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SERIA: FILOSOFIE ŞI ŞTIINŢE
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Universitatea de Vest
din Timişoara

ANALELE UNIVERSITĂŢII DE VEST DIN TIMIŞOARA

SERIA: FILOSOFIE ŞI ŞTIINŢE ALE COMUNICĂRII

ANNALS OF THE WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMIŞOARA

SERIES: PHILOSOPHY AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

alexbaum7@web.de) CORIN BRAGA (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, corinbraga@yahoo.com)

FARKAS KATALIN (Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, farkask@ceu.hu)

ALBERTO GONZÁLEZ (Bowling Green State University, Ohio, USA, agonzal@bgsu.edu)

CRISTINA IONESCU (Regina University, Canada)

NOBORU NOTOMI (Keio University, Japan)

NILÜFER PEMBECIOĞLU ÖCEL (Istanbul University, Turkey, nilocel@istanbul.edu.tr)

MILENKO PEROVIĆ (Novi Sad University, Serbia, milenko.perovic@gmail.com)

DORIN POPA (A.I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania, dpopa@uaic.ro)   ILIE RAD (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, nikolausrambu@yahoo.de) NICOLAE RÂMBU (A.I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania, nikolausrambu@yahoo.de) CĂLIN RUS (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, calin.rus@ubbcluj) TON VEEN (Christian University of Ede, Netherlands, tveen@che.nl)

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Foști sportivi, actuali influenceri – cariere, teme, public

Adela Borlea

E-mail: adela.borlea01@e-uvt.ro

Departamentul de Filosofie şi Ştiinţe ale Comunicării

Facultatea de Ştiinţe Politice, Filosofie şi Ştiinţele Comunicării

Universitatea de Vest din Timişoara

Abstract

Tema permite descoperirea evoluţiei internetului prin prisma unor reţele de social media, analizând conturile unor foste sportive de performanţă. Prima parte a lucrării este despre apariţia social media şi cât de mult s-a dezvoltat aceasta pe parcurs, mai exact, despre cât de mult a luat amploare mediul online faţă de presa tradiţională. În continuare, lucrarea se ocupă de conceptul de influencer cu o privire ţintită spre sportivii de performanţă, cunoscuţi la nivel internaţional. Analiza vizează paginile de social media (Instagram şi Facebook) ale unor foste sportive de performanţă, atât din ţară cât şi din străinătate, precum şi un interviu cu una dintre acestea, Diana Bulimar, scopul fiind de a arăta înrâuririle dintre fosta lor şi actuala lor ocupaţie.

Cuvinte-cheie: Influenceri, sportivi, vlog, social media, internet

Introducere

Lucrarea abordează o temă destul de controversată, social media, din care fac parte influencerii. Cercetarea aduce atât idei idei pro, cât şi contra în ceea ce priveşte influenţarea publicului. Ca metodă de cercetare am folosit-o pe cea empirică, în studiul de caz, prin analiza de conţinut a unor reţele social media ale unor creatoare de conţinut online retrase din sportul de performanţă şi de asemenea, ca metodă calitativă, am ales interviul.

Prezenta lucrare a avut ca scop ilustrarea exactă a termenului influencer, care este perceput de fiecare persoană diferit, cât şi identificarea exactă a ce înseamnă un influencer retras din sportul de performanţă, atât prin ajutorul analizei de conţinut, dar mai ales prin metoda interviului.

Concepte, noţiuni

Conceptele cu care am operat sunt: „Un influencer este acea resursă digitală care, în baza unui contract comercial şi în conformitate cu un brief care să conţină cerinţe clare, este achiziţionată la un anumit cost şi trebuie să aducă beneficii în conformitate cu obiectivul de comunicare al brandului” şi „Într-un top făcut de HypeAuditor & MOCAPP este ilustrat faptul că aproapre 20% dintre influencerii români folosesc şi postează conţinut legat de lifestyle. Pe locul 2 se situează muzica cu un procent de aproximativ 13%, iar pe locul 3 este prezentă categoria de beauty cu un procent de aproximativ 9%” (China Birta 2021). Resursa bibliografică principală pentru primul concept este cartea lui Cristian China-Birta *Ce ne facem, dom'le, cu influencerii aceştia?*, autorul fiind foarte cunoscut pentru blogul său, este un om

activ în media, de asemenea, a participat inclusiv la Universitatea de Vest la o discuţie cu specialiştii în PR. Cartea apărută recent, în 2021, cuprinde informaţii despre noile tehnici din media şi despre influenceri.

De asemenea, pentru cel de-al doilea concept cu care am operat, am folosit ca sursă bibliografică cartea *Social Media influencerii şi rolul lor publicitar*, coordonată de Delia Cristina Balaban şi Julia Szambolics, una dintre cele mai recomandate cărţi apărute la noi despre influenceri. De asemenea, este o carte de actualitate, apărută în 2021.

Nu în ultimul rând, am operat şi cu diferite concepte şi mai exact noile media şi conceptul de online, prezentate de Roger Fidler în cartea, *Mediamorphosis – Să înţelegem noile media*, care este utilă în aceste privinţe. Alte resurse bibliografice uilizate sunt manualul lui Horea Bădău, *Tehnici de comunicare în social media*, în care sunt explicate tehnicile folosite în media, cât şi statistici, dar şi cartea lui Stephanie Clarkson, *Vlog it!*, în care predomină informaţii despre vlog.

Ce înseamnă social media?

