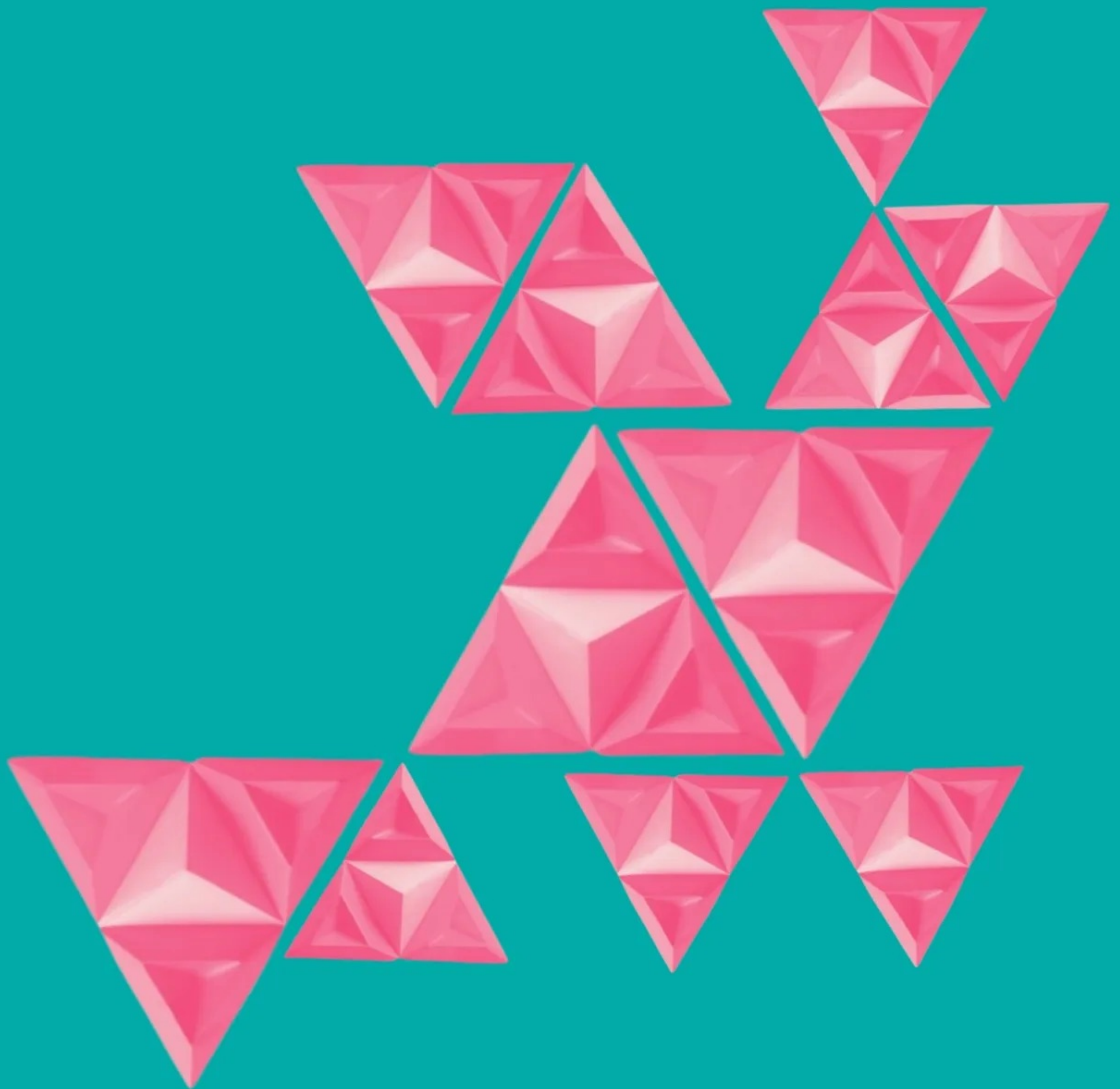


Confluence: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies

Volume VI (2022)



SYMBIOSIS SCHOOL
FOR LIBERAL ARTS

॥ वाचं धेनुमुपासीत ॥

Note from the Board of Editors

Releasing this issue has not been easy. After a long wait, we are happy to release Volume VI of the journal, originally planned for 2022. This issue is a culmination of perseverance, patience, and commitment of the authors, interns, reviewers and the editorial board. The delay was prolonged by the ‘coming-back-to-life cycle’ after the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many other facets of our lives, it has disrupted our traditional processes and timelines. Nevertheless, the steadfast enthusiasm of the interns, paired with the efforts of our editorial team, has ensured the realization of this edition.

This volume carries eight research articles, two commentaries and three book reviews. Social isolation during COVID-19 and its effect on creativity has been a concern in the contemporary world, and the lead article in this issue has analysed this situation. Many authors have focused their inquiries on representational politics in the realm of audio-visual media. These include investigating identity creation in ‘The Angry Young Man’ in John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, exploring stardom and intertextuality in the film *Om Shanti Om* and analysing the visual spectacles in mainstream popular Bollywood movies. Another article has focused on the contrast between the male gaze and the female gaze in the Mughal court through historical texts. Two articles discuss detective fiction – one analyses the representation of female detectives in contemporary television crime series, and the other argues that Sherlock Holmes is a cognitive empath. Another article discusses the social effects of inclusive hiring of transgender individuals at the Kochi Metro Rail Limited. The two commentaries in this issue focus on Russia’s role in the Yemen war and the relevance of virtual reality therapy in India. Rounding off this issue are reviews of three books – *Beyond Macaulay: Education in India, 1780-1860* by Parimala V Rao – which provides a comprehensive history of the Indian education system in the colonial era, *Global Masculinities: Interrogations and Reconstructions* edited by Mangesh Kulkarni – which provides insights into various constructions of masculinities around the world and *The Republic of Caste: Thinking Equality in the Time of Neoliberal Hindutva* by Anand Teltumbde – which discusses the suppression of Dalits under the caste system in contemporary India.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to our reviewers from across disciplines for sharing their time and expertise. Their rigorous evaluation, insightful feedback, and criticism have played an integral role in shaping the manuscripts and ensuring their scholarly integrity. We recognise that reviewing manuscripts is a time-consuming task that requires considerable expertise and effort. We also thank our group of interns – Aditi Vaidyanathan, Ahana Bhattacharji, Gunjan Periwai, Isha Mahajan, Mrinalini Niranjani, Parvathi Vijay, Rachana Jadhav, Rushil Airan, Shivani V, Tanisha Agarwal, and Tanvi Kulkarni – for their

contribution to the copyediting process. Their attention to detail, meticulous copyediting and proofreading have enhanced the overall readability of the content. We greatly appreciate their professionalism and the respect they have shown towards the authors and their work. A journal is incomplete without its cover. Our cover design team – Eva Banerjee and Vaidehi Rajput – has crafted an image that invites contemplation and aims to resonate with the content of the journal, providing a glimpse into the rich tapestry of ideas that lie within. The cover design invokes two ideas central to CJIDS – interdisciplinary triangulation and the possibility of multiple interpretations. A special note of appreciation is also due to the design team, led by Ahana Bhattacharji along with Rachana Jadhav and Aditi Vaidyanathan, who put in considerable effort in getting the website ready for releasing the issue.

Finally, we extend our thanks to Dr Shweta Sinha Deshpande, Director, and Dr. Anita Patankar, Founder Director and Advisor, Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, for their support and encouragement throughout this journal's journey.

Suchetana Banerjee

(on behalf of the Board of Editors)

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The Effect of Loneliness, Social Isolation, and Boredom on Creativity During COVID-19

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How to Cite this Paper

Krishnan, V. V. (2022). The effect of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom on creativity during COVID-19. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 1-24.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused monumental changes in the lifestyle of people all around the world. The pandemic has brought to the fore feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom. At the same time, there is also an increase in creative activity that has taken place during this period. Given the importance of creative endeavours to cope with the pandemic, it is fruitful to explore the factors that affect it and consequently, predict it. The present study hypothesised that loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness would predict the frequency of self-reported creative behaviour. A sample of 128 young adults was assessed. Participants were administered the Short General Health Questionnaire, Short Form Boredom Proneness Scale, Lubben Social Network Scale, Short Form UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8), and a modified version of the Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviours. Findings indicate that creative behaviour is significantly and negatively correlated with boredom proneness and loneliness. Regression analysis indicates that a model of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness significantly predicts creative behaviour, controlling for age, sex, and current mental health. Specifically, boredom proneness demonstrates a statistically significant effect. These findings are discussed along with their possible explanations and theoretical implications.

Keywords: creativity, boredom proneness, social isolation, loneliness, COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused monumental changes in the lifestyle of people all around the world. The pandemic has brought to the fore feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom. At the same time, there is also an increase in creative activity that has taken place during this period. Given the importance of creative endeavours to cope with the pandemic, it is fruitful to explore the factors that affect it and consequently, predict it. The present study hypothesised that loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness would predict the frequency of self-reported creative behaviour. A sample of 128 young adults was assessed. Participants were administered the Short General Health Questionnaire, Short Form Boredom Proneness Scale, Lubben Social Network Scale, Short Form UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8), and a modified version of the Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviours. Findings indicate that creative behaviour is significantly and negatively correlated with boredom proneness and loneliness. Regression analysis indicates that a model of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness significantly predicts creative behaviour, controlling for age, sex, and current mental health. Specifically, boredom proneness demonstrates a statistically significant effect. These findings are discussed along with their possible explanations and theoretical implications.

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Introduction

Creativity is theoretically conceptualised in different ways by researchers. Creative ideas are characterised as being innovative, original, and task-appropriate (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007). Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) proposed the Four C model of creativity consisting of little-c (“everyday creativity”), Big-C (“eminent creativity”), mini-C (“creativity inherent to the learning process”), and pro-c (“the developmental and effortful progression beyond little-c that represents professional-level expertise in any creative area”) (p. 1). Kaufman et al. (2012) also proposed five domains of creativity – “Self/Everyday, Scholarly, Performance (encompassing writing and music), Mechanical/ Scientific, and Artistic” (p. 298). In a broader sense, Besse (2012) defined creativity as “the abilities such as being imaginative, innovative, original, and engaging in novel problem-solving behavior” (p. 4). For the purpose of this study, creativity is conceptualised as any behaviour or activity that inherently exhibits these qualities.

The global pandemic between the years 2020 and 2022 caused by COVID-19 led to large-scale changes in the lives of people worldwide. People all over the world were in forced quarantine

(lockdown), working and attending college from home. An interesting phenomenon observed during the lockdown was the relative increase in creative endeavours (Karwowski et al., 2021; Mercier et al., 2021). In order to understand this better, it is necessary to explore other characteristics manifested during the lockdown. Research indicated that boredom was prominently experienced by people as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown (Droit-Volet et al., 2020; PTI, 2020). Studies indicated increased levels of social isolation among specific vulnerable groups such as older adults (Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020; Cornwell & Waite, 2009), HIV patients (Marziali et al., 2020), and working women (Gao & Sai, 2020) as well. COVID-19-induced loneliness was also reported to be experienced by populations across all ages (Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020; Li & Wang, 2020). This may be indicative of a potential relationship between the aforementioned factors and creativity.

Boredom and Creativity

There is a plethora of literature exploring creativity in the context of boredom. Mann & Cadman (2014) theorised that “boredom stems from a situation where none of the possible things that a person can realistically do appeal to the person in question”. For many years, boredom was considered to only have negative implications on creativity, intelligence, and personality (Schubert, 1977; Schubert, 1978). However, recent research delves into alternative perspectives. Creativity research predominantly conceptualised boredom as a state (emotion) or as a personality trait (Vodanovich, 2003). Some utilised the state approach, which employed boredom-inducing tasks, followed by creativity tasks. These indicated that incidental boredom affects the quality of ideas and level of creativity depending on the kind of boredom-inducing activity and the kind of divergent thinking task provided (Mann & Cadman, 2014; Park et al., 2019). In a convergent thinking task, boredom did not have any significant effect on creativity (Park et al., 2019). Liang et al. (2020) found no significant relationship between engagement in creative behaviour and state boredom of individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. An individual’s trait creativity was, however, found to moderate the relationship between engagement in creative behaviour and boredom. In other words, engagement in creative behaviour was found to negatively predict an individual’s state boredom when they have high creativity.

The trait approach involves assessing an individual’s propensity to be bored, i.e., boredom proneness. Boredom proneness was negatively associated with task effectiveness at work (Drory, 1982). Hunter et al. (2016) argued that although there was a negative correlation between boredom proneness and creativity, boredom proneness as a personality trait was not a predictor of creativity, specifically creative personality. Research exploring creative behaviour does so in the context of state boredom. On the other hand, research on boredom proneness examines it in the context of creative personality. This calls for an exploration into the relationship between trait boredom and creative behaviour.

Social Isolation and Creativity

For the purpose of this study, social isolation was defined as “the objectively quantified shortfall in an individual’s social relationships often measured in terms of social network size, diversity or frequency of contacts” (Malcolm et al., 2019, p. 1). The inability to leave one’s house and engage in physical social interaction with peers and family members could result in feelings of social isolation among individuals (Usher et al., 2020). Social interactions and social support are found to impact creativity. Fischer and Giaccardi (2007) highlighted the importance of social and material surroundings in creative activities. Parenting styles dominant in acceptance were associated with higher levels of creativity in children (Lim & Smith, 2008). Workplace creativity was also fostered by quality social interactions between employees and their work group (Fischer & Giaccardi, 2007). Barnes (2018) found that employees working remotely were perceived to have less creativity in comparison with co-working employees. Perceived social support was found to have a statistically significant positive correlation with creativity in young adults (Mahon et al., 1999). Perceived social support was also found to be a positive predictor of creativity in university undergraduates (Yousaf & Ghayas, 2015). This could be extended to the intercultural dimension as well, where engaging in intercultural friendships and relationships positively predicted employee creativity in convergent and divergent thinking tasks (Lu et al., 2017). Thus, it can be inferred that an objective lack of social support or social isolation could affect everyday creativity in young adults.

Loneliness and Creativity

Negative implications of loneliness on physical and mental health were observed among older adults (Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020; Tomaka et al., 2006), remote working employees (Barnes, 2018), and young adults (Matthews et al., 2016). Loneliness was defined as “a perceived deficit between actual and desired quality or quantity of relationships” (Malcolm et al., 2019, p. 1). Recent research found significant negative correlations between loneliness and creativity (Mahon et al., 1999; Besse, 2012). However, studies indicated a positive correlation between an individual’s perception of loneliness and creativity. Thus, individuals who viewed their experience of loneliness positively were associated with being more creative (Besse, 2012). The role of creativity as a mediator between accepting parenting styles and loneliness was also established (Lim & Smith, 2008). These findings corroborate the aforementioned literature indicating that social support is essential in facilitating creativity.

Although studies have explored the effects of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness on creativity individually, their compounded effect is scarcely investigated. Additionally, most of these studies are conducted in Western or other South Asian countries and it remains to be seen whether or not the results obtained would be similar in an Indian context. Creativity is

conceptualized and assessed in different manners across studies, be it through creative performance on a task or creative behaviour demonstrated. While most studies focus on performance or task-based creativity, everyday creative behaviours are relatively unexplored, especially in the aforementioned contexts of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness.

The lockdown-induced change to a predominantly virtual lifestyle could be particularly hard for young adults as it also coincides with a paradigm shift from adolescence into adulthood (Arnett, 2001). Studies examining the effect of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom on young adults are few and far between and they primarily discuss the broader implications on mental health or the specific effects on aspects such as depression and social media usage (Matthews et al., 2016; Primack et al., 2017). The experience of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness during the lockdown on young adults is yet to be thoroughly explored.

Some studies have explored creativity in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. They identified the pandemic to be a catalyst in driving creative action (Beghetto, 2021) as well as explored the role of creativity in coping with the pandemic (Karwowski et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2021). Creativity also serves as an avenue for meaning-making during the pandemic (Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020). While there is an increase in creativity during the lockdown, studies exploring it in the context of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness are limited. Given their theoretical linkages with creativity, investigating these factors as predictors of young-adult creativity during the lockdown is a fruitful endeavour. Thus, the present study aims to bridge these gaps in the existing literature and explore the compounded effect of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness on the frequency of young-adult creative behaviour in urban India during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The objectives of this study are:

- To assess the levels of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness concurrently in young adults in urban India during the COVID-19 lockdown
- To assess the extent of creative behaviour in young adults in urban India during the COVID-19 lockdown
- To study the individual relationships between all study variables (loneliness, social isolation, boredom proneness, age, sex, social desirability)
- To determine whether loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness are predictors of creativity during COVID-19

Consequently, this study aims to answer the question – What is the effect of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness on creativity in young adults during the COVID-19 lockdown? It hypothesizes that the frequency of self-reported creative behaviour in young adults will be predicted by loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness.

Materials and Methods

Materials

Participants were required to respond to the following instruments –

Short General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg & Blackwell, 1970)

It is a 12-item questionnaire used to assess the general mental health of a non-clinical population. The questionnaire consists of a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 0 to 3. For positive statements, 3 = more so than usual or better than usual, 2 = same as usual, 1 = less so than usual or less than usual, and 0 = much less than usual. For negative statements, 0 = not at all, 1 = no more than usual, 2 = rather more than usual, and 3 = much more than usual. The scoring for this instrument is such that each item is referred to a symptom and dichotomised into two values: 0 = “absence of the symptom” and 1 = “presence of the symptom. The maximum score is 12 while the minimum score is 0 (Kim et al., 2013; Sánchez-López & Dresch, 2008). Higher scores indicate poor mental health and consequently, greater psychological distress. This scale is chosen to assess the general mental health and well-being of the sample, given the implications of COVID-19 and the potential toll it might have taken on their mental health.

Boredom Proneness Scale – Short Form (Struk et al., 2017)

This is an 8-item questionnaire to measure a participant’s boredom proneness, or propensity to be bored. It consists of a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 0 to 7 where 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = somewhat agree, and 6 = strongly agree. Participants have to rate each of the given statements on this scale. No items are reverse-scored. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher boredom proneness. Struk et al. (2017) established construct validity by correlating the measure with other appropriate measures of aggression, anxiety, stress, depression, anxiety, ADHD symptoms, “spontaneous mind-wandering, and lapses of attention” (p. 10).

Short-Form UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8) (Hays & DiMatteo, 1987)

This is an 8-item questionnaire measuring the levels of loneliness in a participant. It consists of a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 4 where 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = often. Participants rate each of the given statements on this scale, with some items being reverse-scored. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher loneliness. This scale is chosen to provide measures of participant loneliness or their subjective evaluation of their social network and relationships. Xu et al. (2018) found the Chinese form of ULS-8 to have good construct validity, high internal consistency, and convergent validity among Chinese adolescents.

Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviours (BICB) (Batey, 2007)

This is a 34-item questionnaire designed to measure creative behaviour in participants. It is used in a modified form and the existing dichotomous response format is changed into a 4-point Likert Scale from 0 to 4 assessing the frequency of creative behaviour during the months of lockdown (will vary depending on when data collection is done; for now, it is assumed to be 6 months). 0 = not at all, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = frequently, 4 = very frequently. None of the items are reverse-scored. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher creative behaviour. This scale is chosen to measure the level of engagement of participants in everyday creative activity, and, thereby, assess their creative behaviours.

Lubben Social Network Scale (Lubben et al., 2006)

It is a 6-item questionnaire used to measure the levels of social networks in participants. It consists of a 6-point Likert Scale ranging from 0 to 5 where 0 = none, 1 = one, 2 = two, 3 = three or four, 4 = five through eight, and 5 = nine or more. No items are reverse-scored. High scores on the scale indicate a robust social network and high social support whereas lower scores signify social isolation. This scale is chosen to measure the objective level of social networks of participants. Low scores on this scale imply social isolation, which is the objective lack of a person's social networks and relationships. The scale showed high internal consistency and discriminant validity among three distinctly different European community-dwelling populations (Lubben et al., 2006).

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form C (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960)

It is a 13-item questionnaire used to measure social desirability. It records a dichotomous response for each question where 0 = false, and 1 = true. Scores from this instrument are used to control for lack of participant honesty and the social desirability effect. Higher scores on the scale signify the need for greater social desirability. This scale is used to control for the effect of social desirability on the results of the study.

In addition to the instruments mentioned above, participants also filled out an informed consent form, stating that they had understood the purpose of the study and consequently, consented to participate. 3 items were chosen to serve as attention checks. All the aforementioned instruments were chosen to suit the demographics of the population being studied.

Participants

Young adults across India, ranging from 18 to 25 years of age, participated in the study. The a-priori estimated sample size, calculated using G*Power was 115 participants. This figure was arrived at by using an F-test (Linear multiple regression: Fixed model R^2 , deviation from zero; effect size = 0.15; α = 0.05; power = 0.85; predictors = 7). Participants were recruited by circulating the survey within the researcher's social network and these contacts were then asked to circulate it in their respective networks as well using platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Thus, participants were recruited using convenience sampling followed by snowball sampling. Based on the data collected, participants were selected if they fell within the required age bracket, score 7 or more on the English fluency self-assessment, and passed two out of three attention checks. The final sample size was 128 participants (90 females, 38 males). Based on this sample size, the achieved power computed post-hoc was 0.91 (Linear multiple regression: Fixed model R^2 , deviation from zero; effect size = 0.15; α = 0.05; sample size = 128; predictors = 6).

Design

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design. Participants responded to the informed consent form, failing which they were not allowed to participate. After consenting to participate, participants were required to complete the 84-item questionnaire on Google Forms consisting of the instruments mentioned above. The form contained questions about the age, sex, and English language fluency of the participant and standard instructions for filling out each scale. All the scales were retained in their original form except the BICB which was modified as detailed above. On completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed by providing them with resources to seek out professional help and support if they feel uncomfortable or unsettled.

Procedure

The consolidated Google form consisting of all the above-mentioned details and scales was circulated among participants. Only those participants who consented to participate in the study were able to access the scales. Participants were required to complete and submit the questionnaire online. Responses were anonymously recorded in an automated manner on a Google Sheet. This means that the names and email addresses of participants were not recorded. There were no follow-ups for data collection. Data was considered only for those participants who fell within the required age bracket, scored 7 or more on the English fluency self-assessment, and passed two out of three attention checks.

All the necessary ethical procedures were followed while conducting the study. Requisite ethical approval was obtained from the necessary authorities and all participants were informed of the ethical approval status of the study.

Results

The consolidated 87-item questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms to the target population satisfying the inclusion criteria. 153 responses were recorded out of which 1 was incomplete. A total of 152 (46 male, 106 female) participants filled out the questionnaire and completed the study. Out of these, 128 (38 male, 90 female) participant responses were considered valid based on the inclusion criteria of age, English language fluency, and attention checks. The General Health Questionnaire was to be considered as an exclusion criterion. However, the sample size after exclusion was too small to conduct a regression analysis. Hence, current mental health was incorporated into the regression model.

Data analysis was carried out using JASP 0.14.0.0. The variable sex was coded such that 1=Female, 0=Male. Single-test reliability analysis was conducted for all the scales used in the study. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables, followed by Pearson's correlations. Lastly, a multiple hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all the variables as seen in Table 1. This included the mean, standard deviation, variance, maximum and minimum values.

	Age	Sex	Current Mental Health (Distress)	Loneliness	Social Network	Boredom Proneness	Creative Behaviour	Social Desirability
Valid	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	20.281	0.703	6.727	20.359	16.500	35.969	31.672	6.000
Std. Deviation	1.374	0.459	3.660	5.136	4.818	10.604	17.927	2.462
Variance	1.889	0.210	13.397	26.374	23.213	112.440	321.372	6.063
Minimum	18.000	0.000	0.000	8.000	5.000	10.000	0.000	0.000
Maximum	24.000	1.000	12.000	30.000	28.000	56.000	85.000	11.000

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Cronbach's Alpha Single-Test Reliability

Single-test reliability analysis was conducted for all scales. The Cronbach's alpha values are presented in Table 2. All the scales were reliable (Cronbach's alpha >0.7) except the

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form C, which had an alpha value of 0.585 and was, therefore, not included in the regression model.

Estimate	McDonald's ω	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.862	0.860
95% CI lower bound	0.827	0.821
95% CI upper bound	0.898	0.893

Table 2: Short General Health Questionnaire: Single-Test Reliability Analysis

Estimate	McDonald's ω	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.823	0.816
95% CI lower bound	0.777	0.763
95% CI upper bound	0.869	0.860

Table 3: Short-Form UCLA Loneliness Scale: Single-Test Reliability Analysis

Estimate	McDonald's ω	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.761	0.774
95% CI lower bound	0.697	0.704
95% CI upper bound	0.825	0.830

Table 4: Lubben Social Network Scale: Single-Test Reliability Analysis

Estimate	McDonald's ω	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.865	0.861
95% CI lower bound	0.829	0.821
95% CI upper bound	0.900	0.894

Table 5: Boredom Proneness Scale: Single-Test Reliability Analysis

Estimate	McDonald's ω	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.876	0.872
95% CI lower bound	0.845	0.837
95% CI upper bound	0.907	0.901

Table 6: Biography of Creative Behaviours: Single-Test Reliability Analysis

Estimate	McDonald's ω	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.598	0.595
95% CI lower bound	0.497	0.482
95% CI upper bound	0.700	0.689

Table 7: Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form C: Single-Test

Reliability Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis for all variables is presented in Table 8. Results indicated that age did not have significant correlations with any of the variables while sex significantly correlated with current mental health and boredom proneness. Current mental health (distress) had a positive correlation with loneliness and boredom proneness whereas it negatively correlated with social networks and these results were significant. Measures of loneliness, social networks, and boredom proneness significantly correlated with each other. Loneliness had moderate negative correlations with social network and moderate positive correlations with boredom proneness. Meanwhile, social network and boredom proneness had only a modest negative correlation between themselves. Creative behaviour demonstrated significant negative correlations with both loneliness and boredom proneness. It also negatively correlated with current mental health (distress) and positively correlated with social network, but the results were not significant. Social desirability had no significant correlations with any of the other variables in the study.

Variable		Age	Sex	Current Mental Health (Distress)	Loneliness	Social Network	Boredom Proneness	Creative Behaviour	Social Desirability
Age	Pearson's r	—							
	p-value	—							
Sex	Pearson's r	-0.104	—						
	p-value	0.243	—						
Current Mental Health (Distress)	Pearson's r	0.108	0.223 *	—					
	p-value	0.226	0.011	—					
Loneliness	Pearson's r	-0.067	0.062	0.490 ***	—				
	p-value	0.453	0.484	< .001	—				
Social Network	Pearson's r	0.032	0.007	-0.219 *	-0.410 ***	—			
	p-value	0.719	0.936	0.013	< .001	—			
Boredom Proneness	Pearson's r	-0.063	0.228 **	0.578 ***	0.537 ***	-0.282 *	—		
	p-value	0.483	0.010	< .001	< .001	0.001	—		
Creative Behaviour	Pearson's r	-0.108	-0.043	-0.091	-0.199 *	0.148	-0.250 **	—	
	p-value	0.223	0.633	0.305	0.024	0.096	0.004	—	
Social Desirability	Pearson's r	-0.054	-0.070	-0.086	-0.148	-0.023	-0.126	-0.005	—
	p-value	0.549	0.434	0.332	0.095	0.795	0.157	0.955	—

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 8: Pearson's Correlations

Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis

A three-step multiple hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive value of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom with respect to creative behaviour, controlling for covariates such as age, sex, and current mental health. The first step included age and sex. The second step included age, sex, and current mental health. The final step comprised age, sex, current mental health, loneliness, social network, and boredom proneness. The results of the step-wise regression analysis are detailed in Tables 9-14. The R-squared value of the final model was 0.102. There was an increase of 8.2% in the R-squared value in the alternative model in

comparison with the null model and these results were significant ($p=0.014$). In terms of the individual effects of variables, boredom proneness was found to be a significant negative predictor of self-reported creative behaviour ($B= -0.262$, $p=0.025$). Loneliness was also a negative predictor of creative behaviour but the results were not significant. Social network was found to be a positive predictor of self-reported creative behaviour, but the results were not significant in this case as well.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	p
H ₀	0.121	0.015	-0.001	17.937	0.015	0.931	2	125	0.397
H ₁	0.140	0.019	-0.004	17.965	0.005	0.607	1	124	0.437

Note. Null model includes Age, Sex

Table 9: Regression Model Summary – Step 1

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H ₀	Regression	599.213	2	299.606	0.931	0.397
	Residual	40215.006	125	321.720		
	Total	40814.219	127			
H ₁	Regression	795.249	3	265.083	0.821	0.484
	Residual	40018.970	124	322.734		
	Total	40814.219	127			

Note. Null model includes Age, Sex

Table 10: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) – Step 1

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H ₀	(Intercept)	63.341	24.047		2.634	0.010
	Age	-1.488	1.164	-0.114	-1.278	0.204
	Sex	-2.127	3.489	-0.054	-0.610	0.543
H ₁	(Intercept)	62.724	24.098		2.603	0.010
	Age	-1.364	1.177	-0.105	-1.159	0.249
	Sex	-1.462	3.597	-0.037	-0.407	0.685
	Current Mental Health (Distress)	-0.351	0.451	-0.072	-0.779	0.437

Table 11: Regression Coefficients – Step 1 Coefficients

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	p
H ₀	0.140	0.019	-0.004	17.965	0.019	0.821	3	124	0.484
H ₁	0.319	0.102	0.057	17.405	0.082	3.704	3	121	0.014

Note. Null model includes Age, Sex, Current Mental Health (Distress)

Table 12: Regression Model Summary – Step 2

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H ₀	Regression	795.249	3	265.083	0.821	0.484
	Residual	40018.970	124	322.734		
	Total	40814.219	127			
H ₁	Regression	4160.977	6	693.496	2.289	0.040
	Residual	36653.242	121	302.919		
	Total	40814.219	127			

Note. Null model includes Age, Sex, Current Mental Health (Distress)

Table 13: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) – Step 2

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H ₀	(Intercept)	62.724	24.098		2.603	0.010
	Age	-1.364	1.177	-0.105	-1.159	0.249
	Sex	-1.462	3.597	-0.037	-0.407	0.685
	Current Mental Health (Distress)	-0.351	0.451	-0.072	-0.779	0.437
H ₁	(Intercept)	88.208	26.844		3.286	0.001
	Age	-2.007	1.158	-0.154	-1.733	0.086
	Sex	-1.030	3.535	-0.026	-0.291	0.771
	Current Mental Health (Distress)	0.751	0.553	0.153	1.357	0.177
	Loneliness	-0.404	0.392	-0.116	-1.031	0.304
	Social Network	0.242	0.353	0.065	0.685	0.494
	Boredom Proneness	-0.442	0.195	-0.262	-2.271	0.025

Table 14: Regression Coefficients – Step 2 Coefficients

Discussion

The results of the study provide interesting insights into the interplay of boredom proneness, loneliness, social isolation, and everyday creative behaviour in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is seen that females suffer from poorer current mental health and greater psychological distress during the pandemic as opposed to males, in accordance with existing research (Li & Wang, 2020). They also have a higher propensity to be bored. People with poorer current mental health demonstrate greater loneliness, boredom proneness, and social isolation. This is aligned with findings that point to an increase in the experience of negative emotions during the pandemic (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Dimitra & Ioannis, 2020; Id et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). Experiencing greater loneliness, boredom proneness and social isolation could potentially explain the deterioration of mental health as well.

Boredom, social isolation, and loneliness correlate with each other in a manner consistent with previous literature, even in the given context of the pandemic. Individuals who are more socially isolated are lonelier (Matthews et al., 2016; Tomaka et al., 2006). Similarly, higher levels of boredom proneness are associated with increased loneliness (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986; Skues et al., 2016). A novel correlation found through this study is between social isolation and boredom proneness. Higher boredom proneness is associated with increased social isolation, which is also a novel addition to the existing body of literature.

In terms of creativity, a higher frequency of self-reported creative behaviour is associated with reduced levels of loneliness and social isolation, consistent with existing work in the domain of creativity research. Previous studies highlighted the positive effects of state boredom on creativity. However, trait boredom was found to negatively correlate with creativity and this finding is supported by the present study. It was hypothesised that the frequency of self-reported creative behaviour can be predicted by loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness. On controlling for the effects of age, sex, and current mental health, results indicate that 10.2% of the variance in the frequency of self-reported creative behaviour can be explained by loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness. In other words, a regression model consisting of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness significantly predicts self-reported creative behaviour, controlling for the effects of age, sex, and current mental health. H_1 is, thus, not rejected.

When the effects of individual predictors are examined, it is found that boredom proneness significantly and negatively predicts the frequency of self-reported creative behaviour during the pandemic. In other words, individuals who have a lower propensity to be bored are likely to engage in creative behaviour more frequently. This is in contrast to existing literature that explores boredom proneness and creativity. Hunter et al. (2016) concluded that boredom proneness is not a predictor of creativity, over and above personality. This difference in findings could be explained by methodological variations; this study does not control for personality. Additionally, Hunter et al. (2016) conceptualised creativity in terms of creative personality whereas, in this study, creativity is conceptualised in terms of the frequency of engagement in creative behaviour.

Vodanovich and Kass (1990) proposed that boredom proneness has conceptual similarities with certain factors such as a lack of external stimulation, deficiencies in internal stimulation, low affective responses, perception of the slower passage of time, and imposing constraints. Research done during the COVID-19 pandemic indicates that individuals are likely to experience feelings such as the slowing down of time (Droit-Volet et al., 2020). Additionally, constraints are imposed on physical movement to comply with social distancing norms. This could also result in people suffering from a lack of external stimulation that they would otherwise gain from social interactions and experiences in the external world. Thus, individuals scoring higher on boredom

prone to experience these feelings in a heightened manner, affecting their inclination to engage in creative behaviour. For instance, high boredom proneness could be due to constraints resulting in a lack of external stimulation, which affects an individual's ability to be imaginative and original. A lack of internal stimulation could also hamper creativity because individuals may not feel intrinsically motivated to engage in creative behaviour. Another plausible explanation is that individuals who have a higher propensity to be bored may be unable to sustain creative behaviours for long periods. Thus, they might engage in a wide variety of creative activities but the frequency of a particular creative behaviour might be lower as compared to an individual scoring lower on boredom proneness.

In terms of the relationship between loneliness and social isolation with creativity, the results of this study are consistent with the existing literature in these domains. Although loneliness and social isolation correlate with creativity, they are not significant predictors of creative behaviour. Existing literature highlights the role of social relationships in creativity. However, these findings indicate that the subjective and objective lack of social relationships does not have significant predictive value when it comes to creative behaviour. The study also indicates that loneliness negatively predicts creative behaviour frequency, i.e., lonelier people are less likely to demonstrate creative behaviour, but the results are not significant. An explanation for this outcome as offered by Mahon et al. (1996) is that lonely individuals direct their energy and resources toward identifying ways to mitigate their loneliness and, therefore, do not have adequate time and energy to spend on creative endeavours. Social network is a positive predictor of creative behaviour. Consequently, people who are more socially isolated are likely to be less frequently engaged in creative behaviour. These results, too, are not significant. There could be two probable explanations for these findings. First, higher social isolation results in a lack of social interaction and experience that individuals can draw inspiration from to engage in creative behaviour. Second, a lack of encouragement from other people would serve as a deterrent to engaging frequently in creative behaviour. Limited communication and the exchange of ideas due to a lack of social support could also be a factor hampering creativity (Yousaf & Ghayas, 2015). The predictive value of loneliness and social isolation in terms of creativity is probably not significant because the individual's perception of these feelings is not accounted for by the scales used for measurement. Drawing from the findings of Besse (2012), a more significant predictor of creative behaviour could be an individual's perception of the experience of loneliness and social isolation during the pandemic.

Conclusion

The present study is not without its limitations. The role of affect and its effect on creativity is not specifically considered in this study. Creativity could also be seen as an anxiety-alleviating mechanism and could also depend on the mood of an individual (Kaufmann, 2003). Further research can be done to explore these relationships in greater depth. Another factor that could

influence study outcomes is the extent to which lockdown protocol was followed by participants. Despite measures instated, several individuals may have violated isolation and stay-at-home practices. These individuals may have experienced loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness at lower levels, which could affect the results of the study. Furthermore, the BICB requires participants to evaluate the frequency of behaviour by relying on their memory of activities undertaken during the lockdown period. Results could be affected by participants' inability to recall information accurately. The fact that the lockdown period might have varied for participants and some people may have experienced unlock before others could also influence study outcomes. Respondent fatigue from having to answer 84 items could affect the study results as well. Future research can build on the findings of the existing study. An interesting area of exploration would be to compare the influence of state and trait boredom in their predictive value in terms of creativity. Researchers could also study an individual's interpretation of the experience of loneliness and social isolation and the role it plays in creativity. Finally, controlling for the effects of personality while examining the role of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness on creative behaviour could produce interesting findings.

The results of this study have several theoretical as well as practical implications. While several studies have individually evaluated the effects of loneliness, social isolation, and boredom proneness on creativity, this study is one of the first to explore the compounded effect of these variables on creativity, especially in the context of COVID-19. Its findings also enhance our understanding of young adult creativity, which remains a relatively unexplored area of enquiry. The context of the study offers a unique opportunity to understand the expression of creativity during times of crisis. Interventions utilizing creativity activities as a buffer against social isolation, loneliness, and boredom proneness can be designed based on the findings of this study.

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(Re)Discovering Identity and Narcissism in the Angry Young Man

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Abstract

How to Cite this Paper

Kharkamni, A. (2022). (Re)discovering identity and narcissism in the angry young man. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 25-37.

Self-perception is defined by how an individual commits to and identifies with a particular group; the absence of a mature identity related to the self, which stems from a personal as well as a collective socio-cultural level, leads to a crisis producing doubt about one's social function and often a sense of loss to one's personality. Jimmy Porter, the protagonist of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, was born in an era of lost identity and purpose in the English consciousness caused by the post-war situation during the 1950s. He portrays the youth of the time who felt that life was meaningless; this void and lack of identity is perhaps the most fundamental aspect when studying Jimmy. The Eriksonian concept of "identity crisis" attempts to warrant that Jimmy, along with an entire generation born before the Second World War felt a lack of purpose and meaning. This paper aims to investigate Jimmy's behavioural patterns in an attempt to study his personality and establish whether he is an individual suffering from a pathological case of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) caused by the trauma of the identity crisis he faces on a personal and collective level. Collective memories, which are individually held memories, help shape personal identity. Investigations explicate those individuals with a deficit in self-narrative create gaps and discontinuities in self-perception and behaviour. The inability to construct a coherent self-narrative and a painful experience of meaninglessness, chaos, and emptiness may manifest in individuals with PDs (personality disorders).

Keywords: *Look Back in Anger*, Angry Young Man, Jimmy Porter, Identity, Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

Introduction

In trying to understand and define ‘identity,’ one is faced with a multitude of difficulties primarily as it is related to various theoretical and interdisciplinary traditions, each focusing on the different aspects of identity and use of different research methodologies; it “is located in the borderland between several scientific disciplines, including developmental, clinical, and personality psychology, and sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and political science” (Jørgensen, 2018, p. 107). Erik Erikson was perhaps the first psychologist who addressed the concept of ‘identity.’ According to him, identity was constructed through social interactions and experimented with various behaviours and roles. Erikson approached identity from various perspectives and spanning an individual’s entire lifetime; however never arrived at a precise definition (as cited in Sokol, 2009, p.139).

Perceiving identity as an ever-evolving entity that shapes our life is a terrifying thought. It is the understanding that humans are not always in control of themselves or how they experience things. There is without a shadow of a doubt that society and the memory of its people are reflected in the kinds of literature of the time, especially if it were a cultural movement as significant as to produce the ‘silent generation.’ From a social and cognitive perspective, identity refers to the mental construct, that is, “the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is” (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012, p. 69).

For a considerable time, identity has been associated with individualism and self-definition; nevertheless, identity creation is also linked to other factors such as the social and contemporary context. The formation of a mature identity allows a person to traverse this world, connect with others, and assist in controlling emotions. This concept of collective identity “is grounded in one’s membership in larger social groups and one’s inclination to identify with a specific religion, nation, or ethnic group” (Jørgensen, 2018, p. 111). Alberto Melucci introduced his model of collective identity based on studies of various social movements drawing on the works of sociologists Alain Touraine and Alessandro Pizzorno. He argued that “Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (Melucci, 1995, p. 44). It can be said that memory and experience shape the *self*, as S. B. Klein and S. Nichols (2012) put it, “Memory for past episodes provides a sense of personal identity” (p. 677). As suggested by Yasar (2015),

The connection between the past, the present, and the future is a necessity for the integration of the individual into the social order. It is a necessary element of social and personal memory. Hence the lack of connection with the past destroys individuality and the personal identity on the psychological level. Jimmy Porter’s obsession with the present condition derives from the fact

that he cannot get (a) connection with his own past and it destroys his personal and social identity (p. 21).

In a modern psychoanalytical context, the idea takes on several forms: personal, social, and collective. ‘I think, therefore I am’ concerning the development of individual identity formation thus takes on a fresh perspective as the personal act of thought and identity must therefore accommodate a social prism. Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* portrays an entire generation’s sensibilities of the Angry Young Man movement, and Jimmy Porter became its spokesman. As such, Jimmy is perhaps the most recognisable advocate for the millions of angry young men existing in post-war Britain.

Jimmy was born in an era of lost identity and purpose; this generational identity crisis, coupled with the trauma he endured at an early age caused by the death of his father, reveals that he is an insecure human. Being unable to link the dull present with what is to come is perhaps the most terrifying thing imaginable. His nostalgia springs not from a world he had lost but from an imagined? world he never had: “If you’ve no world of your own, it’s rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else’s” (Osborne, 2016, p. 11). The play is born from a void created by the changing world scenario in the English psyche. The young, educated youth portrayed in *Look Back in Anger* is a confused soul, coupled with the post-war changeover in international politics further raises doubts to which he finds no answer. As Yasar (2015) posits,

The post-war era is a transition period, from modernism to postmodernism, for British society and the individuals of the reconstruction era have difficulties deriving from inability to get connection with the post-war institutions and values that had been the sustaining values for ages on the sociological level for British people (p. 14).

