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The Impact of Collectivism on Creative Self-Efficacy in Japanese Learners

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Abstract

During 25 years of observing Japanese students in the English language classroom a pattern began to emerge in the students. When asked to do something that required creative skills a percentage of the class was inevitably stumped by the task and looks to their fellow classmates before producing something that resembled what others had done. Japan is widely seen as a collectivist society which led to the question of whether or not a collectivist self-identity had an impact on creative self-efficacy. Fifty Japanese participants from various ages and social standings were given a survey that contained qualitative and quantitative questions. The data were compared and both sets of data were consistent with the other. A Pearson's correlation test was done on the quantitative results. The test showed a strong negative correlation between collectivist self-identity and creative self-efficacy.

Key Words: collectivism, Japan, creative, self-efficacy, identity.

Introduction

I first arrived in Japan in 1992. From that time until the present I have been teaching English as a second language to Japanese people from every demographic imaginable. Over those 25 years, I began to notice a pattern in some of my students. Before I describe the pattern, I want to emphasize that I only saw this in some, not all. However, the prevalence caught my attention and peaked my curiosity enough to study the phenomena. What I noticed was that whenever I gave my students an assignment that required them to be creative; some of them were unable to complete the assignment. They would either freeze-up, panic, or try to find out how others were doing the assignment before proceeding.

This type of reaction occurred again and again over the 25 years of my teaching practice and was observed in almost every age group from elementary school to the elderly. This continuous observation led to the question of what might be causing this behavior and how it could be addressed in order to improve learning outcomes in the English language classroom. I began to define what I was observing as low creative efficacy and wondered if it was being influenced by collectivism since Japan is widely seen, even by Japanese people, as a collectivist society. To put it clearly, the thesis question that drove this research was how does a collectivist self-identity impact creative self-efficacy?

Before describing the research method, results and implications I would like to put my observations into context by presenting several examples that support the idea of identity's effect on behavior, collectivism and Japan, a description of creativity, and finally, language as a creative process.

Background

There is a plethora of information in the fields of behaviorism and psychology on how identity and behavior are interlinked. Berzonsky, for example, made three general identity categories and, based on those, predicted behavioral tendencies. In 2010, he wrote about a specific experiment he had done involving 1078 Polish people from adolescence to early adulthood. In his study, he successfully predicted that, based on the identity category that best described each individual, he could successfully establish a correlation between his three categories and the types of values people adopt, what sort of personality traits they would display, and most importantly, how they engaged in the decision-making process (Berzonsky, Cieciuch, Duriez, & Soenens, 2011).

In another example of how identity affects behavior, Akutsu examined the correlation between collectivist identity and bargaining behavior. He hypothesized that the impact of group identity on bargaining behavior is stronger in Japan, which he describes as a collectivist culture, than in the U.S., which he describes as an individualistic culture. He went on to state that the individualism/collectivism dimension of culture interacts with the group identity effects, however, bargaining behavior is not notably different between the two cultures when group identity is collapsed (Akutso, 1998).

Finally, we can see previous notions of the relationship between identity and behavior in Kekes' work, once wrote the following.

> A man possesses constancy only if he regularly acts in accordance with a deliberate pattern. That is, a pattern he first recognizes as an ideal and then gradually transforms himself so as to have his life reflect it. To have constancy is to be steadfast in adhering to one's deliberate pattern as it is transformed from a distant ideal to one's second nature and true self (Kekes, 1983).

Kekes is describing a pattern of self-identification that dictates deliberate behavioral choices, which eventually become habitual. This idea runs parallel to my own hypothesis that collectivist self-identity in Japanese students influences creative self-efficacy. One problem we face with this question is that some would argue about whether or not Japan was indeed a collectivist society.

Japan as Collectivist

In the US, there is a well-known proverb that states, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." In contrast, Japan offers a different perspective with its own well know proverb, "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down". (出る釘は打たれる). Each can be said to represent the core values of their respective societies. If we assume that the squeaky wheel and the protruding nail are both metaphors for individual expression, then we can also see how each country's proverb suggests how one should deal with individualism. Frager explains that when Japanese social behavior is discussed, there is often an importance placed on social forces and the pressure towards conformity. Almost all talks about Japan also focus on the importance of group membership. Frager calls Japan a culture in which social standards rather than personal values determine behavior (Nealy, 2013).

It is important to note that what is being described is the average, rather than the absolute of each individual in Japanese society. Hofstede put it best when he said that characterizing a national culture, or in the case of this study, national ideology, does not mean that all people in that nation have all of the characteristics being assigned to that culture. Common elements are being described as oppose to absolute characteristics of every individual (Hofstede, 1980).

Collectivism pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong and cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003). According to Hofstede, people are born into collectivities which may be their extended family, or their community. Everybody is expected to look after the interest of the in-group and to have no other opinions and beliefs than the opinions and beliefs of their in-group (Hofstede, 1983).

