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Articles

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Mission

ATINER is a ***World Non-Profit Association*** of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent **Association** with a **Mission** to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, **as well as engage with professionals from other fields**. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to *Plato's Academy* and *Aristotle's Lyceum.* Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, **Athens"*... is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing*".** ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War).* It is ATINER's **mission** to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. *Education* and *(Re)searching* for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why *Education* and *Research* are the two core words in ATINER's name.

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President's Message

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Before you submit, please make sure your paper meets some basic academic standards, which include proper English. Some articles will be selected from the numerous papers that have been presented at the various annual international academic conferences organized by the different divisions and units of the Athens Institute for Education and Research.

The plethora of papers presented every year will enable the editorial board of each journal to select the best ones, and in so doing, to produce a quality academic journal. In addition to papers presented, ATINER encourages the independent submission of papers to be evaluated for publication.

The current issue of the Athens Journal of Social Sciences (AJSS) is the first issue of the seventh volume (2020). The reader will notice some changes compared with previous volumes, which I hope is an improvement. An effort has been made to include papers which fall within in one of the broad disciplines of social sciences.

This volume includes papers which their common denominator is the community from the perspective of sociology, anthropology, and ethnography. In total, four papers are included. The first paper deals with the issue of netnography and its contribution in the understanding of the social world and cultures of online communities. The second paper deals with the inclusion and integration of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa. The next paper is on contraception in Egypt. The last paper explores the wellbeing of Filipino Catholic Migrants in Taiwan.

The AJSS is truly an international journal; this is also reflected in this issue. The four papers refer to different countries and regions of the world: Italy, Canada, Egypt and Taiwan.

Gregory T. Papanikos, President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

14th Annual International Conference on Psychology
25-28 May 2020, Athens, Greece

The Psychology Unit of ATINER organizes its **14th Annual International Conference on Psychology, 25-28 May 2020, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Social Sciences. The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars and students of psychology and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2020/FORM-PSY.doc).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **27 January 2019**
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- Submission of Paper: **27 April 2020**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

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- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
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Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

14th Annual International Conference on Sociology
4-7 May 2020, Athens, Greece

The Sociology Unit of ATINER is organizing its **14th Annual International Conference on Sociology, 4-7 May 2020, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Social Sciences. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Sociology, Social Work and other related fields. Theoretical and empirical research papers will be considered. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2020/FORM-SOC.doc).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: : **6 January 2019**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **6 April 2020**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Domenico Maddaloni,** Head, Sociology Research Unit, ATINER & Associate Professor, University of Salerno, Italy.
- **Dr. Yorgo Pasadeos,** Director Social Sciences Division, ATINER & Professor Emeritus, University of Alabama USA.
- **Dr. Sharon Claire Bolton**, Head, Management Research Unit, ATINER & Professor, The Management School, University of Stirling, Scotland.

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Doing Social Research on Online Communities: The Benefits of Netnography

By Felice Addeo[*]*, Angela Delli Paoli*[†]*, Maria Esposito*[‡] *&*
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In social science research, Netnography has become a widely accepted research method. It has been used to tackle a wide variety of topics from culture to identity, social relationships and civic empowerment. Netnography can be broadly defined as a qualitative research approach that adapts the traditional ethnographic techniques to the study of the "net", which is the online communities, practices and cultures formed through computer-mediated communications. Both Ethnography and Netnography are naturalistic and unobtrusive approaches, interested in studying social practices in their everyday context (Kozinets 2010). They are both multi-method, methodologically flexible and adaptive, not confining themselves to following specific procedures, but rather remaining open to issues arising from the field (Varis 2016). However, Netnography differs from Ethnography under some crucial points. Entering the online culture diverges from face-to-face entrée in terms of accessibility and research design. From a data collection perspective, Netnography is far less time consuming; however, it requires a new set of skills due to the specificities of computer-mediated communication and its dramatically increased field site accessibility, which requires choices about field sites and decisions about types of data to gather and analyse. Moreover, it is far less intrusive than traditional Ethnography as it allows for researcher invisibility: the cyberspace makes it possible for researchers to be unseen from people observed. This allows documenting the explicit language of informants without the risk of obtrusiveness and disturbance. This paper presents the methodological specificities of Netnography focusing on its context of application, the definition of the method, the research design: from the objectives and research questions' setting, to sites' selection and cultural entrée, from the type of data to be collected, to the way to classify, analyse and represent them. The paper will also discuss some examples of netnographic studies in social sciences.

Keywords: *Netnography, Online Communities, Qualitative methods, Social research methods.*

Introduction

The growing number of internet-based studies, along with constant developments in computer-mediated communication, offer a new field for social research, while simultaneously presenting many methodological challenges. The

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paper focuses on a specific research method which can be listed as a qualitative research approach alternatively named as *Netnography* (Kozinets 2002, 2010, 2015); *Cyber Ethnography* (Morton 2001), *Ethnography of Virtual Spaces* (Burrel 2009), *Internet ethnography* (Boyd 2008), *Ethnography on the Internet* (Beaulieu 2004), *Internet related ethnography* (Postill and Pink 2012); *Digital Ethnography* (Murthy 2008), *Webnography* (Puri 2007). Among these alternative labels, according to us, the one that best captures the nature of this method is *Netnography* as it clearly suggests the idea of a qualitative research approach that adapts the traditional ethnographic techniques to the study of the "net" that is the online communities, practices and cultures formed through computer-mediated communications.

The term, while obviously recalling the traditional ethnography, suggests, at the same time, the idea that doing online ethnographic research is something different from its offline parallel.

Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviours and perceptions of communities in their own time and space and in their own everyday lives (Burawoy et al. 1991), in order to produce detailed, rich, holistic and situated accounts and understanding of the cultures, perspectives, practices and social actions of the people in these settings, i.e. *thick descriptions* (Geertz 1973). "Thick description" is an expression used to characterize the process of paying attention to contextual detail in observing and interpreting social meaning when conducting during a qualitative research. A thick description of a social event or action takes into account not only the immediate behaviours in which people are engaged but also the contextual and experiential understandings of those behaviours that render the event or action meaningful (see the Sage Research Methods Dictionary).

Both Ethnography and Netnography are naturalistic and unobtrusive approaches, interested in studying social practices in their everyday context (Kozinets 2010). They are both built on the combination of different research methods, are methodologically flexible and adaptive, not confining themselves to following specific procedures, but rather remaining open to issues arising from the field (Varis 2016). However, Netnography differs from ethnography under some crucial points. From a data collection perspective, Netnography is far less time consuming; however, it requires a new set of skills due to the specificities of computer-mediated communication and its dramatically increased field site accessibility, which requires choices about field sites and decisions about types of data to gather and analyse. Moreover, it is far less intrusive than traditional ethnography as it allows for researcher invisibility: the cyberspace makes it possible for researchers to be invisible to people observed. This allows documenting the explicit language of informants without the risk of obtrusiveness and disturbance. This paper presents the methodological specificities of Netnography focusing on its context of application, the definition of the method, the research design: from the objectives and research questions' setting, to sites' selection and cultural entrée, from the type of data to be collected, to the way to classify, analyse and represent them. The paper will also discuss some examples of netnographic studies in social sciences, and finally conclusions are drawn.

The Context of Netnography: Online Social Spaces

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is being incorporated into every aspects of daily life: everyday people worldwide are using blogs, social networks, chat rooms, personal worldwide pages and other online channels to express their identity, share information, ideas, and values, build knowledge, common practices and relationships (Riffle et al. 2019, Hallett and Barber 2013, Kozinets, 2010, 2002, Garcia et al. 2009, Mann and Stewart 2000).

Social life has been deeply penetrated by the Internet (Beneito-Montagut 2011); the use of online spaces to build communities and social relationships with people independently from their geographical location is widely spreading.

These virtual spaces take the form of small-scale communities without established parameters but held together through shared emotions, styles of life, new moral beliefs, and senses of injustice and consumption practices (Cova 1997). Following the definition of Rheingold (1993: 5) - who developed the expression "virtual communities"- they can be referred as *social aggregations* that emerge from the net when a *large number of persons* - moved by sufficient *human feelings*- carry on argumentized and *long discussions* about a domain of interest developing *webs of personal relationships* in cyberspace.

They are emotionally based, and they can connect heterogeneous people having different socio-cultural backgrounds, but sharing at the same time interests, passions and feelings. Virtual communities assume the form of communities of practice (Wenger 1998) when members, linked by common interests and passions, become content producers and practitioners developing an extended repertory of resources in order to share information, create ideas, find common solutions, build knowledge, make innovations, and so on (Lave and Wenger 1991). These communities are based on distinctive systems of meanings that are either exclusively or mainly manifested and negotiated online.

The participation in virtual communities is not restricted to just one community: people engage in different communities basing on their personal interests. The majority of the people, during their lives, usually takes part in several communities through different media, technologies and platforms, depending on the passions and the interests they perceive as predominant in a specific period of their existence. Netnography is a non-media-centric approach: the media are not the focus of research, netnographic research is not interested in media characteristics and use (Pink et al. 2016) but instead in the cultures, experiences, activities and relationships developed through different media (social networking groups, blog, communities, etc.), in one word online "worlds of meanings" (Kozinets 2015). Within this perspective, online social spaces can cross the boundaries of one specific community and platform and can have a collectively distributed nature. Consider for example the case of social media where a group of people may coordinate through using the same hashtag in order to share interests, opinions, emotions and so on. In this case a technical strategy (the use of the same hashtag) pairs up with a discursive strategy (Caliandro 2018).

Considering the need for social and community belonging behind online spaces' participation, Maffesoli (1996) rejects the assumption of the *triumph of* *individualism* to connote postmodernism. Instead, postmodernism seems to be characterized by a contrary movement toward the end of individualism expressed by the anxious search for social and community links. The same perspective is expressed by Cova (1997: 300-301); to him, post-modernity creates new social compositions: "the individual who finally managed to liberate him/her from archaic or modern social links is embarking on a reverse movement to recompose his/her social universe on the basis of an emotional free choice".

Participation in online spaces is a relevant part of daily life and relationships developed within online communities can, and often do, cross the communities' boundaries and affect other aspects of people social life. This is due to recent technological developments which increase the scope and range of online communities and the forms and time of participation such as the web 2.0 which widened the opportunities for user-generated content, the emergence of an "internet of things" and of ubiquitous mobile devices which make it possible to be always connected (Costello et al. 2017). Many studies have demonstrated that online communities contribute to change notions of the self, have identity implications, become systems of social support, institutionalize power and support activism (Olaniran 2008, Campbell 2006, Gossett and Kilker 2006, Madge and O'Connor 2006, Carter 2005, Williams and Copes 2005).

Thus, the distinction between online and offline life and the dichotomy real-virtual is more and more blurred losing its usefulness. In other words, virtual reality is not something distinct from other aspects of human actions and experience, but rather a part of it (Costello et al. 2017, Hallett and Barber 2014, Beneito-Montagut, 2011, Kozinets 2010, Garcia et al. 2009). Digital spaces are embedded in our culture so to change social practices (Hallet and Barber 2014). As a result of these changes, most sociologists think that, to really understand current society, it is necessary to follow people's social activities, including Internet and other forms of CMC. This implies an adjustment to epistemological and methodological stances for doing social research and an adaption of traditional social research methods to the specificities of online interactions.

Many Names, Same Approach?

Historically, social research on online communication articulates into two stages.

A first phase is dominated by experimental research with the aim of testing the effects of communication technologies without considering contextual factors (Androutsopoulos 2006: 4).

The second stage is characterized by a "[…] growing application of naturalistic approaches to online phenomena and the subsequent claiming of the Internet as a cultural context", with ethnographic research increasingly applied (Hine 2005: 7).

However, the ethnographic methods to study online social interactions are still undefined and in flux. The uncertainty concerns even the different labels that social researchers use to describe their studies of online communities and cultures.

Some researchers (Garcia et al. 2009, Kanayama 2003, Maclaran and Catterall 2002) simply call their online studies "ethnography", intending an inclusive and complex approach that does not substantially change whether it is used for studying an offline or online phenomenon.

Hine (2005) talks about "virtual ethnography", considering it as a partial and limited approach because it is focused just on the online aspects of the social life and does not consider the entire social experience.

Exploring the literature, it is possible to come across many other labels, such as "cyber ethnography" (Robinson and Shulz 2009, Morton 2001), "ethnography of virtual spaces" (Burrel 2009), "Internet ethnography" (Boyd 2008), "ethnography on the Internet" (Nelson and Otnes 2005, Beaulieu 2004), "Internet related ethnography" (Postill and Pink 2012), "digital ethnography" (Hjorth et al. 2017,Varis 2016, Murthy 2008), "webnography" (Horster and Gottschalk 2012, Puri 2007, Evans et al. 2001), online ethnography (Tuncalp and Lé 20014).

Many other scholars (La Rocca et al. 2014, Beaven and Laws 2010, Maulana and Eckhardt 2007, Fuller et al. 2006, Nelson and Otnes 2005), following the Kozinets proposal (1998), use the term "Netnography" to describe their studies about online communities.

All these labels refer to some kind of online data and to ethnography as a research approach (Varis 2016).

This paper adopts the term "Netnography" basing on several reasons:

- the term, based on a combination of the words "Internet" and "ethnography", immediately and clearly suggests the idea of a qualitative research approach that adapts the traditional ethnographic techniques to the study of online communities and practices;
- the term, while obviously recalling the traditional ethnography, suggests, at the same time, the idea that doing ethnographic research on online communities is something different from its offline parallel. As it will be shown in the following pages, Netnography distinguish itself from ethnography under many points of view;
- by now, the term is established and accepted by social researchers and frequently recurs in the academic literature about the study of online communities (unlike other labels that sporadically occur in isolated contribution about the topic).

In agreement with many other scholars (Beneito-Montagut 2011, Kozinets 2010), this work does not favour the expression "virtual ethnography", because it assumes that the virtual reality is something different and separated from the real and suggests a dichotomy real-virtual that, considering the spread of CMC in individual and social everyday life, does not exist anymore.

Netnography as a Research Method

Netnography as research approach has been developed by Robert Kozinets (1998) in the area of marketing and consumer research. Over the last decade, the approach has found application in a lot of social sciences areas, from sociology and anthropology to cultural and media studies.

Netnography can be defined as a qualitative research approach that transposes and adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques to the study of the online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets 2002: 2).

Through the use of not intrusive observation techniques, Netnography allows the researchers to study social interactions online, immersing themselves in the virtual environment in which these interactions are performed. It allows studying particular online cultures in their manifestation.

The specific purpose of Netnography is therefore represented by the study of online social spaces as previously defined. It is not limited to the analysis of the individualistic and sporadic action of posting messages on the internet, but it explores continued and repetitive interactions performed trough computer channels and technologies through the analysis of online communication. Online communication can take many forms, including text, but also audio information, visual information and audio-visual information. Depending on the research topics and aims, communities under analysis can take the forms of blogs, forums, social networks, chats, mailing lists, play spaces, virtual worlds, wikis, etc.

The origins of Netnography can certainly be traced in its offline parallel, traditional ethnography.

Ethnography belongs to the sphere of qualitative approaches within which it occupies a prominent role. It is a social research method aimed to study cultural knowledge, patterns of social interaction, particular society, drawing on a wide range of source of information. The main source of information is the ethnographer, overt or covert, participation in target people's daily life for an extended period, collecting observational data on the issues of analysis. The goal of any ethnography is to study people, culture and society in their own time and space and in their own everyday lives (Burawoy et al. 1991: 2), in order to produce detailed and situated accounts, i.e. *thick descriptions* (Geertz 1973). "Thick description" is an expression used to characterize the process of paying attention to contextual detail in observing and interpreting social meaning when conducting qualitative research. A thick description of a social event or action takes into account not only the immediate behaviours in which people are engaged but also the contextual and experiential understandings of those behaviours that render the event or action meaningful (Sage Research Methods Dictionary).

The main advantage is its capacity to depict the perspectives of actors, the richness and complexity of social life challenging the misleading preconceptions that social scientists often bring to research. Ethnography is able to produce an authentic understanding of a culture based on concepts that emerge during the study, instead of being imposed *a priori* from the researcher hypotheses (Hine 2005). This is the reason why ethnography has been recognized as a particularly suitable approach to familiarize the unknown, i.e. to describe backgrounds of social life that are difficult to access otherwise. At the same time, it is appropriate to deconstruct what is an already known, revealing new and surprising features of well-known social contexts (Marzano 2004). In doing so, researchers are required to be accurate, sensitive and reflective toward their subjects/objects of analysis and the context in which these subjects are acting and performing (Beneito-Montagut 2011).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) identify the main features of the ethnographic research:

1. the approach requires the immersion of the researcher in the everyday life of a social group for an extended period of time, in order to directly observe the group members and often participate in the group activities;
2. the ethnographic research takes place "in the field": distinct from other techniques as experimental, in ethnographic research people are studied in their everyday context and life, rather than under conditions artificially created by the researcher;
3. ethnographers prefer an inductive approach in which the assumptions directly emerge from the fieldwork rather than a deductive approach, in which assumptions are derived from the theories and then tested in the empirical world;
4. information derives from a variety of different sources, like documents, artefacts and, above all, participant observation and informal or formal interviews with members;
5. data collection is unstructured under two main points of view. First, it is not based on a fixed and rigid research design defined at the beginning of the research. Second, the categories for interpreting the phenomenon under study are not established *a priori* by the researcher, but they progressively emerge during the research process itself;
6. the research is usually focused on one or few cases because the main research goal is not to generalize, but reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, gaining a type of particularized knowledge that is grounded in a specific context;
7. the analysis of data involves a hermeneutic interpretation of the members' meanings, actions and practices. The analysis is mostly based on verbal descriptions and explanations. Quantification and statistical analysis play a very subordinate role;
8. the entire ethnographic process is characterized by a strong unpredictability, as it represents a unique and unrepeatable encounter between a researcher and a social context in a specific historical time.