Jimmy portrays the youth of the time who felt that life was meaningless; it can be hypothesised that due to the post-war situation in Britain and elsewhere, individuals, especially those born prior to the Second World War, felt a lack of identity. For Jimmy, this can perhaps be his greatest insecurity. Jimmy Porter “was born out of his time” (Osborne, 2016, p. 96), and this identity crisis turned him into an “angry young man”. Dan P. McAdams, in “Psychology of Life Stories” writes:

[I]dentity itself takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme. (...) Life stories are based on biographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. Life stories are psychosocial constructions, coauthored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person’s life is embedded and given meaning (2001, p. 101).

Studies like those of Lind et al. (2020), Dimaggio, G. (2011) suggests that individuals, especially those suffering from PDs (personality disorder), experience a deficit in their self-narrative (life story), thus creating gaps and discontinuities in self-perception and behaviour. As Dimaggio (2011) argues, “Patients suffering from certain PDs are unable to provide elements from their autobiographies and instead resort to abstract, theory-like statements (...). In typical impoverished narratives, the landscape lacks detail and pictorial quality, with scarcely a reference to where and when a scene took place” (p. 166). The inability to construct a coherent self-narrative and a painful experience of meaninglessness, chaos, and emptiness manifest in individuals with PDs.

Jimmy and the Identity Crisis

In psychology, the term “identity crisis” introduced by Erikson means an individual who is unable to obtain an ego identity. Levesque (2011) suggests,

Ego identity is the sense of identity that provides individuals with the ability to experience their sense of who they are, and also act on that sense, in a way that has continuity and sameness. (...) Having a strong sense of ego identity, e.g., means having the ability to synthesize different “selves” into one coherent identity throughout time, creating an inner coherence and sameness (pp.1144).

Unlike many other developmental theorists of his era, Erikson’s psychosocial theory of human development covers the entire lifespan, including adulthood. Erikson defined a “crisis” as a sequence of internal tensions tied to developmental phases. Erikson’s theory states that how a person handles a crisis determines their personal identity and future development.

The character of Jimmy Porter in Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* belongs to a generation that has been bereft of its brilliant history, has a bland and uncertain present, and will confront an aimless future. As a result, an aloof, aimless, purposeless, confused, and hopeless generation was produced. The fundamental concern at the time was the identity crisis. Throughout the play, Jimmy Porter expresses his dissatisfaction with society, class and sex issues, and even his hate for religion. As Sierz (2008) perceptively puts it, “*Look Back in Anger* is not just an old play, it’s a cultural battlefield” (p. 3).

We find him continuously making complaints against the society’s corruption, injustice and irregularity: “I suppose people of our generation aren’t able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. There aren’t any good, brave causes left” (Osborne, 2016, p. 89). We find him constantly abusing and cursing society, the system, and even his near ones, that is because “Jimmy Porter like the rest of the

younger educated lot, feels cheated. And this dissatisfaction ignites Jimmy's anger. Nothing really happens for Jimmy." (Mukherjee, 2016, p. 113).

"Maybe Jimmy's aggression is a way of *concealing his insecurities, doubts and weaknesses* [emphasis added]" (Sierz, 2008, p. 17); he is unable to lessen his personal agonies or the people of his class and fails to convey his idealism to others "this sense of loss, both of identity and power, makes Porter an insecure soul" (Mukherjee, 2016, p. 134). Jimmy Porter blames class and the status system of society for making his existence and identity meaningless. He likes Cliff only because he (Cliff) calls himself a "common man":

CLIFF: Well, I suppose he and I think the same about a lot of things because we're alike in some ways. We both come from working people if you like. Oh I know some of his mother's relatives are pretty posh, but he hates them as much as he hates yours. Don't quite know why. Anyway, he gets on with me because I'm common. (*Grins.*) Common as dirt, that's me. (Osborne, 2016, p. 24).

He seems dissatisfied as he was born outside of his own time in a completely static, hostile, and unjust society; thus, he is unable to find any meaning. Engrossed in the 'Edwardian twilight,' Jimmy has lost touch with existence and identity in the present: "the core of Jimmy's emotional life —about which he is thrillingly articulate— is the feeling of loss, obviously related to the death of his father. The loss taught him not only anger, the central emotion powering the play, but also betrayal — loyalty is Jimmy's core value" (Sierz, 2008, p. 18). He was ten years old when his father died. The death of his father greatly influenced his personality. Jimmy says:

Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity. (His good humour of a moment ago deserts him, as he begins to remember.) For twelve months, I watched my father dying – when I was ten years old. He'd come back from the war in Spain, you see. And certain God-fearing gentlemen there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long left to live. Everyone knew it – even I knew it. (He moves R.) But, you see, I was the only one who cared. (Turns to the window.) His family were embarrassed by the whole business. Embarrassed and irritated. (Looking out.) As for my mother, all she could think about was the fact that she had allied herself to a man who seemed to be on the wrong side in all things. (...) Every time I sat on the edge of his bed, to listen to him talking or reading to me, I had to fight back my tears. At the end of twelve months, I was a veteran. (He leans forwards on the back of the armchair.) All that feverish failure of a man had to listen to him was a small, frightened boy. I spent hour upon hour in that tiny bedroom. He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. (...) You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry – angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. (Sits.) I knew more about – love ... betrayal ... and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life (Osborne, 2016, pp. 58-59).

He yearns for the companionship of anyone with whom he can share his opinions and sentiments about society and religion, which causes him frustration, disillusionment, and nihilism. From Jimmy's perspective, he has experienced nothing but hardship and pain in his quest for identity and existence. He tends to see everything through a pessimistic lens, which inevitably leads to demolishing all-established institutions and social values. As a result, he attempts to transform everything around him to meet his own expectations, yet, he is unable to fulfil his intense desire for the reconstruction of the external world. His inability to modify or reconstruct the people and institutions around him drives him to develop his own set of beliefs and ideas. As Yasar (2015) posits,

Look Back in Anger reveals the isolation of the first generation of the post-war British society from the concepts such as society, religion, the institution of middle-class marriage, the individual past, and idea of Englishness by making serious judgements about all the established institutions before 1945 (p. 14).

Jimmy's effort to discover his true identity heightens his sense of insecurity. We discover him in the midst of a class and gender battle. Cliff and Jimmy; two of the four main characters, are from the working class, while Alison and Helena are from the upper class. This caused social and sexual friction, resulting in Jimmy Porter's identity dilemma. He feels unmanly because of Alison's higher standing, and he also fails to arouse warm sexual feelings in his wife. Furthermore, Jimmy's personal trauma related to the death of his father and the subsequent abandonment of his mother also played a pivotal role in shaping his personal identity. Moreover, his personal identity can also be related on a collective level, influenced by the changing socio-cultural environment (1950s Britain).

This analysis of the character of Jimmy Porter from a psychoanalytical perspective forcefully proves that Jimmy, the main character in *Look Back in Anger* by Osborne, was a frustrated, disillusioned and hopeless "angry young man" belonging to the "silent generation". He strives to search for identity and existence in a society that is completely hostile to his point of view. M. Halbwachs in *Collective Memory* states that the community's shared past helps shape collective identity. In this case, the Angry Young Man Movement linked not just Jimmy but all the youth who felt that their narrative was disturbed.

Unmasking the Real Jimmy Porter

The quest for identity is perhaps the most salient feature of Jimmy's unconscious desire and the main agenda for the youth of the fifties. Many theories can be found that support the argument that trauma (especially those experienced in childhood) has a great impact on memory and self-perception; "the trauma violates the schemata of the person, is therefore hard to process and

as a result becomes poorly integrated into the self-narratives of the person” (Berntsen & Rubin, 2007, p. 417). Based on narrative psychology, identity is perceived as a story that is internal and evolving, that is to say, identity is a narrative that an individual constructs to make sense of the world at large: “the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and others” (McAdams, 2006, p. 4).

Following this theorisation of identity, it is observed that individuals with PDs (personality disorder) experiences deficits in the self-narrative, thus, creating gaps and discontinuities in self-perception and behaviour. Jimmy Porter lacks a mature identity, resulting from the trauma he faced on a personal and collective level. His identity crisis is the major contributor to his *pathological insecurity*, thus, leading him to develop narcissistic tendencies; “[i]n its clinical manifestations, narcissism implies pathological insecurity” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 28).

Narcissism may be defined as “[a] pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 669). NPD is built on these primary foundations, and the frequent portrayal of these traits *may* hint at narcissism. Durvasula, in her book, *Don’t You Know Who I am?* brilliantly details “The Five Clusters of Narcissism”, which are, in essence, traits narcissists exhibit. As she suggests, “narcissism is a pattern that is actually made up of lots of other traits, patterns, and behaviors. (...) If a person *consistently* [emphasis added] exhibits the patterns (...) on a regular basis, with little self-reflection, then it creeps into darker corners of toxicity and narcissism” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 44).

At an interpersonal level, the narcissist often demonstrates patterns that hurt and cause discomfort to the people around them. It is perhaps the most painful experience as they are interpersonal in nature. It is clear that Alison Porter is the victim of much of his abuse: “JIMMY: Behold the Lady Pusillanimous. (*Shouting hoarsely.*) Hi, Pusey! When’s your next picture? (*Jimmy watches her, waiting for her to break*)” (Osborne, 2016, p. 17). Jimmy clearly lacks empathy; in its pathological manifestation, it is “observed when the person rarely cares what anyone is experiencing or feeling” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 48). He simply does not care what other people are feeling, thus resulting in him making careless and often times hurtful as this dialogue suggests:

JIMMY: Oh, my dear wife, you’ve got so much to learn. I only hope you learn it one day. If only something—something would happen to you, and wake you out of your beauty sleep! (*Coming in close to her.*) If you could have a child, and it would die. (...) (*She retreats away from him.*) Please—if only I could watch you face that. (Osborne, 2016, p. 36)

Jimmy is abusive not only to his wife but also detests her family, “JIMMY: (*Capable of anything now*) I’ve got every right. That old bitch should be dead! (*To ALISON*)” (Osborne, 2016, p. 53);

“JIMMY: Sounds rather like Daddy, don’t you think? CLIFF: Don’t take any notice of him. He’s being offensive. And it’s so easy for him” (Osborne, 2016, p. 7). Although it was stated earlier that Jimmy likes Cliff only because he (Cliff) calls himself a “common man” that does not help him in escaping Jimmy’s tirade: “JIMMY: What do you want to read it for, anyway? You’ve no intellect, no curiosity. It all just washes over you. Am I right? CLIFF: Right. JIMMY: What are you, you Welsh trash?” (Osborne, 2016, p. 76)

Due to his lack of empathy, Jimmy makes thoughtless, dismissive, and unkind statements which make the victims feel dismissed, underserving, unseen, and unheard. “It is a pattern—a pattern of making dismissive, unkind, or thoughtless statements or gestures, which are often followed by (insincere) apologies” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 64). “CLIFF: She’s burnt her arm on the iron. JIMMY: Darling, I’m sorry. JIMMY: I’m sorry, believe me. You think I did it on purpose—ALISON: (*her head shaking helplessly*) Clear out of my sight! (*He stares at her uncertainly*)” (Osborne, 2016, p. 22). Durvasula states that understanding narcissistic abuse is complex and sometimes not always well articulated. However,

It is a pattern of psychological neglect, invalidation in dehumanization that causes significant stress or psychological harm or distress to the individual who is the subject of such abuse. (...) what it’s characterized by is: chronic invalidation; lack of compassion; lack of respect; lack of what we call mutuality back and forth and a sort of a cold indifference (10:26 – 11:01); The ‘love’ that narcissist sell it’s something very superficial; it is something that lacks the depth that a healthy intimate relationship has (MedCircle 2020, 12:33 – 12:47)

Narcissists are insecure beings and constantly feel out of control, therefore, they regulate their self-esteem from the outside, “they often attempt to exert tremendous control over their external worlds, and this includes relationships, their environments, and other people” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 55). It becomes pathological when it is a prevailing dynamic in relationships. Jimmy limits Alison’s contact with the outside world, including her family and friends; as he says “either you’re with me or against me” (Osborne, 2016, p. 91). Jimmy tries so desperately to regulate things around him, he cannot even bare to listen to churning bells, “Wrap it up, will you? Stop ringing those bells! There’s somebody going crazy in here! I don’t want to hear them!” (Osborne, 2016, p. 20). This may be seen as a subtle form of grandiose behaviourism as the bells and “noisy women” drown out his voice and heaven forbid for “hell hath no fury like a pissed-off narcissist” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 67).

Desire for or lack of control often makes narcissists paranoid; from a cognitive perspective paranoia is defined as “a strong tendency to feel that you cannot trust other people or that other people have bad opinion of you. (...) Because narcissists are so hypersensitive and insecure, they experience everything as a threat, and this can escalate to the level of paranoia” (Durvasula, 2019, p. 88). In short, it is the overreaching belief that everyone and everything is out to get

them: “ALISON: It isn’t easy to explain. It’s what he would call a question of allegiances, and he expects you to be pretty literal about them. Not only about himself and all the things he believes in, his present and his future, but his past as well” (Osborne, 2016, p. 40). And in order to deal with their paranoia, narcissists tend to seek assurance by means of other mannerisms, thus developing poor boundaries. This is a more informal way of saying that narcissists are impertinent. Boundary violation can take a number of forms, from unwanted physical contact to violating privacy.

CLIFF: (*Indicating Alison’s handbag*) Wouldn’t you say that that was her private property?
JIMMY: You’re quite right. But do you know something? Living night and day with another human being has made me predatory and suspicious. (...) When she goes out, I go through everything —trunks, cases, drawers, bookcase, everything. Why? To see if there is something of me somewhere, a reference to me. I want to know if I’m being betrayed (Osborne, 2016, p. 35).

It should be noted, however, that not all narcissists present themselves as pumped-up grandiose monsters; there is another side of narcissism: the “covert vulnerable narcissist,” according to Durvasula: the ones who play the wolf in sheep’s clothing. Jimmy Porter’s actions *align* with this specific trait set. Covert narcissists are not showy or grandiose in an obvious manner. Instead, they believe the world does not understand their special, unique, or great abilities. They also believe the world owes them something and maintain a *brooding anger* about not having received the things that they believe they deserve. They tend to be resentful of the world, of people in their social sphere and in their family, and of anyone whom they perceive to have a better life than they do. Narcissists cannot regulate emotion, and so they are prone to anger and rage-fuelled actions; if anything fails to go according to the wishes of the narcissists, they go completely berserk. Their interactions with other people tend to be hostile, and it is in this way that covert narcissism also closely resembles traditional narcissism:

COLONEL: (...) You were afraid of being disloyal to your husband. ALISON: Disloyal! (*She laughs.*) He thought it was high treason of me to write to you at all! (...) COLONEL: He really does hate us, doesn’t he? ALISON: Oh yes – don’t have any doubts about that. He hates all of us (Osborne, 2016, p. 67).

In relation to the social and cultural context of post-Second World War Britain, Jimmy as an individual is observed to be exploitative and vindictive. This is partly due to the fact that he never received the ideal world he has always dreamt of, thus, he portrays himself as the victim of circumstances. He is notoriously disloyal, and he seeks to marry Alison only to serve his means for revenge: “Some people do actually marry for revenge. People like Jimmy, anyway” (Osborne, 2016, p. 69); revenge for the identity he never received and the deep-rooted attachment issues he has with his parents.

ALISON: (...). Mummy has always said that Jimmy is utterly ruthless, but she hasn't met Hugh. He takes the first prize for ruthlessness – from all comers. Together, they were frightening. They both came to regard me as a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on. (...) ALISON: Just about everyone I'd ever known. Your people must have been among the few we missed out. It was just enemy territory to them, and, as I say, they used me as a hostage. (...) we'd gatecrash everywhere – cocktails, weekends, even a couple of houseparties. I used to hope that one day, somebody would have the guts to slam the door in our faces, but they didn't. They were too well bred, and probably sorry for me as well. Hugh and Jimmy despised them for it. So we went on plundering them, wolfing their food and drinks, and smoking their cigars like ruffians. Oh, they enjoyed themselves (Osborne, 2016, p. 43).

Muller claims that Jimmy is a typical Freudian case of “secondary narcissism” caused by parental absence:

His father must have signified an idealized male working-class role model for Jimmy, as he fought for the Communist Brigades in the Spanish civil war during which deadly wounds were inflicted upon him. This idealization of the father hero is even strengthened by the fact that Jimmy was the only representative of his family who, at the age of ten, remained at his father's deathbed. It is crucial to note the massive impact that this experience must have had on young Jimmy's psychological disposition: according to Freud, the attributes of a loved person lost in childhood are persistently internalized and become a part of one's own identity in order to overcome grief of loss (Muller, 2015, p. 176).

Personality pathology with regards to object relation also reveals that Jimmy is an insecure soul, caused by the lack of identity integration, and as such, he torments those who surround him as a means of coping with his meaningless existence. As Schlüssel (2005) suggests, “The loosening of parental ties and the respective states of insecurity are being met by means of adopting a sense of greatness and by taking up relationships which tend to be narcissistic and, thus, assist in fostering this sense of grandeur” (p. 386).

Conclusion

After the Second World War, there was a general sense of disillusionment in humanity. People saw real horrors, and amidst those horrors, they came to question the meaning of life and were in doubt if it was worth living in a society that seemed to lack a sense of identity and purpose. Jimmy's constant rant for meaning and “human enthusiasm” in an age of general discontentment seems rather a pitiful spectacle. “There aren't any good, brave causes left” became the motto of the era. Yet, not all individuals born during that time turned out to be like Jimmy or develop a deficiency in personality development.

As a spokesperson for an entire generation, Jimmy Porter became synonymous with the Angry Young Man movement. It must be made clear that the scope of this research has been to solely investigate Jimmy's personality. His frustration, anger, and mean-spiritedness lead him to obsess over the present, which, coupled with his desire for control and change, leads him to develop an extreme psychological disorder.

Jimmy is an extremely disturbed individual experiencing a crisis concerning identity; his alienation, idealisation of the past, and use of memory as a form of rationalisation take him on a darker path to make sense of the world. A rebel without a cause and a self-glorified gossipmonger, he wants to mean; a chance to cry out, 'I Am Jimmy Porter!'; it is about 'Me, and me alone.' Yet, he does not do anything about it. Instead, he blames, verbally abuses, and attacks the people who are closest to him, and in that, there is no redeemable quality. Therefore, it can be said that Jimmy is a narcissist suffering from a pathological case of personality disorder caused by the trauma of the identity crisis he faced on a personal and collective level.

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The Anguished World of the Female Detective: Navigating the Nexus of Trauma and Gender in Contemporary Crime TV Series

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How to Cite this Paper

Arya, K. (2022). The anguished world of the female detective: Navigating the nexus of trauma and gender in contemporary crime TV series. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies, Volume VI*, 38-55.

Abstract

The element of trauma in works of crime fiction has been previously examined in the context of social histories and political events such as war. Such explorations of trauma have been confined within the bounds of either a masculinised or medicalised framework, which often tends to isolate aspects of emotionality or the personal experience of distress. Even the portrayal of gendered trauma has traditionally been centred towards the victim in the form of sexual violence and heavily focalised through the perspective of the male detective. Moving into the twenty-first century, however, the figure of the detective in popular consciousness comes to be represented as an ambiguous hero who is just as susceptible to shock, trauma and injury as the characters who do not bear the responsibility of restoring the social order of the world. The detective's traumatic experience, therefore, becomes an integral component of their sense of self. With the increasing focus on the figure of the female detective in contemporary crime television, the question of how trauma operates from a gendered lens in works of this genre becomes pertinent. However, current literature examining this intersection is scarce. This article, therefore, explores how the element of gender-based trauma functions within the narratives of contemporary crime series and what role the traumatic experiences of female investigators play in informing the rationale with which they solve crimes. Moreover, the article highlights how public and personal trauma(s) are represented in such contexts. This is achieved through close reading and textual analysis of the recent television series *Mare of Easttown* (2021) and *Marcella* (2016-2021) in

order to understand the framework and techniques through which the nexus of trauma and gender operate within crime fiction.

Keywords: Trauma, Female Detectives, Crime TV, Contemporary Fiction, Gender

Introduction

“Well, maybe she would be a vain little snot, and you wouldn’t waste six minutes having a beer with her ... A lot of talent came from those years on the street... Your alternative Mallory wouldn’t ... have the makings of even a better cop than her old man ... Oh, and the way she walks. You can see it all coming at you, the badge and the gun and all that power. If she’d gotten another life, she would be ordinary—or worse.” (Connell, 2007, p.94)

The quote above is from the penultimate novel of the long-running “Kathleen Mallory” series, when Kathleen’s friend Riker comments on her potential to live a ‘normal life’, suggesting how her experience as a survivor of trauma makes her more efficient at work as a detective. Tellingly, Kathleen Mallory represents a formulaic patchwork of peculiarities widely prevalent in detective figures of contemporary fiction: cold, calculative, distant — yet world-weary and palpably haunted by a traumatic past.

Detective fiction of the classic and hard-boiled tradition has employed trauma as a tool to explore the central figure’s disillusionment with the social world that they inhabit (Dodd, 2019). Much academic literature on this subject particularly seeks to examine trauma from a medicalised and masculinised framework; as a direct result of either war, shell shock, or both (Hamilton, 2020). In the hard-boiled narrative, gendered trauma is usually centred on the victim and presented as the aftermath of sexual violence (Kennedy, 2017). This particular narrative’s focalisation on the male detective, however leaves the broader socio-cultural implications of such kind of gendered trauma relatively unexplored.

Now, with the explosion of feminist sentiments in popular fiction, contemporary crime and detective narratives have slowly begun to shift their focus to the female detective and her social world. In these portrayals, the resolution of the crime is often tied to the resolution of the detective figure’s trauma, which tends to reveal truths about the moral codes of a socially sanctioned world just as much as the nature and arc of the crime investigation. This then raises interesting questions about how trauma lends itself to the logic and rationality of the female detective and, more importantly, why it serves this function.

This article, therefore, addresses the role gender-focused trauma plays in informing the narratives of contemporary detective TV series, using the figure of the female detective as the focal point. As a further exploration, the article examines how public and personal trauma take shape and are represented in such narratives. In order to do so, the article draws on textual analysis and close readings of two recent crime/detective TV dramas: *Mare of Easttown* (2021) and *Marcella* (2016-2021).

Mare of Easttown (2021) is set in a small town in Pennsylvania and revolves around a local detective sergeant, Mare Sheehan, who is investigating the murder of a teenage girl. Alongside this, Mare grapples with a string of personal tragedies and crises, which involve coming to terms with the suicide of her son, her broken marriage, and a custody battle for her four-year-old grandson. On the other hand, *Marcella* (2016-2021) is set in London's cosmopolitan mega-city. The story follows a former police detective who decides to return to work after the dissolution of her marriage. As she solves the cases she is assigned, she slowly comes to uncover disturbing truths about her traumatic past. Marcella experiences violent blackouts and struggles to cope with the death of her baby daughter, all the while attempting to keep her dysfunctional family together.

These specific TV series have been identified and chosen as texts for analysis because each has a central female character as the figure of a disillusioned detective who has experienced a major traumatic event(s) either linearly or belatedly within the timeframe of the show. The plotlines of the two shows are motivated and driven by the backstories of these individual protagonists, connecting the nature of the crime(s) with the personal misfortunes of the detectives in deeply moving and complex ways. Moreover, the two examples have varied thematic similarities as well as structural and elemental differences in their narratives which could expose unique insights and ideas, adding to the scope of analysis. Given the global popularity of these shows, they are pivotal in the larger understanding of how the figure of the female detective comes to navigate both personal and public trauma. Reflecting a set of significant social meanings, *Mare of Easttown* and *Marcella* become part of the mass consciousness of audiences that consume contemporary works in this genre.

Dodd (2019) argues that authentic representations of traumatic pasts in crime fiction can equip large audiences with the empathetic knowledge of trauma while offering therapeutic outlets. The pervasiveness of audio-visual media and entertainment means that film and television hold power to influence perceptions of social phenomena. By and large, the understandings of gender and trauma in popular fiction have either been ignored, distorted, or are superficial in nature. For instance, Ford and Boyle (2021) note how the figure of the female investigator in popular crime TV dramas tends to be portrayed as one who is confident, pragmatic, and a paragon of heterosexual desirability. While this staple detective figure of contemporary television at times does falter between rationality and emotional vulnerability, most of her experiences of being

enmeshed in trauma are showcased through physical violence so that its materiality is only sparsely exhibited, either through the body or the scant memories of the event. Shedding light onto the workings of this intersection as portrayed in one of the most ubiquitous genres of TV dramas would therefore hopefully pave the way for further research into how the function of such narratives can be deployed to elicit more sensitive and nuanced outlooks towards accounts and experiences of real-life gendered trauma.

Examining Trauma and Gender in Crime Fiction

Cathy Caruth (1991) identifies an overarching definition of emotional and psychological trauma: “[trauma] describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (p. 181). Drawing from this well-cited definition, Whitehead (2004) discusses the importance of conceptualising trauma theory within fiction. She argues that the representation of trauma in fiction raises questions of politics, ethics and aesthetics, essentially shifting focus from an understanding of trauma as an individual phenomenon to that which constitutes a larger social experience. Contemporary fiction has been shaped by various historical instances of collective trauma, pushing trauma theorists to study and elaborate on the cultural and ethical implications of traumatic experiences in literature and film (Whitehead, 2004).

Crime and detective fiction critics have largely dismissed trauma theory even though it offers a useful frame of reference to examine many of the works in this genre (Hamilton, 2020). Existent research mostly uses the medical framework of post-traumatic stress disorder following war. For example, Trott (2016) creates this framework to extrapolate Raymond Chandler’s traumatic experience of trench warfare in World War II in order to examine the character of Philip Marlowe. Hamilton (2020), however, attempts to develop connections between trauma theory and detective fiction from a socio-political perspective, drawing attention away from the medical model and into the public framework of trauma in crime fiction.

Hamilton (2020) argues that a trauma framework “enables a nuanced examination of the politics implicit in the formula of detective fiction” (p. 318). The trauma framework confronts the perceived realism within which crime fiction operates, thus questioning the impact of the trauma experienced by the character(s) and the extent to which this can be communicated to the audience. Often, the detective who undergoes trauma achieves actualisation through healing and later re-asserting her agency. However, for Hamilton, the trauma survivor in crime fiction is not a patient or an individual victim but the agent for social change. She claims that the individualisation of trauma and its resolution through personal healing largely depoliticises the nature of trauma and ignores its social dimensions. The detective’s relationship with the status

quo also becomes clear by making the political and subversive potentiality of trauma in crime fiction more apparent (p. 320).

A common impediment in the face of the authenticity and coherence of the survivor's experience in detective fiction is the 'mythologisation' of traumatic events (Tali, 1996, as cited in Hamilton, 2020, p. 321). This means that trauma becomes codified and reduced to an archetypal narrative form because of the constant repetition and reproduction of traumatic events in fiction. This argument is also highlighted by Seltzer (1997), wherein he contends that the constant consumption and reproduction of trauma in crime and detective fiction renders it an object of fascination for the audience. Berger (1997) argues that the detective who undergoes trauma in this case comes to possess an air of enigma, having procured special knowledge and authority following the traumatic event. The need for the detective figure to then 'set the world right' is informed by this experience of personal trauma. The enactment of violence to restore the world's order is thus also justified by the audience since these actions are attributed to the detective's past traumatic experiences (Seltzer, 1997).

This tendency to locate the detective figures' motivations and actions in their belated experience of trauma is characteristic of the more recent examples and works of detective fiction. Makinen (2015) discusses how the detective figures of classic crime fiction are regarded as 'emblems of analytical genius'; they are rational yet eccentric characters who become the sole protectors of the justice system, responsible for its temporary yet complete restoration. In contemporary crime fiction, however, this mirage of the genius detective is often shattered. The figure of the detective is no longer above shock, trauma, or injury, but very much susceptible to these. As a result of their traumatic experiences, these characters are found continually negotiating their status as detectives and, more importantly, as protectors and upholders of justice.

Extending from this, Kennedy (2017) draws on the gendered implications of trauma in detective fiction. She discusses how the key moments that shape the detective's core sense of justice occur sometime in the duration of her lived traumatic experience. Kennedy claims that the female detective's reaction to her trauma follows her attempt to maintain and aspire to the identity of the 'family woman'. While the female detectives in contemporary fiction have a "hard edge" (p. 54), their appeal lies in the internal and external conflict between pursuing individual success and the desire for deeper family and community ties. The female detective's transgression from a patriarchal set of values then results in the lack or fragmentation of such ties, thus setting a precedent for traumatic experiences. As survivors of trauma, the logic of the narrative then also witnesses these characters possessing cultural knowledge to deconstruct the causes of violence against other women (p. 55), followed by resolution and healing.

These discussions then pave the way for further exploration into how trauma centred around the female detective functions in contemporary crime fiction and what role it plays in informing the

narrative. Considering existing literature on the subject, there is sufficient scope to explore what revelations about the rationale of the female detective can a trauma theory framework help uncover. Following Hamilton's discussion on public trauma, it is also useful to understand how social and personal trauma operate from a gendered perspective in detective fiction.

Analysis

Sites of Trauma: Space and Location as motifs for traumatic experiences

In most renderings of the detective fiction genre, spatiality and landscape serve as significant loci for the characters' individual as well as collective memories (Wells, 2004). Urban spaces in particular, are developed and perceived as inextricably linked to the nature of the crime or the crime itself, within the narrative frame of this genre (Worthington, 2011, as cited in Phillips, 2017). Dodd (2019) discusses the importance of place and location in developing a more profound understanding of traumatic event(s) as they occur within the crime fiction narrative. Spaces used as character motifs can also help audiences access traumatic experiences from a unique vantage point since the setting takes on a life of its own (Dodd, 2019).

For example, in the pilot episode of *Mare of Easttown* (2021), we see this recurring use of location to foreground public trauma that runs deep in the small town where the series is set. Both the opening and ending sequences in this episode not only foreshadow the grim events which follow later in the show but also create a tense atmosphere reflecting the detective figure's inner world, along with that of the troubled residents of Easttown. In the opening sequence, the first few establishing shots pan different areas around the small Pennsylvanian town; zoomed-out shots of an industrial complex, a lone house in the middle of a dried-out, foreboding forest, a cemetery and then at last, a cluster of suburban homes in the early hours of morning.

In the depiction of these locations through jump cuts before the camera shifts its focalisation towards Mare, the narrative attempts to give ambiguous yet eerie spatial identities to these lonely territories. The establishment of this ghostly essence of Easttown then lays the ground for something more unsettling since what this spatial identity exactly denotes begins to unfold later in the timeline of the show — when it becomes clear that the town is tainted by the trauma of the abductions and killings of several teenage girls, and more specifically the violence against teenage mothers trying to make ends meet. Later sections of the article will also explore how this public trauma is juxtaposed against Mare's personal trauma of losing her son to substance abuse and suicide. The recurring theme of such violence against women is foreshadowed in the opening sequence. The initial shots build to a moment where a woman is heard screaming, following which light in a distant window gets switched on, and the town awakes from its slumber. These first few shots are also accompanied by tense, melodramatic music, which seems almost incomplete; however, a more complete version of the same music also underscores the

final scene of Mare's murder investigation, where she uncovers the true killer of the young mother, Erin McMenamin.

By contrast, in *Marcella* (2016), the first shot of the opening sequence itself begins with the focalisation of the central figure of the titular detective. There is no outright sense of setting or location here. However, by opening the scene with the shot of Marcella bloodied, wounded, and shocked, the narrative establishes her as a figure who is not in control at the outset. The shot opens with Marcella waking up and sitting hunched in a bathtub. At first, the camera focuses on her back as she sits upright, and then on her face and the rest of the space that she occupies through a dirty mirror.

The use of mirrors or other reflective surfaces is quite prevalent throughout *Marcella* when the focus on the space and body is more private or intimate. Usually, Marcella and the space around her are depicted through a mirror during moments of deep internal anguish or when she relives a traumatic experience. Shetley & Ferguson (2001) argue that mirrors function as *mise-en-abyme* [visual portrayal of an image within an image to suggest a recurring theme or sequence within the larger narrative (Oxford Reference, n.d.)] so that viewers can access the depicted scene and certain thematic and visual elements within it in a way that they would not be able to otherwise. The mirror reproduces space in *Marcella* such that it appears broken and fragmented. Marcella's constant blackouts as a result of dissociation and trauma mean that she experiences a reality that is fragmented and disrupted by gaps in her memory. Therefore, such a representation of space becomes symbolic of this fractured sense of reality and the self, which come to be associated with the recall of traumatic events (Dodd, 2019).

The scene then cuts backwards in time to twelve days earlier, with a zoomed-in shot of a car window. The camera later pans over to a distraught-looking Marcella sitting in the back of the same car. Until this point, the exact geographical location of where the narrative of this series is set is unclear. However, the next scene cuts to the car arriving at a destination, and this is the first time the viewers get a glimpse of the outside world. The car is presumably a black cab, one of the most significant markers of the urban space of London. Later in the same sequence, a scene depicts a wide shot of a city street with a double-decker red bus turning a corner (again, a mode of transport that has come to be widely associated with the city of London).

The sole focus on the central character and her fraught relationship with the private space of the bathroom in the first shot establishes that personal trauma takes precedence over public trauma in this series to some extent. Since viewers share Marcella's point of view right at the beginning, they are aligned with her distressed inner consciousness. Even the later depiction of the large, bustling urban space of London as the plot's setting has an almost alienating effect on the viewers — so this space becomes just the right backdrop for Marcella's aggravating personal trauma. As opposed to the choice of focus in *Marcella*, *Mare of Easttown* initially draws

attention to location, in effect centralising the small, quiet, yet troubled town of Delaware County. The idea of public trauma here then becomes more or just as significant as the personal trauma experienced by the central figure. Since the township where the narrative is set sustains closer community ties, the lines between collective and individual trauma often tend to get blurred within the narrative frame.

Of Motherhood and Family: Characterising Gendered Trauma

Contemporary crime fiction is characterised by a revision and distortion of old gender and genre roles (Soler, 2019). What emerges out of this is a set of notable features unique to newer works of crime fiction across all mediums. In recent times, there has been a tendency for popular detective fiction to give more attention to social and familial bonds, which come to be positioned at the core of the central figure's characterisation. For female investigators in particular, this means a shift away from the classical lone figure of the male detective, as well as from that of the independent female sleuth found more habitually across film, TV, and literature at the turn of the 20th century (Soler, 2019). These new, transitional female characters then come to be defined by their social and familial ties. More popularly, it is the female detective's status as a mother or a daughter that becomes central to the construction of both the character and the plotline (Wilton, 2018).

In *Mare of Easttown*, the foundation of motherhood and family becomes pivotal to understanding the characterisation of Mare Sheehan, as well as the nature of the crime being investigated. Wilton (2018) notes that in fiction as well as in real life, mothers often become the objects of moral and social scrutiny. Mare's profession as a local detective sergeant requires her to maintain and enforce the social order of the community. Thus, her identity as both a mother and a detective subjects her to a dual burden — one of maintaining social norms and the other of being responsible for the upkeep of a functional family.

This weight is morphed into a sense of duty, and its impact on her is consequently reflected through *mise-en-scène* elements such as costume and make-up. Her loose flannels, mostly dishevelled hair, and a vape that she pulls out of her jacket pocket ever so often uniquely mark her presence on screen. While on the surface, these elements might work towards accentuating her rugged personality, they also represent her sense of disillusionment that occurs as a result of personal tragedies and perceived failure to preserve social order when she is unable to solve a missing persons case for a year. Mare is also a physically worn-down figure as she carries the heaviness of this dual burden. In the pilot episode itself, viewers watch her trip over a wired fence as she chases after Beth Hanlon's brother, Freddie. The subsequent injury then causes her to limp throughout most of the other episodes in the season.

In the washed-out blue-grey colour palette of the series, Mare's world-weariness becomes foregrounded. However, in a flashback scene in episode 4 (*'Poor Sisyphus'*), the lighting suddenly gets warm. Usually, warm lighting is used in scenes that represent moments of comfort or joy. Yet, this flashback scene makes for one of the most unsettling sequences in the series. Here, the viewers get a first glimpse at the relationship dynamic between Mare and her son, Kevin. He breaks into Mare's house with his partner Carrie to steal money for drugs and has a violent outburst of rage where he screams and curses at Mare. The juxtaposition of warm lighting against this dismal context, therefore, makes the scene appear more disturbing.

The way the scene transitions from the present to a moment in the past becomes significant as well. In this scene, Mare is in a bedroom, going over Erin's social media profile as part of her murder investigation. She clicks on a video of Erin talking about her experience of mothering a one-year-old baby. Appearing overwrought behind the screen, Erin says, "Some nights I feel like a terrible mother. I want him to have a great life, and I'm trying to give that to him, I just want so bad to give him everything..." till her voice fades into a distant echo and the camera centres on Mare's face. Then all of a sudden, an out-of-focus bathroom door slams shut, and Mare, along with the viewers, is transported to a time in the past. The motif of dysfunctional families and motherhood connects the sergeant to the crimes all along. However, it is in this scene that viewers witness this connection directly. The focus on Erin's struggle as a mother shifts seamlessly to reflect Mare's trauma that stemmed from the fraught relationship she shared with her own son.

In the flashback, Kevin and Carrie lock Mare out of her bathroom as they steal money from her purse. When Mare attempts to enter the bathroom and stop Kevin and Carrie from stealing her money, Kevin straddles and pushes her towards a corner of the bathroom. During this brief physical struggle, the composition and framing of the shot become shaky and haphazard, adding to the sense of disconcertment. To an extent, the scene is a revelation of sorts. It is in the following episode (*'Illusions'*) that Mare discloses that Kevin was diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome and mood disorders when he was young, thereby suggesting that such violent episodes were frequent. For the first half of the show, this information is kept concealed from the viewers. Therefore, the element of shock is more prevalent than the sense of distress here since the viewers comprehend and bear witness to the extent of Mare's trauma for the first time. This technique of cutting the linear narrative frame with a flashback (used only once in the series) allows us to witness the simulation of traumatic recall of the event as Mare would have experienced it herself.

Another such technique of disrupting the linear narrative is also apparent in *Marcella*. Midway through the pilot episode, Marcella's ex-husband Jason visits the house to pack his clothes and move out of the home he used to share with her. As the couple briefly quarrels, they are never completely positioned in the same frame together, thereby indicating the discord between them.

Even as Marcella attempts to hug him later, the camera is focused only on her body and shifts to Jason's as he breaks away from her. When Jason confesses that he does not love Marcella, an unpleasant noise in the background builds to a pitch and then stops completely. Marcella then punches Jason, and the scene transitions to silent, hasty jump cuts of her attempting to push him down the stairs. The screen then fades to black, and moments later, the camera focuses on Marcella as she stands alone in the stairway of her house. Similar to analepsis (flashback) as seen in *Mare of Easttown*, this technique used in *Marcella* (prolepsis, or flashforward) also interrupts the narrative's linear flow of time. The episode reveals brief snippets of Marcella and Jason's physical fight before flashing forward in time when Marcella is alone. According to Dodd (2019), analepsis and prolepsis are both commonly used narrative strategies used in trauma fiction. The series uses the technique of prolepsis quite similarly each time Marcella's blackouts occur.

In season two of the series, both of these techniques are employed heavily while exploring Marcella as a mother figure in spaces of domesticity. By shedding light on the traumatic events and memories of Marcella's past, this season delves deeper into unearthing the reason behind her violent blackouts. In episode two, for instance, Marcella visits her psychiatrist following an argument with Jason, who threatens to take away the sole custody of her children. And then, in a moment that perhaps defines one of the most crucial social dilemmas that the series attempts to shed light on, Jason tells Marcella that she "*should maybe try being more of a mother and less of a detective*". *Marcella*, in this sense, posits its central figure as someone who occupies the position of the female investigator and of the mother as two mutually exclusive identities.

Steenberg (2013) elaborates on this idea of motherhood and professionalism as two disparate categories in her examination of female investigators in contemporary crime television. She notes that while female detectives work under the guise of independent, working women, they often become subject to immense psychological distress, which invalidates their authority and bases their value on the performance of 'womanhood' as much as on their forensic and analytical abilities. In the case of *Marcella*, this becomes increasingly apparent throughout the arc of its second season. The first season leaves the mystery behind the death of Marcella's baby daughter, Juliet, unresolved. However, throughout the second season, her daughter's death is alluded to through flashbacks (analepsis) and flashforwards (prolepsis), which display a series of jarring yet obscure events before finally unmasking Marcella herself as the killer.

For instance, while Marcella visits her psychiatrist, (season 2, episode 2) the scene oscillates between their conversation in the present and Marcella back at her house in the hours following the session, taking Juliet's cots and toys out of the store room and assembling them in her old, empty bedroom. This back-and-forth sequence becomes significant in the narrative frame of the series since, along with the audience, Marcella is also unaware that she killed her daughter in a moment of unwitting frenzy. The trauma of committing this act leaves Marcella with repressed

memories of Juliet's death, and it is later suggested that this repression is the cause for her frequent blackouts.

While this fact is revealed to Marcella and the audience simultaneously in the last episode of the season, this particular sequence in episode two foreshadows that final moment of revelation. When Marcella's psychiatrist asks her what she remembers from the evening of Juliet's death, the action jumps ahead in time, showing Marcella standing over Juliet's old cot that she just re-assembled. As opposed to the shallow space shot used during the scene with Marcella's conversation with her psychiatrist, this sequence uses a deep space shot as she looks down grimly at the cot. This use of contrasting space in the *mise-en-scène* foregrounds Marcella's spatial and sensory disorientation during her frequent periods of oblivion, thus suggesting that Juliet's death may have a role to play in causing such traumatic blackouts. The visual style in this sequence is then also emphasised using chiaroscuro lighting. This lighting scheme emphasises the contrast between shadow and light, essentially creating an uncanny atmosphere which denotes an underlying tension in the mood or setting of a visual piece of work (Glitre, 2009). In *Marcella*, chiaroscuro lighting is often used in scenes that attempt to underscore the psychological turmoil or imprisonment of the characters. An explanation for the use of visual elements such as lighting instead of verbal dialogue to bring attention to Marcella's psychological distress can be found in one of the central tenets of Rutherford's trauma theory (2013): "A pivotal aspect of major trauma is the 'unspeakability' of it; the survivor has either conscious or repressed knowledge about something no one should know—a knowledge that potentially tears at the social fabric" (p. 81).