Based on Hofstede's research, on the scale of individuality and collectivism Japan falls somewhere in the middle (Hofstede, 1983) which lends credence to the idea that collectivism might have an impact on Japanese learning and creativity.

Definition of Creativity

There are several definitions of creativity. For the sake of this study two definitions will be used. The first states that creative people are characterized by an active, lively, inventive, own and independent approach to the seeking of solutions in complex situations and tasks (Sramova & Fichnova, 2008). The second definition is one I formulated myself in order to have a

framework by which I could evaluate creative-self efficacy. It is characterized by information synthesis, own decision making, imaginative thinking and problem solving. These five skills are what was considered when thinking about the impact of collectivism on students' ability and willingness to be creative. Having said that, the participants of this research were asked to define creativity. The results of this research are based on what they think it means to be creative.

Under the heading of creativity one can also find language. Researchers such as Gass and Selinker have long seen language as a creative process.

> The process of acquisition is seen as one of creating a body of implicit knowledge upon which the utterances in the language are based. Acquiring a language is a creative process in which learners are interacting with their environment to produce an internalized representation of the regularities they discover in the linguistic data to which they are exposed (Gass & Selinker, 1994).

It is the notion of language acquisition and use as a creative process that also contributes to this study's quest to find out if there is a correlation between collectivism and creativity.

Methodology

The study was done using mixed methodology. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected via questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered either online or as a printout for participants to fill in. The questionnaire was originally written in English then translated to Japanese. Qualitative data were collected using open ended questions while quantitative data were gathered using Likert scale questions. A type of narrative analysis was done on the quantitative data to establish patterns and themes in the participants' response and to understand the implications. The qualitative findings were then compared to the quantitative data in order to corroborate the results of both. Quantitative data were analyzed using a Pearson's correlation test to measure the strength of association between collectivist self-identity and creative self-efficacy.

In the quantitative portion of this research, the responses were given a score of 5 to 1. A score of 5 signifies the respondent strongly identifies with the group category while a score of 1 indicates that they do not identify with the group category. Those listed below that are marked with an asterisk were given a reverse weight so that they corresponded with how strongly or weakly the participant identified with the category in question. The questionnaire items are listed below:

Collectivist Self-Identity (Quantitative)
1. I think about what others would do before making a big decision.
2. I always speak my mind even if it goes against the other people's opinions. *
3. I enjoy being unique and different from others. *
4. When shopping for music and clothes I always choose items that are "all the rage".

Collectivist Self-Identity (Qualitative)
1. Do you think of yourself as a group oriented person? Why or why not.

Creative self-efficacy (Quantitative)
1. I'm sure I can deal with problems requiring creative thinking.
2. Many times, I have proven that I can find out solutions for any difficult situation.

3. I'm good in proposing original solutions of the problems.
4. I am very good at creating things.

Creative self-efficacy (Qualitative)
    1. I think I have a lot of creative ability. Why or why not.

Data Collection

Data from a total of 50 Japanese participants aged 19 to 71 were collected. The survey was conducted over a one-month period between June and July 2012. Participants were recruited by Japanese acquaintances, who distributed the survey's URL to their Japanese associates. This method of data collection is often referred to as the snowball technique or snowball sampling. Bryman suggests that the problem with this approach is that the sample collected in this way is seldom representative of the population (Bryman, 2008). While this may be true in other cases, the issue was less problematic since the population being tested was no more clearly defined than that they be Japanese people. In support of my decision to use snowball sampling, there have been other researchers, such as Lopes et al, who have found snowball sampling to be useful for minimizing selection bias (Lopes, Rodrigues, & Sichieri, 1996).

Research ethics

All participation in this study was voluntary. No one was tricked or coerced into participating. The participants were only partially informed about the nature of the research. They were told that the survey was for a graduation thesis on the relationship between collectivism and creativity. They were not told who initiated the study nor were they given an in-depth explanation of the research questions. All participation was done anonymously. None of the data collected was shared with anyone except research staff and the faculty of Linköping University, Sweden.

Results

In this section I will present the quantitative and qualitative results of the study. The quantitative results will be presented in a straight forward showing of numerical data. Given the nature of the qualitative data, I would like to offer some explanation along with the presentation of the findings in order to keep the results in context.

Quantitative
    Collectivist self-identity
        Likert scale Questions
            Overall there was a mean score of 2.39 on the Likert scale with a standard deviation of .68.

    Creative self-efficacy
        Likert scale Questions
            Overall there was a mean score of 3.56 on the Likert scale with a standard deviation of .52.
        Pearson's correlation
            There was a -.45 correlation between Collectivist self-identity and creative self-efficacy with a P value of .001

<u>Qualitative</u>
      Collectivist self-identity
            "Do you think of yourself as a group oriented person? Why or why not".
                  Results
                  70% Negative Association
                  30% Positive Association

Some of the reasons cited by the participants for not being collectivist were the inability to find ways to fit in, feelings of resistance towards the group, and preference for freedom. Negative feelings often emerged when the participants wrote about being separate from the group.

