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Greek People, the Orthodox Religion and Resilience in the Time of Crisis

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The current issue is the second of the eleventh volume of the *Athens Journal of Social Sciences* (AJSS), published by the [Social Sciences Division](#) of ATINER.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
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27-30 May 2024, Athens, Greece

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An Integrated, Multi-Level Approach to Interpersonal Aggression and Family Violence

By Joseph Michalski*

The study of interpersonal aggression has been carried out for the most part in separate spheres by experts from an array of academic disciplines. To advance a deeper understanding of these issues, however, requires a more conciliatory and interdisciplinary approach. The article offers just such an integrated approach, using a multi-level heuristic framework that has direct parallels with ecological modeling. In addition, the approach expands the analytic focus to reflect different aspects of complex human behavior, which include: 1) the behavioral investment framework, or the bio-psychological reality of the human animal; 2) the socialization framework, or the social psychological aspects of human learning and development; 3) the justification framework, or the language, knowledge, and meaning systems that one acquires to facilitate interpersonal communication and to justify one's actions; 4) the social location framework, or the social interactional dynamics of interpersonal relationships that animate one's daily life as a member of various groups and social networks; and 5) the societal context framework, or the broader institutional forms and sociocultural conditions within which individuals and groups are situated. The current approach bridges human neurophysiology and psychology with sociology in a developmental, ecological context that examines each dimension of human behavior. While the five dimensions can be separated analytically, in practice these overlap to exert multiple influences. Such a conciliatory framing permits a more comprehensive analysis of human social animals as situated within their natural environments. The paper outlines how each of the five levels contributes to expressions of interpersonal aggression by elaborating on key mechanisms that operate across the different levels of informational complexity. Several examples of empirical research are cited to illustrate the core principles that operate within and across the five complementary frameworks.

Keywords: *interpersonal aggression, violence, ecological model, integrated framework*

Introduction

The scientific community writ large has long been preoccupied with the study of human aggression and violence, but especially since the 1960s (e.g., Lorenz 1966, Tinbergen 1968). As with most important social scientific concepts, though, a semantic “jungle” exists with respect to the conceptualization and definitions of what shall be described here as *interpersonal aggression*. Most approaches tend to characterize interpersonal aggression (IA) as any intentional behaviors meant to harm another person who prefers to avoid such harm (Van Lange et al. 2017).

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Violence represents a more extreme form of IA, or the *physical* expression of actions aimed at harming another human being (Anderson and Bushman 2002)¹. Weiner et al. (1990, p. xiii) thus define violence as “the threat, attempt, or use of physical force by one or more persons that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more persons.”

Despite the universal existence of aggression among higher-order animals (Been et al. 2019), a comprehensive explanation has remained elusive. The reasons are many. In the first place, the cognitive division of labor within the sciences has created divergent paths to explain specific facets of human behavior across fields such as psychology, economics, political science, anthropology, and sociology. Each discipline contributes to our understanding of the multifarious aspects of the human condition by highlighting key concepts, such as personality characteristics, the scarcity of resources, the concentration of power, the importance of culture, or social learning differences. Yet a concerted attempt to unify these efforts to develop integrated explanations of human behavior arguably would generate more considerable advances.

There are additional challenges that must be overcome. For instance, unlike the study of electrons in controlled laboratory settings, no two human individuals are identical or have the same histories. Moreover, human beings *change* ever so subtly in response to stimuli and learn (or fail to learn) from their experiences to varying degrees. The feedback loops mean that new information becomes available which can influence human responses to their circumstances. These emergent conditions are typically far different from what happens in the laboratory, wherein human subjects are extracted from their natural environments to have their behaviors observed. The simple fact that individuals are being studied may affect their behaviors too, especially to the extent that subjects are aware of the research process (i.e., the “Hawthorne effect”). Ethical concerns further limit the types of manipulations that can be performed on humans.

Finally, some people attribute the perceived limitations of the social sciences as due to the free will of conscious, sentient beings who can alter their behaviors in response to an unlimited array of possible stimuli or situations (Searle 2001, see Zimmerman 1966). In principle, these stimuli—as well as human interpretations and reactions—can be identified and presumably should yield predictable responses. The intricacy of multiple factors and their interactions, however, presents an almost insurmountable challenge. How could scientists ever map the entire array of influences that shape the behaviors of human beings?

One way forward involves examining the interrelationships of factors across different levels of behavioral complexity. Most social scientists work within narrow disciplinary perspectives that logically reflect their many years of training and specialization within their particular field of expertise.² Not many scholars,

¹Similarly, the International Society for Research on Aggression views aggression as any “behavior motivated by the intent to cause harm to another person who wishes to avoid that harm. Violence is an extreme subtype of aggression” (see <https://www.israsociety.com/blog/anger-aggression-and-violence-it-matters-that-we-know-the-difference>).

²As Daly and Wilson (1988, p. 2) noted in their comparative study of homicide, “researchers stake out careers as the leading advocates of one or another hypothesis or ‘model’.”

therefore, have committed to working in a truly conciliatory or interdisciplinary fashion. As a result, the explanatory power of their work often remains more limited in scope. As Zegans (1971, p. 355) observed more than a half century ago, “A unified theory of human aggression must confront the problem of man’s (*sic*) complexity.” Herein the intellectual shift toward multi-level, ecological models has offered a path forward that has the potential to be extended much further.

The Basic Ecological Framework

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989) offers a seminal example of a multi-level, integrated approach to the study of human behavior or, more specifically, *human development*—and the dynamic aspects of personal characteristics that evolve and change over one’s lifetime. His ecological systems model posits that one cannot fully understand the development of the human person without examining the multiple levels and contexts within which each individual interacts, i.e., the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The overarching logic can be summarized as follows:

$$D_t = f_{(t-p)}(PE)_{(t-p)}$$

Where:

D_t = human development at a discrete, observed time

$f_{(t-p)}$ = a function of a period of time during which different forces are operating

$PE_{(t-p)}$ = an interactive function of personal *and* environmental features during a time period

Bronfenbrenner (1989, p. 190) states that each person’s characteristics at a particular time in life “are a joint function of the characteristics of the person and the environment over the course of that person’s life up to that time.” The logic situates the human being within a nested hierarchy of environmental contexts that interactively shape the individual’s understanding and awareness of reality, as well as one’s active responses to physical and social environments. Human development unfolds across the lifespan as a continual process, which includes changes in physical and mental capacities—and yet always mediated further by the changing fields of social relationships (Levitt 2000). The value of the approach stems from an intentional focus on linking individual dispositions to the broader environments within which human development occurs.

Without knowledge of social contexts, the ability to examine precisely which features are salient to the explanation of IA remains quite limited. A comprehensive analytic strategy demands a concerted effort to study and integrate those factors across multiple levels and dimensions of human existence that affect patterns of behavior. As depicted in Figure 1, Dahlberg and Krug (2002) provide a heuristic illustration of a multi-level ecological framework that situates the individual as embedded in a series of all-encompassing ellipses:

Figure 1. Dahlberg and Krug's Depiction of the Ecological Framework

The basic model identifies the individual as the focal point of analysis, who possesses a set of genetic and biopsychological traits, personality characteristics, and a personal history. Each individual has a range of abilities and capacities, including latent potentialities that may emerge in specific environmental contexts. As a straightforward illustration, every human being with the full complement of anatomical features and physical dexterity has the potential to jump off the ground to varying heights. Yet genetic capacities, the exposure to healthy diets, learning proper technique, and muscle development afford some people with exceptional abilities the opportunity to become basketball or track stars, while others may use that explosive capacity in the realms of hunting game or protecting oneself in warfare.

At the same time, individuals cannot survive more than a few days after birth in the absence of interpersonal relationships, which must be sustained throughout one's formative years and in varying combinations across the lifespan. Apart from innate capacities and background factors, everyone has a social location relative to everyone else in social space, defined by the webs of interpersonal relationships that establish the parameters of their daily interactions. The relationships clearly vary in their degree of supportiveness and resource exchanges. Perhaps even more profoundly, the various statuses that individuals occupy in social space relative to one another have enormous impacts upon how people are evaluated, interact with one another, and their levels of resource exchanges.

The third level of *community* includes the social settings of the neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces within which much of social life unfolds in contemporary societies. The immediate environments and physical spaces that people inhabit assuredly affect the nature of the transactions and interactions that occur. The research has long demonstrated, for example, the importance of issues such as impoverished living conditions and the adverse effects of lead poisoning, toxic air quality, substandard housing, poor nutrition, and stress upon healthy child development and family well-being³. Equally important are the sociological aspects of communities, such as poverty rates, employment opportunities, home ownership, literacy levels, and the countless elements that shape the everyday experiences of individuals and their families. These contextual variables help define the contours of the social landscapes within which people's lives are situated. The interweaving of

³Numerous studies have verified the significance of these factors, including those by Kaplan-Sanoff et al. (1991), Legot et al. (2012), Richardson (2002), and Salazar et al. (2019).

social, spatial, and physical environments cannot be ignored in the effort to explain the emergence of aggression and violence.

The fourth level consists of the societal conditions and cultural climate that may encourage or inhibit certain behavioral expressions. The coordinated efforts of individuals and groups within societies create the economic, educational, legal, religious, and familial institutions—and the myriad formal and informal policies—that help regulate and contribute to the overall health, well-being, and sustainability of their communities. In addition, societal groups establish the norms that either support or denounce IA and violence as acceptable means for resolving conflicts, often rooted in preceding historical conditions and past practices. The comparative research reveals tremendous cross-cultural variations in the general use and acceptance of different types of IA and violence. Ember and Ember (1992) confirmed such diversity in their cross-cultural study of 186 mainly pre-industrial societies regarding their propensity for warfare, including a minority of cases (28%) where warfare was “absent or rare.” Yet no society has ever been *violence-free*, especially at the level of individual and interpersonal conflicts which, at times, can escalate to physically aggressive confrontations. Consequently, societies around the world and throughout history have developed a range of distinctive policies and practices to regulate the use of aggression and violence at both the interpersonal and intergroup levels.

A Consilient, Interdisciplinary Framework for Interpersonal Aggression

The ecological approach emphasizes the disparate influences that operate across the multiple levels of human experience as necessary to understand and explain more fully why IA might emerge. Even if one believes some people are inherently aggressive, there are several limiting factors that might inhibit any routine or systematic use of aggression or even violence. For instance, an individual inclined to use aggression might consider the energy that must be expended, the personal risks of physical harm, any foreseeable psychological and emotional outcomes, the degree of social acceptability, the possible legal ramifications, and the impact upon one’s existing network of social relations (among the multiple factors). Indeed, there are innumerable risks and a plethora of adverse consequences to be evaluated.

But why engage in such behavior if there is any number of less costly alternatives available? That type of “why” question requires some consideration not merely of the social conditions which shape the propensity for IA and violence, but the psychological drivers that influence the behavioral outcomes of sentient, cognitive human beings. Nature and nurture interact; both unquestionably matter. Hence psychologists and sociologists alike have important insights that can enhance our understanding if properly integrated. To that end, some social scientists have turned to multilevel modeling to assess the impact of group differences in behavioral outcomes and possible associations between the characteristics of persons and these outcomes (Avinun et al. 2018, Rose 2018).

The scientific community can similarly emphasize a more conciliatory strategy to knowledge-building that might be described as *integrated pluralism*. Rather than privilege a single theoretical approach, the most effective strategy should draw upon the multiple disciplines and paradigms that address questions of *why people behave as they do*. Complementary perspectives can be synthesized to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the different facets and evolving nature of human behavior (Espinoza and Warner 2016). To explain IA requires that social scientists investigate key processes that underlie the emergence of certain behaviors (e.g., violence) initiated by individuals in the context of their interpersonal relationships, under diverse historical circumstances and across cultural settings. The multiple levels of the human experience encompass biological, psychological, and sociocultural realities, which interweave to elicit responses to environmental stimuli. Individual, familial, and societal behaviors then can be described and explained with a more encompassing conceptual apparatus.

The approach here starts from the premise that human beings are social primates, whose fundamental traits and characteristics have developed via naturalistic evolutionary processes. The different forms of human aggression are the byproducts in part of such processes, based upon a “complex interaction between environmental stimuli, sensory structures, information processing, emotional affect, motor response and even inhibitory or control mechanisms” (Corning and Corning 1972, p. 11). Human beings’ perceptual, motivational, and emotional architecture reflects an evolved system of behavioral investment such that even aggressive behavior can be described *scientifically* (if not always *morally*) as an adaptive byproduct of natural selection. From an evolutionary psychology perspective, *Homo sapiens*’ adaptive system operates both at the motivational and emotional levels, combining an orientation toward various goal states that are counter-balanced by positive and negative feedback signals.

In addition, the perceptual-motivation-emotional system can be divided into two domains: the material and the social environments. The material environment dictates behaviors aimed at the individual’s core survival needs, such as acquiring resources, temperature control, and avoiding injury. The environmental domain also facilitates processes such as growth and mastery (e.g., toolmaking). Henriques (2011, p. 16) captures the logic here via the “influence matrix,” which maps the underlying motivations and psychological mechanisms that dictate how “humans process social information, develop social goals, and are guided by emotions in navigating the social environment.” As social creatures, humans experience their place in the social influence network as deeply felt in an embodied way. People intuitively track their felt sense of being valued and respected, as well as the degree of social influence they have over others and vice versa. Threats of the loss of respect, love, power, or freedom are powerful motivators that individuals react to based on complicated—and highly evolved—biological-psychological architectures.

Extending the theory further, humans are unique primates because of their specific capacity for syntactical language, the recursive nature of their explicit self-awareness, and by virtue of being raised in specific cultures that differ across ecological, technological, and historical contexts. These factors ensure greater intra-species diversity compared to other animals (including chimpanzees and bonobos,

which are the most sophisticated and closest of human relatives). A core sociological wisdom states that while humans are *born primates*, they must develop and be socialized within specific linguistic and cultural contexts to *become persons* (Smith 2010). The parents and caregivers of infants must invest tremendous amounts of energy and resources to ensure that their children achieve the status of persons, defined as self-conscious entities capable of making choices for which they are deemed responsible and accountable within their social environments.

To advance the explanation of IA, a heuristic model has been developed that allows for a synthesis of the relevant social scientific theories, as well as an evaluation of empirical evidence that pertains to each facet. Several mainstream approaches overlap in large measure at each level, sometimes emphasizing the same explanatory factors. The current model thus has analytic relevance far beyond the study of human aggression and violence since the social forces and psychological mechanisms deduced from multiple theories apply to human behaviors across the full scope of historical and cultural contexts. The theoretical approaches that span multiple levels of human behavior include five interrelated frameworks: 1) behavioral investment; 2) socialization; 3) cultural justification; 4) social location; and 5) societal context.

The main thesis can be stated accordingly: *the combination of these five frameworks provides a more comprehensive, holistic explanation of interpersonal aggression and, in the extreme, the violence that sometimes erupts in the context of human exchanges.* As Thurner et al. (2018, p. 20) argue, the complexity of human social processes and behavioral outcomes reflect the fact that these are “evolutionary, path-dependent, out-of-equilibrium, and context-dependent.” Most notably, each of aforementioned frameworks offers important contributions to the study of IA. Hence to understand why human beings are aggressive and even violent at times with one another requires a concerted effort to develop an integrated, interdisciplinary framework, such as the approach proposed in Table 1 (see Michalski 2022). The framework situates the human being within multiple developmental spheres a la Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) approach, while simultaneously identifying the key analytic questions and explanatory principles that must be considered to fully account for behavioral outcomes.

The five dimensions outlined reflect the different aspects of complex human behavior, which include: 1) the bio-psychological reality of the human animal; 2) the social psychological aspects of human learning and development; 3) the language, knowledge, and meaning systems that one acquires to facilitate interpersonal communication and to justify one’s actions locally; 4) the social interactional dynamics of interpersonal relationships that animate one’s daily life as a member of distinct groups and social networks; and 5) the broader institutional arrangements and sociocultural environment within which individuals and groups are situated.

Table 1. *An Integrated Theoretical Framework of Human Development and Interpersonal Aggression*

Theoretical Framework	Development Stage	Main Analytic Questions	Explanatory Principles
Behavioral Investment	Human animal	What types of behavioral investments enhance the human animal's survival and reproduction? How do differences at the physiological, neurological, and temperamental levels affect interpersonal aggression (IA)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biopsychology: The central nervous system computes the expenditures of energy on an investment value system. Response patterns to environmental stimuli reflect evolved adaptations that enhance natural selection.
Socialization	Social animal	What are the key aspects and mechanisms of social influence that shape human development? What kinds of reinforcers help condition the <i>social animal's</i> responses to environmental stimuli such that IA gets channeled in socially (in)appropriate ways?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social psychology: The human animal must be nurtured from birth to survive, as well as acquire core information and competencies. Social learning processes continue non-stop through one's everyday experiences and social interactions.
Cultural Justification	<i>Homo iustificationem</i>	What role do cultural beliefs and values play in the "normalization" of the dominant practices in one's more immediate social world? What belief systems prevail to help to coordinate human behavior, as well as influence individual and group justifications for IA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturology: Different human groups within and between societies have developed distinctive cultural forms of expression and their associated justification systems to communicate and regulate human behavior.
Social Location	Human person	What are the primary social forces that energize and activate social interactions? How do network positions and status differences shape both interpersonal and group dynamics, such as the likelihood of initiating or experiencing different forms of IA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-sociology: Several dynamic social forces combine to create the social fields within which each person interacts and experiences one's version of reality, shaped by the intersectionality of the many statuses that one possesses in relation to others.
Societal Context	Society	What are the main institutional and ideological forms that characterize the society in which individuals and groups live out their lives? How do groups structure and coordinate processes of production and distribution across ecological niches and historical contexts – and to what degree does the prevailing normative framework sanction IA in various forms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macro-sociology: Every society develops social institutions and ideological systems to organize and coordinate human activity, including the production and distribution of their essential resources within ecological niches, which include highly variable legal and/or normative frameworks.