În ziua de astăzi, termenul *social media* este tot mai frecvent în rândul adolescenţilor, care îşi petrec ore în şir pe reţelele de socializare precum Instagram, Facebook, TikTok etc. Acestea au creat un amestec de inedit, unde oferă atât informaţii despre vedete, influenceri, cât şi despre ştiri. Dar, totuşi, ce înseamnă cu adevărat social media? O varietate de canale prin care oamenii interacţionează, unde se creează conţinut şi unde se transmit informaţii utilizate în viaţa de zi cu zi. Practic, se formează o „interacţiune socială şi propagare, departajare, sindicalizare sau căutare a informaţiilor uşor accesibile, prin care mari comunităţi de participanţi pot colabora prin producerea şi schimbul textelor, fotografiilor, materialelor audio şi video, care sunt redifuzate de la un utilizator la altul". (Bădău 2011, 16)

În cadrul social media se formează multe comunităţi de oameni în jurul unor interese comune în diferite domenii, precum cultură, divertisment, sport etc. Aceştia trebuie să se

modeleze prin ilustrarea de conţinut şi prin impunerea unor tendinţe care să facă publicul să prindă interes şi să se implice pozitiv în cadrul fiecărui proiect propus de aceştia. Informaţiile pe care le primeşte publicul trebuie să ilustreze munca utilizatorului de conţinut. Trebuie să existe mai mereu conversaţie cu cel interesat, deoarece aceasta face ca rolul platformei să crească şi să aducă un câştig substanţial. Constant, omul din spatele unei platforme social media trebuie să aducă noutate şi să capteze interesul oamenilor, unde să existe propria evoluţie, care se poate îmbunătăţi prin crearea unor noi forme de comunicare precum comentariile sau partajarea unor informaţii de care este interesată persoana respectivă.

„De-a lungul timpului, orice nouă formă de comunicare a evoluat încă de la origini ca o extensie a unei forme anterioare într-o formă distinctă”. (Fidler 2004, 28) Acest lucru confirmă faptul că tot ce înseamnă media este într-o continuă mişcare şi aduce ceva nou, inovativ care să facă publicul să înţeleagă era în care se află. Practic, acesta este un proces chiar şi în formarea noastră ca oameni, în care formele de succes din media evoluează odată cu noi. Există câteva indicii care ilustrează cum evoluează social media. În primul rând, orice nouă formă de comunicare apare în industrie, ea va influenţa în tot acest timp toate celelalte forme care deja există, ceea ce ne putem da seama chiar şi în acest moment, deoarece majoritatea reţelelor de socializare sunt strâns legate între ele. Totodată, nicio reţea de socializare nu va apărea spontan, ci ele vor evolua de la prima până la ultima care va apărea, gradual. Nu în ultimul rând, aceste media sunt obligate să se adapteze la ceea ce publicul doreşte să vadă şi să se modifice şi să evolueze constant. De asemenea, e nevoie de timp pentru a reuşi să prindă interes. Se estimează că e nevoie de cel puţin o generaţie umană, adică undeva la 20-30 de ani pentru a intra în tendinţele actuale.

Apariţia blogurilor, vlogurilor şi a reţelelor de socializare

Oamenii din ziua de astăzi consumă destul de mult conţinut online, ceea ce înseamnă că pot petrece câteva ore bune pe săptămână urmărind o pagină de blog sau chiar şi un vlog pe YouTube. Exact cât timp petrec aceştia se poate observa chiar din telefonul mobil din setările

IOS sau Android.. Interesant este cât de mult s-a dezvoltat această industrie a articolelor postate pe un blog, dar și ce impact mare a avut urcarea unui clip pe YouTube, din care să reiasă un vlog. Mulți se întreabă cum au apărut toate acestea și cât de repede s-au dezvoltat în timp. Acest proces s-a derulat treptat și a făcut să crească substanțial industria online.

În anul 1998, a apărut primul blog pe un site tradițional de știri, The Charlotte Observer, unde se scria despre uraganul Bonnie. (Chapman, 2011) Pe parcurs au început să apară alte bloguri, dar și site-uri care ofereau, găzduiau bloguri, printre care și cunoscutul LiveJournal. Tot acest fenomen al blogging-ului s-a dezvoltat treptat și a fost nevoie de timp pentru a reuși să prindă importanță pentru cititori. O comparație evidentă este și aceea că în anul 1999 erau active doar 23 de bloguri, față de anul 2006 când numărul a ajuns la 50 de milioane. Această statistică a fost făcută de Jesse James Garret. (Chapman 2011)

Undeva, în anul 2010, blogul a intrat într-o competiție cu vlogul. Au apărut mulți utilizatori care doreau ceva mai mult decât scris și anume conținut video. Astfel, a început să se dezvolte și așa-zisul conținut video, anume vlogul. Ideea esențială este că, deși poate este mai ușor să urmărești un video, scrisul niciodată nu va dispărea, pentru că aici, sentimentele sunt mai ușor de exprimat decât într-un video unde o cameră mereu te va face mai reținut. Există și câteva plusuri în ceea ce privește vlogul față de blog. Un punct esențial este că unele studiile arată că aproximativ 65% dintre utilizatori au șanse mai mari să achiziționeze un produs pe care l-au văzut într-o reclamă sub formă de videoclip. (Chapman, 2011) Când urmărești un vlog este și mai ușor să îți formezi o opinie despre un anume obiect sau o anumită persoană. De asemenea, este foarte simplu să partajezi un videoclip cuiva pe diferite platforme de social media când este ceva foarte urgent.

Facebook a fost înființat de Mark Zuckerberg, în anul 2004 și este printre cele mai cunoscute rețele de socializare din lume. (Facebook 2023) Orice persoană care are conexiune la internet își poate crea ușor un cont de Facebook. Inițial, Facebook a fost creat ca o rețea universitară, doar în timp a ajuns la angajații companiilor precum Microsoft și Apple. Pe Facebook, majoritatea postează și vizualizează fotografii. Este normal să vizualizezi ce fac

unele persoane şi să interacţionezi cu ele. De asemenea, se poate da like la ceea ce îţi place sau poţi lăsa un comentariu unei fotografii. De obicei, apar postările persoanelor cu care interacţionezi cel mai mult.