"If you mean being in a group just to be in a group, that is not who I am. I change jobs many times, I change schools many times, I enjoy being by myself but it doesn't mean I hate people." This respondent defended the position of not being in a group as if that decision was considered by others to be antisocial. This suggests that, for this respondent, there are social pressures for belonging in a group.

In other responses where people identified with not being group-oriented words like resistance, loss of self, and rejection were used. One respondent wrote, "I am weak, being alone is easier."

Of the respondents who identified themselves as not being group oriented, only 60% gave a reason. In almost all cases there was some sort of negative attachment to their position. This includes a fear of losing self, experience with being ostracized, and the group being bothersome.

I should note here that there were a few respondents who mentioned that they were "not especially" group oriented. Use of the phrase "not especially" connotes the idea that the respondents do not think that they are any more group oriented than most people. I interpreted these answers to mean that the respondents did not have a strong collectivist self-identity since they did not see themselves as being especially collectivist.

Now, let us take a look at the opposite side of the collectivist identity spectrum. Although we had a negative association attached to not being group oriented by the participants who did not have a strong collectivist identity, the reverse was true of those who strongly identified with being collectivist. Their reasons were security, support, acceptance, pride, human nature, and having more fun in a group. For example, one respondent wrote:

"When I am in the group I feel extremely safe. If I imagine myself without a group I begin to feel uncertainty."

This answer was striking not only because it highlights the overall attitudes of the participants who identified as being strongly collectivistic, but it also echoes the negative images seen in the group who did not identify with being collectivistic. Just like them, this respondent described separation from the group in negative aspects. Belonging to the group means acceptance while not belonging to a group equals uncertainty.

Creative self-efficacy
> I think I have a lot of creative ability. Why or why not.
>> Results
>> 57% Negative Association
>> 35% Positive Association
>> 9% Unsure

Creative self-efficacy refers to how much belief the individual has in his or her own ability to do something creative. On the survey the participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "I think I have a lot of creative ability. Why or why not." 57% said no, 35% said yes, 9% were not sure. The question itself was designed to determine, whether or not the respondents believed in their own ability to actually create something. Some of the answers given for why they could not were as follows:

- "I want to have ability but it's difficult. I lack the ability to make things real."
- "No I don't think so because I can never think of anything when I am supposed to draw or do some crafts."
- "I don't think so. There are so many geniuses in the world, I am not that confident."

For those who answered yes to this question some of the reasons given were
- "I think so. I can easily call forth images of things."
- "I believe I have a decent imagination. I also think some part of me has the
- spirit of a shokunin (master craftsman) but I don't know if it's anything special to brag about."
- "The difference between creativity and creative ability is do you take action or not. To think might be easy but to take action is different from just thinking therefore I think I do have creative ability"

Discussion

This study was conducted as a way of finding out just how deeply collectivism impacts upon creative self-efficacy. In particular, I was less concerned with the term collectivism in the general sense and more concerned with the notion of the collectivist identity. I believe there is a difference. On the one hand collectivism, when applied generally, describes a certain aspect of social behavior and psychology. It can be used as a catchall descriptor of a group of people. On the other hand, the collectivist self-identity can exist independent of what may or may not be characteristic of society at large. The individual is collectivist because he or she believes him or herself to be collectivist.

When we look at studies like the one done by Noguchi (Noguchi,, 2007), we see that research of this type tries to establish the collectivist nature of the whole group and then tries to determine how that collectivist nature impacts on creative ability. What these studies fail to do is look deeper at the role of identity on the outcome of creativity. I have to admit that on the outset of this project I was also of the mind that socially inherent collectivism was the dominant factor in how often and to what degree individuals within Japanese society identify with being cognitively creative and see themselves as having the ability to physically do something creative.

It never occurred to me, until later in the research, to focus more on identity rather than purely on the notion of collectivism itself.

So, is Japan a collectivist society? Perhaps. The bigger question is how does the individual's belief in that influence their creative outcome? If you believe that creativity is the ability to think divergently then it would seem that a collectivist identity would cancel out divergent thinking. A majority of the participants themselves defined creativity as the development of the unknown, freedom of expression, and the ability to imagine. All three of these would seem to be hampered by a collectivist self-identity.

If we look at the data, we can see that there is indeed a negative correlation between collectivist self-identity and creative self-efficacy. This means a stronger collectivist identity tended to also show a weaker creative aspect. However, when we take a deeper look at the reasons people gave for not being creative there was hardly any mention of collectivism or social pressure. Instead, it seemed on the surface to be purely a matter of self-confidence. Those who did not identify with being creative did so because they did not feel they had enough ability or talent to be creative. There were however, a few who did cite not wanting to stand out as a reason for their perceived lack of creativity.