Most of these features apply also to Netnography. It is possible to identify a lot of common elements between ethnography and Netnography. They are both naturalistic approaches, interested in studying social experiences and practices in their everyday context (Kozinets 2010); they are both based on adaptation or bricolage, being always built on the combination of different research techniques and methods. Both approaches are methodologically flexible and adaptive, not confining themselves to following specific procedures, but rather remaining open to issues arising from the field (Varis 2016).

Despite these common elements, there are also elements of distinction between the two research methods. Differently from ethnography, Nethnography is easier and far less consuming: information can be downloaded from the internet without having to be recorded and transcribed as in the traditional ethnography, the researcher does not have to travel anywhere for data collection. Moreover, it allows research invisibility making it possible for researchers to be invisible to people they are observing. In online settings, in fact, it is possible to lurk at the sites of interest, without disclosing the researcher's presence. Traditional ethnographies, instead, are unavoidably intrusive, as they involve a participant observation of the researcher and require at least the minimal participation of *being there* (Puri 2007, Evans et al. 2001). Another advantage of Netnography is the possibility of archiving material: as historical data are archived on most sites; it is possible to study trend over time. The permanence of online material also makes it possible to revisit sites at different times and do rigorous checks of consistency (Puri 2007). At last, Netnography also offers the opportunity to study real time trends: online conversations are always up to date, which makes it possible to study trends in real time, as soon as they form (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Ethnography vs. Netnography: Similarities and Differences*

	Ethnography	**Netnography**
Multi-method	X	X
Context-specific	X	X
Travel required	X	
Manual data recording	X	
Automatic data recording		X
Unobstrusiveness		X
Studying trends over time		X
Studying trends in Real time		X

Source: Authors own elaboration based on Kozinets' works.

Types of (N)ethnographic Research

Depending on the nature of the phenomenon researcher is trying to investigate, Netnography can be used as the only methods or supplemented by other research methods. In this regard, Kozinets (2010) introduces an important distinction between *online communities* and *communities online*, that can be very useful to understand *if* and *when* Netnography can be used as a stand-alone approach or if it should be used as a part of a larger study including other face-to-face research techniques.

Doing research on online communities means studying phenomena specifically related to online communities and online culture. In studies of this type, the online interaction/communication/identity is central and an online research approach could legitimately be the only one. In studies of this type, the online setting is part of the definition of the phenomenon under study: community members interact and communicate mainly via Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) so that the researcher can decide to focus their attention only on the online setting.

On the other hand, the expression *communities online* refers to phenomena whose social existence extends beyond the Internet and online interaction, even if the virtual plays an important role within the phenomena themselves.

It is clear that this dichotomy represents just a schematic attempt of categorizing phenomena, maybe over simplistic, as the difference between *online communities* and *communities online* should be better read as a *continuum*. However, this classification could be useful for researchers and allows deriving a general guideline: research on *online communities* should tend to have a primarily netnographic focus; instead, in research on *communities online*, Netnography could play a supporting or a secondary role within the research process (Kozinets 2010).

A similar classification has been proposed by Garcia *et al.* (2009), who distinguish between social phenomena which exist solely or primarily online, i.e. groups whose members interact only or mainly via CMC, and multimodal social phenomena, that are performed through both CMC and face-to-face contacts. For the solely or primarily online phenomena, it is legitimate for ethnographers to study the community life and practices just by examining the member online behaviour. For the multimodal phenomena, instead, it is necessary to define the research setting combining online and offline components.

It comes from this also the distinction between *Pure Netnography* and *Blended Netnography*. A *Pure Netnography* is a research that is conducted only using data generated from online interactions. On the opposite, a *Pure Ethnography* is a research conducted totally using data collected face to face, with no data gathered from online interactions. A *Blended Netnography*, instead, would be a combination of the both approaches, including data collected face to face as well as by online interactions (Kozinets 2010) (see Table 2).

At the beginning of every research, the nethnographers must question themselves if they are studying a solely or primarily online community/ phenomenon. If it is, they can decide to adopt Netnography as a stand-alone method. In this case, a pure Netnography would be appropriate, exhaustive and complete. On the opposite, if the researcher is studying a more complex phenomenon, then limiting it to a netnographic study would be partial and incomplete.

According to many authors (Beneito-Montagut 2011, Garcia et al. 2009), the application of a *pure ethnography* will increasingly reduce through the time. As the distinction between online and offline worlds will be always less fuzzy, ethnographers must alter their research techniques, to the point that all ethnographies of contemporary society should include and integrate CMC in their definition of the research field.

Table 2. *Typology of (N)ethnographic Studies*

		Data Collection	
		Face to face	*Online*
Type of Interaction	**Face to face**	Pure Ethnography	Blended Ethnography
	Online	Blended Netnography	Pure Netnography

Source: Adapted from Kozinets, 2010.

Netnography: Research Design

In social research in general but in qualitative research in particular, research design is not rigid but malleable and the phases can be greatly modified or reimagined to suit specific projects. The evolution of a netnographic research, even more than for other qualitative research methods, cannot be predetermined, anticipating all its possible issued and planning strategies and solutions to face them (Hammersleyand Atkinson 2007, Marzano 2006). However, this unpredictability does not eliminate the need for a pre-fieldwork preparation and does not mean that the researcher's behaviour in the field can be totally casual and offhand, based on the mere attempt to accommodate events. As for other research approaches, research design is crucial also to Netnography, even if it is an open and flexible design in which a reflexive process operates throughout every stage of the research itself.

In general, we can say that the design of a netnographic research involves different phases. These phases do not need to be interpreted as sequential and linear stages as feedback, reversibility and inversion of phases is frequent in concrete research.

We can identify 6 different phases:

- defining research questions;
- selecting the research field;
- gaining access to the field;
- collecting information;
- analysing data;
- writing a research report.

Defining Research Questions

Research should always begin with some problems or set of issues, starting from what in 1922 Malinowski (2) referred to as "foreshadowed problems" (2002). One of the most important tasks in the early stages of the research is to turn the foreshadowed problems into a set of defined questions (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Authors disagree about the reference to theory at this stage. Some (Creswell 2008, Glaser and Strauss 1967) reject referring to the existing literature and theory in order to not contaminate the emergence of new issues. Kozinets (2010), instead, suggests that researchers should always have as much knowledge as possible about what other people have done in the same research area, trying to connect their works with a large frame of references and build bridges with the related literature in the same area. This depends also on the object of the study: if *exploratory* then the researcher may collect the information first and then try to make sense of it referring to theory; if *descriptive* then the researcher would refer to theory first to obtain information on the particular features of an issues and then collect the information. Consequently, we can imagine two main types of netnoghraphic studies: *exploratory netnographies*, i.e. studies in which the researcher tries to look for patterns in the data and come up with a model within which to view this data, and *descriptive netnographies* which are theoretically-driven starting from a gap in the relevant literature and dissatisfaction for the absence of detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon.

Independently from the type of netnographic research, as for traditional ethnography, much of the research effort is concerned with formulating and reformulating the research questions in ways that make it more prolific and/or more suitable to investigation.

Although there are no hard-and-fact rules, Creswell (2008) suggests some useful guidelines for writing research questions during a qualitative research process:

- asking one or two central questions followed by a limited number of sub questions;
- beginning the research questions with the words *what* and *how* that suggest an open-ended research design;
- employing non-directional language, exploratory verbs, for example "discover", "understand", "explore", "describe", "seek to understand", "build meaning";
- using open-ended questions.

Once defined the (more or less structured) research questions, the researcher may use cognitive tools that facilitate the identification of significant dimensions in order to answer the research questions. In particular, conceptual maps could be very useful. They are taxonomic diagrams where an abstract concept – too general and abstract to be assessed – is progressively connected to more specific concepts. In this way, conceptual maps contribute to convert concepts into indicators for not directly measurable concepts (Marradi 2007: 203-204).

Selecting the Case

Apart from defining the research questions, it is necessary to find the best communities to start the field work (Silverman 2010, Kozinets 2010, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). There is no a fixed order between the definition of the research question and the community selection. Sometimes the setting selection comes first, for example when the researcher participates directly to an interesting online community. In this case, foreshadowed problems are identified *ex post* and derive from the nature of the setting itself.

In other cases, the setting may be selected on the basis of foreshadowed problems. Even in this case, the nature of the setting may still affect the development of the research questions. This happens because, as underlined before, in netnographic research the development of research problems is rarely completed before fieldwork begins; indeed, data collection often plays a key role in that process of problems development.

After identifying the main research questions, the researchers are rarely in a position to directly specify the precise nature of the best setting for their research. At the beginning, they can try to identify the types of locations that would be most appropriate for investigating the research problems. The best strategy is using a variety of keywords, progressively refining and specifying the initial research keywords, until the research results are not satisfactory. At this stage, substantial differences emerge between traditional and online ethnography. Researchers need to explore a different number of options before finding the best community for their research purposes. Looking for a research field online is very different from doing it offline. While traditional ethnographers had to travel a lot in order to study a particular culture, the netnographers can perform the same work using a good search engine and entering terms related to the research area and focus (Kozinets 2010).

As for traditional ethnography, netnography uses a type of sampling that is known as *theoretical sampling* (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In this type of sampling, the purpose is to collect data from places, people and events that will maximise opportunities to develop many categories and properties of categories as possible, and to facilitate the emergence of relations among the categories themselves.

In other words, cases are selected according to their capability to give useful insights, rather than being aimed at producing findings that are representative of a population or at testing hypotheses.

Transposing the concept of theoretical sampling in online settings could be practical translated in following specific criteria and preferring online communities that are (Kozinets 2010):

- *relevant*, i.e. related to the issues under analysis, to the specific research focus and questions;
- *active*, as they do not need to be past communities but need to be present communities with ongoing, recent and regular communications;
- *interactive*, as they need to be relational spaces with active communications between participants;
- *substantial*, as they need to be spaces of discussion on specific issues with a critical mass of communicators;
- *heterogeneous*, with a number of different participants;
- *data rich*, with detailed and descriptive data.

Gaining Access to the Field

Before gaining access to the selected community, it is necessary to become familiar with the community itself, its rules, rituals, values, language, norms, practices, organization and members. In this explorative step, the researcher can try to find out, for example, who are the most active participants, who are the leaders, which are the most popular topics, what type of specialized language, rituals, activities and values are shared by the community members (Kozinets 2010). During this step, the researchers can really assess the feasibility of their research aim and objectives, defined only theoretically until that moment.

After having familiarized with the community, researchers need to gain access to it. Gaining access to a community represents a strategic moment on which the success or failure of the research can depend. As for ethnographic studies, netnographies are exposed to the risk of failure because of the lack of access to the field or the difficulty for researcher to establish a relationship with members and/or gain their trust (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Depending on the type of community, strategies to gain access may be different. Online environments can be mainly classified into two categories:

- *open* environments, whose contents are free and accessible to anyone;
- *closed* groups, where the contents are accessible upon user's registration which is, in turn, subject to the approval of one or more administrators.

Based on the type of community, the research aims and the features of the research field, as in ethnographic research, there are two basic ways of gaining access to the search site:

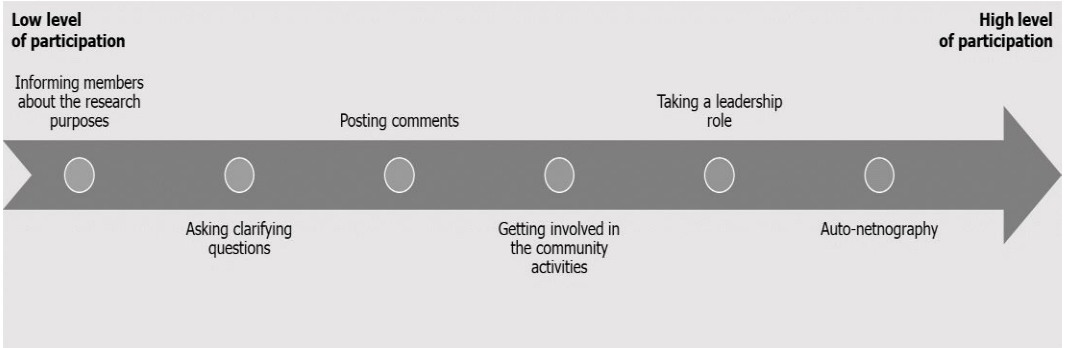
- *covert access or lurking:* the researcher invisibly observes the community without informing people about the research and the researcher's presence within the group with related ethical implications;
- *overt access*: the researcher informs community members of the research and asks for their consent, often through the gatekeepers (Silverman, 2010: 5), focal actors who act as gates and intermediaries for entering the community.

In the case of *overt access* which can be equated to *participant observation* in ethnography, there are different degree of participation in the community: researchers can decide to interact in a very limited way, just informing members about the research purposes and asking them some clarifying questions. They can also decide to interact with members as full participants, giving their contribution to the shared knowledge and practices. Thus, the participation of researchers in the community can be perceived as a *continuum*. On one hand, there is the observational role of the researcher, highlighting the possibility of observing without establishing any social contact with the community members. On the other, the participative role can be taken to the extreme and assume the form of an auto-Netnography, where the aim of the research becomes autobiographical reflections about the researcher own experience about his/her online community membership (see Figure 1).

Between these opposite stages there are a lot of different strategies of participation, at various levels and with different intensity, in the community under study (Kozinets 2010, Morton 2001):

- reading message in real time to following links;
- rating, commenting, replying to other members' messages;
- using chat lines and other synchronous forms of CMC for 'interviewing' by posting one question at a time and being able to immediately respond to the other;
- using mail for a different form of "interviewing" in which one or more questions can be sent at a time, and the subjects can respond in their own time;
- getting involved in the community activities and practices, becoming an expert within the community itself.

Figure 1. *The Level of Netnographer’s Participation in the Online Community*



Source: Authors’ elaboration based on Kozinets’ works.

The choice between covert and overt access to the community is controversial. Covert access may have benefits in terms of obtrusiveness but has ethical and privacy implications. Instead, overt access is ethical correct but obtrusive. Some scholars (Kozinets 2010, Hine 2005) support overt access for ethical reasons: a researcher should always disclose his/her presence and research intentions to online community. Others (Hewer and Browmlie 2007, Beaven and Laws 2007, Langer and Beckmann 2005) believe that informing communities’ members on the researcher’s identity would compromise the main advantage of the approach, i.e. its unobtrusiveness. Arguments around the invisibility issue range a lot.

On the one hand, there are scholars (Beneito-Montagut 2011, Hine 2005, Bell 2001, Heath et al. 1999) who suggest that lurking is not ethnographic observation in the traditional sense and hence not "proper" ethnography. Lurking is not considered research in its real sense of collaboration, it is considered rather as a one-way process of appropriation, as an unethical practice which does not provide any deep understanding of the community, but only a superficial description due to the absence of dialogue with respondents (Bell 2001, Heath et al. 1999, Garcia et al. 2009).

On the other hand, there are scholars (Beaven and Laws 2007, Hewer and Browmlie 2007, Puri 2007; Langer and Beckmann 2005) that idealize the possibility of lurking thinking that it should be the norm for netnographic research. Lurking, in fact, offer a unique opportunity for collecting "natural" data, as the members are not aware of their informant status and do not modify their behaviour due to the researcher’s presence. As Paccagnella (1997) points out, in social sciences, as well as in other fields, the phenomena under study are modified by the act of observing them. Even in the case of qualitative methods as the participant observation, the presence of a researcher in the field can cause problems. The author recognises that, while the possibility of performing observation without informing the people under study clearly poses new ethical issues, at the same time, it reduces the danger of bias and distorting data caused by the presence of the researcher.

Between these two extremes positions (never lurking or always lurking), there are authors who believe that lurking may be justifiable and legitimate in certain circumstances. Some authors (Garcia et al. 2008) underline that lurking could be acceptable at some conditions, especially if that is the way how members routinely participate and experience the community. In other words, researcher could experience the online sites in the same way that participant routinely experience it, gaining access to a field by displaying competence of the norms of the group and adapting their behaviour on the basis of them. Others (Maclaran and Catterall 2002) justify the choice of non-participant observation when the researcher thinks that the presence of an outsider within the community would be undesirable and unwelcome. Others (Langer and Beckmann 2005) consider a covert netnography as a particularly suitable approach to investigate sensitive topics, for which it is not advisable to apply traditional research methods as a questionnaire, surveys, interviews and ethnographic observation. Not always participation is appropriate and in some case can be risky (such as in the case of illegal topics or forms of extreme activism) or impossible (such as in the case of communities of practices). For example, in the selection of the online community under study they may use native social media devices such as mentions, like, retweets, tags, hashtags as methodological sources for selecting communities, filtering and sampling comments, posts, texts, images and videos.