Când Facebook-ul începuse să fie în floare a apărut şi o nouă reţea de socializare, adică Instagram-ul. Acesta a fost lansat în octombrie 2010 de către Kevin Systrom şi Mike Krieger. Acesta a devenit popular foarte repede făcând în 2 ani, adică în anul 2012, 100 de milioane de utilizatori. Instagram este o reţea populară pentru iubitorii de conţinut online. (Facebook 2023) Aici se pot încărca fotografii, videouri şi se pot face diferite campanii de promovare de produse. De obicei, Instagramul se adresează tineretului şi influencerilor. Totul se bazează pe metoda follow/unfollow. Această metodă îţi permite să urmăreşti persoanele care îţi transmit energia necesară, precum influencerii, dar şi prietenii.

Ce sunt influencerii?

Ce este, de fapt, un influencer? Dacă este să ne gândim strict la partea de online, putem spune că este acel om care pe baza unui contract semnat, cu anumite cerinţe, să aducă beneficii atât comunităţii lui, cât şi partenerului cu care a semnat contractul, în schimbul unei sume de bani. Scriitorul Cristian China-Birta introduce o definiţie a influencerilor. „Un influencer este acea resursă digitală care, în baza unui contract comercial şi în conformitate cu un brief care să conţină cerinţe clare, este achiziţionată la un anumit cost şi trebuie să aducă beneficii în conformitate cu obiectivul de comunicare al brandului". (China-Birta 2021, 32)

Majoritatea influencerilor din mediul online se remarcă prin numărul mare de urmăritori sau abonaţi. Fiecare persoană poate să urmărească orice influencer dacă consideră că merită sau dacă îi aduce un anumit interes în funcţie de conţinutul postat sau de plasarea de produse pe care o foloseşte. De asemenea, un influencer se remarcă prin numărul mare de reacţii şi comentarii pe care le primeşte la postări. De multe ori, un anumit trend care domină într-un anumit moment din online, poate fi o treaptă ascendentă pentru un influencer. Astfel,

mulți dintre influenceri s-au lansat prin anumite trend-uri precum dansuri de pe TikTok sau machiaje inspirate de la alți influenceri.

În România există diferite agenții sau oameni care se ocupă de managementul influencerilor. Aceştia îi ajută pe influenceri şi discută cu diferite brand-uri înainte de colaborarea propriu-zisă. Ei decid ce să includă campaniile publicitare, care sunt cerințele şi câți bani va primi influencerul. Practic, persoanele din spatele influencerilor sunt cele care fac mai mult de jumătate din treaba influencerilor, sunt minţile luminate care îi ajută indiferent de cum evoluează cariera lor.

Fiecare influencer urmează o anumită nişă prin postările pe care le face şi prin ceea ce promovează pe profilul său. Există numeroase tipuri de conținut precum: beauty & make-up, lifestyle (stil de viață), travel (călătorie), healthcare (sănătate), fashion (modă), gaming (jocuri online), animale de companie, sport, muzică, cooking (gătit), parenting, dar şi antreprenoriat. Majoritatea influencerilor folosesc aceste denumiri în limba engleză, deoarece sunt de talie internațională şi pentru a putea fi urmat conținutul de oricine. Într-un top făcut de HypeAuditor & MOCAPP este ilustrat faptul că aproapre 20% dintre influencerii români folosesc şi postează conținut legat de lifestyle. Pe locul 2 se situează muzica cu un procent de aproximativ 13%, iar pe locul 3 este prezentă categoria de beauty cu un procent de aproximativ 9%. (Szambolics 2021, 70)

Influencer în domeniul sportului

În domeniul sportului sunt întâlnite diferite subcategorii sportive şi acest lucru diferă în funcţie de ce sport practică influencerul. Aici se pot adăuga inclusiv informaţii despre dieta sa, stilul său de viață şi chiar şi diferite plasări de produse. În cea mai mare parte, un influencer sportiv va fi foarte activ în ceea ce constau sfaturile care țin de un stil de viață sănătos, cum trebuie făcută alimentația, dar şi ce presupun unele exerciţii sportive. Totodată mulţi dintre

influencerii sportivi îşi creează diferite programe de antrenament care includ fitness, Pilates etc., în care fiecare participant îşi poate selecta ce vrea să lucreze.

Influencerii sportivi s-au făcut remarcaţi prin postarea unor conţinuturi pe reţelele de socializare. Probabil cele mai cunoscute dintre acestea sunt Youtube şi Instagram. Pe Youtube, mulţi dintre ei postează exerciţii zilnice pentru diferite părţi ale corpului şi mai ales şi explică ceea ce trebuie făcut. Ele pot fi accesate oricând şi pot ajuta orice doritor de sport care, poate, nu îşi permite un abonament la sală. Nici cei de pe Instagram nu se lasă mai prejos, deoarece şi ei pot posta detalii despre unde se antrenează, despre ce exerciţii fac la sală etc. Practic, pot crea nişte tutoriale despre cum se pot folosi anumite instrumente de sport, despre ce este greşit să facem când facem sport, despre cum trebuie să fie poziţia corpului şi cum trebuie să avansăm de la o săptămână la cealaltă.