In this sense, the subsequent trauma that accompanies the knowledge of Marcella killing her daughter pushes against the limitations of conceptual vocabulary (Rutherford, 2013). The sequences, which therefore show Marcella struggling to recollect her traumatic memories are devoid of any audible dialogue, thus foreshadowing the 'unspeakability' of the traumatic event. It is in the process of killing Juliet and repressing the memories around this act that the social contract upon which the conventional principles of motherhood rest is abolished.

In both *Mare of Easttown* and *Marcella*, the anxieties surrounding the roles of the female detectives are explored extensively through a critical lens. The navigation of what Greer (2017) calls the "mother-as-martyr and woman-as-professional" (p. 333) spectrum raises questions about how transgressions from the ascribed gender roles and ideals of motherhood manifest into social punishment. The punishment of not fulfilling such ideals is meted out as trauma which is then rendered as the personal failure of the female investigators.

Vicarious Trauma(s): The place of the personal in the public

In the most perfunctory sense, the difference between personal and public trauma is characterised by the scale of emotional wound and/or shock incurred (Leys, 2000). Public trauma is said to shake the foundation of a collective group and call into question its sense of identity and belonging, whereas individual trauma is relegated as the outcome of rare, one-off occurrences; events too intimate and domestic to make any ripples in the larger social order of the world (Eyerman, 2013).

In many contemporary works of crime fiction, however, the portrayal of personal trauma comes to reinforce the allusive collective trauma (Wilton, 2018). In *Mare of Easttown*, for instance, the centrality of personal trauma is made complex with the haphazard social order of the small-town community. Rife with an opioid crisis, abductions of young girls, and the moral depravity of men, the trauma that runs deep in Easttown mirrors the personal trauma that Mare experiences when she loses her son to substance abuse and then eventually, to suicide. The anxieties of motherhood and caregiving are therefore reflected publicly — in that the failure to do so is presented as a threat to civilisation and its moral fabric.

At the beginning of episode three (‘*Enter Number Two*’), for example, Mare looks wistfully at her grandson, Drew, pondering the outcome of a potentially long-drawn custody battle between Drew’s mother and her. The scene then cuts to an outdoor setting, and a car moves along a bend in the road. In the distance, a traffic-sign-like board reads “Watch Our Children”, almost like a warning. The arrangement of these two scenes, one after the other, foregrounds the significant motif of women’s trauma as caregivers. This trauma is then represented as social, as much as it is rendered individual—the dimensions of collective trauma feed into personal trauma, in essence, doubling the shock and losses experienced by the central figure, as well as the community at large. For Mare, therefore, the need to fulfil her duty as the tough yet righteous detective and to ‘set things right’ in the public world is tied to her need to attain a sense of adequacy as a caregiver.

The blurring of individual and collective trauma is also evident in how closely the detective figures in the two series are involved with the crimes. Marcella investigates the murder of her estranged husband’s partner, Grace Gibson, in season one and is also the last person to see her before her death. In *Mare of Easttown*, the people implicated in the murder of Erin McMenamin are family members of Mare’s best friend. The high personal stakes for Mare and Marcella in investigating these crimes disrupt the fundamental assumption that the domestic world of the detective is separate from the corrupt, grisly world of crime and murders. Ford and Boyle (2021) argues that this conflation of the private and public worlds of the detective in TV crime dramas is a gendered phenomenon central to plots involving a female investigator as the protagonist. The trauma-informed narratives of such TV dramas therefore make it clear that violence is not only inflicted upon the bodies of the victims but is also dispersed outwards, imprinting psychological wounds upon the consciousness of those investigating the crime (Seltzer, 1997). This fulfils a

‘feminist textual strategy’ that represents the violence of a crime beyond a singular traumatic event, as in the context of the two dramas being examined, the dual status of both Mare and Marcella as victim-detectives makes them profoundly aware of the emotional and physical violence against the victims of the crimes they investigate. Therefore, the investigative work performed by these characters is also a form of tacit emotional labour that deepens the extent and intensity of trauma experienced beforehand (Ford & Boyle, 2021). In keeping with such representations of trauma, the two TV shows emphasise the detectives’ inner thoughts and emotions rather than the action taking place in the outer, public world. This shift is also characterised by prioritising the emotional behaviours and trauma of the detective figures over cold, unattached logic and rationality. This becomes central to the idea of the feminist textual strategy that Ford and Boyle (2021) discusses.

Visually, this pervasive sense of interiority and emotional introspection is showcased through what Ine Ang (1985) calls ‘emotional realism’. This refers to a representational quality in audio-visual narratives which involves creating a sense of emotional authenticity through aesthetic and aural techniques (*Emotional Realism*, 1954). For instance, Coulthard (2018) argues that *Marcella* uses its musical score and other sound effects to punctuate the psychological turmoil and other emotional states that accompany her process of solving the case (p. 563). Recurring sound effects such as mechanical whirs and rapid heartbeats gradually grow deafeningly loud before suddenly coming to a screeching halt. This juxtaposition of almost intolerable noise with prolonged periods of complete silence creates a sense of unease and turbulence, construing Marcella’s thought patterns as disturbed and unsettled and, therefore, inseparable from her trauma. Emotional realism in *Marcella* is also constructed through recurring point-of-view and close-up shots, one after the other, during moments of shock or revelation. In episode three of season one, Marcella comes to terms with the fact that she moved Grace Gibson’s dead body from her house to the woods during one of her blackouts. This leads to Marcella’s terror at the thought that she could have potentially murdered Grace and could be the prime suspect in the case that she is investigating herself. The scene under discussion shows Marcella in a disoriented state, just minutes after recovering from a blackout. The camera zooms into her face as she darts her eyes around the room and eventually opens a laptop to web-search Grace. During this sequence, the camera orientation constantly shifts between a close-up shot of Marcella’s eyes and the laptop screen from her perspective. This oscillation between Marcella’s frantic viewpoint and close-ups of her tense expression allows for the creation of a point of identification for the viewers, which is instrumental in representing what Ang (1985) calls a ‘true-to-life’ emotional state (p. 50).

Similar techniques are also employed in *Mare of Easttown*, where zoomed-in shots of Mare’s face or eyes give a visual presence to her inner thoughts and feelings. However, the use of space also becomes essential in locating Mare’s internal emotional distress and personal trauma against the town’s public trauma. At the end of episode three, Chief Carter puts Mare on administrative

leave from her detective duties upon finding out that she planted drugs in Carrie's car (Drew's mother, who is a recovering addict) in order to prevent her from getting Drew's custody. After confronting Mare and confiscating her gun and badge, Chief Carter leaves in his car and the point of focalisation shifts outward and away from Mare. As the car drives away, the camera gets positioned to show Mare as a lonely, diminishing figure against the background of the less-than idyllic suburbs. The space around her gets enlarged as the camera grows distant from Mare.

The shift in focalisation and the utilisation of deep space following a close-up shot showcase Mare as an alienated figure within her community. Over the entire series, Mare's trauma becomes central to her sense of self as well as to her work in the professional space. Her moral transgression by attempting to disenfranchise Carrie also stems from her trauma of having already lost a son. This sequence, therefore, becomes significant in eventually establishing Mare as someone who is not integrated with her town and its people since her personal trauma takes precedence over set moral conventions.

Moreover, it is worth noting that when Mare removes her gun and badge from a drawer to hand them over to Chief Carter, the camera briefly pans over two photographs of a police sergeant and a child in the same drawer. From information revealed in the previous episodes, the audience is able to recognise the photographs as that of Mare's father and Mare herself as a child. Despite the arc of the series positioning Mare as a redemptive hero-like figure of her town, this sequence possibly indicates that her own internal sense of failure is felt to a greater extent in the domestic space of her family than in the larger community.

Conclusion

In a genre that regularly produces and underscores an ethos of rationality, crime fiction dramas such as *Mare of Easttown* and *Marcella* construct trauma-informed narratives that function as conduits for expressing gendered and other social frustrations. The figure of the female detective in both of these TV series is constantly negotiating her role in the domestic spaces of family and home, as well as in the professional space as a detective, and therefore also as a harbinger of justice in the social world she inhabits. The traumatic experiences of these characters are then located in the confluence of these two realities that become central to their identities.

This article has examined how traumatic frameworks based on gendered subtexts function within the narratives of the two TV series. As a result, what has emerged from the textual analysis is an understanding of how trauma, both personal and public, operates in multiform—as motifs as well as themes. As detailed in the first section of the analysis, elements such as location, space and setting become significant in characterising the nature of trauma that forms the premise of these stories. Trauma theorists such as Dodd (2019) and Caruth (1991) have also proposed arguments

which suggest that the motif of location in crime fiction can be useful in constructing a vantage point through which viewers can access the traumatic memories of the characters.

Furthermore, the insights in this article also touch upon how overarching themes of motherhood and family play a role in characterising gendered trauma. The *mise-en-scène* elements such as affective music, lighting and the use of space, along with techniques such as fragmentation and analepsis visually foreground the themes of trauma and gender throughout the running period of the two shows. Drawing from this, the article also discusses how the merging of the public and personal worlds of the female detective is, by extension, symbolic of the blurring of individual and collective trauma as represented in the narratives. In the two series examined, this is achieved through emotional realism, which uses aesthetic techniques to bring to focus the characters' inner turmoil and emotional experiences. The question of how the intersection of trauma and gender is understood within the ambit of the crime fiction genre becomes relevant to the contemporary context in which such works are produced. With an increasing number of literary works, films, and television shows centred around the female detective, the crime fiction genre has undergone several thematic shifts which involve the depiction of embodied elements such as emotional distress and trauma. In this sense, it becomes important to examine the research questions posed in this article since the representation of traumatised female detectives essentially reveals a set of social sensibilities of the contemporary world.

While this article only closely examines two television shows, the insights gained from the analysis recur across several other contemporary films and shows. For example, in recent years, crime series such as *Top of The Lake* (2013-2017), *From Darkness* (2015) and *Sharp Objects* (2018) reflect similar trends of representing the female investigator at the centre, with her traumatic experiences and emotional distress guiding both the narrative and the logic with which she solves the crime. The pervasiveness of such trends in present-day crime television dramas underscores the need to further elaborate on the insights gathered.

The narrative, aesthetic and thematic features that embody representations of trauma in these crime series can possibly function as cathartic or therapeutic outlets for its massive audiences. In these dramas, violence, emotional distress or trauma experienced by the female detective is turned inward, away from the excessively romanticised or masculinised frameworks within which they were previously characterised. This article posits that it may therefore be important to establish links between gendered trauma in its authentic portrayals and the generic elements of crime fiction at large.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to Ananya Parikh for her mentorship and guidance throughout the process of conceptualising and writing this paper. I am also grateful to Ria Iyer and Bhoomika Mhatre

for providing me with the gift of their friendship and unending support both in and outside the seminar sessions last year. Finally, I would like to thank the board of editors and reviewers for their invaluable feedback and edits on this paper.

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‘Om, Naam Toh Suna Hee Hoga’: Stardom, Doubling, Intertextuality and Excess in ‘Om Shanti Om’

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How to Cite this Paper

Deshmukh, I. (2022). ‘Om, naam toh suna hee hoga’: Stardom, doubling, intertextuality and excess in ‘Om Shanti Om’. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 56-71.

Abstract

This paper explores the concepts of stardom and doubling/double roles through the ideas of intertextuality and excess by analysing Farah Khan’s 2007 film *Om Shanti Om*. This paper also looks at the phenomenon of double roles by placing it in the context of star theory and Bollywood. Furthermore, through a textual analysis of the film and drawing on ideas posited by Richard Dyer, Susan Hayward and Christine Gledhill, the paper aims to answer the question – how the logic of multiplication or doubling constructs or plays into Shah Rukh Khan’s star persona? The research finds that while double roles aid actors such as Shah Rukh Khan to explore more versatile roles, another character is added in the narrative to later authenticate the actor’s star image, one he deviated from with the first character.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Excess, Doubling, Stardom, Bollywood, Shah Rukh Khan

Introduction

Doubling or the logic of multiplication has been common in Hindi cinema for decades. Closely associated with other ideas such as excess, spectacle, and intertextuality, dual roles were employed in films for more than simply fulfilling narrative requirements. Doubling in Hindi cinema presented the perfect commercial value – having a star figure embody two different characters in one film at the same cost. Thus began a relatively long history of double role films, tracing back to *Nishan* (1949). These films usually had familiar narrative tropes such as ‘twins

separated at birth and across multiple generations'. (Majumdar, 2003). Popular examples include Tapi Chanakya's *Ram Aur Shyam* (1967), Ramesh Sippy's *Seeta Aur Geeta* (1972), and David Dhawan's *Judwaa* (1997). Additionally, some of the most common narrative themes followed were themes such as characters being reincarnated to fulfil an objective of their deceased predecessor or two doppelgangers (one protagonist and the other, an antagonist). The most famous example of the latter is Mahesh Bhatt's *Duplicate* (1998) as well as both versions of *Don*, one starring Amitabh Bachchan (1978) and the other, Shah Rukh Khan (2006).

Om Shanti Om, therefore, becomes an important film to study in the history of double role films in Hindi cinema, as it also falls under the same genre. The film deliberately uses familiar narrative tropes of doubling such as reincarnation and doppelgangers. It also becomes a reflection of the evolution of post-war Hindi cinema to that of the films born in post-liberalised India. *Om Shanti Om* traces this history and the birth of Bollywood through references to an older film from the same category of doubling— *Karz* (1980). Additionally, it is also done through the body of Shah Rukh Khan, who becomes the face of the Hindi films post-1990s. Stardom and doubling, therefore, become two critical ideas in the film to understand Bollywood. Star figures and the star system have been central to Hindi cinema for decades; the two concepts of excess and intertextuality also lie at the system's focal point, without which stardom and doubling cannot be understood. Excess has been at the focus of stardom in Hindi cinema since the 1940s by providing multiple ways, spaces and approaches through which audiences could be exposed to the star body, and actors could present themselves within and outside the filmic space. Majumdar (2003) also notes that the star system allowed actors to appear in multiple film releases. This tendency of multiplication led to the concept of double (or multiple) roles becoming common in the industry. Along with doubling and excess, intertextuality also becomes relevant to the study. *Om Shanti Om* contains and addresses all of the concerned areas of study and provides the space for understanding star figures and double roles in Hindi cinema within the framework of excess and intertextuality. In this paper, the film will be analysed, keeping the aforementioned framework central to examining how Shah Rukh Khan's stardom is used and authenticated through the double roles in the film.

Star Theory, Excess And Intertextuality

A star is someone who brings into alignment the body and technology and becomes a channel that allows the flow of the creative energies of a specific historical moment.

(Chakravarty, 2013).

With the changing media landscape, the star system has become dynamic and subject to further study over the past two decades. The following section of the paper highlights theories posited by Richard Dyer, Susan Hayward, Christine Gledhill and more that have been crucial to

understanding the phenomenon of stardom. Furthermore, this section also brings in the ideas of intertextuality and excess, and in tying them with the star theories, aims to provide a theoretical framework for analysing Shah Rukh Khan's stardom through his double roles in *Om Shanti Om*.

Stardom or the star figure is a complex network of interrelated meanings. There are multiple perspectives through which the concept of stardom can be understood. In his book *Stars*, Richard Dyer categorised stardom into production and consumption, wherein he suggested that star figures represent economic value. In referring to these individuals as texts produced by media and products, stars became vital capital value in the film industry. They are seen as a guarantee, an investment for a film's success. These figures are also used to 'stabilize audience response' (Dyer, 1998, p.11). They are also seen as assurances for drawing in audiences and being promised a certain production quality. Stars exist in the film industry as both capital and labour. As capital, these figures become 'valuable assets to the production company', that is, they are investments that provide a degree of protection against loss, to mitigate risk. Their salaries make up a significant percentage of a film's budget and are also used as marketing tools, with their images being advertised considerably in order to influence the entertainment industry in favour of the film being promoted (Dyer, 1998; McDonald, 2000). Additionally, Dyer, McDonald and several other authors noted that the star's tangible features – notably the body, the face, the personality, and their real or created identities – are useful marketing tools that are being used as product differentiation between production houses. Presently, the star figures have their own brand images that they market for their own economic and creative benefits. Production houses, filmmakers and the industry also depend on these images as a point for brand identification from audience as well. The star system or these star figures become one of the focal points of the film industry (globally, nationally or even hyper locally).

Furthermore, Susan Hayward notes that in addition to the capital value, stars also represent a specific iconography that supports the former. Iconography is the form of gestures, actions, or even being associated with particular genres of films, types of characters and more. Iconography here becomes an important point to note for the concept of intertextuality. Advocated by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality in a film refers to filmmakers building narratives around pre-existing subject matters from texts and resources available to them; they are also based on and reconstructed around current sociocultural settings, economic systems, pieces of literature, prior fables and traditions, and so on. However, one of the most critical aspects of this functioning is the audience's comprehension of the allusions.

Hayward's definition of a star being understood through the representation of certain iconography can also be linked with Dyer's explanation of using the tangible features of a star as a point for production and consumption. Hayward (2000) noted in her first definition of stars that these figures not only worked through certain archetypal codes (referring to their dispositions, characters they were typecast into, or the way they looked) but also represented cultural codes

that helped them in being differentiated according to the regions they belonged to and consequently, the film industry. These cultural codes included particular gestures, attitudes, postures and so on. Stars being typecast as certain characters in the films they make and the archetypes they thus create and fit into make space for stars from later generations to fill similar roles and borrow cultural codes from them.

According to Richard Dyer (1998) and Christine Gledhill (1991), stardom is not reducible to simply actors as we see them but rather the complex personas comprising various texts. The star figure is embodied by a human being. While the audience is privy to these personalities through their differentiating physicalities such as their voice, looks, skills, and so on, this version of the text is made available to viewers by the industry, films, publicity, marketing, or through unofficial texts such as rumours and scandals. Therefore, stars are not simply creations of the film industry; they too partake in constructing their personas. Dyer also notes that ‘stars are extensive’ and are intertextual in the sense that their images ‘are picked up and used by others’, whose stories outlive them. As a result, a star can be seen as a collection of meanings that present the star phenomenon as fundamentally unstable and contradictory in nature.

In reference to the idea of ‘borrowing’, Christian Metz suggested that films become texts that have consciously or unconsciously borrowed from other pre-existing texts (available in any form). Intertextuality in Indian cinema has always been featured through allusions, adaptations, references and more. Character names, emotions in conversations, and other visual signals like images and figurines can be alluded to in films (CVS Edu, n.d.).

Bollywood and Stardom

Since its inception, Bollywood as a phenomenon has been subject to much interpretation. However, among such views, the perspective that Bollywood is an appellation given to a type of Indian film inspired by local and global situations appears to be the most historically and logically coherent (Prasad, n.d.). Bollywood films emerged in the 1990s when the Indian economy became liberalised and found its foundations in the films and the industry of pre-liberalised India. These films were centred around NRI figures with a combination of tradition and modernity as the crucial themes (Prasad, n.d.).

Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2003) notes that Bollywood is not the Indian film industry but a part of the whole. It works parallel to Hindi cinema, and for a small space, it is a complex network of activities relating to the film industry. As Rajadhyaksha points out, Bollywood addressed the NRIs and was not concerned about the problems of Indians; it became techno-cultural nationalism and NRI nostalgia for India. The author mentions that with Bollywood came technology to keep up with the Western film industries, technologies that allowed for the multiplication of star bodies to continue. (Rajadhyaksha, 2003).

While there was a rapid increase in the presence of star figures across the industry, as the system's dynamics shifted, it led to a surge in the dominance of actors being known for much-specialised roles. The star system in Bollywood continues to take forward the commercial and aesthetic value of having star bodies in the films. A central phenomenon to this new stardom in Hindi cinema was the idea of excess wherein the body of the star was permitted 'multiple avenues of exposure' within the production and the general discourse of films (Majumdar, 2003, pp. 89-90)). Consequently, it led to a new tendency of seeing stars in multiple roles which also led to the creation of a logic of multiplication – double role films or doubling, as mentioned above. This has been a relatively widespread phenomenon in Hindi cinema over the past few decades. Doubling also offered an opportunity for a 'meta-performance', as suggested by James Naremore (1988, p. 72), wherein the actor 'signals they act persons who are acting'. This idea of meta-performance can also, therefore, be linked to Shah Rukh Khan's performance in *Om Shanti Om*, wherein as Om Makhija in song picturisations, he breaks character almost to signal his presence as the star and then switches back to the person he is embodying through the act of acting. Through his double roles in the film, the audience becomes aware 'of the mechanism of cinema itself' (Chakravarty, 2013), the link between technology, the star and his stardom, and the seamless way through which the film moves spatially and temporally. This logic of multiplication of star body or doubling also builds on the idea of excess. Excess in Hindi cinema has majorly been showcased through the notion of wealth and dream sequences in the form of song picturisation, both at times tied in with exaggerated acting. Following liberalisation, contemporary Hindi cinema observes narratives surrounding diasporic Indians residing abroad engaging in consumerist opportunities and travel, romance also being another central storyline. Wealth or abundance remains a rather large part of the commercial productions, notably in films like *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), and more.

With the use of technology, there has been a sort of longevity given to the stars of this era, unlike the ones from the pre-liberalised Hindi cinema, where stars enjoyed only a decade or so of stardom. In referring to this longevity, there has been an increasing shift of male and female actors towards the anti-ageing process. While female stars from the yesteryears are nowhere to be seen after a few years (examples including Helen, Neetu Kapoor, etc.), the arrival of technology in Bollywood has let contemporary faces such as Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Saif Ali Khan, Akshay Kumar, Deepika Padukone and more, enjoy more than two decades on-screen, not allowing them to age in the process. Some of these male actors are seen in multiple film releases, touched-up images (completely toned bodies, wrinkle-free faces, dyed hair, etc.), romancing actresses at least a decade younger than them. Furthermore, with the expanding digital media landscape, Bollywood has transcended, in some form, to OTT platforms taking with it some of its stars, furthering the idea of longevity.

Bollywood and Intertextuality

Essentially, the industry today produces content in which the “past continues into the present” (Kapoor, 2020) through intertextuality and constant referencing enabled by star bodies. The Indian ‘star system’ functioned on a fair degree of dominance of the star over the film production and on their practice of working on various projects simultaneously, which continues even in contemporary Hindi cinema (Majumdar, 2003). Stardom has been a central and dominant part of Hindi cinema, and the appeal of Hindi films rested on the local and cultural interpretations and readings of the star bodies (Viswamohan & Wilkinson, 2020). Stars from the earlier decades in Hindi cinema allowed their films to construct their star identities. Presently, in addition to the aforementioned details, stars aid in providing capital value to the cinema and stabilizing viewer response.

Intertextuality, however, has remained a common theme throughout the changes seen in the industry. Current stars constantly make references to older ones, and remakes allow viewers to consider, reflect and be nostalgic with certain narrative tropes common to star figures. While Bollywood emerges parallel to Hindi cinema with new tendencies of its own, its star system remains rather static. Much like Dilip Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan after him, Bollywood has seen (albeit more in number) multiple male stars enjoy stardom for long years such as the three Khans and Akshay Kumar. On the other hand, every decade a new set of female stars emerges, slowly replacing some of the older ones. Stardom in Bollywood does not reinvent itself into a new phenomenon but draws on the system from earlier Hindi cinema and modernises itself through technology.

***Om Shanti Om* Analysis**

Synopsis

Om Shanti Om (2007), directed by Farah Khan, is a romantic drama film that follows the story of Om, a junior artist in the 1970s, who falls in love with female star Shanti Priya. He is murdered while attempting to save the actress from a fire and is reincarnated thirty years in the present as Om Kapoor, an upcoming star in Bollywood. Om Kapoor begins regaining memories from his life as Om Makhija after he meets Bela (Om Makhija’s mother), Mukesh and another series of events that trigger the resurfacing of his memories. Om and Mukesh decide to collaborate on a film called *Om Shanti Om*, where he employs a Shantipriya look-a-like in the hopes of forcing a confession from Mukesh. However, things go astray, and Om’s life is put in jeopardy once more. *Om Shanti Om* presents a narrative that is packed with entertainment, a story and the subsequent stylisation pertaining to some of the most popular genres in Bollywood such as romance, drama and action which quickly made it an audience favourite. It saw the highest number of prints, about 2,000, which was a significantly large number for any Hindi film at the time of its release (Raghavendra, 2007) and accumulated millions in profit after its release worldwide. In comparison to its ₹30 crore budget, the film made over ₹300 million in India only (BOI, n.d.).

Shah Rukh Khan's role and performance were so anticipated that the film's premiere at Berlinale in 2008 had three sold-out screenings (PTI, 2008). However, one of the recurring themes in audience reactions across all media channels remained Shah Rukh Khan (SRK). People across the globe have consistently watched the film owing to the amount of exposure it provides them to the actor, doing in abundance on screen for what he has become known for – an affective performer. In general, the film provided the 'entertainment value' that has been closely associated with Bollywood for years – a dramatic storyline with a happily ever after, elaborate and highly stylised song sequences, and two hours of screen time for some of the popular stars in the industry.

Intertextuality and Excess in '*Om Shanti Om*'

The aesthetics of excess, tied in with intertextuality, become essential to understanding the stardom represented in *Om Shanti Om*, which can be noted through the mise en scène and narrative aspects. Excess is also closely associated with the idea of melodrama. In reference to Gledhill's (1991) argument about melodrama, most sequences in the film are charged with overpowering background music and exaggerated actions from the actors seen through swift zoom-ins and mid-shots as they interact with one another and the mise en scène. An example is a sequence with Om Makhija and his mother in the flashback as they argue over changing his name. This tendency of overdramatising scenes through non-diegetic sound and exaggerated acting has been relatively common in Hindi films from the 1960s to 1980s; a tendency also used to accompany dialogue to highlight characters' issues relevant to their dispositions and society. In the case mentioned above, the matter being discussed is the change in the last name, status and caste symbol within the Hindu society, also relevant to stardom.

Intertextuality in *Om Shanti Om* is characterised by gestures, familiar narrative tropes, costumes and set designs as references to popular films. In doing so, it also creates a sense of nostalgia and recognition, also characteristic of Bollywood films from the late 1990s (Shastri, 2011). The film borrows heavily from another film called *Karz* (1980) and opens in a film city-like space known as RC studios. The artificially-made elaborate structures of the city become a vital mise en scène element to the film as it acts as a central space for climaxes in both sections to take place, for memory and recall, and becomes a temporal link between the past and the present (Mitra, 2020). The mise en scène is packed with the romanticism of 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, Bollywood and Hollywood films, especially those about producing movies. (Khalid, 2007).

Om Shanti Om constantly refers to a common tendency of Hindi cinema's star system to have 'powerful' names to gain superstardom. The constant references made by Pappu for Om to change his name to one of more significance (such as 'Kapoor', 'Khanna') highlights an important aspect of stardom in Hindi cinema at the time. A part of it has been associated with names of actors such as Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Rishi Kapoor, Rajesh Khanna and more,

which has seeped into contemporary Hindi cinema as the film presents through its narrative and allusions such as the ones mentioned above. Perhaps this explanation can also be extended to Om's love interest in the film – Shanti Priya. It is possible to link the female character to Hema Malini, who enjoyed star status in the 1970s Hindi film industry. This association is made for two reasons: Shanti Priya is called the 'Dreamy Girl' while Hema Malini also starred in a film titled *Dream Girl* (1977); and another because both women sport double names. (Shastri, 2011).

Another character, Rajesh Kapoor, has been included to spoof Rajesh Khanna, and the former brings the latter's eccentric style of hair flicking, which we also see being imitated by Om and Pappu. In producing a character off of a real actor, whose gestures are replicated by the main protagonist, who is also a star at the time of making the film, produces a text within a text within a text. Through this character, we can first understand the star as capital value or commodity. It is clear from most of his scenes in the film that he is a respected star. From his character and the reactions of the others around him, he holds a specific commodifiable value that, in Dyer's understanding, is used to maintain and garner favourable audience responses – a guarantee for any film to perform well commercially. Although a minor character in the film, Rajesh Kapoor's star persona also comprises the hair-flicking gesture and distinct way of carrying himself, similar to Rajesh Khanna, representing cultural code and an important star figure of the 1970s.

Shanti Priya too can be seen as a commodity in the industry. In the premier sequence, she fulfils the same conditions that Rajesh Kapoor does, if not more. Shanti also represents the 'Dreamy Girl' iconography, which showcases her authentic star persona. However, in the later scenes, we can also observe the industry's restrictions imposed on her star persona. In the sequence before Om saves her from the fire, we see Shanti refusing to work; consequently, the entire filming comes to a halt. It can be inferred that female stars are simply vehicles for films. It is as though a film gains additional value, commercial and aesthetic, with them. This scene in the film added to the melodrama aspect and is also an intertextual reference to a similar incident that had taken place with stars Nargis and Sunil Dutt.

Shanti's stardom can be understood through the perspective of stars being constructs. As Gledhill also mentions, the female stars who have 'excessive' habits need to be punished or are made to disappear. Shanti Priya becomes a representative example of this in the sequence where she confronts Mukesh of their marriage predicament and confesses about her pregnancy. Similar to Om eavesdropping, we watch as Shanti pleads to Mukesh to embrace their truth as he argues about the money that could go waste if they do. The lines 'no one will invest money in a married actress's film' or her 'career would be ruined' if they publicly announce their marriage present the state of female stardom in Hindi cinema. At the risk of a public confession, Mukesh murders Shanti later. Her death in the narrative is mysterious to others, with only Mukesh and Om knowing about the murder.

The idea of the unavailability of a female star due to marriage, pregnancy or even other ‘excessive’ habits strips them of their star identity. Om’s mother also refers to a similar logic in his conversation about the last name change. She mentions in passing how she could’ve been a star had she not been carrying Om at the time of her audition. At the risk of a public confession, Mukesh murders Shanti later. Her death in the narrative is mysterious to others, with only Mukesh and Om knowing about the murder.

Om Shanti Om borrows from films before it, and showing the filming of a project with the same name in its narrative shows its capacity to be self-reflexive and intertextual. The film’s intertextuality works so that the audience also becomes an active participant in the meaning-finding process as they become aware of the intertextuality the film undertakes. Additionally, it builds its narrative and mise en scène in a way that mirrors the tendencies and traditions of Hindi cinema in the territory of Mumbai, old and new. The film’s narrative ‘defly moves in and out of diegetic bounds to establish intertextual relationships’ (Shastri, 2011).

Through the tragic love story of Om and Shanti and the carefully crafted mise en scène, *Om Shanti Om* presents a transformation of Hindi cinema to Bollywood. The sets, characters, narratives and other cultural codes relevant to Hindi cinema from the 1970s and 1980s have to burn down to let Bollywood and its extravagance take place; for Shah Rukh Khan to claim his superstardom. Bollywood rises from the ashes of Hindi cinema.

Shah Rukh Khan – Star Image

Shah Rukh Khan attained super or mega-stardom in Bollywood over fifty films and fifteen years in this industry. His rise to stardom corresponded with the beginning of Bollywood and India opening up to a ‘neoliberal capitalism and Internet age’ (Gopinath, 2017). His presentation of himself in the public eye and through his film roles, as a sophisticated, urban and modernised male with this newly liberalised economy quickly made him one of the most prominent faces of contemporary Hindi cinema or Bollywood (Gopinath 2017; Chopra 2007; Chakravarty 2013). Even the characters he played – which majorly spanned middle-class Hindu men presenting affective masculinity – quickly won him credibility within Indian households.

Following more than two decades of being in the spotlight, SRK’s stardom remains one to be studied in terms of his double roles. His name is often the first one associated with Bollywood and indicates a link to the ‘contemporary sensibility defined as a global culture’ (Chakravarty, 2013). It is important to note that SRK’s performances are not limited to simply films. His persona covers and stretches across various media such as advertisements, television, live performances and more.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2003), in his article on Bollywood, mentions how the new era in Hindi cinema after liberalisation came with advancements in technology. Additionally, Chakravarty (2013) and Chopra (2007) also suggest that Shah Rukh Khan becomes the face of this new era, representative of the technologically advanced films made in Bollywood, as contemporary Hindi cinema. This technology enabled the star to appear with himself in one frame and maximise his star persona as he ‘romances with his favourite stars from the seventies in one scene’ (Chakravarty, 2013). The technology being harnessed here also adds to the excess and spectacle Farah Khan creates through the sets, costumes and sound.

The film begins thirty years in the past and ends thirty years following that, suggesting that if the problems posed in the narrative are not resolved, the film is not over. Given SRK’s global stardom and extensive filmography of romance films, the viewers expect the star to have the conventional ‘happily ever after’. The reason for the aforementioned is not simply his devoted fan following and ‘his cinematic representation of a compassionate heteronormative relationship’ (Gopinath, 2017), but also his ability to feel and express the emotions of his characters profoundly and to make his audience reciprocate those as well. Therefore, in a way, he must, literally and metaphorically, ‘win’ at the end by getting a happy ending with his love interest, resolving the narrative crisis, or both. As similarly suggested by Gopinath, ‘He and his characters are sensuous and emotional, objects of desire and regard, who, nevertheless, are triumphant subjects at the end.’

Doubling in ‘*Om Shanti Om*’

In this regard, SRK’s first character in the film – Om Makhija – can be analysed. Om Makhija, a junior artist struggling to make it big in the industry, falls in love with Shanti Priya, a female star at the time. Both meet a tragic end in the film’s first half when they die in a fire. Comparing some of the previous roles held by SRK, Om Makhija is a rather pitiful character. His actions are exaggerated; his poor command of the English language and his struggling role in the industry positions Shah Rukh Khan as undesirable.

In referring to Hayward and Dyer’s understandings, Shah Rukh Khan’s star body is easily commodifiable in a way that it provides a guarantee for the film to succeed commercially. However, Om Makhija neither provides capital value for the film nor garners a favourable audience response given the character’s life trajectory. He is portrayed as ‘less than’ in terms of agency, economics and social status compared to other characters such as Shanti Priya, Mukesh, and so on. Although, the character does provide SRK to showcase his versatility as an actor. Om Makhija is everything that Raj (*Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*), Rahul (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*), and so on, or even the Shah Rukh Khan represented in media is not. However, Om Makhija provides an avenue for SRK to embody characters that show his

versatility as an actor, allowing him to break out of the roles he is usually typecast into – the urban, middle-class Hindu man who resolves all crises at the end (both action and romance).

Albeit, SRK retains his real star persona through songs. Through the multiple set and costume changes, the songs in *Om Shanti Om* do not provide a temporal jump, unlike other Bollywood films but temporarily break us away from the film's narrative to reinstate SRK's star figure. The idea of meta-performance can also, therefore, be linked to Shah Rukh Khan's performance in *Om Shanti Om*, wherein as Om Makhija in song picturisations, he breaks character almost to signal his presence as the star and then back to the person he is embodying through the act of acting. Primarily seen in the track 'Main Agar Kahoon', the audience sees less of Om Makhija and more of the Shah Rukh Khan known to grace the screens. In referring to stars being representative of specific cultures and creating their iconographies, SRK has come to be known as a 'romance king'. The film momentarily breaks from the narrative to show SRK wooing Shanti Priya with his iconic actions – smiling at the camera in a side angle and his signature open-armed wide stance. The affective/emotive star figure he is known for is restored through this. As Om Makhija, Shah Rukh Khan borrows gestures from his previous characters that framed his star identity to reinstate that same identity through the character. Here, Hayward's star theory on intertextuality and iconography comes into play as SRK borrows gestures from previous characters he played, one that he is known globally for, to pacify the viewers of his real identity and a promise of resolution of the crisis. However, since Om Makhija is embodied by Shah Rukh Khan, the unfavourable circumstances of the character are unsuitable for the actor as the film cannot let him 'lose' or not just lose his love interest but simultaneously die after not having resolved the problem; let the 'evil' win over the 'good'. Consequently, the audience is led to the next section of the film, where SRK's double role as Om Kapoor is introduced.

Om Kapoor, son of Rajesh Kapoor, is born when Om Makhija dies. The opening sequence with SRK's second character in the film begins with mid-shots and close-ups of a film star's luxurious lifestyle, accompanied by a voiceover of Om Makhija narrating the star life he had dreamt of having. As can be seen from this, the foreshadowing from the previous sections is coming true. Here, the ideas of excess and intertextuality are presented in *mise en scène* elements and theory, respectively.

In the mid-long shot, we see the room in which Om Kapoor resides is large; each corner arranged with decorative, modern art pieces and picture frames as he is dressed in an expensive robe, with multiple butlers at his service. Additionally, the ominous non-diegetic background score build-up adds to the life of excess that Om Kapoor lives in, owing to his star identity. There is a hint of melodrama when the music comes to a crescendo with a shot of the burnt scar of the 'Om' tattoo on his wrist, providing physical evidence of reincarnation.

In referring to Gledhill and Dyer's understanding of the star as a construct, Om Kapoor becomes a central, intertextual figure. This understanding becomes relevant, especially in the case of Shah Rukh Khan and the characters he embodies in *Om Shanti Om*. Through Om Kapoor, SRK is not only displaying the life of an upcoming star but also of himself via his distinct way of greeting his fans through his infamous balcony; the lifestyle lived by him and the way his star persona is a 'networked' body with the use of technology that enables him to be in multiple spaces at the same time. Om Kapoor is produced as an individual reaping the benefits of a neoliberal capitalist economy. Not only is he a close representation of SRK's real life, but he is also reflective of the star system prevalent in Bollywood today. This can be noted in the scene where a producer hastily narrates the scene to Om Kapoor, who is listening to him and simultaneously carrying on a conversation through a Bluetooth device. As Chakravarty notes, SRK's persona is 'hypermediated and networked'. (Chakravarty, 2013). Additionally, the same scene also shows how the crew of the film Om Kapoor is working in cannot move forward with the filming without him or his input and approval. He seems to be the driver of the film, the most vital narrative and economic component of the entire project. The character also represents Shah Rukh Khan – the reel persona embodying the real persona. In doing so and in reference to Dyer's (1998) and Hayward's (2000) theories, *Om Shanti Om* highlights the significance of a star's commercial value by also using the same concept through SRK. Furthermore, in embodying Om Kapoor, SRK partakes in the construction of the former's (reel) stardom based on the latter's real star identity, which he helps create along with the industry, media, fans and more. Om Kapoor can thus be viewed as a text within a text within another text.

The 'Deewangi Deewangi' song also becomes essential to this discussion. The song takes place as an after-party and celebration of Om Kapoor winning an award. It has an extraordinary number of appearances of other stars of Bollywood, especially ones Shah Rukh Khan has worked with. This song can be seen as epitomising SRK's star figure; through the facade of Om Kapoor, the audience can enjoy performances from other star actors, all of whom dance to gestures borrowed from their movies with SRK. He does not perform here as Om Kapoor but as himself. This brings in intertextual references and further positions Shah Rukh Khan as the global star of Bollywood. The award show that precedes the song is also an essential sequence in terms of intertextuality and excess. The dramatic, exaggerated performance of all the stars, including SRK, adds to the excess.

Furthermore, the scenes where the nominations are announced are references to films done by the actors (Akshay Kumar, Abhishek Bachchan, etc.) and SRK. However, both the scenes from different movies involving Om Kapoor are identical as he narrates the same dialogue to two different actresses. The dialogue here coupled with his signature arms-wide-open pose invites the audience to view him as SRK, not Om Kapoor. These scenes provide the junction for reality and illusion to overlap (Shastri, 2011), creating multiple layers of intertextual texts that reinforce

Shah Rukh Khan's stardom by giving his 'real' persona the space to do so, not the 'reel' as Om Kapoor.

In presenting Om Kapoor's lifestyle before the character himself, the film in a way is attempting to restore Shah Rukh Khan's star image, almost pacifying the viewers that the issues from the previous section will be resolved now that much of the control in the film had been reinstated to SRK's character. Om Kapoor's star identity in the film is also a mirror image of SRK's stardom. The song sequence, 'Dard E Disco', which the character suggests as a dream sequence for a wheelchair-bound character he plays for his job, becomes an interesting piece to analyse. The sequence leading up to the song presents a film-within-a-film, referring to the constant use of intertextuality. The song itself also becomes an example of excess given the use of dancers of varying nationalities dressed in skimpy clothing and exaggerated accessories, while SRK dances mostly shirtless in frontal shots. SRK/Om Kapoor remains the central figure of spectacle throughout the song.

Drawing on the ideas of theorists mentioned above, the association between the actor and technology in Bollywood becomes apparent in the second half of the film. As mentioned earlier, the Om Kapoor's scene with the producer of a film he seems to be working on, the Superman sequence that required him to 'fly' with the help of gadgets and the constant reliance on technology (phones, projection and surveillance equipment, etc.) in the execution of the plan to take revenge on Mukesh – all of these instances aid in showing SRK – through Om Kapoor – as the face and networked body of Bollywood's new technological stage. *Om Shanti Om* not only provides Shah Rukh Khan two major avenues to express this affective masculinity that has become a significant part of his brand image but also allows him to extend, borrow and reference his star identity interchangeably – as SRK from outside of a film and as both the Oms, his characters in the film.

Conclusion

Om Shanti Om illustrates Shah Rukh Khan's stardom in two ways: the first of his versatility as a performer through the 'desiring and vulnerable body' of Om Makhija, and the second related to his star identity outside the film screens, in other media spaces as a 'desired body' through Om Kapoor (Chakravarty, 2013). Both characters are brought together in a space characterised through themes of love, self-identification and sacrifice and highlight the actor's ability of an affective performance, as he has come to be known. This is also helpful in further establishing his credibility as an actor.

Shah Rukh Khan had done a few double role films before *Om Shanti Om*, and more so following it as well. However, in each of these films, there is an observable pattern to the way his star identity is presented to the audience. In *Don* (2006), as an example, while he plays a negative

character in the film, the power of the plot rests solely in his character, as though it is him that controls the narrative, so much so that even the viewers are not aware of an unexpected development in the narrative. Even by playing such a role, the film does so to leave and authenticate his star identity in a position of command. Therefore, reiterating the point that SRK's characters in some form must be triumphant in the end, doing so otherwise will not only dampen audience expectations but also deem the actor's stardom as lesser than the global image he holds.