Other scholars propose to use lurking as an explorative research approach. Lurking is, in this case, a useful way to explore the setting under study, learn the rules and the norm of the community, its specific organization and language. All the gained information could be used later by researchers to create interview questions (Kozinets 1998), identity gatekeepers, or choose the best strategy to introduce themselves as a newcomer to the community and get engaged in participant-observation research (Shoham 2004).

In the case of overt access, an accurate and pondered process of identity management, self-presentation strategies and researcher's interpersonal skills are fundamental. Presentation strategies can range from writing a public post in the community to explain the research goals and ask members for collaboration to try to privately contact the community administrators or key members asking them advice on how to behave within the community itself.

Whether the research is covered or uncovered, it is important to always explain the selected strategy and the reasons behind each choice. In the same way as in ethnography where ethnographers narrate the access to the field with detailed travelling and arrival stories which turn to be fundamental in making the description perceived as authentically grounded in a specific field, in netnography the access to the field needs to be narrated. The lack of physical travel does not mean that the relations between researchers and readers is totally compromised (Hine 2005). Online ethnographers can build their authority giving to the readers a detailed description of their virtual travel to the community, the used research tools, the criteria of selection, the access and negotiation strategies.

Exploring the literature (Kozinets 2002), it is possible to come across a lot of netnographic reports that provide the reader with a detailed arrival story, explaining how the researchers found the communities, why they selected them, how they negotiated access, observed members' interactions and communicated with members. These accounts do not represent an unnecessary and redundant narrative ornament, as they are fundamental for ensuring clearness, legitimizing the role of the netnographer, building a relationship with readers, involving them in the research process.

Information Collection

In netnographic research, data collection preserves some advantages compared with other data collection techniques such as focus group, in depth interviews and survey (see table 2). These data collection techniques are inevitably intrusive as they pose subjects in artificial and decontextualized situations. On the contrary, Netnography allows documenting the explicit language of informants without the risk of obtrusiveness and disturbance. It is focused on the study of spontaneous and naturalistic conversations, publicly available on the internet and not contaminated by the needs of a social scientist. In doing Netnography, it is not necessary to initially compile the desired data, as these data already exist in the Internet. Due to their spontaneity, the collected data are free of systematic bias, since the researcher does not interrupt the conversation and can remain invisible.

Table 3. *Netnography vs. Other Research Methods: Similarities and Differences*

	Unobtrusive	In depth understanding	Naturalistic	Less Time consuming	Flexible	Generalization allowed
Focus group	X	□	X	□	□	X
Interview	X	□	X	□	□	X
Survey	X	X	X	□	X	□
Traditional ethnography	X	□	□	X	□	X
Netnography	□	□	□	X	□	X

Source: Authors own elaboration based on Kozinets' works.

In traditional ethnography, information collection is based on different kinds of sources that can be classified in two main categories: *naturally occurring* and *elicited* (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The former derives from observation, participation and participants' oral accounts. The elicited are interviews, documents and artefacts of various kinds. During data collection, the researcher also has to write field notes.

As ethnography, also Netnography is multi-source: the main source of information is represented by online contents but it can be complemented by other sources such as information collected through interviews, desk analysis, etc. Exploring the literature, it is possible to come across a lot of empirical studies performed through a combination of different methods and techniques, both offline and online, in collecting and analysing data. Particularly, it is very common to come across a combination between content analysis and in depth interviews, conducted online (Maulana and Eckhardt 2014, Scaraboto and Fisher 2013, Fuller et al. 2006, Kanayama 2003); offline (La Rocca et al. 2014, Hallet and Barber 2013, Langer and Beckmann 2005) or both (Beneito-Montagut 2011). Netnography could also be combined with in person observation (Hallet and Barber 2013) and diaries analysis (Beneito-Montagut 2011, Maulana and Eckhardt 2007). It is also interesting the use of netnography within mixed method research design that combine online ethnography with other quantitative research methods, such as survey (Bilgram et al. 2011) or network analysis (Paccagnella 1997).

In the analysis of online communications, researchers can benefit from two main sources: the data that they directly copy from the computer-mediated interactions among community members and the field notes, i.e. data that they inscribe with their personal observations about the community, its members, interactions and meanings.

In Netnography, data collection is far less time consuming than its offline parallel. Doing an online study, in fact, the researcher can benefit from the automatic transcription of downloaded documents that are often very rich and easy to obtain.

A problem can derive, on the opposite, from the excessive availability of information, as one of most important issues of online settings is the information overload. For this reason, the researchers' choice of what is important and what is worth to consider and save should always be guided by the research aim and objectives. In this regard, Kozinets (2002, 2010) suggests making a preliminary distinction between on-topic and off-topic messages (where *on-topic* means consistent and relevant to the research aim), in order to specifically focus the research efforts on the former.

As in traditional ethnography, the other important netnographic source is represented by the reflexive field notes, where researchers record their own observations and (also) personal emotions occurring during the research. The importance of writing field notes has been underlined by many researchers (Garcia et al. 2009, Kozinets 2002) who state that field notes are very important in order to contextualize data, helping the researchers to record their experiences, describe data and develop theories from observation. The importance of the field notes is already evident at the beginning of a netnographic research. Before starting data collection, in fact, researchers can already write some guidelines containing information about the research focus and questions, the keywords used to search for the community and the criteria by which they selected the group. In the starting field notes, researchers need to clarify and formalize some important decisions, for example how is planning to interact with the community or if they are going to use a qualitative software analysis.

Apart from presenting time advantages, the online setting poses also some challenges: digital artefacts are continuously editable and most of the time, we can see the final product but not the process leading to them; what remains visible of a post is the end result without edits, changes and deletions. Fortunately, some platforms offer nethnographers useful tools to fill the gap caused by the impossibility of doing a 24h observation. Facebook, for example, shows which posts have been edited and which have not and presents digital traces for the ethnographer interested in following the entire processes of meaning-making, rather than just the final product (Varis 2016).

Thus, netnographers need to choose between studying products or processes: they can limit themselves to download the data *en masse* (Kozinets 2010) or try to always be "there", being immersed in the situation, directly observing interactions as they take place, following in real time the processes of editing and deletion of posts and the flow of comments in discussion forums and blogs. However, this second option is very time and resource consuming.

Another issued relating to watching what happens on the screen, is this: there are a lot of multi-functional platforms, such as Facebook, where multiple channels of communication are available (public posts, but also private chat conversations and private messages). In other words, what is observable on the screen can be misleading, or at least provide a partial image. For example, basing the analysis only on observation, a user may seem inactive or sporadic on Facebook. The same user, indeed, could be very active in sending private messages and chatting with their connections (Varis 2016).

In both cases (lurking or participating) and like in traditional ethnographic research, data collection proceeds until *theoretical saturation* is reached (Glaser and Strauss 1967); additional information are supposed not to lead to significant and supplementary contributions to the research objectives. From this point of view, one of the strengths of Netnography is its ability to get in contact and study in depth an online group and its members: for this reason, interesting and useful conclusions might be drawn from a relatively small number of messages, if these messages contain rich and detailed data (Kozinets 2010).

Analysing Data

In ethnography, the step of analysis is not a distinct stage of the research: it begins in the pre-fieldwork step, with the formulation and clarification of research questions, and continues and crosses the whole research process, through to the writing of the final report. As underlined before, in ethnographic studies, the research process is always iterative, as the analysis of data feeds and affects the other research steps, like research design and data collection.

Moreover, in doing ethnography online, data analysis covers the entire process of research and it is aimed at turning the entire results of observation, participation (including textual downloaded text, graphical files, screenshot, online interviews transcripts and reflective field notes) into an organic and consistent research report.

The process of analysis cannot ignore the existing ideas of the ethnographer and the suggestions deriving from literature about the topic. However, it is important that these prior elements do not take the form of strict prejudgements, forcing interpretation of the data into categories: the researcher, instead, has to use them as useful resources to make sense of the data, being, at the same time, always open to new and unexpected interpretations, resisting the temptation to rush to determinate conclusions.

At this stage, the concepts will not usually be well-defined elements, but they will probably take the form of "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer 1954): "Where definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 164).

There are some general qualitative data processes of analysis that can be successfully applied also to netnography (Kozinets 2010, Miles and Huberman 1994):

- *coding*: classifying data gathered from posts, field notes, interviews and documents into categories. During coding, names and labels are assigned to particular units of data. Categories usually emerge inductively from data themselves rather than being imposed by an *a priori* classification;
- *noting*: writing reflections and comments about the data during the collection;
- *abstracting and comparing*: classifying patterns into higher-order concepts, constructs or processes, identifying similar phrases, build relationships, emphasizing differences across the information;
- *refinement*: returning to the online community for another round of data collection in order to refine the interpretation and understanding of constructs;
- *generalizing*: elaborating a small set of generalizations explaining our constructs;
- *theorizing*: connecting our interpretation to existing theories or constructing new theories.

Apart from coding, the netnographic analysis is mostly based on a hermeneutic approach. In this regard, the concept of hermeneutic circle can be very useful. The hermeneutic circle can be considered as a methodological process for interpreting qualitative data, in which a part of qualitative data is interpreted and reinterpreted in relation to the developing sense of the whole text. According to this approach, a holistic understanding must be developed over time: initial understanding of the text is often modified as further readings provide a more developed sense of the text as a whole (Thompson 1997: 433). Doing a hermeneutic analysis, researcher needs to seek interpretations that are coherent and free of contradictions, comprehensible to the reading audience, supported with relevant examples, written in a prose that is persuasive and stimulating, using allusions, metaphors, analogies.

The two different processes of netnographic analysis, coding and hermeneutic interpretations, can be usefully combined during the analysis.

During this process, qualitative software such as NVivo or Atlas.ti could be surely useful for researchers. In particular, Paccagnella (1997) recognizes some useful tasks that qualitative analysis software could excellently perform:

- writing or transcribing field notes;
- editing, correcting, extending, or revising field notes;
- coding, i.e. attaching keywords or tags to segments of text to permit later retrieval;
- organizing storage, i.e. keeping text in an organized database;
- data linking, i.e. connecting relevant data segments to each other, forming categories, clusters, or networks of information;
- doing a quantitative content analysis: counting frequencies, sequences, or locations of words and phrases;
- conclusion-drawing and verification: aiding the analyst to interpret displayed data and to test or confirm findings;
- theory-building: developing systematic, conceptually coherent explanations of findings; testing hypotheses;
- graphic mapping: creating diagrams that depict finding or theories;
- preparing interim and final reports.

However, despite the importance of data classification and coding, Kozinets (2002, 2010) underlines that the most useful interpretations come as a result of a hermeneutic and symbolic interpretation, rather than from a meticulous process of classification. In addition, Paccagnella (1997) recognizes that, despite the different and useful tasks that a computer program could implement, it would play a supporting role for the researcher, but no computer program will analyse the data in place of the researcher. A computer program can surely make data analysis much easier, but the aim of an ethnographic research remains the study and interpretation of social phenomena provided by the researcher own hermeneutic understanding.

One of the most common data analysis practice consists in collecting data through an observation approach and analysing it by performing a bottom-up approach. In this type of study, the posts are read several times and, according to the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967), the collected data are analysed moving from the specific to the general, identifying categories and relations between them. Even in the case of a content analysis based approach, it is possible to identity variations, as the content approach can be more focused on a qualitative interpretative approach (Hewer and Browmlie 2007, Fuller et al. 2006, Nelson and Otnes 2005) or a quantitative frequency analysis (La Rocca et al. 2014) or a combination of both Horster and Gottschalk 2012, Beaven and Laws 2007, Langer and Beckmann 2005).

Netnography in Action

Netnography is a very flexible and crosscutting research method, and it can be applied to analyse a wide and heterogeneous range of sociocultural phenomena from different disciplinary fields. Here we briefly present some examples of netnographic empirical studies conducted by our research group. For each study, a short description of research objectives and main results is provided.

The Fansubbing Phenomenon

The purpose of this research (Addeo and Esposito 2016, 2015, 2013) was to study the Fansubbing online activity, as a paradigmatic example of participatory cultures based on collaborative problem-solving and knowledge creation between people which by re-elaborating medial pre-existing materials, produce new creative forms. Fansubbing is defined as the practice of translating and creating subtitles for TV series produced in a foreign Country, usually USA or England, in order to preserve the media product in its original form, avoiding cross-cultural contaminations caused by the official dubbing. Once produced by Community members through a collective and interactive production process, subtitles are online and available to everybody. The research adopted an Exploratory Case Study approach (Yin 1994) that: "combined qualitative and quantitative techniques in data collection and analysis, following a mixed method approach. Specifically, content analysis of official documents produced by the ItalianSubsAddicted Community; press review of articles and videos about the Community; netnography for the analysis of the Community forum; in-depth interviews to 15

Itasa members, selected with a snowball sampling" (Addeo and Esposito 2016: 2-3). The Netnography was carried out to analyse the online interactions on the most important Italian Fansubbing Community, named "ItalianSubsAddicted" (aka ITASA) which presents the highest number of users and of Series subtitled. As usual in the netnographic and ethnographic approach, research started with a foreshadowed problem ("know more about fansubbing") that turned out to be a simple start for a multifaceted and stimulating research path. After a short lurking stage, Researchers gained access to the field adopting an overt approach and collected information through a participant observation that lasted 24 months. Data analysis mixed coding and hermeneutics techniques and implemented the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in which data analysis and data collection are conceived as simultaneous and interrelated processes. This progressive and iterative procedure implied that all the data already codified were constantly compared with all the new results that emerges from the analysis of new data, highlighting similarities and differences among them. Results shed light on the complex and deep learning and identity-formation dynamics of the Community, whose members group together not only to share their passion, but also to become active producer of subtitles for media products. The ITASA Community represented an interesting research subject under many points of view: "First of all, it can be considered an application of the collective intelligence dynamics: people who share the same interests and passions cooperate to make available the product of their intelligence to other people" (Addeo and Esposito 2016: 5). This results are consistent with the collective intelligence paradigm (Lévy 1994), because every Community member contributes to the group project with a distinct and specific role. ITASA could also be considered a paradigmatic example of a community of practice that allow collective and distributed learning being an effective field of learning by doing (Wenger 1998, Lave and Wenger 1991): "the Community experience, in fact, favours the development of specific skills and abilities, like linguistic skills and interpersonal skills, making the individual more competitive on the labor market" (Addeo and Esposito 2016: 5). Finally, the ITASA experience helped community members to enrich their personal culture by offering them the possibility to cooperate, and share value and opinions with different people from a wide range of social, cultural and economic conditions: "Cultural diversity tested through the Community experience allows each person to leave parochialism behind and get a new and richer identity" (*ibidem*).

Fanfiction and Fandom

This research shares the same ground of the previous one, as it studies an online community, Erika Fan Page (aka EFP), representing another paradigmatic example of collective intelligence. EFP was founded in 2001 by Erika, who is still managing the community as administrator. At the end of July 2019, the community has 562,559 users, 199,633 of which are registered as authors. EFP is a touchstone for fanfiction lovers and producers. In fact, this online community is dedicated to the production of fanfiction, that is the practice of re-elaborating media texts (TV series, Movies, Comics, Novels, and so on) in order to create new content related to the original text. For example, a fan of a specific movie can write a novel with an alternate ending of the story, or a comic fan can publish a in which. EFP community members can read and review the documents made by other members, or they can upload their own work. Under this perspective, EFP is a surely a community of practices because it creates new knowledge, by updating the existing one. EFP was also chosen because it fulfils all the selection criteria required by netnographic literature (Kozinets 2010); i.e., the EFP is relevant, active, interactive, heterogeneous, and rich of detailed and descriptive data. The access to the field was gained though several steps. First, a lurking activity was implemented in order to familiarise with the community's values, norms, roles and dynamics: "lurking phase was also useful to learn the language and the specialized vocabulary used by EFP users; without knowing it would have been impossible to understand the productive and interactive dynamics of the community" (Salzano et al. 2017: 216). After the lurking stage, researchers decided to switch to an overt access, using a mixed method approach to collect information: non-participant observation of the community members' interactions and in-depth interviews to 15 people, selected among the most active EFP users. Data collection ended when saturation was reached (Bertaux 1981, Glaser and Strauss 1987), i.e. when the researchers achieved awareness that the data collection would not have provided new insights about the research objects. Research empirical basis was made up of: online interactions among EFP users; interviews transcription; field notes. This empirical basis constantly and progressively underwent to coding, interpretation, abstraction and comparison (Silverman, 2010), thus following a grounded approach: data analysis was performed during the data collection stage, and not at the end of it. Moreover, following the aforementioned constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1987), data have been analysed recursively according to the circular principle of the interpretative process (Montesperelli 1998); if new categories of analysis emerged during the collection, the already encoded information is interpreted according to the new emerging categories.

Results show that the communicative and relational practices contribute to shape EFP as a learning community in which users are able to progressively acquire and develop competences and skills related to writing and media literacy; "the dynamics which have been observed are: Fan Fiction writing as a collective autobiography and Fan Fiction communities as a digital media literacy playground" (Salzano et al. 2017: 224). Results also confirm that online communities like EFP could be seen as a social space promoting forms of engagement and peer-review practices, being so an excellent environment to develop and improve the digital media literacy. This research confirmed also that "online communities aggregating young people are interesting immersive learning environments, in which it is possible to observe the emerging of skills and competences which are not only useful within the group in terms of the construction of a reputation but also in the job market" (Salzano et al. 2017).