De asemenea, influencerii sportivi primesc diferite produse sportive şi fac diverse unboxing-uri împreună cu urmăritorii. Acest lucru înseamnă că influencerul a cumpărat sau a primit un anumit produs şi trebuie să îi facă reclamă pentru a fi cumpărat la rândul lui de publicul ţintă. Aici intră de obicei branduri precum Adidas, Nike, New Balance etc. După primirea acestor produse, influencerul sportiv poate face un *Get ready with me* (Pregăteşte-te cu mine). Astfel, el se va pregăti, se va îmbrăca în hainele respective şi se va forma o tranziţie care este specifică pe Instagram, în special la influenceri.

Sacrificiile unui sportiv de performanţă

Până a ajunge în această lume a influencerilor, majoritatea persoanelor trec prin anumite situaţii în viaţă. Unii aleg să urmeze un serviciu şi mai apoi să ajungă în lumea din mediul online, alţii aleg să pătrundă în online imediat, iar alţii ajung să devină influenceri după ce au practicat un anumit sport. Acest lucru se poate referi la campanii sportive pentru copiii care nu îşi pot permite un sport de performanţă sau la diferite programe sportive puse la

dispoziție pentru iubitorii de sport sau chiar deschiderea unei Academii de Sport precum a Nadiei Comăneci.

Până a ajunge să fie prezenți în social media, aceştia urmează o viață destul de dură şi competițională. Dar, cea mai grea etapă este cea a sacrificiilor. Orice sportiv de înaltă performanță trece printr-o serie destul de complexă de sacrificii, de care trebuie să țină cont pentru a putea performa la cele mai importante competiții.

Retragerea dintr-un anumit sport poate rezulta un moment emoționant pentru orice sportiv şi de asemenea, poate avea un impact destul de semnificativ din punct de vedere psihic, fizic, dar şi social. Dedicarea unui om spre un anumit domeniu este practic şi responsabilitatea lui de a arăta ce semnifică acel domeniu şi ce influențe poate aduce tuturor celor care vor să urmeze acea cale. Acelaşi lucru se întâmplă şi în sport, când ajungi să îți faci un renume, orice pasionat de sport va vrea să urmeze acel drum. Acesta este un fir al vieții, practic în momentul când un om care ne inspiră, mereu vom vrea să fim ca el sau mai buni. Acest lucru se întâmplă inclusiv aici, în România, unde majoritatea micilor talente vor să fie ca şi Nadia Comăneci, Gheorghe Hagi sau Simona Halep, deoarece ei sunt emblemele României în sport. Deşi, Nadia şi Hagi s-au retras din sportul de performanță, au rămas în lumea reflectoarelor pentru ce sunt în prezent, antrenori. Simona Halep este încă o jucătoare de top, dar cu siguranță, când se va retrage, va continua să rămână ataşată de sportul care a consacrat-o.

Metodologie

Din punctul de vedere al metodologiei de cercetare am inclus atât analiza de conținut cât şi interviul, ambele din universul metodelor de cercetare calitativă. Am considerat faptul că analiza de conținut poate ilustra foarte clar munca din spatele unui influencer şi am încercat să scot în evidență detalii care să cuprindă calitățile şi atribuțiile pe care trebuie să le aibă un influencer. Mai clar, pentru a demonstra acest lucru, am selectat diferite postări pe o perioadă limitată de timp şi le-am analizat. Am sesizat de multe ori cum poate să scadă sau să crească

numărul de aprecieri al unor postări sau ce fel de postări ies în evidenţă. În analiza făcută am observat diferite tehnici de promovare, din care se remarcă cu preponderenţă plasarea de produse, una dintre cele mai des întâlnite în rândul influencerilor.

Prin interviu am urmărit să evidenţiez expertiza intervievatului,. De asemenea, interviul a fost unul portret punctând personalitatea intervievatului. Structura grilei de întrebări a fost de tip *tunel*, întrebările fiind de intensitate egală, bazându-se pe calitatea de influencer retras din sportul de performanţă.

Acest studiu de caz a cuprins trei analize complexe ale reţelelor de socializare aferente unor sportive retrase din sportul de performanţă, dar care îşi continuă activitatea pe diverse reţele sociale. Două dintre acestea sunt foarte cunoscute tocmai pentru rezultatele lor din tenis şi se numesc Maria Sharapova şi Caroline Wozniacki, iar cealaltă sportivă este fosta gimnastă română, Diana Bulimar. Pe lângă aceste analize, voi mai detalia şi un interviu cu fosta gimnasta, Diana Bulimar, unde aceasta va vorbi de viaţa de influencer şi ce presupune aceasta.

Analiză Maria Sharapova

Prima dintre aceste sportive este Maria Sharapova. Cine a fost Maria Sharapova în sport? Probabil majoritatea pasionaţilor de tenis o cunosc pe Maria Sharapova. Originară din Rusia, aceasta a reuşit de-a lungul carierei sale în tenis să câştige numeroase turnee, dar mai ales cinci turnee de Grand Slam. Se poate lăuda că a fost una dintre cele mai bune sportive din lume, reuşind să se menţină inclusiv pe locul I.

Analiza a cuprins postări ale Mariei Sharapova pe social media. Postarea din 13.03.2023 de pe contul de Instagram Instagram @*mariasharapova* cuprinde cinci poze şi are la bază ţinuta pe care Maria Sharapova a purtat-o la Vanity Fair în Los Angeles. Mai exact, Vanity Fair strânge numeroase vedete din toate colţurile lumii, iar acestea prezintă diferite ţinute şi accesorii pe care ele aleg să le poarte. Chiar Maria Sharapova a pus descrierea că este singura noapte din an în care ea nu doarme şi stă trează după miezul nopţii. Unii fani i-au scris

comentarii precum: *Beautiful, Forever an ICON, Definition of beauty*. Din comentariile pe care le-am citit, nu am văzut niciunul negativ; majoritatea se refereau la cât de frumoasă este Maria Sharapova. Unele comentarii au inclus doar inimioare sau emoticoane care zâmbesc şi aplaudă. Această postare a reuşit să strângă aproape 87 de mii de like-uri, deci un număr considerabil de aprecieri. Comentariile au fost în jur de 1000.