Table 1 includes a brief label that links each developmental aspect of the human being to the gradual evolution from human animal to the emergent level of society. While every individual's life unfolds dynamically over time, the various interrelated dimensions of human behavior apply across the lifespan. In the absence of a catastrophic incident that severely damages a person's faculties, no one ever completely stops being a human animal, experiencing socialization and social influences, framing and justifying one's behavior, interacting with people in one's immediate environment, and living out one's life within the full panoply of sociocultural contexts relevant to the individual's historical location.

The five analytic levels link together the essential pieces of the human behavioral puzzle, with each perspective concentrating on explanatory principles that address questions relevant mainly to investigators who study behavior in terms of different levels of informational complexity. While the many sciences

evolved unevenly and over different historical eras, the net result has been the creation of siloed systems of academic inquiry. The disciplines have tended to focus on disparate questions that could only be analyzed by experts in that respective field at the cost of scholarly collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and cross-fertilization of ideas. The calls for more consilient and cooperative approaches have been sounded literally for decades, as the following extended quote from the 1988 International Society for Research on Aggression World Conference demonstrates (Maiuro and Eberle 1989, p. 13):

True interdisciplinary exchange is still a relatively rare phenomenon in the field of interpersonal violence. When reading the literature or attending a typical conference, one is often reminded of the tale of “The Blind Men and the Elephant,” in which six investigators attempt to identify the nature of the beast by grasping a different part or appendage. Given the scope and complexity of violent behavior, we need to be aware of the findings from other disciplines or we likewise run the risk of mistaking an elephant for a snake or a tree.

The current approach thereby bridges human neurophysiology and psychology with sociology in a developmental, ecological context that examines each dimension of human behavior. While the five dimensions can be separated *analytically*, in practice these overlap to exert multiple influences (and often simultaneously). Such a conciliatory framing permits a more comprehensive analysis of human social animals as situated within their natural environments. A secondary benefit of the more integrative, holistic approach is the manner in which different analytic levels and scientific language systems can be reconciled. The ultimate aim should be that the entire metaphorical elephant might come into clearer focus rather than just certain appendages.

Level I: Behavioral Investment Framework

At the most basic level of the human *animal*, the behavioral investment framework (BIF) focuses on the commitment of effort and energy to achieve outcomes relative to investment returns. All else equal, behaviors that can accomplish objectives to enhance human well-being and survival efficiently will be valued more relative to those that require a greater investment for the same yield. Henriques (2011, p. 46) views behavioral investment as a way of describing “animal behaviors as a form of commerce with the environment.” In effect, what expenditures (time, energy, opportunities, etc.) must animals commit to certain actions vis-à-vis the expected returns on their investments?⁴

First, the principle of energy economics suggests that animals strive to acquire workable energy from their behavioral investments in the most efficient manner

⁴Zipf (1949, p. 1) noted that human beings tend to behave in a manner consistent with the least amount of effort. The principle of least effort refers to the idea that a person “will strive to solve his problems in such a way as to minimize the *total* work he must expend in solving both his immediate problems and his probable future problems. That in turn means that the person will strive to minimize the probable *average rate of his work expenditure* (over time).”

possible. Second, the brain and the nervous system serve as the computational control mechanisms that process the vital information that informs decision-making around these investments. Finally, the learning principle emphasizes that animals have varying capacities to master and develop new forms of coordinated movements and responses to their environments through interactions within their habitats. These latter processes are often linked to the developmental stages of the animal, which inevitably continue along the unceasing pathway of time from the emergence of the animal's life until physical death.

The learning principle at the animal level has been described as “associative learning,” which refers to the behavioral responses of animals that stem from the reinforcements associated with different stimuli (Abramson 1994). Ginsburg and Jablonka (2010, p. 13) describe the neural process as involving connections between sensors and effectors that occur as a result of “past memorized experiences (that) allow anticipation of future events and rewards, and discrimination among different classes of cues.” The specific mechanisms are classical and operant conditioning, which psychologists believe to be the foundational forms of learning (mental behavior) that characterize species of sufficient developmental complexity. While by no means the only determinants of human beings' diverse behavioral repertoires, these mechanisms contribute to a greater understanding of the behavioral outcomes associated with embodied, cognitive beings known as *Homo sapiens*.

The implications for the life of the human *animal* are profound, as living organisms consume energy and process information to live effectively in their environments. The fundamental aspects of human survival at a minimum consist of securing resources for one's physiological well-being (e.g., food, water, air, sleep, shelter). These efforts alone can involve an assortment of behaviors that might strike an observer as aggressive or possibly even violent. The literal struggle to survive afflicts the human animal and helps shape responses much like any other organism, which includes a plethora of heritable traits and genetic predispositions. At the same time, the human animal's efforts cannot be divorced from the child-rearing environment and socio-cultural context into which one has been born. Any aggressive behaviors that human beings exhibit are the byproducts of the complex interface between biopsychological and sociocultural forces.

The family into which human animals are born and early childrearing environments have lifelong impacts, from the physiological to the cultural dimensions of human existence. The earliest years of the infant's life involve exposure to highly variable environments in terms of levels of safety, stability, and stress. The infant may not be able to articulate her experiences verbally (beyond basic or non-linguistic vocalizations), but the body's initial physiological programming moves full speed ahead and retains key information in terms of adapting to stressful situations. The key explanatory features of the human animal from the BIF include the importance of the following:

- inherited traits, genetic influences, and individual characteristics
- perceptions of sensory inputs and neuro-informational processing

- the brain's capacity as a computational-control processor to evaluate energy expenditures
- the associative learning that occurs in natural environments linked to reinforcement schedules that stimulate neurophysiological reactions
- the acquisition of neuro-physiological knowledge and the development of biological memories that facilitate behavioral modifications aimed at efficiency and survival

Based on the BIF framework, how do differences at the genetic, physiological, neurological, and temperamental levels affect IA? The overarching thesis suggests that IA has evolved as an adaptive mechanism to facilitate human survival and reproductive success (Buss and Shackelford 1997). The specific mechanisms involved include a range of inherited traits and genetic influences, especially with respect to the neuroendocrinal foundations of aggression and the impact of varying levels of neurotransmitters (e.g., serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine) and neuropeptides, such as vasopressin and oxytocin (Sarkar and Wranham 2023, Zhang-James and Faraone 2016).

Repeated exposure to significant stressors (or growing up in a toxic environment) increases the propensity of the individual to respond both physiologically and emotionally with IA to situations where others may have vastly different responses. A key aspect that many social scientists ignore relates to the impacts of one or more experiences of early childhood adversity, which affect the development of "biological memories" that "weaken physiological systems and produce latent vulnerabilities to problems that emerge well into the later adult years" (Shonkoff et al. 2009, p. 2257). In effect, the human animal learns and establishes memories at the neurophysiological level just as powerfully as the mental self learns to develop memories at the sociocultural level.⁵ Both have enormous implications for subsequent displays of aggression and violence based on the mechanisms associated with neuro-informational processing and energy expenditures.

In addition, if certain types of aggressive impulses are reinforced positively as efficient means for achieving one's objectives, then IA should occur with greater frequency at the individual level. To the extent that neuro-physiological knowledge and biological memories accrue as the individual adapts to one's immediate environment, these will further determine the degree to which IA enhances the individual's adaptive capacities and survival. At the same time, much of the IA and violence that humans display cannot be divorced entirely either from their learned responses or socialization experiences.

⁵Shonkoff et al. (2009, p. 2256) offer a more detailed explanation: "Toxic stress refers to strong, frequent, and/or prolonged activation of the body's stress-response systems in the absence of the buffering protection of adult support. Major risk factors include extreme poverty, recurrent physical and/or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, severe maternal depression, parental substance abuse, and family violence. The defining characteristic of toxic stress is that it disrupts brain architecture, affects other organ systems, and leads to stress-management systems that establish relatively lower thresholds for responsiveness that persist throughout life, thereby increasing the risk of stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into the adult years."

Level II: Socialization Framework

The socialization framework shifts the focus to the learning processes at the cognitive level that occur mainly through social interactions and the relatively stable relationships that human beings form. While by no means the only social animal on the planet, human beings certainly exhibit a distinct array of relationships and interactions with other members of their species unparalleled elsewhere in nature. At the most basic level, the human animal requires an incredibly extensive period of care and training to establish independence, which eventually means achieving the status of “personhood” and social recognition as a member of a human society. Whereas human *beings* are born, human *persons* develop only through their prolonged periods of interaction with other human beings via the socialization process.

The intersection of psychology and sociology occurs precisely at the level of socialization, or wherever one places an animal directly into a physical habitat and social environment. The more evolutionarily complex species typically require longer periods of care and nurturance. The information and capacities necessary for their long-term well-being and survival can only be obtained through the process of social interaction that involves cognitive learning processes, rather than genetically predetermined or pre-programmed responses. Among humans, the socialization processes are universal, even though the specific content learned varies considerably across cultures. Most important, the newborn arrives in a state of complete dependence on others for survival. Without the provision of basic needs and the intervention of other human beings, the infant cannot survive typically more than a few days. Nor can babies develop the capacities for self-care or language without human interaction.⁶ While these are obvious and well-known assertions, the implications for human social behavior are profound.

In the first place, human socialization inevitably occurs in sociohistorical and ecological contexts. Faris (1947, p. 159) suggested that the institution of the family throughout history has served as “a central mechanism for the transmission of culture (through) a “slow, informal, and unwitting apprenticeship.” That “unwitting apprenticeship” includes language acquisition and age-specific developmental milestones that help to establish each person’s identity. The development of the human “self” occurs just as naturally and profoundly as one’s linguistic capacities, reinforced daily through extended periods of interactions, the development of social bonds and attachments, and the social influences upon personality traits and the individual’s emerging identity and relationship with one’s parents (Kochanska et al. 2004).

The dynamics of human social development always occur within family- and community-specific cultural environments that provide both the material *and*

⁶The developmental period for humans extends for several years, as even the brain develops mainly *after* birth (including the prefrontal cortex). Unlike other primates, human infants are almost immobile at birth, unable to cling to their mothers or lift their heads. The helplessness of newborns means an infant would die within a matter of days, though one newborn survived six days after being abandoned in a drain in Australia (see <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/newborn-baby-survived-for-six-days-after-being-dumped-in-sydney-drain-20141124-11se91.html>).

symbolic resources that fundamentally shape human development. These environmental contexts include early childhood exposures and developmental circumstances, including parenting capacities and interactions, which can vary dramatically sometimes even within communities or from one family to the next. The conditions of the childrearing environment directly impact child development in general and the child's growing understanding of the appropriate and inappropriate uses of aggression.

For example, Silver et al. (1969) conducted a multi-generational study of families where the evidence revealed that abusive parents were usually abused as children themselves. The violence permeated throughout the family relationships to include spousal abuse and child abuse, while the youngsters themselves were rapidly developing criminal records for engaging in violence. Building upon the earlier research on the modeling of aggressive behavior (Nelson et al. 1969, Harris 1973), Carroll (1977, p. 291) hypothesized that "the greater the extent to which physical violence is used on a child, the greater the chance that he or she will use violence on other family members as an adult." The study was one of the earliest to offer empirical support for the "intergenerational transmission of violence thesis," with additional hypotheses that included the additive impact of families being low in warmth, high in stress, and same sex identification.

Bandura's (1973, 1977, 1978) work helped establish further the importance of social learning as a determinant of significant others' influence in shaping coping patterns and family dynamics. His cumulative body of research stressed that most expressions of aggressive behavior are complex responses to external stimuli and require considerable learning to enact. Those who experience or witness IA during childhood learn to accept violence as a way of resolving their differences, which increases the likelihood of repeating such patterns in their relationships as adults. The importance of primary socialization within one's family cannot be overstated, reinforced as well through the subcultures and communities in which families reside more generally.

Akers (1973) elaborated on the social psychological processes involved that connect social learning with the intergenerational transmission of violence thesis. These include the observation of significant others' behaviors (differential association), the internalization of definitions of the situation that are learned, the imitation of esteemed role models' behaviors, and patterns of differential reinforcement, imitation, and modeling (Akers and Silverman 2004). Hence from the socialization framework, the key mechanisms that are associated with distinct forms of human behavior and the emergence of aggression in particular include the following factors:

- direct influences and nurturing behaviors of primary caregivers (especially parents) and significant others
- imitation and internalization associated with social learning processes
- factors linked to the development of an individual's identity within familial and cultural environments
- dynamics of social interactions that shape/reinforce individual personality characteristics

- material and symbolic resources available within specific learning environments

The most compelling work, especially based on a meta-analysis of twin studies, has provided evidence that heritability interacts with a common familial environment (Miles and Carey 1997). Recent research offers further evidence that IA emerges from the interplay between genetic predispositions and life circumstances (Pishva et al. 2023). Especially in the context of early human development and socialization, there are highly sensitive periods in which genetic programs are activated, imprinting occurs, and the imitation of one's parents or primary caregivers together contribute to the development of aggressive tendencies (Markel 2018).

In terms of the social learning component, Widom's (1989) seminal cohort study of children who experienced child abuse and a matched comparison group who had *not* suffered child abuse helped confirm the cycle-of-violence thesis. Her research focused on the greater likelihood of abused or neglected children being at risk for delinquency, adult criminal behavior, and violent offences (Maxfield and Widom 1996). The diverse studies that have ensued lead inexorably to the conclusion that experiencing—and especially witnessing—various types of domestic violence are decisive risk factors for subsequent displays of aggression and violence (Delsol and Margolin 2004, Messinger et al. 2021). Moreover, a large volume of evidence has shown that abused children have increased odds of perpetrating violence in adulthood, both within and beyond the family (e.g., Heyman and Slep 2002, Wright et al. 2019).

Another fruitful analytic dimension involves research on the “Big Five” personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and their possible linkages to IA and violence. The growing body of evidence suggests that different elements of the five-factor model interact with family environmental conditions to reliably predict IA outcomes (e.g., Lone and Albotuaiba 2022). The meta-analytic research emphasizes especially the importance of agreeableness and conscientiousness, as well as the pathological personality constructs of psychopathy, narcissism, and impulsivity, as key antecedents of self-reported behavioral indices of aggression (Hyatt et al. 2019, Jones et al. 2011).

Future research must address an important gap, however, in terms of evaluating the interactional dynamics and “causal direction” linking the development of the individual's identity and personality characteristics to IA in natural environments. There has been only limited research, for instance, that has investigated to what extent long-term family interactional patterns may help shape personality development and the immediacy of the contexts within which different forms of IA might emerge. Moreover, the nature of the material and symbolic resources available within the immediacy of one's learning environment has not been studied systematically and may contribute further to our understanding of the development of aggressive tendencies. Indeed, the above factors and associated effects of social learning should not be considered determinative. The occurrence of IA and violence always requires some consideration of the sociocultural

environments and networks of social relationships within which individuals and groups are situated.

Level III: Cultural Justification Framework

An essential divide distinguishes human beings from other animals due to a requirement that extends beyond the nature of their symbolic forms of communication. In particular, humans frequently must explain *why* they act as they do. The intersubjectivity of language introduces an entirely new problem unique to the human species: the capacity to translate their thoughts and experiences into language for the purpose of communication and, crucially, as a form of “justification.” Human beings must orient and maneuver themselves within their fields of interactions through activities that are regulated and negotiated through justification processes (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991). The study of human justification systems and their social contexts quickly reveals that some forms of IA and the use of physical force are acceptable or even desirable under certain circumstances.

The cultural justification framework highlights the ways in which people communicatively navigate through the social universe. In the broadest sense, human beings create social fields of interpersonal matrices that are yoked together by systems of justification. Embedded within human communications are the diverse forms of reasoning, excuses, arguments, beliefs, norms, and rationalizations that express why their claims and actions are warranted. While many species have language and coordinate their activities for certain purposes, humans alone must justify their actions to explain why they think and act as they do. The lion that kills a zebra in the Serengeti National Park does not worry about his pride’s judgments of his behavior, or that some might question his homicidal nature or non-vegan lifestyle. In contrast, the diverse dietary practices of humans are subject to a wide range of evaluations of both *what* people eat and *how* people eat.

The process of justification has a reciprocal nature as well. Not only must humans justify their actions, but everyone else similarly evaluates the legitimacy of a person’s claims and behaviors. The explanation of human social behavior can occur either at the level of why individuals act and react as they do *or* in terms of sociolinguistic justification. Two core questions are relevant. First, why do human beings behave as they do in specific interactional contexts? Second, why do human beings justify their actions as they do? The former question focuses on the complex interplay of factors that shape human behaviors within natural habitats. The latter question calls attention to the sociolinguistic devices that humans use to justify their actions as cultural beings.

From a scientific perspective, IA can be described as a type of behavior directed to achieve designated outcomes that may or may not be considered acceptable or *justifiable* in certain situations. For example, most people do not question the legitimacy of soldiers killing one another on the battlefield. Even in everyday social life, the legal system recognizes certain lethal behaviors as forms of “justifiable homicide” or “no fault” homicides. These types of encounters

ordinarily involve the death of an individual under circumstances of necessity or in the line of duty (either commanded or authorized by law). Such homicides are characterized by a lack of criminal intent, involving various social contexts such as responding to a threat in self-defense.

In fact, the justice system classifies most police shootings as “justifiable homicides,” even though evidence in certain high-profile cases captured on camera contradicts that conclusion. Some instances of police engaging in lethal actions, however, have led to criminal convictions, such as George Floyd’s death while being detained by police officer Derek Chauvin (and three colleagues) on May 25, 2020. Chauvin was convicted of unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter. Whether the use of physical force can be justified or not varies in terms of the immediacy of the situations, which reflects the interpretations and cultural justifications of those involved. In effect, a continuum exists in terms of the degree of acceptability of different types of IA that occur across societal landscapes.

