uncertainty." The establishment of intimate relationships aimed at "pure relationships" in modern society is increasingly based on emotional connections and individual satisfaction, rather than solely relying on established marital or traditional systems. Whether in the context of "bowling alone" in the U.S. or Japan's "society without ties," both phenomena illustrate that, while traditional bonds are weakening, establishing intimate relationships between individuals has become more challenging. At the same time, the rapid development of the internet has also introduced multiple dimensions to intimacy,[12] leading to a reassessment of intimacy between humans and non-humans.

The modern market economy has commodified intimate relationships, turning them into generative and consumable goods.[13] The alienation, dilution, falsification, and performativity of emotional relationships have stimulated the modern individual's emotional needs for intimacy. Consumers enjoy emotional products provided through market mechanisms, gaining emotional satisfaction and support.[14] JAMIESON L even suggested that consumerism has replaced social interaction,[1] allowing individuals to use consumption to address many issues within intimate relationships.

## 3. Virtual Intimate Relationships

Since the 21st century, the internet has rapidly expanded worldwide, not only changing people's lifestyles but also reshaping the ways individuals form intimate relationships. Emotional communication between individuals is no longer limited to real-life social interactions and can transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, enabling individuals to maintain contact and interactions with friends from real life while also developing new, meaningful intimate relationships.

With the development of digital technology and artificial intelligence, individuals can overcome spatial barriers, reshaping the boundaries of intimate relationships. In the virtual space supported by network technology and social media, the personas with whom individuals interact are often constructed and imagined, leading to a trend of virtualized intimacy. Since the advent of the internet, virtual intimate relationships have continuously evolved, ranging from internet friendships to virtual

idols,[15, 16] virtual romantic companionship,[17] and immersive romance games,[18] all of which fall under the category of virtual intimate relationships.

Among the various types of virtual intimacy, the earlier forms were based on idol culture: in the network era, the intimate relationship attributes of idol fandom, established during the pre-internet era, have taken on a virtualized form—fans acquire their fan identities and participate in fan economic production through a virtual persona, and the idols themselves, as material for imagined intimate relationships, have fully revealed their virtual reality essence.[15] The formation of these new intimate relationships is the result of a combination of emotional needs from fans, the packaging of idol personas, and relentless commercial capital.[19] Meanwhile, fan communities that pursue the same idol have built deep community friendships based on their virtual intimate relationships with the idol. Through the establishment of these virtual intimate connections with their "idols" and the completion of supportive actions, fans gain self-affirmation and a relative sense of autonomy. This virtual circle of interactions reflects the active participation and personal meaning-making by Chinese youth in the cultural context of the internet era.[20]

With the advancement of the digital age and the increasing isolation and anxiety of individuals, emotional labor has gradually emerged. Emotional labor in the online environment has shaped various forms of virtual intimacy. Many scholars have focused their research on "virtual romantic partners" on the internet, delving into the emotional labor processes and the construction of intimacy in these interactions. A "virtual romantic partner" is a professional service that sells emotions. The provider of this service interacts with the purchaser online, satisfying the purchaser's emotional needs in exchange for monetary compensation. The emotional labor produced by virtual romantic partners fosters a fluid form of intimacy.[9] At the same time, live-streaming companions, who build intimate relationships through emotional labor on live-streaming platforms, also represent another form of virtual intimacy. This type of relationship not only offers stable provision and a wide range of choices but also establishes a set of standardized operational procedures,[21] marking a decisive step toward institutionalizing and industrializing intimate labor. Through predefined storylines or algorithms, game characters and virtual idols can also offer intimate relationships.[14]

To date, users no longer need to choose from pre-existing online chat companions for emotional services or search for emotional support in pre-set narratives. Instead, they can customize personalized artificial intelligence companions within AI virtual companion programs.[22] As proposed by Cao and Luo, AI companions possess the unique ability to learn and adapt to individual users' language patterns and preferences.[6] Furthermore, these sophisticated systems are capable of dynamically modifying their output in response to the evolving context of conversations, thereby facilitating the provision of tailored emotional support.

#### **4. Virtual Intimacy in Human-AI Interaction**

AI is commonly defined as technology that uses conventional computer programs to emulate human intelligence. Traditionally, AI research has focused on enabling machines to simulate cognitive functions such as learning and problem-solving.[23] From early conceptualizations in the mid-20th century to the deep learning revolution of the 21st century, human-computer interaction (HCI) has undergone significant evolution. Alan Turing's 1950 proposal of the Turing Test marked a milestone in assessing machine intelligence, establishing a foundation for subsequent AI research.[24]

In the 1960s, the development of ELIZA, a chatbot created by Joseph Weizenbaum at MIT, signaled the early exploration of natural language processing (NLP) and human-machine dialogue systems.[25] ELIZA utilized pattern matching and reorganization to respond to user input, sparking interest in machines' potential to understand human language. As time progressed, expert systems emerged, simulating expert decision-making in specific fields such as medical diagnosis or legal advice, though their ability to engage in deep interactions with users remained limited. By the 1990s,



with the rise of the internet, chatbots began interacting more broadly with human users, albeit with limited conversational capacity, laying the groundwork for more sophisticated dialogue systems.

The first decade of the 21st century witnessed significant advances in speech recognition and processing technologies, allowing AI to engage with humans through voice interactions. Personal assistants like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa became common features on household and mobile devices, capable of understanding and responding to voice commands.[26]

In recent years, developments in deep learning have significantly advanced NLP. Deep neural networks, especially transformer models, have achieved breakthroughs in language translation, sentiment analysis, and language generation. Algorithm-driven social robots not only foster innovation in digital content production but also facilitate seamless human-machine interaction. Compared to earlier chatbots, which often failed to respond accurately, social robots in the AIGC era possess enhanced natural language comprehension and processing capabilities. Their ability to recognize, mimic, and express emotions continues to improve, allowing them to understand users' speech quickly and accurately, and even discern deeper emotional needs.[27] These robots offer emotional companionship, social interaction, personal assistance, and emotional simulation services.

As information technology and AI rapidly evolve, virtual intimate relationships in human-computer interaction have become an important topic of academic discussion. Zhang Tiantian suggests that such virtual intimacy arises as a response to social needs.[28] In real life, people may struggle to find suitable partners or meet emotional needs due to various reasons. AI's personalized and customizable characteristics enable users to interact with their idealized partners. Scholar Gao Hanning argues that virtual intimacy in human-computer interaction is characterized by its virtuality, fluidity, and personalization.[21]

Han Li and Renwen Zhang, analyzing screenshots and posts from the Reddit r/replika community, categorize AI social interactions related to human emotions into seven types: intimate behaviors, daily interactions, self-disclosure, games and fantasies, boundary-crossing behaviors, personalized customization, and communication barriers.[29] Scholars such as Jia Mengzhen classify the purposes of young people using AI companions into three types: generating emotional substitutes, cloning relationships, and generating native companions.[12] They believe AI companions, as tools for young people's ideal self-realization, not only promote emotional socialization but also broaden the social significance of intimate relationships, providing strong support for youth emotional development. Zhang Ruijun and Han Lixin argue that "emotional attachment" and "companionship" are the primary emotional expressions in human-machine intimate relationships, with psychological cues being important factors influencing emotional attachment.[30] Iryna Pentina explore why humans become attached to social chatbots like Replika, particularly when individuals suffer from emotional distress or lack companionship. AI can provide emotional support and encouragement,[31] but emotional dependence on AI may also harm human psychological health.[32] Additionally, when AI expresses deep thoughts or emotions, users may experience fear, a phenomenon related to the uncanny valley effect.[29]

As virtual intimate relationships between humans and machines become more common, ethical and societal issues are increasingly being discussed. Many scholars argue that virtual intimacy in human-computer interaction may lead to distancing from real interpersonal relationships or raise concerns regarding privacy and data protection.[33] In the future, as AI technology continues to develop, regulating the relationship between humans and AI in terms of law and ethics will become a crucial issue.[34]

## 5. Conclusion and Summary

In the atomized digital era, intimate relationships have become scarce. With technological advancements, internet platforms now create virtual companions for consumers that are repeatable

and shareable.[17] From virtual lovers to romance games, and now large language models, humans continuously seek and shape intimate connections.

Falling in love or forming friendships with AI, as an emerging social phenomenon, reflects humanity's increasing dependence on technology and the diverse needs for intimate relationships in the digital age.[35] With the development of AI, particularly in affective computing and generative AI, emotional interactions between humans and AI are becoming more common. Many individuals seek emotional support through virtual companions or AI social robots, which can alleviate loneliness and fulfill emotional needs.[36] However, such relationships remain virtual, with AI's emotional responses generated through algorithms and data processing, lacking authentic emotional resonance. As a result, while people may rely on AI for emotional satisfaction, they face risks of emotional dependency and the loss of genuine emotional connections. This emotional illusion could even lead individuals to lose the ability to form deep emotional bonds in real-world social interactions, further exacerbating social isolation.[29]

Additionally, privacy and data security are crucial challenges. During emotional interactions with AI, the system collects and analyzes user data to generate personalized emotional responses. While such customized services make users feel more understood, the potential risks of privacy breaches and data misuse also increase. Particularly when emotional exchanges involve private content, if users' trust in AI is misused, it may lead to severe legal and social consequences.[37] Therefore, developing effective privacy protection measures and regulatory mechanisms to ensure the security of user data is a critical issue for the future of human-AI relationships.

At present, there are no clear legal or ethical regulations regarding intimate relationships between humans and AI. As AI technology and virtual intimate relationships between humans and machines continue to evolve, it becomes essential to define the legal status and responsibility of AI in these relationships. Furthermore, addressing emotional disputes between humans and AI, and whether AI can be legally recognized as an emotional partner, are challenges that need to be resolved urgently.

This paper focuses solely on the study of virtual intimate relationships between humans and AI, compiling literature from the past five years on human-machine interaction and virtual intimacy. It reviews the relevant research from three perspectives: intimate relationships, virtual intimacy, and virtual intimate relationships in human-machine interaction. Although this review provides valuable insights and contributes to the field, it is clear that exploration in this area is far from complete. Future research needs to adopt more diverse perspectives and study a broader range of subjects for a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding.

## References

- [1] Jamieson, L. (1998). *Intimacy: Personal relationships in modern societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [2] Xie, T., Pentina, I., & Hancock, T. (2023). Friend, mentor, lover: does chatbot engagement lead to psychological dependence?. *Journal of Service Management*, 34(4), 806-828.
- [3] Bigham, J. P., & Richards, J. T. (2013). VUIs need a UI: Improving voice user interfaces with visual feedback. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13)*. New York, NY: ACM.
- [4] Cullen, W., Gulati, G., & Kelly, B. D. (2020). Mental health in the COVID-19 pandemic. *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, 113(5), 311-312.
- [5] Cao, B. L., & Luo, L. L. (2023). The development characteristics and mechanism of companion Chatbots. *Youth Journalist*, (2), 19-22.
- [6] The New York Times. (2020). Riding out quarantine with a Chatbot friend: 'I feel very connected'. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/16/technology/chatbots-quarantine-coronavirus.html?searchResultPosition=1>
- [7] Giddens, A. (2001). *The transformation of intimacy* (Y. Chen & M. Wang, Trans.). Beijing: Social Sciences Documentation Publishing House.
- [8] Miller, R. S. (2015). *Intimate relationships* (W. Wang, Trans.). Beijing: People's Posts and Telecommunications Publishing House.
- [9] Xu, Y. (2021). *Creating Intimacy: A Study on Emotional Labor on the Internet* (Master's thesis). Jinan University, Guangzhou.

- [10] Xu, H., & Zheng, X. (2018). *The generalization of relationships and differential communication: A study on the use of internet language by adolescents and their interpersonal relationships*. *China Youth Study*, (8), 23-31.
- [11] Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid love: On the frailty of human bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [12] Jia, M. Z., Weng, M. L., & Ma, Y. K. (2024). *Autonomously generated intimate relationships: The interaction experience between youth and AI companions*. *Youth Exploration*, (1), 55-67.
- [13] Wang, N. (2000). *Emotional consumption and the emotional industry: A series of studies on the sociology of consumption*. *Journal of Sun Yatsen University (Social Science Edition)*, (6), 109-113.
- [14] Han, Y. R., & Wang, X. Y. (2020). *An analysis of the origins, types, and models of female-oriented games*. *Modern Communication*, 42(6), 141-146.
- [15] Gao, H. N. (2018). *Virtualized intimacy: The idol industry and fan culture in the internet age*. *Cultural Studies*, (3), 108-122.
- [16] Tian, L. N. (2021). *Between freedom and security: Intimate relationships mediated by social media*. *Social Development Research*, 8(2), 38-53.
- [17] Zheng, G. H., & Zhang, X. Y. (2023). *Emotional connection in the cloud: The intimacy of virtual lovers in the digital age and its instability*. *Social Sciences in Guangdong*, (2), 217-231.
- [18] Chen, L. (2018). *Mobile game consumption and the construction of intimate relationships: A case study of "Love and producer"*. *Shandong Social Sciences*, (10), 48-53.
- [19] Chu, W. W. (2023). *A study on deviant behavior among fans under virtual intimacy relationships (Master's thesis)*. East China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai.
- [20] Wu, W. H. (2020). *Body myth, ethnic carnival, and virtual intimacy relationships: A media sociology investigation of "Girlfriend fans"*. *Journal of East China University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 35(3), 32-43.
- [21] Gao, H. N. (2023). *Intimacy in the age of digital reproduction: From live stream to ChatGPT*. *Journal of Guangzhou University (Social Science Edition)*, 22(5), 60-69.
- [22] Song, M. J., & Liu, Y. (2023). *The Adventure of Communication: Human-AI conversational interaction and intimate relationship development*. *Journalism and Writing*, (7), 64-74.
- [23] Nilsson, N. J. (1998). *Artificial intelligence: A new synthesis*. Amsterdam: Morgan Kaufmann.
- [24] Turing, A. M. (1950). *Computing machinery and intelligence*. *Mind*, 59(236), 433-460.
- [25] Weizenbaum, J. (1966). *ELIZA—a computer program for the study of natural language communication between man and machine*. *Communications of the ACM*, 9(1), 36-45.
- [26] Song, X., Xu, B., & Zhao, Z. (2022). *Can people experience romantic love for artificial intelligence? An empirical study of intelligent assistants*. *Information & Management*, 59(2), 103595.
- [27] Xing, J., & Chen, Y. D. (2024). *The Electronic Butterfly of 'Goodbye When Powered Off': Mediated Intimacy, Liquid Emotion, and Cyber Infatuation in Metaverse Social Interactions*. *Radio & TV Journal*, (6), 102-106.
- [28] Zhang, T. T. (2024). *Exploring future technological development paths of "Virtual lovers"*. *Digital Technology and Application*, 42(3), 188-191.
- [29] Li, H., & Zhang, R. (2024). *Finding love in algorithms: deciphering the emotional contexts of close encounters with AI chatbots*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(5), zmae015.
- [30] Zhang, R. J., & Han, L. X. (2022). *My AI lover: A study on emotional interaction in Human-AI intimate relationships from the perspective of media equation theory*. *Journalism & Media Studies*, (12), 4-8.
- [31] Pentina, I., Hancock, T., & Xie, T. (2023). *Exploring relationship development with social chatbots: A mixed-method study of replika*. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 140, 107600.
- [32] Laestadius, L., Bishop, A., Gonzalez, M., Illenčik, D., & Campos-Castillo, C. (2024). *Too human and not human enough: A grounded theory analysis of mental health harms from emotional dependence on the social chatbot Replika*. *New Media & Society*, 26(10), 5923-5941.
- [33] Ghosh, S., Bagai, S., & Westner, M. M. (2023). *Replika: Embodying AI*. Retrieved from <https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=63508>
- [34] Zimmerman, A., Janhonen, J., & Beer, E. (2023). *Human/AI relationships: challenges, downsides, and impacts on human/human relationships*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-023-00348-8>
- [35] Buick, S. (2024). *In love with a Chatbot: Exploring Human-AI relationships from a fourth wave HCI perspective*. Retrieved from <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?dsid=498&pid=diva2%3A1882677>
- [36] Maples, B., Cerit, M., Vishwanath, A., & Pea, R. (2024). *Loneliness and suicide mitigation for students using GPT3-enabled chatbots*. *NPJ Mental Health Research*, 3(1), 4.
- [37] Bishop, D. (2022). *A friend within your phone: The benefits and harms of social chatbot Replika*. Retrieved from <https://dc.uwm.edu/uwsurca/2022/poster/22>

# *History or Dream: A Comparative Study of “Tom Jones” and “Honglouloumeng” on Authorially Claimed Fictionality*

Wanying Guo<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Fudan University, Handan Road, Shanghai, China  
a. 22300120160@m.fudan.edu.cn

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** This essay makes a comparative study of *Tom Jones* and *Honglouloumeng* from the perspective of the matter of fictionality. Both texts include authorial intrusions that straightforwardly signify the fictionality of the texts, complicating the problem of fictionality in the texts by affecting the delivery and connotation of the messages, or the truths, of the texts, while such fictionality functions distinctively differently in these two works. In comparison, this essay further elaborates on how authorially claimed fictionality splits texts into multiple layers among which readers are demanded to properly posit themselves among while reading, and how the progress of readers' reading of these layered texts complicates and resolves the matter of fictionality to drive readers to perceive the messages of the works. While *Tom Jones*' fictionality progresses by distancing readers from both the storyworld and the authorial narrator, *HLM*'s fictionality functions by devouring both the readers and the author to immerse them in the storyworld. By different approaches to fictionality, the two texts lead readers to different types of truths. Therefore, this essay might offer a glimpse into the matter of fictionality in novel, on how fictionality constructs the nature of novel.