Gay-friendly Advertising

This research was aimed to detect the identification factors influencing LGBT perceptions and reactions to gay-friendly advertising (Addeo et al., 2019). In this case Netnography was chosen on the basis of the unit of analysis – LGBTs. The LGBT community is probably one of the social groups that have benefitted the most from the participatory culture of the Internet. By surfing online, gay people can create or join communities in which they can easily overcome the offline difficulties of finding information, sharing experiences, feelings and interests. The social aggregation dynamics of the Web can also lead to the development of strong and influential online communities, whose members can influence the behaviour of people in the real world. For this particular community internet may serve as a socialization medium and a tool to express freely their own opinion within the gay community.

The research was based on a netnographic approach applied to the two most important Italian LGBT online communities: *Gay-Forum.it* and *Liberamente Lesbica*. These communities represent important points of reference for the Italian LBGT community and fully meet the criteria suggested by the literature on netnography (Kozinets 2010: 89): i.e. they contain relevant information related to the research focus and questions; they display recent and regular communications; they present large interactivity among participants.

In both communities, the access was preceded by a period of lurking, which is a useful covert observation for researchers to learn the norms of the groups under study, to become familiar with their organisation and to identify the community gatekeepers and key members. Then, the researchers asked the community gatekeepers for permission to start data collection and, having received the consent, they disclosed their presence to the members, presenting themselves, the aim of the study and its methodology and also contributed by co-creating contents, interacting with the community members, asking questions and giving clarifications. Data analysis was performed through a combination of coding and hermeneutic interpretation (Kozinets 2002, 2010).

Through participant observation of users' online conversations about LGBT marketing, the research highlighted the most important factors that make a brand be perceived as gay-friendly.

Overall, LGBT responses to advertising seem to vary on the basis of two dimensions which influence their identity as LGBT, the importance that they place on gay-oriented activities and their identification in corporate values:

1. the way gayness is depicted, either with stereotyped representations or with normalized representations;
2. the way sexuality is represented, either emphasising erotic connections or family values.

Stereotypical representations such as those stressing physical characteristics or attitudes (e.g. obsession with beauty and fashion, enjoying sunbathing, bars, dance and attention, assuming effeminate pose, dressed as women, etc.) are considered negative for the LGBT community because based on the difference with the dominant heterosexual group and on heterocentric mediatypes. Also the representation of Lesbian and Gay sexuality as an erotic lifestyle that evolve around erotic and casual sex is seen as unrealistic, depersonalising gay people as moral outsiders. Instead, LGTB community identifies in normalised alternative sexual relationships and family structures. As a consequence, the higher level of identification emerges from gay-friendly communication offering a normalized depiction of gayness not including negative stereotypes and from a representation of sexuality representing the possibility of alternative sexual relations and family structures.

Airbnb Experience

This netnographic study (Delli Paoli and Ciasullo 2019) was aimed to shed light on the symbolic meanings driving the use of shared process of consumption. Airbnb was chosen as the context of the study as it represents a good example of sharing economy based on sharing underused services directly from individuals: apartment owners (hosts) and temporary rental seekers (guests). Netnography was used as the methodology in this study as users of Airbnb are mostly active in cyberspace. Three months were spent mapping Airbnb online spaces before starting data collection in order to select the appropriate spaces for analysing online interactions between guests and hosts. The Airbnb official forum was found suitable on a few grounds. Firstly, it contains an array of relevant user-generated information on Airbnb matters by hosts serving as a platform to gather ideas from hosts to submit to the platform and to share ideas, feedback and experience among hosts. Secondly, it is an active and interactive forum with participation from hosts from around the world following a peer-to-peer interaction model which includes also participation from Airbnb. Thirdly, with no character limit placed on the length of posts and comments, the forum is data rich. A set of selection criteria were necessary to filter through large amounts of data which were then manually stored. In order to select message threads, we used the technical features of the platform following a purposeful sampling (Patton 1990):

- Hosts' comments from the forum were downloaded and saved when they were found to be relevant in the community (they have received approval from other hosts in terms of positive votes and likes from other hosts), they have received feedback from both hosts and the platform in terms of comments by other hosts and responses from Airbnb, they included the mention of any particular meanings attributed to Airbnb experience. A total of 433 comments were analysed.
- Data from guests' reviews were downloaded and saved when they were found to be relative to hosts with listings in European capitals (London, Rome, Bruxelles, Amsterdam, Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Lisbon, Prague) with a hosting story (a high number of reviews: only the reviews with a minimum of 100 reviews were chosen to avoid one-time users) and responsive and that include reference to the specific hosting experience. Moreover, we balanced between superhosts and not superhosts, home, room and experience listings.

The study implemented a qualitative content analysis building on the principles of Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and hermeneutics (Kozinets 2010: 120). The analysis of netnographic data was guided by an inductive approach following a bottom-up approach in generating themes. It was able to identity an institutionalized system of meanings for both guests and hosts. The guests process of consumption emerged as a socially constructed and culturally embedded phenomenon which refers to experience sharing and triggers a multiplicity of emotional, physical and cognitive reactions to the guest experience involving them emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. Guests are driven by the ability to have an authentic and possibly life-enriching experience that cannot be offered by competing accommodation alternatives. The hosts process of offering an accommodation is conceived as a social practice routed in the ancient traditions of hospitality and welcoming strangers. Hospitality exchange is not just considered a matter of accommodation but also a matter of meeting people and engaging in mutually meaningful social interactions. In the hosts' perspective, the concept of hospitality moves away from the business-oriented mind-set to shift toward social interaction with guests.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to provide an overview of Netnography as a research method. Netnography is a readily adaptable research method applicable across a wide spectrum of involvement, from lurking to active participation in online conversations and activities. Being based on creativity and *bricolage*, every netnographic study has distinctive and specific features that make it unique and different from other studies; for this reason, two netnographies cannot be conducted in exactly the same manner (Kozinets 2010). The methodological approaches described here are not particularly novel in themselves. They do not provide radical changes but minor adjustments to adapt traditional research methods to the specificities of new information and communication technologies. Compared with offline qualitative methods, Netnography does not provide radical shifts in practice or in epistemological substance. While imitative of traditional qualitative research, Netnography exhibits fundamental adaptations of aspects of traditional qualitative research. In Netnography, research methods need to be adapted to the contingencies of the online cultural environments: the ipertexuality of the data and the disembodied nature of online interactions. Moreover, it requires digital and hermeneutic competencies. Researchers are required to immerse themselves into the world they intend to study, to be familiar with the mechanisms of online conversations, to be able to navigate a big mass of unstructured information, interpret those assigning meanings to them and detecting the cultural connections that link content together.

In order to use Netnography researchers need to equip themselves with a natively digital methodological array using internet and online social spaces as a source of methods instead that a mere object of analysis (Caliandro 2018, Rogers 2010).

The analysis of previous netnographic research has demonstrated that:

- netnography is particularly appropriate to those online spaces and activities that would not exist without the internet or are digitally alimented: it is the case of digital embedded practices such as in the case of fansubbing and fanfiction and online sharing practices and forms of collaborative consumption such as in the case of Airbnb.
- The definition of the online social formation under study is not necessarily the starting point of the analysis. Rather, it can be the point of arrival as in the case of Airbnb where the community was selected in different online contexts after a process of mapping users, comments, opinions, reviews using the social media logic (like, hashtag, rating, and so on).

One of the main advantage of netnography is the opportunity to expand the geographical dimension of the research field, connect dispersed networks around the world and increase the researcher's accessibility to the research population. This is particularly useful for difficult to reach groups and sensitive research topic such as illegal acts, illnesses, health concerns and interests, stigmatic phenomena and groups (migrants, disabled, LGBTs, etc.). This characteristic of netnography of being adaptable to study phenomena difficult to study through face-to-face encounters is defined by Kozinets as the "voyeuristic quality" of Netnography (Kozinets 2015: 88).

As the examples of netnographic studies presented in this paper demonstrate, the best application of netnography is to understand the social world and cultures of online communities which develop prevalently in cyberspace in order to document the explicit language of informants without the risk of obtrusiveness and disturbance of direct research involvement providing researcher with the emic (insider) and ethical (outsider) perspectives for more holistic insights. Netnography provides a valuable tool for understanding constructed online social spaces.

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Inclusion and Integration: A Case Study of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa's Cultural Recreation Activities

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Ethnic community organizations serving immigrants in host societies can provide cultural recreation activities that are inclusive and integrative, as well as leisure pursuits that are centered on building cultural cohesion and social closure. The Hellenic Community of Ottawa fulfills its mandate by providing cultural recreation activities that are reflective of mainstream society as well as those that are ethno-cultural specific. This paper presents a case study of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, its cultural recreation activities (youth, seniors, sports and athletics, and festivals and arts) and the role of organizations and institutions (public, private and non-profit) outside the ethnic Community, in bringing about inclusion and integration into mainstream society. Based on the experiences of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, this paper concludes with suggestions for ethnic community decision-makers and service providers for the provision of inclusive and integrative cultural recreation activities.

Keywords: Inclusion, ethnic community organizations, leisure, recreation, minorities

Introduction

Non-profit ethnic-based community organizations are often criticized for promoting segregation and social closure, furthering divide between ethnic minorities and mainstream groups. However, ethnic-based community organizations can play a significant role in promoting inclusiveness in the receiving society through recreation and leisure services. Drawing from a case study, this project explores the role of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa in promoting openness and cohesion to the host community through its social, cultural and spiritual programs and services.

The Hellenic Community of Ottawa was established in February 25,1929 to help Greek immigrants in the Ottawa metropolitan area maintain their religious and cultural traditions, and to provide resources and support not offered by mainstream institutions and actors to accelerate social and economic integration. Since its establishment, this ethnic organization has played a key role in assisting in the resettlement and integration of new Greeks into the host society (Karlis, 1993; Karlis, 1987). Throughout its history, the Hellenic Community has main-

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tained its commitment to Canada multiculturalism ideals, which recognizes ethnic group's rights to preserve and celebrate their culture, and to ensure social and economic equality regardless of individual's ethnic background (Black-Branch & CEA, 1995). Indeed, its organizational mandate emphasizes contribution to multiculturalism through the provision on ethno-specific recreation activities that enhance awareness of the Greek culture as well as through activities focused on creating bridges with the larger society.

As a result, The Hellenic-Canadian organization has built strong associations with government agencies at the three levels (federal, provincial and municipal), as well as with educational institutions, the private sector, and non-profit organizations in its effort to continue its mission towards integration and inclusion. Through collaborative efforts with organizations outside the Hellenic Community, cultural recreation activities are often employed as a tool to ease integration and inclusion of newcomers and isolated Greek immigrants into mainstream society. The purpose of this paper is to explore how non-profit ethnic community organizations can play a more significant role in promoting inclusion and integration into the host society by working closely with government agencies, businesses, educational institutions, service providers and community groups. To fulfill this purpose, this paper presents a case study of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, its cultural recreation activities, and the role of organizations and institutions outside the Hellenic Community of Ottawa in bringing about inclusion and integration into the broader Canadian society.

Canada is a multicultural society consisting of over 200 ethnocultural groups and representing over 20 percent of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2011). The commitment to immigration and growth by the federal government since the millennium has led to the highest rate of immigration in Canada's history (Karlis, 2011). Census Canada (2001) reported that immigration to Canada was at the highest level that it has been in the past 80 years. Not only has this affirmed Canada's commitment to immigration, it has posed various challenges to those immigrating to Canada, — mainly the challenge of integrating into mainstream society. Ethnic community organizations today are called on more than ever in Canada's history to play a lead role in not only enhancing the quality of life of immigrants and their descendants, but also on helping immigrants become included and integrated into the broader community. Yet, not all ethnic groups have ethnic community organizations or highly structured ethnic community organizations. The older, more established groups, largely consisting of groups that immigrated to Canada from Europe between 1951 and 1971 tend to be well established ethnic community organizations that collaborate with outside organizations and institutions (Couton, 2014; Karlis, 2011). These ethnic community organizations tend to consist of ethnic groups that have been in Canada for a longer period of time and having built closer collaborative relationships with outside organizations and institutions (Couton, 2014; Ho, 2018; Karlis, 2011). One of these organizations, the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, is examined in this paper.

Review of Literature

Members of an ethnic group often depend on their ethnocultural organization for vital services to advance their economic and social wellbeing. Couton (2014) defines ethnocultural organizations as "complex social structures that involve various types of networks, the formation of both physical and virtual communities, and a broad range of organizations (p.3)". Ethnocultural organizations can be formal or informal (Bucklaschuk, Sormova, & Moss, 2008). Formal ethnocultural organizations are legally constituted entities and fulfill various functions including preserving cultural traditions and providing resources, information and support to recent and more established immigrants including employment, recreation, spiritual, and charitable. Informal ones, on the other hand, are loosely and unofficially organized for the purpose of social networking among members of the same cultural traditions. The literature shows that the term "ethnocultural organization" is often used interchangeably with "ethnic organization", "ethnic-specific organization", "ethnic-based organization" and "immigrant organization" (Babis, 2016; Hein, 1997; Fennema, 2004; Vu, Nguyen, Tanh, & Chun, 2017). Moreover, the term "organization" in relation to an ethnic group is often substituted for "community" and vice-versa (Hein, 1997).

Ethnocultural organizations can shape the policies of both the host and homeland societies. Leaders of formal ethnic organizations can play a critical role in raising public awareness of important issues affecting its ethnic members in the host society and outside of it, — in the ancestral homeland. For instance, Harrignton, Prest, and Unheim (2008) and Smith's (2000) findings on ethnic community organizations shows that members of ethnic groups can influence policy by lobbying both the host and homeland governments to reshape domestic and foreign policies with respect to immigration matters, economic prosperity, trade, and civil and human rights. That said, while ethnocultual organizations can exert pressure on domestic and homeland governments and bring about a change, Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) study shows that ethnic communities might not be as influential socially, politically, or economically as Harrignton, Prest, and Unheim (2008) and Smith (2000) contend. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) maintain that ethnocultural organizations are often overlooked by host policymakers claiming that "elected officials remain largely ignorant of the activities and characteristics of ethnic organizations in their cities, despite substantial immigrant and ethnic minority population" (p. 45). Nevertheless, ethnic organizations are increasing in number to respond to the growing needs and challenges of their co-ethnic members. As a result, these organizations have become the subject of interest of many scholars seeking to study the role of ethnic organizations in building connections between newcomers, established co-ethnic members, and the larger host society (Carment and Bercuson 2008; Couton, 2014; Ho, 2018; Zhou and Lee 2012).

Furthermore, research has been conducted to explore the impact that cultural recreation activities have on ethnic closure and cohesion, yet limited research exists on the role that cultural recreation plays on inclusion and integration, particularly when it comes to inclusion and integration into the host society

(Galabuzi & Teelucksingh, 2010; Fangen, 2010). For instance, Karlis (1998) identified how cultural recreation activities offered by ethnic community organizations can slow down the cultural integration process and increase attachment to the ethnic cultural identity. What was overlooked in this research however, was the potential for cultural recreation to enhance inclusion and integration into mainstream society. Inclusion simply means the process of improving the conditions or opportunities for individuals or groups to fully participate in society (Arellano, 2011). Cultural recreation, in the form of ethno-specific cultural recreation activities, or those activities representative of mainstream society's cultural values can help one "feel part of" the host country.

In the case of ethnic groups, cultural recreation activities that are not ethno-specific in nature may lead to greater inclusion into the broader society, yet ethno-cultural recreation activities may also lead to inclusion, particularly if the activities provided by the ethnic community are not socially exclusionary and include participants from mainstream society. Thus cultural recreation, whether ethno-specific or not, can play a vital role in not only bringing people together from the ethnic community, but also in helping one be introduced to mainstream cultural recreation activities that can be integrative (Bolla, Dawson, and Karlis, 1991; Karlis, 1999). Cultural recreation is a social experience that brings people together. Its potential for inclusion and integration is endless as it brings people together to engage and participate in the cultural recreation pursuits of the ethnic group and/or mainstream society.

The Hellenic Community of Ottawa

The Hellenic Community of Ottawa has existed for over 90 years. This ethnic organization consists of a Greek Orthodox Church and a Community Centre that houses a banquet facility. This ethnic organization is also home to most of the cultural recreation activities offered by the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, such as the community hall used for dances, shows, art exhibits, cultural presentations, and, a in-house seniors recreation centre. This ethnic community organization is a non-profit, charitable organization that relies on membership fees and donations to maintain its operations. The banquet facility also provides an added source of revenue as it is used for wedding receptions, conferences and conventions, etc. Cultural recreation— such as the annual Greek Festival —is also an added source of revenue for this ethnic community. The governance of the Hellenic ethnocultural organization consists of a board of directors, 15 individuals elected for two-year terms. The directors are dedicated volunteers responsible for the ethnic community's day-to-day operations in accordance with the articles and conditions set out in the by-laws. The executive of the Board of Directors consists of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, and a Secretary. In addition, a member of the Board of Directors serves as a liaison overseeing the cultural recreation activities that consist of the programs of the Seniors Centre, the Ottawa Hellenic Athletic Association (OHAA), the youth programs (known as the Greek Orthodox Youth Association (GOYA)) and The Junior Orthodox Youth (JOY), as well as the Ottawa Greek Festival.