For the most part, overt forms of IA that result in physical injuries are highly regulated in terms of everyday justification systems. Acts of aggression are deemed justified only in certain settings (e.g., a boxing match) or threatening situations, such as being attacked and responding with an equal measure of violence in self-defense. There are still other contexts that do not necessarily conform to mainstream society’s codes of conduct where IA might be permitted. Certain more marginal or deviant subcultures (or counterculture groups) may sanction violence positively, such as college fraternity hazing rituals, fight clubs, gang conflicts, or terrorist groups. Thus the cultural justification framework calls attention to the following issues as having explanatory value in terms of engaging in the use of IA or even violence:

- the degree to which social behaviors are defined as appropriate under various circumstances
- the level of shared agreement as to culturally justifiable behavioral expressions
- patriarchal-matriarchal (and alternative) belief systems
- the legitimization of different power dynamics
- the cultural acceptability of violence

Wherever human beings engage in IA, the interpretive component of the social exchanges must be considered to determine the degree to which the actions are considered legitimate and justifiable by those directly involved and any observers (including those who become aware of the events only after the fact). The learning aspect of the justification process commences early on in life, such that even pre-school children have developed clear ideas about the acceptability of aggression and violence under various circumstances (e.g., Howell et al. 2012, Swit et al. 2016).

The research confirms that by the time young people have entered adolescence, they have established belief repertoires that in the main condone or reject IA in their relationships, although those beliefs do not necessarily remain fixed for all times (e.g., Valdivia-Peralta et al. 2021). The support for IA may be conditioned

by family of origin determinants, parental attachments, and the ability to regulate anger (e.g., Grych and Kinsfogel 2010). Regardless of the precise mechanisms involved, the acceptability of violence has particularly strong predictive value in determining both family violence and aggression in general (Gracia et al. 2020).

In addition, the importance of gender must be considered in relation to the cultural dimensions of justification systems. Males clearly commit far more violence (especially lethal forms) across a variety of societal contexts, but especially to the degree that gender-based differences emerge whereby males condone the use of IA more than females (O’Hearn and Margolin 2000, Willis-Esqueda and Delgado 2020). The effects are especially powerful to the degree that aggression and violence are accepted and perhaps even *expected* as an appropriate form of gender-based behavior (Rizzo et al. 2021, Sundaram 2013). Those who have social dominance orientations, for example, are more likely to justify violence against women due in part to pronounced sexual double standards (Nida et al. 2022). If widespread agreement exists with respect to these types of belief systems, then higher levels of IA almost certainly can be predicted as accompanying the actual situations that people encounter on a daily basis.

Level IV: Social Location Framework

The idea of “social location” references the notion that everyone occupies a unique position in the social world compared to everyone else. Just as no two physical objects can occupy the same space simultaneously, human beings occupy distinct *social* positions relative to each other and thus cannot occupy equivalent “social space.” To be sure, there can be many similarities between individuals, such as being born on the same day or sharing the same language. Yet no two individuals share *every* social or cultural characteristic in common, just as no two individuals share the same brain or exactly the same identity. Most important, as people come into contact with one another, they establish some kind of relationship, even if these are quite fleeting in many instances (such as sitting next to strangers on the subway). The *social* component of their interactions requires an exchange of information, which exists in specific linguistic and cultural contexts. These are crucial features that help to establish each person’s unique identity and social position relative to everyone else whom one might encounter.

Human beings effectively create and re-create their social world on a daily basis through the simultaneous exchange of energy and information in their interpersonal relationships. More formally, the social location framework refers to the paradigm of thought that highlights the importance of the multi-dimensional nature of the human social world, inhabited by individuals who possess multiple statuses and navigate within their social networks of relationships. Human beings create actual “fields of interactions” through their interpersonal exchanges, which then act recursively and include feedback loops that shape information exchanges, learning processes, and subsequent behavioral manifestations at the individual level.

Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz (2013, p. 295) define social relational contexts as the “interpersonal settings...in which actors must take the expected reactions of others into account in deciding how to act themselves.” Relational contexts always exist temporally and culturally in the social universe to create the distinctive *habitus* for each individual person, such that the actual content that attaches to different configurations varies across societal and ecological contexts (Bourdieu 1977). Human fields of interaction by definition are the settings within which social forces operate to produce differential responses to various stimuli, as well as the evaluations and judgments that flow from the participants involved.

The socio-spatial configurations of the social networks within which human beings are situated involve the intersection of multiple statuses that define and position each individual relative to everyone else, which subsequently influence the direction of the behavioral responses that ensue. Sociologically speaking, individuals can be characterized as evaluative beings who use information to assess everyone’s background characteristics and status positions relative to one another, as well as across the social contexts within which they encounter each person. Social locations are defined, therefore, by the multiple social status positions that each individual occupies in relation to everyone else within their social networks or fields of influence. While every relationship can be described by the same specific categorization processes, the different status positions vary in terms of their salience across social contexts.

Three fundamental *social* forces arguably derive from the geometric shapes, social distances, and field configurations formed in the course of human interactions. Just as “psychological forces” influence individual decision-making processes, “social forces” influence how people interact and relate to one another within their social fields. Each of these social force vectors reflects a combination of multiple subdimensions. These dimensions convey the forces (or “influences”) that stem from status differences separating people in social space: vertical distance, relational distance, and cultural distance.

Vertical distance refers to the hierarchical dimension of social life, defined by any type of *social inequality* in the distribution of valued resources, such as wealth, power, and prestige. In conventional sociological language, we often speak of the different types of social inequality that might exist across diverse interpersonal and societal contexts. That variability constitutes a vertical force vector that differentiates and separates individuals and groups hierarchically in social space, often with profound effects.

Relational distance refers to the horizontal dimension of social life and deals with the “degree to which (people) participate in one another’s lives” (Black 1976, p. 40), along with the *depth* of their involvement. Those who have been in a relationship longer, who interact more regularly, and whose interactions are more intensive (e.g., time alone together at dinner versus a business meeting) have a closer relationship compared to those who do not interact to the same degree. In common parlance, the relational force vector implicates the degree of *intimacy* that social actors have in their relationships with each other.

Cultural distance refers to degree to which people have similarities that reflect the breadth and diversity of their symbolic connectedness (or relative lack thereof),

or the degree of *heterogeneity* within and across populations. If one shares the same language, ethnicity, alma mater, or religion with another person, then these would be indicators of cultural similarities. The sub-dimensions can be multiplied much further, but the logic suggests a continuum ranging from extreme homogeneity to maximum cultural diversity. Multiple distances operate simultaneously in every encounter, which complicate the attendant evaluations. In summation, the social location framework attends to the immediacy of one's interpersonal interactions that characterize daily living. The key explanatory issues involve the fundamental "social forces" of nature:

- the amount of social inequality that exists with regarding the distribution of valued resources between individuals and groups
- the degree of social involvement and intimacy that characterize social relationships
- the cultural diversity or heterogeneity that exists within and across individuals and groups
- the size and configurations of the emergent social fields
- the habitus within which persons are located

The research consistently demonstrates that, all else equal, human beings respond with higher levels of aggression and even violence toward those who are lower in social hierarchies, less intimate (and less "important" or necessary for survival), and culturally different (Cooney 2014, Michalski 2017). Each of these types of distances activate the social forces that apply within the fields of human interactions (Michalski 2022, Senechal de la Roche 1996). While personal dispositions, socialization experiences, and cultural justifications help set the stage, the various markers of social distances are the relational cues that shape human responses to the full array of conflicts, competitions, and transgressions that invariably animate social experiences. The multifarious status distinctions prove absolutely vital for determining whether or not aggression occurs in the first place, as well as the level of violence that might ensue.

A range of comparative analyses have demonstrated that the most extreme forms of aggression tend to be directed toward those who are dehumanized and/or demonized, i.e., occupying those positions most marginalized and devalued (e.g., Michalski 2017, Campbell 2015). As Costello and Hodson (2009, p. 4) explain, these "representations presumably justify the exclusion of outgroups from moral consideration (and) render the outgroup less deserving of compassion and respect." The people at the lowest rungs of status hierarchies are sometimes dehumanized or referred to as animals (Kteily and Landry 2022). The concept conveys the idea that those evaluated as such have lost their humanity or status as human beings.

In terms of the more general propositions implied, IA predictably should occur more often and intensify where individuals members of devalued outgroups are (often) outnumbered and live in relatively close proximity to majority groups, while concurrently being: 1) less integrated and less intimate with the dominant group; 2) more culturally distant along multiple dimensions – and less able and/or willing to conform to dominant group norms; 3) in a chronic state of disrepute

(e.g., defined as immigrants or “illegal aliens”) such that they suffer from a type of collective liability that precedes their behavior; 4) lacking in allies or social network support; and 5) lack the resources to counter the dehumanization or demonization habitus and narratives effectively.

Level V: Societal Context Framework

The social sciences collectively are committed to evaluating the full range of social structural, organizational, and sociocultural variables and their impacts upon the human condition. The societal context commonly refers to the overarching environment of various supra-individual factors that affect human behavior. Large-scale social systems operate above and beyond the individual level to include the institutional arrangements within which human beings are embedded across sociohistorical contexts. Such an analytic focus does not exist and would not make sense outside of the boundaries of human social life. *Homo sapiens* appear to be unique in the animal kingdom as the one species that develops coordinated systems of action that are linked through intersubjective communicative strategies and justificatory mechanisms.

These coordinated systems of action are referred to in the social sciences as institutions, or “systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions” (Hodgson 2006, p. 2). The subjective understanding and knowledge of such normative systems mean that human beings awaken each day well aware of their immediate social and *general* societal locations, with memories, languages, and cultural resources readily available to assist daily navigations. The great benefit of institutions, especially in lieu of fully developed animal *instincts*, derives from their ordering capacities and the creation of stable expectations of others’ behavior. The dual explanatory challenge has always been to establish how these institutional forms are created and, perhaps even more important, to identify the mechanisms through which society’s institutional forces operate and affect human social behavior.

Three complementary domains can be highlighted in the societal context framework. First and foremost, human beings participate in many formal and informal groups beyond the immediacy of their families and households within their neighborhoods, work environments, community settings, religious affiliations, online associations, and so forth. These broader social connections constitute the fields of interactions in which individuals and groups regularly participate. Similar to the meso-system (or exo-system) discussed in the ecological literature (Belsky 1980, Heise 1998), individuals and their families are always situated within the ecological contexts and historical epochs in which they are born and live out their lives.⁷ Their social networks are located within and sometimes even across societies,

⁷For example, Franzini and Spears (2003, p. 1848) define the social context as “represented by ecological variables that reflect properties of population groups and provide information not captured by individual level data.” Their interest stems from the belief that social contexts are directly relevant to the risk factors associated with heart disease and mortality rates.

thereby establishing and defining the more expansive landscapes of the human condition within which human beings interact.

Second, at the macrosocial level, sociocultural contexts clearly differ across societies. The manner in which institutions are organized and the levels of support available vary substantially, which impacts how individuals and families behave and organize their lives. For example, while the United States and Canada share many economic and cultural similarities, there are some important differences between the two societies as well in regard to their historical developments and prevailing value orientations (Lipset 1988). The net result has been the emergence of different levels of institutional support, such as in regard to childcare policies and health care access. For instance, in terms of family supports, one of the most significant differences involves the much more generous parental leave policies in Canada and supplemental supports at the provincial levels, such that new parents or mothers in particular can usually have paid leaves of at least one year. By comparison, no federal leave program exists in the United States, although the Family and Medical Leave Act provides certain employees with a maximum of 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year.

Third, as the brief comparisons between selected U.S. and Canadian institutional supports reveal, cultural and policy variations reflect how the zeitgeist of each society may differ in certain respects. The World Values Survey confirms attitudinal differences between the two countries with respect to religious beliefs, as well as many socio-political issues⁸. At the same time, both societies also share many ideological and normative convergences, which include the citizenry's views on the importance of democracy, nationalism, the championing of individual rights and freedoms, capitalism, law and order, science and technology. The survey evidence nevertheless reveals persistent differences such that Canadians tend to be more "liberal" in their views overall compared to their U.S. counterparts.

The societal context framework highlights the notion that every society stresses a core set of values, as well as dominant narratives and mythologies which serve as the overarching discourses that justify existing institutional structures and help shape what people tend to believe. That reasoning extends to the level of perceptions about the appropriate and inappropriate usages of aggression and violence. Some societies are more patriarchal and/or more capitalistic than others, both of which correlate with a greater likelihood to support certain forms of violent behavior. There may be a "culture of honor" or a degree of "hegemonic masculinity" (the legitimation of men's domination) that shape people's views of gender, violence, and "normal" behavior. Li et al. (2018) provide an interesting exemplar through their study of Afghan youth and parents. The evidence revealed that while only a minority endorsed violence in principle, specific situations elicited much more favorable responses and justifications for the use of violence, including wife beating, the beating of daughters, and punishing children who speak out against traditional practices.

⁸The World Values Survey data are freely available online for anyone interested in comparing the responses of nationally representative samples of the total populations from over 100 countries worldwide on a range of social, cultural, economic, and political issues. The data can be accessed at: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>.

As another example from the World Values Survey, respondents were asked whether “violence against other people... can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between” on a ten-point scale. Slightly more than two-thirds of both Canadians and Americans selected either “1” (never) or “2” as their responses, suggesting no real differences. In contrast, further research has shown that some societies are more willing to “go to war” and appear to be “more violent” or even “extremely violent” in comparison with others (Gerlach 2010, Karstedt 2012). As a final illustration, a comparative study of corporal punishment determined that a correlation existed between societies that endorsed corporal punishment and a higher prevalence of violence (including adolescents) *and* a greater endorsement of violence at the societal level (Lansford and Dodge 2008). In certain cases, there may be mythological or religious justifications that reinforce commitments to peacefulness and non-aggression (e.g., Bonta 1996, 2013).

Bucheli and Rossi (2017, p. 3695) explain that “the sociocultural perspective emphasizes the role of shared beliefs in a society that justifies and legitimates violence.” If a higher proportion of the population expresses support for certain forms of IA, then potential perpetrators are more likely to act accordingly in various contexts. Perhaps not surprisingly, multiple studies across diverse societies have revealed that IA and violence among family members occur more frequently among those who hold attitudes that justify “wife beating” and violence more generally (e.g., Bueno and Henderson 2021, Murshid 2019, Reese et al. 2021). In fact, Waltermaurer’s (2012) metanalytic review of studies evaluating public justifications for domestic violence failed to identify *any* countries with a “zero prevalence” of domestic violence justification, although the levels of support varied dramatically within and across many of the countries.

The key issue involves societal views about the acceptable use of aggression or even physical force. Many societies historically and in contemporary settings subscribe to a patriarchal ideology to varying degrees, as reflected in their values, beliefs, and norms that justify male dominance across social and political landscapes (Yllö and Straus 1990). The popular trope “might makes right” reflects a justificatory mechanism consistent with a patriarchal model of human society. In patriarchal social systems, people tend to condone the use of aggression as a form of empowerment and entitlement.

Lystad (1986) describes the “pecking order” of family violence as perpetrated by those with the most power and status upon those who have less of these resources. Additionally, the use of violence and coercive controlling behavior has been linked to hegemonic masculinity, such that men may internalize their abusive behavior as an expression of their “manhood” (Reidy et al. 2014). By the same token, parallel research demonstrates that women construct their own justificatory narratives, including excuses and self-blame, often in a manner consistent with their own understanding of hegemonic masculinity (Copes et al. 2021, Krause et al. 2016).

To conclude, societal contexts matter with respect to extant institutional arrangements, the ecological conditions that prevail, and in terms of setting the stage and scripts related to aggression and violence, especially from a comparative standpoint (and noting how societies have evolved historically). Societies vary in

terms of levels of economic development and wealth distribution, degree of urbanization, poverty levels, their political systems, religious institutions, educational systems, and much more. The narratives constructed around their institutional configurations and cultural practices are essential too if we hope to understand each society's zeitgeist, their rituals and normative practices, and cultural interpretations of appropriate and inappropriate expressions of aggression. Hence the societal context framework highlights the importance of the following broad explanatory principles or macrosocial forces that must be considered:

- types and extensiveness of different types of social networks
- social organization of production and distribution
- formal institutional arrangements
- prevailing zeitgeists and cultural orientations
- range of narrative practices, mythologies, and justificatory ideologies

A great many different measures of societal conditions, then, must be factored into the discussion of aggression. The crucial aspects of the macrosocial forces include the institutional arrangements established for social life in general, such as the social organization of production and distribution. The issues then set the broadest stage for the possible emergence of IA and violence. Those societies, for example, where the division of labour has privileged males as producers *and* where marital living arrangements are predominantly patrilocal have higher rates of domestic violence targeting women in particular (Alesina et al. 2021).

The manner in which societies are organized and the prevailing macrosocial conditions can have profound effects that filter down to the level of individual beliefs and behaviors. Anthropological and sociological studies of IA and violence more generally reveal diverse practices and justification systems across cultures and epochs. What might be considered acceptable or even expected in some locations will be rejected completely as inappropriate or unacceptable elsewhere, which can be framed at the macro-societal level in terms of the overarching ideologies used to justify violence (Arosoaie 2017, Cousar et al. 2021). As an example, Baron et al. (1988) found that the level of social disorganization, urbanization, economic inequality, and the percent of single males helped shaped both people's views of "legitimate violence" *and* the incidence of rape across states in the United States, a process sometimes referred to as "cultural spillover theory."

The practices even *within* a given society may change over time or as quickly as within a generation or two. An excellent contemporary example involves corporal punishment and the physical discipline of children. Whereas corporal punishment was once condoned as a standard strategy for parents to maintain control of their children within the family (and even within most school systems), most forms of physical discipline used against children are no longer accepted and often tend to be criminalized.⁹ The relevant social forces must be identified to

⁹Even in recent national polls, such as a 2013 Harris poll, more than four in five U.S. adults agree that "spanking" is an "appropriate" form of discipline at least "sometimes" (see <https://time.com/>

explain why certain patterns of social interaction prevail, as well as why groups accept or eventually modify to varying degrees their existing practices.

Conclusions

Genuine explanatory progress requires more concerted efforts aimed at interdisciplinary cooperation with respect to understanding and explaining interpersonal aggression and violence. The argument advanced here springs from the premise that human beings everywhere are complex, adaptive actors who exist and operate in a multidimensional reality that includes physical, organic, mental, and sociocultural behaviors. The notion of the “normalcy” of aggression simply means that various forms appear wherever humans have lived, even though there may be considerable variation in the expression thereof or the extent to which violence might result.