**Keywords:** *Tom Jones*, *Honglouloumeng*, Fictionality, Authorial Intrusion.

## 1. Introduction

Fictions function paradoxically: they stem from inventiveness yet attempt to feign themselves as real, as is recognized by Catherine Gallagher [1]. Among all fictions that paradoxically draw their energy from fictionality, those that outspokenly advertise their artificial origin seem odd, especially ones wrought before the rise of metafictional concern. The claim of fictionality is often made by authorial forces, interesting enough, that the usually unconditional sources of reliability and certainty should intentionally claim the falsity of their work, an act almost equivalent to renouncing their credibility, in waiving the delusion of verisimilitude to facts. The authorial claim of fictionality then receives criticism for its deviation from the realism of immersion, growing dominant since the last century: Whether James' teaching about showing instead of telling or Ian Watt's establishment of formal realism based on the favor of lifelike illusion, all seem incompatible with what seems the abrupt intervention in the flow of integral illusory narrative.

As the more recent study gradually comes to be attracted by the study of fictionality of novels for so long a time taken by default, the paradoxical nature of fiction becomes quite more elaborated but also more confusing. Novels, whose paradoxical fictionality are uncovered by their authors intentionally, therefore for their bold exposure become some of the most complicated cases of

understanding the fictional nature, and want further research. Though the debate over fictionality and realism occurs mainly in Western literature theory, there is no reason to limit the range of sources under discussion to Western ones. The contemplation on fictionality, once forms categorized as fiction arise in the literature tradition of a culture, often sparks up, and is often contextualized and structured with considerable differences, worthy of attention for possible illumination on the topic still much a puzzle. Therefore, this essay selects two texts, *Tom Jones* and *Hongloumeng (The Story of the Stone)* for further examination, each itself influential and distinctive enough in their embracing of authorially alleged fictionality. Yet their respective involvements with fictionality, the approaches to truths through fictionality and the locations of truths differ.

For *Tom Jones*, fictionality originates from the authorial narrator spreading his comment on the story over the text. Apart from the widespread criticism against the intruding author based on the principle of immersive reality, the approvals of such authorial intrusions often focus on reliability, certainty, and therefore, another type of reality that intrusions promise. Rothstein's elaborated analysis in *Virtues of Authority in "Tome Jones"* deals with how the authorial narrator establishes his authority to achieve the desired intention in his ideal readers with rhetoric techniques [2]. A similar opinion is also expressed by Wayne C. Booth, in which the author approaches the problem through a historical perspective, noting that intrusion establishes Fielding's authority to fully control his fiction to trigger certain moral effects in his readers[3]. Paul Dawson, with his historical research on authorial intrusions, also endorses the idea that intrusions ensure moral truths: he argues that breaking the immersive illusion in fiction counts not as a violation of realism in Fielding's time, but a beneficial digression to keep readers in proper distance from the invented world and also guarantee the moral reliability of the text as "a true report of the world (162)"[4]. Gjerlevsen, occupied with the matter of fictionality as a critical component in the rise of the English novel, also regards *Tom Jones*'s authorial address of fictionality as an explication of the newly-rose genre's relations to other existing genres, justifying the genre's credibility. Another trend of criticism devotes more to the authorial claim concerning fictionality that in turn yields beneficial unreliability in refreshing readers' perception of reality [5]. Susan P. McNamara's *Mirrors of Fiction within Tom Jones* handles how the permeating elements of fictionality, including ones generated by authorial intrusions, challenge the standard of truth to inverse the relations between fiction and reality by the problem of reliability in readers [6]. Also interested in readers' response to the problem of reliability in reading, John Preston discusses how the seemingly authorial narrator serves as an apparatus to put readers into the irony of the plot with his insufficient credibility, leaving space for the idea of uncertainty in the hands of Fortune in life for readers to perceive [7].

*HLM* is situated in the context of the discussion about the mixture of Zhen and Jia (truth and falsity) in itself. A consensus reached by inquiries into fictionality is that fictionality functions through its alluring verisimilitude, by immersing its implied receivers in the illusion of life in the storyworld, another aspect of Jia: the vividness yet transience of the mundane world, as an approach to the final enlightening truths. In the essay *Fiction That Leads to Truth*, Lene Bach pays attention to how Kongkong Daoren, the character as an embodiment of imaginary readers, experiences the quest for the truth of the story of the stone to reach the final enlightenment. The author notes that in such progress, attachment and involvement to the story, or in other words, to be temporarily "deluded", is a necessary stage [8]. Anthony Yu's discussion of the novel's fictionality in the light of its Buddhism-informed cultural background also to some extent stresses the necessity of delusion: that "the illusion of life ... can only be grasped the illusion of the art (49)", the author calls attention to fictionality to highlight both the danger and the need to indulge in illusion, realized in the storyworld as an indulgence in qing (desire)[9]. Yau reviews fictionality from the perspective of its simultaneous violation and fulfillment of realism. He argues that through a series of paradoxes produced by the claim of falsity on different levels of the text, the attempt to generalize the truth of the novel into any

single element, namely “monist realism”, is deterred[10]. Thus the truth must be realized through fictionality, and in fictionality.

Existing studies of the two texts have roughly outlined the differences between the two texts: fictionality functions in *Tom Jones* by distancing to deliver the truth to readers, while in *HLM* it encourages immersion and identification as a trial to truth. Also, these studies of the two works, to different extents, all resort to the progress of readers’ apprehension of the matter of fictionality posed by authors’ declaration. Therefore, this essay aims to further expound on the effects of fictionality, the matter produced and complicated by direct or indirect authorial comments, on readers’ progressive perception of the message of the novels. The authors produce the matter by splitting their works into several interacting narrative layers and dictate to their readers proper attitudes towards these narrative layers, yet in the meantime confuse them in their self-positioning. Through the progress of reading, readers’ perception about these layers gradually alters, finally ending in a thorough apprehension of the truth through the fictionality matter.

## 2. Tom Jones: A Fictionalized History

### 2.1. Granting “Historical” Authority: Credibility

Fielding entitled his work a “history”. Indeed he styled his fictional world in a somewhat historical way: the panoramic perspective, which concentrates more on the actions of characters and the progress of the plot rather than rendering inner life, that posits the readers as the audience of a play; the zero focalization that enables the omniscient narrator—likely the correspondence of Fielding himself incarnated in the text—to assess and comment as he narrates; the past tense of the narrative, denoting the time distance of the storyworld from the narrator and readers. Yet the work does not intend to confuse itself with serious history, for its style is too blatantly comic and satirical, not only in the sense of its plot and language style, but also for its intrusive narrator that professes the work’s fictionality right at the opening of this work, and pleads the following for his intrusion: “the excellence of the mental entertainment consists less in the subject, than in the author’s skill in well dressing it up.”[11] Here marks the beginning of an authorial manipulation of the fictionality of the invented history throughout the whole work, which aims at delivering the truth of this fiction to its readers. By “dressing it up”, Fielding means to separate his work into two layers of narrative: the storyworld of *Tom Jones*, and the authorial intrusion.

Authorial intrusion dictates readers’ proper reaction towards the story, delivering Fielding’s moral lessons: the narrator “set ‘good readers’ who practices what he preaches (99)” [2]. Authority is established by convincing the readers of the author’s close control of the connotations of every line, ensuring them that the messages to be conveyed have all been given or indicated by the narrator. Its second but no less significant faculty is to distance readers from the fictionalized world, obstructing them from waiving their advantageous position of omniscient viewpoint shared with the narrator, as Ian Watt notes, might cause the loss of “alertness to the larger implications” of characters’ actions [12]. The two faculties then motivate the work to function as a fictionalized history: to place readers amid a position that they recognize as more privileged in terms of knowledge of the truth than the blind characters whirling in Fortune, but still knowing less than the narrator-author who plans the story integrally and logically yet does not demonstrate it frankly. In the meantime, however, readers cannot always predict the Fortune of the storyworld though they know more; and although knowing less than the narrator readers have confidence in the narrator to confer his knowledge fully. These effects all resort to the work’s claim as a “fictionalized history”.

*Tom Jones*’ pseudo-history is created, lacking a reference to the fact in reality. For real history, based on referentiality to reality, history’s credibility lies in the record of a series of facts and achieves its utmost freedom only in the arrangement and interpretation of incidents. It is the authenticity of



facts, not the novelistic design of the plot, that grants the credibility of history and serves as the foundation of authority. All arrangements and interpretations of history are then attempting proposals of understanding, not entirely in control in accordance with historians' will; and therefore, the categorical authority of any version of recorded history cannot be granted. Yet for *Tom Jones* as an artifice, fictionality grants the author absolute freedom to conjure up incidents and spin up a plot unavailable for authentic history, and absolute authority to dictate a teleological truth. Therefore, the narrator-author's position is even more privileged in his pseudo-history than the real historians, for he secures full control realized in his well-devised intrusions, even though he withholds some truths as he narrates.

## 2.2. Demonstrating "Historical" Experience: Uncertainty

He withholds but in an appropriate manner: Tom Jones' history is dramatic and unpredictable in the name of ever-fluctuating Fortune, the plot "free-ranging, unpredictable, open-ended (368)" as coined by Preston. While the narrator highlights a comprehensible causal chain in the turmoil of Fortune, the plot proceeds in another sequence not fully intelligible and predictable for readers guided by the narrator, for the sequence is full of "coincidence, chance meetings and meetings missed, good luck and bad, unplanned and unforeseen events (371)" [7]. The narrator-author does not empower his readers to overlook this unpredictability and take it for predestination from the omniscient viewpoint of a historical narrator but has to guide them to proper judgment by suggesting that he holds a grasp of all the drastic fluctuations and is well-qualified as a guide, though not thoroughly frank. Therefore, a double irony faces the readers: firstly the one between readers and characters, where readers expect them to know more but gradually discover that they are no less pranked by Fortune; secondly the one between readers and the narrator-author, where readers trust him to participate in his omniscience only to find their anticipation fails. Readers' reading is then not just surveying history but also encountering it: by reading the unpredictability of Tom's life they also experience how history works in progress, and how Fortune is unfolded in history, though they are always reminded as spectators of good taste, to keep a proper distance from the storyworld, thanks to the echoing reminding of fictionality. Fictionality then works as the engine of the pseudo-history, creating irony while driving readers forth to distinguish Fielding's design as they continue, until they reach the ending where the truth awaits. That truth, however, just partly resides in uncovering all the connotations that the narrator-author did not reveal and to regain the omniscience the narrator-author preserved and recognizing his full moral intent. It also resides in the ironized state of readers when they remained innocent of the twists and turns of the plot, a "historical experience" that Fielding attempted to convey: the history of "man in time", as Philip Stevick observes in his survey of Fielding's attitude towards history, a history not of abstracted tendencies but "coheres in endless and intersecting chains of cause and effect", with individuals in it occasionally both perplexed and rewarded by Fortune; and the complication of history is represented in a comic manner in *Tom Jones*, celebrated with witty laughter from irony[13]. Readers, in their retrospect to the experience under irony, are then able to laugh both comically at their once innocence, and at the comic-like fictional history as a miniature of the world in history that Fielding elaborates, which they themselves experience as an audience but no less impressive.

By "history" Fielding encouraged no immersion, but an equally immersive experience to run across Fortune beyond a fictionalized world, and a truths about a world in history reached by fictionality.

### 3. Hong Lou Meng: A Truthful Dream

#### 3.1. The Threefold “Jia”

*HLM* is dream-like in multiple aspects: the lack of referentiality to reality and its substitution for a fictionalized story as is declared by the author (“Jiang Zhenshi Yinqu”)(concealing the true events)(Note: All translations of the first three paragraphs of the original text are my own, and translations in other parts are from Cao, Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone*, translated by John Minford and David Hawks, Ebook version by Penguin Books, 2012.); the obscurity of the authenticity of the story on the stone in the storyworld as Kongkong Daoren (Vanitas) concerns; the transience and futility of Hongchen (The Red Dust) splendor as the stone indulges in. The affirmation and accusation of the fictionality of the text within and outside the storyworld and the motif of the ephemeral mundane world interprets the title “dream”, corresponding to and intertwining with each other to deliver the message of the fiction. Embodied in the structure of the fiction are the three layers of narrative: the authorial comment on the “dreamy” property of the fiction, the framework narrative within the storyworld about Kongkong Daoren and the magical stone, and the account of Jia Baoyu’s life in Hongchen. The author mediates between and bridges these layers, by his direct presence or the presence of his embodiment and his allusion to the imagined readers. And by fiddling with fictionality and futility, the author manipulates the deluding “Jia”, or sham, to reach the truth of the fiction.

#### 3.2. Layer One: The Beginning of Fictionality

The first layer readers meet is the passage from “Zuozhe Ziyun(The author says)” to “Liaoran Buhuo(with no confusion)”, the first three paragraphs of the work. A direct authorial intrusion, its intention is to reassure the undertone of the fiction as a dream, for it “Jiang Zhenshi Yinqu (conceals true events)”. The claim of Jia appears here firstly in the form of fictionality, not only in the sense of fictionalizing *ex nihilo* but also further in the sense of camouflaging reality: by emphasizing such concealment, the author suggests his readers not to cling to the referentiality of his work but to enjoy it as amusing nonsense. Yet defining the fiction as a camouflage might provoke readers even more than pure fictionality, for the claim to hide the truth constitutes a paradox: It has been expounded by Ka-Fai Yau that the author “engages in a version of the liar’s paradox (124)”[10] when he fabricates himself as a participant of narration within the text to declare the falsity of incidents in his work as an act of self-reference.

The credibility of the author then begins to diminish, tangled and confused in fictionality, commencing his gradual vanishing into the world of dreams of the text.

Apart from these three beginning paragraphs the author never returns in a blatant authorial intrusion: he is “descending” into the fictional world, and the third paragraph serves as the transition. It occupies an ambiguous position between the layers: written in the voice of the author, it conveys his advice to readers: “Xi’an Ze Shenyou Quwei (reflection will show that there is a good deal more in it than meets the eye)”, and is the last time the author directly addresses his readers with his authority; yet it refers to the fictional origin of the story within the fictional world, and is already in the realm of fiction. Therefore it might be considered a descending point of the author into the second layer, who submerges himself into the storyworld and shall appear later incarnated as a character, not to avoid being devoured by the fictionality he created. The descending results in the emergence of the narrator of the whole following text, and as is indicated by his reference to the fictional origin of the story, a homodiegetic one. The narrator takes over the authorial voice of the descended author. Furthermore, the narratees, invoked by a homodiegetic narrator, should also habit the storyworld; yet as readers in reality receive and accept the author’s advice of “Xi’an(reflection)”, they then identify

with the narratees. It then marks the descending of readers into the storyworld as well, heralding their immersion in fictionality.