Următoarea postare cuprinde 3 poze şi este tot de la Vanity Fair, exact de la locul unde toate vedetele fac poze şi este distribuită în aceeaşi zi, tot în 13 martie. Descrierea Mariei Sharapova este puţin mai diferită şi face referire la faptul că acela este singurul loc unde cineva poate purta mănuşi negre în California.

Faţă de cealaltă postare, Maria Sharapova a ascuns numărul de aprecieri, iar astfel nimeni nu poate să vadă câte like-uri a strâns poza. În schimb numărul de comentarii este mai mic, în jur de 640. Sharapova etichetează atât cu ce este îmbrăcată şi accesorizată, cât şi cine i-a făcut pozele, coafura şi machiajul. Etichetările sunt: @gettyimages, @hairbyadir, @karayoshimotobua, @erinwalshstyle, @emiliawickstead, @versace.

Postarea din 26.04.2023, tot de pe contul de Instagram, este despre un parteneriat plătit al Mariei Sharapova. Este vorba de o colaborare între brandul Balmain şi apa Evian. Maria a adăugat şase fotografii în care poartă o geacă a brandului Balmain Paris, dar care este inscripţionată şi cu numele apei, Evian. De asemenea, aceasta indică cu claritate faptul că susţine această colaborare ilustrând în diferite ipostaze că poartă Balmain şi consumă această apă.

Din pozele postate, Maria pare că a participat şi la o petrecere sau un brunch în cinstea acestei colaborări şi pare foarte fericită că se află acolo. Descrierea ei ne face să ne dăm seama că şi pentru ea este o surpriză spunând că i se pare distractiv să vadă că această colaborare chiar prinde viaţă.

Fiind vorba despre un parteneriat plătit, Maria Sharapova adaugă acest lucru atât în descrierea locaţiei cât şi în descrierea fotografiei. În cea a fotografiei foloseşte #ad şi

etichetează atât @evianwater cât şi @balmain. Aceasta ascunde numărul de aprecieri şi de la această postare ca şi la majoritatea fotografiilor, dar numărul de comentarii este mai mare faţă de postarea anterioară, adică aproximativ 650. De asemenea, comentariile sunt pozitive, majoritatea folosind emoticoane pentru a-i arăta că o îndrăgesc sau o aplaudă pentru munca pe care o face. Inclusiv cei de la Evian Water i-au lăsat un comentariu: *„We loved having you there” („Ne-a plăcut să te avem acolo”)* şi au adăugat şi două emoticoane, unul cu inimioară şi unul cu un strop de apă.

Postarea Mariei Sharapova de pe Instragram din data de 12 mai va fi ultima pe care o voi analiza îndeaproape. Este de asemenea, un parteneriat plătit cu o companie privată de avioane pe nume Air Charter Service. Maria Sharapova a încercat să scoată în evidenţă luxul unui avion din această categorie postând patru fotografii din diferite locuri. Trei dintre fotografii sunt făcute în exteriorul avionului pentru a observa cum arată acesta, iar cealaltă este făcută în interiorul avionului privat pentru a vedea luxul.

În descrierea postării, influencerița pare a fi mulțumită de această colaborare şi etichetează atât compania privată de avioane, @acs_aircharter, cât şi pe cea care a fotografiat-o, @photobyjennajones. Aceasta explică că aceea este starea de a urca într-un avion şi să începi o aventură proprie, dar şi să ajungi acolo cu stil. Pentru a ne da seama că este un parteneriat plătit, aceasta mai adaugă în descriere şi hashtagul, #ad.

Nici la această fotografie nu se poate vedea numărul de aprecieri, pentru că a fost ascuns. Însă, numărul de comentarii este mai mare faţă de postarea analizată anterior, adică aproximativ 500 de comentarii. De data aceasta, am observat mai multe comentarii negative în care unii urmăritori spuneau că acest tip de avion poluează, însă un fan i-a scris că ar putea să joace rolul lui James Bond. Sunt şi multe comentarii pozitive în care oamenii o apreciază pentru ceea ce face şi felul în care îşi prezintă conținutul.

În total, am reuşit să analizez pe contul de Instagram al Mariei Sharapova 11 postări din 13 martie până în 13 mai. Majoritatea postărilor au cuprins mai mult de o fotografie, iar două dintre acestea au fost reels-uri. Cea mai apreciată fotografie din cele în care apare

numărul de like-uri este cea din 20 aprilie, unde Maria Sharapova apare într-o fotografie alături de copilul ei, de ziua sa. De asemenea, aceea este şi cea mai apreciată fotografie cu un număr de aproximativ 2680 de like-uri. Cea mai puţin apreciată fotografie, luând în considerare numărul de comentarii, este cea din 7 aprilie, 304 comentarii, când Sharapova a participat la premiera unui balet la Boston. În ceea ce priveşte frecvenţa postărilor, în luna martie, Sharapova a avut trei postări, în luna aprilie, a postat de 5 ori, iar, în luna mai, de 3 ori.