A profound question then remains: What explains the emergence of IA, including the more severe forms that may escalate and boil over into actual violence? A great many theories have been proposed, mostly with a narrow focus on one main aspect of behavioral reality tied to a specific academic discipline. A potentially more powerful explanatory approach consists of studying the interrelationships among the different types and dimensions of the human condition that lead both to aggression and to emergent phenomena such as human justification systems that amplify or constrain violence.

The explanation of human aggression and family violence can be enriched by examining the many threads of research that deal with the human animal, socialization processes, justification systems, social fields, and institutional contexts within which individuals and families live out their lives. The generic ecological framework establishes a heuristic device for identifying the different levels where human social interactions occur, but does not independently specify the dynamic features that animate these interactions or generate the particular behavioral outcomes routinely observed. Hence the key analytic question remains: what are the defining aspects of interpersonal relationships situated within diverse ecological contexts that generate particular responses, such as aggression and violence? As proposed here, the answer requires some consideration of the multiple levels and dimensions of human exchanges, which include:

1. the functional capacities and behavioral investment strategies of the human animal, i.e., the decision-making processes and coordinated actions of the human animal
2. the socialization experiences and learning processes that facilitate human development and understanding across the lifespan

the-discipline-wars-2/). National Opinion Research Center data confirm that nearly 70% of the public in 2018 continue either to “strongly agree” or “agree” that “it is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking.” Yet many countries around the world have banned corporal punishment, with Scotland becoming the first UK country to outlaw the practice entirely in 2019.

3. the development of and cultural exposure to the sociolinguistic communication systems that human beings eventually use to justify behaviors in their multiple fields of interaction
4. the social locations of individuals and the social fields that emerge in their immediate environments, animated by the social “forces” associated with the status differences of each actor involved
5. the institutional arrangements, sociohistorical contexts, and cultural zeitgeists within which individuals live out their lives as members of a particular community or society

To acquire the knowledge of these multiple dimensions of human existence, while a daunting proposition, would be the most comprehensive approach to understanding, explaining, and even predicting the likelihood or the increased *probability* of humans acting with aggression or directing violence against one another. No one should be surprised that few analysts within the social sciences have attempted to integrate the knowledge from across the many disciplines to achieve a more holistic accounting. Most researchers study one dimension of the human condition at a time—and usually specialize even more narrowly on certain features or subdimensions (e.g., the importance of substance abuse, previous exposure to violence in familial relationships, current measures of “stress” levels, the activation of specific hormones, etc.). To be fair, there are practical and funding constraints that limit what researchers can do for each specific project. From a theoretical perspective, however, we should be able to agree at this point that no discipline has cornered the intellectual market for explaining aggressive behavior.

Hence an integrated approach offers the opportunity to link five complementary theoretical branches that span the social sciences: behavioral investment, socialization, cultural justification, social location, and societal context frameworks. Each framework highlights distinct factors and mechanisms that, if combined into a coherent whole, can determine the probabilities of different behavioral outcomes in terms of IA and violence. Such an ambitious objective defies any simple solutions. Future success of scientific investigations in the field will stem not only from replicating past studies and verifying significant predictors, but from applying multi-level modelling techniques to evaluate their interaction effects in stimulating or deactivating the threat of interpersonal aggression. The future of the behavioral sciences belongs to those who are committed to genuinely interdisciplinary work, i.e., those who are prepared to deal with complexity and contingency in innovative and yet collaborative ways.

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Family Organizational Basics, Leadership, Communication, Environment and Culture

*By Sandra Velez Candelario**

Family as a socioeconomic organization have the responsibility to be effective and productive even in bad times like this pandemic era named COVID-19 virus. Families first goal is pursued happiness sharing affectivity within their human capital at home and without food, shelter, air and oxygen that is not possible. This paper is a scientific construction that include the explanation about the basic organizational needs that any organization needs to be productive and functional including the family. Family Organizational Basics: Leadership, Communication, Environment, and Culture, is the first academic document that introduce openly the organizational psychology to the family organization. These four areas according with the organizational and management theories should be functional to receive the best respond from the human capital that is managing in any organization. It is a scientific analysis about how the four areas of the organizational behavior works in the household setting and how those impact the daily lives of the family members increasing or decreasing their daily productivity.

Keywords: *leadership, communication, environment, culture, organizational, family*

This paper context is part of the research synthesis and analysis that Velez-Candelario compiled and published from 2009 until 2019. This topic is novel in regards of organizational psychology and organizational behavior inside the household daily administration. By first time Velez et al. (2016), analyzes the family as a formal organization. Her study proved that this organization has a pre-design creation that is delineated and regulated by each legal system of each country around the world. She also proves that this human organization has the natural and the legal command to deliver human capital with a high productivity at school level and working skills to the socioeconomic system every single day. But unfortunately, for each human being family is like our feet; we know how difficult it would be to walk without them, but frequently we don't care like we should. The same thing happens with our house or domestic building, even when we own it. We usually treat this space like a thing that must be there, not like a privilege that is protecting our body from the weather, from distress, or the environment; we should treat it like something that comes between us and other dangerous situations, as a great gift.

Regarding human relations within the household environment, frequently it is treated without any type of respect and formal approach. The frequent and familiar contact promotes a very casual and informal relationship between the family

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members. Even when a hierarchy exists, and some are the subordinates and others the subordinators. That constantly informal and casual relationship interrupts the proper functionality of the family organization that has the huge responsibility to develop and enhance the human capital skills to be able to be part of the workforce later. The family organization according with Velez-Candelario (2019) is not an informal social group it is a formal organization. She explains that family organizations need strategic plans and formal analysis to be able to manage and develop their group and their individuals to reach effectively and successfully a psychosocial and economic development.

Life's routine can make great things look casual and insignificant, while also making us unable to care for those gifts and assess them correctly. The reality is that being able to count on our own family is a privilege. Having daily access to the affective behavior below the same roof is a gift that not every person can manage. Management is an activity that needs specific skills, processes and abilities. Due to human beings' responsibilities to manage everything around them including their family organization, analyze, understand and control the management system at home is a huge opportunity to avoid dysfunctionality of this specific organization.

The scientific management or administration of any human organization including the family, is totally possible and pertinent. Today's fundamentals of the scientific management and administrative processes give to the family leaders the tools that they need with data support from previous analysis in regards of what style or skills leaders needs to avoid mistakes influencing others and developing socioeconomic systems. Many studies support some actions more than others when a leader is managing a human organization. That information has been supported by different researchers during the last hundred years, while the industrial business system was developed. It means that scientific management or administration is one of the main topics in organizational development due to the human capital functionality and productivity needs to enhance the economic activity. According to Conlin (2023) "different managers have different schools of thoughts". He mentioned:

- **Frederick W. Taylor's theory is scientific:** He experimented in various ways to determine the most efficient and effective ways to get tasks done. Taylor created four principles of his scientific management theory:
 - Each task should be studied to determine the most efficient way to do the task.
 - Workers should be matched to jobs that align with both their abilities and motivation.
 - Workers should be monitored closely to ensure they only follow the best working practices.
 - Managers should spend time training employees and planning for future needs.
- **Henri Fayol's theory is administrative:** Fayol developed six functions of management:
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- *Forecasting*
 - *Planning*
 - *Organizing*
 - *Commanding*
 - *Coordinating*
 - *Controlling*
- **Max Weber's theory is bureaucratic:** The organization will be most efficient if it uses a bureaucratic structure. This uses standard rules and procedures to organize itself. This strategy was especially effective for large operations. It has five principles:
 - Task specialization
 - Hierarchy
 - Formal selection
 - Rules and requirements
 - Impersonal
 - **Elton Mayo's theory is based on human relations:** Productivity increases when people feel like they are part of a team and valued by their co-workers. This emphasizes praise and teamwork as motivational factors.
 - **Ludwig von Baranoff's theory is systemic:** This believed that each business is a system, much like a living organism, with numerous things going on to keep the operation rolling along. A person needs his other organs and other key features to live.
 - **Douglas McGregor's theory is based on different types of workers:** Systems theory says everything needs to work together for a business to succeed: The X&Y theory of management assumes there are two different types of workers. Theory X workers lack ambition and drive and need to be ordered around by bosses to do anything. Theory Y workers, on the other hand, enjoy work and strive for self-fulfillment.

With this short overview of what management theories are is clear that human beings are always going further to make their lives easier and better. That includes their needs to manage effectively to receive the best input during their human daily activity. Human leaders understood that they must be effective during their management process of their time and economic resources to reach specific goals, including their human capital productivity. Due to that economic activity and the need to be efficient they introduce their beliefs and scientific tools to the management process. This activity was more applied during the industrialization period because of their new way of doing business. The new business way includes massive production and men's and women's sharing the same space to work outside of their houses.

That means that during the new era of the new business activity, where the household is included as part of the main places to work, the scientific management to develop the organizational development of this specific organization is a valuable tool. The author Velez-Candelario (2021) exposed through this paper the relevant analysis of her research details and results using the scientific management and organizational theories to understand household functionality. Her analysis and

findings demonstrate that her instruments helped to understand family leaders' strongest and weakest skills during their family organizational development.

The family is a formal organization due to their natural and legal pre-design system that includes biological, physiological, psychosocial, legal, and socio economics responsibilities to develop their young and adult human capital. That assignment makes this organization the first one that needs the organizational development design. The organizational theories and a scientific management system will help the group to be alive and functional. Otherwise, the organizational theories are the results of the human being business organization's needs during the first period of industrialization. These theories exposed their values due to the analysis of the organization's permanence and functionality. According with Velez et al. (2016), depending of the family leaders' management and administrative style of this specific organization will be successful during their goals achievements or not. Moreover, Britannica Encyclopedia editor's Foster (2016) explained that 'most of the work in organization theory has been written by scholars in the disciplines of sociology, business management, and economics. They have focused their attention on analyzing and theorizing about business firms and associations and nonprofit organizations. Organization-theory is primarily concerned with explaining organizational structure, performance, and survival'.

Otherwise, Greenwood et al. (2021) explained that "organization theory is concerned with the relationship between organizations and their environment, the effects of those relationships on organizational functioning, and how organizations affect the distribution of privilege in society. Organization theorists are thus interested in the range of organizational designs; their governance, capabilities, processes, and consequences; and how new organizational designs arise and become established". It means that if the organizational theories emerge from the needs of the new business needs in the earlies nineteen century due the industrialize system, today's industrialize businesses are creating work's position that allowed people works from home remotely due a pandemic global issue and a new change to help families to manage successfully their household social system goes aligned with today's socioeconomic needs. Hygiene needs to be safe due to the contagium possibilities with others similar viruses change the business system again in the entire world. The new virtual school also promotes used the household space for a young human capital productive activity inside the family environment.

Today's business and academic organizations use the household as a workplace again, just like before the industrialization period, where the family was the owner of their own farms and business activity. In today's economy family leaders use their household to work remotely with global films and at the same time use the same space to race and develop their young human capital in charge, their children. The young human capital also used their household space to produce at school. Furthermore, today's family have double mission assigned by their legal and socio-economic system, be functional during their main responsibility of develops their young human capital academics and psychosocial skills to be able to be successful at school and get ready their household space to serve the global business activity.

Family Organization: Vision, Mission and Goal

The family, like any other organization, delineates their vision, mission and goal. Doing this first administrative step; the vision, mission and goal delineation they start to organize themselves to make any dream come true. The human being as an intelligent natural resource organizes every project systematically to be able to handle it appropriately, using their own physical characteristics as the natural brain activity. The human brain uses their different parts that it has systematically.

According to Hopkinsmedicene.org (2023) the brain sends and receives chemical and electrical signals throughout the body. “The human brain is not only one of the most important organs in the human body; it is also the most complex. The brain is made up of billions of neurons and it also has a number of specialized parts that are each involved in important functions” (Cherry 2022). It is clear that even the human biological body is already organized with specific skills in their organs parts to be able to function properly and effectively.

Cherry (2022) also exposed that “While there is still a great deal that researchers do not yet know about the brain, they have learned a great deal about the anatomy and function of the brain. Understanding these parts can help give people a better idea of how disease and damage may affect the brain and its ability to function”. She expresses that “the cerebral cortex is the part of the brain that makes human beings unique”. Functions that originate in the cerebral cortex include:

- Consciousness
- Higher-order thinking
- Imagination
- Information processing
- Language
- Memory
- Perception
- Reasoning
- Sensation
- Voluntary physical action

Moreover, Hopkinsmedicene.org (2023) expresses that “different signals control different processes, and your brain interprets each. Some make you feel tired, for example, while others make you feel pain”. These same resources mention the organizational activity of the brain until today’s evidence:

- a) *Frontal lobe*. It is the largest lobe of the brain, located in the front of the head, the frontal lobe is involved in personality characteristics, decision-making and movement. Recognition of smell usually involves parts of the frontal lobe. The frontal lobe contains Broca’s area, which is associated with speech ability.
- b) *Parietal lobe*. It is in the middle part of the brain, the parietal lobe, helps a person identify objects and understand spatial relationships. The parietal

lobe is also involved in interpreting pain and touch in the body. This houses Wernicke's area, which helps the brain understand spoken language.

- c) *Occipital lobe*. It is in the occipital lobe it is the back part of the brain that is involved with vision.
- d) *Temporal lobe*. The sides of the brain, temporal lobes are involved in short-term memory, speech, musical rhythm and some degree of smell recognition.

Some messages are kept within the brain, while others are relayed through the spine and across the body's vast network of nerves to distant extremities. To do this, the central nervous system relies on billions of neurons (nerve cells). According with Cleveland Clinic, (2023) the peripheral nervous system (PNS) is one of two main parts of your body's nervous system. Your PNS feeds information into your brain from most of your senses. It carries signals that allow you to move your muscles. Your PNS also delivers signals that your brain uses to control vital, unconscious processes like your heartbeat and breathing. Moreover, these same resources mention that your peripheral nervous system has two main subsystems: autonomic and somatic.

- *Autonomic*: These are nervous system processes your brain runs automatically and without you thinking about them.
- *Somatic*: These are functions you manage by thinking about them.

Those two subsystems are how your peripheral nervous system does its three main jobs:

- *Senses*: Your PNS is a key part of how your brain gets information about the world around you. This job falls under the somatic nervous system.
- *Movement*: Your peripheral nerves deliver command signals to all the muscles in your body that you can consciously control. This job also falls under the somatic nervous system.
- *Unconscious processes*: This is how your brain runs critical processes that don't depend on your thinking about them. Examples of this include heartbeat and blood pressure. This job depends on your autonomic nervous system.

Is clear that the human biological body includes an organized system that will manage the outside and inside world that surrounds it. Due to this is possible to infer that it is also a pre-design model that mother nature implements to make this functional but depends on an organize processes to become effective. Otherwise, Velez-Candelario (2019) found that families that have a functional organizational activity (as the organizational theories recommend) at home reach higher results in their young human capital (their children) general point average at school. Otherwise, as higher punctuation the family has in the Family Organizational and Administrative Functionality Scale (Velez-Candelario 2018) higher is their young human capital school productivity. As lower the results of the FOAF Scale lower is the GPA at school.

In regards of the vision that human beings can have while organizing their group, they will also delineate a mission. The mission will help them to be motivated throughout the whole process in order to reach their goals. The family as a human's organization follows this same procedure during its establishment and permanence, due to the natural organizational characteristics of the brain. This basic human organization, as any other, is created with a purpose; they frequently delineate this purpose after they become a group, not before. The main process to delineate these three basic steps, according to Velez et al. (2016) established the vision, mission and goal is a fact that without a plan the live of the intelligence creatures named human capital within a capitalist's space will not be effective. Planning is one of the main activities of the scientific management or administrative activity.

Young Human Capital Development and its Socioeconomic Challenges

Every day, each family organization confronts the same socio-economic challenges to find their basic human needs such as food, shelter, water, and rest (among others), in today's capitalist societies. Capitalism defined by Britannica (2023) is also named as the free-market economy or free enterprise economy. This same fountain mentions that "this type of economic system was dominant in the Western world since the breakup of feudalism, in which most means of production are privately owned, and production is guided, and income distributed largely through the operation of markets" (Brittanica 2023). As is clear capitalism is promoted by privates' hands, in other words are the individuals and their specific skills that must be used to be able to develop their exchange products and services.

This reality within a capitalist society makes human beings' skills a highly valuable capital, and the family is the unique "production system" of it. This formal organization needs to be capable of developing those abilities. This specific organization must work very hard and manifest the best organizational behavior to deliver the highly functional human capital possible to their society. Otherwise, the only way to support a family's economic needs is by capitalizing money through legal or illegal actions. To have a family capitalization process within the capitalism, adult leaders and their young human capital frequently select legal ways through job positions or private business establishment and acquiring a good Grade Point Average (GPA) at school, respectively. Those organizations—the workplace and the school—give adults leaders and their human capital in charge the opportunity to show their talents and to sell those to the market, but at the same time it forces them into a competition with other equals, resulting in a stressful situation for these family members.

Stress is a natural process that humans have in regards of their biological body. Stress is shown through physiological reactions that the human body has due of the environmental factors that influence them. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023) stress is "a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation". The World Health Organization (2023) "stress can be defined as a state of worry or

mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being". This definition mentioned that human beings must respond to stress in a specific way and depends on the way their reaction will make a difference or not in regards of their wellbeing.

Moreover, Cleveland Clinic (2023) defined Stress as "a normal reaction to the pressures of everyday life. Worry, fear, anger, sadness and other emotions are also all normal emotional responses. They are all part of life. However, if the stress that underlies these emotions interferes with your ability to do the things you want or need to do, this stress has become unhealthy".