### 3.3. Layer Two, to Be Merged with Layer Three: The Complexion of Fictionality

As both the author and readers immerse in the storyworld, they are embodied as characters. The former ones are Kongkong Daoren and Cao Xueqin in Nostalgia Studio, and the latter are the monk and the Taoist priest who bring the stone into the Red Dust, and Jia Yuncun (“feigned words remain”) and Zhen Shiyin (“concealing real incidents”). Both are perplexed by Jia: confused by fictionality and reality or wallowing in the transient illusion of the mundane world, their experiences stand in relief to each other.

The monk and the Taoist priest traverse the two layers in the storyworld, between the mythical world and the Red Dust. They traverse but not accompanied by entanglement into the illusion, not captured by Jia. Unbound as they are, they do not hinder the magical stone from a journey into the illusionary Red Dust, nor do they reveal the truth of that illusion to the world with plain words, but playfully embed it into a poem, *Haoliaoge (Won-Done Song)* in the first chapter: they represent the truth and the origin of the truth, yet this truth is not overtly available for characters—then also, for readers; and this truth sojourns in the worlds of tangling illusion and reality, but does not transcend them. Readers are about to perceive such a truth in reading to the end.

Jia Yuncun and Zhen Shiyin both undergo ascendance from the third layer to the second, from inside the story on the Stone to the mythical world the Stone itself lies in. Both first habituate the Red Dust, while Zhen Shiyin then goes with the Taoist priest, and Jia Yucun meets Kongkong Daoren in his everlasting coma. With their traversing, the boundary between the second and the third layer also blurs and fuses: “Liangfanren Zuo Yifanren” (As Man and Stone become once more a single whole)(Note: The original text could be straightforwardly translated as “the two sects of people integrate into a single whole”. For my argument here, “Liangfanren” not only refers to Jia Baoyu and Stone but also other characters that traverse the boundary of layers. And the sentence might be interpreted as “two groups of characters in two distinctive layers integrate into one group because of the combination of narrative layers”), hinting at the traversing of layers by characters. And after the Stone’s return, the renewing of the record of boundary traversing “Houmian Jiwen Li You Lixule Duoshao Shouyuanjiegude Huatou (a whole new section had been appended to the gatha with which the earlier version concluded)”, by also including the happenings in the mythical world, indicates the combination of textual layers. For Zhen Shiyin, this fusion occurs when he witnesses the end of the Stone’s journey in the Red Dust: the Jia of illusion ends, but not the Jia of fictionality. After that, Jia Yucun becomes the key figure who leads Kongkong Daoren to the embodied author Cao Xueqin, where Daoren’s concern with fictionality terminates. Jia Yucun never transcends the illusion of the Red Dust by recognizing it, but by endless sleep: a state often related to dreams. And where he awakens still exists in the world of fictionality: to Daoren he insists on the authenticity of the story, “Zheshi Wo Zaoyi Qinjian Jinzhi, Nizhe Chaolude Shangwu Chuancuo(“I have seen all this myself at first-hand. As far as I can see your record contains no errors.”)”—a sham of fictionality. Thus for readers, their endings are the sign of the termination of illusion but continuance of fictionality, and the Jia of null reference is always present.

For Kongkong Daoren, his opinion regarding the authenticity of the Stone’s story alters several times, until finally realizes Fuyan Huangtang(all utter nonsense)” of the text. Immersed readers identify with him in reading experience: Bech analyzes that Kongkong Daoren exists as the fictive reader in the text, who undergoes the maze of Jia and Zhen in the story in his pursuit of truths as the readers do, for his hybridized acceptance of the three main teachings in pre-modern China makes him representative of the “proverbial ‘every man’ (20)”[8]. The trail of readers’ reading coincides with

Kongkong Daoren's, both in indulgence in the story of the Red Dust in layer three, and the perception of the fictionality of the Stone's story in layer two.

### 3.4. Awakening, but with no Escape

The moment he gives up on the problem of authenticity, readers stop identification, and this moment corresponds to Jia Yuncun and Zhen Shiyin's departure from the Red Dust in the sense of their dispose of Jia as characters. However, as their departure does not signal the end of fictionality, the renunciation of Daoren does not remove readers' burden of the problem of fictionality. Readers stop identification, only to find that after identification with Daoren and deeper immersion into the fictional Red Dust, they are in the same case as the beginning of the fiction, when addressed as narratees in the third paragraph, in the gap between reality and fictionality. The difference is that the author has escaped into fictionality, promising no return: the authorial credibility goes absent and the extra-textual origin of all truths and meanings gets lost. Indicated in the text is the last scene of the fiction, where the embodied author rather than the real author himself addresses again the absurdity of the story—again an action of self-reference of fictionality in fiction, its credibility doubtful. Thus the reader must accept the absence of the author, facing the now unified fictional world alone. This absence renders the issue of fictionality a murky affair, leaving readers lingering on the vague borderline of fictionality and reality. The claim that "Xi'an Ze Shenyong Quwei" emerges as the only possible truth—the fictionality is the very truth of the fiction, and the "Shen Qu (profound interest)" is engendered by the process of readers' "Xi'an" and awakening from immersion in fictionality. The fictionality, as the truth, is the source of readers' "Quwei (interest)": Yau coins it as "making sense through nonsense (128)"[10]; and Yu comments that such interest resides in the "reinforcement of illusion", which is both a "need and danger (48)"[9]. Chan Buddhism's philosophical undertone permeates such truth: the truth realized upon awakening from the illusions of the world is that reality does not lie beyond this world, but rather, illusion is the entirety of reality. Thus, fictionality leads to itself as the truth expressed by the text, through a Dream of multiple layers demanding progressive immersion and identification, and the final awakening to revelation without escape.

## 4. Conclusion

The fictionality in *Tom Jones* is traceable in its authorial origin, and ultimately leads to a certain truth that lies beyond its fictionality: fictionality functions as a guarantee of moral truth and is then recognized as a window to "history", a method leading to a truth that must be grasped. In this process, the craftsmanship of such fictionality is acknowledged. Fictionality and the truth it aims to achieve are separate, the former as a means to reach the latter, and the author is the source of fictionality, crediting a comprehensible truth.

*HLM* works differently. Its boundaries of fictionality are difficult to define both textually and contextually, and the ultimate truth about the text is simply its own nature—fictionality, as both the means and the end. Fictionality and the truth it seeks to achieve are identical. It is hardly probable to discern the extent to which the author fictionalized the text (concealing real events), and ultimately, everything dissolves into the text's fictionality, offering no promise of any truth beyond the existence of fictionality itself.

*Tom Jones*, as a kind of fictionalized history, presents a form of fictionalized certainty; though artificial but still qualifies as history, as it provides knowledge and insight through the interpretation and generalization of events and characters, offering truths that can be applied to the real world in which the reader lives, for "similarities can occur because of the difference between fiction and life", as mentioned by Gjeverson, arguing that Tom's story is "thematized in an Aristotelian way (180-181)"[5]. It also offers, on the adverse side, an uncertainty as unpredictability: the truth of the

experience of history itself. However, *HLM*, as its title suggests, is a dream—a metaphor in a Freudian sense, a displacement of reality. Without external references beyond the dream, reality cannot be discussed: all the heated discussions of inquiry into the life of the mysterious author, Cao Xueqin, cannot bear a fruit of absolute certainty for the lack of validating evidence. Fictionality composes the nature of the novel, and in the absence of a reliable authorial consciousness, the only truth to be acknowledged is the novel's fictionality without any other certainty.

The relationships between fictionality and reality differ in the two texts. To generalize, these reflections reflect two sides of fictionality in the novel: one side leads to the discovery of truth in themes as generalized knowledge after encountering; the other side is the ontological completion of the novel, pure fictionality itself, achieved through illusory immersion. Novel is both a fictionalized history and a truthful dream, and the author is both the authorizer and interpreter of meaning over fictionality and someone who disappears into fictionality. The comparison of the two fictions then might offer us a glimpse into fictionality as the fundamental nature of the novel.

## References

- [1] Gallagher, Catherine. "The Rise of Fictionality." *The Novel*, edited by Franco Moretti, vol. 1, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 336.
- [2] Rothstein, Eric. "VIRTUES OF AUTHORITY IN 'TOM JONES.'" *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1987, pp. 99–126.
- [3] Booth, Wayne C. "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*." *PMLA*, vol. 67, no. 2, 1952, pp. 163–85.
- [4] Dawson, Paul. "From Digressions to Intrusions: Authorial Commentary in the Novel." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2016, pp. 145–67.
- [5] Gjerlevsen, Simona Zetterberg. "A Novel History of Fictionality." *Narrative*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2016, pp. 174–89.
- [6] McNamara, Susan P. "Mirrors of Fiction Within *Tom Jones*: The Paradox of Self-Reference." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1979, pp. 372–90.
- [7] Preston, John. "Plot as Irony: The Reader's Role in *Tom Jones*." *ELH*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1968, pp. 365–80.
- [8] Bech, Lene. "Fiction That Leads to Truth: 'The Story of the Stone' as Skillful Means." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, vol. 26, 2004, pp. 1–21.
- [9] Yu, Anthony C. *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- [10] Yau, Ka-Fai. "Realist Paradoxes: The Story of the 'Story of the Stone.'" *Comparative Literature*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2005, pp. 117–34.
- [11] Fielding, Henry. *The History of Tom Jones, Reprinted in Penguin Classics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1985, p.52.
- [12] Watt, Ian. "Fielding as Novelist: *Tom Jones*." *The Rise of the Novel*. Ebook version by Pimlico, 2000, p.261.
- [13] Stevick, Philip. "Fielding and the Meaning of History." *PMLA*, vol. 79, no. 5, 1964, pp. 561–68.



# *A Conversation Analysis of Dialogues in “Young Sheldon” from the Perspective of Politeness Principle*

Sixuan Sui<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Chinese Language and Literature, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, China*

*a. sisyun0420@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The Politeness Principle plays a vital role in daily communication and is a guarantee of successful communication activities. Young Sheldon, an American series premiered in 2017, focuses on the life of Sheldon’s family, which contains a large number of conversations that against the Politeness Principle. In this paper, I study the conversations in Young Sheldon, count all the dialogues that against the Politeness Principle, and analyze the conversational implicature and effects of pragmatics. Results show that the violation of Approbation Maxim and Tact Maxim has the highest frequency in all dialogues, while the violation of Generosity Maxim the fewest occurrences. The analysis indicates that the dialogues that against the Politeness Principle show the characters’ selfishness and indifference, and have the discourse effect of reflecting humor and hindering the development of relationship, which helps people understand the characters and the plots better and improve their communication skills.

**Keywords:** Politeness Principle, conversation analysis, Young Sheldon, pragmatics.

## **1. Introduction**

Politeness is a universal phenomenon in human communication, a manifestation of modesty and respect in words and actions when people interact with each other, and also a code of conduct commonly followed by people in different cultures and formed by customs and habits. After the American philosopher H.P. Grice proposed the Cooperation Principle [1], the British linguist Leach expanded Grice's generalization of the meaning of conversation and proposed the Politeness Principle [2]. He believed that people need to follow the Politeness Principle in addition to the Cooperative Principle when engaging in verbal communication. In daily life, the Politeness Principle plays an indispensable role in our communicative activities. When having communication with others, we must consider various factors, use appropriate language, respect to others, and avoid causing misunderstanding and unhappiness. Therefore, the Politeness Principle plays a guiding role in our daily communication and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

This research aims to apply the Politeness Principle to explore the effect of violating six maxims in daily conversations by examining the conversational implicature arose from dialogues, therefore improving the theoretical system of the Politeness Principle and providing theoretical basis for the innovation of the analysis of Politeness Principle in real conversation. By analyzing and summarizing the characters’ dialogues, it fills the lack of research on analysis of Politeness Principle in Young Sheldon and other television shows, analyzes the nuances of the six maxims, and further promotes the development of pragmatics.



## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Politeness Principle

The Politeness Principle was first proposed by Geoffrey Leech in his book *Principle of Pragmatics* [1], which was divided into six maxims: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. According to Leech, speakers should make an effort to minimize the harm and maximize the respect to hearers, and conform to the Politeness Principle when having a conversation. After Leech's research, the focus of politeness studies changed to predominantly postmodern discourse analytic paradigm, focusing on conversational context and cultural background rather than the form of conversation.

In recent years, studies regarding Politeness Principle mostly concentrate on cross cultural communication, and social media and digital communication. Huang compares politeness between Chinese and western culture, defining politeness as a social phenomenon, a means to an end, and a social norm. The researcher discusses how cultural values like privacy and individualism affect politeness and stresses the significance to understand these differences for more effective communication. This study highlights that although the Politeness Principles are universal, there are cultural differences in how they are applied and interpreted, necessitating cultural sensitivity and adaptability in communication [3].

Moreover, Chandra examines communication patterns and politeness strategies in social media, particularly in Diponegoro University WhatsApp groups. By applying qualitative methods, the researcher identifies patterns like non-standard language, emotions, and spoken language writing, which are influenced by status, social distance, and imposition. According to the paper, participants adapt to the conversational context through using approaches like positive and negative politeness to create comfortable communication. Chandra concludes that politeness in social media is important for effective communication and is affected by the relationship between people [4].

### 2.2. conversation analysis of dialogues in Young Sheldon

Current research on Young Sheldon's dialogues mainly focuses on application of politeness theory, identity construction, and social interactions, choosing particular seasons to analyze. For example, Zhang analyzes the conversational implicatures in the first three seasons of "Young Sheldon". This study divides 23 conversations into groups based on whether the characters follow or violate the politeness maxims. The author concludes that viewers' understandings of characters can be enhanced by comprehending these conversational implicatures [5].

What is more, Zhang examines conflictual conversations between parents and children based on the first season of "Young Sheldon", outlining three stages of conflict. This paper finds that characters often violate politeness conventions during conflict to express their dissatisfaction and authority. The author concludes that the adherence and violation of Politeness Principle would impact relationship dynamics and viewers' interpretation [6].

"Young Sheldon" has a large number of dialogues that violate the Politeness Principle, but current studies chose limited data to analyze, probably leading to less comprehensive results. Therefore, this paper investigates dialogues in five seasons of "Young Sheldon", selecting impolite conversations, and categorizes them into six maxims of Politeness Principle.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Statistics of dialogues violating Politeness Principle

This study collected data from five seasons of “Young Sheldon”, accounting for 105 episodes. 511 dialogues were manually chosen to analyze and the statistics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistics of dialogues violating Politeness Principle in “Young Sheldon”.

Kind	Amount	Percentage
Tact Maxim	159	31.1%
Generosity Maxim	23	4.5%
Approbation Maxim	195	38.1%
Modesty Maxim	18	3.5%
Agreement Maxim	73	14.3%
Sympathy Maxim	44	8.5%
Total	512	100%

Table 1 demonstrates that the violation of Approbation Maxim has the highest frequency among the several types of impolite communication, showing that dialogues that express disapproval or criticism are the most commonly used by characters. The Tact Maxim violations that follow suggest that there are a lot of conversations that have the potential to cause hurt or discomfort to others. With the fewest occurrences, the Generosity Maxim implies that there are fewer instances of ungenerous offers or promises made by characters in the series.

#### 3.2. Violation of Tact Maxim

The Tact Maxim requires speakers to be thoughtful by making sure their words are helpful and pleasant and avoiding causing any harm or offense to the listener.

Case 1: In Sheldon’s first class of high school, the teacher introduces him to other students:

Teacher: I’m sure you’re well aware we have a student with us, who, despite his young age, is remarkably gifted. And I expect y’all to make him feel welcome.