Shah Rukh Khan (and other similar stars) have never quite broken out of his star image, within and outside the space of the film. He experiments with his performance as Om Makhija in the first half of the film, completely deviating from the dominant, romantic, and all-knowing characters he plays to Makhija's naive and submissive personality. However, to validate his star figure and his presence, he comes back and ends the film as Om Kapoor, a character that not only lives and breathes as SRK in the reel life, but one that embodies and represents the actor's real life. Therefore, in order to deviate from their usual star personas, actors such as Shah Rukh Khan pick narratives that allow multiple avenues of exposure to their body so they can, later in the same film, authenticate the stardom they previously diverged from. In doing so, the subsequent (audience) consumption remains in accordance with the stardom as produced by the various media texts.

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The Female Gaze vs the Male Gaze in the Mughal Court: Recreating a Picture of the Royal Women Through Humayun-Nama and Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh

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How to Cite this Paper

Periwal, G. (2022). The female gaze vs the male gaze in the Mughal court: Recreating a picture of the royal women through *Humayun-Nama* and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 72-88.

Abstract

Historical texts have played an important role in determining the narratives people form around a historical period, and the way history is written is always impacted by the ideologies and personal biases of the author. Mughal history has been a subject of fascination for historians around the globe. While several studies have been undertaken to understand the politics, religion, or administration of the time, very few sources give an insight into the lives of the royal women of the *harem*. This paper aims to recreate the lives of the royal women of the Mughal Court through a textual analysis of Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun-Nama* and Abdul Qadir Badauni's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. The texts are analysed through a gendered lens to understand the difference in perspectives of the portrayal of women through the male gaze and the female gaze. The paper has used both primary and secondary sources for data collection. The limitations of the research are discussed as well, which include but are not limited to anachronism, selection bias, and personal biases of the authors. The analysis of the texts has helped understand how the lives of the royal women were shaped by the issues of marriage, customs and traditions, and the influence over the Emperor.

Keywords: Humayun-Nama, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Gulbadan Begam, Abdul Qadir Badauni, Mughal Court, harem

Introduction

Historical texts have always played a key role in enhancing our understanding of our past and scrutinising events from the past as a lesson for the future. Studying history is essential to be aware of where we have come from and how that has shaped our comprehension of the world around us. The sources we read determine the narratives we form around history. The way history is written is always impacted by the author and their opinions and biases, which are extremely difficult to eliminate. Therefore, it is always argued that history is the story of the victors since it is written by them. There are various sources of information for a historian, but one of the most important is written or literary sources. Literary sources give an insight into the time they were written and the society and culture of the people. Memoirs, travelogues and government documents are significant because they help us understand the administrative, political and personal lives of the emperors of the time. Leopold von Ranke classifies sources into primary and secondary sources; primary sources are closest in time and space to the events because of their authenticity and accounts of actual eyewitnesses. Interpretations and textual analysis of these historical works shed light on issues that are hard to be found elsewhere yet are extremely important for a detailed perspective of the period.

Mughal history has been a subject of much fascination for scholars around the world, with several studies undertaken in various spheres of the period to understand the functioning and policies of one of the most successful empires in Indian history. While a lot of focus is given to texts of the time that are centred around religious, political, or administrative issues such as the *Akbarnama* or *Ain-i-Akbari*, there is a paucity of sources that give an insight into the everyday activities of the *harem* and the fundamentals of the royal household. Historian Ruby Lal says that all works describing the Mughal *harem* portray it as “a sexualised, secluded, feminine domain (albeit not for the “old and ailing”), centrally premised on a crude principle of sensual pleasure that was supposed to regulate the “private” lives of imperial women and men” (2004, p. 592). As Lal explains, this is a wildly inaccurate representation of the *harem*, which is sadly perceived by most people around the world. Very few surviving texts provide insight into the harem, and even fewer give an insight into the lives of the common women of that time. This paper compares two primary literary sources to understand the Mughal harem of that time, thereby understanding the socio-cultural history of that period – the *Humayun-Nama*, an official memoir written by Gulbadan Begam for emperor Humayun that talks about the lives of the women of the royal *harem*, and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, an unofficial account of the history of the early Mughals in India by Abdul Qadir Badauni, giving an insight into the lives of the common women of the time.

Gulbadan Begam’s text is revolutionary because it gives an insider’s perspective into the *harem*, one that is true to its essence in showing the complexities of the *harem* and the interpersonal relationships that were formed within it. She writes about the lives of the royal ladies, which were undocumented at that time, and the pressures they had to face within and outside the *harem*.

Abdul Qadir Badauni's text, on the other hand, has a stark difference in the way he describes the *harem*. When he speaks of the royal women, he calls them "ladies veiled with the veil of chastity, but he believes them to be one of the instigating factors for the Emperor" (Majid, 2010, p. 249) as he introduced new ideas and thoughts to the court. He believed that the ladies of the *harem* wielded influence over Emperor Akbar and were one of the major factors in his change of policies towards religious tolerance and secularism that irked Badauni. His text often blurred the line between historical accuracy and stories and anecdotes that were twisted to his benefit, therefore, his description of the *harem* and the royal household is extremely colourful and fitting to the social context. This research aims to understand the daily activities of the Mughal *harem* and the royal household through a gender perspective, analysing how similar events were perceived differently through a female gaze and a male gaze, therefore changing the narrative of the event as well as the discourse surrounding it.

To recreate a picture of women's lives through these two narratives presented in Gulbadan Begam and Badauni's text, the paper answers the question, "How can one understand the lives of the royal women in the Mughal *harem* by analysing the Humayun-Nama and Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh through a gendered lens?" The variables for this question are looking at excerpts from both texts focused on the *harem* and women in general and assessing them based on how they view the *harem* from a female gaze versus a male gaze. This analysis helps to understand the difference in perception of the *harem* through the male and female gaze and whether they match the preconceived notions created through mainstream texts. The paper also evaluates existing literature on this topic and provides a brief on the kinds of research that have already been undertaken in the field.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted in the past to understand the relevance of the two texts and infer the Mughal *harem* based on the descriptions of these texts. Several secondary works of literature are available for both which interpret and analyse the texts and make inferences based on the analysis. In the case of Humayun-Nama, scholars focus on Gulbadan Begam's relevance in describing the *harem*, and historians have written extensively on her importance as one of the most important female writers of the time with the only surviving text. Most of the works done on Gulbadan are contemporary, thus explaining gender discourse through her memoir. Scholars have studied Badauni's works to analyse his description of the Mughal court, especially that of Akbar's reign as he was a courtier at that time. His perspective of being an outsider in the court gave us a different outlook on every event that transpired at that time. His works not only talk about governance, socio-political discourses, and the royal *harem* but also give an outlook into the lives of the common people in tandem with the Mughal court.

Historian Ruby Lal brought attention to Gulbadan Begam's memoir in the academic world through her books and papers, which explore domesticity, cultural conduct and the role of women in the Mughal *harem* and has worked on various papers exploring Gulbadan's importance in the literary community. Her article *The Domestic World of Peripatetic Kings: Babur and Humayun, c. 1494-1556* (2001) aims to analyse the meaning of the role of women in the household, marriages, and family and their interactions with emperors Babur and subsequently Humayun. It also explains how the domestic life of these emperors was impacted by the political gains or instabilities during their reign and gives a detailed account of all interpersonal relationships in the *harem* and events such as marriages, feasts, festivals, births, and deaths. Another article, written by Lal, *Rethinking Mughal India: Challenge of a Princess' Memoir* (2003), focuses on the study of gender dynamics in the Mughal court and how these newfound revelations of the Mughal court lead to a new narrative in terms of political, social, and cultural affairs. Turning away from Mughal historiography's general analysis concerning military and administrative affairs, she introduces new challenges concerning hierarchies and power in the *harem*. Lal's article *Historicizing the Harem: The Challenges of a Princess's Memoir* (2004) uses excerpts from Gulbadan's text and K.S. Lal's contemporary work on the Mughal *harem* explains how these two texts have a striking contrast in the way they have portrayed the royal women and the *harem* because of the difference between the female gaze and the male gaze of the authors. Through this paper, she tries to dismantle the previously accepted notions of the *harem* and domestic life as portrayed by the male authors. Through all her articles, Lal has written a history of Mughal domestic life, one that was not undertaken before on an academic level. She specifies that she has "not unearthed any new sources" but has "returned to sources that have been available all along" (2004, p. 593). Through this method, she has incorporated sources that were previously neglected because of them not being mainstream enough, such as Gulbadan's memoir, and used them to strengthen the central narrative around the Mughal harem.

Some other works on Gulbadan Begam's memoir include M. A. Scherer's *Woman to Woman: Annette, the Princess, and the Bibi* (1996) and Rebecca Gould's *How Gulbadan Remembered: The Book of Humayun as an Act of Representation* (2011). Scherer's article tries to form a connection between Gulbadan Begam and Annette Beveridge, the translator of her memoir. Gould's article is a study on the interaction between history and memory through the lens of Gulbadan, the first female author of Mughal India. According to her, Humayun-Nama is a "genre-crossing historiographic memoir" (2011, p. 187), with little authorial self-reflection in the text. This article gives a profile on Beveridge and how she came to translate Humayun-Nama, thereby introducing the world to the literary genius of Gulbadan and bringing the female perspective into the Mughal narrative.

Afshan Majid has extensively written about Badauni's texts in various papers, understanding the impact of Badauni's works in recreating a picture of the Mughal court and the position of women

at that time under Emperor Akbar. Her article *Women and a Theologian: The Ideas and Narratives of Abdul Qadir Badauni* (2010) explores how Badauni works Nijat-ur-Rashid, and Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh are helpful “in understanding the social milieu...(and) the study of gender emanates from the study of society” (p. 248). Through various examples of policy changes and anecdotes, he explains how women had an influence over the change of heart of the Emperor and turned him astray from religion. The paper also explains the idea of *Mutah* or temporary marriages and how Badauni’s opinions helped clear the dispute about the legality of the Emperor’s many marriages. Her article *Ideology and Personal Grievances: Badauni’s Career at Akbar’s Court* (2011) is insightful in understanding how he became a part of the Mughal court under Emperor Akbar. It gives a brief about Badauni’s life before entering Akbar’s service and his interactions with other courtiers and nobles. Different stories and anecdotes describe how he was either neutral or critical of Akbar’s measures. Through his works, it was understood that he was not given the true position he deserved in the court, and while he was “ready at first to make concessions for advancement in service”, he ultimately failed “to keep up with the development of ideas in Akbar’s mind” (p. 351). Her article *Emperor Akbar’s Views on Women as Recorded by Badāūnī and Abu’l Fazl* (2014) explains the views of Akbar on women through the lens of recorded written history. Akbar’s views on women can be explained in two stages – the “immature phase or the phase of evolution” and “his mature views” (p. 289). Badauni’s works give an idea about his second or the mature phase through a more direct narration.

Other sources explaining Badauni’s texts are Fauzia Zareen Abbas’ paper *Abdul Qadir Badauni – A Voice in the Wilderness* (1991) and Angbin Yasmin’s *‘Middle Class’ Women in Mughal India*(2014). Abbas’ paper explores the position of Badauni in the Mughal court and how he acquired that position, which was ultimately reflected in his texts. She also explains how Badauni wrote for posterity, stating that “it is the only historical work written during the reign of Akbar but not for Akbar” (p. 263). She defends his motives and works by stating that his personality and position were overshadowed in the court and historians have misinterpreted him. To explain the role of the so-called middle-class women in society, Yasmin’s article takes anecdotes from different texts written by various people during the Mughal rule, such as the *Ardhakathanak*, *Munshat-i-Namakin*, *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Padshahnama*, and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. There is also reference to miniatures, legal documents, and paintings to explain further the different perspectives in the treatment of these women. While talking about Badauni, she says that he gives biographies of physicians, pious men, and poets, and amongst the various male poets, one biography is that of a woman named Nihani. He provides a couplet written by her and states, “although the poets of the age have all attempted to answer this couplet yet none of them has equalled it; what manhood is this, that cannot cope with a woman?” (p. 298).

While these secondary texts have immense details on the original sources and have made comparisons through a gendered lens with other relevant sources, no scholar or historian has

made any comparison between the *Humayun-Nama* and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*; as far as the researcher knows, thus this study has aimed to be original in its research and findings.

Method

For this paper, the best way to answer the research question is through textual analysis. Textual analysis is a method of research through which researchers understand the various cultures and subcultures of society by interpreting literary sources of the time. This method helps understand and gather information about how the Mughal *harem* functioned through the interpretations made after reading both texts. This method of research provides an in-depth analysis of both the texts and helps understand how the gendered differences in the analysis have shaped our perception of the harem, the royal household, and the Mughal court. A well-defined research question is used for the textual analysis and gendered viewing of both texts.

Case Selection

The two texts that are chosen for comparison are *Humayun-Nama*, written by Gulbadan Begam, and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, written by Abdul Qadir Badauni. This paper specifically focuses on excerpts from both the texts which talk about the Mughal *harem* and royal household under the various emperors.

About Gulbadan Begam and Humayun-Nama

Gulbadan Begam was born around 1523 AD to Zahiruddin Muhammad Babar, the first Timurid sovereign ruler in India and the founder of the Mughal Dynasty, and his wife Dildar Begam. Babur was consequential in uniting two of the highest Central Asian aristocratic family lines – Taimur the Turk and Changez Khan. Before beginning his conquest of the Indian subcontinent, he was the ruler of his father’s principality of Farghana in present-day Uzbekistan. When forced to abandon, he moved southwards and captured Kabul and the surrounding areas of Kunduz, Badakhshan, Bajaur, Swat, and Kandahar (Begam, 1902). Gulbadan was taken under the tutelage of Maham Begam, another wife of Babur and the chief lady of the royal household. She was a woman of extraordinary talents as she had mastered several languages and had become an accomplished poet, but her most important literary achievement was writing the *Humayun-Nama*, the memoir of her brother. She started working on the *Humayun-Nama* (also known as the *Ahval-i-Humayun Padshah*) somewhere around 1587 after requests from the then-emperor Akbar, who wanted to chronicle the lives of his father and grandfather. More importantly, since she was one of Humayun’s closest sources – witnessing Humayun’s initial rule, his exile and victory again, and the Mughal household during Humayun’s reign – we are presented with a literary masterpiece that focuses on royal life from a unique domestic perspective. It chronicles personal conversations and important events such as marriages, births,

festivals, and celebrations but also “it provides a glimpse of the ruler outside the formal environment of the court, thus portraying him in a human light” (Hosseini, n.d.). While she does not talk about her marriage in her text even once, we are made aware of a son Sa’adat-yar, whom she has mentioned once towards the end of her manuscript. Her book is extremely simple yet interesting as she documents the day-to-day lives of Humayun and Babur with their families and the social activities they undertook, which is unconventional in the texts written during that period since every event is recounted from a woman’s perspective. The remaining records of her life are scanty, and she died at the age of eighty due to fever, with Hamida Begam by her side till the end. While the women of the royal *harem* undertook a *haj* journey over the course of four-six years, the description of the journey and the pilgrimage is not mentioned by the Begam, which would have been a very insightful source in understanding the religious meaning that women devoted to this journey.

While Mughal women were encouraged to learn and excel in various fields such as art, literature, poetry, and even politics, Gulbadan Begam’s work particularly stands out. Most records and biographies gave an insight into the political strategies, wars, alliances, laws, and governance of the time, thereby describing the way an emperor managed his kingdom. Gulbadan Begam’s record of her brother Humayun’s rule is an exception because she focuses rather on the everyday domestic life of the royal family and the *harem*. She describes various events and happenings through “the anxieties and pressures as womenfolk experience them...even the emperor’s travels are charted through the minds of the women in his household as the men ride away to war and women anxiously scan the horizon for them to return” (Tharu & Lalita, 1991, p. 99). Through her work, she gives us well-described and rounded characters like her father Babur, his wives, her brothers Humayun and Askari, and Humayun’s wife Hamida. It also gives us an insight into events that have not been talked about in such detail in other records such as the feasts organised by elder relations of the royal *harem* to celebrate various occasions such as marriages, births, or otherwise. The book gives the readers an insight into not only the socio-political events of the time but can be considered an insider’s perspective into the culture and lifestyle of the Mughals. It is not literature per se, but a day-to-day record of what she saw or heard around her. Nine copies of Humayun-Nama were made in accordance with Akbar’s orders – two went to the Emperor’s library; three to princes Salim, Murad, and Danyal; two to Abu’l Fazl, one was given to the Begam, and one perhaps to the author (Begam, 1902, p. 76). This allotment also points to the fact that Gulbadan Begam collected and read books. Gulbadan Begam’s text is also the only available historical source of that time that was written by a woman, therefore understanding her perspective is extremely important to analyse the Mughal court through a gendered lens. Gulbadan’s history “lights up a woman’s world” and is “the most valuable contemporary record of the period”, according to Annette Beveridge, who first translated the text in 1902 (Begam, 1902).

About Abdul Qadir Badauni and Muntakhab – ut – Tawarikh

The Mughal Period, especially under Emperor Akbar, was prolific in the progression of literature and historiography and authors like Abul Fazl, Nizam-ud-din Ahmed, and Abdul Qadir Badauni came to the forefront. However, scholars such as Fauzia Zareen Abbas are of the opinion that with the emphasis on ideas of secularism and religious acceptance in modern-day society, Badauni and “his traditional approach to religious problems have been overshadowed” (1991, p. 264). In traditional historical studies, the literature and ideas of Abul Fazl have been emphasised with such great detail that “Badauni’s personality has been eclipsed and deprived of its share of glory...he has been misrepresented and misinterpreted by historians” (Abbas, 1991, p. 264). Abdul Qadir Badauni was born in 1541 in Kota Bhim, part of the Kacchwaha principality in Amber, Rajasthan. As his name suggests, he was not originally from Badaun but shifted and settled there after 1561. His orthodox beliefs and adherence to strict religious laws stem from the education that he received under Shaikh Mubarak, a strict follower of Mahdavisim, and Miya Hatim Sambhali, an orthodox religious professor during the period. Badauni was proficient in a variety of subjects, both in the arts and sciences, that included astronomy, history, and Indian music. He was also an accomplished chess player and a player of the *rudra veena*.

Unlike many works of his time, Badauni did not write Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh for the perusal of Emperor Akbar and therefore his style of writing and commentary was not impacted by the fear of retribution or the idea of pleasing the Emperor. Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh was a political chronicle of the rule of the Muslims in India, with a focus on Emperor Akbar. He talked about his views in a simple and straightforward manner and his work is “history written with a suppressed ebullition an outburst of his emotions...it is the only historical work written during the reign of Akbar but not for Akbar” (Abbas, 1991, p. 263). The book is divided into three volumes – Volume I focus on the Muslim rule in India from the Ghorian invasion until Humayun’s reign, Volume II deals with Akbar’s reign from its beginning until 1595, and Volume III consists of biographies of various *ulemas*, physicians, *mashaikhs*, and poets. Based on his notings in Volume III of his book, the readers can assume that Badauni completed the volume around 1596 AD, but it only was made available for circulation to the public after twenty years of completion, between 1614-1616 AD (Rezavi, 2020). As scholar Nadeem Rezavi suggests, Badauni was hesitant to circulate his work during his lifetime because of the fear of persecution or hostility from the Mughal authorities because of his sharp criticism of Akbar’s religious tolerance and policies. Readers can observe a lot of contradictions in Badauni’s opinions, especially in Volume II of his work where he talks about Akbar’s reign. There are conflicting assertions about Akbar and his policies – while in many instances Badauni refers to Akbar with much respect as *khalifat uz zamān* and talks fondly of the Emperor, in several other places Badauni has harshly criticised Akbar for being swayed by his nobles and *begams*, and his policies towards religion, calling him a heretic. It was during this period that Badauni’s views toward the Emperor began to drastically shift because of the conflict between religion and tolerance and this can explain why he had such wide-ranging unbalanced views in Volume II,

and subsequently in Volume III as well. It seems that as he was writing Volume II, “his views had become rather extremist...he had come to the conclusion that the position of Islam in India has become untenable due to many factors including Akbar’s policy, and he was trying to put it straight by apportioning the blame of the catastrophe” (Rezavi, 2020). However, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh is a brilliantly written work, intertwining the chronology and description with the personal narratives of the author and covering not only political happenings but also social, religious, and literary activities of the time, thus giving the readers a rounded view of the period.

Nature of Sources

To answer the research question, the paper uses both primary and secondary sources for data collection and analysis of the texts. The primary sources include the original translations of both the texts, as done by Annette Beveridge for Humayun-Nama and G.S.A. Ranking (Vol. I), W.H. Lowe (Vol. II), and T.W. Haig (Vol. III) of Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh. The sources also include secondary literature by scholars and historians based on their analysis and interpretation of the texts, blog articles, websites and research articles on the texts as well as the respective authors.

Limitations of the Research

There are a few limitations in this research that are unavoidable, both in the methodology and the texts used for comparison. Selection bias creeps in while using the comparative case study method because the two texts are not selected in a truly random manner for analysis but at the convenience of the researcher and the limited availability of such historical texts. While analysing both the texts, it has to be kept in mind that these are translations in English and not the original texts, since the original texts are not accessible to people and are written in different languages. When studying these translations, one must be aware of the biases that can be reflected in the translator’s opinions and beliefs and thus analyse the text accordingly. In this case, both texts are translated by Britishers who would not understand the Mughal culture or the events that were talked about in much detail, and thus there could be a shortcoming in the translation as compared to the original texts. Anachronism is yet another problem that the researcher has to keep in mind while studying historical texts. Anachronism refers to the idea of picking up a modern concept and linking it to an earlier time when such opinions did not exist, thus forming biases and misconceptions and degenerating the core theory of the subject. Therefore, the safest practice is to refer to a time period with its own terminology and reduce anachronism. Other limitations of the text include the personal biases of the authors which can be reflected in the text. In the case of Humayun-Nama, it is unlikely that Gulbadan Begam would write in contempt of Humayun and criticise his policies due to their close relationship. Badauni, on the other hand, would define the events happening in a way that he seemed fit, which would not necessarily match the actual event. There could also be a case in both texts where more

important information would not get recorded at all because of the limited scope of the authors. While reading both the texts, one also has to be careful of the time they are set in – while Gulbadan's text is set in the 16th century, Badauni's work spreads over more than 600 years, from the Ghorian invasion of India to the end of Akbar's reign. Thus, while they are in proximity in terms of space, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh is spread across different time periods and will therefore have a difference in the way various cultural or social events have been described as compared to Humayun-Nama. Gulbadan Begam's original manuscript ends abruptly and has missing pages; depriving the readers of information that could be critical in understanding a tradition or custom of the court. these are some limitations that have to be kept in mind while reading the text and analysing the paper for a more authentic experience.

Analysis of the texts

Humayun – Nama

Gulbadan Begam's work is revolutionary in its approach because of the way she has looked into the everyday lives of the Emperor and makes him seem more human in his approach. Through showing the interactions between Emperor Babur or Humayun and the women of the royal *harem*, she has shown a different perspective on their lives, one free from the socio-political or economic views of the court.

Marriage and related practices are mentioned in detail in the Humayun-Nama and give the readers an insight into the traditions and customs that were followed during the Mughal period about marriages. When talking about Babur's initial rule and the invasion of Samarqand, where he was besieged, Shahi Beg Khan told him that if Babur were to marry his sister Khanzada Begam to him, there would be peace and a lasting alliance between them (p. 85). When Babur was on his deathbed, he also commanded Maham Begam to arrange marriages for Gulbadan's sisters, Gulrang Begam to Isantimur Sultan and Gulchihra Begam to Tukhtabughra Sultan (p. 106). This shows how marriages for alliance and security were customary since Babur's rule either to expand their kingdom, protect their alliances, or make new alliances. Marriage for an alliance had been predominant not only in Mughal culture but in other kingdoms as well in India and across the world. Even in Elizabethan England, the purpose of a royal marriage was to cement an alliance with another kingdom, and royal children were usually betrothed at a very young age, such as Mary, Queen of Scots, who was betrothed at the young age of 5.

Marriages were not about love but security and expanding one's kingdom, and it was hardly that a member of the royal family married out of love to someone of their own choice. Gulbadan Begam also talked in great detail about the feasts arranged by Maham Begam on the occasions of the first anniversary of Humayun's accession and Mirza Hindal's marriage to Sultanam Begam. They lit up not only the *bazaars* but also the soldiers' quarters and other such places, and it is

through this tradition that illumination became a custom in India (p. 113). She had given details of the feast, from the seating arrangements to the process of giving gifts according to the ranks, the decorations, and the setting. During the feast, Emperor Humayun ordered all the *mirzas* and *begams* to bring gifts and divided them into three trays of *ashrafis* and six of *shahrukhis*. He asked Hindu Beg to give one of *ashrafi* and two of *shahrukhis* to the *mirzas*, *chiefs*, *vazirs*, and soldiers; another heap of the same quantity was to be given by Mulla Muhammad Farghari to theologians, religious men, ascetics, devotees, and the poor and the needy. The third heap was kept for his pleasure to be divided amongst the members of the royal *harem* who attended the feast (p. 124-125). Gulbadan Begam also described the gifts given to the bride, Sultanam Begam, when she described the feast arranged in honour of her marriage to Mirza Hindal. Another feast that had been mentioned in the text is the circumcision of Emperor Akbar when he was five (p. 179). Through these descriptions, it can be understood that arranging feasts was an essential part of the Mughal custom and traditions and was seen as a way to express joy and celebrate a momentous occasion. Gift-giving also played a crucial role at the time and was also reflective of the hierarchy in the harem and the society. The kind and quantity of gifts given were based on the position of the receiver in the society and how high they ranked. In the *harem*, gifts were given based on the position of the *begam*, from senior most to junior *begams*, and whether they were a favourite of the Emperor. She had dedicated a good portion of her text to explain the process of giving presents to the members of the *harem*. In one instance, she stated how when Khwaja Kilan Beg requested Emperor Babur to move back to Kabul, the emperor sent some valuable presents that had fallen into their hands through the victory over Ibrahim Lodhi to the elder relations and sisters in the royal *harem*. The Emperor made a list of how everything was to be distributed – each *begam* would receive a special dancing girl of the dancing girls of Ibrahim Lodhi; a gold plate full of jewels such as rubies, pearls, diamonds, emerald, topaz, and turquoise; two small mother of pearl trays full of *ashrafis* and on two other trays *shahrukhis*; and all sorts of things by nines – that is four trays and one plate (p. 94-95). Babur then asked for arrangements to be made for the *begams* to give their thanks for the gifts and novelties. In another instance, she mentioned that the *begams* and *khanams* received gifts and houses and lands to their heart's desires (p. 97). It can be said that gift-giving was an integral part of the royal household, and the women were regularly bestowed with different objects, which would have been more than enough to sustain themselves and manage their day-to-day spending, not having to rely upon the Emperor or the treasury for their every expense.

Gulbadan Begam has, on various occasions, talked about how emperors Babur and Humayun interacted with the older relations of the *harem* regularly, thereby reflecting their domestic side. These emperors, who have only been viewed from an administrative or political standpoint in history, now had a different side to them – it was a shift from their masculine and intimidating aura of an Emperor to that of a doting son, father, brother, or a husband who looked after the well-being of the members of the *harem*. She told the story of how when Babur was in Agra, he would go every Friday to visit his paternal aunts. One day when it was extremely hot, Maham

Begam asked him to not go on that particular day, and he exclaimed that the daughters of Abu-Sai'd Sultan Mirza had been deprived of their fathers and brothers, so if he did not cheer them up, who will (p. 97). After Emperor Babur and Maham Begam left for heavenly abode, Gulbadan Begam found herself in great affliction, helpless, and lonely. At this time, Humayun visited her several times to comfort her and showed her kindness and sympathy (p. 116). She also narrated the story of how when Humayun visited any *begam* or sister's quarters when he was in the garden during court das, all the *begams* and all his sisters used to go with him. One day, one of his wives, Bega Begam complained that he had not paid a visit to her quarter even though he had been in the garden for a long time. He responded by saying that he first visited the quarters of all his elder relations because that was a necessity laid on him to make them happy, and he was fulfilling it because he was ashamed of not seeing them often (p. 130-131). Through these instances, Humayun's familial relations and domestic duties can be seen, which he tried to fulfil on all occasions and maintain cordial ties with everyone irrespective of age or position.

While describing Mihrangez Begam and Shad Begam, she said that they wore men's clothing and had various accomplishments to their names, such as playing polo, making thumb rings and arrows, and shooting with the bow and arrow. They also played many musical instruments (p. 120-121). This is also proof that the royal women specialised in various fields, including those that were traditionally considered male-oriented activities. Wearing men's clothing or engaging in such activities was not considered taboo or completely shunned in the Mughal society. In another instance, when Emperor Humayun halted in the Qibchaq defile in Kabul and required an army, he sent a message to Haram Begam to send him the army of Badakhshan as quickly as possible. In no time, the Begam sent horses, arms, and some thousand men and herself superintendent and came with the troops as far as the pass (p. 195). Haram Begam's timely action and support provided immense support to Humayun and showed us how women of the nobility had control of their military resources as well. This proves that women were not solely confined to the *harem*, but they were trained to be self-reliant and defend themselves and had the resources to learn various skills and administer them when the need arose.

Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh

Across the three volumes of Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh (1590-1615), Badauni addressed his ideas on the various variables of marriage and related practices, the influence of the women in the Mughal court, piety and virtue, and love affairs and scandals. Since Badauni was not a part of the nobility, he had an outsider's perspective and therefore gave an account of the lives of the common women as well. This can help draw a comparison between the lives of the royal women of the harem and the common women and how the societal idea of the female gender implemented itself in their lives.

While talking about marriage and the customs associated with it, Badauni gave information from the royal decrees and proclamations; therefore a picture of Akbar's policies surrounding marriage can be recreated. In the second volume, he reported that in 1586-87, Akbar ordered to raise the marriageable age of girls to twelve years (p. 355-356). This shows that before this order, the age of marriage for girls was extremely low, even less than twelve in various cases, which resulted in the prevalence of child marriage and because these brides became young mothers, the infant mortality rate was high as well. This is also apparent in Gulbadan Begam's text as well, where she mentions how the various women of the royal *harem* lost their children at an infant age. Increasing the age of marriage was a welcome move towards reducing mortality rates and ensuring that young girls were not privy to marriages at such a tender age.

Emperor Akbar also ordered that widows should not be stopped from remarrying (p. 355-356), therefore striving to raise their status in society and not outcast the widows. This was also done because the practice of *Sati* was prevalent among the Hindus and the Emperor; wanted to control it and give widows the dignity they deserved. While talking about polygamy, it is perceived that the practise was widespread among the people; therefore the Emperor passed orders that a man should not have more than one wife unless she cannot bear children (p. 355-356). Badauni himself was of a similar opinion and critical of polygamous relationships because he criticised Husain Khan for his second marriage, despite having affections for his first wife (p. 125). It can thus be observed that while polygamous relations were prevalent, they were deemed unfit by the Emperor even though he had many wives of different faiths in his *harem*. He narrated an account of 1562-63 when Emperor Akbar desired a woman who was already married therefore her husband was advised to divorce her and send her to the Emperor, and he did the same. He was consoled by saying that he could always remarry since there were many other options in the world (p. 61). Shaikh Salim Chisti also gave a similar counsel to his sons when they complained that their wives were becoming estranged from them due to the Emperor's frequent visits (p. 109). This proves that the Emperor frequently desired women, even those who were married, and they or their husbands had no choice but to comply with his wishes, thereby losing the sanctity of their marriage. In the third volume of the text on the topic of divorce and separation, Badauni wrote in Shaikh Muin's biography that if any woman asked the Shaikh for separation from her husband on the grounds that he was away for too long, the Shaikh responded that while he would provide her with monetary support, he would ask her to not separate from her husband (p. 96). This shows that women often complained of being abandoned by their husbands and therefore asked for separation on financial grounds. As men took more wives, they seemed to abandon or move away from their older wives and eventually stopped providing financial support to them or their children; therefore it was important for women to be provided with monetary support, at least in such cases.

Badauni was of the opinion that women were a bad influence on the policies and opinions of the Akbar and was constantly vocal about the same. His opinion is reflective of the men around him;

therefore it can be said that this could have been the general opinion of men at that time. Whenever he described a new secular policy of Akbar, he mentioned how the women of the *harem* influenced and instigated him, such as turning him against eating garlic or beef (p. 303). This goes on to show that the women of the *harem* had an influence over the habits of the Emperor, and Badauni was bitter about it because this influence was likely coming from Akbar's Rajput wives. The Emperor's giving up garlic and beef is a positive evidence of the same. On the death of Yusuf Khan, he also exclaimed that indulgence in wine and women could be fatal to men (p. 84-85). In the *Nahj-ul-Balagha*, Mir Abdul Hayy quoted that a day will arrive when a council of women will run the government and Badauni lauded him for the same (p. 65). This statement was made while criticising Maham Anga, the *wazir* of the Mughal Court. Through this statement, it can be observed that women held power and considerable influence in the decision-making process in the court, and Akbar followed the tradition of taking the opinion of the royal women into account. It also shows that a woman could rise to a huge advisory and administrative position because of her experience and qualification. In the third volume, Badauni called women robbers on the road to God (p. 111) and recounted a particular incident where Shaikh Abdun Nabi had ordered the execution of a Brahman against the Emperor's commands. He claimed that the harem women then incited the Emperor against Akbar, yielding the power and position to do so.

Badauni narrated a few love affairs in the second volume of his work and talked about them in a very open and positive manner, thereby explaining that people had a more liberal attitude towards romances. He narrated the story of Saiyid Musa and Mohini (p. 110). Through his narration, a few points can be noted – first, he did not have an issue with the inter-religious romance of Saiyid Musa, a Muslim, and Mohini, a Hindu. But perhaps he sympathised with Mohini because she converted to Islam after Sayid Musa's demise. Though Badauni had his own way of narrating this story to put forth his ideas, a close reading indicates how Mohini was determined to be with her lover and thereby defied everyone in the process. He also puts forth the story of Shaham Beg and Aram Jan (p. 22). Aram Jan was a dancing girl and the wife of Khan Zaman. Shaham Beg had fancied her, and therefore Khan Zaman let her go. Shaham Beg, however refused to give her up further to Abdur Rehman Bin Muayyid Beg, who desired her as well. The two ended up in a quarrel, and Shaham Beg was killed; Badauni thus describes him as a martyr for love. These two love stories tell a lot about the position of the women in these spaces. Although inter-religious, Saiyid Musa and Mohini's romance was not considered taboo or unnatural, stating that such romances were not rare and accepted in society. Mohini's beliefs and opinions were given an equal voice as that of Saiyid Musa's, which contrasts sharply with Aram Jan's treatment. This could be because Mohini was a goldsmith's daughter and therefore from a well-respected background, whereas Aram Jan was a dancing girl. She was a Muslim and the wife of Khan Zaman, yet she was shunted around as a mere commodity in the hands of these men who passed her on without any hesitation or regard for her opinion. The narration does not mention her thoughts or opinions as well, thereby further proving that she was looked at as a

mute object. These two incidents give us an idea of the spectrum of the behaviour of men toward women and also the various kinds of women that existed in society. It also indicates the caste and class position vis-a-vis women and how these factors impacted the way women were looked at and treated by the people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has aimed to understand the female gaze and the male gaze of the authors of the texts *Humayun-Nama* and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* and understand how they viewed the daily activities and hierarchies of the *harem*, thereby gaining a more well-rounded perspective on the royal household and the role of women in these scenarios. Through a close reading of the two texts, it can be understood that the lives of the royal women were entangled with the happenings of the Mughal Court, and there were various activities that they partook in, which were not only limited to the so-called activities for women such as traditional and religious practices, marriages, or organising feasts, but they were also actively involved in the policies and administration of the court. They also had an active influence on the ideologies and beliefs of the Emperors, especially Emperor Akbar. The domestic life of the Emperors and their interactions with the members of the *harem* also reflect them in a different light, which is not usually seen in other works of the Mughal court. These interactions reflect their humanistic life and show them in their family relations – in the roles of fathers, husbands, or sons.

Badauni's work is also reflective of the lives of the common women, one that is missing in Gulbadan Begam's text. Since Badauni was not a part of the royal family and just a mere observer, his observations reflect the society around him. Badauni provides us with a different perspective as compared to Gulbadan Begam, his ideas were inclusive of the lives of the common women as well. He reported everything as it was supposed to be, without any biases and his work was a reflection of the society and the status of women of that time. Badauni and Gulbadan Begam were both ahead of their times – one was a woman author at a time when the male text was prevalent and the other provided an outsider's perspective at a time when propaganda court text was prevalent.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Afshan Majid, who supervised this research project and for her constant guidance, feedback and support at every stage. I would also like to thank Dr. Vijayant Kumar Singh and Dr. Suchetana Banerjee for their valuable assistance and input during the review process.

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Putting the Chaar Chaand on Our Screens: The Visual Spectacles of ‘Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham’ and ‘Devdas’

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Abstract

How to Cite this Paper

Jadli, A. (2022). Putting the chaar chaand on our screens: The visual spectacles of ‘Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham’ and ‘Devdas’. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 89-110.

This paper explores the role of production design in cinema through concepts laid by Charles Tashiro and David Brisbin. It situates this in the context of Bollywood as a culture industry, as theorised by scholars like Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Madhava Prasad. The paper delves into two films, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001) and *Devdas* (2002), and attempts to find links, if any, between the production design and narratives of the films. The mise en scène analysis reveals that production design plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative of the films, simultaneously rendering Bollywood as an industry through specific visual construction.

Keywords: *Production design, Narrative, Bollywood, Culture Industry, Diaspora, Historical films*

Introduction

This research paper aims to critically understand the role of production design in cinema. Production design includes the visual elements that compose a film and, therefore, is an integral part of the same. These visual elements draw the audience into the world it creates, immersing them and guiding them through the film (Soriano, 2021). The arrangement of the various visual elements in a scene that enable in constructing different frames is termed as mise en scène (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The paper explores the relationship between production design and mise en scène, building into the idea of spaces in cinema. The organisation of space assists in evoking certain emotions, producing drama. This paper examines these ideas in the context of

Bollywood. It attempts to understand the role of production design in shaping cinematic narratives through the mise en scène analysis of two films: *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001) and *Devdas* (2002). In the Indian film setting, the late 1990s and early 2000s were a period that saw the transition from Hindi cinema to an industry called Bollywood (Prasad, 2003). Central to the idea of Bollywood is the logic of spectacle and the pleasure derived from the spectacle. The films chosen for this study emerged during this shift, and are popularly known for the visual aesthetics, the grandeur of their sets, and their production design. The research will allow in understanding how the use of particular visual design in Bollywood produces specific narratives and cultural ideas such as the debates on tradition versus modernity, national identity, idea of spaces and the various affective responses it generates from the audience. To understand these phenomena, I first look at the question of production design in film studies, followed by further discussion on Bollywood.

Understanding Production Design and Narratives

One of the key aspects of understanding production design in films is mise en scène. When analysing a film, the features of the film's medium, that is, the film's style, must be taken into consideration. The most known technique in cinema is mise en scène, a French term that translates to "putting into the scene" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 112). In the case of narrative films, that is, films that often have a fictional story with a cause-and-effect chain of events (Deguzman, 2022), techniques such as mise en scène function "to advance the cause-effect chain, create parallels, manipulate story-plot relations, or sustain the narration's flow of information" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 111). This understanding of mise en scène that Bordwell & Thompson (2006) refer to pertains to the Classical Hollywood Cinema. Thus, to understand a film in its totality, it is crucial to analyse mise en scène's functions in terms of their relationship with other techniques that the film uses, the intent behind using certain mise en scène elements, and how these elements vary or develop throughout the narrative. Based on David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's definition, we understand that production design is a part of the larger umbrella that is mise en scène. It is important to note that while mise en scène is a term often used within the discipline of film studies by scholars, production design is a more technical term used by the film industry and filmmakers, referring to the design and the look of the film which is often informed by the larger vision of the director and producer. David Brisbin further elaborates on this in his explanation of what production design stands for.

According to Brisbin, production design encompasses every bodily component visible to the audience of the universe in which a story or narrative is being disclosed (Brisbin, 2013). Production design ensures that every visual element that the camera captures as part of the filmic universe is harmonious with the central arcs of the story. It contributes to the essence of emotions, drama and the overall structure of the story. Brisbin's understanding of production design ties in with Charles Tashiro's argument that the visual design of a film encompasses

layers of meaning. These meanings are implicit and associated with what the audiences see on the screen- particular objects, how something is displayed. The audience then either connect meanings to the designs they see or extract meanings from them (designs) (Tashiro, 1998). He notes that the production design of a film creates a more lasting impact on the audience as compared to the narrative by stating that “films’ surfaces endure better than their ‘depths’” (Tashiro, 1998, p. 58). The surfaces, organised through design and its elements, captivate the audience. Therefore, based on Brisbin and Tashiro’s arguments, we recognise production design as an integral element of a film’s structure and narrative for conveying and interpreting meanings.

Commenting on production design as a narrative tool, Vincent LoBrutto (2002) emphasises on elements such as colour scheme, texture, architecture, and space to bring alive the filmic narrative. The construction of spaces that the characters inhabit within the story becomes paramount in contextualizing the narrative for the audiences (LoBrutto, 2002). Spaces become essential for establishing meanings in films, adding value by emotionally connecting to the audience (Arisoy & Gökmen, 2021). In cinema, the spaces are not merely physical but also carry a social, historical, and cultural context. The experiences of characters within the film and the relationships that emerge always correspond to a space, lending it certain meanings. Thus, as Tashiro (1998) posits, cinema uses space to create specific latent, predetermined meanings which relate to the film and its characters. This paper further explores this relationship between space and cinema in the cultural context of India.