The World Health Organization (2023) also mentioned that 'stress affects both the mind and the body. A little bit of stress is good and can help us perform daily activities. Too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems. Learning how to cope with stress can help us feel less overwhelmed and support our mental and physical well-being'. Recommend to manage the stress according with the World Health Organization (2023):

1. Keep a daily routine.
2. Get plenty of sleep.
3. Good sleep habits (also known as sleep hygiene)
4. Be consistent.
5. Get some exercise.
6. Connect with others.
7. Keep in touch with family and friends.
8. Share your concerns and feelings with people you trust.
9. Eat healthy.

After seeing what "stress" does and how this has to be managed to be in control, the compulsory questions are, who teaches newborns, children, teenagers, and young adult to manage their stress? How can young human capital learn skills that help them manage the bad feelings that can be caused by stress causing disease? After making these questions it is clear that the answer exists but for some reason was underground or deleted as the only one that can be possible due the cost of this, their household leaders in charge. Their parents, or family leaders are the people that need to be ready to train their subordinates at home in regards of the stress symptoms that they will be experimenting with during their live stages and how manage this.

Definition and Analysis of the Four Basics

The four organizational areas which should work inside any human organization—in accordance with organizational and administrative theories—are communication, environment, culture, and leadership. In regard to this, Velez et al. (2016) found that these four areas during family administration are the key to

being successful or not as a human organization and as a human capital incubator. The explanations of these four areas may help readers to analyze them once again as a scientific management topic that is extremely helpful for family organizational development during the process to reach the vision, mission and goals.

Leadership, Communication, Environment, and Culture are the main areas to develop and manage any human organizational process. Each one must be handled effectively to receive the better inputs to their organizational daily activity to reach their goals:

- a) *Leadership*: guiding and impacting outcomes, enabling groups of people to work together to accomplish what they couldn't do working individually (Mackinsey and Company 2023).
- b) *Communication*: this is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior (Webster (Dictionary 2023)
- c) *Environment*: the conditions that you live or work in and the way that they influence how you feel or how effectively you can work (Cambridge Dictionary 2023).
- d) *Culture*: something that consists of activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are important for the development of civilization and of people's minds (Collins Dictionary 2023).

Because of the connection that these specific areas are mentioned during the organizational development process in today's business management Tessina (2008) explains that 'you may not think of your marriage as a business deal, but a huge part of it is just that. Just like a business, a marriage receives income, pays expenses, and is supposed to have a little profit (savings) left over'. She also added that 'having children creates extra pressure in your relationship because parenting is a demanding, exacting, and stressful enterprise'.

The four basics are not just an administrative system that allows the group to be organized and ready to manage intelligent creatures named humans and their surrounding environment. These four factors will serve as guides to help them review their inventory in their daily basic while administrating their family organization.

A family leader's responsibility goes further than just applied scientific tools to control their group members' management. They also must be sure that their methods are delivering a high-quality performance to deliver a productive human capital to schools and workplaces. Leadership is one of the principals' skills that managers need to be successful. The leaders will be going to apply their own personal characteristics and their knowledge in administration to be able to handle their organization specific needs. If these two variables are not in good standing with their group needs their administrative activity will not be functional. In relation to Coursera (2023) "leadership skills include the abilities or strengths shown by people in management roles that aid in guiding and encouraging a group of people and their team toward achieving a common goal or set of goals. These

skill sets include communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, decision-making, and more”.

This same fountain mentioned few skills that are the main topics that leaders need to manage successfully:

- **Negotiation**- This involves two or more parties engaging in a conversation to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties. Also involves understanding the interests of all parties and working to reach a solution that satisfies each one.
- **Conflict resolution**- Ideally, as a good leader, you should be able to maintain your composure and make thoughtful decisions when handling disagreements.
- **Adaptability**- Showing adaptability in leadership involves being flexible and adjusting to changing conditions and environments.
- **Decision-making**- Using critical thinking skills in decision-making allows you as a leader to identify problems and develop solutions advantageous.
- **Critical thinking**- The steps of the critical thinking process often entail gathering facts and data, posing deliberate queries, and examining potential answers. Critical thinking is an important component of decision-making.
- **Problem solving**- Can have foreseen issues in the organization, define the problem, identify its causes, develop a plan to remedy the problem, and learn from the problem to avoid future issues. Problem-solving requires strong communication skills and respect for all parties involved.
- **Relationship building**- The ability to forge bonds and establish communities is necessary for an effective leader.
- **Time management**- Proper time management by leadership members affords leaders more time to invest in their team.
- **Reliability and trust**- Trust, or belief in another person's skills, integrity, and character, is frequently thought of as something built upon in personal relationships.
- **Creativity**- A creative mindset is open, not closed or rigid, and produces ideas and solutions that are both significant and effective.
- **Strategic approach** - Leaders who are successful will think before they act, or in other words, have a strategic plan before acting.
- **Self-awareness**- Self-awareness in leadership involves understanding your own personality, behaviors, and motivations and then considering how these traits and qualities influence your leadership skills.

Otherwise, communication is not functional if this is inappropriate or disrupted. According with Emerson (2021) communication skills should include:

- **Be clear and concise** - The key to powerful and persuasive communication is clarity and, when possible, brevity. Before engaging in any form of communication, define your goals and your audience.

- **Prepare ahead of time** - Know what you are going to say and how you are going to say before you begin any type of communication.
- **Be mindful of nonverbal communication**- Our facial expressions, gestures, and body language can, and often do, say more than our words. Nonverbal cues can have between 65 and 93 percent more impact than the spoken word.
- **Watch your tone** - How you say something can be just as important as what you say. As with other nonverbal cues, your tone can add power and emphasis to your message, or it can undermine it entirely.
- **Practice active listening** - Communication nearly always involves two or more individuals. Therefore, listening is just as important as speaking when it comes to communicating successfully.
- **Build your emotional intelligence** - Communication is built upon a foundation of emotional intelligence. Simply put, you cannot communicate effectively with others until you can assess and understand your own feelings.
- **Develop a workplace communication strategy** -Today's workplace is a constant flow of information across a wide variety of formats. Every single communication must be understood in the context of that larger flow of information.
- **Create a positive organizational culture** - The organizational culture in which you are communicating also plays a vital role in effective communication. In a positive environment communication in general will be easier and more effective.

After the recommendation of Emerson (2021) in regards of the communication system is not an option delete the environmental conditions. In other words, the relevance that the environment has over the intelligent creatures named human capital. The environment creates the conditions that will have a very strong influence over the motivational factors of human beings that commit in the same spaces with commons mission, vision and goals. The environment also will help to create the emotional conditions in the humans that interact daily inside the household.

According with Britannica (2023) “environment, the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival”. Moreover, Merriam-Webster dictionary (2023) defined environment as “the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community”.

Kals and Müller (2012) exposed the following question: “What are environmentally relevant emotions? We will start a closer look at the role of emotions in conservation behavior with some examples that match the categorization of emotions”. To go further these researchers exposed a few examples that expose the way that they analyze emotions in regards of the environment:

- A couple is flying to South Africa to enjoy the breathtaking landscape and the wildlife, mainly ignoring the social and the rising ecological problems of the continent. Their first significant impression is, however, the dust, dirt, and blighted environment of Johannesburg and its townships. They feel threatened about this unexpected state of at least parts of the “African environment”.
- A student who has grown up using the car as main means of transportation decides to take part in a project that bans car use for one month. He enjoys walking and riding the bicycle on the way to his college and is proud of his success.
- A family takes a winter walk in the woods, and while playing in the snow with the children, the parents feel relieved from their day-to-day worries and enjoy being in nature.
- In an apartment building, one family puts their waste into the paper recycling bin when the other bins are full. The other residents become more and more upset about this and start complaining.

As is clear, the physical environment of our surrounding areas inside or outside of the household influences emotions. Velez et al. (2016) also analyze the environment inside and outside the household where the family interacts every single day. They found that families who enjoy a sanitized environment in the household that smells good and has clean sensation expressed a pleasant emotion during their resting period at home and during their family commitment. Moreover, the families who have everything in order where have an easy access making their tasks and activities manageable also expressed pleasant emotions as better comfort and feelings of auto control.

Finally, when leadership, communication and environment have a daily commitment at home a culture will pop up. Culture is the glue, is the attachment, is the connection between all the members of any social group. It is also the whole characteristics of the organization that promotes a specific way to function or manifest. Culture develops belonging feelings and makes possible the group consolidation as an organization with a vision, mission and goals to reach as a one community.

Application of the Four Basics at Home

The four basics are not empty words, they are active areas and practical tools to manage human intelligence and our surroundings. This paper mentions the four organizational basics: *communication, environment, leadership, and culture*. Organizational and administrative theories recommend specific ways about how those four areas should be managed to motivate human capital to increase their productivity and daily functionality including activating their motivational feelings. These four management areas are the main assignments that any leader must work with during their management in any organization, including the household. By other hands, understanding the organizational theories and how to

administer them scientifically in these four areas at home, family leaders will be able to avoid errors during their daily organizational and administrative domestic management.

The Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defined *Organizational Theory* as the study of how organizations work and why they are or are not successful. They also mention that “the focus of organizational theory is to understand the structure and processes of organizations and how organizations interact with industries and societies”. Otherwise et al. (2021) establish that “Organization theory is concerned with the relationship between organizations and their environment, the effects of those relationships on organizational functioning, and how organizations affect the distribution of privilege in society. A central concept is organizational design (sometimes termed ‘organizational form’). According to these authors “the Organizational design is important because the ability of societies to respond to various problems depends on the availability of organizations with different capabilities”. They also mentioned that “Organization theorists are thus interested in the range of organizational designs; their governance, capabilities, processes and consequences; and how new organizational designs arise and become established. Recently, organization theorists have been applying their insights to ‘grand challenges’ and in making an impact on practice”.

Conclusion

Velez et al. (2016) found that all families have common characteristics and develop a particular culture that characterizes their group customs, values, routines, and moral views. They observed that as more family members assume common characteristics with their community at home, more groups’ members identify themselves proudly as part of the same family organization. Indeed, the family that recognizes their common cultural characteristics as the same community, and feels proud of it, develops human capital that is more productive at school and in the workplace. Otherwise, Velez-Candelario (2019) found an organizational behavior pattern between the productive families and not found the same thing between the unproductive families during her quantitative research to measure the correlation between the family organizational and administrative functionality using the FOAF Scale and the general point average at school of their membership.

Velez et al.’s (2009) qualitative analysis and Velez-Candelario’s (2018, 2019) quantitative analysis open new routes to enhance family organizational behavior skills. These studies also bring knowledge to help families to reach their mission, vision and goals to be able to function as a socioeconomic organization that has the assignment to develop the young and adult human capital. As the human capital incubator, the family has new theories and information that can be used to applied during the organizational development process of their social group to become successful during their human resources development and delivery.

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Improving Inclusive Education: Quality of Life and Self-Determination

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The purpose of this study is to provide a basis for theoretical reflections for the recognition of the importance of the construct of Self-determination as a fundamental dimension of the Quality of Life, also for people with disabilities. In this sense, the main empirical studies that analyse the existing correlation between Self-determination and Quality of Life are summarized, to highlight the relevance that these constructs occupy in the sectors of education, special education, and public health. Following this file rouge, the delineation of educational paths aimed at the aid of innovative models and practices is envisaged, starting from the drafting of Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), a key tool for the design of inclusive teaching paths, based on the construction of self-determined people, causal agents of Quality Lives.

Keywords: *self-determination, quality of life, disability, IEP, inclusion, education*

Introduction

There is both an intuitive and a theoretical link between self-determination and Quality of Life, even for people with disabilities. Intuitively, it makes sense that greater autonomy and wilful action would improve one's Quality of Life (QoL). Theoretically, self-determination definitions have framed the construct about its contribution to a person's overall Quality of Life, while Quality of Life theoretical frameworks have included self-determination among the core dimensions that contribute to improving Quality of Life (Schalock et al. 2005, Lachapelle et al. 2005). These theoretical links have been supported by research on the relationship between Quality of Life constructs and self-determination of persons with disabilities, specifically intellectual (Wehmeyer 2020a) and developmental disabilities (Wehmeyer 2020b). There are several implications from this knowledge base that deserve consideration, including in education. The school is, immediately after the family, the main agency for socialization and formation of man's personality. Its fundamental task is to provide the necessary tools to grow culturally, psychologically, and socially; acquire responsibility and autonomy to train active and democratic citizens (Gagné et al. 2022, D'Alonzo 2020). In this sense, the school – *in primis* - should aim to give students the opportunity to *self-determine quality life horizons*, cultivating the talents and potential of *each and every one*.

When we work with disability, the discussion becomes more intense: this requires touching the *differences* first-hand, to find and promote the possibility of compensating for functional deficiencies necessary to promote *everyone's* personal

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growth. The "*taking shape*" that Andrea Canevaro (2015) talks about should translate into the construction of life paths that are never confined, regardless of the presence of disabilities, in a composition of elements that are never rigid and always open to welcome others, or to transform those already present, with the ability to decide autonomously and for themselves, to make Quality Lives flourish. It is therefore necessary for the school, at every grade or level, to guarantee the preparation of an individualized life project, which favors training courses for skills and competences in the making, to achieve the full autonomy and self-determination possible. These assumptions imply the necessary knowledge of the main theories and models supporting these important constructs.

Education, Disability and Self-determination: A Comparative Analysis of Models and Theoretical Perspectives

During World War II, Seligman et al. (2019) began to ask why many once confident and successful people became disheartened and depressed after World War II robbed them of social support, jobs, money and status, and why, at the on the contrary, other people still managed to preserve their serenity and their integrity. This made scholars understand that individuals were moved by instances, by different forces. The studies conducted by Freud, Jung, Maslow, Rogers, and May gave scientific answers judged by Seligman as unsatisfactory (Seligman 2019). Therefore, the need was felt to found positive psychology, born not only with the aim of "*repairing*" but of building *positive qualities*, enhancing education, growth, introspection. Individuals were no longer to be considered passive, but active beings, able to choose, to take risks and responsibilities.

The reference paradigms of most studies of positive psychology can be traced back to *hedonism*, according to which well-being consists in pleasure or subjective happiness, and to *eudaemonia*, according to which well-being is something more than happiness: it represents the realization of human potential and one's own nature. In the hedonistic perspective, well-being and happiness are equivalent, while for the eudemonic perspective the two concepts are quite distinct.

In this regard, the famous studies on self-determination by the Americans Ryan and Deci (2000) are included in the vein of the eudemonic perspective. The authors elaborated the *Self-determination theory* (SDT). For SDT, a need, broadly speaking, emphasizes the presence of a particular desire or preference, often rooted in a lack, and which varies among individuals. It is described as a need when its satisfaction is essential for the well-being of the individual. The authors identified three basic needs, united by being innate, universal, and essential (Deci and Ryan 2000), the satisfaction of which is essential for the growth, integrity, and well-being of the individual: autonomy, competence, and relationality.

The need for *autonomy* refers to the will of individuals and reflects their desire to be the origin of their own behaviours. It implies that actions, thoughts, and feelings are underpinned by a sense of purpose and authenticity. When this need is satisfied, there is a sense of integrity: the actions, thoughts and feelings of an individual are authentic and approved by him. Conversely, when this need is

frustrated, one feels a sense of pressure and often conflict, as if one perceives oneself as being pushed in the wrong direction. Autonomy, on the other hand, concerns the possibility of choosing autonomously, without being affected by the impositions of others. Deciding independently allows you to perceive yourself in harmony with your identity and therefore coherent with yourself. It is a form of self-affirmation, not in relation to the surrounding environment but to one's own person. Also, the need for *competence* refers to the ability, mastery, and effectiveness of the individual. It is satisfied when people engage in activities in which they use and expand their skills and competences; when frustrated, on the other hand, there is a sense of ineffectiveness, failure, and helplessness. Competence concerns interactions with the environment and the possibility of expressing one's abilities in relation to it. It is a type of relationship that man establishes with the surrounding world, in a natural way, since childhood, and triggers the satisfaction given by *being good at something*. Competence, therefore, takes the form of doing. Finally, the need for *relationship* refers to the experience of *nurturing bonds*. It is satisfied the moment a sense of connection is established, a feeling of mutuality in tune with the people who matter to the individual. When this need is frustrated, there is a sense of social alienation, exclusion, and loneliness. The relational need *recalls* the need to be part of a social context, a group, or a community, in which one feels at ease, where it is possible to weave networks of shared intentions and meanings. It is the environment where social emotions, such as friendship and love, develop. It is for this reason that the sphere of relationality can be placed in relationship with the sphere of competence, since it is important, in the environments in which the ability to do is expressed (such as, for example, the educational sphere), to relationships with other learners, for the reasons just given.

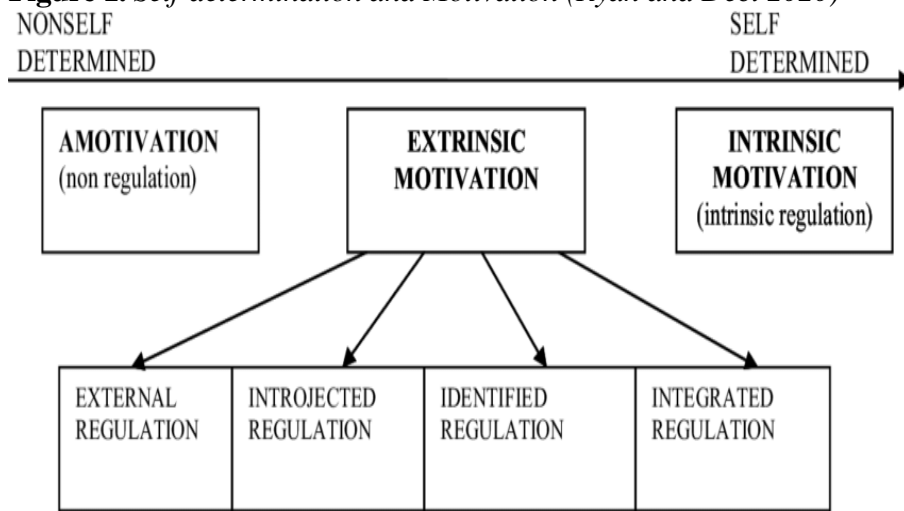
For Ryan and Deci (2000) these three needs possess the characteristic of *observability* from an early age, because they are present beyond any experience; they are *shared* by every human being, regardless of the culture of reference and, moreover, they are considered *inescapable* since they promote personal satisfaction and well-being.