Sheldon: Per the student dress and grooming code, this boy’s hair is too long, this boy is wearing sports attire outside of a designated area and this girl’s blouse is diaphanous, which means I can see her brassiere.

On Sheldon’s first day of high school, the teacher praises his talent and other students all give him a warm welcome. However, Sheldon directly points out some of the students’ violation of the dress code in front of everyone, which is not considerate of their feelings or social standing. In other words, Sheldon increases the social cost for other students, causing embarrassment and offense.

The violation of Tact Maxim indicates Sheldon’s traits such as lack of empathy and proper ways for communication, and has an attitude of rules as paramountcy, which are the key aspects of Sheldon’s character development and also create most humor in the show. Audiences can be easily connected to those embarrassed students, and realize the importance of social norms and communication skills. Furthermore, this conversation encourages audiences to be curious about how Sheldon would adapt to high school life and whether other students would accept him, thus audiences can be fully engaged in the show.

### 3.3. Violation of Generosity Maxim

The Generosity Maxim encourages speakers to make generous contributions and avoid emphasizing their own demands in front of others.

Case 2: Sheldon wants to buy something but he does not consider whether mom is available:

Sheldon: Please, Mom! You're being unfair!

Mom: No.

Sheldon: But I really need those thrust-to-weight ratios.

Mom: Do you see I'm cooking?

Sheldon: Well, take me after dinner.

In this conversation, Sheldon is asking for a priority before his mom and does not consider about whether his mom has time to drive him to the store, and also directly says his mom is being unfair, which is hurtful and disrespectful. In other words, Sheldon only focuses on his own demand and does not offer any contributions to others.

The violation of Generosity Maxim shows Sheldon's traits such as selfish, spoiled, and lack of consideration, which are typical personalities for a gifted child. Sheldon's unreasonable request makes him, a talented genius that is not common in real word, more relatable to audiences because everyone may have such moments of self-centeredness. And this selfish behavior can teach not only Sheldon but also the audiences to concern more about others and learn to compromise.

### 3.4. Violation of Approbation Maxim

The Approbation Maxim asks speakers to express as more compliments as possible while minimizing criticism to the listener.

Case 3: Sheldon and his dad are discussing about the work his dad used to do:

Sheldon: Were you a good player?

Dad: Eh, not really. I was just bigger than the other kids.

Sheldon: So you compensated for mediocrity by being large.

Sheldon's words directly criticize his dad's ability as a baseball player, questioning his dad's competence. When his dad is being modest, Sheldon does not choose to give comfort or praise. This kind of comment would make his dad feel upset or undervalued. Facing with this situation, Sheldon has the tendency to be honest and analytical, even at the expense of politeness.

The violation of Approbation Maxim illustrates Sheldon's traits such as honest, and prioritizing truth over social needs. This dialogue also serves as a source of humor to the show, as Sheldon's innocence accidentally "hurt" his dad's feeling. What is more, audiences can learn that it is necessary to express compliment to others in order to maintain a positive relationship and help them gain confidence and joy.

### 3.5. Violation of Modesty Maxim

The Modesty Maxim advises speakers to avoid bragging or drawing attention to their own achievements, thereby fostering a more respectful communication dynamic..

Case 4: When Sheldon enters college, he also receives resentment and alienation from his classmates. Sam, a former classmate of Sheldon's, kindly points out the reason:

Sam: Sheldon, that arrogant attitude is why no one sits with you in class or lunch or ever.

Sheldon: Well, I like to think that they're maintaining a respectful distance out of deference to my intellect.

Sheldon's reply is a clear example of praising himself, as he claims that his classmates' ignorance is a result of their admiration for his superior intelligence. Instead of rethinking his behavior and attitude that might contribute to his social isolation, Sheldon enhances his own image at the expense

of others. This attitude would make Sheldon more isolated and more likely to be excluded by other students, because this arrogant behavior is going to cause resentment among classmates.

The violation of Modesty Maxim reflects Sheldon's traits such as arrogance and a lack of self-awareness. Audiences may find Sheldon's words humorous because of his naive and endearing honesty, even as Sheldon violates the social norms and is impolite to others. It also reinforces the established characteristics that make Sheldon a special and endearing character, laying the stage for further character arcs in which he may grow in his comprehension of social dynamics.

### 3.6. Violation of Agreement Maxim

The Agreement Maxim encourages speakers to express same views and avoid conflict by emphasizing agreement over disagreement.

Case 5: Tam, a Vietnamese, has dinner with Sheldon's family and they ask about Tam's family:

Mom: So, Tam, tell us about your family. What brings y'all to Texas?

Tam: Well, after the American War...

Dad: You mean the Vietnam War.

Tam: We call it the American War.

In this dialogue, Tam refers to the war as the "American War," which is from Tam's perspective of being Vietnamese, and Sheldon's dad is from a completely opposite perspective. However, this war was an aggressive war launched by American against Vietnam. From Tam's view, the experience was painful, and Sheldon's dad should not correct the name of the war or else it would bring back Tam's memories of the unpleasant past. Later, Tam re-emphasizes the name which also makes the situation awkward. They both do not try to find a common view and avoid disagreement and conflict, therefore causing a brief moment of discomfort and awkwardness at the table.

The violation of Agreement Maxim demonstrates characters' traits such as a strong sense of cultural identity and ignorance to others' feelings. This dialogue highlights the significance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in communication. It also suggests audiences to take cultural difference into consideration for building a positive relationship and reducing conflict when having a conversation.

### 3.7. Violation of Sympathy Maxim

The Sympathy Maxim requires speakers to be supportive and understanding towards others, and use less expressions that might be seen as cruel, careless, or indifferent.

Case 6: Paige's parents are going to get a divorce and her mom is asking for advice from Sheldon's dad:

Paige's mom: Boy, that doesn't sound like it could work.

Dad: Suit yourself, but I'm having a nice day; you're crying into your peach cobbler.

Facing with someone who needs help and support, instead of offering comfort or understanding, Sheldon's dad chooses to take his happy marriage as a comparison with Paige's mom's awful situation. This response would bring Paige's mom more hard feelings and probably do damage to her marriage.

The violation of Sympathy Maxim shows Sheldon's dad's traits such as lack of empathy and understanding. Sheldon's dad's unusual behavior shows that even kind people can be impatient and thoughtless, making this character more relatable to real people. For audiences, it reminds them of the needs to be considerate and supportive, especially when someone is going through a rough time.

#### 4. Discussion and Findings

As we can see from the table and analysis, the violation of Politeness Principle is common in “Young Sheldon”, illustrating Sheldon and other characters’ personalities such as selfish, cold, blunt and spoiled, and their behaviors such as telling the truth regardless of the situation, mocking others and ignoring others’ feelings, which drives narrative tension and plot development, and makes characters’ traits more memorable.

For viewers, these violations can bring them humor, as observing someone’s misfortune or social faux pas can bring laughter for audience and let them feel relieved and superior [7]. Moreover, breaking social norms contradicts viewers’ expectations and viewers can also see themselves in the impolite behaviors to better connect with characters.

It can be seen that politeness serves multiple functions, not only maintaining harmony and pleasantness in daily life but also addressing issues arising from cultural differences when communicating with foreigners. The violation of politeness and the consequences afterwards can be used to guide both characters and viewers to understand the value of politeness in encouraging positive social dynamics. Over the whole series of “Young Sheldon”, there is a gradual change in characters’ dialogue patterns, with a large number of impolite words exchange to more refined and polite discourse. This shift enhances the storyline and reflects the growth of the characters, especially Sheldon, as they learn to deal with various difficulties of social relationships. Furthermore, the politeness violations emphasize the importance of treating others with respect, empathy and cultural awareness in our daily communication. Through watching the consequences of impolite words and some relative adjustments, the audience is given a practical instruction and a slight warming on the necessity of adopting polite discourse.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the dialogues in “Young Sheldon” and highlights that the violation of Politeness Principle offers an insight into characters’ personalities, particularly Sheldon’s, presenting a group of selfish and indifferent, but honesty and naive people. These violations also engage viewers by providing humor and a relatable exploration of social norms, suggesting that it is important to maintain politeness in social interactions to keep harmonious relationships. Furthermore, this paper enriches our understanding of how the Politeness Principle functions in everyday life.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the distinction between six maxims may not be completely understood and there might be errors in categorizing conversations that could change the results of this study. Second, this study relies solely on Leech’s Politeness Principle, as it may influence the accuracy of the analysis. Third, the cultural background of politeness norms in “Young Sheldon” may not be fully explored in this study, which might change greatly among audiences and affect how the dialogues are interpreted.

To solve these problems, there are several approaches that we can use to improve relevant studies. First, future research could adopt tools such as natural language processing to assist in the classification of dialogues. Second, researchers could combine Leech’s Politeness Principle with other theories such as Brown and Levinson’s Face Theory [8] or Locher and Watts’s Politeness Theory [9]. Third, future studies could consider the cultural diversity of the audience, as a cross-cultural analysis could provide a deeper understanding of how politeness is viewed and used in various societies.

#### References

- [1] Grice, H.P. (1975) ‘Logic and conversation’, *Speech Acts*, 41–58.

- [2] Leech, G. (1983) *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- [3] Huang, Y. (2008) 'Politeness principle in cross-culture communication', *English Language Teaching*, 1(1).
- [4] Chandra, O.H. (2021) 'Politeness in the use of language in social media', *E3S Web of Conferences*, 317.
- [5] Sijia, Z. (2023) 'Analysis of the conversational implications of dialogues in young Sheldon from the perspective of politeness principle', *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 6(9).
- [6] Ying, Z. (2020) *An Analysis of Conflict Talk Between Parents and Kids in Young Sheldon Based on Politeness Principle*. M.A. Thesis of School of Foreign Language. Shanxi Normal University, Taiyuan.
- [7] Freud, S. (1928). *Humor*. In *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 9(1), 1-6.
- [8] Brown, P. and Levinson, S.C. (1987) *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] Watts, R.J. and Locher, M.A. (2005) *Politeness theory and relational work*.



# *An Analysis of the Subaltern Narrative in A Tale of Two Cities*

Yunying Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Humanities, Jiangnan University, Lihu Avenue, Wuxi, China

a. wangyunying03@163.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is set against the backdrop of the French Revolution and tells the story of the urban commoners represented by Dr. Manette and Charles Darnay, as well as the plight of the poor embodied by the Defarges. Compared to the corrupt rulers and aristocratic powers, both groups occupy the position of the "subaltern." From the perspective of the "subaltern," and with the aid of theories such as Edward Soja's "Third Space" and Seymour Chatman's "Narrative Voice," we can observe Dickens's depiction of the living conditions and spaces occupied by the commoners. This perspective reveals the narrative structure and viewpoint Dickens employs when writing about their fates, as well as the narrative voice he uses to portray the behaviors of different "subaltern" groups.

**Keywords:** *A Tale of Two Cities*, subaltern narrative, space, narrative perspective, narrative voice.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

The term "subaltern" was first introduced by the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci translated the term "subaltern classes" as "lower classes" or "lower groups" to describe oppressed people and forces marginalized by mainstream power within a nation-state[1]. Subaltern narrative, as a significant form of literary expression, focuses on depicting the life experiences, emotional states, and inner worlds of the lower social classes to authentically reflect social realities. As a realist work set against the backdrop of the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities* possesses significant literary and social research value.

### 1.2. Research Objectives and Significance

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the "subaltern" forms the core of the narrative structure. Set against the backdrop of the French Revolution, this element evokes readers' empathy towards the oppressed, making the story more compelling and persuasive. By focusing on the groups living at the bottom of society through a "subaltern" perspective, we can gain a deeper insight into their living conditions, surroundings, psychological states, and more, thus comprehending the sharp and complex class conflicts revealed in the text.

## 2. Literature Review

Scholars began analyzing and commenting on Dickens's novels during his lifetime, and this academic pursuit has continued for over a century, resulting in a vast range of studies, methodologies, and findings. Research on the ideological content and artistic features of his works is particularly abundant. Shortly after its publication, Wilkie Collins praised *A Tale of Two Cities* as "the most perfect work of constructive art"[2]. However, as an experimental piece, some scholars argue that the novel's portrayal of the French Revolution and certain characters does not align with historical facts.

To date, most studies focus on analyzing the artistic characteristics of the novel, such as its narrative structure, character portrayal, and rhetorical techniques, delving into the complexities and multifaceted nature of humanity while exploring themes like compassion, forgiveness, and hatred. In 2003, in *The Dual Variation of Civilian Consciousness and Gentleman Complex: The Duality of Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities*, scholar Gao Jianhong discussed Dickens's tendency to depict the subaltern emotionally while simultaneously presenting upper-class values. Subsequently, Zeng Yi's 2016 publication, *An Analysis of the Ideological Connotation in Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities\**, along with several later works, analyzed the portrayal of humanitarianism in the novel from the perspective of the lower classes. In 2020, Zhao Yuanyuan and Zhang Wen, in *Subaltern, Space, and Humor: The Cinematic Reimagining of Dickens's Urbanism*, highlighted the focus on the subaltern perspective and the metaphorical construction in the film adaptations of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Some studies have also begun to emphasize the novel's narrative techniques, such as narrative perspective and voice, offering insights into contemporary novel writing.

## 3. The Spatial Architecture of the Subaltern

### 3.1. The Spatial Projection of Real-Life Class Structures

American geographer and urban studies scholar Edward Soja posits: "In the 'First Space,' we can examine the absolute and relative locations of things, including the environment of places, as well as the graphical representations of our physical world." The "Second Space," however, pertains to the mental realm—such as the depiction of space in literature, the representation of space in film and art, or individual imaginings of space—all of which can be termed "Second Space." In this realm, various illusory elements strive to conceal reality, turning the real into a substitute for imagination, a projection of an idea[3].

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the representation of the "Second Space" is similarly constructed based on the author's ideological perspective, directly reflecting the social class and real status of the subaltern. In Chapter Five, "The Wine-Shop," Dickens depicts a representative scene of subaltern life: a large wine cask falls in the street, and people nearby "scooped up the wine with broken pottery cups," while others "built small dams with mud," and some even "chewed on the fragments of wood softened by the wine." The spilled wine offers the suffering populace a brief opportunity for self-numbing, a momentary "frenzy" that epitomizes the condition of all subaltern individuals. The lively and passionate surface underscores the deeper realities of their existence.

Additionally, from the perspective of residential sociology, housing disparity is one of the markers of social stratification, objectively dividing society into different ranks. Housing serves not only as a cultural symbol of lower-class dwellings but also as the cramped living space of "subaltern individuals." Its dual identity gives it a more representative significance in spatial architecture. In Chapter Five, Dickens spends considerable effort depicting the place where Dr. Manette is imprisoned: "Through the rusty iron bars of the window, one doesn't need to see; the stench alone reveals the filth and disorder of the surrounding area." The confined, eerie attic becomes Dr. Manette's dwelling place, with the dilapidated old building and gloomy living environment serving as symbols that represent

the living conditions of Dr. Manette and countless others oppressed by the aristocracy. These symbols foreshadow the chasm between social classes and reality. Such typical depictions construct the "Second Space" within the literary work, reflecting the real social class of the characters.

### 3.2. The Formation of a Space for Subaltern Rebellion

In his work *Thirdspace*, Edward Soja discusses the concept of "Third Space" from a cultural geography perspective, explaining its method of incorporating power relations into spatial analysis. At the same time, he abstracts the concept into a mode of thinking that transcends binary oppositions, describing it as "a space that is simultaneously both central and marginal (while also being neither)"[4]. In realist writing, we observe that the spaces faced by subaltern groups often possess certain limitations, yet within these limitations, there frequently exists a sense of "marginality." This marginality serves both as a barrier and a connection, enabling those at the social bottom to retain their autonomy when confronted with hardships. In short, the subaltern no longer seeks to coexist with the "mainstream" within a unified social hierarchy as victims; instead, they come to accept and recognize their "subaltern" identity.