Cinema Through Spaces: Hindi Cinema and Bollywood

Stephen Teo argues that films produce narrative melodrama through spaces. Specifically in the context of Hindi cinema, he takes examples from films by Guru Dutt and Raj Kapoor to show the various ways in which spaces are utilised in conveying emotions. In the song *Na Aankhon Mein Aansoo* from the film *Aag* (1948), the individual spaces in which the three characters move lead them to a personal self-discovery, tied to the song (Teo, 2013). The song *Jaane Kya Tune Kahi* in Guru Dutt’s *Pyasa* (1957) inadvertently establishes a romantic relationship between the protagonists, which is also reflected in the spatial arrangement of the song. The camera tracks Gulabo (Waheeda Rehman) through narrow, dark alleys to wide parks littered with columns, providing a contrast to the emptiness of the alley (Teo, 2013). As seen in Teo’s analysis, spaces are about the visual composition of characters in relation to the environment. Focussing on the frame’s construction produces specific narrative themes and emotions that carry the film forward.

Naveen Mishra, focusing on Bollywood movies, delves into the idea of spaces and cinema in the form of landscapes. Conventionally, the landscape is viewed as a spectacle producing an aesthetic and carrying a beauty that pleases the senses, providing a comforting visual appeal

(Mishra, 2018). However, the narratives, cultural meanings, and symbols are also embedded in the landscape (Arler & Mellqvist, 2015). Mishra notes that romantic sequences between protagonists, especially in songs, are often shown in foreign landscapes. These sequences produce an exotic image of the West, heightening the visual and emotional experience of the audience. The images of the West carry meanings such as independence and uninterrupted love. Romance cannot bloom under conservative values, and thus, has to be set in a foreign land with ‘modern’ ideals (Mishra, 2018). Furthermore, he argues that films use landscapes as a spectacle which is central to Bollywood. Bollywood’s charm lies in its ability to make an everyday event into a larger-than-life spectacle that is passed as reality. The spectacle of the landscape is created by Bollywood by associating the scenic, aesthetic visualscape with themes such as aspirations, dreams, imaginations by heightening the visual experience for the audience (Mishra, 2018). While Teo’s argument describes spaces in Hindi cinema, Mishra focuses specifically on Bollywood films. Thus, it becomes important to understand how Bollywood is different from Hindi cinema.

Meanings of Bollywood/ What is Bollywood

Production design as a formal element becomes a key feature in distinguishing between Hindi cinema and Bollywood. Madhava Prasad (2003) mentions that Hindi cinema represented a realistic portrayal of society, especially with the middle films that emerged in the 1970s. The middle films, as posited by scholars, were films “marked by consistent political and social ordinariness” (Sinha, 2019, p. 1). These films had stories of urban middle-class people presented through simple, non-glamorous aesthetics. This style was in contrast to the popular films being produced during the same period, which, while rooted in social realities, were larger than life in their narrative tendencies. Prasad argues that Bollywood makes it possible for these different tendencies to come together, developing stories around both modernity and tradition. Additionally, Bollywood employs stylistically grander techniques and visuals to depict the narrative tendency of representing reality (Prasad, 2003). Along with the formal transformations, there is an idea of cultural identity that these new narratives produce, one which is linked with the Indian diaspora and the NRI as the facilitator of the Indian identity.

Bollywood through its specific narratives and stylistic choices was able to attract the Indian diaspora, something Hindi Cinema had failed to do. Bollywood takes the tendencies of Hindi cinema and intensifies them (Rajadhyaksha, 2003). Bollywood is further explored as an industrial shift, a rising culture industry that no longer comprises of just the films it produces, but a “range of distribution and consumption activities from websites to music cassettes, from cable to radio” (Rajadhyaksha, 2003, p. 27). Similar to Prasad, Rajadhyaksha argues that the Indian diasporic audience is central to the early Bollywood films that emerged during the period (the late 1990s to early 2000s). Bollywood relies on narratives that cater to this diaspora. It produces a global ‘Indian’ culture industry with the diasporic Indians as its central figures (Rajadhyaksha,

2003). Thus, Bollywood produces a nostalgia that ties in with a sense of nationalism and Indian identity on a global stage.

Jigna Desai and Rajinder Dudrah argue that following the transition towards Bollywood, the industry also became characterised as a “musical genre with fixed form” (Desai & Dudrah, 2008, p. 11). In most Bollywood films, the song and dance sequences take place in the realm of fantasy and imagination that breaks away from the film’s narrative, as pointed out by Mishra (2018). The logic of spectacle that the early cinema was also interested in comes to the forefront through these sequences. The production design becomes central for the films to deliver the impact of this spectacular and melodramatic effect which assaults the senses of the audience (Dudrah & Desai, 2008). Along with the notion of the spectacle, a shift takes place in the common narratives and stories of the films. From the 1990s, the narratives of these films were stripped off of the conflict and trauma of popular Hindi cinema. Instead, they focussed on the romantic stories where the central concern of film becomes fulfilling the romance between the leads (Dudrah & Desai, 2008). This shift in the formal narrative elements accompanied with the change in stylistic design becomes a turning point for Bollywood films.

The arguments of Teo and Mishra bring out the difference in the way space is used and manipulated in Hindi cinema and Bollywood. Hindi cinema uses space as a device to build the narrative, albeit using it economically. It facilitates in contextualising the characters and reflecting their relationships. Whereas with Bollywood, there is sufficient emphasis on space and landscape for them to be considered characters unto themselves. With globalisation entering the narrative, the landscape and space become essential for producing meanings and ideas, especially linked with nostalgia. It is the spaces and landscapes of the hometown, the mother land that connects the audience with their roots in a fast evolving, modern space. The play on nostalgia became important as the films that emerged post-liberalisation (1990 onwards) started targeting the Indian diasporic audience, predominantly in the western nations. The question of identity became prominent within the diaspora, who were searching for a sense of belongingness. Thus, the Bollywood films that were now being produced targeted the Indian diaspora, constructing an Indian national identity (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). There is a negotiation between tradition and modernity, which reflects the new India and informs the identity of the Indian diaspora. Thus, the idea of nostalgia becomes important in the appeal of the emerging post-liberalization Bollywood that represent the ‘homeland’ by juxtaposing the memory of India that these audiences carry, with the image of a new globalised India. There is a noticeable shift in the production system and the focus is given to the creation of spectacles to attract the audience. Therefore, with the focus shifting to grandeur and creating visually pleasing images, the ‘realistic’ spaces seen in Hindi cinema take a backseat. Nitish Roy further elaborates the style of production design in Hindi cinema.

Production Design in Indian Cinema

When looking into production design in Bollywood, it is important to understand the changes that take place from Hindi cinema to Bollywood. Having worked for both Hindi cinema and Bollywood films, Nitish Roy emphasises on the significance of art direction, used synonymously with production design here, as the background of a film that builds and adds to the story and its characters (Rajya Sabha TV, 2016). As Arisoy & Gökmen (2021) argue, the character's personality is reflected in the minute details that go into designing the set, the space they occupy. Roy mentions that these intricacies were considered insignificant for creating sets during the early years, but he believed otherwise. The role of production and art design is to create an ambience, which also sets the film's tone. When working on Shyam Benegal's *Mandi* (1983), it was important for Roy to create the house's ambience wherein the protagonists lived. This was primarily done through the colour schemes and use of property in set design, taking inspiration from actual locations for realistic portrayal. During this period in Hindi cinema, we see a heavy emphasis on realism and its depiction. In talking about the change in production design, Roy concentrates on the cultural change that came about with the emergence of Bollywood. In 1993, Roy took up the project of designing the Ramoji Film City and worked on it for seven years (Rajya Sabha TV, 2016). This builds into the shift that begins to take place during the 1990s. The changes in technology opened new possibilities for production design. The development of studios and film cities for commercial and marketing aspects of the films are the visible changes of the cultural conglomeration that begins with the emergence of Bollywood. This visible shift roots itself in the change of desires within the audience, who now watches films for the sake of their spectacular quality. Thus, films start focussing on this idea of a spectacle which is emphasised through production design.

Roy's experience with production design finds resonance in the arguments made by other scholars of Bollywood. The shift from Hindi cinema to Bollywood is evident through the new-found opulence in production design that produces a spectacle (Prasad 2003), (Dudrah and Desai, 2008). Another step towards creating a Bollywood aesthetic, was taken through the narratives that were developed during this period. The narrative catered to a diasporic audience and played with the idea of homecoming to produce a sense of nostalgia in them (Rajadhyaksha, 2003). Together, production design and narrative devices create the spectacle that is pertinent to understanding Bollywood and its quintessential aesthetic.

Charles Tashiro (2004) argues that a film is not reflecting but 'recreating' a past and thus, the surfaces have to be manipulated to convince the audience of the same. While this approach could lead to inaccurate period details, it creates the impression of a more realistic world. The film's composition and elements such as lighting, costume, setting, and movement play a significant role in giving the audience the impression that it is a historical event that they are witnessing. Tashiro argues that just as scripts compromise on the historical accuracy to balance the dramatic aspects, being an extension of the script, production design experiments with historical accuracy

too. He elaborates on the effect of production design on a film's tone and visual reception by taking examples of two films based on Henry II, *Becket* (1964) and *The Lion in Winter* (1968). The two films have distinctly different aesthetics, design styles and visual compositions. While the former uses a vibrant aesthetic style, the latter relies on gritty, darker aesthetics, producing different emotional perceptions of the same historical event (Tashiro, 2004). Films build an image of the past that the people rely on, more strongly than they do on historical or archaeological facts. Therefore, it becomes essential that the scale of production is high or spectacular enough to suspend disbelief but not so assertive as to make audiences aware that they are artificial (Tashiro, 2004). While Tashiro specifically talks of historical films, his argument of films building and changing memories of the past can be applied to Bollywood films as well, even those that may not fall under the historical genre. Bollywood, which largely functions within the logic of spectacle, uses vivid visuals on-screen that stay as an imprint in the memory of the audiences. In keeping with Tashiro's argument, I look at *Devdas* through a similar theoretical framework (2002). While the film itself is not based on a historical event, it adapts the well-known novel of the name set in India's colonial past. Through the film, I wish to address the use of the spectacle in Bollywood. Through *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001), I will explore the same logic of the spectacle by contrasting the two films' historical and modern settings. While contrasting in their genres and settings, the films surface around the same time and thus, address the aesthetics and narratives that govern Bollywood in that period.

To understand the appeal of the films in terms of their visual impact, the following section looks at decoding the chosen films, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001) and *Devdas* (2002) through a *mise en scène* analysis. Furthermore, it attempts to understand whether these visual cues and design elements assist in producing specific themes supporting the narrative. For brevity, this paper will focus on production design through two themes common in the films: portrayal of social difference such as class or caste and changes in spaces. The former is a dominant theme seen in various films, in Hindi cinema as well as Bollywood, and acts as the primary plot point in them. Thus, exploring its presentation in terms of production design would be interesting. Spatial change, a common observation in the two films, is an avenue to explore the influence of space on narrative and vice versa.

Visual Analysis of Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (2001)

Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham, abbreviated as K3G, is a 2001 film directed by Karan Johar. Johar's success with his previous films brought great anticipation for this film, mainly due to the stellar ensemble cast of leading Bollywood stars. The film broke global box office records as the highest grossing Indian film of the time, and won multiple awards for direction, acting, production design and screenplay, making it one of Bollywood cinema's popular and landmark films. The production design of the film garnered much praise for its larger-than-life aesthetic, making it essential to understand its relationship with the film's narrative.

Differences of Class and Social Status

A dominant theme within the film's narrative is the difference in class and social background of the lead romantic pair. These differences are effectively produced through visual organisation. The opening shot of the film shows a family portrait of the Raichands, which reveals the social status through the costumes, especially of Amitabh and Jaya Bachchan. The deep, rich red and maroon of the saree and the curtain give a sense of royalty, reflecting the affluence of the Raichand family. As the shot transitions to flashback scenes between Nandini (Jaya Bachchan) and Rahul (Shahrukh Khan) in his childhood, the wide staircases, long corridors, castle-esque facade of their house add to the audience's knowledge about their class status. The audience is introduced to the character of Rohan (Hritik Roshan) in the vastness of a cricket stadium. There is an implicit understanding that he can access such spaces because of his wealth. The huge swathe of open land also reflects his welcoming and easy-going attitude. The room décor of Yash Raichand, the patriarch of the family, comprises a minimal yet extravagant design. The overall layout of the room, accompanied by the colour combination of royal blue and gold, which is commonly associated with a royal and sophisticated attitude, enhances Yash's commanding position within the space and the narrative. Similar tones of colour and patterns of design follow the Raichand family's setting throughout the film.



Image 1: Yash Raichand's room (Credits: Dharma Productions)



Image 2: Raichand house (Credits: Dharma Productions)

This rich, lavish aesthetic of the upper-class Raichands is contrasted by the space of Chandni Chowk, the residence of the female protagonist Anjali (Kajol). Production designer Sharmishta Roy mentions that instead of shooting on location, they decided to completely recreate the area of Chandni Chowk in Mumbai Film City. They did so to project a “hygienic, sanitised and kitschy *mohalla* with old world charms to woo a nostalgic diasporic audience” (Pal, 2013). The conscious choice to produce a more glamorised image of Chandni Chowk, rather than a realistic and rustic one, is indicative of the ‘nostalgic’ image that the Bollywood films began producing in this period. The film’s concern is not to root itself in realism but within the logic of spectacle as Mishra (2018) had argued. These images reminisce about the Indian home and evoke a sense of nationhood for the diasporic audience to connect with.

In the narrative, the stylistic design of the sets for Chandni Chowk is incongruous with the sets of the Raichand family home. Chandni Chowk’s colours are rooted in earthy tones of light browns, contrasted with the bold yet simple palette of yellow and red that Anjali brings to the screen. The other characters within the *mohalla* are usually associated with soft pastels. This contrast in the aesthetic of Chandni Chowk and the Raichand mansion is indicative of the traditional versus the modern identity that the diasporic audience deals with. The use of specific shades of colours within the film can be understood through what the palette is trying to highlight. For example, the protagonists are established through the distinctly differentiable colours. Compared to them, the possible conflicting figures and ideas within the plot are presented through colours that strike against the protagonists’ tones, that is Yash’s ideals and his refusal to accept the romantic plot. The mediators or the characters who are crucial in resolving the conflict – Rohan and Pooja (the two protagonists’ siblings) and Daijaan – are presented through soft pastels in the early half of the film.



Image 3: Anjali's house in Chandni Chowk (Credits: Dharma Productions)



Image 4: Mela of Chandni Chowk (Credits: Dharma Productions)

The class difference between the two lovers as established through the setting and design is first acknowledged by the characters themselves when Rahul and Rohan enter Chandni Chowk in their sports car and Rohan describes the place as 'tacky' and 'down-market'. This sequence marks a significant moment in the narrative as Rahul and Anjali, the primary love interests, meet for the first time. The development of their romantic relationship occurs in the background of Anjali's modest but warm home environment. Scenes such as their first meeting, the blossoming of their friendship, their 'date', the subsequent confession of love, and even their decision to get married, are never in the high-society backdrop of the Raichands. The humble spaces in which their relationship unfurls weaves into Rahul's character and highlights his distinctly different opinions and beliefs from that of his father, who even refuses to be a part of Rukhsar's (daughter

of Sayeeda i.e., Daijaan) wedding celebration. When Nandini tries to confront him, he replies “*Hum wahan kaise jaa sakte hain?*” (How can we go there?). Thus, Rahul occupying and being comfortable in a space associated with people from a lower social status than his family, hints at an impending conflict.

Shifting Spaces

The film distinctly divides the narrative in two through another form of spatial discontinuity. The first half establishes the central narrative and introduces the conflict in India, the ‘motherland’. In contrast, the latter half which builds towards the resolution of conflict is set in the ‘foreign’ space of London. The difference in the landscape is established through the mise en scène. The second half begins with shots of landmark places of the city- the London Eye, River Thames, double-decker buses, logos of popular brands. These images establish the Western landscape that the film has now entered. As Rohan comes to London and goes around the city, the sequence is picturised with the song *Vande Mataram* and shows various elements of ‘Indianness’. There are Indian classical dancers, people wearing the Indian flag, women wearing salwar-kameez, almost as if the film is saying that the West cannot take away the India that resides within the people. This kind of assertion of national pride is later seen in *Anjali* as well. The logic of producing images associated with India in a foreign landscape is explained by Naveen Mishra’s example of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaayenge*. He argues that the imagery of the homeland, with its “*sarson ke khet*” (mustard fields) and its ancestral house, establishes the idea of homecoming and the nostalgia invoked by tradition, culture and motherland (Mishra, 2018). This emotional evocation is important for the NRI or the diasporic Indian audience.



Image 5: Rohan’s entry in London (Credits: Dharma Productions)



Image 6: Tradition and Modern coming together in London (Credits: Dharma Productions)

The transition to Rahul's house in London is notable in terms of the aesthetic that it produces. While the house's exterior and interior resemble typical modern architecture, the scene shows Anjali performing an aarti, indicating that their traditions are still intact. This also complements the patriotic song *Saare Jahan se Accha* playing in the background. The introduction of Pooja (Kareena Kapoor) is fascinating, because the character of the sweet little girl that the audiences knew from the first half of the film has now undergone a complete makeover. The design of Pooja's room and her dressing style throughout the latter half of the film has what is now termed as the Y2K aesthetic. The style combines futuristic and retro-edge dressing such as glossy/shiny fabrics, colourful sunglasses, baguette bags, pleated skirts and short-tops (Feiam, n.d.). Pooja's room can be seen littered with these details. Her wardrobe, the purple lighting in the room and the staircase leading up to it creates the ambience of a modern, 'trendy' popular character that she now represents. With both, Pooja's modern room and Kajol's temple housed under one roof, the architecture of the house symbolizes the possibility of negotiation and the coexistence of tradition and modernity. This negotiation and the assertion of 'Indianness' within a foreign space becomes an important celebration of identity for the diasporic audience (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). The contrast is also representative of the image of a global India, one that has entered the international marketplace and is advancing in various aspects but at the same time, is also rooted in its tradition and culture. Thus, the film simultaneously produces a global image of the nation while also carving a parochial cultural identity for it.

The colour palettes for the characters also change in this setting. Rahul and Anjali who had bright colour costumes while courting each other, their palettes have mellowed to pastels and colder tones such as grey-blue, deep violet and dull browns. Rohan and Pooja have a comparatively lively palette, as they embody the young-love now and are responsible for resolving the conflict within the narrative. These palettes are carried forward throughout, until

they come back to India. The only exceptions are seen in the song and dance sequences of *You are my Sonia* and *Bole Chudiyan*, done within the logic of spectacle. The two songs emphasise the grandiosity of the Raichand family with deep red colours and shimmery tones. *You are my Sonia* which is set in a disco creates an up-beat, party atmosphere, whereas *Bole Chudiyan* showcases a grand Indian style of celebration with bright costumes and set design, bringing in the idea of nostalgia. It once again brings in two distinct cultural practices, of prom in the west and the Indian festival of *Karvachauth*, portraying a confluence of tradition and modernity. The presentation of grandiose visuals in these sequences works within the logic of spectacle to produce an awestruck reaction from the audience. Simultaneously, it produces a celebration of Indian cultural practices (in the case of *Bole Chudiyan*) which acts as a unifying factor for Indian diasporic communities. The film further emphasises on the aspect of nostalgia and homecoming, as we see when Anjali convinces Rahul to return to India by saying “*Ab wapas chalo. Yeh humara desh nahi hai, humare log nahi hai*” (Let us go back now. This is not our country; these are not our people). The resolution of the narrative conflict takes place when the pair finally returns to India.

Visual Analysis of *Devdas* (2002)

The 2002 Sanjay Leela Bhansali directorial *Devdas* is well known among the audiences for its soundtrack and its spectacular visuals. The film was also India’s entry to the Oscars under the Foreign Film category. After Bhansali’s success with *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999), the director was motivated to create a magnificent version of the classic novel. Thus, the project began with a budget of 50 crore rupees, the most expensive Indian film ever at the time. The film boasts of elaborate sets built with a whopping expense of 20 crore rupees (Indiatimes, 2002). Today, the director is synonymous with the larger-than-life, exquisite sets and distinct colour palettes of his films. *Devdas* being the landmark film celebrated for the same, the paper here takes a look at its production design.

Difference of Caste

The central conflict in the romance saga of Devdas (Shahrukh Khan) and Parvati or Paro (Aishwarya Rai) is the social class and caste of the lead romantic pair. While the class difference does exist, it is not starkly evident in the production design, as seen in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*. The backlash they face for their marriage is due to Paro’s maternal lineage. Therefore, while the Mukherjee family is deemed as wealthier, the houses and setting for both the families carry a similar grandeur. Sharing an anecdote from the film’s production, production designer Nitin Chandrakant Desai mentions that after finishing the detailed construction of Paro’s house, Bhansali asked him to re-work on Devdas’ house as it paled in comparison to Paro’s (Aikara, 2011).

The factors that differentiate the two houses are aspects such as the varying colour tones and interior décor that subtly bring out the difference of caste and social status. The film is set in early 1900s British India. The architectures of the protagonists' houses take inspiration from the British Raj architecture of Calcutta (Indiatimes, 2002). The Mukherjee mansion has chic architecture with large beams and numerous pillars with wide spaces in between. The structure is reminiscent of British manors with its polished white walls, reflecting the aristocratic background of Devdas. Intricate details such as *jaali* designs are added to root it in the Indian fabric. The interiors of the mansion are decked in silk curtains and large chandeliers. Devdas's academic ascendancy over Paro is established through a conversation that takes place in his chambers. In the background, we can see the packed bookshelves which, coupled with him bragging about his life in London, puts Devdas in a position of power. The differences in their caste, which stems from Sumitra's (Paro's mother) lineage of a *nautanki* family, is brought out through the much vibrant décor of their house. Paro's *haveli* has colour-tinted glass panes over windows and door arches of the house, reflecting Paro's fragile beauty, a dominant theme in the film (Damle, 2002). It is in this space, this house, that the romance between the lead pair is allowed to bloom. Once again, producing the idea that the conflict is likely to arise from the imposing, wealthy, upper-caste family.



Image 7: Devdas' house (Credits: Mega Bollywood)



Image 8: Paro's house (Credits: Mega Bollywood)

Furthermore, the costume design of the various characters also brings out the subtleties of caste. The use of navy blue and reddish maroon paired with gold and white is associated with rich and upper-caste status. This is evident in the way the Mukherjee family is seen in the first half of the film and subsequently, in Parvati too as she marries into an upper-caste family of Thakurs. The heavily embroidered work, accentuated by the use of gold threads, adds richness and depth to the costumes. Against this, Paro's costumes as an unmarried woman used brighter shades of similar colours along with greens and pinks. Neeta Lulla, the costume designer for Paro, mentions that Paro is seen draped in simple cottons with traditional borders and prints during the first half of the film, unlike the intricate patterns of others (Indiatimes 2002). Paro's change in style happens after her marriage to Bhuvan Thakur, after which she is seen in rich colours and longer drapes giving Paro an elegant look. Even then, we only see her wear soft pastels when she is back in her own house.

In the case of Devdas, his figure as a rich-kid is established through the use of English dressing style in the early scenes of the film. Right from his entry, we see him dressed in a suit, with a cravat and a hat, carrying a small staff along with him. This reflects the influence of the British style and the high social standing of Devdas' family. His style undergoes a transformation when his family rejects his love and he leaves his home. After this, we only see him in white or beige *kurtas* paired with Bengali *dhotis* to portray the rebel persona he embodies, coupled with the look of a dejected lover (Hattangady, 2002).



Image 9: Devdas English costume (Credits: Mega Bollywood);
Image 10: Devdas *kurta-dhoti* costume (Credits: Mega Bollywood)



Image 11: Paro's costume pre-marriage (Credits: Mega Bollywood);
Image 12: Paro's costumes post marriage (Credits: Mega Bollywood)

Shifting Spaces

In the film, the change of space indicates the turn that takes place within the narrative. The shift is evident in the film's second half, wherein we now see Parvati in a higher social order than Devdas' family. This also results in a shift of power-dynamic between the two. While earlier, Parvati was seen as the more emotional and romantic of the two, she is now the one to put distance between her and Devdas. Devdas, whose character comes off as stubborn and bratty initially, requests Parvati to elope on her wedding day, but she declines. Having left his familial home, Devdas moves between Chunnilal's (Jackie Shroff) residence and Chandramukhi's (Madhuri Dixit) brothel. Visually, the colour palette used for these two settings is distinct from his house. Moving from the white-washed décor of Devdas' house, Chunnilal's home reflects a combination of blue and white which is soothing to the eye but also adds a sense of gloom despite the shimmery additions of lamps.



Image 13: Devdas in Chunnilal's home (Credits: Mega Bollywood)

In contrast to that, Chandramukhi's brothel which is situated within a market-place stands out compared to any other setting seen in the film. The wide shots of the setting reveal that the place is covered in *diyas* (oil lamps) on the outside, which give the location a divine look. The spatially expansive landscape depicts a sense of openness that the character of Chandramukhi herself possesses. This spatial association is also elaborated by Mishra (2018) in his example of the film *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*. He argues that the wide, long aerial shots highlight the themes of self-exploration, freedom, reconciliation, introspection that the characters experience within the film. Thus, establishing the space in this manner enhances the emotions associated with the characters.



Image 14: Wide view of market – Chandramukhi's brothel (Credits: Mega Bollywood)



Image 15: Interior of Chandramukhi's brothel (Credits: Mega Bollywood)

The design and décor of Chandramukhi's brothel is one of the visual highlights of the film. The elaborate detail of golden curtains contrasted with deep maroons creates a balance while showcasing an expensive and exquisitely decorated brothel. While this space is grander than the mansions of the zamindars and thakurs, the idea of the space as a brothel taints its image within the narrative. It is in this space where the male protagonist undergoes a transformation. The changing of space signifies the shift that takes place within Devdas himself. Chandramukhi's brothel is the place where he first indulges in alcohol. It is from this point forth that we see his descent into alcoholism and subsequent doom (death).

The period of blooming romance between Devdas and Paro shows Devdas as the more rational one between the two. In a scene where Paro proposes the idea of eloping in the dead of the night, Devdas rejects the idea and tries to tell her that he can convince his family. But when Paro takes a stand for her own family before her wedding, there is a change in their dynamic. Now Paro seems the more pragmatic of the two. She continues to be placed as the pragmatic figure as we see her take on responsibility after her marriage, while keeping a distance between Devdas and her. Paro reasons with Devdas, who is senselessly drunk at his father's funeral, to leave alcohol and become sober. The character development and change seen in Parvati are brought about through the change in space. Therefore, for the film, the spaces that these characters occupy play a key role in establishing the change brought in through the filmic narrative.

In the case of *Devdas*, since the film bases itself on a novel adaptation set in the 1900s, it does not engage with questions surrounding globalisation. However, a close reading of its visual design shows that the film can be interpreted as producing a 'global' image of Bollywood and hence, India. As discussed, the film showcases lavish production design, right from the flamboyant sets to the glamorous costumes of the characters. The 2002 *Devdas* stands out among its previous cinematic adaptations in terms of the spectacle it produces. The fascination with such larger-than-life sets can be inferred as Sanjay Leela Bhansali's attempt at creating a mark for Bollywood cinema in a global market. By showcasing intricately designed sets of a high budget, he puts on display the quality and the scale of production in India. While there were more impactful films made that year, *Devdas* was chosen as the Indian nomination to the Oscars. Although the selection process for Oscars is usually kept under wraps, it is widely believed that one of the major reasons for the selection of *Devdas* was its 'exquisite' and 'grand' visual design. This can be seen as Bollywood creating a space in the global, international market through its 'grand scale' melodramas. The argument is supported by the commercial success of both *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* and *Devdas* internationally. Both films project a polished, grand image of Indian families and communities. Centering the narrative on upper-class people, the films produce a tinted image of a 'rich' Indian society which paints a positive image of India in the global market.

However, while *Devdas* was well received commercially, it left various critics disappointed in terms of its treatment of the story. The film was appreciated by many for the visual pleasures of seeing its grandiose and ornamental sets and costume design. Although, having seen legendary actors like Dilip Kumar and P.C. Barua carry the legacy of *Devdas*, the 2002 film did not hit its mark with the narrative. Bhansali took creative liberties with the elements of the plot that displeased many audiences. Some even felt that the lavishness of the sets overpowered the narrative rather than supplementing it. While the expectations of the audience remained partly unfulfilled, the film's visuals are still appreciated and talked about. The narrative impact notwithstanding, the production design of the film remains a topic of discussion and a hallmark of the distinct style that Sanjay Leela Bhansali developed.

Conclusion

The production design of the two films subtly fleshes out the traits and emotional experiences of the respective characters. The directors Johar and Bhansali produce these narrative cues through their sets. Both the films are deeply rooted in the idea of spectacle that distinguishes Bollywood from its other counterparts. For *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, this spectacle arises by accentuating the differences between classes and highlighting the Indian identity in a foreign space. The appeal to the diaspora is a key narrative element of the film. This is enhanced by the visual design of the film that negotiates between the modern and traditional aspects of Indian society, building a global idea of Bollywood. In contrast, *Devdas* is a film about the past and Bhansali gives his adaptation of the renowned novel a grander visual look. The film creates an image of a beautiful, semi-historical past that leaves an imprint on the audience. The components of every single set add to the relationship between the characters and the spaces they inhabit and enable them to negotiate their relationships with others. The two films focus on producing visual spectacles that the scholars argue are a marker of Bollywood. These spectacles build into the narratives and enhance the audience's experience of the films. Therefore, production design in Bollywood plays a crucial role in shaping a film's narrative.

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The Case of Empathy: Understanding Why Sherlock Holmes is an Empathy Expert

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How to Cite this Paper

Mhatre, B. (2022). The case of empathy: Understanding why Sherlock Holmes is an empathy expert. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 111-127.

Abstract

Empathy is conventionally defined as the ability to understand the feelings and emotions of another person. However, there are two types of empathy and this definition is restricted to the emotional type (affective empathy). This paper sheds light on the lesser known type of empathy, which is known as cognitive empathy. Cognitive empathy allows an individual to understand the perspectives of other people. It has various applications, which this paper demonstrates by emphasising its irreplaceable role in detective fiction. By doing so, the paper also illustrates the relationship between cognitive empathy and rationality. In order to better understand how the detective uses empathy, the character of Sherlock Holmes is studied by analysing the literary works of Arthur Conan Doyle. Separate sections are dedicated to determining Holmes' humanity, examining Dr. John Watson's role as the companion-narrator, and understanding the effect achieved by the narrative structure. Two novels were selected for analysis – *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. On finding several instances that support my argument, I conclude that Sherlock Holmes is a highly empathetic detective, who uses empathy to his advantage at all times.

Keywords: empathy, Sherlock Holmes, cognitive, detective.

Introduction

Who is the first person that comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘detective’? For many of us, it’s the man who says it’s his business to know what other people do not know. Indeed, it’s none other than Sherlock Holmes, the world’s greatest fictional detective. Fans around the world have marvelled at and been perplexed by the brilliant sleuth’s extraordinary intelligence and reasoning powers for years. Yet, the thought of Sherlock Holmes being empathetic might seem more baffling than some of Arthur Conan Doyle’s best mysteries. We admire his intelligence, sense of justice, morality, unerring judgement and wit. But his general image is that of a cold, apathetic, aloof and eccentric mastermind. However, as this paper intends to highlight, the character of Sherlock Holmes also provides a wonderful portrayal of empathy. One might rightfully question the credibility of this statement. After all, Sherlock Holmes doesn’t fit the bill of someone who would attempt to understand your feelings and soothe your pain. It is quite easy to dismiss the possibility of Sherlock Holmes being empathetic precisely because his utilisation of empathy does not fit in with our traditional understanding of the concept.

This paper focuses on empathy as a broad concept and demonstrates how it plays an extremely important role in a detective’s profession. I argue against the popular notion that empathy hinders rationality, in defence of the contemporary idea of empathy and rationality being interlinked (Slote, 2010). Empathy is based on subjectivity and imagination, and rationality is based on objectivity and reasoning. As such, the two are always viewed as completely separate from one another and with good reason (Slote, 2010). However, combining them leads to some interestingly significant results. Drawing on this idea, this paper focuses on the application of empathy in detective fiction. As detective fiction is celebrated for its emphasis on rationality, the role of empathy in this genre helps us understand why these two concepts bring out the best in each other. Sherlock Holmes happens to be the best candidate for this paper as he expands rationality with his imagination and empathy with his reasoning.

Keeping this in mind, two *Sherlock Holmes* novels were selected – *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In the first section, I discuss the role of empathy in detective fiction. This section illustrates how a collaborative effort between empathy and rationality occurs in detective fiction. In the second section, I delve into the psychological underpinnings of empathy and how Holmes makes use of it in his profession. In the third section, I explore how Doyle humanises his detective and how the Holmes-Watson dynamic contributes to it. The fourth section illustrates the importance of narrative and elaborates on the detective-companion narrative model. I conduct narrative analysis on the two novels to explain how the narrative and the writing style affect our interpretation of the stories. The final section highlights instances from the selected novels to demonstrate the exact ways in which Holmes uses empathy. These novels contain various instances where Holmes puts his imagination and cognitive empathy to use and solves his cases.

The Science of Empathy

When we think of detective fiction, empathy is perhaps the last thing that crosses our minds. Why would any emotional skill be considered by someone contemplating a genre that's rooted in analytical and rational problem-solving? However, relying on the same logical thinking that detective fiction celebrates, one can easily deduce that empathy actually plays an important role in the detective's job. When the detective figure decides to investigate a crime, he or she is primarily dealing with the criminal's thought process because that's precisely what led to the crime. Consequently, the detective has to simulate the thought process of the criminal. Often, feelings and emotions influence our thoughts, which lead to a particular behaviour or action. This implies that in the process of understanding the criminal's mind, the detective will also inadvertently access the criminal's feelings and emotions. But even if that were not the case, a crucial part of the detective's job can be described by the idiom "putting oneself in someone else's shoes", which is popularly used for understanding empathy. For the detective, this 'someone else' is usually the criminal. However, the detective can use empathy multiple times to decipher the mystery surrounding a crime. For instance, empathy can help the detective understand the actions of other people involved in or related to the crime and the victim(s). So, try as it might to reduce human beings to objects and crime to a puzzle (Mandel, 1985, pp. 15, 21), detective fiction heavily relies on the humanity of its characters and their psychology. Yet, our conventional understanding of empathy bars us from considering its unique role in detective fiction. Empathy is generally understood as the ability to share and understand another person's emotions and feelings (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). But this definition is quite constricted and does not fully encompass what the process of empathy really entails. Then what is an all-encompassing definition of empathy and how does the process actually work?

In psychology, the definition of empathy is a topic of much debate. Although the term was coined by psychologists in the early 1900s (Konnikova, 2012; Lanzoni, 2021), they still haven't reached a consensus on a universal definition of empathy (Coplan, 2011; Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). The term 'empathy' was derived from the German term *Einfühlung*, which was translated to English in the early twentieth century by American psychologists (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1990, p. 17). Since then, there have been multiple definitions of the concept of empathy (Hall & Schwartz, 2018). Early conceptualisations of empathy did not focus on an understanding of affect (emotions) and lacked self-other differentiation (Deutsch & Madle, 1975). As Deutsch & Madle observe, Mead was the first psychologist who recognised the need for self-other differentiation. They further note how Mead defined empathy as 'a capacity to take the role of the other person with whom one interacts or putting yourself in his place' (as cited in Deutsch & Madle, 1975). In recent years, one of the most comprehensive definitions of empathy was given by Carré et al. (2013):

[Empathy] requires the recognition of one's own and other people's emotions. It also requires the ability to share and replicate other people's emotional states while simultaneously being aware that these emotions are not one's own (i.e., affective responsiveness). In addition, it demands the ability to adopt another person's perspective while simultaneously preserving the distinction between self and other (emotional perspective taking). Finally, it requires individuals to choose the best socioemotional response (e.g., by soothing a sad person without being as sad as this person). (p.680)

Furthermore, extensive research on empathy, especially in the field of psychology, has led to the discovery of many important findings and theories.

Most psychologists agree that there are two main types/systems of empathy – affective empathy and cognitive empathy (Shamay-Tsoory, 2010; Preckel et al., 2018; Weisz & Cikara, 2021). Affective empathy is defined as sharing the experience and feelings of another person. The conventional and popular definition of empathy essentially refers to affective empathy, which is also called emotional empathy. In the context of modern day use, when someone says 'I feel you', they are inadvertently referring to affective empathy. Cognitive empathy refers to the ability to understand, but not share, the perspectives, mental states and emotions of others. It's also called 'mentalizing' or 'perspective taking' (Hall & Schwartz, 2018). It helps us understand where someone else is coming from and consider the potential rationale behind their actions and beliefs. Even the aforementioned idiom, 'putting yourself in someone else's shoes', refers to cognitive empathy. More importantly, this is the type of empathy that the detective employs as well. Furthermore, it must be noted that 'perspective taking' has two different forms – imagining how another person thinks and feels, and imagining how you would think and feel if you were in their position (Batson et al., 1997). Naturally, the detective figure utilises the first form of perspective taking to draw inferences from the actions of any person involved in the investigation. The discovery of a dual system process was beyond significant as it implied that empathy has two equally important components – feeling and thinking. Furthermore, it has been proven that the neural pathways of affective and cognitive empathy are different and they work separately, but they can also work together under specific contexts and situations (Weisz & Cikara, 2021). So, even a 'cold-hearted' or 'insensitive' person has the capacity to empathise with others.

Adjectives like 'cold-hearted' and 'insensitive' are often used to define the detective figure, specifically Sherlock Holmes, who certainly seems misjudged to some extent. Now that we have established the role of empathy in detective fiction, it calls for a closer look at literature for a better understanding. In her essay, 'The empathy machine', Maria Konnikova asks, 'What would it look like if we were to imagine a personality that was deeply empathetic – and yet wholly unemotional? This person would be, I think ... Sherlock Holmes, the world's greatest fictional detective.' As this paper intends to demonstrate, Konnikova is right on the mark with her

hypothesis. How is it that most of the metaphors used to understand empathy are rooted in cognitive empathy, yet affective empathy takes the centre stage in our actual understanding of the concept? As mentioned earlier, our general understanding of empathy is a little too restricted. A character like Sherlock Holmes offers a unique take on empathy and its applications, thereby broadening our own perspective of the concept. Holmes shows us how important cognitive empathy is and how greatly it helps us in understanding other people. As Konnikova (2012) notes, Holmes' empathy is unbiased, unprejudiced and less ego-centric:

So, Holmes is an expert at the very thing that makes empathy possible in the first place – seeing the world from another's point of view. He is entirely capable of understanding someone else's internal state, mentalizing and considering that state, and exhibiting prosocial concern. Indeed, he is a master of it.

In this way, Sherlock Holmes demonstrates the benefits of cognitive empathy and how it counters the downside of affective empathy. Empathising with others solely using affective empathy can be emotionally draining and mentally exhausting for the empathizer (Waytz, 2016). Such results are counterproductive as you cannot care for others effectively if all your energy is consumed by one or two individual's problems. Relying more on our cognitive empathy turns out to be more sustainable as it allows us to empathise with other people while maintaining our own emotional well-being (Waytz, 2016). Thus, cognitive empathy proves to be a better option for all the parties involved.

In recent years, exceedingly interesting research has been conducted in the area of empathy. For instance, researchers have found that cognitive empathy and empathic concern are major factors in predicting sensitivity to injustice for others (justice sensitivity). On the other hand, it was found that affective empathy, astonishingly, was not associated with justice sensitivity (Decety & Yoder, 2016). As the name suggests, justice sensitivity is defined as 'an individual's concern for justice' (Decety & Yoder, 2016, p. 2), and empathic concern refers to 'the motivation to care for another's welfare' (p. 2). Furthermore, the researchers also mentioned how previous research has indicated that 'empathic concern plays a primary role in eliciting prosocial behaviour, particularly when other-oriented concern develops in concert with understanding others' internal states' (p. 3). If we delve into his characterisation throughout the series, we can easily infer that Sherlock Holmes displays high justice sensitivity. Thus, the above study's findings provide further support for Holmes' heavy reliance on cognitive empathy as a detective, as well as the underlying empathic concern he has for his clients. Interestingly, Holmes also demonstrates what is known as 'advanced empathy' (also known as advanced accurate empathy) in psychotherapy. Counsellors use advanced empathy to understand and interpret the implied meanings and messages behind what their clients explicitly express (Wicks et al., 1993, p. 109). They focus on not just what the client is saying but also how it is being said by using tone of voice and body language, among others, as cues. Counsellors also take into consideration the developmental and

historical context of their client's problems and personal narrative. Thus, advanced empathy is a result of meticulous practice and significant experience as it requires the counsellor to see the world through their client's eyes. We can easily draw parallels between a counsellor who uses advanced empathy to gain a better understanding of their client and Holmes, who uses cognitive empathy in a similar manner to produce a solution for a crime investigation.

Since empathy is considered to be a core aspect of human nature, it's necessary to establish Sherlock Holmes' humanity. In the following section, I argue that despite his popularised image, Doyle's detective is far more human than what most critics and ardent fans would like to believe. He is not simply a self-conceited, arrogant and reclusive character and he is certainly not cold-blooded and apathetic either. It also highlights the importance of Holmes and Watson's friendship in humanising the consulting detective's character.

Perfectly Imperfect: Exploring Sherlock Holmes' humanity

The idea of Sherlock Holmes being an expressive character, full of all kinds of emotions, would sound absurd to most people and reasonably so. Readers are so accustomed to viewing Holmes as a 'genius' and 'superhuman', whose powers seem surreal, that we often forget his ultimately human existence. And it's not just the readers who forget that, but the other characters, specifically Watson, tend to follow suit as well. Some of Holmes' own thoughts and opinions reinforce his 'inhuman' image. However, when all is said and done, Sherlock Holmes turns out to be just as human as the rest of us. Right from the first novel, Holmes is extremely expressive, sometimes even more than Watson. Holmes and Watson's first meeting is an excellent demonstration of the same:

At the sound of our steps, he glanced round and sprang to his feet with a cry of pleasure. 'I've found it! I've found it,' he shouted to my companion, running towards us with a test-tube in his hand. 'I have found a re-agent which is precipitated by haemoglobin, and by nothing else.' Had he discovered a gold mine, greater delight could not have shone upon his features. (Doyle, 2003, p. 35)

He often smiles, chuckles and laughs throughout the stories. This expressive nature is complemented by a clever sense of humour, which is prominent in his frequent witty remarks and snide retorts. At times, even his perpetually self-assured demeanour seems to ever so slightly fall apart (p. 62). The consulting detective had his highs and lows, usually ending up on the extreme ends of the scale. He was lively and full of vigour when he had a truly baffling or enigmatic mystery to solve. Watson tells us about the 'glitter' that shoots out of Holmes' eyes whenever 'he was keenly interested' (p. 667). But when there was no such crime demanding his brilliant skills, he would lapse into periods of listlessness and depression. He would then turn to drugs like cocaine and morphine to stimulate his brain during these periods. Consequently, some

critics suspect that Holmes suffered from manic depression/bipolar disorder (Redmond, 2009, p. 42).