Methodology

This paper presents a case study of the cultural recreation activities of the Hellenic ethnic organization.

A case study can be described as “an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units” (Gustafsson, 2017, p. 2). A case study has also been defined as “an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables” (Healy & Twycross, 2018, p. 7) This method is helpful for this study as it enables the collection of different types of data including a review of the literature, media, reports, and websites, to name a few, to generate greater understanding of a rarely explored topic, such the one examined in this paper on the role of ethnic organizations in promoting inclusion and integration into the host community.

Information presented in this case study has been gathered from secondary sources, literature and archive material, as well as documents and flyers. Most of the information gathered has come from written materials, either published or unpublished, including articles that depict the cultural recreation services of the Hellenic ethnic organization. From the information gathered, four categories of cultural recreation activities have been identified: (1) senior activities, (2) youth activities, (3) sports and athletics, and festivals and arts. Literature available for each of these identifies if a relationship exists with outside organizations and/or institutions thus making it possible to draw inferences on the relationship between these organizations and institutions and inclusion and integration.

Results

Results from the analysis found that both sedentary and non-sedentary culturally-specific leisure activities as well as mainstream activities were engaged in by participants of both Greek and non-Greek descent. Participation in leisure pursuits varied by age groups.

Sports Participation

Participants of both Greek and non-Greek descent reported to be playing in organized sports’ teams such as hockey and soccer offered through the Greek community’s Athletic Association. Our data show that nearly 25% of the hockey players are of non-Greek descent. Similarly, soccer teams consisted of culturally diverse players. Participants in both sports activities, hockey and soccer, interact and compete consistently with players from various cultural backgrounds, which facilitates both inclusion and integration in Canadian society.

Cultural Festival Participation

Our data showed that a large proportion of attendees and volunteers at the annual cultural festival event, The GreekFest, are of non-Greek descent. This summer ten-day cultural event includes live music, Greek and multicultural dance performances, cultural food, and an art exhibition in which Greek and multi-ethnic artisans participate. In addition, various private organizations, Greek and non-Greek owned, act as sponsors for this mega, and volunteer-operated festival. This cultural event provides an avenue for intercultural exchange among Canada's diverse population.

Youth Participation

A number of youth programs exist in the GOYA and JOY recreation and spiritual groups such as field and cultural trips, bowling nights, and bake sales. These activities tend to be engaged in mostly by youth of Greek descent, but the nature of some of the excursions for example, such as field trips to Toronto, were shown to be inclusive and integrative in nature since part of the trip will focus on participating in mainstream activities such as a Blue Jays or Maple Leafs Game.

Seniors Participation

In contrast to the athletic and festival-related activities that involve both Greek and culturally diverse participants, senior activities offered by the ethnocultural community were found to be mainly attended by participants of Greek descent. Seniors engaged mainly in sedentary leisure activities that are social in nature such as playing board games and watching TV in the Greek language, and attending Greek folk music events (e.g., Kantada Night).

Suggestions for Ethnic Community Organizations for Inclusion and Integration

Results from this study have shown that both cultural and sports recreation activities can have a significant impact on inclusion and integration. Ethnic communities concerned with assisting in the inclusion and integration process into mainstream society need to recognize the role and place of cultural recreation activities. Cultural recreation activities offered either by the ethnic community organization or outside of it can have a significant impact on inclusion and integration. Cultural recreation activities that take place within the ethnic community, as in the case of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, can be inclusive and integrative consisting of a balance of ethno cultural specific activities as well as cultural recreation activities reflective of mainstream society (e.g. hockey and integrative soccer leagues).

Ethnic community organizations would benefit by recognizing the potential impact that cultural recreation has on inclusion and integration. Decision-makers as well as service providers of ethnic community organizations must understand that cultural recreation activities offered by the ethnic community organization not only enhance quality of life but also assist in inclusion and integration. Below is a list of suggestions for decision makers and service providers of ethnic community organizations to help them better recognize the potential of cultural recreation activities for inclusion and integration.

Suggestion 1: Establish and Provide Opportunities in the Ethnic Community Organization for the Provision of Cultural Recreation Activities that are Inclusive and Integrative.

The Hellenic Community of Ottawa has an ice hockey league of eight teams and a number of soccer teams integrated into the city of Ottawa soccer league. Ice hockey is one of the two national sports of Canada. The Hellenic Community of Ottawa not only offers a mainstream sport league it also permits players of non-Greek descent to play in this league. Although soccer is not a Canadian national sport, Hellenic teams participate in the City of Ottawa league, thus integration as well as inclusion results for participants simply through social interaction with other participants.

Suggestion 2: Build Partnerships and Collaboration for Cultural Recreation with all Service Sectors (public, private and non-profit).

Decision-makers and service providers of ethnocultural organizations can build collaborative relationships with diverse service sectors to improve their position for implementing cultural and recreational activities that can be inclusive and integrative. For instance, the Greek ethnocultural organization collaborates with the municipal and provincial governments, as well as various private and charitable organizations to promote large entertainment events (e.g., The GreekFest). In addition, The Greek ethnic organization in Ottawa collaborates with other ethnocultural organizations such as the Serbian Community as well as the Lebanese Community to promote multicultural festive events.

Suggestion 3: Establish working Relationships with the Private Sector for the Enhancement of Cultural Recreation Activities that can Enhance Inclusiveness and Integration.

Recently, the Ottawa Senators had a home match against the Boston Bruins. Match day was dedicated and themed “Greek Night.” Tickets bought by members of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa were discounted, and during breaks in the game, Greek music was played by the organist and the entertainment systems, live performances were held at the Arena by Bouzouki players, and Greek Embassy dignitaries as well as a Greek-Canadian comedian were in attendance to help celebrate the evening. The Ottawa Senators, a private sector organization, worked closely with the Hellenic Community of Ottawa to help plan “Greek Night” as well to help promote the game of hockey in an inclusive and integrative way to members of the Hellenic Community.

Conclusion

The case of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa examined in this paper provides a rare view of how cultural recreation services when offered through an ethno-cultural organization can serve as an effective tool to enhance inclusiveness and integration of immigrants into mainstream society.

Ethnocultural organizations can play a more significant role in immigrants' integration and participation in a host society by placing greater focus on building bridges with the broader mainstream community (Couton, 2014). The major emphasis rests on the decision-makers within ethnocultual organizations to reach out to the public, private, and non-profit service sectors and establish partnerships as well other types of formal and informal networks with mainstream institutions and organizations (Ho, 2018).

The suggestions put forth in this paper are to enhance awareness of decision-makers and service providers of ethnic community organizations as well as other institutions or agencies working with immigrants to improve inclusion and integration by incorporating mainstream activities into their regular programming to promote intercultural exchange.

Decision-makers and service providers are invited to recognize the potential for inclusive and integrative cultural recreation activities to exist through collaborative efforts with all areas of the service sector – public, private and non-profit.

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Quantifying the Community Effect on Contraceptive Use in Egypt

By Noura Anwar[*]

Egypt has significant regional heterogeneity in contraceptive use rates. Few previous studies showed that the regional variation remains even after controlling for individual and household characteristics. This study aims at investigating the multilevel dependence of contraceptive use on socioeconomic change in Egypt between 2000 and 2014. The questions of this research are: 1) Do the regional variations in contraceptive use change with time? 2) To what extent can the regional variations be explained in terms of individual, household and contextual variables? Egypt Demographic and Health surveys "EDHS"; 2000 and 2014, are the main sources of data. EDHS is a nationally representative survey, it provides data of (15–49) ever-married women. For specifying the individual and contextual determinants of Contraceptive use, the multilevel modelling approach is used. The dependent variable is "the current use of any modern method"; this variable is a dichotomous variable; it equals 1, if the woman is currently using any modern method and it equals 0, if she isn't using. The results show that about 7.5% of the variability in the current use of any modern method is due to the differences between level 1 units (governorates of Egypt) in 2000. This percentage decreased to reach 6.6% in 2014. This indicates that still the contraceptive use rates depends on the socioeconomic development and the contextual norms heterogeneity among different regions of Egypt. The level of education of woman and her husband, her discussion of family planning and her husband's approval on family planning, on the women-level, the mean number of children ever born and wealth index, on the regions-level are the most important variables affecting the odds of using a modern contraceptive method.

Keywords: *Multilevel Models, Contextual Effects, Contraceptive Use, Determinants, Egypt.*

Introduction

Egypt has significant regional heterogeneity in contraceptive use rates. Previous studies showed that the regional variation still exists even after controlling for individual and household characteristics (Guisti and Vignoli 2006).

Contraception is the most effective proximate determinant of fertility according to the framework of Bongaarts in 1982 and his further work in 1984. In addition to the direct effect of contraception on fertility, it has great health outcomes on maternal and child health through decreasing maternal mortality rates

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and preventing many maternal morbidities (Aizenman 1988, Stover and Ross 2009, Ahmed et al. 2012)

Egypt has one of the most successful family planning programs, it has achieved great success in this field within 20 years since the contraceptive use rate increased from about 38% in 1988 to about 60% in 2008 (Sayed et al. 1988, Elzanaty and Way 2008). In spite of the continuous efforts of the family planning program in Egypt, the contraceptive use rate has witnessed a frustrating plateau during 2005 and 2008; to about 60%, and it has slightly decreased in 2014 to 59% (Elzanaty and Way 2005, 2008, Ministry of Health and Population 2015, Rashad and Zaky 2013). The stagnation in the prevalence rate of contraceptives during the nineties and the slight decrease experienced during 2008 and 2014 should be investigated through identifying both the individual and contextual determinants of contraceptive use.

In an attempt to inform the Egyptian family planning program and population-related decision making processes in Egypt, this study aims at tracking the change in the combination of factors affecting the contraceptive use rate in Egypt between 2000 and 2014, this may be achieved through; first, measuring the community effect on the probability of using any modern contraceptive method. Second, studying women-level and contextual-level factors that are influencing the odds of contraceptive use.

Specifically, the research questions are: 1) Do the regional variations in contraceptive use change with time? 2) To what extent can the regional variations be explained in terms of individual, household and contextual variables?

Literature Review

Worldwide, many previous researches studied the determinants of contraceptive use. Most of them focused on analyzing the probability of using any method for family planning on the individual level only; i.e. identifying individual and household characteristics that act as determinants of contraceptive use. While other researchers showed that contraceptive use is influenced by two sets of variables; the first set reflects women-level characteristics and the other set reflects context-level characteristics.

As for women's individual and household characteristics that have been identified through many studies to significantly affect the probability of using any effective method for family planning, there exist certain women's demographic characteristics such as; age of woman and her parity. Also, there are some women's socioeconomic characteristics, of them: woman's educational level, type of current place of residence, type of birth place of residence, her level of empowerment and autonomy, working status and type of occupation (especially whether she is working in governmental or private sector). This is in addition to other factors such as; her exposure to family planning messages through mass media and her attitudes towards family planning. This is along with her husband's characteristics. (Al Riyami et al. 2004, Awadalla 2012, Ragab and AbdelWahid

2014, Moursund and Kravdal 2003, Osmani et al. 2015, El-Moselhy et al. 2017, Samari 2017).

On the other hand, there are many context-level variables affects women's behavior towards contraception, of them, the level of socioeconomic development of the region, level of school participation, economic roles of children which may be highly associated with the dominant economic activity; industrial, Agricultural, commercial, …etc., level of women autonomy, female labor force participation rates, the number of family health units in her place of residence, community fertility norms, doctor staffing levels, number of community health workers and number of well trained nurses (Entwisle et al. 1986, Moursund and Kravdal 2003, Stephenson et al. 2007 and 2008, Ahmed et al. 2012, Elfstrom and Stephenson 2012, Longwe et al. 2012, Eltomy et al. 2013, Lamidi 2015, Sedgh et al. 2016).

In Egypt, most of previous studies investigated the determinants of contraceptive use on the individual and household level. In almost all of these studies there was a consensus on that the probability of using family planning methods is higher among older, high parity women, better-educated women, working women, women residing in urban places (Mahran et al. 1995, Awadalla 2012, Ragab and AbdelWahid 2014, El-Moselhy et al. 2017).

Very few researchers explored the contextual influence on contraceptive use in Egypt. In 2006, Guisti and Vignoli studied the determinants of the ever-use of contraception in Egypt using a multilevel approach with a special reference to the differentials due to the socio-economic context and the type of place of residence. The key finding of their research was that the individual characteristics of the woman, especially those related to husband and the economic class of her community explained part of the unobserved heterogeneity that exist between the different communities of Egypt.

Methodology

The current study is interested in studying the determinants of using any modern contraceptive method, since these methods are the most effective path for controlling the level of fertility. Egypt Demographic and Health surveys "EDHS"; 2000 and 2014, are the main sources of data. EDHS is a nationally representative survey, it provides data of (15 – 49) ever-married women. It provides data of many indicators covering many demographic and reproductive health dimensions such as fertility, contraceptive use, infant and child health and mortality, coverage of antenatal and delivery care, nutrition of mother and child, some anthropometric measures and prevalence of anemia. Meanwhile it provides also many background and socioeconomic characteristics of women, husbands and households.

For measuring the community effect on the probability of contraceptive use and specifying the significant determinants of Contraceptive use, multilevel modelling approach is to be used. The analysis focus on currently married women aged (15-49), not pregnant and want no more children (either for spacing or limiting). The number of women in this group is 8396 women in 2000 and 10809 women in 2014.

The dependent variable is the current use of any modern method. This variable is a dichotomous variable, it equals 1, if the woman is currently using any modern method and it equals 0, if she isn't using.

To achieve study objectives, the analysis is divided into a series of consecutive models:

- A binary-logistic two level null model with random intercept, in order to assess the community effect on contraceptive use on both years; 2000 and 2014.
- A binary-logistic two level random intercept model with individual characteristics (on lower level), in order to identify the determinants of contraceptive on the individual level and the volume of variability explained by them and the change of the effect of some variables between 2000 and 2014 are highlighted.
- A binary-logistic two level random intercept model with contextual variables (on higher level), in order to identify the contextual determinants of contraceptive and the volume of variability explained by them and the change of the effect of some variables between 2000 and 2014 are highlighted as well.

In what follows is the general form of the two level binary logistic regression model, equation 1 presents the logistic link function, which is the most appropriate in this case. It is used to link between the log – odds of success (according to the outcome variable, the success occurs when a woman use any modern contraceptive method) on the left hand side and a linear combination of explanatory variables on the right hand side (Hox et al. 2017). We can notice that equation 1 doesn't include an error term, this is because the underlying probability distribution associated with the outcome variable Y_{ij} is not normally distributed (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Equation 2 presents a generic structural model of level-2. At level-2, the level-1 coefficients β_{qj} become outcome variables modeled in terms of a linear combination of level-2 explanatory variables.

$$\log\left[\frac{\pi_{ij}}{1-\pi_{ij}}\right] = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{1ij} + \beta_{2j}X_{2ij} + \cdots + \beta_{qj}X_{qij}\,. \quad (1)$$

$$\beta_{qj} = \gamma_{q0} + \gamma_{q1}W_{1j} + \gamma_{q2}W_{2j} + \cdots + \gamma_{qS_q}W_{S_qj} + u_{qj,} \quad (2)$$

Where

π_{ij} = the probability of success,

X_{qij} = level-1 predictors,

β_{qj}= level-1 coefficients,

W_{S_qj} = level-2 predictors,

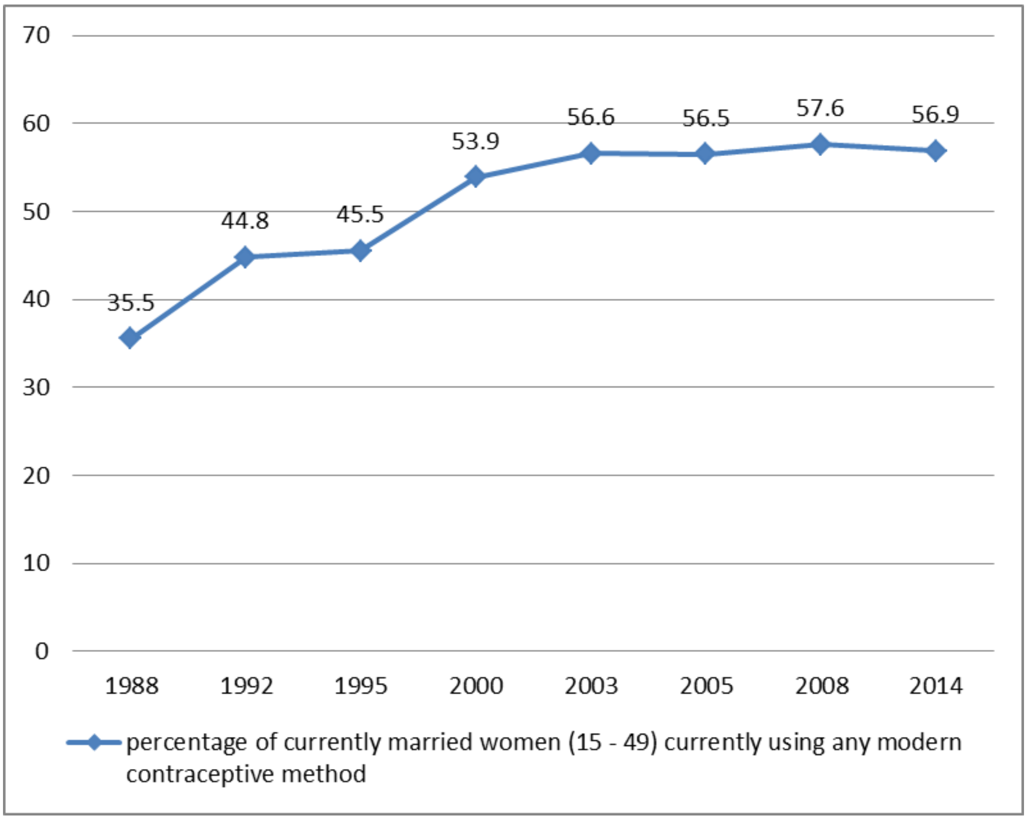
γ_{qS_q} = level-2 coefficients, and $u_{qj,}$= level-2 random effects.