Analiză Caroline Wozniacki

Cea de-a doua jucătoare căreia îi voi analiza unele din postările pe reţelele de socializare este Caroline Wozniacki. Aceasta este o fostă jucătoare de tenis daneză, în vârstă de 33 de ani, care s-a făcut remarcată prin jocul ei de mare valoare, reuşind să îşi păstreze de nenumărate ori poziţia I în clasament. De-a lungul carierei şi-a adjudecat 28 de turnee, printre care şi unul de Grand Slam în Australia. Anul 2020 a fost cel al retragerii din tenis, deoarece a vrut să îşi dedice mai mult timp familiei şi să aducă pe lume un copil. În prezent, aceasta are doi copii şi se bucură de viaţa de părinte, dar şi de contentul pe care îl face pe reţelele de socializare.

Postarea din 29 martie de pe contul de Instagram @*carowozniacki* include un parteneriat plătit al Carolinei cu un brand de televizoare, sisteme muzicale şi difuzoare de înaltă calitate. Acest brand poartă denumirea de Bang & Olufsen şi are 561 de mii de urmăritori pe Instagram. Postarea este alcătuită din patru fotografii şi în fiecare dintre acestea apar diferite produse ale acestui brand.

În descrierea postării se identifică faptul că Wozniacki este brand ambasador pentru aceştia şi că produsele lor sunt de o calitate superioară, iar ea a folosit o multitudine dintre ele în amenajarea noii case. De asemenea, în descriere este explicat faptul că există şi un interviu cu fosta jucătoare de tenis unde aceasta vorbeşte despre proiectele ei viitoare, despre decorarea

noii case şi cum este balanţa între viaţa de familie şi cea profesională, iar interviul poate fi găsit la acest brand pe Instagram, @bangolufsen, accesând linkul din bio.

De asemenea, numărul aprecierilor lipseşte, ci doar cel al comentariilor poate fi văzut. La această postare a reuşit să strângă foarte puţine comentarii, 39 la număr, iar acest lucru se petrece poate pentru că postarea apare și pe contul acelui brand. Comentariile sunt majoritatea pozitive, fanii lăsând emoticoane care aplaudă sau inimioare.

Postarea din 06.05.2023 include un parteneriat plătit al Carolinei cu UCB_Biopharma, care este o companie biofarmaceutică globală concentrată pe tulburările neurologice şi imunologice. Wozniacki apare în ipostaza în care aleargă, ceea ce ilustrează că sportul înseamnă sănătate.

În descrierea fotografiei, Wozniacki specifică faptul că este un parteneriat plătit adăugând hashtag-ul specializat pentru aşa ceva, adică #ad, și explică faptul că este ziua mondială a celor care suferă de spondiloartrită axială și că cel mai bun remediu pentru aceştia este menţinerea unui stil de viaţă activ care să reducă rigiditatea şi durerea din cadrul articulaţiilor, dar și îmbunătăţirea calităţii generale a vieţii. Aceasta oferă şi nişte sfaturi pentru această boală prin accesarea site-ului #AdvantajeHers.

Aceasta îi etichetează şi pe cei de la Biopharma în cadrul fotografiei pentru ca oricine să poată să le acceseze profilul de Instagram, @ucb_biopharma. Ca la fiecare postare, numărul de aprecieri este ascuns, ci doar numărul de comentarii este vizibil, adică 24 la număr, ceea ce este din nou foarte puţin. Majoritatea o laudă pentru iniţiativa pe care o are și pentru faptul că este o persoană atât de bună.

Analiză Diana Bulimar

Cea de-a treia şi ultima sportivă căreia i-am analizat paginile de social media este Diana Bulimar. Aceasta este o fostă gimnastă română, în vârstă de 27 de ani, care a reuşit să aducă rezultate excepţionale şi să fie pe podium de foarte multe ori. Solul şi bârna au fost mereu preferatele acesteia, iar Nadia Comăneci, idolul ei. Aceasta a ajuns în anul 2012 să

participe la Jocurile Olimpice, câştigând împreună cu echipa, la una dintre probe, medalia de bronz.

Postarea de pe Facebook din 08.04.2023 este de la Dinasty Cup, primul concurs organizat de Diana în ceea ce constă gimnastica. Postarea conţine nouă fotografii cu diferite cadre în care sunt prezenţi atât copiii care au participat, cât şi Diana care pare foarte bucuroasă că a reuşit să organizeze acest eveniment la Academia lui Ion Ţiriac. Acesta este oarecum şi un job de influencer, pe care Diana a reuşit să îl dobândească pe lângă partea de online. În descriere, aceasta mulţumeşte sponsorilor, partenerilor şi întregii echipe care au reuşit să o ajute să facă posibil acest eveniment şi pare convinsă că vor mai exista şi alte ediţii. Postarea a reuşit să strângă un număr de aproximativ 1590 de aprecieri pe Instagram, ceea ce reprezintă faptul că fanii Dianei apreciază, cel puţin online, munca depusă de aceasta. Comentariile sunt de asemenea, destul de puţine, 13 la număr, însă toate sunt pozitive, iar fanii o felicită atât în română cât şi în engleză pentru evenimentul reuşit.

Pe Facebook, Diana a reuşit să strângă în jur de 400 de aprecieri, mult mai puţine decât pe Instagram, însă acest lucru îl arată şi comunitatea mult mai mică de pe Facebook. Comentariile, în schimb, sunt mai multe, adică 25, unde lumea o felicită, iar câteva persoane au adăugat în comentarii chiar poze de la eveniment cu Diana alături de copii. Pe Facebook putem observa că postarea a fost distribuită de cinci ori. Prin urmare, tot pe Instagram aprecierile sunt mai multe.

Postarea Dianei Bulimar din 29.04.2023 pe contul de Instagram @*bulimardianaofficial* este un reel. Este vorba despre un parteneriat plătit cu Adidas, brandul unde ea este ambasador. Aceasta prezintă ceea ce are ea nevoie după un antrenament intens şi ceea ce o ajută să primească un refresh după orele de muncă. Aceasta face reclamă la deodorantul de la Adidas, dar şi la gelul de duş care conţine glicerină şi acid hialuronic, speciale pentru a regenera pielea.