According to the Theory of Self-determination, to satisfy these needs, it is necessary for everyone to *develop self-determination*, i.e., the set of knowledge, skills and beliefs that allow the growth of self-regulated behaviors directed effectively towards the objectives.

The theory considers self-determination and motivation as two related concepts. Motivation is a process related to the achievement of a goal or what tends the individual to the satisfaction of needs (Autin et al. 2022). We cannot talk about motivation without including *skills* (what the individual is able to do) and *personal values* (what the individual wants to do) (Ryan and Deci 2020). The theory focuses on the different types of motivation, attributing a fundamental role in determining the results of individual well-being. Motivation is considered as a continuum, at the extremes of which are the *absence of motivation* (or a-motivation) up to the achievement of the highest form of *intrinsic motivation*, passing through extrinsic motivation (Figure 1).

The development of self-determination is, therefore, closely connected to motivation, the drive that moves people to act to satisfy the three basic psychological needs. Self-determination theory research began with a focus on intrinsic motivation, activities performed for self, self-interest, and enjoyment (Ryan and Deci 2020). Intrinsically motivated behaviours are generated by activities such as play, exploration and anything that can make you curious. These actions support intrinsically motivated behaviours, which do not depend on external pressures, but rather on personal incentives; moreover, intrinsic motivation is the main responsible for learning throughout the human life¹⁰.

Figure 1. *Self-determination and Motivation (Ryan and Deci 2020)*



Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is a heterogeneous construct that can vary in content and characteristics; for this reason, there is a subdivision into four main subtypes. The first subtype is *external regulation*: it concerns behaviours driven by externally imposed punishments or rewards and is a form of motivation typically experienced as controlled and non-autonomous (Ryan and Deci 2020). The second subtype is *introjected regulation*, which can be defined as a partial internalization of extrinsic motivation. In this case, the behaviour is regulated by actions through which internal rewards of self-esteem can be obtained. As a result, there will be a tendency to avoid feelings of anxiety, shame, or guilt that result from failure. External regulation and introjected regulation are controlled forms of motivation. Extrinsic motivation can be implemented autonomously: in this case we speak of *identified regulation*, which corresponds to the third subtype of extrinsic motivation. The person consciously identifies or approves of the value of an activity, experiencing a higher degree of volition or willingness to act. The last subtype of motivation is *integrated regulation*, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. In this case, the person recognizes and identifies with the

¹⁰Although there are results in the literature that attest to the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning, some research shows that this tends to decrease over the school years. These results suggest that sometimes the school environment does not allow for the creation of sufficient contexts for the development of intrinsic motivation.

value of an activity and finds that this is also congruent with other personal interests and values. Identified regulation and integrated regulation are two forms of autonomous extrinsic motivation, which share being strong-willed with intrinsic motivation, but differ in that they are based on carrying out an activity deemed useful but not pleasant. The opposite happens for intrinsic motivation, thanks to which people are interested in the activity they carry out, have fun, and feel involved (Ryan and Deci 2020). Within this motivational *continuum* also lies a-motivation: this form of lack of motivation can derive from a feeling of incompetence, lack of interest or attribution of value towards the activity that is being carried out. It is, therefore, a negative predictor of well-being and the construction of quality life paths.

According to self-determination theory, most intentional behaviours are multiply motivated. Motivation is like a staged process; it must be cultivated in a supportive environment that allows the development of skills and that autonomously directs to choose. When motivation is supported by the will it helps the development of *vitality*, a form of psychological charge that is perceived when the person feels effective in carrying out activities that he has internalized and which he perceives as belonging to himself. Vitality is considered a positive measure of well-being (Ryan and Deci 1985).

Relevant to the theory are, in fact, also the environmental conditions, which may or may not favor the satisfaction of the three basic needs. The degree of personal motivation is influenced by the environment: when the latter is controlling, the person will not perceive himself capable and needs will be frustrated; on the contrary, when he is supportive, he will be motivating, allowing the satisfaction of the three basic needs (Ryan and Deci 2000).

Deci & Ryan have therefore identified self-determination as the ability to choose between various opportunities and to use these choices to direct one's personal actions. Therefore, self-determination as a necessity, which to be achieved requires not only personal skills, but also a supportive social context. It is the result of the behaviours that allow people to identify their goals and the set of skills that allow them to be achieved.

Hoffman and Field (1994), add that the ability to self-determination is promoted or discouraged by personal values, knowledge, and skills of the individual, and by other variables inherent to the context of belonging: opportunity to choose and attitude of the other. For this reason, self-determination is to be understood as a multidimensional construct. Mithaug et al. (1996), not surprisingly, believe it is characterized by a series of skills through which people know and express their interests, needs and abilities; set goals and related expectations; they make choices and act to complete their projects, evaluating the consequences and modifying their actions (Cottini 2016).

Self-determination theory assumes that individuals - *in toto* - are prone to growth, learning, mastery, and *connection* with others. In fact, self-determination is a construct that is acquiring ever wider relevance in the field of disabilities (Lindsay and Varahra 2022), especially intellectual and developmental disabilities (Sánchez et al. 2022, Verdugo et al. 2023) (even if in Italy it has not yet assumed the necessary centrality in the scientific debate and in educational applications).

Since the early 1990s, attention has grown on the concept of self-determination in people with disabilities. In this regard, an important contribution to defining the construct of self-determination was offered by the group coordinated by Wehmeyer (1998).

The author specifies that self-determination is not what the person has absolute control over, because men live in relationships of interdependence, and support from other people does not preclude the possibility of controlling one's actions. Self-determined behaviours do not necessarily lead to success or successful actions, because decisions are not always optimal, even when all possible choices, actions and solutions to solve any problems are identified and examined. Furthermore, self-determination for the author is not synonymous with self-sufficiency, otherwise it would be difficult to approach people with disabilities who, on the other hand, sometimes need support to achieve their goals (Wehmeyer 2001).

For Wehmeyer, another common mistake is to consider self-determination as only ability or only opportunity, while instead it depends on abilities, opportunities, and the presence of adequate supports. "Self-determination is not simply something you do, and it cannot be tied to a specific outcome. Self-determination cannot be *stricto sensu* - simply synonymous with choice" (Zappella 2019). These clarifications clarify the contours of the concept of self-determination which, according to the literature, can be described according to four models:

1. Functional Model of Self-determination
2. Ecological Model of Self-determination
3. Self-Determination Learning Model
4. Model of the Theory of Agency

The functional model of Wehmeyer et al. (2001) argues that an individual acts in a self-determined way when he performs actions in which he is the *primary causal agent*. This means that whoever acts perceives himself as the protagonist of his own choices that he is capable of acting and deciding in a completely autonomous way and not influenced by external causes. The concept of *causal agent* refers to the fact that the person has the strength to act for his own well-being, because he believes that certain actions can be impactful in his life. The functional model proposed by Wehmeyer focuses on numerous studies conducted on people of different ages with learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. As Cottini (2016) points out, the self-determined person operates as a causal agent with the intention of building his own future both based on his own personal skills (such as being able to make choices, plan objectives, direct and self-monitor his behaviour), both to the opportunities that the environment must offer so that such behaviours can be truly implemented. The attestation of the importance of self-determination for people with disabilities and their complaint that they actually enjoy little opportunity to make choices independently and to express preferences about the main aspects of their lives by recording low levels of agency, have led researchers to implement specific psychoeducational intervention programs to promote self-determination, increase choice opportunities, favouring active and

direct involvement in educational activities aimed at them and in the planning processes of their life (Dean et al. 2016). The literature, in fact, demonstrates that, through personalized support and interventions and thanks to access to individualized inclusive programs, the person with disability can achieve good levels of self-determination regardless of their intellectual functioning. In Wehmeyer's model, both the individual dimension is taken into consideration, i.e., a series of skills that the person needs to assume self-determined conduct, and the environmental one, which concerns the opportunities that the context provides for people to become causal agents in their own life. This shows how people with disabilities can encounter a series of context barriers and how, at the same time, the role of supports assumes a fundamental aspect throughout the life cycle of the person with disabilities. The components of self-determination must, therefore, be considered in the rehabilitation and educational paths of all ages, and not only in certain moments of a person's existence. Within the proposed model, the construct of self-determination is divided into four fundamental elements (2001):

1. *Autonomy*: includes the level of independence, the person's ability to act based on his own system of values and interests. In other words, this element refers to behavioural autonomy.
2. *Self-regulation*: includes self-management skills (such as self-instruction, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement); definition and achievement of objectives and problem solving. These strategies allow the person to more adequately control his own life.
3. *Empowerment*: focuses on internal locus of control and adequate levels of self-efficacy. The person, when he has these skills, is confident in his own abilities and in his own possibilities to carry out a goal successfully.
4. *Self-actualization*: it relates to the person's degree of self-awareness with respect to their strengths and limitations. This competence matures in one's own reference environment and is influenced by the perception that significant people have towards themselves, by the reinforcements and by the causal attributions of their own behaviour (Cottini 2016).

These main elements are formalized in self-determined behaviour and are expressed in some capacities: 1. Capacity to choose; 2. Problem solving skills; 3. Ability to decide; 4. Definition and achievement of objectives; 5. Self-management skills; 6. Self-help skills; 7. Perception of control and self-awareness.

Abery and Stancliffe (2001), the main authors of the development of the ecological model, unlike Wehmeyer, gave greater prominence in their texts to the role of the environment in the development of self-determination. For these authors, personal competencies are influenced by the environment which, in turn, is influenced by competencies, and self-determination depends on three interrelated elements: the desire for control, the degree of control exercised, and the importance given at various events. Based on this model, a person who has low control due to her disability can have a high level of self-determination if there is a close relationship between the desire for individual control and the importance of the outcome (Bentzen and Malmquist 2022).

The domains highlighted in this case are: 1. *Skills*: goal setting, choice and decision making, self-regulation, problem solving, communication, social relationships and independent living; 2. *Knowledge*: about oneself and one's economic situation, rights, Quality of Life, available resources, possible options when it comes to making a choice; 3. *Attitudes and beliefs*: locus of control, sense of efficacy, self-esteem, self-acceptance, perception of being appreciated by others and positive prospects for the future.

These domains refer to subjective conditions (for example, emotional well-being) and objective conditions (for example, individual rights and the level of social inclusion), and are modulated on four different life systems or contexts: micro-system (regards growth and development opportunities, such as family and school), meso-system (environmental improvement programs and techniques; concerns the relationship between two microsystems), exo-system (external influence of factors not directly attributable to the individual) and macro-system (ideological and cultural level, related to social policies) (Bronfenbrenner 2002).

In the third model, that of learning self-determination, Mithaug et al. (2003) focus on the process that leads to self-determination, seen as the freedom to use resources to achieve objectives consistent with one's expressed needs and interests within a welcoming community. Specifically, the model explores how individuals interact with opportunities to improve perspectives on the goals they want to achieve in their lives. Self-determination is in this case influenced by two domains: 1. Capacity: understanding of the meaning of self-determination, of the behaviours necessary to exercise it, plan objectives and make decisions; 2. Opportunities: places where self-determination is exercised, particularly in the home and school environment.

The challenges people experience are opportunities to pursue their goals and learn how to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Self-determined people learn to express needs, interests and abilities, to have goals and expectations; are able to change decisions and adjust behaviours to achieve desired goals effectively.

In the fourth and final model, defined as agency theory, Shogren et al. (2014) revise the functional model with two goals: to extend it beyond the realm of disability by recognizing that self-determination is relevant to *each and every one* (including people with disability), and integrate it with the contribution coming from other disciplinary sectors. Unlike other theories of human behaviour, the theory of agency predicts that the agent's action is: motivated by biological and psychological needs; directed towards self-regulated goals; driven by an understanding of agents, means, and ends, and triggered by contexts that provide supports and opportunities, as well as obstacles and impediments. The domains, which include those of the functional model, plus other elements related to different disciplines, are: voluntary action, agency action and control of one's beliefs and perceptions.

Summarizing what has just been outlined, it can certainly be asserted that the functional model, and that of agency which constitutes a revisitation of it, place the accent on individual characteristics, while that of learning highlights the process through which people can become more self-determined. The ecological model,

on the other hand, emphasizes the fundamental role of the environment. From the analysis of the four perspectives, three common elements can be traced: 1. Personal responsibility for one's own life, which includes both direct and indirect control of situations; 2. The effects of the environment and opportunities affecting the self-determination of the individual; 3. The idea that making decisions is a broader concept than choosing between various options, which requires a set of skills necessary to be able to exercise self-determination.

The different definitions of self-determination analysed all converge to emphasize a series of possibilities that allow - especially people with disabilities - to assume, in their own reference environment, roles connected with the dimension of adulthood. Certainly, due to deficits or functional deficiencies, these possibilities could be conditioned, but action must be taken to be able to guarantee good levels of self-determination. Therefore, the construct of self-determination puts the educational dimension in the foreground to guarantee perspectives and life projects aimed at achieving the best Quality of Life (Giacconi 2015).

Quality of Life and Self-determination: A Correlation Analysis of Constructs

Scientific literature suggests that the concept of Quality of Life is linked to that of Self-determination, even for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Several studies report the direct relationship between these two constructs: “higher levels of self-determination would correspond to higher levels of Quality of Life, and vice versa; the highest levels of Quality of Life of people with disabilities would be found in people with good levels of self-determination” (Cloutier et al. 2006).

The construct of Quality of Life has evolved over time, moving from a perspective centered only on people's subjective perceptions, to one that “has embraced the concept of Quality of Life as an awareness-raising notion and general principle for service delivery” (Schalock & Keith, 2005) precisely for people with disabilities.

Schalock and Keith (2005) have defined Quality of Life as a multidimensional phenomenon composed of fundamental domains influenced by personal characteristics and environmental factors. The conceptual model of Quality of Life, which has guided the application of this construct as a general principle for the provision of services, is made up of eight fundamental domains or dimensions: 1. Personal Development; 2. Self-determination; 3. Interpersonal Relations; 4. Social Inclusion; 5. Rights; 6. Emotional Wellbeing; 7. Physical well-being; 8. Material Welfare.

For Schalock and Verdugo (2002), Quality of Life is not a "thing" that people have. It is a multidimensional construct that provides a means to design and evaluate supports for people in service systems. In Schalock's (2016) perspective, self-determination is not only a fundamental dimension of Quality of Life, but it is also a core value on which services are based and, arguably, an outcome of such services and supports.

This construct was first applied to the context of intellectual disability in the early 1990s. Not surprisingly, in the field of intellectual disability, Wehmeyer highlighted a first relationship between QDV and Self-determination when he defined the latter as “acting as a primary causal agent in one's life; make choices and decisions regarding their *Quality of Life*, free from undue influence or outside interference (Wehmeyer 2001). This suggests that in the initial phase of applying the construct of self-determination to the field of intellectual disability, it was related to the Quality of Life. Wehmeyer's theory of causal agency has been proposed to explain how people become self-determined and, more importantly, to explain the development of self-determination itself. Causal agency theory defined self-determination as: “a dispositional characteristic that manifests itself as a causal agent in one's life. Self-determined people (that is, causal agents) act in the service of freely chosen goals. Self-determined actions function to enable a person to be the causal agent in their own life” (Shogren et al. 2015, p. 56). Self-determined people take action to achieve specific ends or to make significant changes in their lives. Acting in a self-determined way implies that people decide to change their lives or pursue goals, rather than someone or something else from the outside can influence their choices. Self-determined action is goal-oriented, driven by preferences and interests, and ultimately serves to enable people to improve their Quality of Life. Concerning the relationship between self-determination and Quality of Life, self-determination, in the theory of causal agency, is seen as a contribution to the overall Quality of Life.

Schalock and Verdugo (2002) underlined that the concept of Quality of Life has provided an important evaluation framework based on the results associated with specific domains (in particular, the domain of self-determination). As the two authors underline, both personally evaluated life considerations and the design of large support systems. In this regard, Schalock et al. (2005) conducted a study examining the fundamental dimensions of Quality of Life in five countries (Spain, Central and South America, Canada, mainland China and the United States). The aim of the study was to identify properties of these key dimensions in geographically and culturally diverse populations. More than 750 respondents completed a survey that asked questions about the relative importance of each of the eight core dimensions (including self-determination) and 24 indicators of those dimensions, and the degree to which each indicator was available to the person and supported by the system. Participants included people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, industry professionals, and families of people with disabilities. The results showed that people with disabilities, when they answered the questions in which it was necessary to assign a score to the importance of self-determination, rated it with higher scores than professionals or family members. Based on analysis of variance by group (person with disability, professional, parent) and geographic region (Spain, Central/South America, Canada, Mainland China, and the United States), there were significant differences in reports of the importance of self-determination. As previously reported, people with disabilities placed the highest importance on self-determination compared to professionals; the geographical regions that rated it with the highest scores were Spain and North America, compared to the lowest trend recorded in China.

Two studies also directly measured the relationship between Quality of Life and self-determination among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998) measured the self-determination and Quality of Life of 50 adults with intellectual disabilities. The number of choices available to each participant was measured using the *Life Choices Survey*¹¹. These researchers hypothesized that individual self-determination status and opportunity for choice would predict membership in high- or low-quality-of-life groups. Based on a discriminant function analysis, it was determined that self-determination scores predicted membership in the High Quality of Life group and that these scores were significantly correlated with choice opportunities. Lachapelle et al. (2005) replicated this study, while measuring only self-determination and Quality of Life, with a sample of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in four countries: Canada, the United States, Belgium, and France. These results mirrored those of Wehmeyer and Schwartz, indicating that overall self-determination and subdomains of self-determined behaviour (including autonomous functioning) predicted membership in the highest Quality of Life group. Research has established that the environments in which many people with intellectual disabilities live or work, particularly congregational environments, limit opportunities for choice and the expression of preferences (Stancliffe 2001).