What does it all mean for the classroom?

My experience tells me that the first priority of education should be to eliminate as many barriers to learning as possible so that the learner can come to the experience with readiness. In essence that is what this study has really been about. In a Japanese course, how does a strong collectivist identity affect the learning process? Does it hinder it or is it insignificant? Based on the evidence presented in this study we cannot say that the collectivist self-identity is insignificant. In the qualitative analysis 30% of the participants identified strongly with being collectivist. This figure was corroborated by the quantitative data. If the notion exists, then it must have some bearing on the behavior of the individual. Also, of those who did identify with being non-collectivist there was still a strong negative association with this position. Again, this would logically influence behavior.

What this points to is the notion that it is not the idea of collectivism as social phenomena alone that curriculum designers and educators should be concerned with. Instead, focus should also be placed on individual identity within the given society because understanding the dynamics of identity within the context of the group will allow for deeper insight on how to eliminate barriers to learning. Furthermore, the identity of the individual should take precedent over any generalized notion as the greater force on the behavior of the learning. I do not mean that we should dismiss collectivism all together. What I am saying is that we consider it as one of the influential factors of identity rather than solely as the influential factor of creative outcome.

Limitations

The notions of collectivism and creativity are constructed concepts. This could also have a large bearing on the outcome of the study because what I see as being collectivist and what the participants see as being collectivist may not have been the same thing. The same is true for creativity. Still, while these constructs exist and color behavior, it is the individual identity that seems to have the greater power over outcome.

Language also introduced another limitation. The survey was translated from English into Japanese. Although every effort was made to avoid the group effect, whereby the participants might answer out of defensiveness or in response to what they perceived as expectation, I failed

to take into account the subtlety of the Japanese language and the culture behind it. Because of this it is possible that the participants were aware of the fact that the survey was done by a foreign person and answered accordingly.

Another linguistic limitation was in the word creativity itself. There are two ways to write the Chinese characters for creativity. One indicates use of imagination and the other indicates the actual creation of things. Although both characters are often used interchangeably the translator selected the character that indicates the creation of things. This, of course, may have biased the answers that were given.

Finally, Greater understanding of the correlation between collectivist identity and creativity could have been gained with the use of in depth interviews and deeper narrative analysis. A questionnaire can only provide a small glimpse into the minds of the participants. Given the lack of time and resources a questionnaire was the only option available for this study.

With the limitations listed above the findings of the study are, by themselves, inconclusive since it is unclear how far bias has contaminated the data. Still the data does have some value because it allows for a deeper understanding of how Japanese people view themselves in the context of collectivism and creativity. This is the seed necessary for the development of more hypotheses and further research on the topic.

Conclusion

All of this research was done in order to ponder obstacles and solutions for the Japanese creativity classroom. Since the descriptor "collectivist" appears again and again it is absolutely crucial that these issues be considered when thinking of the best way forward in education. As stated in the discussion, focus on collectivism alone is not enough. Individual identity also plays a key role as well. Based on the findings of this research I can now proceed to hypothesize that it is more important for curriculum designers to focus on building programs that look to address the various identities within the class as a whole, if that curriculum hopes to achieve creative learning for the entire group.

With regard to collectivism, I would like to conclude by emphasizing again that by understanding the role that collectivism plays on the identity and behavior of the Japanese learner we can better understand how to build curriculum that addresses this and even utilizes it for the betterment of the classroom. What is certain is that based on the qualitative, quantitative, and deduced findings of this study the matter warrants further investigation.

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Adapting Ourselves and the Other in an Evolving World

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Abstract

There are issues that make you mostly to think. There are issues that make you mostly to feel. Migration issue is one of those rare issues that make you to think, to feel and to act. Recent months migration has acquired a vast dynamic in some Greek Islands and northern frontiers as huge numbers of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan enter literary every day.[1] The demands of this moving population in shelter food water and schooling resembles to a huge natural catastrophe. According to every sociocultural and geopolitical analysis, this trend will continue for years to come and is happening into a society in a turmoil because of its own financial and social crisis. As it was written "with the refugee crisis on the top of everyone's social agenda, there is a population especially feeling the impacts of displacement and violence: women." According to some official data there are currently 60 million people displaced from their homes as refugees. And 80% of those people are women and children.[2] With conflict as a constant reality in our world, it is women and children who feel the brunt of the violence and it is academic community, activists, local and international societies and institutions who must feel the urge for those women and children to create and participate in sustainable networks of their development. Having as a given our actual interference and participation into the antiracist and pro-refugees movement in Greece, we are discussing some of the approaches related to women and children we traced in the border line area of Eidomeni, and we compare them to such programs as the Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, INTERSOS, or Najlaa'skilis knitting workshops and charity sales in Turkey. There is no such thing as a program able to solve everything in such a complicated and hard issue. Yet where there is true need, and this is a case like that, there should be any possible effort securing that wellbeing of refugee women and children, and the safety of them and of the rest of the world, will not be omitted from our perspectives and efforts.