Results

Contraceptive Use in Egypt: Trends and Patterns among Regions Since 1988

This subsection will present a descriptive analysis of rates of contraceptive use of any modern method among currently married women since 1988 until 2014 and its pattern of distribution among regions of Egypt.

Figure 1. *Trend of Current Use of Contraception among Currently Married Women 1988 - 2014*

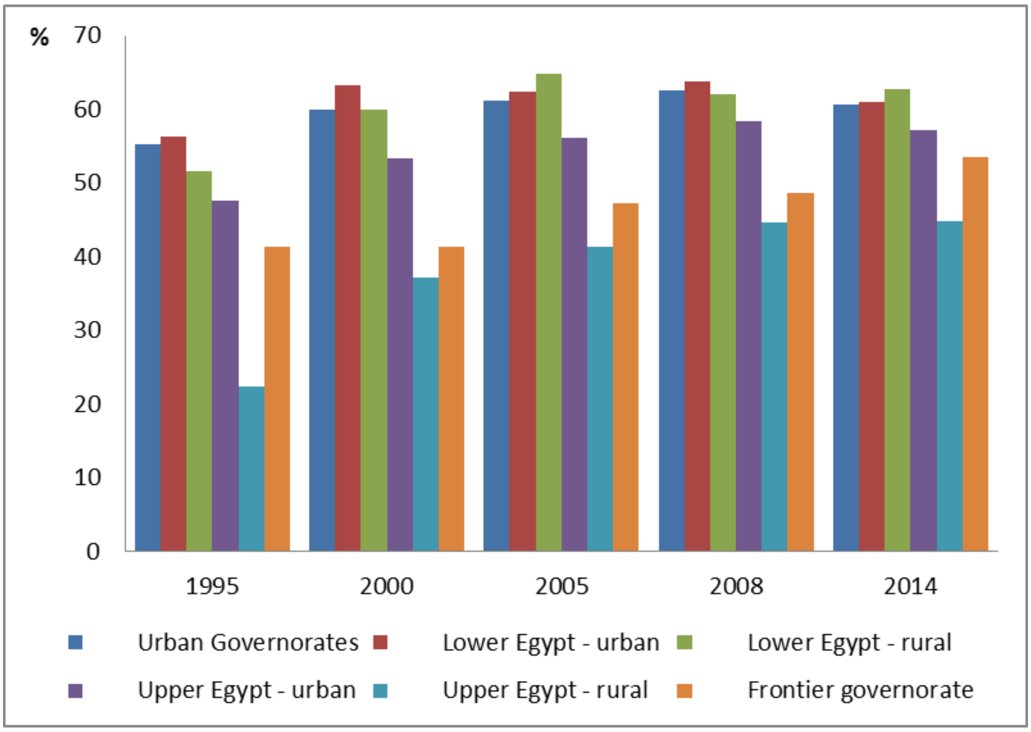


Source: By researcher depending on EDHS reports 1988, 1992, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2014.

The percentage of currently married women using any modern contraceptive method increases considerably with time between 1988 and 2003. Further, from 2003 until 2014, modern contraceptives prevalence exhibits a stagnation, with a slight decrease in 2014 (see Figure 1).

The distribution of current use of any modern contraceptive method is different among regions of Egypt. Rural Upper Egypt is the most disadvantaged among others with least prevalence of modern methods over the whole time span. It should be noted that Rural Lower Egypt achieved highest rates of prevalence among others in 2014 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. *Pattern of current use of contraception among regions of Egypt 1995-2014*



Source: By researcher depending on The DHS Program STATcompiler - http://www.statcom piler.com -April 2019.

Form the above analysis, the need for exploring the community effect on contraceptive use is justified and it will be shown in the following subsections.

Multilevel Approach for Analyzing the Determinants of Contraceptive Use

<u>The Null Model for Quantifying the Community Effect on the Odds of Using Any Modern Contraceptive Method in 2000 and 2014</u>

The basic purpose of multilevel modeling is the investigation of randomly varying outcomes (i.e., intercepts and slopes) across groups. So that, we will begin with quantifying the volume of the community effect on the odds of using a modern contraceptive method. This is done by fitting a null (empty) two-level model, which is a model with only an intercept and community effects.

$$\log\left[\frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}}\right] = \beta_0 + u_{0j}$$

The intercept β_0 is shared by all communities while the random effect u_{0j} is specific to community j. The random effect is assumed to follow a normal distribution with mean equals zero and variance σ_{u0}^2.

After fitting the null model to 2000 and 2014 data, the results suggest that a woman is about 2.1 times more likely to use a modern contraceptive method than not using in an average community (where $U_{0j} = 0$) in 2000, since the intercept equals 0.763, while in 2014, a woman is about 3 times more likely to use a modern contraceptive method than not using in an average community, since the intercept equals 1.135. And the variance of u_{0j} is estimated as $\sigma_{u0}^2 = 0.267$ in 2000 and 0.231 in 2014, and both of them are statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The results also show that the $ICC = 7.5$ in 2000 and 6.6 in 2014. which indicates that around 7.5% of the variability in the log odds of using a modern contraceptive method is due to the differences between communities (higher level units) in 2000, and this effect decreased in 2014 to reach to 6.6%.

Models with Level-1 Predictors and Random Intercept in 2000 and 2014

In this subsection, we concentrate only on presenting the results of an intermediate stage of the analysis, models with level-1 predictors and random intercept of 2000 and 2014. The importance of this stage of analysis stems from its ability to answer the following question: after controlling the effect of the most important woman- level determinants, what is the volume of unexplained variability in the odds of using any modern contraceptive method on the regional level?

Table 2. *Variance of the Random Intercept and the Intra-Class Correlation for the Null Model and the Model with Level-1 Predictors*

	2000		2014	
	Null model	Model with level-1 predictors	Null model	Model with level-1 predictors
Second level variance	0.267	0.173	0.231	0.177
ICC	7.5	4.9	6.6	5.1

From Table 1, we can answer the previous question. It is obvious that after considering the most important woman – level predictors (number of children ever born, difference in age between spouses, the educational level of woman and her husband, the attitudes of husband towards family planning, and the discussion between spouses on family planning), the regional effect on the odds of using any modern contraceptive method reduced by 35.6% in 2000 and 22.7% in 2014.

The ICC also indicates that still there are a considerable amount of unexplained regional effect on the dependent variable still needs to be explained. The rest of variability in the outcome that lies between groups will be explained through the following models which will include a set of contextual predictors.

Models with Level-1 Predictors, Contextual Predictors and Random Intercept in 2000 and 2014

In this subsection, we consider the results of the two final models, in which the individual and contextual determinants of modern contraceptive use are added to the null model. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 3. *Women-Level and Contextual Determinants of Modern Contarceptive Use in Egypt, 2000 and 2014*

Year / Predictors	2000		2014	
	Exp (β)	Sig	Exp (β)	Sig
Fixed Effects				
Women – level variables				
Intercept	0.622	0.013	1.132	0.000
Number of children ever born (centered)	0.930	0.000	0.943	0.001
Age difference between spouses	0.985	0.001	0.984	0.000
Woman's educational level (ref. lower levels)	-	-	-	-
Woman's educational level (secondary and above)	1.257	0.004	1.172	0.046
Husband's educational level (ref. non educated)	-	-	-	-
Husband's educational level (primary or preparatory)	1.178	0.025	1.118	0.176
Husband's educational level (secondary and higher)	1.205	0.007	1.140	0.207
Husband's approval on Family planning (ref. No)	-	-	-	-
Husband's approval on Family planning (Yes)	3.327	0.000	-	-
Discussion with husband about Family planning (ref. No)	-	-		
Discussion with husband about Family planning (Yes)	1.693	0.000		
Context – level variables				
Mean number of children ever born (centered)	0.624	0.000	0.500	0.000
Mean level of wealth (centered)	0.737	0.007	1.000	0.001
Random Effects				
Second level variance	0.069	.004	0.068	0.001
Corrected model	F = 34.519 (d.f.=9,8384)	0.000	F = 21.347 (d.f.=8,10798)	0.000

Results in the lower panel of Table 2 (Random Effects) show that, after considering the most important contextual predictors, the regional effect on the odds of using any modern contraceptive method reduced by 98.6% in 2000 and

2014. In other words, these two final models almost explained to a very high extent the regional effect on our variable of interest; the current use of any modern contraceptive method.

The intercept estimates implies that about 40% of women in an average region (where the mean wealth index equals the overall mean, the mean number of children equals the overall mean and $U_{0j} = 0$) are currently using any modern contraceptive method in 2000 controlling for all woman-level predictors included in the model, while this percentage is 53% in 2014. This result suggests that women in an average community are less likely to use any modern method but this result inverted in 2014, as women in an average community are more likely to use any modern method.

We can notice that the number of children ever born and the difference in age between spouses are significant determinants of the current use of any modern contraceptive method both in 2000 and 2014, in an average community and after controlling for all other variables in the model. Still their effects on the outcome variable are very weak as the odds ratio is near 1.

As for the educational level of women, it has a significant effect on the outcome variable both in 2000 and 2014. Its effects in 2000 and 2014 are consistent since the results show that an increased level of education yields an increased odds of using any modern contraceptive method in an average community and after controlling for all other variables in the model. Its effect in 2000 are stronger than its effect in 2014, women with secondary and higher level of education are 1.25 times likely to use any modern contraceptive method if compared with women with below secondary level of education, while in 2014, women with secondary and higher level of education are 1.17 times likely to use any modern contraceptive method if compared with women with below secondary level of education, controlling for all other predictors in the models and this is for women in an average community.

The results show an important fact that the effect of social characteristics approximated with the educational level of women and husband become insignificant and very weak in 2014 if compared with 2000.

The educational level of husbands has statistically significant effect on the outcome variable in 2000 but it become insignificant in 2014. In 2000, women whose husbands' educational level is 1.2 times likely to use any modern contraceptive method if compared with women whose husbands are illiterate.

Husbands' approval on family planning, FP, is a very important determinant in 2000 since it has a significant effect on the outcome variable. Whenever husbands approve FP, women are 3.3 times likely to use any modern contraceptive method if compared to women whose husbands don't approve in an average community and after controlling the effect of rest of variables included in the model. The same result can be drawn for the discussion of FP with husbands, it has a significant effect on the outcome variable and when the discussion on FP holds between spouses, this yields to an increased odds (odds ratio = 1.69) for using any modern contraceptive method.

Unfortunately, the last two important determinants; husband's approval on FP and discussion with husband on FP, are not measured in 2014, so that their effect can't be measured and compared between the two time points.

Considering the results of the context level variables, it can be noticed that both the fertility level of the community approximated by the mean number of children ever born and the extent of socio-economic development approximated by the mean level of wealth index have significant effects on the odds of using any modern contraceptive method. As for the mean number of children ever born, when this variable is away from the overall mean by one standard deviation, the odds of using any modern contraceptive method decrease to be 0.624 in 2000 and 0.5 in 2014 for women in an average community. The effect of fertility level of the community become clearer in 2014 if compared with its effect in 2000.

Whenever the mean level of wealth index is one standard deviation away from the overall mean of wealth index, this implies decreased odds for using any modern method in 2000, this effect become trivial in 2014 as the odds ratio equals 1. This means that women living in communities above average level of wealth have the same odds of using any modern contraceptive use as women living in a below average level of wealth.

Finally, U_{0j} are estimated for each community j both for the null and the final model. Each U_{0j} represents the effect of community j on the odds of using any modern contraceptive method controlling for all predictors. For the null model in 2000, the highest odds of using are for urban Kalyoubia, while the least odds are for rural Assuit. For the final model, the highest odds are for rural Beheira and the least odds are in rural Assuit again. While in 2014, the highest odds of using is for urban Kalyoubia, while the least odds is for rural Sohag. For the final model, the highest odds of using is for urban Kalyoubia, while the least odds is for rural Sohag. For the final model, the highest odds are for rural Menoufia and the lowest odds are for rural Redsea.

Discussion

Egypt has one of the successful family planning programs. In spite of the continuous efforts of the family planning program in Egypt, the contraceptive use rate has witnessed a frustrating plateau during 2005 and 2008; to about 60%, and it has slightly decreased in 2014 to 59%. This stagnation in the prevalence rate of contraceptives during the nineties and the slight decrease experienced during 2008 and 2014 should be investigated through identifying the determinants of using any modern contraceptive method though a multilevel analysis approach. The multilevel analysis is justified through the descriptive analysis which showed that Rural Upper Egypt is the most disadvantaged among others with least prevalence of modern methods over the whole time span (from 2000 to 2014), this is besides previous study of Giusti and Vignoli in 2006, and the hierarchical style of the EDHS data which supports the application.

This study aims at tracking the change in the combination of factors affecting the contraceptive use rate in Egypt between 2000 and 2014, this has been achieved through; first, measuring the community effect on the odds of using any modern contraceptive method among currently married women aged (15-49), not pregnant and want no more children (either for spacing or limiting). Second, studying women-level and contextual-level factors that are influencing the odds of using any modern contraceptive method.

From the analysis, It may be concluded that a considerable share of the variability in the log odds of using a modern contraceptive method is due to the differences between communities (higher level units), and this variability doesn't vanish through 2000 and 2014. This indicates that in spite of achieving some of the most important mellinium development goals and the continous development that Egypt achieved regards its population and their charateristics, still we have inequality in the utilization of certain health services. This is not only due to lack or uneven distribution of services, but also this is due to the heterogeniety in the human behaviour, that is due to the context effect on their culture, values and norms.

Adding woman – level predictors to the models (number of children ever born, difference in age between spouses, the educational level of woman and her husband, the attitudes of husband towards family planning, and the discussion between spouses on family planning), the regional effect on the odds of using any modern contraceptive method reduced by 35.6% in 2000 and 22.7% in 2014. The smaller decrease appeared in 2014 model indicates that the women – level characteristics couldn't explain the same share in regional effect as in 2000, this means that the behavior of women in Egypt in 2014 is more influenced by the attitudes and behaviors dominant in contexts around them.

The two final models; where the community – level variables added (level of fertility approximated by mean number of children ever born and the economic level of the community approximated with mean wealth score) explained to a very high extent the regional effect on our variable of interest both in 2000 and 2014. This result agree with the results of Giusti and Vignoli in 2006 and Dias and de Oliveira in 2015, as they have showed that wealth index, as a proxy of the regions' degree of modernization, is responsible for a large amount of the probability of ever use of any contraceptive method. The results indicate also that, in contexts where the norm is for high fertility rates, women behavior is highly influenced towards not using any modern contraceptive method in spite of their need for using which can be deduced through their fertility preferences.

Further analysis are needed to explore the differential strength between some woman – level predictors and contraceptive use through more complex multilevel random intercept and random slope models.

Conclusion

Rural Upper Egypt is the most disadvantaged among other regions of Egypt with least prevalence of modern methods over the period from 2000 to 2014. A considerable share of the variability in the odds of using a modern contraceptive method is due to the differences between communities (higher level units), and this variability doesn't vanish through 2000 and 2014.

The behavior of women in Egypt in 2014 is more influenced by the attitudes and behaviors dominant in contexts surrounding them. This is concluded through the smaller decrease in ICC appeared in 2014 model after adjusting for women-level characteristics if compared to that in 2000.

The effect of social characteristics approximated with the educational level of women and her husband become insignificant and very weak in 2014 if compared with 2000. The wealth index, which acts as a proxy of the regions' degree of modernization, is responsible for a large amount of the probability of the current use of any modern contraceptive method among the study sample.

It may be concluded also that, in contexts where the norm is for high fertility rates, women behavior is highly influenced towards not using any modern contraceptive method in spite of their need for using deduced from their fertility preferences.