In the novel, Madame Defarge embodies a dual identity as both an "oppressed individual" and a "revolutionary." She is a typical portrayal of a subaltern character. As a victim of class oppression, Madame Defarge harbors deep resentment against the aristocrats who cruelly murdered her family. This long-standing hatred, nurtured amidst social turmoil, evolves into a force of rebellion, driving her to autonomously distance herself from and oppose mainstream society. Similarly, in the Defarges' wine shop, many rebels choose to abandon their original names and adopt the identity of "Jacques." Under the leadership of the Defarges, they rise up, storm the Bastille, and overthrow the ruling class. As "nameless" individuals, they constantly struggle for survival, resisting the rule of the aristocracy, unwilling to be extinguished in the grand world. By discarding their names, these revolutionaries relinquish their "symbols" within mainstream society, instead seeking self-identity and a new sense of belonging within the "Third Space."

## 4. Strategies of Subaltern Narrative

The number of named characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* is relatively small compared to its length, and most of these characters are representative of the subaltern class. In each subaltern character, we can observe contradictions in their personalities. To portray their life experiences and psychological activities, Dickens employs various narrative strategies, enriching the characters while advancing the plot.

### 4.1. Interwoven Narrative Structure

Wang Anyi asserts: "Words are the riddles, structure is the key to decipher them, and the story is the answer"[5]. Structure, as the backbone, supports the text and themes of a novel while also revealing the author's underlying intentions. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens deviates from his usual chronological narrative approach, instead employing flashbacks and interwoven storytelling techniques extensively. Most readers, upon their first reading, may find it difficult to unravel the cause-and-effect relationships within the story. For instance, Mr. Lorry and Miss Lucie rescue Dr. Manette, Darnay is accused of espionage, and the Marquis St. Evrémonde's carriage runs over a poor child—these seemingly unrelated events are, in fact, crucial to the narrative. Within the intricate web of events, each intersecting point serves as a driving force for the plot's progression.

Dr. Manette's wrongful imprisonment results from the corruption of the aristocracy, which is also the reason behind the tragic fate of the Defarges. The intersection of these two characters then leads to the love story between Darnay and Lucie. Although the characters' fates differ throughout the story,

they all exist in the same tumultuous era. Whether it is the revenge-seeking "Jacques" or the others who simply wish for a peaceful life, none can escape the dark tide sweeping through society.

Moreover, to serve the narrative purpose, Dickens separates narrative time from the story's timeline, using summary and omission to highlight key events. In many chapters, he sets up indicators for the shifts in time and space, such as in the first chapter of the second book, "The Golden Thread," titled "Five Years Later," or the beginning of the sixth chapter, where he states, "the tide of time had flowed on for nearly four months." This narrative strategy achieves a seamless and natural transition between different temporal and spatial scenes, emphasizing the shift in characters' states and maintaining a cohesive and tight connection between chapters.

## 4.2. Multiple Narrative Perspectives

As a realist novel reflecting social conflicts, Dickens consciously incorporates the perspective of the subaltern, contemplating their fate deeply. The entire novel alternates between a first-person retrospective perspective and an omniscient perspective. From the beginning, the story adopts a retrospective form, focusing on Dr. Manette as the central thread of the narrative, followed by several experiential descriptions that echo each other. For instance, through Dr. Manette's recounting, readers learn about the Evrémonde brothers. Compared to the omniscient perspective, which offers insights into characters' motivations, this perspective enhances the sense of immersion and authenticity.

The omniscient observer is inherently all-knowing, but the author does not directly reveal or analyze each character's psychological state. Instead, Dickens uses foreshadowing and intentionally leaves gaps, creating a psychological distance between the reader and the characters while hinting at their fates and experiences. In several instances, the author depicts Dr. Manette's unusual reactions to Darnay: when Dr. Manette and his daughter defend Darnay against charges of treason, Dr. Manette "looked at Darnay with a peculiar gaze, staring at him intensely, his brows furrowed, showing a mixture of distrust, aversion, and even a hint of fear." Due to his long imprisonment, Dr. Manette's memory has weakened, but a familiar face still triggers painful recollections. This deliberate hint raises questions for the reader, prompting them to explore the connection between the two characters. When Darnay expresses his affection for Lucie to Dr. Manette, his reaction is equally abnormal: "He suddenly fell silent, his expression odd, and the blank look in his eyes during the silence was also strange." In this scene, the "sound of hammering" symbolizes the awakening of painful memories buried deep within Dr. Manette's mind. This callback surpasses ordinary psychological descriptions, revealing the internal struggle within Dr. Manette. Although the author does not explicitly state it, readers may infer that Dr. Manette has realized his wrongful imprisonment was linked to Darnay's family. Such narrative strategies not only set up the plot but also shroud the entire work in a layer of suspense.

## 5. The Subaltern Narrative Voice

As James Phelan has pointed out, "narrative voice" is one of the frequently used yet inadequately defined critical terms. In this context, "narrative voice" leans towards the "voice" of the author himself. According to the degree of involvement, American narratologist Seymour Chatman categorizes narrators into three types: the absent narrator, the covert narrator, and the overt narrator. The voice of an absent narrator is difficult to discern, while an overt narrator takes advantage of his position to clearly express his stance and opinions. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the author's presence falls between the first two categories. When depicting the actions of subaltern characters at various stages, Dickens conceals his personal attitude within the arrangement of plot and language, subtly intervening and influencing the narrative to participate in constructing the work's expressive structure.

### 5.1. Support for Resistance Against Oppression

Throughout the novel, the author's intention is clear—to depict the miserable lives of the French people under feudal tyranny, expose the corrupt rule of the aristocracy, and express deep sympathy for the suffering of the people. In the narration of two key events in the early part of the novel, Dickens establishes the emotional tone for the entire work. The first event is the "resurrection" of the protagonist, Dr. Manette, and his reunion with his daughter, Lucie; the second is Darnay's estrangement from his family, leading him to London, where he falls in love with Lucie. These events indicate that the author's intent is to reveal the enslavement and oppression of the common people by the ruling class.

The outbreak of the French Revolution was not a sudden event; it was the result of long-term brewing and the accumulation of public resentment. Therefore, a significant portion of the narrative focuses on the subaltern characters, giving them a voice to cry out for justice: when a wine cask accidentally breaks, spilling wine onto the street, people rush out to seize the wine. Among them, a drunken man uses his finger to write the vivid word "blood" on the wall. This symbolic depiction foreshadows the impending bloodshed. The women's knitting becomes a record of the crimes committed by the nobility, with the "Three Fates" metaphorically representing the surge of the revolutionary tide. As the storm approaches, Dickens emphasizes the anger brewing within the hearts of the French commoners, signaling that the fire of revolution is about to ignite.

Additionally, by analyzing the author's attitude towards the aristocracy, who stand in opposition to the "subaltern" people, we can see that Dickens recognizes the legitimacy of the revolution. In Chapter Seven, "Monseigneur in Town," the author employs heavy satire to describe the corrupt and extravagant lives of the nobility: "If only three people attended him while he drank his chocolate, such an improper scene would bring disgrace upon his coat of arms." This sharp contrast highlights the inevitability and significance of the revolution. When the Marquis's carriage runs over a child on the roadside, Dickens uses the phrase "a bundle of something" to describe the boy's body. This understatement reflects how the Marquis perceives the common people's lives as worthless, delivering a powerful shock to the reader. The commoners, forced to fear the nobility, are inevitably driven to revolt.

### 5.2. Skepticism Toward Revolutionary Violence

By depicting scenes of the Parisian people storming the Bastille and punishing their oppressors during the French Revolution, the novel presents a controversial image of the revolutionaries, thereby exploring the relationship between revolution and humanity. In Dickens's portrayal, the revolutionaries are not abstract entities; in contrast to the virtuous and kind figures of Dr. Manette and his daughter, the author expresses disapproval of the violent acts committed by the revolutionaries during the revolution.

During this turbulent period, the people of the Saint Antoine district are depicted as the typical victims of exploitation. The brutal murder of Madame Defarge's family by the Evrémonde brothers left her with an indelible hatred for the aristocracy. In the early stages of the uprising, she decapitates enemies without hesitation and even attempts to frame Lucie and Dr. Manette to achieve her personal revenge. Like Madame Defarge, many revolutionaries are blinded by their rage at this moment. To break free from long-standing oppression, they engage in revolutionary struggles, transforming from fervent idealists to perpetrators of unrestrained violence, thus distorting the original intentions of the revolution. "The rivers of the south were choked with corpses thrown in during the night; prisoners were shot in rows under the southern winter sun." To some extent, revolutionaries gained the "freedom" to judge but were simultaneously stripped of their own freedom.

The prominence of the theme of violence in the latter part of *A Tale of Two Cities* is not merely an account of the perpetrators in a sea of blood; it is also a fusion of the dual themes of revenge and humanitarianism—two themes that conflict yet converge, making the motivations and trajectories of the subaltern characters more vivid. Regardless of the narrative voice the author adopts, it is not a simple matter of praising the early “justice” or condemning the later “atrocities.” Madame Defarge's “violence” stems from oppression and personal tragedy, while the revolutionaries' behaviors are influenced by social realities beyond their individual will. Thus, Dickens's narrative voice on “justice” and “violence” ultimately converges on a call for humanitarianism, giving the novel greater relevance amid the intense and brutal revolution.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper explores the use of spatial symbols in *A Tale of Two Cities*, particularly those closely related to subaltern narratives, to analyze how the novel employs spatial structures and operations to reveal social injustice, the complexities of human nature, and the struggles and hopes of the lower classes. In the novel, Dickens's subaltern narrative extends beyond the elevation of themes and character portrayal. By integrating the "subaltern" perspective into various subaltern characters, he constructs a polyphonic narrative. The dialogue, conflict, and integration between these different voices not only enhance the authenticity and emotional resonance of the work but also demonstrate the diversity and inclusiveness of subaltern narratives.

## References

- [1] Dong, B. (2015). *On Sun Huiwen's "Subaltern Narrative" (Doctoral dissertation)*. Heilongjiang University, Heilongjiang.
- [2] Feng, C. (2013). *A study on Gothic elements in Dickens's later novels (Doctoral dissertation)*. Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai.
- [3] Wang, X. (2021). *A study of Jhumpa Lahiri's works from the perspective of the Third Space (Doctoral dissertation)*. Liaoning Normal University, Liaoning.
- [4] Yuan, Y. (2017). An overview of the academic history of "Third Space": On the theoretical intersection of Soja, Bhabha, and Jameson. *Journal of Central South University (Social Science Edition)*, 23(4), 180-188.
- [5] Wang, A. (2011). *Elegant structure*. Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House.



# *Identity Recognition of Immigrants in European Countries*

Like Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Nanjing Foreign Language School, Nanjing, 210008, China*

*a. 17826509009@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** With the development of technology, nations worldwide are strengthening their interconnectedness. In this context, an increasing number of individuals, particularly those from less developed countries, exhibit a greater inclination to migrate and establish new lives in other countries. However, several obstacles hinder their smooth integration. Therefore, this paper explores factors that contribute to challenges in immigrants' recognition of identity. In this essay, the author primarily examines the substantial disparities between their traditional cultural backgrounds and the novel cultures they encounter. While endeavoring to accept and adapt to new lifestyles, some of them may experience doubts regarding their original identities. Besides, host countries invariably establish regulations and policies for immigrants that can exert both positive and negative influences on issues pertaining to personal identity recognition. This study specifically focuses on inquiries regarding immigrants' identification by reviewing relevant documents and reports while consulting official websites for data and surveys.

**Keywords:** Immigration, European countries, Identity recognition, Culture differences, Government policies.

## **1. Introduction**

According to statistics released by the United Nations in 2016, as of 2015, the number of international migrants reached 244 million, an increase of 71 million (41%), compared to 2000. There were approximately 4.7 million foreign immigrants entering Europe in 2015, of which about 2.4 million came from non-EU member states and 1.4 million from EU member states. In addition, the number of illegal immigrants within the European Union has reached a considerable level. As of 2017, about 15,755 illegal immigrants landed on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, coming from Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan. Besides, according to data released by the Italian Ministry of the Interior, from January 1st to August 14th, 2017, a total of 97,293 illegal immigrants arrived in Italy by sea and land [1]. People immigrating to European countries are plagued by social identity recognition problems, which are concentrated in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. The essay focuses on immigrants to European countries like the UK, France and Germany, specifically the troubles they are facing, in order to help immigrants better understand their identification, encourage governments to make appropriate regulations, and reduce social problem risks. This research can also provide valuable insights for other regions facing similar immigration challenges, facilitating the formulation of global strategies for managing and integrating immigrants.

## **2. The Social Impact of European Immigrants**

### **2.1. Positive Impacts**

Due to the relatively friendly immigration policies towards high-tech talents in many countries, many high-tech talents tend to migrate to developed countries, which can bring about technological development. For example, in Germany. In 2023, the German government's newly revised draft of the "Skilled Migration Act" further relaxed restrictions on skilled migration from various countries, especially non-EU countries, based on the "Skilled Migration Act" passed in March 2020. In this way, Germany has attracted a large number of skilled immigrants, making the country's technological development world-class [2].

### **2.2. Negative Effects**

Due to the lack of proper guidance measures for foreign workers in many countries, a large number of foreign workers have been stranded, causing various social problems in the future. Taking Germany as an example, these social issues are mainly reflected in the following three aspects.

Firstly, the rise in unemployment rate is primarily attributed to the excessive influx of immigrants lacking necessary skills and education. As a result, a large number of unemployed immigrants rely on government assistance, thus placing a substantial burden on the government. According to Germany's Federal Statistical Office, in 2007, while the overall unemployment rate was 10.1%, immigrant unemployment reached an alarming 20.3%, more than double the national average [2]. Secondly, the crime rate has risen. The continuous increase in unemployment and the imperfect welfare system, as well as the deficiencies in the scope of social security, have made it difficult for immigrants to integrate into mainstream society. Besides, the rise of racism and xenophobia in society has greatly deepened the conflict between immigrants and local residents, leading to an increase in crime rates and social instability. For example, in 2021, BKA discovered 5047860 criminal offenses in Germany. There are 1785398 suspects. Among all registered suspects, 533483 (29.9%) were non Germans and 127489 (7.1%) were immigrants.[3]. Thirdly, immigrants have not been able to integrate into mainstream society and maintain close ties with labor exporting countries in certain aspects. In some ways, immigrants may potentially constrain independent diplomatic actions between immigration importing and exporting countries. Therefore, how to coordinate and handle immigration issues will be related to the stability and development of a country's economy, politics, and culture [4].

Moreover, the influx of immigrants has changed the ethnic and racial structure of the receiving country, highlighting the issue of national identity. The strong impact of new immigrants on the host country's culture in terms of language, culture, religious background, and living habits has caused strong concerns among the government and the public. However, the concepts of racial equality and human rights brought about by globalization, the prevalence of civil rights movements and multiculturalism, and economic interdependence have made it impossible for countries to continue to adhere to outdated immigration policies, leading to intense debates within a country about immigration policies and even endangering domestic social stability.

## **3. Factors Driving the Increase of Immigration in Europe**

### **3.1. Pulling Factors**

Pay scales and economic prospects have a big role in luring immigrants. Travelers frequently opt to relocate to nations with better work possibilities and comparatively developed economies and more job opportunities. Furthermore, a lot of immigrants go to high-quality education-producing nations

in the hopes of giving themselves and their family greater educational chances. For instance, a large number of Nigerian students are studying overseas because they believe that education is the quickest route to immigration. The US, Canada and the UK are regarded as premier locations despite their expensive airfares. Nigerians have received 500% more students visas from the UK government in the last two years [5]. In order to fill both professional and low-skilled jobs today's post-Brexit labor markets rely on talent from erstwhile colonies like Nigeria, India and Pakistan [6]. Other Nigerians opt for less expensive, non-English-speaking nations like Germany, Finland, and Norway because they provide part-time employment options to international students and lower tuition. Others choose less restrictive visa requirements but more accessible locations like China and Northern Cyprus, where they are not allowed to work legally [7]. These lower-tier countries act as stepping stones to the upper-tier nations. As a result, geopolitical entities experience a "tier-itorialization" in which global trends support particular worldviews and classifications.