Key Words: Immigration, Education, Rights, Inclusion

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[1] http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php
[2] http://mashable.com/sgs/

Introduction
Greece as Case Study: A society in Transformation

«A «Foreigner». - who can realize the burden of that word»[3]

The transition of a mono-cultural society into a multi-cultural reality carries a variety of functions in social, financial and cultural field. (Adler 1975; Allport & Gordon 1962) Those functions, never completely liberated from the hegemonic discourses, are at the same time related to the acceptance or the disapproval of the *other:* That acceptance or disapproval, having to do with the perception of the self and the other (and thus with the multiple notion of identity) is involved into the socio-psychological strategies the groups create in order to adjust or not in an evolving world.

Greek society, during and after the 90s, (under the influence of major geopolitical and financial changes) rapidly evolved from a society that used to send immigrants abroad into a society that had to receive immigrants within. This huge step from «human export» into «human import» had as a result the need to adapt a hegemonic «monocultural» and ethnocentric, traditional framework into a multicultural reality. (Bourdieu & Swartz 1977; Bien, 2005) In the various social and cultural dynamics that were created and appeared the recent decades, the strongest one in ideological level was xenophobia, and in practical level was the absence of «proper», or at least functional, structures to receive, to sustain, to educate, to include people.

Many of these refugees who migrate nowadays due to war are women and children (International Migration Outlook 2007, Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development Publications: OECD 2007, OECD Publications, 2004) that will have to adjust in concentration camps where their own socio-religious framework will exclude them from taking initiatives, despite the fact women will have the burden to sustain their children, and were they might be endangered. They also have to adjust into local societies with a different culture, being a new parameter in financial poverty and social exclusion, that will affect them and society in general.

In this framework it is extremely important to develop major programs to enchase education and socio-psychological aid in the benefit of women and children (Parekh, 1986; Sarup, 1992) and in the benefit of international ethics, and interests as well that must confront fundamentalism even now that it is a bit late. In order to achieve that we must enrich our knowledge, ideas, and practices in respect to the actual field.

The Subgroups and Their Needs

According to some official data there are currently 60 million people displaced from their homes as refugees. And 80% of those people are women and children[4]. With conflict as a constant reality in our world, it is women and children who feel the brunt of the violence and it is academic community, activists, local and international societies and institutions who must feel the urge for those women and children to create and participate in sustainable networks of their development.

According to United Nation's High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) "in the current situation where people are 'on the move', ensuring the identification of and support to Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) in accordance with their best interests is a particular challenge. In most countries, UASC are reluctant to be identified as such, as this would delay their onward movement. Some UASC state, for the same reason, that they are adults. The 'top' nationalities of UASC in Europe are Syrians, Afghans and Eritreans with significant variations between different transit countries.

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[3] Albert Camus, in his Notes 1940, republished 2014, *Athens: Politeia.*
[4] http://mashable.com/sgs/

The majority of the UASC are boys between the age of 14 to 17 years, but there has been an increase in the percentage of girls. As Caroline Brothers pointed in New York Times in 8/27/2009[5], using examples of children that became victims of exploitation in Greece and elsewhere «thousands of boys from Afghanistan cross Europe all alone the recent years. Some of them are only 12 years old!" The same wave locates Blance Tax[6], general executive in the United Nations pointing that within a year it was more than -doubled the percentage of the children that seek asylum in European Countries.

These refugee realities are brutal and they carry conflicts that target and have as primary victims those segments of population that could sustain the fabric of a community even in the move. If you target a woman, if you rape a child, if you attack a woman or her child, you devastate her family and tear apart the broader social structure, even in times of need.

The first issue we must realize is a tough one and even solidarity movements avoid to address it. The women and children are endangered not just of War, not Just of xenophobia and its version of Arabophobia. They are also endangered inside of their communities because of actual circumstances and because of cultural parameters forming what a woman or a child is or should be. According to some data under question "the practice of providing accommodations in large tents, the lack of gender-separate sanitary facilities, premises that cannot be locked, the lack of safe havens for women and girls — to name just a few spatial factors — increases the vulnerability of women and children in the camps. This situation plays into the hands of those men who assign women a subordinate role and treat women traveling alone as 'wild game'.[7]

So there is a growing urge to create a protected environment (Luhmann, 1990) in order those women and children to be able to take initiatives and transcend social exclusion. Only then their migration will have the meaning of a new life in a better environment.

The Question is: Would this be considered as a violation to their ethics? And should these ethics transcend the ethics of the receiving countries and the very Declaration of Human Rights? There is an important discussion here that we should make.