Reelul durează 38 de secunde, momente în care Diana este surprinsă mai întâi la antrenamente, iar mai apoi la vestiare, la cabina de duş, unde foloseşte atât gelul de duş, cât şi

deodorantul. În descrierea postării, aceasta precizează că poartă în bagaj ceva fresh, pe lângă ceea ce necesită sala, aceasta referindu-se la produsele de igienă. De asemenea, ea etichetează brandul Adidas, dar şi precizează că este un parteneriat plătit.

Postarea a reuşit să strângă aproximativ 1455 de aprecieri, dar şi un număr mare de vizionări, aproximativ 28 de mii. Faţă de postările anterioare de pe Instagram, Diana a reuşit să strângă puţin mai multe comentarii, adică 23 la număr la momentul acestei analize. Aceasta este apreciată inclusiv de alţi influenceri din România, care i-au comentat la poză, precum Alice Cavaleru şi Oana Zara. Ele i-au ataşat câteva emoticoane cu inimioare. Nu există niciun comentariu negativ, doar laude din partea fanilor. Pe Facebook nu a făcut această postare.

Ultima postare pe care o voi analiza este din 09.05.2023. Este vorba despre un reel de 19 secunde, care este şi un parteneriat plătit tot cu brandul Adidas, în care Diana ne aminteşte încă o dată că nu trebuie ca deodorantul şi gelul de duş să lipsească din geanta de sală. În acest reel, ea arată cum introduce cele două obiecte în geanta de antrenament şi se pregăteşte să plece spre sală.

În descrierea postării, Diana adaugă faptul că acestea pot fi găsite în magazinul DM şi etichetează brandul Adidas. Se observă, de asemenea, faptul că a adăugat că este un parteneriat plătit. Faţă de reelul anterior analizat, acesta a reuşit să strângă doar 970 de aprecieri şi aproximativ 27 de mii de vizualizări, adică mai puţine. De asemenea, şi numărul de comentarii este mai mic, adică 5 la număr, însă toate sunt pozitive. Nici de data aceasta nu a făcut această postare pe Facebook.

Un fragment din interviul cu Diana Bulimar

Ai aproximativ 150 de mii de urmăritori pe Instagram, 100 de mii pe Facebook şi un canal de Youtube unde postezi din când in când. Cum ai reuşit să îţi creezi o comunitate atât de frumoasă?

Cred că această comunitate s-a strâns de la sine. Adevărul este că înainte de a participa la vreo emisiune tv, nu eram atât de mulţi, dar ulterior s-au adunat două comunităţi, partea de sport şi partea de lifestyle.

Care dintre reţelele de socializare ţi se pare mai interesantă şi de ce?

Partea de Instagram îmi place cel mai mult, pentru că este mai uşor să surprind momentul pe care îl trăiesc şi cu un click îl pot da mai departe oamenilor. Dar în acelaşi timp, mi-a plăcut mult partea de podcast pe Youtube, m-a făcut să retrăiesc amintiri cu persoane dragi din sport şi sper să găsesc timpul potrivit pentru sezonul 2.

Am văzut că tu colaborezi cu Adidas, mai exact eşti ambasadoare. Ce înseamnă colaborarea cu un anumit brand?

Colaborarea cu Adidas este o mândrie pentru mine şi nu neapărat ca fostă sportivă, ci ca actual om de social media. Înseamnă că m-am depăşit pe mine, pentru că în gimnastică am ajuns la un anumit nivel, dar ştiam că vreau să fac şi altceva în această viaţă, iar această colaborare înseamnă că pot îmbina sportul cu media.

Care este conceptul din spatele a tot ceea ce postezi pe reţelele de socializare?

Exact cum am spus mai sus, sport şi lifestyle. Simt că suntem prima generaţie de gimnaste care s-au deschis publicului şi încerc atât să povestesc viaţa mea din gimnastică, cât şi cum poţi ca fost sportiv sa-ţi refaci viaţa. Pentru că după 20 de ani în acelaşi domeniu este greu să te apuci de altceva, dar nu imposibil.

Care sunt plusurile şi minusurile de a fi influencer?

Plusurile sunt faptul că pot relaţiona cu oamenii, pot cere păreri, dar şi da sfaturi (mai ales micilor sportivi). Există şi beneficii financiare câteodată, dar aici intra şi minusurile, pentru că trebuie să ai o constanţă, să ai numere mari mereu şi să lucrezi în proiecte în care câteodată tu, ca persoană, şi agenţiile nu vedeţi lucrurile la fel şi trebuie să te adaptezi.

Rezultate şi discuţii

Datorită metodelor de cercetare folosite, am reuşit să fac o analiză complexă care să ilustreze concret scopul lucrării mele de licenţă. Am încercat să scot în evidenţă ce înseamnă concret cuvântul *influencer* şi care sunt atribuţiile şi contribuţiile pe care le poate aduce atât societăţii, cât şi lui însuşi. De asemenea, prin studiul de caz, prin metoda calitativă, interviul, am adăugat un plus în ceea ce înseamnă un influencer retras din sportul de performanţă.

Ca rezultat a ceea ce am ilustrat, consider că a reieşit că trebuie să existe muncă în spatele unui influencer, poate mai multă multă decât a unui om angajat într-o companie. Mulţi dintre influenceri îşi petrec ore în şir pentru a edita sau a filma ceva care poate dura în total doar 15 secunde. De la ţinuta, la machiaj până la locul filmării sunt nişte paşi pe care fiecare influencer trebuie să îi urmeze pentru a-şi forma o comunitate.