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Coping Resources for Distress and Well-Being of Filipino Catholic Migrants in Taiwan: An Incremental Validity Analysis

*By Inna Reddy Edara**

Globalization has led to a rapid increase in migration, placing an extraordinary stress on the migrants and their families, which may give rise to comparable increases in all types of mental illness. Mental health problems or distress for migrants result from a complex interplay between biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. One group of people that have been migrating in great numbers are the Filipinos. Currently, Taiwan has about 94,892 migrant workers from the Philippines. Research indicated that the coping styles of Filipinos, nested in a collectivist culture, may not always work in other settings. Religion and prayer are generally used by the Filipino migrants to cope with distress. This study, therefore, used the data from 378 participants and employed incremental validity analysis to look at the significance of psycho-social and religious-spiritual coping resources in buffering mental distress and promoting well-being of the Filipino Catholic migrants in Taiwan. After controlling for the relevant demographics in the hierarchical regression analyses, the subsequent steps indicated that Mastery in Step 2, Social Connectedness in Step 3, Positive Religious Coping in Step 4, and finally Spiritual Meaning in Step 5 significantly predicted both distress and well-being. Although entered in Step 4 and Step 5 of the regression equation, both Religious Coping and Spiritual Meaning, respectively, made a significant incremental contribution to coping with distress and promoting well-being. These significant results suggest that the individuals and church communities, social welfare organizations and policy makers on migrant issues should take into consideration the psycho-social and religious-spiritual resources that help the migrants cope with distress and promote well-being.

Keywords: *Coping Resources, Distress, Migrants, Well-being.*

Introduction

Although human beings have moved from place to place since time immemorial, recent globalization has led to a significant increase in migration. People are now moving further, faster and in greater numbers than ever before. The reasons for and the duration of these migrations put extraordinary stress on individuals and their families, which in turn may give rise to comparable increases in all types of mental illness across all migrant groups (Bhugra and Jones 2010,

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Kelly 2010). In fact, the migration process itself is usually stressful, involving both macro and micro factors. The macro factors include the preparation that migrants undertake; their experience of acceptance by the new host community, and the process of migration itself that plays a role in the origin of subsequent mental disorders. The micro factors include migrants' personality traits, psychological robustness, cultural identity, and the social support and acceptance in their own ethnic group (Bhugra and Jones 2010).

In general, the particular challenges that the migrants face in a host country are diminished social support, confinement in detention centers, enforced dispersal (Kelly 2010), perceived or ongoing discrimination (Kelly 2010, Mak and Nesdale 2001), social stigma (Harvey 2001, Wang et al. 2010), adjustment problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and increased rates of other mental illnesses (see Kelly 2010, Sanchez and Gaw 2007). Murakami (2009) listed some stress factors on the cross-cultural workplace as adaptation to an unfamiliar culture and lifestyle, heavy workload, communication problems, different sense of values and way of thinking, and lack of social support and trusting environment.

Given this general phenomena of globalization, this research paper attempted to specifically investigate the coping resources of the Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. Given that the Filipinos are strongly nested in a collectivist culture and deeply embrace their religion, this study looked at the significance of psycho-social and religious-spiritual coping resources in buffering mental distress and promoting well-being of the Filipino Catholic migrants in Taiwan.

The Filipino Migrants

Filipinos' Culture of Migration

In the age of the emergence of globalization and the borderless world, the dynamics of world economy and trade have become interdependent, greatly reflecting a country's economic development. One of the consequences of this process of globalization is the increasing spatial mobility of people, which manifests in the growing number of migrant workers from developing countries seeking employment in the developed countries (Estrada 2015).

One group of people that have been migrating in great numbers and for various reasons is the Filipinos (Tabuga 2018). The International Organization for Migration (IOM 2013) reported that the overseas employment for the Filipinos, which was launched in an organized system during the oil crisis of the early 1970s, has become for many the most promising venue out of dismal local alternatives. Thus, a culture of migration has begun in the Philippines.

Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) said that the culture of migration pertains to cultural beliefs and social patterns that influence people to move. In the Philippines, such patterns are constantly and implicitly encouraged by the government. Millions of Filipinos, who reside or work abroad, significantly contribute to the Philippine economy by way of foreign remittances, making them heroes. In fact, the government recently minted a new five-peso coin as a tribute to the apparent heroism of the overseas Filipino workers, with the words "new heroes" prominently displayed under visual representations of migrant worker's various professions. Such a move by the government appears to promote labor migration as something noble and heroic, which in turn, may only make working abroad all the more enticing to the Filipinos (Estrada 2015).

Besides North America and Australia, and the Gulf countries, other destinations in Asia, in particular Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan have become major destinations for the Filipino workers, particularly domestic helpers and factory workers. By the end of 2002, there were 48,203 Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. But, by the end of September, 2017, there were 115,948 migrant workers from the Philippines (Ministry of Labor 2017). A report in Taipei Times (2015) indicated that, in general, the Filipino workers have a preference for working in factories, because they can expect regular working hours, holidays, pay raises and extra pay for overtime. Fewer workers seeking jobs as caregivers or household helpers go overseas, partly because some foreign nations have not provided adequate regulations to protect the welfare of such workers. However, there is still demand for the Filipino caregivers and household helpers in Taiwan. The health ministry estimates that there is a shortage of about 40,000 caregivers in Taiwan in the near future.

Migration and Mental Health

During their employment, migrants experience many forms of hardships and distress. In fact, the report by the International Labour Organization (2012) indicates that, as a consequence of the globalization and the changing migration policies, the number of migrant workers experiencing stress and adverse effects on their well-being have been on the increase. Migrant's mental health problems are the result of a complex interplay between biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. Van der Ham et al. (2014a) suggested that although that the migration in itself is the cause of the migrants' problems, it is also the negligence of the migrants' sources of strength, survival strategies, and coping mechanisms that help them to adapt and change. Further, Ujano-Batangan (2011) reported that there is a lack of sufficient knowledge about the health of migrants. In the past, international healthcare focused on the containment of infectious disease transmission. Emphasis was on testing the health of migrants. The general health and well-being of migrants itself, however, was not the focus of attention. Receiving countries have not been investing in proper monitoring of health, let alone mental health and well-being of the migrants.

Studies have shown that stressful experiences that migrants experience may increase their vulnerability to diseases and mental health problems. Migrant workers, including the Filipinos, usually experience various forms of stress-related health issues, including psychological problems. Issues frequently investigated by various studies that cause stress to the migrant workers include poor working conditions, irregular nature of work, marital and relationship problems, worrying about children at home, loneliness, homesickness, and physical and emotional abuse by the employers (see Ahonen et al. 2010, Holroyd et al. 2001, Lau et al. 2009, Nakonz and Shik 2009, van der Ham et al. 2014a, 2014b, Zahid et al. 2003).

Ujano-Batangan (2011) summarized that among the Filipinos, the psychological manifestations of stress include feeling sad and angry, nervousness and anxiety, low self-worth, lack of motivation and energy, feeling that one is not in control of one's feelings and behaviors, and an inability to sleep. Ujano-Batangan indicated the importance of highlighting the fact that there were participants, even if the number was quite small (6.6%), who had suicidal ideation. The majority of the participants who reported this ideation were employed in the Middle Eastern (such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE) and Far Eastern countries, including Taiwan.

Migrants' Mental Health and Coping Resources

As the literature indicates, migrant workers go through lots of stress and various psychological problems; however, not much is reported about the factors that help to reduce or cope with stress and mental health issues among the migrant workers (van der Ham et al. 2014a). Moreover, when discussing and investigating about the coping or protective factors in the midst of stress or mental health issues, research has distinguished them as personal resources and social resources that people use as coping resources or protective factors (Saleebey 2000).

Studies (see Nakonz and Shik 2009, Ujano-Batangan 2011, van der Ham et al. 2014a, 2014b) indicated that praying and reading the Bible, crying, and resting and sleeping, and talking to others were the most frequently used ways by the participants in dealing with stress. The participants in van der Ham et al. (2014a, 2014b) studies further emphasized family as an important source of coping with their problems. The participants explained that communicating with their families saw them through hard times and even brought them joy and happiness. Ujano-Batanga's (2011) research subjects also reported that thinking of their families, communicating with them and receiving emotional support from them helped them to go through hard times. The presence of supportive friends, romantic partners and other social networks also served as support links and coping connections while working overseas. Among the coping strategies, with stress while working abroad, prayer and reading the Bible topped the chart, followed by talking with friends and family, attending church, and engaging in social interactions.

There are also several studies that reveal that social support and religion as important factors in the well-being of migrant workers (see Bjorck et al. 2001, Cruz 2006, Sanchez and Gaw 2007). For instance, when the subjects in Ujano-Batangan's (2011) study were asked if they ever consulted a counselor or a mental health professional, 43% reported that they sought the services of a pastor or pastoral counselor, a psychiatrist (21.4%), and a psychologist (14.3%). Not only most of the help is sought from a pastoral counselor, but Ujano-Batangan reported that one of the major sources of strength in the midst of stress is their spirituality and religiosity, which is exhibited by praying, going to church and maintaining "a relationship with God". According to the participants in van der Ham et al.

(2014a) study, religious groups and organizations are active in recruiting members; they are conveniently situated in the churches where migrant workers go to attend the Mass or to pray; they provide both emotional and social support, especially to the new migrants, and also, social relationships are easily established through the social networks of religious organizations.

Ujano-Batangan (2011) further said that the coping styles of Filipinos, nested in collectivist culture, may not always work in other settings. Religion and prayer are considered as one of the tools used by migrants to cope. This coping style is particularly attributed to the Filipinos' strong and positive sense of spirituality, which is considered to be a source of strength in the individual. Ujano-Batangan's report also indicated that among the Filipinos, the sense of well-being or mental health is closely tied in to the achievement of ginhawa (overall comfort), which is an aspect of one's personhood (pagkatao) that is related to the individual's state of physical, mental and social health. It is considered to be a condition or state which is significantly rooted in the inner core of one's being. The experience of ginhawa is related to kaluluwa (soul) which is the core of an individual's being that is immortal. This concept is related to one's spirituality which characterizes an individual as essentially good or healthy. Kaluluwa (soul) is also the wellspring of buhay (life) and sigla (roughly translated to a combination of flow and positive affect), which allows one to attain ginhawa. For the Filipinos, therefore, attaining this state entails experiencing total health or wellness in all realms – physical, psychological, social, religious and spiritual. The non-achievement of ginhawa may lead to the experience of siphayo (pain of the soul), which is associated with various forms of illness, including mental health problems.

Research Hypotheses

Migrants experience many forms of hardships and distress that lead to mental health problems, which are the result of a complex interplay between biological, psychological, social and environmental factors (Bhugra and Jones 2010, Kelly 2010, Ujano-Batangan 2011). Ujano-Batangan (2011) reported that one of the major sources of strength for the Filipinos in dealing with migration stress is their spirituality and religiosity. For the Filipinos while working overseas, the presence of supportive friends and other social networks also serve as support links and coping connections. Overall, in dealing with stress while working abroad, the Filipinos' use of prayer and reading the Bible top the chart, followed by talking with friends and family, attending church, and social interactions.

Therefore, in general, for the Filipino migrant workers who experience migration distress and subsequent mental illness, the protective factors against mental illness and promoting well-being are multifaceted, which include psychological, social, religious, and spiritual aspects. Based on this understanding, this research project intended to use the incremental validity analysis to test the role of selected coping resources in the mental distress and well-being of the Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. In particular, as the literature indicates that religiosity and spirituality are two major sources of strength for this particular population, this research project specifically aimed to investigate the incremental validity of religious and spiritual coping resources over and above those of the psychological (individual) and social coping resources in reducing mental distress and promoting well-being.

The following specific correlational and incremental validity hypotheses were tested and analyzed:

1. Correlational analysis: Significant negative correlations between mental distress variables and well-being and coping resource variables were expected. For example, the increase in the levels of distress would decrease the overall life satisfaction and happiness. Additionally, significant positive correlations between coping resources and well-being variables were expected. For example, the frequent use of positive religious coping and spiritual meaning resources would increase the overall levels of happiness, positive affect, and satisfaction with life.
2. Incremental validity analysis: After controlling for the relevant demographics, psychological traits and social variables in their respective step-wise regression analyses, it would be expected that the religious and spiritual coping resources would have significant incremental validity on well-being, suggesting the particular importance of the religious and spiritual coping resources in promoting the well-being of the Filipino Catholic migrant workers in Taiwan. Similarly, it would be expected that the religious and spiritual coping resources would have significant incremental validity on mental distress, suggesting the particular importance of the religious and spiritual coping resources in decreasing the distress for the study sample.

Method

Procedure and Participants

After being approved by the Institutional Review Board of the author's institution, data of the Filipino Catholic migrant workers in Taiwan were collected through paper and pencil survey. The questionnaire was administered in English. The author visited different churches, organizations, factories, and workers' dormitories to identify the required sample, and personally administered the questionnaire. Before proceeding with the completion of the survey questionnaire, the eligible and interested participants signed the informed consent form. A total of 383 participants completed the survey, out of whom 5 had missing values on almost all the variables and therefore they were not included in the analyses, thus resulting in a final total of 378 participants with valid data that were included in the further analyses. Each participant was given a gift (statue of Mother Mary or Jesus, rosary, or cross) worth of around US$7 for their voluntary participation.
As indicated in Table 1, the sample consisted of more females (n = 266; 70.4%) than males (n = 103; 27.2%). The majority of the participants were relatively

young, with the mean age of 36 and with the highest number of them falling in the age group between 26 and 45 (n = 236; 62.4%). Most of the participants were either single (n = 192; 50.8%) or married (n = 152; 40.2%), and had a college degree (n = 239; 63.2%). Half of the participants (n = 204; 54%) identified themselves as factory workers, followed by caregivers (n = 42; 11.1%) and machine operators (n = 30; 7.8%). About 98 (25.9%) of them have been living in Taiwan for more than ten years and 95 (25.1%) have been working in Taiwan for two to three years.

Table 1. *Demographics*

		Freq.	*%*			*Freq.*	*%*
Gender	Male	103	27.2	Education	High school	87	23.0
	Female	266	70.4		College	239	63.2
	Missing	9	2.4		Vocational	26	6.9
Age	18-25	45	11.9		Masters	1	0.3
	26-35	155	41.0		Missing	25	6.6
	36-45	81	21.4	Occupation	Factory Worker	204	54.0
	46-55	53	14.0		Machine Operator	30	7.8
	56-65	17	4.5		Caregiver	42	11.1
	>66	3	0.8		Nurse	10	2.6
	Missing	24	6.3		Domestic Helper	11	2.7
Marital Status	Single	192	50.8		Other	26	7.2
	Married	152	40.2		Missing	55	14.6
	Separated	10	2.6	Length of Stay	<1 year	24	6.3
	Divorced	3	0.8		2-3 years	95	25.1
	Widowed	6	1.6		4-6 years	58	15.3
	Other	1	0.3		7-10 years	55	14.6
	Missing	14	3.7		>10 years	98	25.9
					Missing	48	12.7
N = 378							

Measures

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10): The K10 is a 10-item questionnaire, which aims to provide a global score of distress (Kessler and Mroczek 1991). The questions ask about anxious and depressive symptoms that the person may have experienced in the past month. Total scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating severe mood problems. The items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time). Sample item includes, “During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel hopeless”. This scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.91.

Social Stigma Scale (short form): Developed by Harvey (2001), this measure validates a feeling of socially stigmatized. The 10-item scale is measured on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicting more prevalence of the experience of social stigma. Sample item includes, "I am viewed negatively by mainstream society". The scale has reliability coefficient of 0.90.

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS Questionnaire): Developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegan (1988), the PANAS measures affect states so that positive and negative factors would emerge as orthogonal dimensions (separate 10-item scales) rather than bipolar ends of the same scale. In this model, high positive affect (PA) is a state of high energy and concentration, whereas negative affect (NA) is a state of general distress. The scale ratings range from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely), with high score indicating high PA or NA. The alpha reliabilities for both the subscales are acceptably high, ranging from 0.86 to 0.90.

Satisfaction with Life (SWL). Satisfaction with life was assessed by the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985), measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The total score ranges from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating extreme satisfaction. Sample items include, "In most ways my life is close to my ideal" or "I am satisfied with my life". In various studies, internal consistency of the scale ranged from 0.87 to 0.90.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ short form). Hills and Argyle (2002) derived the 8-item short version of the OHQ from the longer version of Oxford Happiness Inventory to measure the state of happiness on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The OHQ demonstrated high scale reliability with a value of 0.91. Sample item includes, "I feel that life is very rewarding".

Pearlin Mastery Scale. Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) 7-item scale assesses the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as being in control of the important forces affecting their lives. The 4-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), with a high score illustrating positive self-mastery. Sample item includes, "I can do just about anything I really set my mind to." Pearlin and Schooler found the constructs to remain stable over time and were confident of the scale's reliability that usually exceeded 0.70.

Social Connectedness Scale (SCS). Social connectedness scale, developed by Lee and Robbins (1995), measures one's emotional distance or connectedness between the self and other people, both friends and society. The scale consists of 8 items using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). The total score has a potential range of 8 to 48, with higher scores indicating a greater perceived sense of connectedness. While item content reflects a sense of social disconnectedness and detachment, the measure was named the Social Connectedness Scale, reflecting the inverse relationship between the item content and the direction of the rating system. Sample item includes, "I feel disconnected with the people around me." Reported scale reliability ranged from 0.91 to 0.93 (Hendrickson et al. 2011, Lee and Robbins 1995).

Religious Coping. Religious coping was measured using the Brief RCOPE (Pargament et al. 1998), which assesses positive and negative religious coping strategies. Respondents are asked to indicate "how much or how frequently" they engaged in these religious methods of coping in their lives. Items are rated on a four-point Likert scale from 0 (not at all) to 3 (a great deal). Cronbach's alpha coefficients range from 0.87 to 0.90 for the positive subscale and from 0.69 to 0.81 for the negative subscale. A sample item in positive subscale includes, "Looked for a stronger connection with God," and an item in negative subscale includes, "Wondered whether God had abandoned me".