Although minor and relatively inconsequential to the cases, Holmes is even proven to be wrong from time to time. We see an instance of this in *A Study in Scarlet*, when he is fooled by the murderer's accomplice, who was disguised as an old lady. But of course, Doyle ensures that the accomplice's acting is brilliant enough to fool the great detective. Watson notes that Holmes' reaction to this error was initially somewhere between 'amusement and chagrin', but he ultimately 'burst into a hearty laugh' (Doyle, 2003, p. 59). Similarly, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Holmes' deductions about an unknown visitor, who had left his stick behind, are proven to be slightly off as well (p. 657). Just like the rest of us, Sherlock Holmes makes mistakes too and even laughs them off. By endowing Holmes with such vulnerabilities, Doyle accentuates the detective's humanity. As a result, Doyle succeeds in counterbalancing Sherlock Holmes' extraordinary powers with his flaws and weaknesses, creating a complex and rich character who is certainly more human than a 'calculating machine'. In his introduction to *The Complete Sherlock Holmes, Volume I*, Kyle Freeman aptly sums up Holmes' humanity and ability to empathise:

Holmes shows emotion in many stories. His judgement about people is tempered by a knowledge of human passions and desires that can only come from introspection. You can't recognize how these feelings work in other people unless you have understood how they work in you. (p. 26)

Cogman (2017) takes it a step further when she says, 'It's that humanity, and all the complexities in the human character, which have made Holmes a character that has lasted for more than a hundred years, and who has been and will remain an icon in popular culture'.

As the next section will emphasise, narrative plays an important role in every story. The readers need to remember that the *Sherlock Holmes* stories are actually Dr. John H. Watson's memoirs. Everything we know about Holmes comes from Watson. The Baker Street sleuth's first description comes from Watson's colleague, Stamford, who claims that: 'Holmes is a little too scientific for my tastes—it approaches to cold-bloodedness' (Doyle, 2003, p. 35). While Stamford has his own reasons for believing this, through him, Doyle gives us a general idea of what most people perceive Sherlock Holmes as – unapproachable, eccentric, whimsical, mercurial – essentially everything that constitutes his image in the real world as well. But as the detective's cherished companion and roommate of many years, Watson gets to meet Sherlock Holmes at a much different and personal level than the other characters of their world. Hence, through Watson, we get to explore Holmes' character at a much deeper level as well. Watson is the one who humanises Sherlock, but he's also the one who compares him to an 'automaton' (p. 119). Yet, if it weren't for Watson and his relationship with Sherlock Holmes, we wouldn't know (and love) the character as we know him today. It's also important to realise that Watson cherishes and needs Holmes' companionship as much as, if not more than, Holmes needs it. In

the initial chapters of *A Study in Scarlet*, it's clear as day that Watson is quite lonely and craves company. He is not in the best place mentally either. At such a time, Holmes provides him with not just company but also a much-needed escape. A friendship that was built on such a foundation not just created a wonderful bond but possibly left a lasting impact on Watson as well. We often want the people we love to be loved by others too. One of Watson's main goals with the stories would then be to improve Holmes' image in the public eye and make people realise that the consulting detective is not as bad as they think. The personal touch that Doyle adds by making these stories Watson's memoirs also has a brilliant effect as it makes the readers feel like they actually know Sherlock Holmes too and adds to the authentic feel of the stories. As some critics have observed, it makes Watson and Holmes feel more real and relatable. Thus, the Holmes-Watson friendship plays an extremely crucial role in humanising Sherlock Holmes.

A Study of Narrative

In detective fiction, it is quite common for the stories to be narrated by the detective's companion. This tradition can be observed right from the very beginning, when Edgar Allan Poe introduced his detective, Auguste Dupin, through the words of an unnamed companion-narrator in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841). While Doyle's deep admiration for Poe's works (Doyle, 2003, p. 16) was perhaps a huge contributing factor in the narrative form that he selected for his detective stories, it provides several advantages as well (p. 20). The detective's companion (Watson) is able to frame the story more dramatically than the detective (Holmes) could because the companion is in the dark about the outcome as well. Thus, the companion can sustain the suspense of the mystery and share his feelings of astonishment and bewilderment with the readers when it's solved. Essentially, Watson makes the readers feel like they are involved in the process of investigation. Furthermore, as the narrator, the detective's companion also has the freedom to glorify his friend. Conversely, if this were done by the detective, as the narrator instead, he would certainly appear much less likeable to the readers. Hence, having his adventures narrated by an admirer turns out to be quite beneficial for Doyle's detective as well as his readers.

As the previous section emphasised the importance of Holmes and Watson's friendship, Holmes' claim of being "lost without my Boswell" (p. 190) cleverly hints towards the importance of the narrative structure employed by Doyle for the stories (with a few exceptions). Guttzeit (2016) states that, in the Sherlock Holmes canon, Dr. Watson functions 'as a representative of the writer, a foil to Holmes, and a double of the reader' (p. 85). Watson's role as the writer gives him the leeway to sensationalise Holmes' cases, much to the latter's dismay (Doyle, 2003, p. 113). As Guttzeit notes:

While Watson stylizes the story, Holmes sticks to the facts of the case and reports them in a matter-of-fact manner, thus keeping up the illusion of a factual investigation that is only

subsequently made literary – in a secondary process. There is thus a way of using Watson's function as a writer of the story of investigation to prolong the dénouement. In contrast, Holmes's comments on Watson's narration and his own customary statement of the case are kept factual in order to give the reality effect of detection. The writerly function of Watson thus connects the illusion of factual detection with the literariness of the genre – without any apparent contradiction.(p. 87)

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, when Watson and Holmes fail to catch the man who was dogging his clients in London, the latter makes an interesting statement: 'Was [there] ever such bad luck and such bad management, too? Watson, Watson, if you are an honest man you will record this also and set it against my successes!' (Doyle, 2003, p. 682). Thus, as the writer and narrator, Watson is required to 'record' all the facts of the case and present the whole truth to the readers, which inevitably increases his reliability and objectivity as the writer/narrator. In 'Side by Side: The Role of the Sidekick', Buchanan (2003) strengthens the idea of Doyle's humanisation of Sherlock Holmes: 'But, more importantly, Watson, through his heavily detailed narrative, maintains Holmes's humanity, balancing Holmes's strengths of observation and deduction with his weaknesses of poor violin playing and depression over inactivity alleviated only by cocaine injections' (p. 21). Stories that lack Watson's narration highlight how significantly different and incomprehensible Holmes seems to the readers without his Boswell (Redmond, 2009, p. 47).

Besides his 'writerly function', Watson's 'everyman' also functions as a wonderful contrast to Holmes' 'superman'. Guttzeit points out that the similarities in the two characters' professions serve to further exemplify this contrast. As a doctor, Watson has been trained to identify symptoms and deduce their causes and diseases. Yet he fails to deduce facts from the clues that he is presented within the stories, further establishing Holmes as a 'superhuman reasoner'. Lastly, Watson functions as 'a double of the reader' as well. He asks a lot of questions to Holmes, out of curiosity, and most of them reflect the doubts that a reader might have while reading the story. The readers depend on Watson to understand Holmes' logic and thought process behind solving the mystery. Even the readers who are able to figure it out beforehand must patiently wait for Watson to validate/invalidate their solution. Watson's 'everyman' position allows the readers to relate to him. As Buchanan (2003) puts it, 'Because we approach Holmes through Watson's faculties, we readers parallel Watson's reactions to Holmes's deductive powers, first feeling awe at the detective's somewhat mystical skills but then feeling foolish at our own inability to observe the commonplace and common sense clues before' (p. 18). Thus, the readers perceive Watson to be just like them, curious yet clueless, and perhaps feel relieved that they are not the only ones who feel that way.

A Study in Scarlet introduces the formula that almost all the other Holmes stories will follow. It's laid out neatly by Freeman in his introduction:

Someone seeks out the detective at his Baker Street rooms to solve an unusual mystery. Holmes and Watson then set out to explore the scene of the mystery. The police are often involved, but of course they never have a clue. After an adventure or two that builds suspense, Holmes solves the case in the most dramatic way. The two investigators end up back at Baker Street, where Holmes explains any point in his chain of reasoning that might have escaped Watson's understanding, and all's once again right with the world. (p. 21)

Interestingly, as many critics have observed, *A Study in Scarlet* is closer to the sensation novel model than the classical detective model. The sensation novel was one of the popular genres of the 1860s-70s. The plot of these novels was concerned with deception, criminality and bigamy. As Pittard (2010) notes, 'This genre can be defined not only in terms of content but also in terms of reader response. One of the leading characteristics of the sensation novel is the author's intention of eliciting a reaction, a sensation, from the reader' (p. 107). Doyle himself has called his language in *A Study in Scarlet* as 'rather sensational and overcoloured'. However, since this was Doyle's first *Sherlock Holmes* story, it's reasonable that he decided to borrow several elements from the sensation novel. This genre was massively popular and well-established at the time of the writing and publishing of *A Study in Scarlet* (p. 108). Among the borrowed elements, Doyle's portrayal of Jefferson Hope stands out the most. The sensation novel often incorporates sympathetic portrayals of its criminals (p. 107). Despite Hope's crime of murdering two people, the readers can't help but sympathise with him. Doyle intentionally gives his criminal a name that would elicit positive and sympathetic feelings for the character, which he backs up with Hope's revenge story. Right from the beginning, Doyle establishes Hope's righteousness and his victims' karmic fate. When Watson encounters the first victim, Enoch Drebbler, he describes the latter as 'ape-like' and simply horrifying. He goes on to state, 'So sinister was the impression which that face had produced upon me that I found it difficult to feel anything but gratitude for him who had removed its owner from the world. If ever human features bespoke vice of the most malignant type, they were certainly those of Enoch J. Drebbler, of Cleveland' (Doyle, 2003, p. 56). Through the emotions that Drebbler evokes in Watson, the readers begin to perceive Hope as a hero and Drebbler as a villain. Watson's description of Hope, before he was revealed to be the murderer, greatly differs from his description of Drebbler as well. It is as if Doyle attempts to condition his readers in the first part to generate a naturally sympathetic response from them by the end of the story. Exposing the crimes and cruelty of the two murdered men allows the readers to resonate with Hope's 'they-deserved-to-die' mentality. When Hope begins narrating his story, he tells the men – Holmes, Watson and Lestrade – 'You'd have done the same, if you have any manhood in you, if you had been in my place' (p. 101). It is quite possible that Doyle used this dialogue to make the characters – as well as the readers – empathise with Hope.

The Hound of the Baskervilles holds an especially important place in the canon, and the hearts of the fans, for multiple reasons. First and foremost, it's the story that revives Sherlock Holmes,

whom Doyle had grown tired of and killed off in 'The Final Problem' (1893). The consulting detective remained missing in action for nearly a decade, against the strong wishes of innumerable fans. So, when news of its publication was released in 1901, it generated a lot of hype and expectations (Doyle, 2003, p. 30). The result not only fulfilled all such expectations but went beyond them. It's not just Holmes who seems to be 'at his very best' (p. 30) in the story, but we even get to see his eternal companion in a different light, when Holmes sends Watson in his stead to the scene of the crime. For the first time in the series, Watson investigates a case independently and plays the detective's role, albeit only for a while. He plays a much more important role in this story and directly contributes to the case's solution. By replacing Holmes with Watson, Doyle makes the differences between Holmes and Watson even more apparent and accentuates Holmes' exceptional skills. Thus, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* further emphasises Holmes and Watson's interdependent relationship and why each is best suited to his designated role. As mentioned earlier, when Watson is absent from the story, Holmes proves to be an ineffectual narrator (Guttzeit, 2016, pp. 93-95). Similarly, Watson seems to fall short in the role of the detective, in the absence of Holmes. Moreover, Doyle experiments with a different narrative style in this novel. In the other three novels, Doyle includes a retrospective narrative in the form of a 'flashback', towards the end, which illustrates the events leading up to the crime. But this flashback forms a separate tale which is unrelated to the actual investigation and solution. However, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, we are not given any such flashback. Even Dr. Mortimer's first reading of the Baskerville legend, which could be considered as a flashback, has a different function. As Kissane and Kissane (1963) explain, 'The legend is a beginning to the action rather than a clarification at the end; it is essential to the actual crime, and its atmosphere permeates the enveloping mystery' (p. 354). Doyle blends the circumstances leading up to the crime and the subsequent investigation into a single narrative, creating 'a work of greater unity than he managed to do in his other longer efforts' (p. 354). Furthermore, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is heavily influenced by the Gothic genre (Allan, 2019). Apart from the obvious tropes like the themes of horror, fear and terror, the novel contains Gothic elements like 'a fragmented narrative (consisting of an ancient manuscript, letters, telegraphs and journal entries), a family curse, questions relating to lineage and inheritance, entrapment (physical and metaphorical), a persecuted woman and 'domestic tyrant', doubles, a tell-tale portrait, aberrant and heightened states of mind and an ancient manor (Baskerville Hall)' (Allan, 2019, pp. 221-222). The legendary hound, the vast and uncanny moor, and the deadly mire are especially reminiscent of Gothic literature. Moreover, the struggle between science and superstition is central to the novel, with the former winning over the latter and reaffirming the 'superior' status of scientific reasoning and rationality. In his first novel, Doyle makes his readers feel sympathy and sorrow, but in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he makes them feel absolute terror and fear. Who has not felt a chill run down their spine after reading Dr. Mortimer's hushed confession at the end of chapter 2, 'Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!' (Doyle, 2003, p. 541). As the novel reaches its end, Watson confesses that he tried his best to 'make the reader share those dark fears and vague surmises which clouded our lives so long and ended in so tragic

a manner' (p. 631). He certainly succeeded but a good amount of Watson's success is owed to empathy. The readers can only 'share' the characters' feelings of fear by empathising with the characters and mentalizing what it would be like to be in their shoes. Thus, empathy helps the readers to thoroughly enjoy a terrific novel.

The Sign of Empathy

Coming back to the larger idea of empathy in the Sherlock Holmes series, we must now turn our attention to the exact ways in which Sherlock Holmes utilises and demonstrates his empathy. In 'The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual', Holmes perfectly outlines how he incorporates cognitive empathy in his profession – 'You know my methods in such cases, Watson. I put myself in the man's place, and, having first gauged his intelligence, I try to imagine how I should myself have proceeded under the same circumstances' (Doyle, 2003, p. 441). The concept of Holmes' skillful usage of cognitive empathy to complete his chain of reasoning and solve the mystery is naturally first established in *A Study in Scarlet*. While Watson is in awe of Holmes' analytical powers, Doyle gives us a glimpse of how perceptive and respectful the detective is of others' feelings and emotional states. When they return home from the crime scene, Holmes is quick to notice Watson's disturbed state of mind and mentions that he understands why Watson feels so upset and shaken. Holmes even explains the involvement of the Baker Street Irregulars to Lestrade and Gregson – 'without meaning to hurt either of your feelings' (p. 71). Although, in this case, there's a high possibility that he was just being sarcastic, the statement alone is enough to infer that he was otherwise respectful and attuned to others' feelings. Doyle even hints at Holmes' vast and wonderful imagination, a quintessential skill in empathising, when Holmes states, 'One's ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Nature' (p. 56). In chapter 5, we come across a direct instance of Holmes' use of cognitive empathy, when he explains why the murderer would be willing to come and take back his lost ring:

Now put yourself in that man's place. On thinking the matter over, it must have occurred to him that it was possible that he had lost the ring in the road after leaving the house. What would he do then? He would eagerly look out for the evening papers in the hope of seeing it among the articles found. His eye, of course, would light upon this. He would be overjoyed. Why should he fear a trap? There would be no reason in his eyes why the finding of the ring should be connected with the murder. He would come. He will come. (p. 57)

When Holmes elucidates his deductions, he also sheds light on the possibility of empathy and rationality working together, and its subsequent results. When trying to ascertain that Hope was posing as a cab driver, Holmes imagined what means a man trying to follow another man through London would use, which helped him to solidify his initial answer. He further explains how he finally tracked down Hope:

If he had been [a cab driver], there was no reason to believe that he had ceased to be. On the contrary, from his point of view, any sudden change would be likely to draw attention to himself. He would probably, for a time at least, continue to perform his duties. There was no reason to suppose that he was going under an assumed name. Why should he change his name in a country where no one knew his original one? (p. 109).

These instances from the novel neatly illustrate how Holmes uses cognitive empathy in his profession. It should be noted that these are just the major and direct instances of cognitive empathy that can be found in the novel, which contains several other minor and indirect ones as well.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Doyle shows us how understanding and considerate Holmes can be of others when he reassures and pacifies a visibly stressed Sir Henry during their first meeting (p. 550). This scene deserves special attention as it takes place right after Sir Henry presents a brand new little mystery to Holmes. Given his love for mysteries, one would expect Holmes to ignore Henry's harsh remark, yet he understands Henry's state and acknowledges it. Later, Holmes assumes the perspective of an elderly and feeble man to deduce that Sir Charles was waiting for someone on the night of his death. In an attempt to explain his chain of reasoning is not mere guesswork, Holmes makes an interesting comment, 'It is the scientific use of the imagination, but we have always some material basis on which to start our speculation' (p. 551). For Holmes, the scientific use of imagination often leads to the scientific use of empathy, as he utilises mentalisation and perspective-taking. This further demonstrates how rationality and empathy can combine forces to produce remarkable results. In chapter 5, Watson tells us about Holmes' remarkable 'power of detaching his mind at will' (p. 557). Holmes could absorb himself entirely in one subject and forget about any other during that period. This implies that such a power plays an integral role in his empathising as it enables him to leave behind any preoccupying thoughts and enter the mind of another being, using his mentalising powers, to re-create their past actions to derive his deductions. Holmes' reaction to Henry Baskerville's supposed death is one of the key moments from the novel. On finding what they assumed to be Sir Henry's dead body, Holmes and Watson are utterly shocked. Holmes takes the blame upon himself, while feeling absolutely outraged and devastated. His reaction proves that Holmes values and feels responsible for the lives of everyone involved in an investigation. His empathy shines through as Doyle demonstrates that Holmes doesn't just solve a case like it's a puzzle; rather he acts in accordance with the fact that his investigations affect real people and could prove to be dangerous for them. This explains why Holmes would react so strongly to Sir Henry's presumed death. Another intriguing scene is Holmes' reaction to finding Mrs. Stapleton and witnessing the horrors she had to go through at her husband's hands. Considering the amount of cases Holmes has solved, you would expect him to be absolutely desensitised to such hideous crimes and scenes, yet he gets furious over the ill-treatment Mrs. Stapleton received, displaying his sensitivity and compassion for any innocent person who experiences injustice. Moreover,

Holmes repeatedly expresses his deeply apologetic feelings for Sir Henry, as he feels responsible for Sir Henry's shattered nerves and empathises with his wounded heart as well. On a different note, we can assume that, to some extent, it was easy for Holmes to empathise with Stapleton and figure out his actions as the two of them seemed to be on the same intellectual wavelength, which Holmes himself remarked upon a couple of times throughout the novel. In the last chapter, Holmes exclusively uses cognitive empathy to explain the perspectives and actions of Stapleton, his wife, Sir Charles, and even the hound. Holmes aptly sums up the very methods he uses by saying:

The whole course of events from the point of view of the man who called himself Stapleton was simple and direct, although to us, who had no means in the beginning of knowing the motives of his actions and could only learn part of the facts, it all appeared exceedingly complex. (p. 633)

Conclusion

By demonstrating that Sherlock Holmes is an empathetic character, this paper aimed to broaden the conventional understanding of empathy and its applications. Empathy plays an extremely important role in our lives yet some of its most important mechanisms tend to be overlooked. As previous sections have emphasised, empathy isn't limited to just being an emotional experience. More often than not, it is an intellectual feat. The main argument of the paper is that the intellectual part of empathy (cognitive empathy) works closely with rationality, which ultimately leads to better outcomes. Thus, the paper focuses on the genre of detective fiction to substantiate this argument. It establishes how empathy is integral to detective fiction, without which the detective would never be able to consider and mentalize different perspectives and deduce the reasons behind the crime. Within detective fiction, the focus was narrowed down to Sherlock Holmes, who helped in highlighting the functions of cognitive empathy and demonstrating how empathy is interlinked with rationality. Sherlock Holmes proves that when we hone our cognitive empathy, we develop a better understanding of the world around us. His empathy is reasoned and scientific, which amplifies the functions of both – empathy and rationality. Holmes' utilisation of cognitive empathy is similar to the concept of 'advanced empathy' in psychotherapy. To solidify the main argument, several instances from *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* were provided, to demonstrate how Holmes uses empathy as a detective. This paper took an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together psychology and literature, to understand empathy. Further studies can explore the portrayal of empathy in other genres, films and television shows, from a newer perspective.

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The Occupational Aspirations of Transgender Individuals Working at the Kochi Metro Rail Limited, Kerala

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How to Cite this Paper

John, A. (2022). The occupational aspirations of transgender individuals working at the Kochi Metro Rail Limited, Kerala. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 128-155.

Abstract

The study aims to understand the occupational experiences of transgender individuals employed in the Kochi Metro as a part of KMRL-Kudumbashree Initiative that began in 2017 and the resultant effects on their lives. It aims to find the nature of their work experience as employees of KMRL, their occupational aspirations and the factors that influence the same, and the manner in which their inclusion in a public sector scheme has impacted their lives and aspirations. Semi-structured, telephonic interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis with 5 out of the 13 trans individuals currently working in the Kochi Metro. The results revealed that all 5 of the respondents wish to continue working at the metro and do not plan to leave their current workplace due to the job security and gender-affirming nature of the initiative. However, factors such as low salary, difficulty in managing living expenses and the lack of mobility within their profession have been identified as highly impactful to their work experience, adversely affecting their aspirations.

Keywords: Transgender employment, occupational experiences, aspirations, trans-inclusionary public sector schemes, Kochi Metro Rail Limited-Kudumbashree, trans-inclusive workforce.

Introduction and Background

In June 2017, the Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) in Kochi, Kerala, began the state's first metro line and India's first multimodal transport system. The Kochi Metro was lauded for being

the fastest metro rail construction in India and was subsequently awarded the Best Urban Mobility Project in India by the Urban Development Ministry. However, the feature of the Kochi Metro that garnered the most recognition and was internationally acclaimed was its efforts made towards social inclusion in collaboration with the Kudumbashree, which is both the state poverty eradication mission (SPEM) of the Kerala government and the women-run community network, to employ transgender people in the KMRL stations. At the forefront of the Kochi Metro Rail initiative, the Kudumbashree Facility Management Centre (FMC) took on KMRL as their first client to ensure employment opportunities for 780 cisgender women and 23 transgender people within services such as ticketing, customer care, housekeeping and gardening (Kudumbashree, n.d.).

The KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative of 2017 came into being just two years after the Kerala government unveiled its own Transgender Policy in 2015; Kerala was hailed for being the first Indian state to release a transgender policy. The policy was drawn up largely on the basis of a state-wide survey of transgender (TG) persons and the Indian Supreme Court ruling in 2014 regarding the constitutional rights of transgender people. The policy emphasises the rights of transgender individuals to identify themselves as per their gender orientation and has provisions for social representation, economic opportunities, legal recognition and protections, and access to required services and resources (Press Trust of India, 2015).

Despite the TG policy being drafted with the aim of protecting the identity of transgender people and ensuring their safety, the stigmatisation and social cost of their identity largely dictates their socioeconomic status, the employment opportunities they receive, their living conditions, their daily interactions and the costs that accompany their gender transitions (often by means of hormone therapy and/or surgery). Schemes that are designed for marginalised communities as a whole within a particular sector are often ones that do not take into account these aforementioned factors that interplay with their ability to make the most of the opportunities that are made available to them. Articles in news agencies such as *LiveMint*, the *News Minute* and the *New Indian Express*, published in 2017, 2019 and 2020 (M.K., 2017; Jayarajan, 2019; Oommen, 2020), respectively, report on the struggles faced by the transgender staff in the Kochi metro. The meagre salary that does not cover their monthly living expenses and the discrimination they face as a result of deep-rooted prejudice were at the top of the long list of issues reported by some of the trans women who were interviewed. One article mentions that many of the staff had to resort to finding other jobs on the side, including sex work. The reports and the stories of the lives of some trans women interviewed in these articles will be discussed in further sections of this paper. However, the central theme in all of these is one that describes the difference between the reality of the implementation of the scheme as opposed to the optics surrounding the progressive step taken by both the state and KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative.

This paper aims to understand the occupational experiences and aspirations of the trans people employed by the Kochi Metro Rail Limited. However, its focus goes past understanding the lived realities of those individuals from communities that are often encompassed in inclusion and welfare schemes to critique the unidimensional lens through which their needs, issues and experiences are often viewed. This study aims to understand the interaction of various factors of the employees' identity, the nature of the job given to them within the context of state support, and the ability to aspire.

The introduction of the study focuses on creating a comprehensive understanding of the KMRL-Kudumbashree scheme and trans identity in the Indian context through the national TG policy of 2014, the Kerala state TG survey and policy, the Godrej Manifesto of Trans Inclusion in the Workplace, and newspaper reports that explore the lives of trans people in the KMRL workforce. Further, work experiences and 'occupational aspirations' and what they entail for the transgender community are defined and elucidated. Additionally, pertinent themes are understood by way of reviewing existing literature and studies conducted. Beyond this introductory section, the paper is further divided into 4 sections, namely Methodology, Summary of Interviews, Discussion, and Conclusion.

The Kochi Metro Rail Limited-Kudumbashree Initiative, 2017

Kudumbashree made its first foray into the facility management sector by establishing the Kudumbashree Facility Management Centre (FMC) to address the concerning levels of unemployment of women in the state and their economic marginalisation during the development process (Kudumbashree Facility Management Centre, n.d.). The FMC hires women from across Kerala to provide facility management services to various private and public sector organisations. Their first venture, as mentioned above, began in the KMRL with the FMC employing 780 cisgender women in areas of service such as customer care, ticketing, housekeeping and gardening. The staff selection process was rigorous, with nearly 40,000 applicants going through rounds of written exams, interviews and a skill training programme. However, what garnered international recognition was the first batch of 23 transgender individuals who were employed in these service areas. They too went through an intensive three-month training programme before they were appointed in different roles on the basis of their educational qualifications and experience.

The experiences of the transgender workers, as chronicled by articles in the *News Minute* in 2019 (Jayarajan, 2019), the *New Indian Express* in 2020, "Transgender staff of Kochi Metro struggle to keep life on track" (Oommen, 2020) and *Live Mint* in 2017, "Transgenders in Kochi Metro: The unsaid story" (M.K., 2017), showcase a different reality filled with hardships that are in stark contrast to the publicised success of the initiative. The *News Minute* titled their 2019 article "Not real inclusion, just a PR gimmick." It revealed that since the first batch of 23 transgender

people were hired, by 2019, the trans workforce grew to 43, before sharply declining to a mere 11 people (Jayarajan, 2019).

Through interviews with numerous trans women who make up the FMC workforce at the KMRL, the following details of their experiences were discovered across the three articles:

- Initially, many of those in the workforce believed that they were officially KMRL employees who had bagged a government job. The importance of the title of the government job has to do with the respect it garners from society and the prestige associated with it. Later, they discovered that they were “contract workers for the Kudumbashree FMC” to whom the KMRL project was sublet (Jayarajan, 2019).
- On the basis of their educational background, the staff were given jobs in the housekeeping department (for those who had not passed their SSLC examinations) and the ticket collection or management departments (for those who had passed their high school or were graduates respectively) (Jayarajan, 2019).
- Their salaries ranged from Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 13,000 based on their positions (Jayarajan, 2019).
- Many of the workers quit their jobs within the first two months of their joining.

Later this number grew. The reasons that pushed many of these trans individuals out of their jobs include, but aren't limited to, the following:

After meetings in 2017 and 2018, the KMRL reportedly arranged for some accommodation to be made in the Kakkanad locality of Kochi for trans individuals (Jayarajan, 2019). However, the problem of commuting wasn't adequately dealt with. Further, the KMRL spokesperson said that they continued to hold talks with the trans workers in order to better understand their concerns. They went on to say that the news articles dramatised their reportage of these stories.

What appears to be clear, however, is that the social costs of the trans individuals' gender identity and their needs and other facets of their life weren't adequately considered when drafting the policies for the initiative and its implementation. The harsh repercussions of the same were faced by the workers themselves.

These narratives and reports aid in contextualising the objectives of this study, its findings, and the implications of work experiences on the trans workforce.

The Transgender Identity in the Indian Context

‘Transgender’ is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth and includes trans men and trans women though it may also include people who are non-binary or genderqueer (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD], 2007). In India, though the number of transgender individuals was estimated to be 487,000 according to the 2011 census, they were their gender identification was not acknowledged until very recently (“Transgender in India”, 2011). They lacked legal recognition until 2014, and were inhabitants of a zone where official identification is absent, which naturally had devastating and far-reaching consequences for the community in sociocultural, economic and political spheres (M.K., 2017).

As defined in the Godrej India Culture Lab’s *Manifesto for Trans Inclusion in the Indian Workplace*, an individual’s gender identity is their “internal, deeply held sense of their gender,” which for transgender people “does not match the sex they were assigned at birth” (Nambiar & Shahani, 2018). While gender identity isn’t always visible, gender expression is the external manifestations of gender “expressed through a person’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice, and/ or body characteristics” (Nambiar & Shahani, 2018).

The 2014 case of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs Union of India and Others was game-changing for the transgender community as it mandated that a trans person be allowed to self-identify as the gender of their choice and also stated that sex reassignment surgery (SRS) was not a prerequisite for identifying as trans (Nambiar & Shahani, 2018). Trans individuals were to be provided reservations for work and in educational institutions as they were to be considered as a socially and economically backward class (Nambiar & Shahani, 2018). In 2019, the Parliament of India drafted the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act after the feedback and criticisms that the 2018 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill received. The 2018 Bill and the 2019 Act were preceded by a 2016 Bill. The 2019 Act came into force on 10 January 2020. However, an important point to note is that the 2019 Act, though modified, did not take into consideration all the criticisms against the previous versions of the bill, and was met with widespread protest and further criticism. The primary problem with the 2019 Act was that it transgressed the 2014 NALSA judgement which lays down the right to self-determination of one’s gender identity. According to the 2019 Act, a transgender person needs to have undergone a gender affirmation surgery to receive a certificate from a screening committee and the District Magistrate legally recognising their gender identity (TNM Staff, 2019). The Act was also criticised for deeming the transgender person as inferior to those who are cisgender on the basis of the differences in certain protections and rights granted to transgender people. For example, the maximum sentence of punishment for those charged with sexual assault of a transgender person is 2 years while the minimum sentence for sexual assault of a cisgender woman is 10 years. The Kerala State Transgender Policy, on the other hand, has been widely lauded for not including gender affirmation surgery as a prerequisite to gaining a certificate. In addition to this, the policy also mentions that it will support any steps for affirmative action to ensure access to

education, health and public appointments. According to the coordinator of the Kerala-wing of Sangama, a non-governmental organisation for sexual minorities in India which was instrumental in the framing of the state's transgender policy, the policy was drawn up after a workshop with representatives of the transgender community (Sethuraman, 2015). However, there are issues relating to ensuring proper implementation, reviewal and revision in accordance with the needs of the transgender population. In 2021, the amicus curiae appointed by the Kerala High Court submitted a report stating that the state government had failed in properly implementing its transgender policy, arguing that it had "a lackadaisical attitude" towards ensuring that the measures specified in the policy are carried out (Oommen, 2021). It is against this backdrop that transgender people in the state and around the nation have had to navigate their diverse experiences and struggles both surrounding and beyond their gender identity.

In the Global South, the intersections of gender and class, and in the case of India, predominantly caste, take place beneath the landscape of power structures that are partly a product of the region's violent colonial legacy. The transgender identity is thus interwoven within the distinct, different social hierarchies that historical circumstances engender. This is a crucial factor for policymakers to remember when drafting policies aimed at aiding marginalised communities because it is key to ensuring that the numerous layers that make up the lived realities of these individuals are not forgotten or modified and that their contributions to the struggles faced by the community are not minimised. The Kerala State TG Policy, in this case, was drafted on the basis of state-wide needs assessment of 4,000 transgender people when the total population of transgender people in the state was estimated to be 25,000 in 2015 (Orinam, 2015). The real numbers for the same is possibly much higher than this, however, due to the fact that many people may not be open about their identities and/or be documented or legally certified just as yet.

While the occupational experiences and aspirations of transgender individuals specifically employed by the Kochi Metro Rail Limited, Kochi, is an area of study that has not been methodically explored and investigated thus far, there exist numerous studies that examine one or more of the factors of interest relevant to the field of study.

Kurian and Manoj (2021) studied the impact of welfare schemes in Kerala on transgender people, including the Kochi Metro Rail initiative in their paper, "Transgenders in the mainstream: Welfare schemes in Kerala -Kochi Metro Rail Project, education programme, health clinics, and old-age pension." The authors conducted a critical exploration into the efficacy and reach of the welfare schemes for transgender persons in Kerala over the past decade. Though the authors look at the effects of these schemes, including that of the KMRL, on transgender people, it does so from the perspective of policy-making and survey data rather than from personal experiences arrived upon through interviews, questionnaires and other methods that allow for articulation of lived experiences, which is what this study aims to do.

In an article titled, “‘I am not a hijra’: Class, respectability, and the emergence of the ‘new’ transgender woman in India,” Liz Mount (2020) explores the intricacies of transgender women’s incorporation into social hierarchies in India, and the juxtaposition and limitation of their gender identities to that of *hijras* in India. Mount conducted an ethnographic study in a metropolitan Indian city, Bangalore, over the course of 9 months, that involved trans women, NGO workers and activists, as well as textual analysis based on representation in media to uncover their own narration of the struggles and the opportunities they receive. It looks at the middle-class status occupied by these individuals and how their class location pushes forward their desire for an identity separate from that of hijras in India. Mount’s paper specifically highlights trans women’s desire for upward social and economic mobility through employment in the organised sector, driven by the hope of achieving similar social status as cisgender women who have been able to achieve the same. The paper also highlights how the media portrays news regarding trans women gaining employment and other opportunities as “optimistic firsts,” which suggest that they will pave the way for more progress (Mount, 2020). However, the author argues that this is seldom the case.

Aneesh M. S. (2017) conducted a study on the social exclusion of physically disabled transgender people in Kerala with the aim of understanding the areas in which they face discrimination. By identifying 10 transgender individuals with disabilities across Kerala, the researcher conducted telephonic interviews. The results revealed that the primary areas of discrimination lie in health, education and professional/occupational spheres. The researcher employs a similar method of conducting interviews and reaching out to respondents as this study does, but differs in aim, and the target population is a different subset of the transgender community in Kerala.

In 2019, Tanya Kumar and Meena Lekha , conducted a study titled “Employment of transgenders in the Indian workforce” which aimed at getting insight into the expectations, aspirations and hardships of those belonging to the transgender community in collaboration with the Chuwal Gram Vikas Trust. The study looks at how support from governmental institutions, policy makers and “knowledge transfers” can help better their lives (Kumar & Lekha, 2019). The authors compiled their findings to create a brochure with strategies for better inclusion into the workforce, skill upgradation centres, existing inclusive workspaces and resources for those seeking employment amidst other aspects. This study focused on the experiences of transgender people in Ahmedabad. While Kumar and Lekha’s study does look into certain firms that have inclusive policies for those belonging to the trans community, it is also different from this study which focuses purely on a public sector initiative and on a limited number of transgender persons as respondents as this one does.

The job opportunities offered to transgender individuals by KMRL are of high significance due to the alarming levels of discrimination and oppression faced by the community. This was underpinned by the results of the 2014 state-wide survey of transgender persons measuring various aspects of capabilities, services, opportunities and rights available to them. It revealed that only 11.6% of transgender individuals in Kerala had regular, stable employment and 54% of them had monthly incomes that amounted to less than Rs. 5,000 (Government of Kerala: Social Justice Department, 2015). However, the most alarming statistic was that all the respondents had been denied a job due to their gender identity and expression. Other concerning results included dropping out of high school, high levels of social stigmatisation and familial ostracism, mistreatment, violence and/or sexual harassment of transgender individuals at the hands of partners and police. These factors compound to make vulnerable and threaten an already marginalised community of individuals and has adverse effects on various aspects of their lives, such as social mobility and occupational aspirations.

Work Experiences and Occupational Aspirations

An important aspect of Mount's paper focuses on the interaction of the discourses of employment, empowerment and respectability. Mount points out that in post-independent India, the middle-class, educated Indian cisgender woman was encouraged to join the workforce in order to push forward the development of both the nation and their empowerment, and having the choice to participate in some form of paid employment, then, became associated with class and respectability (Mount, 2020). Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase (2008) write that espousing "a desire for (cisgender) women to be publicly visible and have relative freedom to pursue careers" is a notable marker of middle-class identity (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase, 2008, p. 82). When a transgender woman desires formal office employment, Mount asserts that it encompasses desires for both upward mobility and to "fulfill middle-class standards of womanhood," wherein "womanhood" refers to the experience of being a cisgender woman (Mount, 2020, p. 626). However, when it comes to employment, employability and the types of jobs made available to cisgender women and gender-nonconforming people in India, specifically transgender women, there is a "mandate of respectability" that is expected to underline their actions and nature of participation in the workforce, which in turn could cause or prevent stigmatisation and ostracisation (Mount, 2020, p. 626). Transgender people and hijras in India are often said to work in "undesirable forms of employment," such as sex work and soliciting money, because of the highly stigmatised nature of these jobs, clearly not passing the "mandate of respectability" referred to by Mount (2020, p. 636). Further, the notion of respectability affects the individual's notion of their own dignity, as respondents of Mount's study echoed.

Occupational aspirations (sometimes referred to as occupational interests or professional goals) are usually understood as an individual's set of preferences and desires regarding their future occupational roles and activities (Lent et al., 2013). Researcher Caroline Hart, in her paper

“How do aspirations matter?,” says that aspirations are “future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and they are indicative of an individual or group’s commitments towards a particular trajectory or end point” and that these aspirations are multifaceted, varying in terms of time periods, evolving over the course of one’s life (Hart, 2016, p. 326). She argues that for “full human development,” aspirations need to be viewed multidimensionally in conjunction with the myriad combinations of influences that precede and shape aspirations and their relationship to capabilities and functioning (Hart, 2016). As Arjun Appadurai says, “Aspirations are never simply individual. They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of life” (as quoted in Hart, 2016, p. 325). Studying occupational aspirations for marginalised communities in the context of their inclusion into public sector employment opportunities (such as with the KMRL) and in the backdrop of the transgender policy of the State of Kerala allows for a more holistic and multidimensional understanding of the same. All the transgender people interviewed in this study, all of them trans women, come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and their individual experiences are largely defined by the interplay of various intersectional factors including, but not limited to, gender identity, degrees of social inclusion, economic opportunities and status, inclusion within public sector schemes, and aspirations of co-workers and peers. It is in this context that policies that aim to empower marginalised communities through employment opportunities need to understand the dimensions of the identity of those belonging to these groups and the interaction of differences in gender, class, caste, religion and regions. Appadurai (2004) also speaks of the capacity to aspire, which he argues is “not evenly distributed in any society.” He goes on to describe it as “a sort of meta capacity,” where those who are socioeconomically better off have a better-developed capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004).

In addition to this conception of aspirations, Caroline Hart notes that in their numerous dimensions, aspirations can differ along the lines of whether they are known and expressed or latent and unarticulated or evolving. She writes that aspirations may be constrained or set in accordance with what the individual believes they are capable of doing, or conversely, they might be set ambitiously so that the individual can strive for better ways of realising it (Hart, 2016). Her article also points out that being able to “anticipate the future” while also being capable of doing the things one dreams of doing is rooted in oppressive and unequal societal power relations (Hart, 2016). In this case, the degree of social mobility that is perceived and experienced is highly influential as well. When looking at the inclusion of transgender people into the corporate and state workforce, Emmanuel David, in his article about trans visibility and capitalism in private enterprises, highlights the modern phenomena of “trans production,” understood as the counterpart of trans consumption, wherein there is an emergence of “patterned location of trans-specific labour power and all-trans groups of workers in the chains of material and cultural production” (David, 2017, p. 28). David’s critique of trans production within these employment schemes becomes especially relevant when exploring how trans occupational aspirations are shaped and influenced by dire economic circumstances and oppressive social

structures. His study explores trans economic empowerment strategies which largely make use of independent contractors, global shifts in restructuring of work and trans class aspirations to confront issues of trans underemployment. He critiques these as they reinforce the perilous working conditions and economic insecurities of the community.

Research Question and Objectives of the Study

Having understood the KMRL and Kudumbashree initiative for trans-inclusion in the workforce, Kerala's Transgender Policy, the transgender identity in India and the concept of occupational aspirations, this exploratory study aims to answer the following research question: what are the occupational aspirations of transgender individuals who are employed by the Kudumbashree FMC in the various departments of the Kochi Metro Rail Limited, Kerala? The study, being qualitative in nature, makes use of interviews as its main research method and attempts to fulfil the objectives of the study by doing a case-by-case analysis. The sample population being focused on is transgender persons who have taken up jobs in the Kochi metro since its inception in 2017 or have been hired in the following years, and continue to be employed by the KMRL.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (a) to understand the nature of the individuals' occupational experiences and aspirations;
- (b) to identify the various factors, if any, that have affected or changed, by promoting or inhibiting these aspirations;
- (c) to examine the effects of the employment of transgender individuals within the social inclusion policy of public sector initiatives such as the KMRL (in the backdrop of Kerala's State Transgender Policy) on the changes or growth in their aspirations;
- (d) to explore the working conditions and experiences of workers employed in the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative.