Communalism vs Human Rights

«It's so easy people to support those who suffer, but it is so difficult people to support those who think!» as Oscar Wilde (2007) wrote. If we transcend any kind of convenient sentimentalism and really root to defend the human rights globally, up to the extent we can, we may realize that any use of the term 'culture' in a static way, and every interpretation of the social differences exclusively as cultural differences, it consists an option of racism. Because how can we define racism if not as an ideological representation of the social contradictions as natural orders?

When we think its commonsensical to avoid asking any kind of cultural adaptation 'because the culture of the immigrants should be respected', then we treat this culture not as a social phenomenon in constant evolution but as a religious aspect, in other words as a natural law! This perception is the foundation stone of the communalisms even when these communalisms are in fight. It is the very same argument after all that ethnocentric communalism uses, declaring national culture as a stable and as mono-cultural culture throughout times.

The borderline where these adaptations should be asked is anything related to the violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Forced Marriage, Wife's Abuse, Pedophilia, clitoris cut, deprivation of the girls from schooling or studying, deprivation of

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[5] http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/28/world/asia/28afghankids.html

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/future-of-gender-equality-2015/files/report_forum_gender_equality_en.pdf

[7] http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/6527/migrants-rape-germany

women from social participation, cannot be tolerated in any Western Country (in fact in any Country), even for 'religious proposes'. Otherwise the multicultural rhetoric functions in a paternalistic way and is being deprived from its very content, defending exclusively the 'one culture' that the hegemonic subgroup (such as the male or ultra-religious) has imposed to the other segments of a certain culture.

This phenomenon of 'distance' between the local culture and some aspects of the immigrant or refugee culture is one of the main reasons why philosophers and social scientists (Radtke, 1999) claim that the dominant version of inter-culturality is related more to the needs of local culture instead of the minority needs. Because through the mentality of distance, of 'not involvement', the members of the hegemonic local culture hold exclusively their privileges, while they reclaim the universal humanitarianism as exclusively their own characteristic. Zizek (1997) points that this version of inter-culturality reproduces the power relations in planetary level, leaving the victims in their 'cultural fate' without exploring the geopolitical and social reasons of this fate.

One more parameter worth mentioning is that this notion of 'distance', this notion of the immigrant or minority culture as a stable natural law, unable to change even when violates human rights, reinforces the ultra-right wing globally, despite the fact ultra-right wing also violates human rights, fact that proves their hypocrisy and their selective use of human and democratic values.

In conclusion, any kind of fetishistic approach, any kind of a 'folklore like' appeal into a major political issue, leads to the disarming of the much needed political analysis and solutions. This is the case with the 'politically correct' humanitarianism that approaches phenomena like hyper realistic religious aspects cut off from the actual social, cultural and financial circumstances that produce them.

Planning the Programs

Forced migration is a global issue that causes political conflict, economic hardship, social disruption, lack of health infrastructure and other risks pertaining to health and the well-being of individuals. Despite the fact approximately 51% of the refugees are women (from now on in some cases they will be referred as RW), and if we add children we have an even higher percentage, refugee women, more than men, face a number of challenges within forced migration and resettlement such as exposure to sexual violence and unequal access to humanitarian assistance. [8] This unequal access to the most vulnerable segment of refugee population must and could be stopped with the integration of Refugee Women (and through them children) and with a change of attitude. According to United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The attitude of individual staff members has been identified universally by both multilateral and bilateral organizations as the major obstacle to implementation of policies and guidelines on behalf of women in mainstreaming issues related to refugee women. As the Beijing Conference underscores, attitudes sustained by what is still a predominantly male establishment must be changed in order to ensure further progress.

Thus some steps that should be made is to create specialized staff to identify opportunities and barriers in field implementation, as well as additional funding. It is important as we may see later in that draft note to find key figures from within in this effort. According to UNCHR well-targeted and expanded People-Oriented Planning (POP) training relies, to a significant extent on that need for specialized stuff. A suggestion on a policy of recruiting only women in relation to children should also be considered. In general any program regarding women should consist of a. actual integration of the target groups, b.

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[8] Global Consultations, 2002; UNHCR, 2001.

physical protection and c. human rights training, d. policy compliance of implementing partners and e. allocation of sufficient resources for implementation. Regarding children should consist on a. a safe and able to offer the basic needs and accepting environment, b. In an effort to not alienate them from their own culture (it might be regarded as aggressive strategy or cultural imperialism otherwise in the camps!) thus RW must have the role of the main educator, c. On socio-psychological support circles, having as a participation criterion the age and 4. access to an enriched education regardless of the gender.

Also the collection of disaggregated statistics which will give more precise planning information to meet specific needs. A further recommendation that food distribution be placed in the hands of refugee women has been developed into an action-oriented research project under the management of the Program and Technical Support Section (PTSS) which will assess the conditions necessary to ensure the success of such distribution and its impact on family level food security.

Furthermore, the very effort to make those women and children feel secure enough and capable to take their lives in their own hands will enrich their world perspective and will make them less vulnerable to religious totalitarian voices. Yet this should be very district and not influenced by geopolitical goals and cultural imperialism of any kind. But it should be influenced by the need and the right to protect the entire population (locals and immigrants) and contemn terrorism through education and human interaction.