Immigrants' decisions may also be influenced by variables including public safety, healthcare, and social welfare. People normally desire to live in places where they can acquire higher social security and quality of life. Some places have drawn immigrants due to their abundance of natural resources. Concurrently, the region becomes more livable due to a more consistent and pleasant climate.

### 3.2. Pushing Factors

Political instability, conflict, internal turmoil, oppression, and various other factors can compel individuals to depart their homeland in search of a more secure and stable environment. In Nigeria, the government's increasing disregard for the educational aspirations of young people has been exacerbated by its utilization of violence. While emigrating from the country had long been an underlying desire among youth, recent years have witnessed a heightened sense of urgency to do so. A decade marked by perceived political deterioration reached its lowest point with the shocking occurrence known as the Lekki massacre on October 20th, 2020. Within Lekki, unarmed civilian protestors—predominantly comprised of young individuals—were subjected to gunfire by Nigerian Army officers. Protests erupted nationwide to condemn the brutality exhibited by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit within the Nigerian Police Force established in 1992 with the mandate to combat rampant armed robberies and kidnappings. Over time, however, this unit devolved into an instrument for extrajudicial violence. For numerous young people, the Lekki massacre laid bare their unbearable circumstances within Nigeria. Fueled by social media platforms such as Twitter in particular, it was through #EndSARS protests that a tipping point was reached—a moment that mobilized pent-up personal discontent accumulated over past ten years [8]. Furthermore, in the event of an economic downturn, local residents often find themselves unable to meet their basic living expenses due to insufficient income. As a result, they opt to migrate to more developed nations where they can earn a sufficient income through physical labor and other means. In Nigeria, faith in the government has been eroded not only by its actions but also by its lack thereof - failure to revive the economy, inability to control inflation (which has ranged between eight and 17 percent annually since 2010), inability to mitigate the rising cost of living, and failure to address concerns regarding the insufficiency of a regular salary (9-5) for supporting oneself and one's extended family [9]. Additionally, environmental challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and limited resources may also contribute to individuals leaving their hometowns.

## 4. The Relationship between Immigration and Identity Recognition

At present, with the increasing number of immigrants, issues of identity and cultural identity are receiving more and more attention from people. Therefore, with the expansion of opportunities to interact with others, more and more immigration groups are entering the territory of existing local

forces, and the struggle between old and new groups will become increasingly common. Friendly communications will build a harmonious and equal relationship, forming mutual identity recognition, while questioning or biased communications will inevitably hinder mutual identity recognition and lead to identity questioning or even denial. So, from embedding to integration is a relational process, a process of mutual adjustment between cultural psychology and behavioral patterns, a process of historical practice, even a process of tension and tension, a process of contradiction and even conflict, a process of mutual adjustment between rejection and acceptance. Therefore, identification is a process of mutual elimination of contradictions, a process of mutual understanding and recognition, and a process of winning mutual respect and recognition [10].

Immigrants usually come from different cultural backgrounds, and cultural differences are inevitable. Immigrants may face challenges in terms of lifestyle, language, religious beliefs, and other aspects, which can have a profound impact on their identity recognition. This cultural difference can be a rich resource or an adaptive pressure. Immigrating to a new society often requires going through a certain adaptation process, accepting new social rules and values. This adaptation process often requires tremendous effort, and the degree of social acceptance has a direct impact on an individual's identity recognition. If a community cannot accept someone's identity, then that person will feel isolated and excluded. In this situation, the person may feel a conflict with their identity. Immigrants may hide their personality and cultural characteristics, and even ignore their identity, in order to better integrate into the new society. In this situation, immigrants will lose their ability to identify themselves and adapt to the expectations of the new society. If a person hides themselves for a long time, they may experience cultural conflicts, self contradictions, and feelings of frustration.

In summary, there is a complex relationship between the integration into immigrant society and identity recognition. Integration into society is a necessary condition for immigrants to achieve survival and development in a new environment, while identity recognition is a dilemma that immigrants need to face in the process of integration. Different individuals and groups will have different choices and orientations due to different cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. For immigrant groups, the key is to balance the relationship between integrating into society and preserving identity, and to find a sense of belonging in this process. This requires the efforts of immigrants themselves, as well as the understanding and support of society. Only in this way can the integration and identity recognition of immigrant society be effectively achieved.

## **5. Current Government Policies for Solving Immigrants' Problems**

First, United Kingdom. The UK's immigrant policy has undergone significant changes since 1990. A large number of refugee applications led to the introduction of relevant acts. These acts have imposed requirements such as English Proficiency and sufficient knowledge of the UK for immigrants or refugees seeking citizenship [11]. The probationary citizenship mechanism was also introduced [12]. The discourse has shifted from emphasizing control to migration management, being selective in accepting immigrants, favoring high-tech talents and international students, while restricting immigration for those not needed for economic development. After the Brexit referendum, restrictions on EU member states' citizens were imposed. In terms of integrating existing immigrants, the UK government is primarily committed to embracing diversity, promoting equal relationships between different groups, and fostering immigrants' national identity in the UK. It promotes integration measures in culture, economy and society. For example, providing language courses and social orientation services for cultural integration, assisting minorities in employment and addressing salary issues for economic integration, and improving the living environment for social integration.

In 2018, the French government carried out a major reform of the Immigration Law, issuing a series of laws and measures centered on "integration" and developing a "personalized integration route." The starting point of this route is the Republic Integration Contract (CIR) signed by the

government and new immigrants as Party A and Party B. The purpose is to promote the integration of new immigrants and facilitate standardized management by the government. In 2019, the French government continued to implement a contract based management model for immigrants, supplementing and revising certain specific terms of integration contracts, proposing biased rules for special groups to balance equality, and formulating the 2020 Plan(Projets 2020)to make contracts more time sensitive. In addition, in 2019, the French government also formulated a republican integration route, proposing to provide more assistance to new immigrants outside the European Union [13]. This marks that France's immigration policy is not only open to immigrants of different ethnicities and groups, but also focuses on the present and looks forward to the future.

Since mid June 2018, Germany's immigration policy has continued to adjust and change under political pressure, and the corresponding changes in the policy mainly reflect these characteristics. Firstly, setting an upper limit for accepting refugees. In January 2018, the governing agreement signed by the new coalition government included for the first time a limit of 18.22 million refugees per year. At the same time, the rights of refugees who are only granted assisted asylum are restricted, and the German government has temporarily frozen their family reunification rights. Secondly, accelerating the repatriation and voluntary departure of rejected refugees. The German government is increasingly focusing on addressing the issue of illegal stay of rejected refugees, deploying police forces to strengthen mandatory repatriation efforts, and encouraging refugees to return to relatively safe countries of origin through measures such as providing resettlement allowances and one-way airfare. Besides these methods, the Germany government continue to improve the efficiency of processing asylum applications, strengthen border control, and to strive to increase the number of safe source countries.

## 6. Future Trends and Suggestions

The core of the dominant cultural concept in Europe revolves around the crucial issue of national identity of 'who we are'. The continuous erosion of multiculturalism and deconstructionism has made Huntington's "Who Are We" proposal in 2004 a representative problem that has puzzled European and American countries [14]. In the contemporary era where postmodernism and deconstructionism prevail, the rise of relativism and nihilism has led to a lack of positive shared values and a trend towards the disintegration of national identity. The decline of national identity in European countries is mainly due to the influence of dominant minority races, ethnic minorities, and the construction of minority identity. The impact of the continuous wave of immigration has made many Europeans feel more and more like foreigners living in their homeland, and even triggered an undercurrent of resistance to immigration. In response to the phenomenon described above, immigrant countries should enact corresponding laws to address such cultural and identity crises[15].

Immigrant groups need to adapt to new cultures in a new social environment by learning and mastering local languages, values, and social norms. Society needs to provide relevant education and training resources to help immigrants quickly integrate into the new cultural environment and establish a sense of social identity and belonging. In the study of the impact of immigration on social and cultural identity, it is also necessary to pay attention to how to promote social integration and interaction among immigrants. Society should provide opportunities for immigrants to participate equally in social life and public affairs, and strengthen communication and interaction between immigrants and local residents. For example, strengthening cultural exchange activities between immigrants and local residents, organizing multicultural celebrations, etc. Through these activities, people from different cultural backgrounds can better understand each other, deepen their sense of identity and trust, and thus establish a more harmonious community and society.



## 7. Conclusion

This paper cites professional articles and related data to discuss the advantages and problems brought about by immigration phenomena, including economic growth, political debates, and cultural conflicts. It highlights the sense of belonging that some immigrants find in forming small communities like China Town. The causes behind this situation are explored through a profound survey, which include culture fusion, new life style race discrimination, and specific policies. The insufficiency of countries' policies is identified through research findings, promoting governments to make their regulations and rules more reasonable and pay more attention to people who are under oppression. However, this essay acknowledges its limitations in addressing the increasing number of immigrants due to the development of technology and economy. It raises questions on how governments can effectively and economically solve this problem while preventing social issues such as riots caused by immigration. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to alleviate difficulties faced by immigrant populations related to racial discrimination, gender discrimination, cultural differences, etc. To further advance research in this field, future studies can categorize research subjects based on different regions such as Europe, North America, Asia, as well as different races such as black, white, and yellow. In addition, intersectionality can also be employed for comparative research by integrating different features together. Overall, this paper provides insights into the complex nature of immigration phenomena.

## References

- [1] Dewen, Tian, Chengsong, Jiang. (2019) *The impact of immigration issues on European society*. *European Immigration Development Report: Refugee Crisis and Management*: 64-81.
- [2] Yi, Zhao. (2023) *Analysis of the Development Trends of Technological Immigration Policies in Developed Countries*. *Global Finance*, 8: 90-94.
- [3] Community news should have been known earlier. (2022) *An Undeniable Data Fact: the High Correlation Between Immigration and Crime*. [https://www.sohu.com/a/615319544\\_121123529](https://www.sohu.com/a/615319544_121123529)
- [4] Yuqing, Chen. (2013) *Opportunities and challenges brought by immigration to Germany*. *Journal of Yibin University*, 13: 96-100.
- [5] Ojoko, Israel. (2022) 'Japa': The trending time bomb we are ignoring. *The Cable*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecable.ng/japa-the-trending-time-bomb-we-are-ignoring>.
- [6] Milliken, David. (2022) *Galvanisers wanted: post-Brexit worker shortages strain UK employers*. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/galvanisers-wanted-post-brexit-worker-shortages-strain-uk-employers-2022-07-04/>.
- [7] Jingjing, Liu. (2022) *Africans in China are on the move. This is Africa*. <https://africasacountry.com/2022/06/africans-in-china-are-on-the-move>.
- [8] Jingjing Liu. (2023) *MoLab Inventory of Mobilities and Socioeconomic Changes, January 2023 Japa, or to flee or to run: Nigerian youth and the urgency of departure*.
- [9] Nigeria Inflation Rate 1960-2022. (2022) <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/NGA/nigeria/inflation-rate-cpi>.
- [10] Jiansheng Li. (2016) *Immigration culture and identity*. *Chinese Culture Forum*, 9:5-10.
- [11] D. Jacob and A. Rea, (2007) "The end of national models? Integration courses and citizenship trajectories in Europe", paper presented at the ELSA-conference, Montreal, 17-19.
- [12] Choudury, T. *Evoing Models of Multiculturalism in the United Kingdom*. *Inter-culturalism: Europe and Its Muslims, In Search of Sound Societal Models*. Brussels: Center for Europe and Policy Studies, 2011: 124.
- [13] *Immigration, shelter, reception, and support for French rangers*, "Do you know the Journey of Republic Integration?" <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/info-ressources/Actualites/Communiques/> "Connaissez-vous-le-parcours-d-integration-republicaine.
- [14] Samuel P. Huntington. (2004) *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, New York: Simon& Schuster, 171.
- [15] Ruud, Koopmans, Paul, Statham. (2005) *Contested Citizenship Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.



# ***Cultural Variations in Parenting Styles and Their Impact on Child Development***

**Beiyi Cai<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Institute of Psychology, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK*

*a. beiyi.cai@warwick.ac.uk*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** With the advancement of globalization and the increase in cultural exchanges, a parenting style that adapts to globalization is necessary in order to better raise a new generation of newborns. The study explored the differences in parenting styles (PS) under different cultural backgrounds and their impact on children's development. The article focused on the interaction between culture and PS, using Baumrind's parenting style framework to review literature from different regions such as China, the United States, Nigeria, Spain and Singapore. By analyzing these articles, it was found that culture and social models were factors causing parenting style differences, but the authoritative parenting style is considered to be the best one among the four styles in most countries. PS have a profound influence on children's psychological, social, academic, and personal value generation, and the style will be passed on to children and show some similarities in their future behaviours. This study reveals the impact of cultural background on PS and its profound role in the all-round development of children, providing important theoretical basis and practical guidance for cross-cultural education and parent-child relationships in the era of globalization.

**Keywords:** Cultural variation, parenting style, child development, mental health.

## **1. Introduction**

While transmitting from a child to an adult, children need a long learning process to gain knowledge of social rules and form individual goals and expectations. Bandura believes that people learn new behaviours by watching and imitating. People often imitate those who are knowledgeable, nurturing or high-status figures in daily life, and these people being imitated are called models. To children, their first and only model before they get in touch with society is their parents [1]. Children pay attention to their parents' behaviours and encourage them to disregard it is suitable or proper for their age. Meanwhile, parents' responses to the imitated behaviours from the children could greatly influence children's willingness to regenerate behaviours. Positive behaviours such as rewards or praise could give children confidence to regenerate the behaviours. Vice versa, punishments such as criticism, and assault decrease children's will to reproduce. Based on those theories towards children, Baumrind in 1967 proposed Baumrind's pattern of parenting [2]. Parents are the ones who bring their children into the social environment and give them socialization skills. The educational methods adopted by parents have a significant impact on children, impacting children's social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes [3].

There have always been similar studies, learning about the relationship between parenting style and its impact on children. With the covid-19, it can be found that the global is more closely connected through the internet and cultures communicate and interact on the internet [4]. Cultural norms and values often shape how parents approach child-rearing, leading to significant variations across different regions of the world. Whether online communication will affect parenting style and thus affect children's development under a closer connection to the world remains unknown. Globalization is an inevitable trend, and this review can show the impact of globalization on parenting styles (PS) and child development, to help find a statistically universal and good PS in the future, giving children a better future development. It is expected that under close communication, PS in different cultures will converge and their children will develop similarities in behaviour.

## 2. Method

The literature review is conducted through the ProQuest search platform, which includes a database of multiple research areas such as Science Direct, PubMed and Scopus. The period is limited to the last 5 years. The search terms used were "PS", "culture difference", "parent impact on child" and "child development" for most frequently mentioned psychological trauma. The search terms used were culture differences, PS and child development. The definition of PS must be based on Baumrind's theory [2].

## 3. Concept

PS is the standard strategy that parents use in raising their children. PS are shaped by cultural norms and significantly impact a child's development outcomes. Baumrind's theory claimed that based on strategies, behaviours and approaches, there are four types of PS depending on the degree of warmth and demand [2]. The warmth dimension, also known as responsiveness, involvement, acceptance, or implication, reflects the degree to which parents show love and affection, provide support, and engage in communication and reasoning with their children. The demand dimension, also called strictness, refers to the sense of control and parents' expectations towards children [5,6]. The four PS are respectively called: authoritative (High warmth and high strictness), authoritarian (Low warmth and high strictness), permissive (High warmth and low strictness) and neglectful/uninvolved (Low warmth and low strictness). Depending on parents' warmth and requirements towards their children, it could be divided into a four-quadrant diagram.

## 4. Culture Stereotypes

Culture is often described as the set of beliefs, behaviours, traditions, and values that distinguish a specific social group. It can include aspects such as nationality, ethnicity, region, religion, and other socially defined communities [7]. There are some cultural stereotypes which remain existing with evidence proven or disproved.