Spiritual Meaning Scale (SMS). Developed by Mascaro et al. (2004), the SMS consists of 14 items with a coefficient alpha of 0.89, and measures an individual's perceived spiritual meaning. The items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Sample items include "I was meant to actualize my potentials" and "Life is inherently meaningful".

Demographics. A demographic form was included to capture essential demographic information, including age, gender, education status, occupation, marital status, and duration of stay in Taiwan.

Results

Scale Reliabilities

As indicated in Table 2, the scale reliability coefficients ranged from 0.92 for religious coping to 0.60 for mastery. Although the mastery scale had a low reliability coefficient in this study, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found the construct to remain stable over time and were confident of the scale's criterion validity and reliability in predicting relevant outcomes. Moreover, research has indicated that although it might be sometimes difficult for the scales with a small number of items (e.g. less than 10) to get a decent Cronbach alpha value (Pallant 2010) for certain samples, the scale's internal consistency based on strong relationships among the scale items could still be considered acceptable.

Testing Hypothesis 1: Intercorrelations

As per Hypothesis 1 and according to Cohen's (1988) criteria for correlational estimates (small = 0.10; medium = 0.30; and large = above 0.50), as indicated in Table 2, the significant intercorrelations among the variables in this sample ranged from 0.11 to 0.48. Happiness and social connectedness were positively and significantly correlated, $r\ (387) = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$, suggesting that a greater perceived sense of social connectedness related to higher state of happiness, and vice versa.
Happiness was also significantly and positively correlated with positive affect, $r\ (387) = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$, suggesting that happy people exhibited high energy and enthusiasm, and vice versa. Distress was significantly and negatively correlated with happiness, $r\ (387) = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$, and positively correlated with negative affect, $r\ (387) = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$, suggesting that those who experienced the anxious and depressive symptoms were low in happiness.

Testing Hypothesis 2: Incremental Validity Analysis

Hypothesis 2 investigated whether the religious and spiritual variables had any unique predictive power over and above the effects of the selected demographics, psychological trait of mastery, and the social variable of connectedness on the distress and well-being of the participants. Before testing the Hypothesis 2, the scores on psychological distress, social stigma, and negative affect were converted into standardized z-scores in order to calculate a composite score of overall distress. In a similar way, the scores on positive affect, satisfaction with life, and happiness were standardized into z-scores to get a composite score of overall well-being. Separate hierarchical regression analyses for distress and well-being were conducted. Relevant demographic variables were controlled for in Step 1, followed by entering mastery in Step 2, social connectedness in Step 3, positive and negative religious coping in Step 4, and spiritual meaning in Step 5. The results are presented in Table 3.

As indicated in Table 3, all the hierarchical models for distress were significant, explaining respectively 8%, 25%, 27%, 28%, and 30% of the total variance in distress. Both religious coping in Step 4 and spiritual meaning in Step 5 had incremental variance in distress. Examination of the relative contribution of the variables in each of the regression models indicated that mastery was significant in all the models, although decreasing in strength from $\beta = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$ to $\beta = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$.

Although positive religious coping was significant in Step 4, $\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$, it became non-significant when spiritual meaning was entered in Step 5, which had a significant incremental contribution to reducing distress, $\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.05$.

In the hierarchical models for well-being, as indicated in Table 3, except in Step 1, all other overall models were significant, explaining respectively 8%, 18%, 21%, and 33% of the total variance in well-being. Social connectedness was significant in all three models, although decreased in strength from $\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$. Both positive religious coping in Step 4 ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$) and spiritual meaning in Step 5 ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) had a significant incremental effect on well-being, suggesting that religious and spiritual resources acted as promoters of well-being for the Filipino Catholic migrants in Taiwan.

Table 2. *Reliability Coefficients, Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations*

	α	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Distress	0.87	19.98	5.94	-	-0.24^{*}	0.35^{*}	$-0.11^{\wedge}$	0.45^{*}	-0.34^{*}	-0.33^{*}	-0.16^{*}	$-0.11^{\wedge}$	0.16^{*}	-0.20^{*}
2. Satisfaction	0.76	26.74	5.92		--	-0.22^{*}	0.15^{*}	-0.20^{*}	0.21^{*}	$0.12^{\wedge}$	0.03	0.03	-0.01	0.09
3. Social Stigma	0.70	26.13	4.88			--	-0.24^{*}	0.20^{*}	-0.29^{*}	-0.23^{*}	-0.24^{*}	-0.11	0.05	-0.22^{*}
4. Positive Affect	0.88	33.90	0.81				--	-0.03	0.47^{*}	0.10	0.36^{*}	0.26^{*}	-0.03	0.39^{*}
5. Negative Affect	0.82	21.01	6.60					--	-0.41^{*}	-0.30^{*}	$-0.14^{\wedge}$	-0.10	$0.14^{\wedge}$	-0.29^{*}
6. Happiness	0.67	35.21	0.62						--	0.33^{*}	0.48^{*}	0.23^{*}	-0.28^{*}	0.29^{*}
7. Mastery	0.60	10.48	2.52							--	0.21^{*}	0.03	-0.28^{*}	0.29^{*}
8. Social Connectedness	0.92	20.77	10.39								--	0.21^{*}	-0.29^{*}	0.32^{*}
9. Positive Religious coping	0.92	25.69	0.19									--	-0.10	0.29^{*}
10. Negative Religious Coping	0.92	13.17	0.59										--	-0.26^{*}
11. Spiritual Meaning	0.80	54.07	0.63											--

N = 378; p^{*}<0.01; $p^{\wedge}$<0.05; two-tailed

Table 3. *Results of Hierarchical Regression (Incremental Validity) Analysis*

		Distress				Well-Being			
Step	Variables	*F*	R^2	*t*	*β*	*F*	R^2	*t*	*β*
	Gender			-0.04	-0.01			1.23	0.08
	Age			-2.85	-0.27^{*}			-0.48	-0.05
1	Marital Status	2.88^{*}	0.08	2.01	$0.15^{\wedge}$	1.15	0.03	-0.21	-0.02
	Education			-0.72	-0.05			0.97	0.06
	Occupation			-1.25	-0.09			0.60	0.04
	Length of Stay			0.20	0.02			1.68	0.15
	Gender			0.30	0.02			1.08	0.07
	Age			-3.21	-0.28^{*}			-0.46	-0.04
	Marital Status			1.39	0.10			0.18	0.01
2	Education	$9.34^{\#}$	0.25	-0.77	-0.05	2.70^{*}	0.08	0.98	0.06
	Occupation			-0.71	-0.05			0.27	0.02
	Length of Stay			1.32	0.11			1.14	0.10
	Mastery			-6.68	$-0.42^{\#}$			3.42	0.23^{*}
	Gender			0.54	0.03			0.60	0.04
	Age			-3.27	-0.28^{*}			-0.42	-0.04
	Marital Status			1.43	0.10			0.14	0.01
3	Education	$9.05^{\#}$	0.27	-0.63	-0.04	$6.19^{\#}$	0.18	0.69	0.04
	Occupation			-0.76	-0.05			0.38	0.03
	Length of Stay			1.55	0.13			0.67	0.06
	Mastery			-6.21	$-0.40^{\#}$			2.58	0.17^{*}
	Social connectedness			-2.31	$-0.15^{\wedge}$			5.32	$0.33^{\#}$
	Gender			0.60	0.04			0.31	0.02
	Age			-3.32	-0.28^{*}			-0.22	-0.02
	Marital Status			1.43	0.10			0.14	0.01
	Education			-0.61	-0.04			0.59	0.04
	Occupation			-0.62	-0.04			0.17	0.02
4	Length of Stay	$7.74^{\#}$	0.28	1.35	0.11	$5.92^{\#}$	0.21	0.73	0.06
	Mastery			-6.20	$0.40^{\#}$			2.46	$0.16^{\wedge}$
	Social connectedness			-1.86	-0.12			4.36	$0.29^{\#}$
	Positive Religious coping			-1.94	$-0.12^{\wedge}$			2.88	0.18^{*}
	Negative Religious coping			0.31	0.02			-0.67	-0.05
	Gender			0.84	0.05			-0.30	-0.02
	Age			-3.38	-0.29^{*}			-0.17	-0.01
	Marital Status			1.52	0.10			-0.02	-0.01
	Education			-0.46	-0.03			0.23	0.01
	Occupation			-0.46	-0.03			-0.23	-0.01
5	Length of Stay	$7.73^{\#}$	0.30	1.53	0.13	$9.70^{\#}$	0.33	0.36	0.03
	Mastery			-5.70	$-0.37^{\#}$			1.44	0.09
	Social connectedness			-1.46	-0.10			3.63	$0.22^{\#}$
	Positive Religious coping			-1.24	-0.08			1.32	0.08
	Negative Religious coping			0.65	0.04			-0.17	-0.01
	Spiritual Meaning			-2.40	$-0.17^{\wedge}$			6.13	$0.39^{\#}$

N = 378; $p^{\#}<0.001$; $p^{*}<.01$; $p^{\wedge}<0.05$.

Discussion

This study looked at the significance of psycho-social and religious-spiritual coping resources in buffering mental distress and promoting well-being of the Filipino Catholic migrants in Taiwan.

Hierarchical regression and incremental validity analyses suggested significant results for both distress and well-being. For example, the sense of mastery played a significant role in buffering mental distress and increasing well-being. The sense of mastery is conceptualized as the individuals' perception of themselves being in control of the important forces affecting their lives (Pearlin and Schooler 1978). In other words, people who take control of their lives, have a mindset of believing that there are ways to face the life's problems, search for possible ways of changes, and firmly believe that their future mostly depends on themselves. Such people tend to feel less nervous and hopeless, less worthless and depressed, less guilty and hostile, strive to overcome society's prejudice against them, and tend to feel more at home in a host society. Hence, as the past research has shown, a sense of mastery can reduce psychological distress and can also act as a buffer against deleterious effects of stressful life events (Crowe and Butterworth 2016), and people in stressful life circumstances (such as migrants) who feel more in control of their lives have lower rates of psychological distress (Bovieret al. 2004, Farmer and Lee 2011).

Conversely, those with a perception of themselves being in control of the important forces affecting their lives (Pearlin and Schooler 1978), think that their lives are in most ways close to their ideals, believe that life is very rewarding, cherish happy memories of the past, feel fully mentally alert, and try to live a satisfying life. In other words, people who experience mastery, and thus feel that a situation can be controlled or changed, and that they have the skills and ability to influence the situation (Pearlin et al. 1981), experience higher levels of positive affect, happiness, and satisfaction with life. Said differently, individuals who don't sit back and watch that life happen to them, but rather do want to control the direction of their life and participate in the creation of their own life story, are very likely to achieve higher levels of subjective well-being.

Beyond the personal trait of mastery, the interpersonal aspect of social connectedness also played a significant role in buffering distress and increasing well-being. Lack of social connectedness, conceptualized as a person's emotional distance or connectedness between the self and other people (Lee and Robbins 1995), leads to a loss or poor sense of belongingness or togetherness, resulting in an increased experience of social stigma, negative affect, and psychological distress. On the one hand, particularly for migrants who leave behind their familiar environments and social groups, establishing social connections in unfamiliar conditions is a daunting challenge, and on the other hand, such a lack of social connections results in increased psychological distress and social stigma. The results from this study are in sync with the past research (see Lee et al. 2001), which has suggested that for most people, a lack of connectedness in life, although unpleasant, is a temporary experience that is overcome by reappraising relationships, seeking new social bonds, and participating in social activities. But, for a smaller segment of the population, such as the migrants, a lack of connectedness is a persistent and pervasive experience that is psychologically distressing and socially stigmatizing. These individuals, given their circumstances in a host country, tend to feel like loners or outsiders, lack opportunities for social activities, and tend to be interpersonally and socially ill-equipped to overcome their circumstances, thus furthering their psychological distress.

On the contrary, as the results of this study have indicated, social connectedness is a key determinant of well-being, because as Cohen (2004) said that social connectedness, both the sum of individual relationships and a sense of belonging, provide people with the emotional support, material help, and information they need to thrive and feel happy. Lee et al. (2001) conceptualized the construct of social connectedness as a global aspect of the self, reflecting wide–ranging beliefs and attitudes about interpersonal and social relationships with the general "other." Thus, having a feeling of connected with the world around oneself and sense of togetherness or belongingness significantly contributes to psychological well-being.

Beyond the individual trait of mastery and the social trait of connectedness, the incremental validity regression analyses in this study suggested significant contribution of positive religious coping to both psychological distress and well-being of the population under study. Positive religious coping strategies include looking for a stronger connection with God, seeking God's care and help, focusing on religion to stop worrying, and seeing God's will in a given situation and collaborating with God in trying to put one's plans into action (Pargament et al. 1998). These strategies implemented by the individuals in the context of their religious faith and practices help them to cope with distress and elevate their well-being. In other words, religious beliefs and practices are a source of strength for many people during challenging life transitions and living conditions, especially for the migrants, in buffering their negative affect and psychological distress and in promoting their positive affect, happiness, and satisfaction with life.

Finally, after controlling for the significant effects of demographics, sense of mastery, social connectedness, and religious coping, the incremental regression analyses in the final step suggested that spiritual meaning made a significant contribution to both distress and well-being. In fact, after the mastery (Step 2), spiritual meaning made a larger contribution to distress. Also, spiritual meaning made the highest contribution to well-being, in spite of entering it in the fifth step of the regression analyses, controlling for the contribution made by the demographics in Step 1, mastery in Step 2, social connectedness in Step 3, and religious coping in Step 4.

The indicators of spiritual meaning (Mascaro et al. 2004), such as an individual believing that there is a particular reason why one exists, feeling that one's life is inherently meaningful, realizing that one is meant to actualize one's potential, experiencing that something higher or transcendent is working through one's life, and sensing that one is participating in something larger and greater than any one of us, give the individuals, particularly those under trials due to various reasons, the inner strength to cope with various forms of distress and thus, and conversely, experience the positivity of life in terms of affect, happiness, and life satisfaction. Particularly, for the Filipino migrants, one of the major sources of strength in the midst of migration and stress is their religiosity and spirituality (Ujano-Batangan 2011). Therefore, in addition to providing other sources, making efforts in creating space for religious practices and spiritual meaning are very important for decreasing distress and increasing well-being among the Filipino migrant workers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The summary of the literature review and the results from this study indicate that in understanding the mental health status and needs of migrant workers, particularly that of the Filipinos, one needs to look into the factors that may prevent their mental distress and contribute to their well-being. Specifically, in this study, the significance of psycho-social and religious-spiritual coping resources in buffering mental distress and promoting well-being of the Filipino Catholic migrants in Taiwan is quite evident.

Thus, it can be suggested that as the literature review indicated and as this study results endorsed, it is necessary for the mental health professionals to understand the process of migration itself and subsequent cultural and social adjustment in the host country that play a key role in the mental health of the migrants. Moreover, people in general and migrants in particular from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds often have different views about mental health and are accustomed to substantially different models of care. This can result in a damaging mismatch between the needs of help seekers and the services provided, unless, as the incremental validity results suggested, an enhanced appreciation of socio-cultural and religious-spiritual factors as they affect mental distress and health is promoted. Additionally, in line with the enhanced appreciation of socio-cultural and religious-spiritual factors, it is generally more helpful to provide appropriate training for mental health team workers to provide effective interventions for specific migrant communities.

The stress and chronic difficulties of living in host societies in which discrimination, lack of social support, scarcity of coping resources that are present at both individual and institutional levels may well contribute to migrants' ongoing distress. Under such conditions, providing situations for promoting ethnic density, that is, the number of people of the same ethnic group around an individual, cultural identity, social support, self-esteem and appropriate religious-spiritual resources may act as protective factors against both onset and relapse of mental distress.

Finally, as the results of this study indicated that the respective religious and spiritual dimensions play a significant incremental role in the mental health of the migrants, it is warranted that the government agencies and hiring institutions should formulate and implement appropriate policies for allowing the migrants to practice their religion and faith by granting a day off on their worship days, establishing places of worship, and training religious leaders who could help the migrants with their religious and spiritual needs, which in turn may mitigate the psychological distress and increase well-being.

Limitations and Future Directions

In spite of some valid findings in this study that may help the professionals to understand the specific processes of psychological distress and well-being of the Filipino Catholic migrants in Taiwan, this study has its own limitations, which also pave a path for future studies in this particular area of research. One of the limitations is that this study included only the Filipinos professing faith in Catholicism. Demographics show that there are many migrants in Taiwan from other countries, such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia, who belong to different religions, most probably to Islam and Buddhism. The results from this study could be compared with and further validated by including the samples from these countries.

Secondly, as the literature has indicated, one group of people that have been migrating in great numbers to various countries is the Filipinos. Therefore, these results could be replicated by studying the mechanisms in coping with distress and promoting well-being of the Filipino migrants in other countries. Finally, to further expand these results, it may be better to use more variety of valid and reliable measures, and even to conduct some qualitative studies in order to have a deeper understanding and broader interpretation of the migrant phenomena in terms of their mental health and well-being.

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