Displaced people, asylum seekers, living in exile, are confronted with complexities and uncertainties about their future. Adults, for example, are in need of opportunities that will help them gain knowledge and skills for a healthy life away from criminal activities and violence. Girls and women are the most susceptible to sexual abuse and exploitation in refugee camps. In many cases, girls turn to sex for money in order to support the family (Robinson & Alpar 2009). For that reason, women refugees are a vulnerable group that must have protection, especially in the camps. Initiatives should be made inside the camps, regardless if camps themselves are an imposed and not positive reality at all.

The fact that women make up two-thirds of the world's non-literate populations has been a cause for concern. To ensure a voice for refugee women in the regional preparatory meetings and in the actual planning, it would be an important step that requires education and decision making to build their team within respecting their otherness (Unheimlich). Refugee Women should go through a primary education to understand their Human Rights and Law Protection in the new context. Also, regarding physical protection the UNCHR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) Guidelines on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence against Refugees have received international praise and indeed were cited as a model in the Beijing Global Platform of Action. A new training module for Interviewing Applicants for Refugee Status includes a specific chapter and training video on refugee women. A manual on rights awareness training is also under development. It is important to explain the status of a female child as well, knowing that as mothers they know more than they can express in their environment.

According to reports sixty per cent of the women interviewed expressed feelings of insecurity, and one in three were too scared or overwhelmed to leave their homes. Thus a psychological support in an interpersonal basis and then in a well-protected circle to be able to express themselves is also needed. F.i. in Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, INTERSOS, in coordination with United Nation' Women, established a 'safe place' under the name of 'Women and Girl's Oasis' in November 2012 which was funded by the Government of Netherlands. Refugee women and girls could meet and receive assistance out of the standardized family control system (unwomen.org). On the one hand, this system allows Syrian refugee women to work and receive 'cash for work scheme', and, on the other, it allows them to engage with a peer-to-peer support mechanism and empowerment process.

Moreover, this safe place supports women's growth allowing them to develop personally and socially; they narrate to each other the stories of violence and abuse they experienced in the Syrian conflict, allowing them to re-build confidence, self-esteem and self-reliance. The activities provided to women encompass tailoring, hairdressing, drawing, English classes, mosaic and handcraft workshops and football for girls.

When a structure of their own will be ready we may set up a network connecting those women with local market. The finances might and should be used in order to sustain the schooling they should offer in their children. To corroborate that women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite to sustainable development is fundamental.

The Needs of the Host Communities

Host communities also need massive support. Many of these women's difficulties and rising tensions reflect more general concerns in the communities around them. The social and psychological and financial status of the people are at stake and they also are in a process of alienating from their own traditional environment that goes through blistering changes. Programs must not overlook that fact! There is an interesting paradigm that reveals to us how important is to find key figures that belong to the same culture as WR in order to offer education and construct a network or a woman structure to communicate and interact with locals. In Turkey a Syrian women Najlaa invested the full amount of help she received in materials for products and, together with the 18 women, began knitting workshops in her home. Having study psychology, she was also able to combine these with psychosocial activities on weekends, allowing the women to deepen their relationship and share their hopes, worries and dreams.

Word soon spread and, in an effort to create a sustainable business model, Najlaa sought approval from Kilis Governorate to hold a charity sale that would help more women to join the community and enable them to earn extra cash to support their families. In January 2013, the first sale, fully supported by the Governorate, was held in Kilis. In just over a year, the knitting group alone has grown to support 45 women, among the centre's 260 participants. Eighteen trainers now offer workshops in hairdressing, Turkish and Arabic, and sewing. The women have also been able to find new premises. This helped not just RW but also local women!

After all, social support, regardless if you are a refugee or a host, is an important factor in reducing the many challenges that women face. Social support is defined as the perception or experience that one is loved, cared for, esteemed, valued and a part of a social group (Wills, 1991). The literature shows that it can have positive impact on both mental and physical health by reducing the severity of the situation and enhancing the well-being of the individual in general. One form of social support is involving women in work that helps in promoting their satisfaction level and the feeling of being valued. The connection of RW and Local Women could be essential.

Resource allocation for ongoing activities and particularly for new initiatives and pilot projects remain a difficulty in times of scarce resources, yet it is a struggle worth giving.

An Effort Worth Doing

According to the Program On the Child Well Being, the keys to lifetime wellbeing starts with the assurance of a safe, low-stress environment. Although it is hard when their life is in a huge turmoil, fundamental Human Rights should not depend on life transitions and these women and children should not be deprived from them.