"Tiger parents" of Eastern parents refers to people with authoritarian PS, who emphasize education, place extreme pressure on academic achievement and reduce playtime. In China, traditional parenting emphasized obedience and family loyalty. Although modern Chinese parents have more democratic forms of control, but overprotective and indulgent parenting, often leading to the "little emperor" phenomenon, is also observed.

In American culture, children are encouraged to explore, express their opinions freely, and make their own decisions and criticism opinions from an early age. And Baumrind's PS—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—have long been influential.

South African parenting has been shaped by the country's diverse cultures, the historical context of apartheid, and socio-economic challenges. The authoritarian PS is still common, particularly among the Black African community.

In Southern European countries like Spain, the indulgent PS is more prevalent and is associated with positive outcomes for adolescents [8]. This PS emphasizes affection, involvement, and low levels of strict control [9].

## 5. The Outcome of PS

The impact of PS is reflected in different dimensions of children, including psychological development, academic achievement and personal value generation. It is found from different aspects and within different cultures that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and responsiveness will usually produce positive outcomes for a child which are often reflected as higher self-esteem (SE), better emotional regulation, and more prosocial behaviours because they are supported and believed by parents. They have higher achievements in academics and do not easily gain psychological disorders [10]. In contrast, authoritarian parenting, which is strict and lacks warmth, often results in children with lower SE, heightened anxiety, and poor social skills. These children might have academic achievement but with a higher possibility to attached to anxiety disorder and lower self-confidence. Permissive parenting provides high emotional safety but low strictness results in fewer academic achievements (AA). Neglectful parenting, marked by a lack of both warmth and structure, has the most detrimental effects, often leading to poor academic performance, social isolation, mental health issues, and an increased likelihood of delinquency and substance abuse [11].

Proof for the claim is Sarwar's experiment. Sarwar did researched about the relationship between PS—particularly authoritarian and authoritative styles—and juvenile delinquency [12]. By interviewing two Pakistan mothers, the researchers distinguished mothers' PS by analyzing the behaviours and attitudes described by mothers such as the language used, the way they responded to their children's behaviours, and the communication patterns in family interactions. For example, mothers who use words such as "scolding" and "anger" are classified as using authoritarian parenting, while those who use words such as "understanding", "asking" and "discussing" are classified as using authoritative parenting. Research revealed that authoritarian parenting was strongly linked to problematic behaviour in children such as delinquency, as children react to excessive control by becoming rebellious, while authoritative parenting fostered better communication and mitigated delinquent tendencies.

## 6. Comparison

In the following paragraphs, there will be a literature review of 9 articles from different regions about the different PS and the influence of PS on children from different aspects.

In Leung, Lau & Lam's study, they are focusing on the PS and academic achievement differences between China and United States & Australia According to their findings, PS is influenced by parents' AA and is passed on to the next generation [13]. By using self-rated questionnaires, children tell the experimenter about their parents' PS and self-academic achievement, and it is found that Chinese parents scored significantly higher in general authoritarianism compared to American and Australian parents, but also Chinese parents had the lowest education levels while American parents had the highest levels of education, divorce rates, and full-time employment among mothers. In conclusion, parents' education level could be told from how they balance control and support for their children to promote their overall development. Highly educated parents are more likely to give children a warm but low-stricting PS.

Akinsola did a questionnaire investigation and aimed to compare the PS prevalent in Nigeria and Cameroon and their impact on the perception of children [14]. Both in Africa, cultural and regional factors shape different PS: Nigerian parents primarily adopt authoritative, and a hybrid of authoritarian/authoritative PS and Cameroonian parents primarily practice permissive and permissive/authoritarian hybrid PS and they both have a positive outcome in local child such as higher social competence and greater emotional stability.

Martinez et al. aimed to investigate the relationship between PS and their effects on adolescents' SE and internalization of social values across three countries: Spain, Portugal, and Brazil [15]. The study found that indulgent parenting (characterized by high warmth but low strictness) was associated with equal or higher levels of adolescent SE and internalization of values compared to authoritative parenting (high warmth and high strictness). And considering all countries are horizontal collectivist societies, under which the focus is on sociability and interdependence with others in an egalitarian context, indulgent parenting has a better effect on children.

Martínez et al., compared the likely victims of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying in 1109 middle-class Spanish adolescents with the self-report questionnaire and found that indulgent and authoritative PS have a better-preventing effect towards children than authoritarian parenting in bullying and even found that gender differences influence the possibility of being bullied [6].

With a systematic review of literature from 2000 to 2018 on India adolescents in Sahithya Manohari & Vijaya 's research, authoritative parenting is generally associated with better outcomes for children across cultures, including higher SE, better academic performance, and fewer behavioural problems [16]. Authoritarian and uninvolved parenting was linked to negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders and permissive parenting sometimes led to negative behaviours like substance abuse and antisocial behaviour. And especially in India, cultural factors like gender identity and family structures significantly influence PS.

In the investigation of Barnhart et al., by evaluating the rating towards hypothetical vignettes representing Baumrind's three PS, the study found that cultural context plays a significant role in how PS are perceived [17]. U.S. students favoured authoritative parenting, consistent with Western values of autonomy and independence, while Indian students showed a more mixed response, with some favouring permissive parenting, potentially reflecting cultural shifts due to globalization. Gender differences also shaped perceptions, with females leaning toward authoritative styles and males showing more variability, including a preference for permissive parenting in the U.S. and authoritarian parenting in India.

The scoping review by Cheung and Lim of PS and practices in Singapore focused on Singaporean samples and relevant child outcomes and found that optimal PS, such as authoritative parenting, were generally associated with positive child development outcomes in Singapore, similar to findings in Western contexts [18]. However, some parenting behaviours often considered suboptimal, such as high parental control, did not always lead to negative outcomes in Singapore. This suggests that cultural factors may moderate how control is interpreted and experienced by children, offering protective effects in certain contexts.

In García & Gracia 's study, researchers summarize existing research on PS and compare the effects of these PS across different cultural settings and countries using various tools, such as the Parental Socialization Scale (ESPA29) and the Authoritative Parenting Measure (APM) [19]. It is found that authoritative parenting is generally associated with better psychosocial adjustment, higher academic performance, better psychological competence, and fewer behaviour problems in children. As a general review, in comparing between countries, there is a significant vary depending on cultures. For example, in Asian and Arab societies, the authoritarian PS, typically seen as less optimal, may not be linked to negative outcomes. In South European and Latin American cultures, indulgent parenting (high acceptance, low strictness) is associated with better psychosocial outcomes for

children, even outperforming authoritative parenting in some cases such as better social competence and lower aggression and defiance. The authoritative PS might be optimal in many Western societies, but other PS like indulgent or authoritarian parenting may yield better results under different cultural environments such as horizontal collectivist cultures. Although strictness and imposition seem like negative behaviours in these cultures, it is still necessary for some contexts. Ideal PS may vary based on cultural factors and a positive PS in some contents need both warmth and strictness.

## 7. Differences and Similarity

Understanding how cultural difference influences PS and the effect of different PS under varied cultures is important in constructing a personalized PS. With a cross-culture review of 9 articles, it is aimed to discover the universal patterns and culturally specific outcomes in PS and child development. The reports being reviewed include countries such as China, the United States, Australia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Spain, Brazil, India, Singapore, and other regions. The differences in PS and outcomes including psychosocial development, academic achievement, and value formation are analyzed.

Under most of the situation, it is believed and found that authoritative parenting is most beneficial to the child and has the best outcome, especially in American countries like the United States and Australia. In Leung, Lau & Lam, it was found that authoritative PS are linked to better average academic outcomes and psychological well-being [13]. A similar result is also found in Barnhart et al. [17]. United States parents favour of authoritative parenting which is believed them bring academic success and strong emotional regulation. Under a warm and supportive environment, children are more willing to become individualistic and have confidence in self-realization.

In Asian and Arab cultures, the studies reveal that authoritarian parenting is more common among families than authoritative parenting. Although in Western countries, the authoritative PS seems strong controlling and rigid and not selected by American parents, it will not cause bad results in countries like China and Singapore. Leung, Lau & Lam discovered that Chinese parents rated higher in authoritarianism than American and Australian parents in the questionnaire [13]. However, AA remain a high score and are not influenced by PS. High parental control in Singapore is also found by Cheung & Lim and is protective to children for surviving in a competitive environment [18]. Concluded from García & Gracia's finding, under some Asian and Arab cultures, discipline and high control are necessary for maintaining family cohesion and authority of parents. It is believed to be an expression of care and responsibility [8].

This similarity in PS could be a result of the collectivist cultures, which are found in most Asian cultures.

Children are raised to see themselves as part of a hierarchical family structure. However, in the other region, horizontal collectivist societies like Spain, Portugal, and Brazil, Martinez et al. found that an indulgent PS will have a better psychological effect on giving children warmth and low strictness [15]. This is an interesting finding that it is usually believed that strictness is necessary to maintain the stability of the family structure, so most families will choose an authoritative or authoritarian PS. In collectivist societies, interpersonal relationships and sociability are valued higher than achievements and providing children with care and confidence gives them higher social ability. An indulgent PS is not a sense of spoiling under a culture that emphasises egalitarian family dynamics.

AA are also studied and found to be highly influenced by PS. The authoritarian PS in China did not produce significantly worse academic outcomes than the Authoritative PS [13]. Martinez et al. found that indulgent parenting in Spain, Portugal, and Brazil did not hinder academic success [15]. In conclusion to all those cultures, academic achievement is not related to PS although education is viewed as a communal endeavor supported by the family rather than children themselves. It is worth noting that although PS did not influence children's achievement in China, the academic level of parents will influence children's achievement.

In finding the PS of African culture, Akinsola compared Nigeria and Cameroon's PS and found that both authoritarian and authoritative PS plays a crucial role in raising children [14]. In Nigeria, authoritative parenting led to better psychosocial and academic outcomes, while in Cameroon, a mix of permissive and authoritarian styles also produced positive results. It could be concluded that although within the same country, regional differences and deprived cultures will have a great influence on PS.

It is worth noting that the role of gender influences PS. In Barnhart et al. 's findings, in the United States and India, females are more likely to choose authoritative parenting while males are willing to choose a hybrid of two PS or authoritarian PS [17]. It is analyzed that the difference might be due to the character of different genders within a family. Female is usually seen as a supportive and nurturing role and males take control and set out discipline, especially in patriarchal societies like India. In contrast, in a matriarchy society like Africa, women will have a higher voice and be more respected in the family. Martínez et al. also found that gender differences influenced the likelihood of being bullied, with boys and girls responding differently to PS [6]. Therefore, it is important to consider gender in cultures while analyzing PS.

It is found that personality formation has relations to PS as well. Sarwar highlights the influence of the authoritarian PS on juvenile delinquency compared to the authoritative PS [12]. Martinez et al. found that an indulgent PS led to a higher internalization of social values and less likely to commit crime with emotional support from family [15]. This finding is also supported by García & Gracia 's finding that warmth and support from PS are essential in developing personal values although the support from family reflects a different PS [19]. It is speculated that indulgent PS provide the environment for children to develop strong interpersonal values in horizontal collectivist cultures and strict PS including authoritarian and authoritative PS guiding the formation of personal values.

## 8. Future Topics (Criticism)

In all nine articles, most of the data collected about PS are from self-rated questionnaires from children. Regardless the data collection is too subjective, and there are no standard questions for which kinds of behaviors belong to one of the four PS or hybrid. There still needs to be further investigation into different behaviours under different cultures and reactions from children to conclude a universal standard for distinguishing the four PS.

Cultural nuances are ignored during the research. It could be found in Akinsola 's paper that under the same cultures, parents like tough and nurturing parents will have significant differences in PS selection [14]. Future research could investigate how subcultures or regions have impacts on PS and their outcomes.

The existence of cultural stereotypes has an influence on the hypothesis and aim of the research. Such stereotypes towards Chinese parents are authoritarian and dictatorial, but more parents nowadays are highly educated and will use a permissive PS and may even raise a "little spoiled emperor". It is worth mentioning while doing the research about the evolutionary and historical perspective and making an anticipation in future research.

## 9. Conclusion

Aiming to review the variation in PS across different cultures and their impact on children's development on different aspects, this paper examines the similarities and differences in PS in paper mentioned. It emphasizes that authoritative parenting is generally the most popular and has the best results in most western studies, but the situation also depends on the culture. Authoritarian and permissive PS can also produce favorable outcomes depending on the cultural context. The article emphasizes that a good PS should at least have appropriate warmth and control, but the situation has



a very high independent difference. The article also mentioned that with the global communication and integration, a more culturally inclusive and universally accepted PS needs to be studied and demonstrated. Future research should address the limitations of self-report data and stereotypes. A more standardized questionnaire for PS, similar to the standardized form of IQ test, needs to be developed.

## References

- [1] Lei, M., & Medwell, J. (2021). *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student teachers: How the shift to online collaborative learning affects student teachers' learning and future teaching in a Chinese context*. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 22(2), 169-179. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-021-09686-w>
- [2] Baumrind, D. (1967). *Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior*. *Genetic psychology monographs*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1967-05780-001>
- [3] Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). *Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction*. In P. H. Mussen (Series Ed.) & E. M. Hetherington (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. IV. Socialization, Personality and Social Development* (4th Ed., pp. 1-101). New York: Wiley.
- [4] Basilaia, G., & Kvavadze, D. (2020). *Transition to online education in schools during a SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Georgia*. *Pedagogical Research*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7937>
- [5] Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (2017). *Parenting style as context: An integrative model*. In *Interpersonal development* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.
- [6] Martínez, I., Murgui, S., Garcia, O. F., & Garcia, F. (2019). *Parenting in the digital era: Protective and risk parenting styles for traditional bullying and cyberbullying victimization*. *Computers in human behavior*, 90, 84-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.08.036>
- [7] Lansford J. E. (2022). *Annual Research Review: Cross-cultural similarities and differences in parenting*. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*, 63(4), 466-479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13539>
- [8] Garcia, F., & Gracia, E. (2009). *Is always authoritative the optimum parenting style? Evidence from Spanish families*. *Adolescence*, 44(173), 101-131.
- [9] Selin, H. (Ed.). (2013). *Parenting across cultures: Childrearing, motherhood and fatherhood in non-Western cultures* (Vol. 7). Springer Science & Business Media.
- [10] Steinberg, L., Elmen, J. D., & Mounts, N. S. (1989). *Authoritative parenting, psychosocial maturity, and academic success among adolescents*. *Child development*, 1424-1436. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1130932>
- [11] Awiszus, A., Koenig, M., & Vaisarova, J. (2022). *Parenting Styles and Their Effect on Child Development and Outcome*. *Journal of Student Research*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v11i3.3679>
- [12] Sarwar, S. (2016). *Influence of parenting style on children's behaviour*. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 3(2). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2882540>
- [13] Leung, K., Lau, S., & Lam, W.-L. (1998). *Parenting Styles and Academic Achievement: A Cross-Cultural Study*. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 44(2), 157-172. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23093664>
- [14] Akinsola, E. F. (2013). *Cultural variations in parenting styles in the majority world evidences from Nigeria and Cameroon*. In *Parenting in South American and African Contexts*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/57003>
- [15] Martinez, I., Garcia, F., Veiga, F., Garcia, O. F., Rodrigues, Y., & Serra, E. (2020). *Parenting styles, internalization of values and self-esteem: A cross-cultural study in Spain, Portugal and Brazil*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2370. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072370>
- [16] Sahithya, B. R., Manohari, S. M., & Vijaya, R. (2019). *Parenting styles and its impact on children – a cross cultural review with a focus on India*. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 22(4), 357-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2019.1594178>
- [17] Barnhart, C. M., Raval, V. V., Jansari, A., & Raval, P. H. (2013). *Perceptions of parenting style among college students in India and the United States*. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22, 684-693. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9621-1>
- [18] Cheung, H. S., & Lim, E. (2022). *A scoping review of Singapore parenting: Culture-general and culture-specific functions of parenting styles and practices*. *Infant and Child Development*, 31(4), e2312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01822.x>
- [19] García, F., & Gracia, E. (2013). *The indulgent parenting style and developmental outcomes in South European and Latin American countries*. *Parenting across cultures: Childrearing, motherhood and fatherhood in non-Western cultures*, 419-433. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7503-9\\_31](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7503-9_31)

# ***Research on the Changing Perspectives on Romantic Love among Chinese International Students at the University of Toronto***

**Jinlu Meng<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, 27 King's College Circle, Toronto, Canada  
a. meng.jinlu@mail.utoronto.ca*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** In the era of globalization, many Chinese students study abroad. As a University of Toronto student, the author is interested in the romantic love narratives of Chinese international students. These students are more confident in expressing emotions and have different views on marriage compared to their parents, leading to a sense of contradiction. By applying an individualist perspective, this research carefully studies the love narratives of Chinese international students at the University of Toronto. The interview in this study carefully curated questions about discussing a conflict in romantic relationships, disclosing the core perspectives towards romantic relationships between couples. This paper adopts the individualism approach by which the author can further explore the micro perspective. The study shows that Chinese international students' pursuit of happiness in romantic relationships is not an isolated endeavor but is deeply entwined with broader social and cultural contexts, requiring a delicate balance between individual fulfillment and collective harmony. This research illuminates the complex interplay between individual agency and societal norms in shaping perceptions of love, offering valuable insights for future research aimed at unraveling the multifaceted dimensions of romantic relationships across cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Romantic love, Individualist perspective, Chinese international students, Toronto.