Through the employment of the interview method the author aims to gain insight into the lived realities of these individuals and understand the factors affecting their professional aspirations from the perspective of the resultant articulated narratives.

Further, the themes derived are understood in conjunction with findings of existing literature ranging from newspaper reports, journal articles and studies conducted. The paper also aims to explore the nature in which the capacity to aspire (in terms of one's professional goals) is influenced by the institutions and policies that seek to include people from marginalised communities (without considering the multifaceted nature of their identity). It looks into future

scope for similar studies and also the manner in which policies can be implemented by better understanding the social costs that accompany an individual's identity, especially when they belong to a historically oppressed community.

Significance

The question of occupational experiences within this specific case becomes a pertinent perspective to investigate not only due to the high levels of media traction that this project gained as one of the first public sector initiatives to include such a policy, but also to understand the impact of such an initiative on the lives and aspirations of the individuals it concerns. In the pursuit of creating opportunities and providing for social inclusion, personal and professional goals and aspirations of those belonging to minority communities are often overlooked and, in some cases, minimised due to the aforementioned issues of intersectional marginalisation and unidimensional considerations of their lives.

This, when coupled with the various growing trans economic empowerment policies that are often impeccable on paper but not effectively implemented, deeply impacts trans people's class aspirations and restructuring of work opportunities. Amidst the concerns of representation and inclusion, opportunities and overcoming societal barriers, individual aspirations and their goals for a better life (which are intrinsically tied to improving their economic and occupational status) take a back seat. With growing dialogue and acceptance surrounding gender identities and expression and understanding the cultural shift required to properly aid such individuals, it is reductive to understand their personalities, goals and aspirations as being one-dimensional or less important in comparison to those of traditionally accepted gender identities and sexual orientations.

As the statistics from Kerala's state survey on transgender persons revealed, areas of education, employment, social inclusion and trust (or the lack thereof) in legal systems and the police have hindered these individuals' personal development. The survey found that 89% had experienced some form of harassment at their worksites.

Thus, this study aims to understand the manner in which their gender identity interplays with their work experience and, consequently, social mobility and aspirations. The study recognises that there are a number of trans women who have left their jobs since being hired in 2017 by the KMRL, which is one of its limitations thus the factors that lead to their changing aspirations in conjunction with their changing circumstances did not have a chance to be identified.

Methodology

Due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of the study, interviews are employed as the research method to obtain the required primary data. The sample consists of a niche and smaller population (relative to the transgender individuals' cisgender male and female counterparts working at KMRL) which allows for a more in-depth, case-by-case approach, and an extensive understanding of the workers' occupational aspirations and factors that interact with it.

Methods/ Tools for Data Collection

In order to answer the research question and satisfy the objectives of the study, a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' lived realities, socioeconomic background and the factors that influence their occupational aspirations and cognizance of the same is essential. To achieve the same, the researcher utilised the qualitative method of interviews. These were semi-structured, one-on-one, telephonic interviews conducted by the researcher in the respondents' preferred language, Malayalam.

The data collected from the interviews have been supplemented with secondary data obtained from relevant literature such as official documents regarding Kerala's transgender policy and the Kudumbashree-led KMRL scheme, newspaper articles, journals, and the like.

Due to the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant regulations, digital consent forms were distributed to the respondents, which contained all the necessary details of the study such as its aims and objectives, the nature of the questions that would be asked, and the researcher's contact details. Furthermore, respondents were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and the right to withdraw at any time. The form explicitly sought consent for recording interviews, while guaranteeing anonymity and addressing concerns surrounding the usage of personal data.

The semi-structured questions asked in the interviews were open-ended. They were framed and intended to broadly gather information regarding biographical information of the respondents, their role at KMRL, the nature of their work day and responsibilities carried out, previous jobs, their occupational aspirations over time (from adolescence to the present), factors affecting their professional and personal life that have influenced their career choices, and their journey in terms of their transgender identity.

The results obtained from the interviews and its analysis allowed the researcher to form a strong central argument, identifying the relevant themes and sub-themes for the study. Each of the interviews conducted with all five respondents were highly detailed and comprehensive, successfully answering all the questions and were approximately 35 minutes in length on average. When supplemented with the gathered literature, the conclusions that were able to be drawn were more holistic and structured, meeting all the objectives of the study.

Sampling

The selection of the respondents was done through convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods.

Since there are only 13 trans persons who continued working for the KMRL during the time period in which the study was conducted (2021 to 2022), the target population is small. Additionally, all the employees of the KMRL live within the city of Kochi, Kerala.

The selection of these methods was done on the basis of the small sample size and limited geographical regions covered in this study. Using this sampling method, the researcher was able to contact one respondent from the target population, that is, transgender individuals employed by the KMRL, and consequently depended on chain referrals in order to contact all the respondents and complete the data collection process.

The total sample size of this study is 5 transgender people, all of whom are trans women and are currently employed by the Kochi Metro Rail Limited. The sample involves both trans women who have or are currently undergoing hormone therapy to make their gender transition and those who have not. The respondents are between 39 and 52 years of age.

Procedure and Analysis

After the respondents were contacted and briefed about the aim of the study, their consent was obtained. The participants were asked whether they would like to have their identity stated or to remain anonymous in the study. The interviews began with a description of the outline of the themes being explored followed by a set of open-ended questions. The audio-recording of the interview, conducted in Malayalam, was translated and transcribed and was subsequently coded according to the common themes, distinct details about factors influencing the respondents' lives and as a result, their occupational aspirations, and any information that is relevant to the formation of the central argument.

Referring to the recordings and the coding sheets, the data collected was summarised and divided thematically, broad common factors were identified across cases, and the narrative was built. The resultant organised information was analysed and utilised to build a central argument, answering the research question and its objectives.

The secondary data, that is, the relevant literature, has been used to substantiate and contextualise the experiences of the respondents. This adds both a comprehensive theoretical background and an understanding of the intersectionalities that exist within the broader

sociopolitical milieu, considering facets such as geographical location, gender and sexual identity, socioeconomic status and education.

Limitations of the Method

The major limitations of this study lie in the sample population, number of respondents and the nature of the interviews.

The procedure of conducting interviews through an audio call on the mobile phone was the most appropriate manner of collecting data given the constraints caused by COVID-19 regulations (limiting the ability to be physically present) and due to the fact that video calls required a large amount of mobile data for the respondents and a potential discomfort of being visible on camera.

However, the limitation that arose due to the characteristics of the telephonic interview was that non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, were not visible to the researcher. These cues usually add depth to the participants' responses and/or give the researcher vital feedback (that isn't explicitly said) to gauge the progress of the interview, emotions and level of comfort of the respondents.

The sample population considered for this study was defined by the scope of the research question (which focused on the experiences and occupational aspirations of the trans workers *currently* employed within the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative). Thus, the study does not include the stories of these individuals who chose to or were forced out of their job in the metro due to a variety of reasons such as lack of accommodation, societal pressure and stigma, and the low wages preventing them from meeting their monthly expenses and more. Due to little to no accessibility and means to contact those workers who have left their jobs at KMRL, the perspective is limited to those who have managed to continue working at the Kochi Metro by overcoming the multiple barriers posed by the job in itself. The occupational aspirations of those who have left, the factors influencing the same and their experiences are not covered.

The next limitation was that the study, which initially planned to include 6 interviews, was restricted to the small sample size of 5 respondents, given that the original number of employees stood at 23. The sixth respondent had to withdraw their participation due to a family emergency. Though 5 respondents make up close to 40% of the sample population in question, the limitation lies in the fact that the pool of respondents has been reduced.

Summary of Interviews

This section of the study focuses on summarising the results of the interviews with the 5 respondents and analysing the same by drawing inferences and identifying recurring themes and

exceptional experiences. This section also consists of a close inspection and comprehension of the common and/or unique factors that are listed after listening to the respondents' stories, the manner in which these factors influence their job satisfaction at the KMRL, their priorities and needs at their respective stages of life and, consequently, their occupational aspirations.

The 5 interviews that were conducted are summarised below. The respondents have been given aliases in order to protect their identity; all the other details obtained from the interviews remain unchanged and are written as they were expressed.

No.	Name of the Respondent	Age	Years Active in KMRL	Role in KMRL	Originally From
1.	Ananya	52	2017-Present	Ticketing	Ernakulam, Kerala
2.	Kumari	42	2017-Present	Ticketing	Ernakulam, Kerala
3.	Thrisha	39	2017-Present	Housekeeping	Ernakulam, Kerala
4.	Manju	40	2017-Present	Housekeeping	Ernakulam, Kerala
5.	Leena	49	2017-Present	Housekeeping	Idukki, Kerala

The 5 respondents were aged between 39 and 52 and have all been a part of the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative since the first intake of Kudumbashree FMC employees for the KMRL project in 2017. Their roles at the various stations of the Kochi metro lie in the areas of ticketing, housekeeping and customer service. Of the 5, 4 of the respondents were born in and settled in Kochi before getting their job, whereas one of them shifted to Kochi after securing the job. The importance given to the location and the issues that come along with an urban area like Kochi will be discussed later on in this section.

Familial Support and Financial Situation

One major aspect that was explored in all the interviews was the respondents' relationship with their families and their resultant experiences with familial and societal support.

In the case of Ananya (52), she reported having had little to no support from her family throughout her life and has hence had to work multiple jobs up until the opportunity at KMRL to provide for herself. Since she is in her early fifties at the moment and has managed to save up enough money to live independently, she believes that it has allowed her to make financial decisions for herself and has given her enough financial and personal security to make use of the scheme at KMRL. She lived in Saudi Arabia for 5 years prior to joining the Kochi Metro, where she worked as a tailor, a passion-turned-profession that allowed her to support herself financially. After returning, she found herself in a conflict with her family which was largely due to her gender identity. She then bought a house in a different locality in Kochi and has since lived independently, leaning on other trans people and groups in and around the city for support and friendship.

Thrisha (39) said that she too has not been given much support from her family in terms of her identity or finances. Her previous jobs were neither high paying nor secure (in terms of duration and long-term guarantees), which resulted in her being unable to save up enough money to provide for herself and her family. As she is continuing to live with her parents, her financial goals are driven by the need to fulfil the basic needs of the household. Thrisha's family still refers to her by the name given to her at birth (not the name she identifies with), and she still presents in traditionally masculine ways whilst at home.

Leena (49) too experienced little to no familial support and described instances of being shamed and having her gender identity disregarded throughout her childhood and adolescence. She also spoke of growing up as an outsider, questioning her own identity, feeling extremely isolated and being rejected by her own family. Due to the aforementioned situation with her family and the increasing societal ostracism she felt back at home, Leena left her family when she was 25 years of age and has never returned. She says that she never had anybody to help her understand what her dreams were, and the job roles she applied for were not chosen based on interest but on ensuring that she could earn money to finance her housing and food.

For Manju (40), things were not too different either. Her father passed away when she was young, leaving her to look after her ailing mother. Her brothers and sisters have been unsupportive of her gender identity and they have not had an amicable relationship. After her mother passed away in 2010, Manju was to inherit their house, which she describes as very small to begin with, but due to feuds in her family and the fact that she had not received her transgender identity card as yet, she decided to move out of her home and live with roommates, shifting between houses ever since. She has taken up multiple professions to provide for herself and has paid little attention to her dreams and hopes.

In contradiction to the others interviewed for the study, Kumari (42) has received high levels of support from her family and was financially stable before her intake into the position at KMRL. Kumari said that the support she received was not just limited to her immediate family, and her relatives from both her paternal and maternal sides were extremely supportive. Her father helped her meet the expenses of her transitioning treatments.

The respondents each had varying levels of support from and relationships with their families, which, to an extent, determined their financial stability and their financial goals in the present. It is important to note that their financial status throughout their childhood was reported to be low; they faced considerable hardships while trying to make ends meet. It also shaped the way in which they interacted with their own identity and security. Their current financial status and financial goals are highly interlinked with their ties with their families and this, in turn, is a huge determinant of their occupational aspirations.

Previous Employment Experiences

Another crucial and shared aspect of the stories shared by all the respondents is that of having worked multiple jobs previously, often simultaneously. They also described periods of isolation due to the lack of a community, emotional support and social and professional spaces that were gender-affirming and inclusive.

Other than Ananya, who worked as a tailor for over 20 years both in her hometown and when she shifted temporarily to Saudi Arabia, Kumari, Thrisha, Manju and Leena all worked multiple jobs before joining the Kudumbashree FMC workforce for the KMRL project. Most of these roles were given to them on the basis of their level of education and skill, and ranged from working in a call centre to being a salesperson, working in labs and nursing homes. Their sole motivation was to earn enough money to support themselves and, in the cases of a few respondents, their families as well. The lack of job security was a major factor in most of these roles, and the constant shifting of roles due to dissatisfaction with their personal and professional lives led to most of the respondents facing periods of unemployment and instability. These experiences were also isolating due to the lack of a community and interactions with others who were influenced by prejudiced and stigmatised perspectives of the trans community. During these periods, the only criterion for occupations they aspired for was one where they would be able to earn enough to make ends meet and where their employers allowed them to work “despite their gender identity.” In most of these workplaces, the respondents (who are all trans women) either presented in conventionally masculine clothing, contributing to feelings of gender dysphoria, or felt like they were hired despite their gender.

Work Experience at the Kochi Metro

As mentioned before, all five respondents began working in the Kochi Metro in 2017; they were all a part of the first intake of women for the Kudumbashree FMC. The selection process consisted of a round of interviews and an assessment of previous educational qualifications amongst other things. Most of the respondents found out about the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative through WhatsApp forwards, word-of-mouth and newspaper announcements about the same. Following their selection, they were given a few weeks of training at Rajagiri College in Kochi to prepare them for their roles. As a trans person, to be able to apply for this job, each respondent needed to have a transgender identity card issued by the government.

When asked to narrate their experiences working at the Kochi Metro, all five respondents spoke about two characteristics of their jobs that stood out to them and were of utmost importance. The first is the gender-affirming and inclusive nature of the initiative. All five respondents have had experiences of being ostracised and discriminated against in their previous workplaces due to their gender identity and expression. More importantly, four out of five respondents said that they had been discriminated against by their own families. Their experiences with social exclusion had detrimental effects on their mental health, led to increased gender dysmorphia and also led to them lowering their standards of safety, stability and security in order to get a job. In her interview, Ananya recounted that in Kochi, she knew of a group of trans women who had been imprisoned and publicly shamed for resorting to sex work to meet their financial needs. She said that when they were asked why they chose to do the same, they responded by saying that if they were given the opportunity to do other forms of work, they would not be forced to engage in sex work. Leena, Manju, Kumari, Ananya and Thrisha all maintain that they would not want to forego the opportunity to be hired in a programme such as the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative wherein, for the first time in their lives, their gender identity is publicly affirmed and visible without shame. They are chosen to work in this position not in spite of their gender or by disregarding it, but rather, because of it.

The second crucial factor is the prestige and respect associated with working in a widely recognised, public sector initiative. The work comes with the benefits that most jobs within the formal sector possess, including, but not limited to, security and stability. Kumari said that she felt a great sense of pride in having a job that allowed her to “stand on her own two feet,” as she believes that her status is largely dictated by a steady job and the capability of earning a monthly wage. Leena says that she does not want to leave this job and look elsewhere due to the guarantee of the two factors discussed above.

However, when it comes to the drawbacks of this initiative and the way it affects the occupational aspirations of the respondents, factors such as wages, the urban setting of Kochi and resultant problems of rent and commute, and issues within KMRL and the Kudumbashree FMC itself are brought to the forefront.

The major drawback that poses a challenge to all five respondents is that the salary is not enough to sustain their needs. All of them said that the salary they were receiving, which ranges from rupees 9,000 to 15,000 per month, was not enough for them to comfortably improve their financial status and often meet their monthly expenses. Thrisha, specifically, expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with working at KMRL primarily due to her low income. Not dissimilar to the other respondents, Thrisha's financial situation is dire, and since she must provide for her parents, she did report that her dissatisfaction with the wage level has pushed her to consider looking for another job in the future. The high levels of dissatisfaction are also compounded by the inability to pay for the treatment for her transition in the form of hormone pills, which she says often takes a backseat after household expenses are met. However, due to the precariousness of job-related opportunities and security for her (from past experiences) and due to the stability and safety factors that this job assures her, she is unwilling to shift jobs at the moment and has not considered it any further. Another vital aspect that was brought up by Ananya was the importance of the women's financial stability before they joined the job. This was particularly important for those who did not reside in Kochi and would, therefore, need accommodation when moving to the city. This is due to the fact that trans individuals face high levels of discrimination and stigmatisation in different spheres, and the lens through which society regards them has often rendered them homeless and exploited at the hands of tenants, landlords and brokers. Ananya reported that of the 23 trans women who had initially joined the workforce at the Kochi Metro, many had to leave their positions due to the lack of accessibility to cheap, safe and clean housing for trans women in Kochi and they not being able to finance their other personal and familial needs. A couple of instances of harassment and discrimination during the initial few months of their employment at the hands of the KMRL staff, managing directors and some of the passengers was described by Manju and were further supported by newspaper reports claiming the same (M.K., 2017; Jayarajan, 2019). However, she says that with time this has lessened, and now there exists a good camaraderie among all the employees. Other respondents maintain that there exists an air of discomfort when communicating with some of the managing staff and other KMRL employees. They chalk this down to the fact that they have not been sensitised or educated about the realities of the trans workers' identity and lived realities. One respondent also mentioned that they often felt like they were "put on display" when important guests were brought to view the functioning of the Kochi Metro, resulting in them feeling like their inclusion could potentially be tokenistic.

These problems were compounded by the fact that their salaries were not adequate for them to meet their monthly rental payments while also managing other expenses such as food, water, electricity and medical needs (including, but not limited to, hormone therapy). In this manner, the location of their work at KMRL and the distance of the same from their homes in Kochi was a determinant of how long they would be able to continue their job at the metro and how they would be able to allocate their expenses, which in turn influences their goals and aspirations. It also provided a glimpse into the challenges faced by the trans women employed under this

scheme at the KMRL as it revealed the aspects of their transition to this job that was unaccounted for within the policies and schemes framed for the purpose of their employment. When these factors threaten their safety, security and their identity, it is likely to impede their aspirations and shift the focus to fulfilling more basic needs (which are usually guaranteed for those who are cisgender and have better financial stability).

Though they have complained to the management and have had multiple discussions regarding the same, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of shifts they were working, resulting in insecurity of income for those months. They were only able to work between 18 and 24 shifts a month; each shift was 8 hours long, and they had a maximum of one shift a day. This implies that there were days of the month when they do not work at all and cannot earn for those days.

Manju also reported that their salary does not reach them directly from the KMRL since it goes through the Kudumbashree FMC first. She suspects that this is the reason that their salaries are often lower than they expect. Interestingly, it was found that their meagre salary was not a strong factor in the determination of their desire to change their occupation, that is, their aspirations were tied to other features of their daily lives and experience at KMRL.

Occupational Aspirations and Mobility within the KMRL – *Kudumbashree Initiative*

When asked about their ambitions and aspirations during their childhood and early adulthood, the respondents provided a variety of responses. Thrisha said that she had no particular dreams as a child but was keen on becoming a teacher if she could have the opportunity to. In Leena's interview, she said that throughout her childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, due to the discrimination and exclusion she faced in her neighbourhood and from her family, she was depressed and often had suicidal thoughts. She said that there was nobody in her life to provide her guidance with respect to the kinds of dreams she could dream or aspire to have. However, like Thrisha, she too expressed her desire during her teenage years to become a teacher. Ananya was always inclined towards fashion and began a tailoring job at a young age to help her provide for herself and to meet expenses. She continued her job as a tailor until she joined the Kudumbashree FMC. She continues to pursue tailoring on the side as a way to earn extra money and to sustain her passion. Kumari expressed her desire to become a doctor during her childhood. However, this passion quickly changed as she did not get a chance to complete medical school and began to work multiple jobs in her early adulthood wherein she experienced high levels of discrimination and solitude. Manju expressed her passion for dance which began in middle school. She said that her dance classes became a safe haven for her as her teachers treated her just like all the other students and allowed her to explore various types of dance. She expressed her desire to continue learning dance, but only in the capacity of a hobby. She is waiting for a few of her friends to return to Kochi to begin dance practice again.

An important aspect of the nature of the trans workers' jobs at the KMRL is that it is based on the Kudumbashree FMC considering KMRL as a contractor for providing their services, which is dependent upon the contract being renewed every three to five years. While this is not a major risk factor, a consequence of the same is that the scope for job mobility within the Kudumbashree FMC and the Kochi Metro does not exist. Since they cannot aspire for higher positions within their place of work, it limits their capacity to expand their working potential and, as a result, their financial status as well.

All 5 of the respondents expressed no concrete plan to move out of their current jobs at KMRL despite dissatisfaction with regards to the low wages, difficulties with accommodation and commute in a city such as Kochi, and the challenges that come along with their trans identity. Though it must be noted that one of the respondents had considered leaving but decided not to since the cost of such a move would be high for her.

The small community of transgender women within the Kochi metro, which was closely supported by other cisgender women who are part of the metro service, has been a motivating factor in the tran workers continuing the job and believing that they can carry forward their work efficaciously. The most important takeaway from the interviews is that due to the aforementioned challenges faced by the trans community at large, there is a sense of responsibility and duty towards the community that was expressed. Both Kumari and Ananya mentioned in their interviews that they felt they did not want to look beyond this job at the moment due to the fact that it was a huge opportunity for them personally and for the trans community at large, and given that they resided in Kochi (and did not face the issue of relocation like the others did). Furthermore, Thrisha mentioned that even if she was unsatisfied with the job it was the “best option” she had at the moment. It was seen that while their occupational aspirations have transformed considerably through the years (through their teenage years and early adulthood until the present), it has not changed or moved beyond the KMRL in recent years.

Discussion

The results of the interviews revealed that all five respondents have expressed no wish to shift from their current job at the KMRL. Additionally, their occupational aspirations and passions were described with limited belief in their capability and capacity of achieving them. However, two out of the five respondents have expressed their desire to continue working on their passions on the side – something they don't have the opportunity to monetise just yet, as in the case of Manju, or something that allows them to do what they are passionate about while earning on the side, as in the case of Ananya. The lack of opportunity to grow within the positions allotted to them could be another factor that does not allow for them to aspire for more within their current jobs as well. Being part of the Kudumbashree FMC and not directly employed by the KMRL,

and moreover, being given positions on the basis of their education for particular roles in this project, KMRL does not promote much scope for shifting. Further, this is on the basis of KMRL and Kudumbashree renewing their contracts every few years. This perceived immobility within their current jobs has played a major role in determining the nature of their aspirations. The same view was put forward by Caroline Hart, who talks about how aspirations may be limited by or decided upon based on what an individual believes they are capable of, which interacts with their being able to “anticipate the future” (Hart, 2016). In this case, the anticipation of any future capability to move upwards within their current workplace does not exist.

Further, however, this must be viewed in conjunction with Emmanuel David’s critique on “trans production,” to make better sense of how the conditions of the poor within the trans community push them to accept working conditions that limit mobility within the job, that come with high levels of job insecurity and restructure trans people’s class aspirations. David writes that with the employment of trans-inclusive workforces, the tokenism (which was described by one of the respondents) is merely a part of something larger at play: “the institutionalisation of transgender as a category” wherein organisations reconfigure their policies in order to fit in with broader cultural movements (David, 2017, p. 34). He goes on to describe how, by mobilising trans labour power, the labour market within the neoliberal system is able to now create new forms of value drawn from the workers’ marginalised identity. This further exacerbates their condition while appearing to uplift them socially and economically as evidenced by the fact that respondents continue to work at KMRL despite the limitations of their job, including major factors such as insufficient income, lack of upward mobility within the organisation and safety during commute. Looking at Liz Mount’s argument on trans women’s employment also highlights the importance of dignity and respectability of a particular occupation within society, especially for those whose gender identity and class position have previously affected their employability and consequently their scope for social and economic mobility. However, unlike in Mount’s paper, the need for upward mobility by trans women must not be viewed merely as a mechanism to achieve the position that the postcolonial, cisgender Indian woman gains through employment. This is made especially clear when taking into consideration the transgender community’s continued struggle for legal recognition and protections over the past decade, alongside the dearth of employment opportunities and other aspects of their identity. One such salient aspect is that of their class position, as expressed in their interviews. Most of them describe themselves as being born into families of low economic status and have struggled to improve their financial position either individually or with their families over the course of their lives. While some respondents are able to manage monthly expenses with the help of their families, others struggle due to lack of familial support and any social capital. The sociopolitical and historical contexts of the evolving nature of the trans identity in India pushes trans women to grab any opportunity that allows them a certain status and awards them the dignity that they were deprived of thus far, as expressed by many of the respondents. In this manner, they recognise the differences of their struggle and the status given to certain occupations within the largely heteropatriarchal capitalist society, which in

turn could be a larger motivator to continue working at KMRL while feeling like they are representatives of their community, with the aim of drawing attention to not only their strife thus far, but also their capabilities.

Arjun Appadurai's ideas on the "capacity to aspire" explains that the capacity to aspire is often reserved for the rich, and since aspirations are formed in the "thick of life" and rarely ever in silos, these are ways in which one's identity and class influence their ability to aspire. When compounded by the intersectional nature of the lives of the poor, in this case, the trans workers who struggle to make ends meet, their goals are limited to their financial needs and living expenses and to sustain a job that affirms and protects their gender identity. The most prominent take away from the respondents' narration of their experiences and aspirations (or lack thereof) is that there exists no other opportunity, in both the public and private sphere, that provides them with equal or greater economic gains without an even more expensive social cost.

The Kerala state's TG survey revealed the perilous state of transgender individuals' safety and employment opportunities: only 11.6% of trans individuals had stable employment, 54% of them had monthly incomes of less than Rs. 5,000, and 100% of them had been previously denied jobs solely on the basis of their gender identity and expression (Government of Kerala: Social Justice Department, 2015). These factors interact with the individual ability to aspire. The need for more careful policy-framing and implementation, one that is driven by those who belong to the marginalised community it is aimed to benefit, is of utmost importance. This is further seen especially in the context of KMRL wherein the public and private sectors come together to provide this opportunity for transgender individuals through an independent contractor while not taking into consideration certain prerequisites and exceptional circumstances of those in the community to make the most of the opportunities as exemplified by the case of those currently employed in KMRL. Further, even when the state and private organisations share the common goal of the empowerment of transgender people and have well-intentioned policies and schemes planned for the same, such as in the case of the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative, David argues that the mechanisms it uses ultimately bolsters perilous working conditions and economic insecurities in ways that "might also unwittingly contribute to economic imperialism" (David, 2017, p. 31). While these jobs do create opportunities for stable employment, dignity and social and economic mobility, the question of who benefits from trans visibility and their incorporation into corporate schemes and the economy must be posed while also considering the cost of the same on those it aims to uplift. For this reason, policies that have been pushed forward by civil society movements, such as the movement for the Right to Information in India (see Mander & Joshi, 1999) and the Indian Against Corruption Movement of 2011 which led to the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party and the Jan Lokpal Bill or the Citizen's Ombudsman Bill (see Sharma, 2014), must be considered in order to make the state's transgender policy more representative and better tailored to cater to the needs of the community. Therefore, a vital question that must be addressed when policies and schemes are drawn up to empower a particular marginalised

community is the level of involvement of those from the targeted community in its formulation and more importantly, in its implementation and continued reviews (or lack thereof). That is, they must take into account the criticisms and protests raised against the schemes and policies, and revise them in order to better represent the communities in question and cater to their needs.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the occupational aspirations of the transgender workers of the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative. Its objectives included understanding the nature of these aspirations, factors that influence the same and the implications of the involvement in a social inclusion initiative such as in the case of the Kochi Metro. Additionally, it aimed to understand the lived realities and work experiences of the workers. Employing semi-structured, one-on-one telephone interviews as the method of research, the study summarised and analysed the responses from five trans people currently working in the Kochi Metro. The results concluded that none of the five respondents were looking to shift their jobs due to the stability and security provided by their various roles in KMRL. This was largely influenced by the gender-affirming nature of the initiative – a priority for trans women. Only two out of five respondents currently have aspirations to pursue a passion or job on the side, and only 1 of them is actively working towards the same. The drawbacks of the respondents' jobs at the Kochi Metro primarily include meagre salaries that make it difficult for them to manage their finances and the lack of mobility within their roles and positions as part of the Kudumbashree FMC. It was found that the second factor led to them not being able to aspire to grow within their current profession and area of work as well. However, these two factors are overlooked due to the aforementioned security and safety provided by an initiative of this nature, especially since it lies within the formal sector. A major limitation of this study was that the sample population consisted only of those trans women who continue to work with the KMRL and not those who have already left due to a host of reasons. Furthermore, a limited number of respondents (5 out of the 13 who continue to be employed in the Kochi Metro) and the interviews being conducted over the telephone were other limitations.

Viewing both social inclusion schemes and policies and the identity of a community that is a minority in India, through a unidimensional lens, is detrimental at an individual and societal level. It is this surface-level understanding that reduces minority communities to mere statistics and homogenous needs, aspirations and problems. It also does not take into account the intersectionalities that persist in a diverse country such as India which in turn shape the lived experiences of each individual. When public sector initiatives for social inclusion are drafted hand-in-hand with private enterprises, the schemes and policies designed do not reflect factors such as welfare, stigmatisation, and more importantly, do not provide the support required for the benefits and opportunities of this scheme to be enjoyed by those it is meant to cater to. Other times, the policy in itself is inherently lacking because it does the bare minimum. In the case of a

minority community such as for transgenders in India, the bare minimum is not enough to get by. It is crucial that legal and economic measures, often those that involve both public and private institutions such as the KMRL-Kudumbashree initiative, are taken to safeguard rights of minority communities and provide them with opportunities for progress. When institutions take steps towards these measures, it is rightfully met with praise and appreciation and almost immediately made into a model for others to follow. However, the depth of these initiatives, their effective implementation and the consideration for the lived realities of those for whom the scheme is designed will be the true sign of progress.

Finally, the study displayed that a multitude of factors affect the capacity to aspire and the nature of occupational aspirations of marginalised communities, in this case, transgender individuals. Thus, studies that look at the ability to move beyond one's current financial and social status through various occupations and professions, especially through an intersectional lens, will provide for a more holistic picture of the existing social and economic milieu vis-a-vis the trans community.

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The Kremlin Factor in the World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis: An Analysis of Russia's Role in the Yemen War

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Introduction

How to Cite this Paper

Thakker, V. (2022). The Kremlin factor in the world's worst humanitarian crisis: An analysis of Russia's role in the Yemen war. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies, Volume VI*, 156-165.

Since the onset of the war in Yemen and the coup of the Saleh government, Russia has been involved in Yemen with the intention of navigating the complicated dynamics of the conflict. It has been engaging most stakeholders within the conflict, including the Southern Transitional Council (STC), the UN-recognised Hadi government, Iran and the Houthi rebels as well as the Saudi Arabia-led coalition of countries. Over the years, it has also maintained dialogue with Oman in relation to the crisis in Yemen in order to catalyse the process of negotiations in the country.

Since September 2017, Russia maintained a contract with the Hadi government to print and transfer bank notes to Aden, which helped the Yemeni government pay its military forces and deter separatist militias (Ramani, 2018). In 2019, Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vasily Nebenzia, praised UN efforts to end hostilities in Yemen and emphasized Moscow's support for peace negotiations by engaging all warring parties in the conflict (Ramani, 2019). In October of the same year, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov met with a delegation of Houthis led by Mohammed Abdulsalam to discuss potential means of peace settlement in Yemen which produced a positive outcome since the Houthi rebels had refused to attend peace talks in Geneva a few weeks earlier (Ramani, 2019). This talk created further positive outcome between the two parties, since the Houthis

soon declared their preference for Russia to be the ground for future mediation regarding Yemen (Hashmi, 2018). In 2020, as the Southern Transnational Council declared independence and its relations with other stakeholders deteriorated, then-Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov contacted the STC President Aidarous al-Zubaidi, urging him to reinstate negotiations

(Cafiero, 2020). Furthermore, while Russia has committed to recognise the Hadi government and Yemen's legitimate government, it is seen as maintaining amiable relations between all parties, aiming to balance its stance across the conflict. As a result, Russia has played an important role in the conflict over the years, often portraying itself as an important party in the Yemen conflict.

Russia's Interests

In order to further decipher Russia's stance towards the Yemen conflict, it is crucial to understand its motivations regarding the same. As a result, this section highlights Russia's geo-strategic, economic and political interests in the Yemen war and the larger West Asian region.

Geostrategic Interests

Russia's interests in the region are primarily based on the attainment of maximum influence and achievement of its own national interest, particularly by emphasising benefits of Russian strategic presence in the West Asian region. From a geostrategic standpoint, maintaining an influential presence in Yemen is crucial for Russia, given the former's critical location at the intersection of the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, lying in the Southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula (Karasik & Cafiero, 2019). This is because, most major countries such as the United States, China, France and Turkey have military bases near the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden, both holding various important choke points (Russia's return to Yemen, 2020).

By undertaking efforts to ensure peace and stability in Yemen, Russia also aims to achieve its important geopolitical and historical interest in the region. By assisting in negotiations between southern Yemeni separatists and pro-Hadi fighters, Russia has been aiming to ensure stability in South Yemen, an important precondition for it to establish a sphere of influence in the Red Sea (Ramani, 2018). The Red Sea, in particular, is crucial for Russia. This is because it lies at a maritime crossroad and wielding influence in that region would facilitate projection of power not only in West Asia, but also in Africa and the East Mediterranean, thereby expanding scope of activities in the Suez Canal, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean (Borshchevskaya, 2019).

Additionally, Russia's growing presence in the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb strait is of serious concern to US and China, as stability in these waterways is extremely crucial for international trade and shipping. Since Yemen lies at the mouth of the Bab el-Mandeb strait, any deployment of anti-ship missiles in this region would cripple world trade and shipping routes (Harding, 2021).

Through its mediation efforts, Russia has also focused on expanding assistance beyond diplomatic negotiation between warring factions and onto a holistic framework of support, to ensure its own security and influence in the region. Since 2017, for instance, a contract between Russia and Hadi's government was signed through which Russia printed 400 billion Yemeni riyals and transported them to the central bank in Southern Yemen in order to reinstate liquidity in the economy ("Russia sends Yemeni bank notes," 2017). This assisted the Yemeni government in paying salaries to its security forces and military personnel in Southern Yemen, thereby deterring defections to separatist militias and ensuring security in the region (Ramani, 2018).

Expanding the scope of its diplomatic relations between countries neighbouring Yemen, Russia has been able to maintain amiable relations with the Iran-backed Houthis, by emphasising that a comprehensive peace talk in Yemen can be achieved only when Iran is involved in the efforts since it is a legitimate and important stakeholder in the country (Karasik & Cafiero, 2019). Russia's emphasis on Iran here can be seen as an attempt to reduce the sphere of influence of its long-time adversary, the United States in Yemen. Iran-US relations have had an extensive history of being hostile after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Due to Iran's numerous but concealed military developments and advancement of means of asymmetric warfare, Iran's sphere of influence in the West Asian region expanded, while souring relations with the United States which views the development of Iran's nuclear and conventional military forces as a threat to its budding influence in the region (Cordesman, 2020). As a result, with the imposition of multiple embargos, Iran's missile strikes on U.S. military bases and U.S. attacks on Iran's commander Qasem Soleimani, Iran-US relations have only worsened in the past few years (Cordesman, 2020). Making optimum use of Iran's ability to influence non-state actors such as the Houthis, Russia and Iran aim to work towards considerably reducing the influence wielded by the US in Yemen (Cordesman, 2020).

Political Interests

Since the onset of Iran-backed Houthi violence in Yemen and deployment of the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm, Russia has made use of its position in the Security Council to alter or oppose positions that may be in favour of the United States or its allies, thereby attempting to balance its influence in the West Asian region. Through the proposed resolutions in the UNSC, the United States and its allies aimed to consistently curb the political influence of Iran within the region. As a result, the United States aimed to propose resolutions that overtly blamed Iran for the instability in Yemen due to its arms supply to the Houthis, thereby calling for imposition of sanctions implemented through Resolution 2266. In response to the violence and crimes committed by the Houthis against the population of Yemen, the UN Security Council implemented various resolutions condemning these acts and proposing the imposition of arms embargoes and sanctions on the insurgents and countries supporting them through Resolutions

2216, 2456 and 2624, Russia could be seen extending its support through abstention and vetoes of proposed resolutions condemning Iran for its involvement and in some cases, lobbying to moderate the sanctions and condemnations against the Houthi insurgents. By maintaining amiable relations with Iran, an adversary of the United States, Russia is attempting to balance the latter.

In 2015, the UNSC passed resolution 2216 that provided international legitimacy to the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm, while also imposing an arms embargo on the Houthis and a travel ban on its leader (United Nations Security Council, 2015). This resolution prohibited the UN member states from supplying arms to any individuals working in association with leaders such as Ali Abdullah Saleh and Abdullah Yahya Al Hakim. At the time of passing of this resolution, 14 of the Council members voted in favour, while Russia was the only country that abstained, citing that the resolution did not call for all sides to halt fire, thereby providing an extremely ambiguous explanation to the ‘humanitarian pause’ (UNSC Press Release, 2015). Additionally, in light of the rampant supply of arms within Yemen by the United States as part of Operation Decisive Storm, the Russian ambassador criticised the draft resolution by claiming that it was inconsistent and did not incorporate its suggestions, calling for an arms embargo to be comprehensive (The Moscow Times, 2015). Lastly, by condemning the intervention of Gulf countries in Yemen without prior UNSC approval, Russia also questioned the legality of the operation and viewed it as an impediment to peace in the region (Ramani, 2019).

The causes behind Russia abstaining from the resolution while possessing the capacity to veto the same seem to be peculiar in nature and do not explain its interests. However, as analysed through its position and statements regarding the resolution, while Russia did oppose certain aspects of the draft staunchly, a moderate response was required primarily for two reasons. First, an overt negation of the resolution would compromise Russia’s attempt to maintain a presence as an important element in the Yemen War as well as the larger West Asian region (Williams, 2015). Second, as iterated earlier, Russian interests in the region expand beyond Yemen into the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. In order to establish a significant strategic presence in the region, Russia would require substantial support from the Gulf countries and by resolutely opposing the resolution, it would risk compromising its larger regional interests (Williams, 2015).

In 2018, the UNSC proposed a draft resolution (S/2018/156) extending the arms embargo against the Houthis and highlighting that after the 2015 embargo, weapons of Iranian origin were found at the site of Houthi insurgents, thereby declaring that Iran was in non-compliance with the aforementioned resolution 2216 (United Nations Security Council, 2018). Russia vetoed this resolution by disregarding the findings of the report due to a lack of substantial evidence to accuse Iran of arms supply and commented that they would not “concur with uncorroborated conclusions and evidence which requires verification and discussions within the sanctions

committee” (AFP, 2018). Russia’s veto meant that the resolution was not passed, thereby deflecting sanctions and legal actions against Iran, particularly by the United States. the US condemned Russia’s move by accusing it of sponsorship and protection of “terrorist-sponsoring regime” in Iran (AFP, 2018). While Russia abstained from the UNSC Resolution in 2015, it chose to veto this resolution later primarily due to the nature of condemnation it called upon (AFP, 2018). Abstaining from the resolution would mean that the Western powers would harshly condemn Iran, compromising its aforementioned ambitions in Yemen (AFP, 2018).

Economic Interests

In addition to the geo-strategic and political interests, Russia’s involvement in Yemen is also a result of underlying economic interests. By refraining from entering the war militarily and siding either with the US-backed Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries or Iran-backed Houthi insurgents, Russia has opened the way for a market of sales of defence equipment to both sides. Until 2013, Russia’s major exports to other countries consisted of energy resources and raw materials, while it worked towards enhancing its military and defence technology exports (Magen, 2013). After a tenure of investments and systemic reformations, Russian manufacturing of arms increased and it made its way into the international arms market, in line with the dominant Western manufacturers (Magen, 2013). During this period, Russia enhanced its own position as a viable source of arms trade among to West Asian countries (Magen, 2013).

Additionally, by further maintaining amiable relations between state and non-state actors within the region, Russia managed to expand its markets and establish its position as both, an influential player within the region as well as a viable trade partner. After the coup overthrowing Yemeni President Hadi in 2014, the Houthis sent its delegation to Russia for greater ties and avenues for cooperation and investment in the energy sector (Lobel, 2021). Since the commencement of the war until 2018, the Houthis fired about one hundred missiles against civilian and military targets in Saudi Arabia (Majidyar, 2018). In retaliation, the Saudi-Arabia-led Operation Decisive Storm undertook military intervention and strikes against the Houthis in Yemen. Russia played a vital role in the supply of arms to Saudi Arabia, recently having signed a military cooperation agreement and continues to do so gaining profits (Bensaid, 2019). Since the Russian supply of arms to Syria and its effectiveness against the ISIS regime, the ‘demand’ for Russian weapons has considerably increased, particularly in West Asian countries (Dudley, 2021). As of 2021, the Saudi delegation was one of the first to visit the Russian Army International Military-Technical Forum, further highlighting the cooperation between both countries in the defence sector (Dudley, 2021).

Therefore, in view of the continuing nature of conflict within Yemen, the region has proven to be a viable and constant market for Russia to benefit economically and consequently, the Russian state-owned defence firm Rosoboronexport has been channelising its supply to the West Asian

countries. In 2018, the Russian defence agencies supplied arms and other defence equipment worth \$20 billion to over 40 countries, out of which West Asia and North Africa accounted for 40 percent of Rosoboronexport's business (Bensaid, 2019). Countries in West Asia, particularly Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United Arab Emirates have considerably increased their purchase of Russian weapons, accounting for about one-third of the global arms market. In February 2019, Saudi Arabia and Russia signed a military cooperation agreement, through which Saudi Arabia was to purchase S400 missiles and domestically produced Russian Kalashnikov rifles (Bensaid, 2019). Three years later, as of 2021, this deal, including Su-35 jets in addition to the S400 air defence systems, lies in its negotiation phase, with ambitions to set up a joint manufacturing facility for the Kalashnikov rifles ("Saudi Arabia negotiating S-400, Su-35 buy," 2021).