Our aim, since we address the education of the 21st century, is to learn, enrich and understand how we can, as educators and social scientists, create a foundation that could intervene in those camps and create a safe and supporting environment changing little by

little their perspectives for themselves and the world, and thus their ambitions and needs. For Instance, it is of high importance to research under an interdisciplinary approach how those women can create unions to get themselves protected and active and at the same time able to be involved in the education of the children offering to them a creative and humanitarian view of the world. And at the same time how they can gain money from local markets creating their own products in order to finance their unions and schools. It is not a new born idea. Microfinances proved that money spend in female hands, for instance in India, return to the family and the community. Now is the time to adjust this given in a creative way and under renewed theoretical and practical approaches in Europe and its new refugee oriented reality.

As we already mentioned usually, worldwide, intercultural education is explored either through a hegemonic cynicism that wants to adapt its needs to 'local' ethnocentric and financial needs, either through a simplistic sentimentalism, that deals with it in a general, theoretical «humanitarian» basis, unable to locate the differentiations, the true status and the true needs of the «other», of the specific «education» and the certain «society».

Islamic refugee women and children from non-westernized countries face a number of challenges in adapting to their new environment, especially when that new country, is westernized and further more deals with its own huge obstacles. As international surveys claim[9] "Refugees are primarily women and children, so it is important that women be in their best health because they usually bear the responsibility of caring for each other and children, often in very difficult situations. To interfere inside the concentration camps and help them organize themselves is a huge first step. This can happen: In Greece in the 90s we built networks in Thracian villages were Muslim women were able to create their own unions and produce local products to finance them and their family. Yet this can happen with immigrants or refugees also: "In Waitako, at the request of women in the local Somali community, a number of initiatives were taken to increase their opportunities for physical activity.

In a survey made by Canada Dept of National Health and Welfare entitled Isolated, Afraid and Forgotten: The Service Delivery Needs and Realities of Immigrant and Refugee Women Who Are Battered (MacLeod, L. & Shin, M. 1990) it was pointed the necessity for information about rights and laws to reach these women, the creation of a supportive network, the opportunity to discuss and reassess beliefs and assumptions with women and men who understand their culture and can communicate in their language, subsidized language-training classes with training allowances and free child care facilities, culturally sensitive child care facilities, more job-training courses, affordable housing, and services in the woman's language. Current services in Canada include immigrant women's programs; immigrant family counseling services; settlement/multicultural or ethnically specific organizations; transition houses and other services for battered women; and mainstream legal, health, and social services. The analysis concluded that these women need more culturally sensitive mainstream services, and involvement in the development and operation of services for immigrant and refugee women who are abused.

And organizations like REWA (Refugee Women Alliance) and Immigrant Refugee Women's Program[10] articulate their proposals, yet within a different context than this nowadays Greece and southern Europe in general faces. Some of their experiences and solutions are quite useful yet local reality must create parallel new ones. The added vulnerability and isolation that immigration or refugee experiences impose on women complicate the reality of domestic or camp assault.

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9 Pauline B. Guerin, Roda Omar Diiriye, Callie Corrigan BspExSc & Bernard Guerin, Physical Activity Programs for Refugee Somali Women: Working Out in a New Country.
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.583.9471&rep=rep1&type=pdf
[10] http://www.irwp.net/ 1/12/16

Having that in mind we consider to start by truly collecting, exposing and briefly analyzing some data of reality. And to continue by listening the actual people and communities, gathering practical information in order to articulate useful proposals with the help of the experts. In a second level we must engage the kind of team of social scientists and workers they actually need in order to build the self and the group within and build their children training or the training and care of unaccompanied children in the camps, gaining some self-respect and some money. And parallel, in a third level, we must make them able, with our support, to promote themselves and their products in the local market, creating a framework of friendly shops, making able to finance their family and their structures inside the camp.

This method, family oriented and scalable by its own nature, should address as Irwin Redlener (2007) pouts it the range of nutrition, health, environmental, and cognitive supports to healthy development and effective learning" for both children and women. Thus it should be multistakeholder engaging a network of social scientists like psychologists and educators to help those women and children construct a different self and collective image, community-based organizations to help them to create/participate in their own schools in mini scales, in order offer a better education, also to gain access to the internal hierarchy of the camp if not demand for a separate one if necessary, and business to help them gain access to local market, selling their products.

There is no such thing as a program able to solve everything in such a complicated and hard issue. And yet there are indeed issues that make you to think, to feel and to act in order to make the world, even in the slightest, a better and more safe place. Having as a given this is an issue like that, let us make any possible effort as scientist educators and citizens to contribute to such an effort.

Conclusion

As rightfully it is said every research about the Other is a research about the Self. About the limits, the values, the strength, the meaning of the human being. Any program concerning the vast refugee crisis in ethnocentric societies like the European ones, should be considered as a field of renegotiation between a monocultural "past" and a multicultural reality that have to invent "bridges". It is not important right now if the bridges we must try to invent are big or small. As people say in the Balkans: "*small bridge, big bridge, someone will pass over!*"

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