## **1. Introduction**

In the era of globalization, an increasing number of Chinese students are choosing to study abroad in search of a broader knowledge perspective and richer personal experiences. As a student at the University of Toronto, the author is intrigued by the narrative of romantic love among Chinese international students. Through observation, they have become more confident in expressing their emotions and are no longer hesitant to reveal their true selves. Moreover, their attitudes towards marriage have significant differences from their parent's generation. Marriage is no longer seen as an inevitable life choice; instead, they place greater emphasis on personal happiness and the authenticity of their emotions. However, this "modern" pursuit of personal love and emotions conflicts with the "traditional" values of stability and family harmony that are prevalent in China[1]. Consequently, many international students experience a sense of contradiction in their self-concept and identity. At the same time, the author has observed that different international students adopt varied approaches

to deal with this contradiction. They either explicitly or implicitly resist the inertia of their cultural background or compromise with “traditional” values. The research paper aims to explore the love narratives of Chinese international students at the University of Toronto, including their perception of love, partner selection criteria, and the influence of external factors. It uses the lens of materiality and a micro-interactive perspective to understand the interplay between cultural exposure, personal development, and beliefs. The individualist perspective provides the researcher with a powerful tool to break down the binary approach as proposed by Victor C. De Munck and David B. Kronenfeld [2]. Previous research on love narratives has broken down binary categorization but neglected Chinese international students. This research develops the love narrative of this minority group and adopts an individualism approach to study the micro perspective. It also examines the complex interplay between individual agency and societal norms in shaping perceptions of love, with contributions to understanding romantic relationships across cultural contexts.

## 2. Methodology

This research focuses on exploring the love narrative among a certain ethnic group on campus. The population of this research project is Chinese International students at the University of Toronto. The author started to look for my participants on February 10th. The interview process happened between February 24th- 29th, 2024. In the meanwhile, transcript processing and coding were conducted in parallel with the interview. The data process was finished on March 10th. Semi-structured Interviews were conducted for this research. An interview guide was constructed to guide the interview process and is designed to answer the interview questions. Open-ended questions were asked during the interview process, and the duration of each interview was held between 40-60 minutes.

This research employed convenient sampling and snowball sampling to select interviewees from the population. These methods were implemented since there was a lack of resources and limited time. Initially, The author found four participants (lmx, wyz, yy, and dsh). When asking some potential participants to interviewees, some preferred not to share their relationship with an interviewer. This problem was solved by introducing snowball sampling which helps to enlarge the pool of potential participants. One of the participants, lmx, asked some of her friends who were suitable for the research and then asked if they were able to participate (zze, and wyz py). After participants were found, what this research was about was introduced, and the policy that everything that happened in the interview would be completely anonymized was announced. Following the process, consent forms were handed to them and they were told that everything was going to be recorded with their consent. The content will only be seen by the TA, the professor, and the researcher.

In total, 6 participants were found. Among them, 2 are male and 4 are female. The age of the interviewees is between the range of 21-22. As our research question focused on Chinese international students, all of them are Chinese and are heterosexual with at least one romantic relationship experience. There are some diversities in their experiences abroad, some went to Singapore when they were young, some came to Canada when they were in high school, and the rest came to Canada for undergraduate education.

The interview began by asking for the background information of the participants and their romantic relationships, through which the researcher was able to grasp an initial understanding of their love experience. Then questions on a certain relationship were asked to gradually delve into participants’ love narratives. Questions asked were mainly about how they found the partner, the criteria for choosing a partner, and a recent conflict. As the conflict was another main research question, the discussion on a recent conflict unfolded into details such that the theme of the source of the conflict and how the participants coped with the conflict was exposed. From what had been covered, this research was able to unearth the family and culture’s influence on the participants’ love narrative.

Employing grounded theory methodology, an initial phase of open coding was undertaken. Throughout this phase, recurrent concepts and salient attributes, including "economic status" and "No drugs," were accentuated and transformed into open codes. Subsequently, prevalent features discernible across the majority of the transcripts were identified, organized, and encoded into focused codes. Building upon the focused codes, themes were systematically developed, reflecting the underlying patterns and concepts present within the data. These themes and codes play a pivotal role in addressing the central research question, providing a structured framework for analysis and interpretation. Analytical memos were written after the coding process was finished. The memos served as a reminder of important findings in the interview and coding process and also as clues to conduct data analysis.

Being a part of this unique demographic offers author an insider's view, enabling a deeper understanding of the nuanced shifts in romantic perceptions that occur when one navigates between Chinese cultural norms and those encountered in a Western context. This insider perspective allows to empathize with the emotional and psychological journeys, recognizing the subtle interplay of cultural identity, adaptation, and resistance that define these experiences. Moreover, the author's position as both a researcher and a member of the community offers an authentic perspective to observe the dynamics of cultural integration and individual transformation.

### **3. Analysis**

#### **3.1. Love narrative**

##### **3.1.1. Criteria for choosing a partner**

During the interview, two predominant criteria emerged, which are an absolute no for drugs, and a good appearance. In Canada, the use of selected drugs is decriminalized, which is a huge legislative difference from the Chinese law system. This difference is notably integrated into their criteria for partner selection. The prohibition against drugs is articulated by the respondents, "these (drugs) illegal things are not to be touched." The perception of drugs being addictive is succinctly captured in their unanimous declaration that "it's an addictive behavior, it will cause illusions." This stance delineates a clear boundary against drug use and reflects the profound influence of Chinese cultural norms on their romantic considerations.

A good appearance was also underscored as a criterion for partner selection by the interviewees. YY mentioned in the interview, "I prefer men who are 1.8 meters tall" while another interviewee (WYZ) similarly stated that her partner should be "at least 1.76 meters." The emphasis on height illuminates the social and evolutionary factors associated with physical attributes in mate choice. The preference for taller men can be interpreted through various lenses, including the social perception of attractiveness, evolutionary preference towards individuals, and culturally constructed ideals of masculinity and protection, shedding light on how criteria are built in a love narrative.

##### **3.1.2. Expectations on social and economic status**

A significant majority underscored the necessity for their partner to possess wealth. One respondent, identified as YY, stated that money serves as compensation for a partner's potential unfaithfulness. It is further illustrated by saying that: "his future salary will be, well, middle income, from a very practical perspective, money is very important." Similarly, another participant, WYZ, delineated her expectations regarding her partner's financial credentials, stipulating a precise annual income of "1.5 million RMB." Jankowiak[3] pointed out that individuals actively seek out and maintain social connections to affirm their presence in a broader society, often by building a large circle of friends. This anticipation of a substantial salary underscores the weight attributed to economic security,

reflecting societal valuations of financial stability and pragmatic considerations in the context of romantic engagements.

### **3.1.3. From romantic relationship to marriage**

Perspectives on marriage among the interviewees exhibited significant variation. One interviewee articulated, "(I) believe that if two people don't marry for love, the future is even more uncertain". Conversely, interviewee YY posited that the bride price could compensate for a lack of love and create a sense of security: "About the bride price,..., my mom didn't say it must be a bride price, we don't have that custom,... But I told him, after these incidents, I felt very insecure. If I were to marry you, I think money is something that can give me a bit of security".

This dichotomy underscores the complexity of the interplay between love and material considerations in marital decision-making. On the one hand, the belief in love as the foundation of marriage reflects a romantic ideal that prioritizes emotional connection and compatibility as the cornerstone of a lasting relationship. On the other hand, monetary compensation highlights a pragmatic approach to marriage, where financial security is seen as a significant component of marital stability and personal security[4].

The divergence illustrates the varying degrees to which cultural traditions, personal experiences, and societal expectations influence individual attitudes toward marriage. The notion of bride price, although not universally practiced, serves as a mechanism for negotiating security and commitment in the marriage. Individuals navigate the intersection of love, materiality, and security, shaping their conceptions of marriage within a transnational context.

## **3.2. Coping with conflicts**

### **3.2.1. Source of conflict**

Both LMX and YY identified indecisiveness as a primary source of conflict within their relationships.

They recalled experiences wherein their boyfriends exhibited oscillation between different individuals (either ex-partners or subjects of affection) and discussed the emotional turmoil such behavior inflicted upon them. LMX mentioned that "One day...so I just checked on his phone. Then I saw...he said he still liked the girl from his middle school." This narrative highlights the psychological strain and relational instability induced by a partner's indecisiveness, particularly when the partner cheats.

Another observation from the interviews involving LMX and YY addresses behaviors associated with pickup artists (PUA) or gaslighting. LMX stated: "It's about him denying some of your values, making you feel like you have become a bad person." By invalidating someone's values, PUAs create an environment of insecurity and self-questioning, enabling one party to exploit over other for the advantage in the romantic relationships.

### **3.2.2. The process of coping with conflict**

When coping with PUA, which is a conflict mentioned by most participants, strategies taken by different participants vary. Analyzing the process may shed light on how Chinese international students deal with conflicts without direct support from their families and away from cultural settings. LMX emphasized the significance of maintaining ample personal space. She elaborated, "I'm not very susceptible to PUAs, that's why I mentioned needing personal space earlier. This is because I need to reflect, I need to think.... When some people come over with PUA talk, I just think they're talking nonsense." This narrative underscores the critical role of self-reflection and the development of an independent mindset as defensive mechanisms against manipulative strategies, thus facilitating



a stronger sense of self and a fortified resistance to external influences. In contrast, interviewee YY employed a distinct approach in addressing PUA, as she articulated: "Now when he talks to me, I directly tell him, 'You're PUA-ing me.'" This strategy represents a confrontation and verbal acknowledgment of the manipulative behavior, serving as a mechanism to disarm the aggressor by explicitly naming and rejecting their tactics. By employing such direct communication, YY not only asserts her awareness of the underlying manipulative intentions but also establishes a boundary against such attempts at influence[5].

### **3.3. Family and culture's influence on love narratives**

#### **3.3.1. Family/ culture influence in choosing a partner**

Interviewee WYZ believes that in her parent's generation, there was an expectation for a suitable match in terms of family background. She describes that "if the man couldn't provide most of the money for a house, it seemed unlikely for people to get married in that era." She also thinks that "actually, it's not much different from now." Another interviewee, YY, also agrees with this viewpoint. She says, "My parents definitely will focus on family conditions."

The insights provided by WYZ and YY, underscore the enduring significance of financial stability and familial background in marriage considerations across generations. This persistence suggests that, despite changes in societal norms and the economy, the capacity to contribute significantly towards home ownership remains a critical factor in marriage decisions. The emphasis on family background, as highlighted by the interviewees, points to a deeply entrenched social norm that favors certain familial connections and economic capabilities in the formation of marital unions.

#### **3.3.2. Preference on Chinese or Asian partner**

All interviewees articulated a preference for choosing a Chinese partner, with LMX attributing this choice to future planning considerations. LMX stated, "It's a matter of planning for the future. I plan not to be here, so... I wouldn't be in a relationship with people here (local people)." Conversely, the other two interviewees unanimously cited "there's a big cultural difference" as the most significant factor. WYZ elaborated, "I can't fully understand their family background or get to know it well, and their lifestyle habits might differ from ours (Chinese)." Additionally, YY observed, "They (Canadians) might think that such hugs between opposite sexes are nothing..., but Asians generally don't do that."

The collective inclination towards a Chinese partner among the interviewees underscores a nuanced interplay between cultural identity, future planning, and the perceived challenges of cross-cultural relationships[6]. LMX's perspective highlighted a pragmatic approach to building a relationship whereas other interviewees emphasized cultural differences as the primary issue. The emphasis on cultural disparities, as articulated by WYZ and YY, points to a deeper sense of cultural belonging and the difficulties of navigating relationships where fundamental values and lifestyle habits diverge. WYZ's concern about the challenge of mutual understanding between two cultural backgrounds underscores the importance of shared cultural experiences in forming intimate relationships. Similarly, YY's observation about differing perceptions of physical affection highlights specific cultural nuances that can influence comfort and boundaries in interpersonal interactions. The diversified reasons for choosing a Chinese partner illuminate the varied dimensions through which individuals navigate the complexities of intercultural relationships, where shared cultural backgrounds and pragmatic considerations both come into play[7].



#### 4. Conclusion

This article examines Chinese international students' love narratives. It focuses on how cultural backgrounds and societal norms shape partner selection and relationship expectations. Key findings include a rejection of drug use reflecting Chinese cultural norms even in a country where drugs are decriminalized, importance of physical attributes and economic status in mate choice, and a complex interplay between love and material considerations in transitioning to marriage. In terms of conflicts theme, indecisiveness and pickup artist behaviors are sources of conflict, and strategies for dealing with them vary. The research also shows that individual agency and coping mechanisms develop in response to conflicts. The family and culture's influence on love narratives theme emphasizes the impact of familial and cultural expectations on partner selection and romantic preferences, with a preference for Chinese or Asian partners due to cultural differences and future planning. The study also shows the complexity of Chinese international students' romantic relationships, including the dual cultural background, personal desires versus familial and cultural inertia, and the intertwining of monetary and psychological factors. The research complements the study of love by investigating this minority group in Western society.

The article also discusses potential biases in a research study due to the researcher being from the same demographic as the participants and the use of convenient and snowball sampling methods. It points out the limitations of a small and restricted sample size in making comparisons with other groups. Future studies could improve by financing a large-scale study with diverse researchers and using more rigorous sampling techniques. Expanding the study to include a wider range of demographic variables and conducting a comparative study with partners from different cultural backgrounds could provide more insights. A longitudinal study could observe how romantic love narratives change over time when students adapt to different countries.

#### References

- [1] Engebretsen, E. L. (2013). *Queer Women in Urban China*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203085561>
- [2] de Munck, V. C., & Kronenfeld, D. B. (2016). Romantic love in the United States. *SAGE Open*, 6(1), 215824401562279. doi:10.1177/2158244015622797
- [3] Jankowiak, W. (2008). Practicing connectiveness as kinship in urban China. In *Chinese Kinship: Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 67–91.
- [4] Kulick, D. (2005). Four Hundred Thousand Swedish perverts. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 11(2), 205–235. doi:10.1215/10642684-11-2-205
- [5] Stafford, C. (2014). Separation, reunion and the Chinese attachment to place. *Internal and International Migration*, 315–330. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315027449-16>
- [6] Zhang, S. (2021). *Voices of Chinese International Students: A critical understanding of their experiences in the United States* (Doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco).
- [7] Yan, Y. (2003). *Private life under socialism: Love, intimacy, and family change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.