Two studies examining the relationship between the opportunity for choice, self-determination and living/working arrangements confirmed the existence of a link between choice and self-determination. Wehmeyer and Bolding (1999) conducted a study of samples of adults with intellectual disabilities that were matched for age and intelligence level but varied as to whether they lived/worked in a large community-based gathering environment. The level of self-determination, opportunity for choice, and lifestyle satisfaction varied according to the living or working environment. In a subsequent study, these researchers measured the self-determination and choices of people with intellectual disabilities who were transitioning from a more restrictive (congregated) work or life situation to an integrated, community-based work or life situation. The results of these studies have shown that there have been significant positive changes in self-determination and in the opportunity to choose as a function of the transition from the more restrictive to the community-based context.

Finally, there are several studies of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities documenting the connection between choice and Quality of Life. Kozma et al. (2009) summarized these studies by finding that people who moved into the community had more choices and experienced better Quality of Life and life satisfaction.

Shogren et al. (2015) also conducted a structural analysis regarding the relationships between the constructs of hope, optimism, locus of control, and self-determination in predicting life satisfaction in adolescents with and without

¹¹The OECD Life Choices Survey is an interactive tool that allows you to view and compare some key factors that contribute to well-being in OECD countries (member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). This tool was designed to allow governments to gather information for planning and evaluation, helping to identify disparities between population groups and evaluate progress towards achieving health goals.

cognitive disabilities. Hope and optimism directly predicted life satisfaction, but these effects were (positively) mediated by self-determination and locus of control.

Individualized Educational Plan and Inclusive Educational Pathways of Self-determination and Quality of Life

In the essay "*The courage to choose*" (2004) Fernando Savater claims that "man is a praxis being, that is, a being who acts". Carrying out an action does not just mean satisfying an instinctive urge but carrying out a personal project. As a living being, man certainly has biological programming, but precisely because he is human, he is called to self-program and self-determine (Cottini 2016). This drive to act autonomously characterizes all individuals, regardless of their abilities and skills, and for this reason it is an element that underpins everyone's Quality of Life (Giaconi 2015). In this sense, education must necessarily consider the dimension of self-determination, especially when people have disabilities.

In line with Schalock and Verdugo Alonso (2002) and the ICF perspective, disability is defined as the outcome of the interaction between a person's characteristics and their living environments. Disability is not the consequence of the related disease but depends on the availability of facilitators and barriers that fuel or limit the person's activities and participation in community life. Based on this evidence, the task of the school is to improve the human functioning and health of pupils with disabilities through the acquisition of skills, the provision of supports/facilitators, the removal of barriers, promoting access and participation in all areas of life, with reference to learning and knowledge development, communication, and socialization (Bocci 2021). Student participation is based on the principle of Self-determination defined by the UN Convention (2006) and understood as respect for the intrinsic dignity, individual autonomy (including the freedom to make one's own choices) and independence of persons.

In Italy, ten years after the ratification of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, the right to self-determination finds concreteness in the school world from 1 September 2019, with the entry into force of the corrective decree 66/2017 on inclusion school, which establishes that "the student will participate directly in the drafting of the functioning profile and in the drafting of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), as will his parents". In this sense, even the drafting of the IEP, of the educational project calibrated on the needs of the individual pupil with certified disability, considers the principle of self-determination (Guay 2022). The single model for the IEP, the guidelines, and the assignment of support measures, in Italy, are established in the Interministerial Decree of 29 December 2020, n. 182. The subsequent corrective provisions of Ministerial Decree no. 153 of 1 August 2023 modified the functioning of the working groups, actions, and measures to be undertaken, as well as the drafting of the documents. This educational plan must involve the constant search for methods and tools to ensure that the design process itself becomes inclusive, guaranteeing the protagonism of the pupil with disabilities. This paradigm shift has

increased the need to define a person-centred planning, on the *plurality of dimensions of the student's life* (Giacconi 2015).

Through the IEP, the school undertakes to positively welcome the student with disabilities (including intellectual and developmental). It represents a document in which "the balanced and integrated interventions are described, in a given period of time, for the purpose of realizing the right to education and instruction" (DPR, 24 February 1994, p. 67).

Through the IEP, the school undertakes to positively welcome the student with disabilities. It represents a document in which "the balanced and integrated interventions are described, in a given period of time, for the purpose of realizing the right to education and instruction" (1994). It includes related educational rehabilitation and socialization projects and integrates school and extracurricular activities. The functionality of its use is directly proportional to the level of collaboration between curricular and support teachers. In fact, for the IEP not to translate into an instrument of exclusion, marginalization, the result of a dysfunctional use of the specialized teacher, it needs a horizontal application "that puts all the actors in synergistic communication, through teaching strategies that are a hinge between the 'disabled pupil and his classmates and among teachers' (2007, p. 6). A practical example for a good quality of student inclusion could be the product of collaboration between all teachers, to agree the objectives set in the class work schedule and those set out in the IEP. Another example of inclusive didactic action could be the use of strategies and ways of working such as tutoring, cooperative learning, laboratory didactics, friendship and help networks between peers, which have the purpose of activating resources - also informal - of the class group.

However, there are some risks inherent in using IEP. Surely a first risk could be that of believing that a meticulous recognition of the functioning profile could lead to a certain prediction of who the single individual will become, neglecting the set of unforeseen elements that the dynamism of the developmental age and the offers of stimuli environmental factors can interpose. Obviously, we are aware that it is very complicated to make the design representation of the operators coincide with the image that the learner with disabilities can develop of himself and his potential for autonomy, but we must never forget that the learner must be considered a privileged interlocutor, able to have ideas, thoughts, and emotions to discover and enhance. A further risk is "that of stiffening the vitality of the minor in a specific and static formal representation over time, also procedurally correct: this is the case of IEP which adopt a language and standardized formulas identical to themselves over the years, almost as if the Individualized Educational Plan is a bureaucratic report rather than the evolutionary narration of life stories." (Peacock 2014). Building a good Individualized Educational Plan leads to the acquisition of awareness that the planning reference horizon cannot be confined to the school, not only because the needs that the student with disabilities manifests are extensive and take on different forms, but above all because the planning of school activities is closely linked to the extracurricular experience.

In this sense, the IEP is a dynamic element inserted in the student's life project, to the extent that the school project takes into consideration the centrality and

globality of the minor as a person, as an existing person, i.e., always committed to building and find out who he can be in the different environments in which he lives and in the different phases of his life. This perspective has been emphasized by the assumption of the anthropological model of description of disability introduced by the ICF. A good Individualized Educational Plan must allow the pupil to be thought not only as such, but seeing him inserted in wider contexts, different from the school and not restricted to the family, in which he has the real possibility of fulfilling the needs of autonomy, competence and relationality. To recover the construction of an IEP-life project with an ecological value, the various relationships that are activated around the student with disabilities should not be isolated but conceived in continuous and reciprocal connection. A good Quality of Life should be the horizon for orienting school teaching towards wider social inclusion, with maximum possible autonomy. This leads us to think that the IEP is a life project not only in a horizontal perspective, but also in a vertical one, imagining that we are building the dimension of the future day after day.

In this sense, in a design that pursues self-determination and Quality of Life - according to the construct of Schalock and Verdugo Alonso (2002) - it will be necessary to promote an improvement of each single domain that constitutes the entire construct¹², considering the different levels of the social system that reflect on the person (Bronfenbrenner 2002). Therefore, it is necessary that the teacher is a promoter of significant outcomes in the various domains of well-being. For example: emotional well-being can be improved through increased confidence; interpersonal relationships improve by fostering friendships; material well-being varies by supporting employment; personal development evolves with a good education; physical well-being increases by ensuring adequate care; self-determination can be pursued by encouraging people to make choices, to take decisions, to take responsibility for their own choices; social inclusion takes place if you take part in community roles, integrating into the community; rights can be promoted with political participation (Giaconi 2015).

In this regard, in the wake of what has been outlined, it is suggested that innovative educational models be included in the IEP, such as Flipped Inclusion (FI), being tested at the University of Salerno since 2014, whose research data corroborate the transformative impact on students' learning, cognitive and attribution styles (Corona et al. 2020). This existential planning model allows us to glimpse the epicenter for the construction of a new *civilization project*, supported by the re-signification of community values (De Giuseppe et al. 2022). Based on the systemic logic of complementarity and social equity, the FI educational avant-garde model aims at building inclusive contexts for the promotion of the Quality of Life of self-determined people, of identities *in fieri*.

The span of the developmental age is particularly significant to be able to support the disabled student in building an identity that is as open, plural as possible, not flattened on a diagnosis that risks becoming binding and marginalizing. Obviously, the school, alongside the family, has a crucial role in accompanying towards self-determination and Quality of Life. In this perspective, as stated previously, the educational institution must "guarantee an ecological and also

¹²See previous paragraph for the description of the domains that make up the Quality of Life.

prospective value to an Individualized Educational Plan anchored to a life project" (Pavone 2014, p. 16), promoting interventions highly qualified and inclusive educational and didactic level. To be able to link the IEP to an existential project, it is necessary to foresee within its goals directly linked to real needs. The school, which acts as an orientation guide, stimulates learning and at the same time places the emphasis on the subject's abilities, as these are the ones that can allow him, through choices and operations, to function adequately in the context of membership. This entails considering the pupil not a prisoner of the deficit, but potentially rich in an action that must be urged to materialize by virtue of the situation proposed in the classroom, in school and outside school.

Therefore, for the student to be able to orientate himself towards elaborating an extracurricular project that allows him to be harmoniously included in society, the IEP must accompany him in the maturation of a gradual awareness of his own interests, motivations, attitudes, aspirations and, progressively, to broaden the knowledge of the reality in which he lives. In summary, the *journey* towards personal development and maturity passes through the enhancement of skills, the growing and continuous assumption of responsibility; the habit of making realistic, weighted, and autonomous choices that take into account - *semper idem* - the Quality of Life of self-determined people.

Conclusions

This study analyses the construct of Self-determination as a fundamental dimension of Quality of Life, due to the relevance that these constructs also have in the sectors of education, special education, and public health.

In this sense, the main models (Functional, Ecological, Learning and Agency Theory) - present in scientific literature - which analyse the concept of Self-determination are described first. From the analysis of the four perspectives, three common elements can be found: 1. First-person responsibility for one's own life, which includes both direct and indirect control of situations; 2. The effects of the environment and opportunities that influence the self-determination of the individual; 3. The idea that making decisions is a broader concept than choosing between various options, which requires a set of skills necessary to be able to exercise self-determination. Specifically, it is highlighted that self-determination is influenced by the places in which it is exercised. It is triggered by contexts that provide supports, by the opportunities that the environment offers, by the freedom of the causal agent to use external resources to achieve objectives consistent with its own needs and interests.

Furthermore, the main empirical research analysing the existing correlation between Self-determination and Quality of Life was also summarized, including for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The examination of the research by Cloutier et al. (2006) Schalock et al. (2005), Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998), Wehmeyer and Bolding (2001), Lachapelle et al. (2005) and the other authors analysed highlights that people with disabilities attributed maximum

importance to self-determination, the higher/lower levels of which were directly proportional to more or less high levels of QoL.

A critical element emerges from the analysis of this research. Most studies on the correlation between Self-Determination and Quality of Life are investigative or quasi-experimental research. In this sense, there is a need for more rigorous examinations of the two constructs: it would be important to have large-scale studies to establish these relationships. Both constructs can only be measured using self-report assessments and, therefore, such research is laborious but necessary because people with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental, cannot always reliably complete self-report measures. Furthermore, research should be expanded on the ways in which self-determination interacts to improve people's Quality of Life.

In the educational field, scientific literature demonstrates that, through personalized supports and interventions and thanks to access to individualized inclusive programs, people with disabilities can achieve good levels of self-determination, regardless of individual functioning levels. The school's task is to promote access and participation in all areas of life, encouraging active and direct involvement in educational activities, also through flipped teaching models (Corona and Ianniello 2022, Ianniello et al. 2023) that support intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci 2020). In this sense, it is necessary to promote inclusive and integrated educational paths, starting from individualized educational plans (IEPs) that support the right of people with disabilities to live "normalized lives", to experiment with Self-determination to act towards a flourishing Quality Life (Nirje 1972, Giaconi 2015).

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Greek People, the Orthodox Religion and Resilience in the Time of Crisis

By Maria Irimi Avgoulas* & Rebecca Fanany[‡]

This paper examines the role of religion in supporting health and the significance this has on emotional wellbeing in time of crisis for individuals of Greek Australian background. Melbourne, Australia, has a large Greek community whose oldest members were born in Greece and emigrated to Australia 50-60 years ago. The children and grandchildren of these immigrants were born in Australia but often see themselves as members of a cultural community distinct from the English-speaking mainstream. In addition to language, one of the most significant cultural factors handed down by the immigrant generation is a belief in the importance of religion and religious rituals in maintaining health. These rituals and beliefs are also a powerful tool for coping in times of crisis, illness and other challenges. Its findings are based on several qualitative studies undertaken in Melbourne between 2011-2016. The individuals that participated in these studies relied on religious faith and traditional practices to support them in times of crisis. Their specific beliefs reflect orthodox theology but also folk practices specific to this community and can be applied to wellbeing and resilience shown by this population in times of crisis. They have a strong belief in destiny and generally accept that God provides the means for addressing negative conditions. This paper describes the nature of their beliefs and outlines the ways in which religion serves as the basis for their resilience and ability to cope with adversity.

Keywords: Greek people, Orthodox religion, faith, resilience, crisis

Introduction, Background and Methodology

The journey of Greek migration to Australia dates back to 1827, however the vast majority of Greek people arrived between 1945 and 1982, searching for a new beginning in the “lucky country,” – “the country of opportunity” as they referred to, and viewed Australia. This process was made possible by the Assisted Passage Agreement that was made by the Greek and Australian governments in 1952 that opened the way for the Greek people to first migrate to Australia and then for the City of Melbourne become home to the world’s largest population of Greek people outside of Greece, and this is still the fact now, in 2021.

In addition to integrating into Australian society, the migrants and their Australian born descendants have maintained a strong cultural identity that includes strong links to their ancestral country, to the Greek language and to their faith the Greek Orthodox religion (for further discussion on this, see Tamis 2005). Generally, faith and the Greek Orthodox religion has been significant as a means

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of support and an ingredient of resilience for both the Greek migrants and their descendants too (Avgoulas and Fanany 2015).

The majority of Greek migrants to Australia arrived with a firsthand experience of war. Greece had been occupied by the German-Italian forces during World War II and this was followed by the Greek civil war. Despite their aspiration for a new start life, many of these migrants saw the move to Australia as a temporary measure. Most intended to return to Greece at some time, having achieved a measure of success in Australia that would allow them to settle in their native land. For most, this did not become reality, and then ended up staying permanently in their new home. This has generated mixed emotions. On the one hand, older migrants often note wistfully that, “Unfortunately we could not go back.” Nonetheless, many of them are remarkably positive and consider that they may have been luckier than those who stayed behind in Greece, commenting, “Look at Greece now and those that live there. We are luckier here.” or “All they have is the sun, water and the Greek land. We have it all here just go to Oakleigh. It’s Greece in Melbourne.” Oakleigh is a Melbourne neighbourhood that offers a large number of Greek businesses and services. Others simply note that, “Australia was good to us.” This same view is sometimes echoed by Greeks who remained in their native land, especially in the today’s context of economic problems: “You’re a lucky one. You left and gave a future to your children – you made a life for yourself and for your children. Look at us here. We have nothing, and our children have no future.”

For the original migrant generation, as well as for their descendants, Australia became home, and they became acculturated to the English-speaking context. They came to refer to Australia as their second country or ‘*patrida*’ (“*Αυστραλία η δεύτερη πατρίδα*”). The vast majority of migrants had few possessions and were not well-educated. They came from largely rural backgrounds and were unskilled. They did bring a store of traditional knowledge, views, and behavior that they made great efforts to pass on to their descendants, as the essence of their ‘Greekness,’ and that were gradually adapted to the Australian context.

The early years of settlement in Australia were difficult for the Greek people overall. Their positive outlook and resilience derived from their traditional culture and religious faith along with the view that maintaining their Greek ways would allow them to prosper. This knowledge, in particular, gave them strength and resilience in diaspora. As compared to other cultural groups in the multicultural Australian society, the Greek community has shown a unique level of attachment to their homeland which confers a sense of belonging (Kaloudis 2006). This has been supportive in the process of adaptation and acculturation and, for the original migrants, provided a refuge from the pressures of integration into the English-speaking mainstream.

Culture plays an important role in the life of individuals and populations and serves as a lens through which health, wellbeing and the experience of illness is perceived. The experiences of specific immigrant communities and the significance of cultural identity in overall wellbeing has been discussed extensively in the literature (see, for example, Lopez-Class et al. 2011, Unger and Schwartz 2012). The experience of migration is life changing, for the immigrants themselves and

also for their decedents. There is often little time for adjustment, and the attendant anxiety may also contribute to a number of health problems (Pumariega et al. 2005). However, migration and the nature of the associated experiences are difficult to predict and may be different for each individual (Berry and Kim 1988). It has also been noted that there are links between the journey of migration the experience of acculturation and the overall health of migrants (Miranda et al. 2011, Organista et al. 2003, Salant and Lauderdale 2003, among others).

This paper will explore the area of migration and health, in particular health and wellbeing will be discussed, and life in people of Greek origin before and after migration to Australia. Incorporating post migration participants that were in fact descendants of the original migrants, and how this can and has been a positive ingredient in time of crisis. Each participant was interviewed about their experiences, and the resulting texts were analyzed using the narrative approach to ethnographic study outlined by Savage (2006). One of the authors of this study, M-I Avgoulas, is a member of the Greek community in Melbourne and occupied a position as both an insider and outsider. For this reason, it was possible to carry out the interviews in Greek and for an emic and etic perspective to be identified (see Ong 1993, Savage 2006, among others). The discussion presented below consists of four sections: Health and Wellbeing in Greece before Migration; Greece after migration; Health and Wellbeing in Greece compared to Australia; and Life in Australia, migration and health. Quotations from the participants are presented to more fully present their perspective and views on their own experience.