As a consequence of maintaining amiable relations with non-state actors, the Houthis in 2018 publicly announced that they would be willing to buy weapons from Iran and Russia if they would be willing to deliver them to Sana'a, circumventing the Saudi-led coalition (Majidiyar, 2018). As a result, by providing a continuous supply of arms in war-torn regions, particularly Yemen, Russia aims to gain economically as well as politically through the war.

In addition to the overt economic interests Russia exercises as a result of the ongoing war, there are other economic interests at stake for the country. While Yemen has never been a major oil producer as compared to its West Asian counterparts, the country possesses enough oil reserves to account for a significant proportion of its national revenue. In the early 2000s, Yemen pumped more than 400,000 barrels per day (b/d) supplying oil to various countries throughout the world, which has seen a dip as a result of persistent fighting and devastation post the onset of the war (Carpenter, 2021). However, Yemen continues to possess significant untapped oil reserves since it sits on hydrocarbon reserves of about 3 billion barrels of crude oil and 17 trillion cubic feet (TcF) of natural gas which Russia aims to benefit from.

Conclusion

The on-going conflict in Yemen continues to cause large-scale destruction in the country, with exacerbated bouts of instability, turmoil and violence. As the Iran-backed Houthi rebels and other non-state actors struggle to gain power in the country, Saudi Arabia and a coalition of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries continue to oppose their efforts through Operation Decisive Storm. In the midst of disagreements between these parties, Russia has emerged as an important stakeholder in the conflict, providing a platform for negotiation by maintaining amiable relations with all. In order to understand the reasons behind such involvement of Russia, this paper analysed its interests in Yemen and the larger West Asian region through geostrategic, political and economic perspectives. Strategically, since Yemen lies at the mouth of the Bab-el Mandeb strait, maintaining relations with the Houthis provides Russia with considerable economic and political influence over trade in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, where Russia aspires to build

a port. Similarly, in order to increase its presence in the West Asian region, Russia has wavered its support to countries such as Saudi Arabia on several occasions, as witnessed in its political behaviour in the UNSC. Additionally,, by maintaining amiable relations between all stakeholders in the conflict, Russia aims to benefit economically from the war by selling arms to all the warring parties. Lastly, in order to gain a stronger foothold in the country and explore untapped resources, Russia is also investing in the energy sector in Yemen. As a result, Russia's involvement in the Yemen war can be explained through its geostrategic, economic and political interests in the country as well as the larger West Asian region.

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Cultural Relevance of Virtual Reality Therapy in India

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Introduction

How to Cite this Paper

Agarwal, S. (2022).
Cultural relevance of
virtual reality therapy in
India. *Confluence: Journal
for Interdisciplinary
Studies, Volume VI*,
166-177.

Virtual Reality Therapy (VRT) is a contemporary method of therapy that has found applications in mainstream clinical psychology as recently as in the past two decades. Virtual reality mimics real-world situations by using a three-dimensional computer-generated immersive and interactive environment, and VRT takes advantage of this simulated environment. In VRT, the therapist delivers sensory information to subjects controlled through a head-mounted display and specialised interface devices (Maples-Keller, Bunnell, Kim & Rothbaum, 2017). Additionally, this form of therapy engages in perceptual stimulation via visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory cues to trigger emotional reactions in clients. VRT thus aids in further enhancing the usefulness of traditional therapeutic approaches by, for instance, enabling virtual replication of situations that might be otherwise unsafe to recreate (in cases of anxiety-related disorders or phobias). Virtual replication of situations helps create a more predictable and structured nature in the intervention setting and allows participants to react more naturally (Dey & Jeevajyoti, 2019).

A research study conducted by Falconer and colleagues (2019) gauged the effectiveness of VR talking therapy by administering an avatar-based program, 'ProReal', on two uncommunicative case subjects visiting the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the United Kingdom. The main aims were to test the effectiveness of this newly emerging digital technology on therapeutic engagement in reluctant subjects, treatment of common mental health problems, and observe the subjects' impressions of the VRT software program. This approach adopted by the researchers is novel since studies in this domain have typically explored the effectiveness of VR therapy as a simulation tool for treating anxiety disorders or phobias (North & North, 2016) and not as an interaction tool to build the therapist-client relationship in the context of talk therapy itself. However, this study, similar to other literature in this domain, is placed in the

western context. Since western frameworks of functioning differ significantly from other social frameworks worldwide, this intervention's cultural applicability and relevance can be questioned. It may be imperative to consider the following customisations to ensure successful implementation of the VRT model.

Currently, in the Indian scenario, research exploring VRT remains scarce. Studies are primarily restricted to the medical and dentistry fields for pain reduction (Haleem, Javaid & Khan., 2020). Only a handful of studies analyse its applicability in patients with anxiety and phobic disorders (Srivastava, Das & Choudhury, 2014; Jadhav et al., 2020; Jashwanth et al., 2020). VRT can potentially transform the current Indian mental health discourse. The capability of VRT is evidenced by the extraordinary results seen by the telemedicine model in the country, which has grown to technologically connect numerous rural and remote hospitals with super-speciality hospitals (Chellaiyan, Nirupama & Taneja, 2019). The telemedicine model flourished during the COVID crisis, enabling widespread dissemination of psychological support and illness management. The model thus evidences the capability of the Indian population to productively engage with technological healthcare services, signalling an optimistic future for VRT. To garner an in-depth understanding of the potential applicability of VRT in a vastly diverse country like India, it is essential to discuss prevalent social frameworks and demographic profiles of the target cohorts that can determine the success of any new intervention model.

Sensitivity to the Indian Social Fabric and Value for the Youth Population

Culture and psychotherapy are deeply intertwined. It is understood that diversity in socio-cultural frameworks is coded “verbally, imaginatively, proprioceptively, viscerally, and emotionally” resulting in different experiential structures and worldviews in people across societies (Koç & Kafa, 2019). These differences might give rise to varied standards of normalcy in functioning of the human mind and behaviour. This, in the mental health context, thus impacts the manifestation of psychopathology, reaction patterns and willingness to receive psychological help (Viswanath & Chaturvedi, 2012; Yalvac et al., 2015). Thus, the social fabric that governs the cognitive and behavioural processes of a population becomes imperative to consider when discussing the potential of a prospective intervention model.

In India, features of the social fabric that are relevant to the context of this paper include the low levels of mental health literacy (MHL), high stigma against mental illness and heavy reliance on non-professional sources of help (especially in rural areas). These social issues lead to discrimination, lack of access to resources and insufficient facilities, and communal cleansing. A study conducted by the Live Love Laugh Foundation in 2018 across 8 cities in India over a span of 5 months, reported that 47% of cohorts indicated higher levels of judgement against people suffering from mental illness and 68% believed that those suffering from mental illness should not be trusted with any responsibility (WEF, 2018). Such low levels of mental health sensitivity

and associations of mental illness with weakness, embarrassment, and lunacy culminating in social backlash, further make it difficult for people to seek mental health support (Padukone, Doraiswamy & Chandy, 2018).

However, an aspect of India's social makeup that is witnessing a paradigm shift and demands acknowledgement in the context of this discourse is the rate of growth of technological literacy in the population. These rates have recently seen an acceleration in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the digitisation of business and education-related domains, positive responses to contactless healthcare as seen via the telehealth models implemented during the pandemic serve as exhibits for the expanding receptivity of the population to technology. Even though a digital divide remains stark in an enormous country like India, digital literacy statistics are promising. This is especially the case in urban India which stands at 61% digital literacy (Mothkoo & Mumtaaz, 2021). Even though these rates are much lower in rural areas, reports have shown populations of tier-two and tier-three cities to be warming up to digital healthcare facilities where, according to Neeraj Lal, COO of Apollo Hospitals, the reluctance to adopt technology has gone down drastically both from the patients as well as doctors' end (Pratima, 2022).

These pearls and perils of the Indian socio-cultural frameworks in context of the VRT model makes perspicuous the immense potential for success that VRT holds. In order to overcome the issues of low MHL and high stigma related to mental illness, and enabling a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive, community-oriented, and long-term approach to mental healthcare, robust implementation of Community Mental Health Models (CMHM) is crucial. Given the increasing technological literacy as well as the economically feasible nature of the VRT model (as discussed in detail in the forthcoming sections), VRT could prove to be a fruitful addition to the CMHM. Moreover, given the adaptable nature of the VRT software, it also brings the possibility of incorporating avatars and realities inclusive of local psychosocial support groups like religious groups, faith healers, and other bodies trusted by the community into intervention models. Via this, the receptivity and, consequently, the effectiveness of the psychopathological treatments could be enhanced. Additional initiatives working towards stigma reduction would further the mental wellbeing goal that these CMHMs are currently struggling to reach. These could include culture-sensitive awareness drives and linking the primary health-care system with tertiary care hospitals (like the existing telemedicine model or within the upcoming network of tele-mental health centres as announced in the Union Budget 2022-23).

An essential factor acknowledged by Falconer and colleagues in their study mentioned earlier in this commentary is the user's age and its impact on experience with the VR system (2019). Since their research is based in a centre for CAMHS, it reports the perceived ease of use by the young participants in their study, leaving the older population outside its scope. A few studies have showcased positive VRT results for the elderly in India. For instance, in 2016, Chitra and

colleagues investigated the impact of VRT on the cognition of geriatric patients residing at selected old age homes in Chennai. The results reported a significant increase in the cognitive abilities of these patients post-VRT administration. However, social characteristics of geriatric cohorts, such as increased value placed on face-to-face interaction and real-world relations over virtual ones, might act as barriers to the successful implementation of VRT in this segment. With younger demographics, VRT has produced more efficacious results. This is evident in studies like those by Taneja and colleagues (2017), who reported reduced mental stress in 20 participants between 18 and 21 in Tamil Nadu who engaged in VRT. Another study by Sinha (2021) discussed how VRT can aid college students in effectively coping with academic/social challenges and addressing psychological distress resulting from new experiences of young adulthood. Moreover, studies like those by Javaid and colleagues (2020), Niharika and colleagues (2018), and Singh and Perry (2016) produced optimistic results for VR applications for young cohorts in domains of medical treatments and dentistry, further evidencing the uptake of VRT for interventions in the youth demographic.

In addition to positive treatment outcomes, the VRT intervention model is also likely to have high usability amongst the Indian youth. This is because the process of digitisation in India has led the youth to increasingly adapt to technology in a manner that has become crucial to their functioning in numerous personal and social domains (Sawshilya, 2020). Research has shown that the Indian youth demographic is extremely receptive to changing technological trends. A survey conducted by YouGov in 2020 reported that India has a high volume (49% of their sample) of ‘early tech adopters’ i.e., individuals who are open and eager to adopt new technology, belonging to the 18-34 age group, the youth demographic (IBI, 2020).

Moreover, age has also proven to play an imperative role in generating usability in terms of learnability of the VRT software. For instance, research by Fluja-Contreras and colleagues (2020) as well as Paulus and colleagues (2019) that tested the learnability of VRT amongst adolescents and undergraduate students in the US and Indonesia respectively and reported that these participants were confident and found the VRT mechanisms easy to use. On the other hand, studies like that by (Fowler et al., 2019) whose sample consisted of veterans with a mean age of 49 years reported learnability to be less, with their sample requiring more time than prescribed to get familiar with the VRT mechanisms. Similarly, studies that explored age-related differences in performance and user experience regarding VRT, reported older cohorts to exhibit inferior performances and evaluate user experience more poorly than the younger cohorts (Plechata et al., 2019). Thus, there exists an enormous market for VRT amongst youth populations, especially in India, a country that houses one-fifth of the world’s youth population (Ministry of External Affairs, 2021).

Closely interconnected with the social and age-related demographics of a population are the cultural underpinnings that drive the formation of their social realities.

Synchrony with the Cultural Characteristics of the Indian Populace

The research by Falconer and colleagues describes the success of VRT with participants who were reluctant to verbalise their emotions to their therapists (2019). This behavioural tendency is prevalent in collectivist cultures (like India), where opinions of others and perceptions of oneself often guide behaviour and cognition. People thus prefer not to share their distress with others by trying to keep it to themselves (“Mental health: Culture, race, and ethnicity: A supplement to mental health: A report of the surgeon general”, 2001). In the same vein, Falconer and colleagues (2019) touch upon how usage of ProReal proved to be successful for males who initially thought that “talking about feelings would make them harder to control”. This finding transfers seamlessly to the Indian context, where strict patriarchal notions of masculinity dictate that men be strong and assume invulnerability, a barrier to help-seeking (Sharma, 2021). By alleviating this need to verbally share concerns with a mental healthcare professional (MHP) face to face, VRT would generate cultural value by helping reluctant clients overcome this roadblock and thus allow for the development of resourceful therapeutic relationships.

Economic Efficiency: Affordability, Accessibility, and Widespread Administration

In addition to socio-cultural facilitators, the economic soundness of an intervention model has to be ensured, especially in a country as large and voluminously populated as India. The increased affordability of VR hardware (Dey & Jeevajyoti, 2019) via the availability of inexpensive but effective cardboard headsets like Google Cardboard (starting from INR 800) and its other imitations (starting from INR 299) would make community distribution and applicability of this therapy method viable even at the grass-root level. The advent of 5G and high-speed data communications would further motivate the growth and adoption of VR models while also facilitating incremental accessibility. Through heightened treatment accessibility, VRT would reduce the estimated economic burden of approximately USD 1.03 trillion between 2012-2030 to be borne by the country due to mental health ailments (World Health Organization, 2019). Furthermore, it would enable alleviating the shortage of MHPs in the country. According to WHO data released in 2017, a meagre 0.15 MHPs remain available for every hundred thousand individuals (as cited in Singh, 2020). Integration of VRT in the recently announced tele-mental health model to be launched and run by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, with technological support by the International Institute of Information Technology-Bangalore (IIITB) would facilitate virtual administration and increased accessibility of VRT even to remote parts of the country where access to mental healthcare remains obscure. This could lighten the enormous burden of these costs.

Despite the promise that VRT shows in numerous domains, there are challenges to its successful implementation in the Indian mental healthcare sector.

Challenges and Possible Solutions

As described earlier, VRT as an intervention model might prove culturally sound, in alignment with the Indian social fabric, and economically efficient in terms of its hardware requirements. However, the model may still have to combat possible hindrances in the Indian landscape such as (i) the socio-cultural perceptions of the population regarding VR being restricted predominantly to domains of gaming and entertainment, (ii) the relatively high economic costs of procuring and customising the VRT software, and (iii) an insufficiency of training opportunities for Indian MHPs.

Lack of Socio-Cultural Associations of VR with Mental Healthcare

In their research paper, Falconer and colleagues (2019) claim the attitudes and perceptions regarding VRT as held by clinicians are pivotal for the success of this technology. However, they fail to consider the everyday socio-cultural perception of the population regarding VR, which would determine openness to it in the clinical setting, thus influencing its therapeutic triumph. In India, even though gradual adoption of VR is observed in domains like education, healthcare, e-commerce, and real estate, most of the population continues to associate it with gaming and entertainment. This is evidenced by Indian software companies, driven by demand patterns, which work almost exclusively on developing VR software for gaming purposes (Parthasarathy, 2016). This divorce of cognitive connections between VR and healthcare, especially mental healthcare, significantly deters easy adoption and warrants extensive awareness initiatives on a national level.

Low Economic Feasibility of the VR Software

While the hardware is now affordable, the economic cost of developing the software could emerge as a concern. Since propagating a standardised VR software across diverse population groups would be fruitless, the software would need to be specialised and developed in collaboration with clinicians to ensure psychological reliability, cultural soundness of avatars and realities, and inclusivity of the numerous subcultures and ethnicities within India. This might bring the economic stability of initial procurement costs into question. However, since the VRT model is proposed to be incorporated into the tele-and community- mental health models, getting the government to incentivise software companies to produce efficient and inclusive VR software could effectively mitigate this challenge. Past budget trends reflect the inadequacy in attention given to mental health. For instance, the Union budget 2021-22 allotted 0.84% of the total amount proposed to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for mental healthcare. Of this, most was directed towards centrally controlled institutions in the country rather than developing mental healthcare systems at the block and public healthcare level (Nigam, 2021).

Even though still centralised, positive changes in trends are visible to some extent via the augmented attention placed on mental health for the year 2022-23 onwards. A 12.5% increase from last year's allotment, INR 670 crore have been allocated for mental healthcare initiatives in addition to the launch of the previously mentioned National Tele Mental Health programme to create a digital healthcare ecosystem and augment the quality of mental health counselling and care services (Bhowmick & Rege, 2022). This could successfully provide for the initial financial burden of software procurement that VRT poses. This leads to the last concern that VRT might face in India. Falconer and colleagues (2019) point out that effectiveness and expertise in administering this therapy require ongoing training and support for the MHPs.

Inadequacy in the Training of Indian Mental Healthcare Professionals

Based on the plan of incorporating VRT into the healthcare model at the grassroots level, it becomes crucial to address the inadequacy in the training of the MHPs in traditional therapy and mental healthcare practices (Hofmann-Broussard, Armstrong, Boschen & Somasundaram, 2017). Therefore, developing expertise through frequent training for a technology-based intervention model that is relatively new seems far-fetched, might face reluctance and therefore emerges as an essential pitfall to account for (Dey & Jeevajyoti, 2019). As a possible solution to this challenge, incorporating VRT training in the curriculum of clinical and counselling psychology degree programs, in addition to current methods that rely on manuals and stand-alone training tools, can be considered. This would amplify awareness and enable widespread training and application of VRT both independently and in amalgamation with other intervention models.

Conclusion: A Promising Contender with Optimistic Prospects

Assessing the cultural applicability of an intervention method is imperative and a significant determinant of its success, especially in India, whose cultural framework differs significantly from Western contexts where these therapies originate. Incorporation of VRT in Indian mental healthcare holds the potential to transform the field. VRT can be customised according to the socio-cultural needs of the population and prove economical with inexpensive versions of VR systems becoming widely available. In addition to better growth prospects owing to the introduction of high-speed data communication channels, VRT's contributions in the form of reduced burden of mental health costs and aid in overcoming the scarcity of MHPs (via incorporation in the telemedicine model) also add to the optimism associated with its future. While the tool could be socio-culturally sound, hindrances might emerge in the technicalities of its successful implementation. This includes possible concerns regarding the cost of the specialised software, the current centralisation of mental healthcare, and insufficient allocation of funds leading to inadequate training of community healthcare workers. Increased attention by the government on the healthcare demands of the country and strict enforcement of CMHMs,

including VRT at the primary healthcare level via the upcoming tele-mental health models, would thus enable India to take long strides towards holistic mental wellbeing.

VRT can also contribute to the journey towards holistic mental wellbeing in the coming years via its incorporation in the curricula of degree programs to ensure standardised and widespread training. Additionally, a plethora of software applications to make VRT more accessible and affordable might be the trend in the future. While this is gradually emerging as a reality in the west, the future of VRT in India might also see a disability-inclusive intervention model which would enable those with audio-visual disabilities to extract psychological benefits from it. This might be particularly relevant in India, where around 60 million individuals suffer from visual and auditory impairment (Banerjee, 2017; “62 million in India visually impaired”, 2019) which not only places them at the intersection of numerous social stigmas but also exposes them to the possibility of higher psychological distress (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020). This is precisely what an inclusive VRT model could help combat in the coming years. VRT is a promising contender in the Indian clinical discourse that should be researched systematically to increase its viability and applicability.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Sandip Ravindra for his valuable and constructive suggestions throughout the development of this commentary. His tireless guidance and patience have enabled me to grow inestimably as a researcher and are deeply appreciated.

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Book Review: Parimala V. Rao. Beyond Macaulay: Education in India, 1780–1860.

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How to Cite this Paper

Gupta, K. (2022). Beyond Macaulay: Education in India, 1780–1860.

Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies, Volume VI, 178-181.

Over the years, various arguments with reference to the colonial education policy in India have been made and discussed in academic and intellectual circles. Various historians and scholars have argued that the colonial educational policy established in India under Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay was inclined towards fulfilling the interests of the colonisers. They believe that Indians were introduced to a British system of education in order to aid the colonisers in running their government in India. They were of the opinion that the colonisers wanted literate Indians to partake in furthering the agenda of expansion and control in the country by assisting the British with documentation and on-ground work. Parimala Rao attempts to provide a novel analysis and an alternative perspective on the history of colonial education in India. She aims to contribute to the historiographical methodology that has thus far been utilised to understand the trajectory of educational policies and their consequent implementation. Rao limits her research and study to the period between 1780 and 1860 when the East India Company (EIC) dominated the social, political and religious sphere in the country. She has covered a gamut of political and social debates, policies and reports right from the establishment of a Madrasa in the Bengal Presidency in 1780 up till the transfer of power from the EIC to the British Crown in 1860. The book focuses on restructuring the analysis of Macaulay's stance on Indian education during that period, which according to the author has been misrepresented by various scholars who have studied the

history of education in India. Macaulay is often credited with the introduction of English and Western culture into the Indian education system and is known to have encouraged the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in educational institutions in India.

Her book, as stated earlier, offers an alternative perspective to the discourse around Macaulay's minutes. It provides an understanding of the ideological disposition behind the educational policies of that period and its association with the larger social debates. The author has drawn upon colonial archives, private archives, selected writings, contemporary publications as well as secondary literature to build her stance. According to her, Macaulay's role has been misstated by various historians and scholars who have studied and continue to study the history of education in India during this period (1780-1860). She has made an effort to deconstruct certain positions taken by academicians with regard to the educational atmosphere and policies in early nineteenth-century India. The main argument of the author revolves around bifurcating the stance taken by the Orientalists and Anglicists with regards to education in India and rejecting the notion that English education in India was a forced colonial and post-colonial imposition. The Orientalists believed that the main focus should be the reading of classic Indian texts and scriptures in the Persian and Hindi language, whereas the Anglicist school of thought was of the opinion that education in India should be conducted in the English language with Western education at the centre of their study.

Parimala provides statistics and reports of indigenous schools in Bengal, Madras, the Bombay Presidency and that of North India and argues that the study of the English language and Western learning was not imposed by the EIC administration. She states that it was a majority of the Indian population that expressed their desire to be imparted Western and English education primarily to fuel their intellectual desire and curiosity and not to attain jobs within the EIC administration. In order to fulfil this demand, a few Anglicists, that is, some Liberal British officers (and certain Scottish officials) who were part of the EIC administration helped establish Western learning in the country. She also dismantles the notion that the EIC administration put an end to classic Indian learning in the country. Rather she argues that the Orientalist section of the administration played a pivotal role in trying to consolidate the traditional method of learning as a part of formal schooling in the country. She also highlights the Orientalist resolve to Brahmanise education in India with special reference to the Bombay Presidency (Chapter 5). Brahmanisation of education implies the incorporation of caste hierarchy and favouritism towards upper-class Hindus (and also some Muslims) with regards to the educational policies implemented at the time. This is with reference to restricting education and the control of educational instruction to upper-class students and teachers respectively.

Throughout the book, Rao sheds light on the interconnectedness between the history of education with the caste, religious and gender debates and policies of the time. Furthering her inquiry, she analyses the interwoven network of decisions taken by the Anglicists, Orientalists and the Scottish officials and the manner in which it shaped the reality of that period. She is of the opinion that the Scottish officials supported the Anglicist cause since they had been raised in an egalitarian society (Chapter 3). Further, she also elucidates upon the impact of the Enlightenment

and the growth of radical ideas on the ideology of the Anglicists, the Scottish officials, the Liberal British officers and the majority of the Indians who demanded Western learning and the incorporation of the English language (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

The author speculates the reason behind the Orientalist stance and believes that the Orientalists wanted to ensure that the Indians remained intellectually backward. They believed that Indians were only well-suited to the classic Indian learning because they were intellectually inferior to the British. She specifically mentions Mountstuart Elphinstone (the Governor of Bombay in the 1850s) in this regard who played a pivotal role in the racialisation of the educational policies in India during that period. She systematically provides information regarding the funding and underfunding of the various traditional and modern educational institutions in India and the different positions that were taken by the Anglicists and Orientalists (of the company) on financial matters and the company's expenditure on education (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) (Rao, 2019).

Chapters 7 and 8 of the book discuss the correlation between the education imparted to Indians with Macaulay's ideological position towards education in India. She describes his efforts towards modernising education in India not just by promoting Western learning and the use of the English language but also by promoting the study of the vernaculars. Furthermore, she argues that it was Macaulay's desire to appoint Indians in various capacities within the EIC administration to ensure ease of dialogue between various communities around the country and the spread of education in both urban and rural settlements. Towards the end of the book, the author critically analyses the last ten years of the EIC administration in India (1850-1860) and Wood's Despatch of 1854.

Parimala V. Rao concludes the book by reasserting her argument that most of the EIC administrators and the members of the Court of Directors (24 directors in London who controlled the functioning of the EIC around the world) from 1780 to 1860 did not intend to modernise Indian education in the first place. They had no desire to chart India's way towards Western learning and the use of English language as a method of instruction. Instead, they intended to formalise classical Indian learning as part of formal schooling so as to ensure stagnation of the intellectual development of men (whom they also considered incapable of intellectual learning and dialogue) so that they do not learn the methods and ways to revolt against the actions of the Company. In summary, Rao points out the role of the social and political reformers of India along with a few Anglicists in trying to establish modern education and learning in India, the racialisation of the Indian education system and policies by a section of the EIC administration, and the methodology and historiography that should be used to study the history of education in India. She thereby provides an altogether different way of analysing and critiquing the debates and positions taken with respect to education by the various Company bodies and communities in India from 1780 to 1860.

Through this book, Parimala V. Rao has contributed significantly to the understanding of the history of education in India during the initial years of the colonial period. The author's methodology and use of empirical data to substantiate her argument makes the book a rather simple and comprehensible read. The book focuses extensively on colonial archives and on the empirical data of about 16,000 indigenous schools, which helps the reader form a well-rounded understanding of the reality of the time (1780-1860) and the various debates that sprung up among the Orientalists, Anglicists, the EIC administrators and the Court of Directors. In order to understand the genealogy of educational policies in India, it becomes rather important to gain an elaborate insight into the policies that were formulated during the British rule. To this end, Rao's work is a comprehensive and rich source of information that provides a detailed analysis of the colonial archives and Macaulay's Minutes on Indian Education of 1835.

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Book Review: Mangesh Kulkarni (Ed.), *Global Masculinities: Interrogations and Reconstructions*. Routledge, 2019

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How to Cite this Paper

Chaudhari, A. (2022).
Global masculinities:
Interrogations and
reconstructions.
*Confluence: Journal for
Interdisciplinary Studies*,
Volume VI, 182-185.

It is generally believed that masculinity is monolithic, but in reality, there are multiple masculinities. There is no single way of being a man because men's lives are shaped by numerous factors such as class, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, institutional and political location, geographical and historical contingencies, as well as patterns of consumption. Hence, the scholarly literature on masculinities includes conceptions like hegemonic masculinity, transmasculinity, ecological masculinity and colonial masculinity. The book under discussion, *Global Masculinities: Interrogations and Reconstructions*, seeks to capture and reflect on this lived plurality by engaging with a wide range of relevant ideas and experiences.

This volume comprising an editorial introduction and more than a dozen papers is an outcome of the second MenEngage Global Symposium on 'Men and Boys for Gender Justice', held in New Delhi, India. It opens with a foreword contributed by Raewyn Connell, who is one of the founders of Critical Masculinity Studies. The papers cover an impressive range of topics, drawing on empirical and theoretical research concerning masculinities spanning several continents: sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia, South America, and southern and northern Europe. The contributors straddle different disciplines, including Philosophy, Political Science, Gender Studies, Development Studies, Social Work, Health Science, Anthropology and Neurobiology.

The book tracks the trajectory of Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS), inspired by the second-wave feminists' struggle for gender equality, which enabled many men to understand that patriarchy was not only unjust to women but also trapped men in a vicious cycle of socially constructed gender roles. The efforts of pro-feminist men participating in anti-patriarchal activism laid the foundation of CMS, which is firmly opposed to the exclusive advocacy of

men's rights. It tries to involve men and boys in the struggle for gender justice and emphasises their vital role in eliminating violence against women.

The volume can be broadly divided into two sections – the first, comprising eight articles, explores the predicament of patriarchal masculinities. They explain how patriarchy not only oppresses girls and women but also locks boys and men into a circle of coercion. The section draws on empirical evidence to investigate the reasons for men's tendency to display aggression and dominance. It also discusses the role played by traditional as well as modern norms, institutions and processes of socialisation in maintaining patriarchal masculinities. The second section includes five articles and focuses on caring masculinities which reject domination and integrate values of care, love and interdependence. It proposes that men can adopt characteristics traditionally viewed as feminine, for example, active participation in childcare and housework, which ensures the well-being of families.

Nolwazi Mkhwanazi presents an ethnographic study of the Xhosa-speaking people of South Africa. She argues that young men's initiation rites are a critical vehicle for maintaining the gendered gerontocracy that forms the basis of Xhosa social life. She emphasises the role of tradition in making men and maintaining patriarchy. However, even modern institutions are not insulated from patriarchal gender norms and practices. Sanjeev Uprety's paper analyses the imbrication of social norms, social structure and law with violence against women in Nepal. He argues that modern legal and socio-cultural institutions are forged in the crucible patriarchy. Moreover, the sheer numerical strength of men in public institutions, including parliament, reinforces the gendered norms which support the existing social structure. He argues that the attempt to create a gender-just society necessitates a simultaneous attack on these pillars of conservatism.

Shashish Shami Kamal explains the reasons for the violent behaviour of Bangladeshi male students in tertiary education. His interviews show that culturally embedded practices give unilateral power to young men to judge women and girls. Men categorise women into binaries like 'good' and 'bad' according to their clothes and body language. Stalking is considered a part of the courtship process. The enactment of such practices determines a young man's social position in the gender order. Thus gender-based violence is embedded in the quotidian practices of young men. The Australian scholar Michael Flood has contributed a paper which critically examines initiatives that engage men in ending violence against women (VAW) in different parts of the world. He argues that the efficacy of such interventions is often dubious, especially as they are based on the false assumption that men can be unproblematically persuaded to believe they will benefit from progress towards gender equality. Efforts to involve men in preventing VAW would be more realistic if they were to emphasise the need to forego patriarchal privileges. The notion that working with men is the best way to change them is also wrong, as empowering women is an important prerequisite for altering unequal gender relations.

Men often act as barriers to women's reproductive rights and freedoms. Sana Contractor and her co-authors examine the masculine norms that shape men's resistance to contraception. They share their experiences from a community intervention with men in central India, which was carried out with the help of two NGOs. The researchers point out that the fear of being 'not man enough' and losing sex drive are crucial reasons for men's resistance to vasectomy. They suggest that men should be approached and involved as partners and carers, not only as targets of vasectomy. This calls for community-specific, multi-pronged interventions to correct the imbalance of responsibility in reproduction and family planning.

Midwifery is almost universally seen as a female vocation. The notion that a man could never truly understand childbirth is widespread. However, the existence of male midwives goes a long way in breaking down such gender barriers. Sneha Makkad and Mira Sadgopal inquire into the role of men serving as indigenous midwives in a tribal district of Western India. The study delves deep into the interrelationship of the traditional *huarku* (male) and *haurki* (female) midwives. The findings of the robust survey and first-hand narratives presented by the authors reveal the commitment, knowledge, methods and ethics of conduct displayed by both male and female midwives. The case study breaks the masculinist stereotype and shows that midwifery has little to do with the sex or gender of the caregiver.

Srdjan Dušanić systematically explores men's understandings of paternal responsibility by analysing collected household survey data. The research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows suboptimal participation of men in childbirth and childcare. It concludes that such participation is shaped by early childhood experiences, the influence of wives, and a man's feelings towards the household. The author suggests that the transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina to a capitalist order in the last thirty years has made men's engagement in household activities and childcare more socially acceptable.

The foregoing discussion of some representative papers clearly indicates that the book provides nuanced insights into the making and remaking of masculinities around the world. The plain writing style of most contributors makes the collection accessible to a broad readership. This is not to say that the book is without drawbacks. It does not cover research on masculinities in regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia, and the former Soviet Union. Most papers focus on micro issues rather than larger forces like the State and the Market, which shape masculinities. The juxtaposition of academic and activist perspectives sometimes seems discordant. The book also suffers from an unintended but jarring gender binarism. The book has covered the core themes in CMS; however, it has not explored the linkages between masculinity and some significant socio-political phenomena like fundamentalism, nationalism, race and caste.

To summarise, *Global Masculinities: Interrogations and Reconstructions* offers a comprehensive, transdisciplinary account of current scholarship and activist initiatives on men and masculinities. It is the first book of its kind to have emerged from the global South and has an explicitly stated emancipatory intent. As Professor Mangesh Kulkarni has rightly observed in his editorial introduction, “the arduous task of dismantling patriarchy requires a two-pronged feminist intervention involving a sustained critique of hegemonic masculinities and direct mobilisation of men and boys for bringing about gender justice”. The volume demonstrates how this can be achieved through theory and practice.

Book Review: Anand Teltumbde. The Republic of Caste: Thinking Equality in the Time of Neoliberal Hindutva.

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How to Cite this Paper

Agarwal, T. (2022). The republic of caste: Thinking equality in the time of neoliberal Hindutva. *Confluence: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Volume VI, 186-193.

The Republic of Caste, written by Anand Teltumbde, spans thirteen chapters, each of which reveals how the Republic has failed to keep its promise to its most marginalised citizens. He uses the prism of caste to analyse contemporary politics- from the formation of Swacchh Bharat to AAP. The Republic of Caste emphasises on the ubiquity of the upper caste hegemony in the nation. He argues that upward mobility is a privilege afforded to an exclusive section of society and that the idea that India is a modern superpower will crumble with a cursory examination of who has benefitted from the Constitution of India.

He unfurls his argument by pointing the reader to Ambedkar's disillusionment with the Constitution. Ambedkar had publicly stated that he had been used as a 'hack' by the Congress to perpetuate the Brahminical hegemony using the vocabulary of a modern democracy. Teltumbde mirrors the same tone and tenor while bringing out the fallacies of the Constitution. Although the makers of the constitution outlawed untouchability they crystalised the phenomena of caste into the foundations of the Republic. Teltumbde argues that they did so by splitting the "Scheduled Tribe" from the "Scheduled Caste". Thus, reinstating caste at the very core of the Republic.

Focusing his attention on contemporary society, he delves into the ways in which the free market and religious fundamentalism has exacerbated the inequalities of a caste-riddled society. This has had catastrophic outcomes for the dalits, adivasis, and the dispossessed minorities at large. In that aspect the book tries to synthesise Marxist and Ambedkarite politics because it believes that the annihilation of caste and revolution are deeply intertwined and one cannot exist without the other. In doing so the book provides a critique of both the left and the Dalit movement that

continue to diverge while caste and class realities remain inextricably interwoven in the nation. The Marxists in India who come from upper caste, middle class backgrounds were far removed from the realities of caste. They deemed it to be a part of the superstructure which would disappear once the economic base is changed. They viewed caste politics as fragmentary that would only obstruct the formation of class unity among the proletarians. The Dalits on their part refused to take into account the oppressive structures of economics and only concentrated on religious and cultural oppression. Teltumbde underlines the importance of uniting the two struggles and developing a better understanding among the two of the other to uplift the marginalised of the nation.

Ambedkarite Politics And Its Shortcomings

The book illuminates the primary fallacies of Ambedkarite politics which over the course of the decades has contributed to the solidification of caste instead of working towards annihilating it. Ambedkar sought to form a cohesive Dalit identity that could challenge the caste system in toto. Today, the leaders who use Ambedkar's legacy to validate their politics are doing little to preserve that Dalit identity by endorsing the various castes and sub-castes under the Dalit identity. This is being done by various party leaders as a way to negotiate alliances with the ruling class however this will only yield fleeting and transitory results. The success of the Bahujan Samaj Party is used as a clear example of how the party used caste to win votes but does a disservice to Ambedkar by asserting caste consciousness instead of annihilating it. Since caste can only act as a divisive force, Teltumbde asserts the need to look beyond identity based solutions to the annihilation of caste. Through this chapter he makes a clear and important distinction between the annihilation of caste and the assertion of it.

Rethinking Reservation And The Logic Of Representation

The book makes a radical departure from dominant anti-caste discourse in that it identifies reservation as a mode of preserving caste in the constitution. Teltumbde is not against reservation but argues that the cost dalits pay for it far outweigh the gains reaped from them. He advises one to look at reservations not as a panacea but as only one of the means through which an egalitarian society can be realised. He contends that the stigma around reservation leads to a few, usually urban individuals, from the dalit community gaining its benefits while the entire community has to bear the brunt of it. This is especially true of the dalits in rural India who pay for it in the form of caste-violence without even gaining from the reservations.

The Republic of Caste makes another radical departure in that it implores the reader to re-evaluate the efficacy of representation in preventing caste atrocities. He uses the example of 1968 Kilvenmani, Tamil Nadu incident where forty four dalit labourers were burnt to death for organising themselves under the Communist flag. The book argues that the caste atrocities have

only increased with the representation of dalits within the state machinery. This bold and counter-intuitive claim is put forth by analysing the peculiarities of the post-colonial Indian political economy. The book is remarkably non-partisan in its critique of the agents of society. It dismisses the 'Dalit bourgeoisie' for failing to play a part in the upliftment of its brethren. It is here that his idea that representation does not ensure justice gains further light. However, this argument marks one of the few blind spots within the otherwise deftly articulated book. It fails to take into account the discrimination that Dalits in powerful positions face in institutions dominated by the upper caste. In such cases the book turns blind eye to the perpetual onslaught of caste on the Dalits.

The State And Caste

Through the book Anand Teltumbde wants to draw the reader's attention to the active preservation of the caste system by the state. He postulates that Dalits need to rethink the concept of the state. The state is usually put on a pedestal by the Dalits as the provider of reservation. The Republic and its constitution are supposed to embody the vision of Babasaheb that will lead to the eventual upliftment of the marginalised. However, Teltumbde opines that it is the state itself, which by failing to penalise caste atrocities establishes a dangerous precedent while maintaining the caste system. He deploys several examples from contemporary India where the state has abused its power to curb independent, dissenting voices of the Dalits by using force, incarceration, and in some cases murder. He underlines the importance of Left and Dalit unity in fighting for those Dalit voices that have conveniently been labelled 'naxalite' for challenging the upper caste and class status quo. The book makes the case for Dalits to rethink their relationship with the state and their antagonism to the Left, to unite against the apparatuses of the state designed to protect the interests of the ruling castes and class.

Caste And Neoliberalism

The Republic of Caste challenges the prevalent belief among many Dalit intellectuals that the market is non-discriminatory and caste blind. The advent of the free market, Teltumbde notes, should have led the caste system to its grave by now. But it hasn't. The privatisation of the basic resources like water, health care, transport, education as a consequence of the adoption of neoliberal policies has impacted the poor, especially Dalits, the most. It has exacerbated already prevailing inequalities in the society. It notes in the chapter 'Manufacturing Maoists: Dissent in the Age of Neoliberalism' that the past few years have witnessed the wrath of the state toward any dissent against the neoliberal policies of privatisation guided by a Brahminical leadership. He argues that 'Maoism' and 'nationalism' are the new lexicon for 'out-caste' and 'caste'. The manufacturing of Maoists becomes integral to suppressing dissent and preserving the interest of the upper caste industrialists. Furthermore, the guiding essence of Social Darwinism underlining neoliberal thought makes it fundamentally antithetical to any conception of a casteless society.

Teltumbde cogently argues against the myth that markets are casteless since they predominantly favour those already in positions of power by creating the perfect conditions for monopolies to thrive in, reaffirming the upper caste hegemony over capital.

Politics Of The Material

At the heart of the book is the need for a Dalit assertion to material change. Teltumbde provides a scathing critique of the Dalit parties that only do lip-service to the anti-caste cause by building statues and memorials of Ambedkar while ensuring little change in the material conditions of the Dalits. The right to land, education, and health is irreplaceable for any social revolution. He criticises Ambedkarites for not participating in land movements that would have yielded far more concrete progress to the anti-caste cause. It is here that he criticises the self-defeating divergence of the Marxists and the Ambedkarites. The mutual hostility between the two is a huge defeat for any imagination of an egalitarian order. He proposes an alliance between the two that takes both class and caste into account by combining Ambedkar's pragmatism with Marx's scientific analysis to build a just and fair society.

Saffronisation Of Ambedkar

He illustrates how dangerous it is to be content with the politics of symbolism by giving the example of the appropriation of Ambedkar by the Hindu-right wing. The inequalities created by the neoliberal fascist state go simultaneously with the saffronisation of Ambedkar. The symbolic service to Ambedkar is an attempt to create amnesia about his vitriolic remarks on Hinduism. The BJP has persistently unleashed violence on Dalits (in Gujarat in 1981, 1985, and 2016 in Una, Bhima-Koregaon, Maharashtra, on 1 January 2018) while simultaneously building memorials for Ambedkar. This critique of the state is unfortunately prescient as Teltumbde himself was later arrested for 'plotting to assassinate the PM in a Maoist conspiracy'. However, a cursory glance at Teltumbde's politics will divulge the true reason for his arrest. Anand Teltumbde's fierce social and economic critique of Hindutva has revealed the casteist and anti-people vision of the Sangh. His reiteration of Dr Ambedkar's vision of heralding a social and economic democracy in India through anti-caste politics and state socialism betrays the contradictions in the BJP's lip service to Ambedkar. Anand Teltumbde is not only one of India's formidable intellectuals but also a son-in-law of the Babasaheb's family. According to Prakash Ambedkar, Anand Teltumbde's arrest is a direct attack by the Sangh on the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar. (Mevani & Kandasamy, 2020) Teltumbde's imprisonment only gives strength to his argument on the manufacturing of Maoists as a novel form of Savarna violence to silence any Dalit dissent that asserts the need for upliftment of the community.

Conclusion

The Republic of Caste is a deftly articulated book that brings together two seemingly antithetical ideologies while establishing the marginalisation, stigmatisation, and exclusion of Dalits from the inception of the nation. It does so by laying bare the workings of history, ideology, economics and politics and reinstating the notion of equality in popular discourse. It's greatest achievement is in its ability to lay the foundation for a novel kind of anti-caste politics that has the potential to rebuild the foundation of the Republic.

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