Despite having lived in Australia for many years, the participants in this study were far more comfortable using Greek than English. This is a characteristic of the Greek community in Australia that has been widely observed; the migrant generation largely maintained a Greek-speaking identity. The first and second Australian generations are native speakers of English, however, and there is some evidence that facility in Greek is declining significantly among younger Australian-born individuals. Language is a significant factor in identity on multiple levels and is also significant in acculturation (see, for example Feuerverger 1989, Fishman 1977, Giles and Johnson 1981, Li 1995). In addition to its function in communication, language is an expression of ethnicity and cultural background (Authers 2006). For immigrants in particular, language may be a determinant in overall wellbeing, and the ability to communicate fully, including in the context of health care, may be crucial in the experience of health and illness (Unger and Schwartz 2012).

Despite the participants' preference for Greek, in fact, they were able to switch between Greek and English readily, and their normal use of Greek contained numerous English words which were specific to the Australian context. Some of these loan terms include: "homemade", "anyway", "alcohol", "jeans", "lungs", "hamburgers", "chips", "restaurant", "stress", "healthy", "computer", "children's hospital", "mobile", "bus stop", "drugs", "cheesecake", "ice-cream", "government", "happy", "yes", "cancer", "pollution", "inflection", "no hope", "soy milk", "very difficult", and "take it easy". When this language use was pointed out to them, a number of participants were quite surprised and also disappointed in themselves that they were using English words naturally and spontaneously and at

times had even forgotten the corresponding Greek words. This situation shows the importance of language maintenance to these members of the original migrant generation but also the inescapable presence of English in their environment as well as the existence of language shift (see Forrest and Dandy 2017). Overall, the English ability of these women was low, and they all relied on children and grandchildren for assistance communicating in the larger Australian environment. This was especially important in the context of health where their low level of formal education meant that they had little knowledge relevant to decision-making and tended to rely on traditional knowledge or on their English-speaking family members.

Health and Wellbeing in Greece before Migration

The participants in this study all seemed to feel that Greece before migration was a healthier place than Australia (generally the belief remains the same today particularly by the younger ones that the health benefits of life in Greece are endless “where to start – everything is just better in Greece, the food is yummy and good for you. People there (in Greece) are happier not just those at beach bars – but even at church”), and that being in their homeland was an aspect of wellbeing. Having migrated at a young age, however, it was notable that these perceptions did not reflect the adult perspective the women had gained over time or the experience of raising children. One commented on the fact that her memories of Greece were those of a child, saying, “We were strong kids then; the lifestyle was different then.”

Medicine has a long tradition in Greece dating back to Hippocrates and has remained a highly respected profession. Nonetheless, some participants recalled doctors in Greece being not very knowledgeable. One noted, “There were doctors, but they did not know the medication.” Others remembered only seeing a doctor for something serious, and others had never been to a doctor in Greece. One participant recalled, “In Greece in those years, I remember there was only one doctor for many villages and someone had to go personally to call the doctor, as there were no phones to contact the doctor to come and then the doctor would come on the donkey, it was very difficult.”

The participants were aware that illness was treated differently in the Greece of their youth than in Australia. A more traditional and informal approach was the norm as was the use of home remedies and treatments derived from plants. Several of them recalled specific treatments they had experienced or instances of being sick. The participants’ comments included: “My mother would rub me with petrol, she would give me warm drinks;” “I had whooping cough and I was taken to the seaside. The doctor had said ‘take her for some fresh air.’” One participant, who had had tonsillitis, said, “They put something like hay on a towel, they would heat it and it would take away the infection, as they couldn’t go to doctors.” Another participant reported being made to stay in bed when she was sick and that rubs and cupping were also used at the time.

Overall, the participants felt they had been healthier in Greece, and their explanation for this was that they ate healthier food and looked after themselves better. One participant said, “When I was a child in Greece, I would eat meat only once a week, and it was fresh. We didn’t have refrigerators. That’s why there weren’t so many illnesses.” Another commented that, “We were lucky that there were no infections then as the atmosphere was clean.”

The contrast between Greece and Australia was notable in the participants’ perceptions of health. One factor in this may have been the difference in age. Speaking from a position of older age, the participants had greater awareness of illness that they had not yet experienced at the time they were still living in Greece. Since most of their experience of dealing with health problems of their own as well as those of family members had occurred in Australia, it is possible they viewed Australia as less healthy simply because it was the location of the majority of the illness they had personally experienced. It is also the case that these participants were aware of concerns about health and the environment that are periodically discussed in the media, including the Greek language media in Australia, and that this also influenced their perceptions as did their views of their children and grandchildren that reflect the wider Australian context.

Greece after Migration

Asked to think about the current situation in Greece, the participants felt that Greece itself as well as the people there had changed since they left. They had all had the opportunity to visit at various times and observe their original homeland firsthand. One participant explained her perceptions, saying: “Greece has changed. When I was there, I would close my eyes and remember the past, the Greece I remembered. Everything has changed, and this saddens me. The people who live there are now different, I did not find my friends, everything has changed.” Another noted that: “Greece has changed, the way of life is very different, young people have no respect.” One commented on the difference between Greece and Australia, saying, “Here we work, and I have taught my children this as well. There, the young people just want to have a good time. Here we have a better life.” They all noted a significant difference between the Greek and Australian lifestyle and the fact that they had come to be seen as ‘Australian’ by people in Greece. Having left at an early age, these women had not experienced firsthand the changes in Europe in the final decades of the twentieth century which included major cultural and political change associated with European Union. At the same time, the participants were not conscious of the ways in which they had changed as a result of their experiences in Australia and, while they felt themselves to be the same as they had been when they left Greece, were unaware that their culture and that of people in Greece had diverged. Generally, they realized that they no longer belonged in Greece, and some of them were surprised to note that they, in fact, were disliked and feared as outsiders or interlopers. One participant explained: “[It was] terrible, my own father and brother did not speak to me. The people there changed. They would say ‘the Australians have come to take our farmland’.”

Another commented, "They disliked us and we them." One participant expressed a comparable concern showing her Australian association, saying, "They don't have money there. A lot of them are coming here for work, and this may result in our children here not having work."

The participants also commented on a number of lifestyle changes that they observed in Greece. These included statements such as, "They don't cook, they go out" and "They don't even go to church. The grandmothers don't even go. I go to church every Sunday." Changes in language use also stood out to the participants, particularly the use of the English language in Greece. One noted, "I hear on television shows from Greece that some Greek words are used wrong," adding that use of the English word "okay" is widespread. At the same time, the participants felt a strong sense of nostalgia and longing for the Greece they remembered. One said, "I do feel a pull to go back. I was born there, my village, but when I went everything was different, nothing was the same as the way I left it." One participant recalled that, on one of her first return trips to Greece, she wanted to bring some Greek soil to Australia but decided not to as the soil belonged to Greece. The pain and difficulty associated with what the participants referred to as having "two homelands" was illustrated by one woman who said that, when she went to Greece for a holiday she missed her family in Australia by the second week, but, when she leaves, she misses Greece. She commented, "That's what it's like to have two homelands." Another said, "It's our πατρίδα (homeland), my family is there. Here I feel and have always felt like someone who is free but a prisoner."

These participants expressed sentiments that show a significant aspect of the experience of migration, the difficulty in reconciling the effects of long term residence in a foreign location with the memories of their culture of origin. For many of them, the awareness that life in Greece had changed significantly from the form they remembered was an unexpected and often unwelcome realization, as was the fact that they, themselves, had gradually come to think differently from friends and family who had remained behind. This was evident in more easily observable aspects of their Greekness, such as the use of English loan words in speaking, as well as in more intangible ways, like attitudes about work, religious observance, and way of life.

Greek culture in Australia, which developed over the years through the efforts of the migrant generation as well as their descendants, reflects the memories of the original Greek settlers and has been adapted to the Australian context. This has created a situation where people of Greek background in Australia feel themselves to be Greek, and this cultural identity is defined by the standards of the migrant generation whose views and experiences reflect the Greece of their youth as well as their social and cultural background. By contrast, Greek people in Greece have developed a very different modern identity characterized by continuous progress from the difficult war years up to the present time, which is structured by membership in the EU and participation in the affairs of the European region. In this sense, the Australian Greek community has maintained a comparatively static conceptualization of what their cultural identity entails but has moved significantly into the English-speaking mainstream. This is, of course, an aspect of adaptation to

the Australian context and has occurred largely unconsciously among members of the Greek community.

Health and Wellbeing in Greece Compared to Australia

The participants in the study viewed health care as superior in Australia, but emotional health and wellbeing were seen as better in Greece. One participant noted, “The comfort that as difficult things maybe you can overcome them financially here [in Australia]. When my children were ill, I would take them to the doctor, buy the medication. There [in Greece] no. Our parents found it very difficult. There my siblings were ill, and they died, why they died? There wasn’t medication, the doctors were not careful? The years were difficult.” Another commented, “It’s better here, the healthcare.” Reflecting on the difference, a participant concluded, “Here people mainly go to doctors.”

One participant, however, added that, while formal health care was better and health knowledge more widespread in Australia, people were healthier in Greece. Other participants agreed that the lifestyle in Greece was better, at least as they recalled it. One commented, “The way of life is very different in Australia compared to Greece. It’s beautiful in Greece. You feel wonderful in Greece. Our life changed in Australia. You go to work, you come home and then you go to work again.” Another expressed this same view: “Here we work very hard. I don’t understand how over there they don’t have the anxiety we do. Things are harder now, as they don’t have work, but you go there and the shops and cafes are full.”

The participants felt that, in Greece, people experience less stress than in Australia. One said, “They don’t have money, but they have a good time.” This participant then mentioned a childhood memory of Greece: “I remember, as a child, I would go to the garden. I would take an onion with some bread and I would eat. But I would not stress. I would go to the fields for work and I would come home singing in the evening.” Another commented on the current economic crisis in Greece saying, “Things were better before the crisis. It was better, the way of life is better.” Nonetheless, the participants had many favorable views about life in Australia that related to their health and wellbeing. One noted that, even when she is in Greece, she tries to maintain the lifestyle she has adopted in Australia, saying, “I try to keep my rules. I have breakfast, a sandwich for lunch or tuna with salad. We have learnt a different way here.” Another participant commented that, “They live better in Greece, but the families are not close. We are more connected to our families here.” Another recognized that she had adapted to the Australian context and that this had been beneficial. She said, “We have adopted an Australian lifestyle that I think works well.”

The comments of the participants reflect the contrast they perceive between Greece and Australia but also demonstrate the degree to which they have become integrated into the Australian context. This fact was not apparent to many of them until they were asked to reflect on their experiences and talk about how they saw them. Overall, the participants recognized that they had done well in Australia and had achieved a lifestyle that surpassed what would likely have been available to

them if they stayed in Greece. Nonetheless, the perception of loss remains a significant aspect of their experience, and they are aware that there were tradeoffs in coming to Australia despite their own success and that of their children and grandchildren. This highlights the dilemma of migration that has been experienced by many groups, including the Greek community, namely that the gains they have achieved are necessarily balanced by losses, and it is not always possible to reconcile the two.

Life in Australia, Migration and Health

This section of the paper will begin with two quotes to set the scene for what will be discussed and can also serve as a reflection to what has been discussed – one quote is from an elder (who was born in Greece), and the second from a young person (a descendant born in diaspora).

“Religious rituals are good, especially during illness as they help us emotionally. They do not take away illness. They give us courage and strength.” – Elderly Greek participant

“I believe it [magic] because it happened to me in my old house. One night, and after it happened I went straight to church. One night, we went to see a play in the city with cousins, a normal night, nothing weird. I went to bed hearing dogs barking and, as a teenager, you hear all the stories that if there is a dog barking, there is an evil spirit. I found this out from school and friends, not my grandmother, and also the internet. Because when you start reading things on the internet, forget it, you can't stop. I woke up and I used to have a clock next to my bed. It was digital, had a light and I could always see the time and I had a look and it was around 3 in the morning. You know how they say at 3 o'clock, all the spirits come out. I went to move and get back to bed. I could not do it. I could not do it. I could not move and then I looked in my doorway, and there was a massive black figure in my doorway. I went to go and scream. I couldn't scream. I couldn't move. I felt like something was sitting on top of me. I couldn't breathe and I remember I started crying. I freaked out. I didn't know what was going on. The first thing I did, because it's the only one I know off my heart, was to recite the Lord's prayer, because through Greek school, we always said it, and then I managed to fall asleep, and two hours later, it happened again, and it had moved from my door to have moved on top of me. I freaked out and I couldn't scream. I just wanted to scream and call for help. I couldn't move. I could not breathe and I was in panic mode. The next morning, I didn't know how to explain what happened. One of our family friends is a priest, and I went to my mum, 'You have to call him. I need to see him.' I went and spoke to the priest, and he said that we have to do something about this. When we spoke, he gave me a little prayer to read every night and he said that, if anything else continues, to come back. Two weeks passed, and then one night, out of nowhere, I woke up and I stood up in my bed, and all that I can remember is hearing all these voices and I can't even explain it. All these voices around my head, and I was, 'No, this is not okay, and this time, I could move, so I got up and I ran. I ran to my mum and I told her we have to go back [to see the priest]. The next day, we went back, and the priest took me to the front of the church and he did this massive prayer and he put me under, not a cloak (the gown the priest wears),

and ever since then, it has not happened again. He said to me that it could have been either, not someone who was trying to hurt me, but something that was either wrong inside of me or something that wanted to get in my head and wanted to do me harm. I asked to see a priest because this is something a doctor could not understand, a possession from an evil spirit. They would think I'm losing it, but if you go to a church and say that, they would understand. I chose church because I always knew it can help because a lot of things had happened. My mum lost her sister to cancer when I was really little, and she would always tell me that she would go to church or get a priest for support and to help her prepare, and that's how I knew straight away that I have to." Greek – Australian young participant.

The participants in this study experienced a range of emotion associated with their experience of migration and settlement in Australia. While they had experienced happy times in Australia, memories of sadness, longing for family left behind, stress and anxiety related to the work context, the difficulty of not speaking English, and having to learn a new way of life are very clear to them. One participant spoke poignantly of the day they left Greece. Saying, "They took me to Athens, Piraeus, and, when the time came to leave. . . Oh God, if I knew how to swim and I was not afraid of death, I would have jumped. That's how much leaving impacted me, even though I was coming to my sister who adored me." Another explained, "We came here without knowing the language, without knowing anyone. It was challenging for us. The first year's there was a lot of sadness. We were afraid, and we would hide. I was afraid if someone knocked on the door, what would I say to them as I did not know the language. I was afraid if someone would come to my house and take my children. All this caused us stress." This participant concluded, however, that, "Australia made us people." This statement epitomizes an idea expressed by all the participants that the challenges they faced in Australia forced them to become self-reliant and resilient in the face of a strange society and culture. The participants were also aware of the connection between their experience of migration and their health, both mental and physical. One participant said, "The health of all immigrants has been impacted by migration." Another explained, "Migration impacted my health. I had a nervous breakdown. That's what the psychiatrist told me." Thinking about her experiences, other participants concluded that, "[Migration is] why I have health problems now." This same woman reflected on the importance of her faith in coping with the problems she experienced, saying, "Everything was very difficult. I was alone. It was very difficult and dangerous. I didn't know anyone, and I would pray, and I would ask for the Virgin Mary's help."

All of the participants in this study hoped and expected to return to Greece one day. This idea was an assumption that underlay their activities in Australia from their first arrival. In particular, it motivated their very strong desire to maintain their Greekness and, more importantly, to convey this identity to their children and grandchildren, even as they tried to adapt to the Australian context. One participant said definitively, "We all had the dream of staying in Australia for a few years only and to return to Greece." Another explained the dilemma of living between two cultures with the hope of returning to Greece as follows: "Everything changed from the minute we got here. Life changed. We did what the

Australians do. We kept the Greek language, [but] our manners changed. We have order here.” Another participant described the hope of migrants like herself but noted the well-known difficulty of return migration, saying, “We all came here with the same dream, to make money and go back. This didn’t happen, and the ones that did go back, returned to Australia.” The problems faced by people of Greek origin who decide to return to Greece has been well-documented in the literature (see, for example, Christou 2002, 2006, King and Christou 2010) and serve to show the real impacts of the psychological and emotional changes caused by acculturation.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties the [participants in this study, and other members of the original migrant generation of people of Greek origin to Australia, experienced, they have, as a group, shown remarkable resilience that is characterized by the integration of the first and second Australian generations into all levels of society. Nonetheless, the experience of migration affected the perceptions and attitudes of the migrants and changed them, relative to family and friends left behind in Greece. One domain of experience that has been significantly altered by their experience in Australia relates to health and wellbeing, where the contrast between the situation in the Greece of their childhood contrast sharply with the Australian context. While in certain ways, they tend to view their health and that of their family, as well as their access to healthcare services, as having benefited in Australia, they still have mixed feelings about the healthiness of the environment, especially the psychological dimension represented by life stress. This underscores the division between physical and mental health in the experience of migrants and suggests a need to better understand the psychological impacts of the experience of migration, especially as these individuals age and face additional physical challenges associated with chronic illness and the period of older adulthood. The perception of the Greece of their childhood that has been passed down to the next generations and that suggests a healthier, happier place presents a serious contrast with the Greece they have experienced as visitors later in life and serves, for many older migrants, as a source of concern and confusion that is difficult to reconcile with the advantages of their life in Australia. Overall, Greek migrants have achieved success in Australia, particularly as measured by economic status. This has contributed to physical health and vastly improved opportunities for children and grandchildren. It does not, in many cases, have the ability to soften the conflicting perceptions migrants often feel about their wellbeing that center on how Greece “should be” and confusion as to why it has, in their view, changed in ways they find concerning. This suggests a need to better understand the expectations of older migrants, the social factors that have motivated their actions over the life course, and the specific issues that exist within various of the cultural communities that make up Australia’s multicultural society. Further research on these topics would greatly enhance our understanding of the experience of migration and also suggest ways to more effectively address the needs of older

Australians who were born in other countries and who are effectively caught between cultures.

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