Mai ales influencerii sportivi trebuie să se afirme prin antrenamente diverse, prin giveaway-uri şi prin diverse lucruri, cu care poate la început nu sunt familiari. Meseria de influencer nu este uşoară şi nu este pentru oricine, iar cei care ajung în acest domeniu trebuie să se facă auziţi şi remarcaţi prin propriile idei, iar ca exemplu este chiar Diana Bulimar.

Concluzii

Analiza a ajutat la descoperirea mai bine a celor ce se află în spatele fiecărei sportive, ce rutine au, cât de des postează, care este locul unde reuşesc să interacţioneze cel mai bine cu fanii şi unde sunt cel mai mult apreciate. Analiza a cuprins trei sportive şi postările lor, detaliile observate, dar şi campaniile pe care aceste sportive le-au avut.

Analiza a evidenţiat atât postări din viaţa lor reală, cât şi postări care cuprind parteneriate plătite. Am comparat activitatea lor pe diferite site-uri de socializare unde mai activează, dar şi numărul de like-uri şi comentarii ale postărilor. Dintre cele trei sportive,

Maria Sharapova are cel mai mare succes pe social media, mai ales pe Instagram, ajungând la cifre uimitoare în ceea ce priveşte numărul de like-uri, dar şi de comentarii.

Consider că lucrarea a condus spre o mai bună cunoaştere a ceea ce înseamnă social media şi sport, combinate. Cred că am reuşit să scot la iveală mici informaţii despre ceea ce semnifică internetul, influencerii, dar şi modul nostru de a percepe unele detalii sau persoane. Internetul poate schimba percepţii, dar poate şi forma direcţii, deci este probabil acela care va deveni cel mai important element din viaţa unui om.

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Conturile analizate:

Facebook: *Diana Bulimar*

Instagram: *@mariasharapova*

   @carowozniacki

   @bulimardianaofficial

Twitter*: @MariaSharapova*

   @CaroWozniacki

Black Tropes in African-American Rhetoric: Patricia Sullivan's analysis of Jesse Jackson's "common ground and common sense" speech

Oana Georgina Gabor

E-mail: georgina.gabor@e-uvt.ro

Departamentul de Filosofie şi Ştiinţe ale Comunicării

Facultatea de Ştiinţe Politice, Filosofie şi Ştiinţele Comunicării

Universitatea de Vest din Timişoara

Abstract: The present study offers an opportunity to emphasize a "problem" of general interest in intercultural communication: the particularity of the theoretical frameworks from the perspective of which discourse may be evaluated and interpreted, in its cultural determination. The study focuses on the problematic of "orality" specific to the discursive tradition of African-American rhetoric. Patricia Sullivan's 1993 article on Jesse Jackson's "Common Ground and Common Sense" speech, the "object" of the present meta-critical essay, manages to "balance" the re-partition of voices within the space of academic discourse. The critical apparatus she documents, which prompts the critic to self-reflexiveness and responsibility for the *particularity* of their subjective positions in relation to the object of their inquiry, makes a step forward in *identifying the political dimension* of the project of intercultural communication. Sullivan legitimizes such a necessity and makes the later

articulation of the political project of intercultural research possible. Sullivan's remarkable attempt to confer and legitimize, within intercultural academic research, a place for a radically different theoretical interpretive model later called "Africalogy" (2000) makes us salute her welcome contribution to the expansion of the possibilities of representation in intercultural communication.

Keywords: intercultural communication, patterns of signification, oral culture, black tropes.

Sullivan's (1993) rhetorical account offers an opportunity to emphasize another "problem" of general interest in intercultural communication: the particularity of the theoretical frameworks from the perspective of which discourse may be evaluated and interpreted, in its cultural determination. The study focuses on the problematic of "orality" specific to the discursive tradition of African-American rhetoric. Sullivan's piece sets out to identify the "African-American patterns of signification" and indicates a theoretical framework which may host an examination of the political discourse of African-American orators who, in their discursive acts, count on such "patterns." To illustrate the thesis above, Patricia Sullivan studies a speech delivered by Jesse Jackson, the 1988 Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States, at the Convention of the National Democratic Party. In the study of rhetoric it is known as the 'Common ground and common sense' speech.

Sullivan sets out to demonstrate that Jesse Jackson's 1988 discourse is extremely representative of African-American rhetoric, which requires specific criteria of evaluation. The rhetorical critics and media representatives may use those criteria in comprehending the African-American "patterns of signification." Such patterns of signification include, but are not limited to "set expressions" or "call/response formulas," "lies" or "tall tales," and "common sense stories." The critic notes that the media, and especially newspapers, commented on the unusualness of Jackson's candidacy in the Presidential campaign. Sullivan

remarks the "frustration" entailed in media representatives' and political activists' reception of Jesse Jackson's campaign. Even when a *New York Times* article appreciated how far Jesse Jackson had come in terms of surmounting racial prejudice in the United States, the tone remained condescending: "Still, let it be recorded that for at least a week in American history, in a middle-sized Midwestern state, a broad range of white voters took the Presidential candidacy of a black man *with the utmost seriousness*" (Dionne 1988, 1). Sullivan appreciates that the press and commentators identified Jackson's "difference" in a strictly negative sense. She sets out to illustrate that the media representatives' "discomfort" with Jackson's campaign was due to their own "assumptions" as to what an adequate campaign would mean. Such prejudice revealed the critics' own biased limits of perception as regards Jackson's candidacy. Primarily, press representatives accused Jackson on two counts: that he lacked honesty and that he overbid the emotional side of the human spirit. In both cases, the unasked question or "assumption" read: "Why won't Jackson step aside and let the 'real' candidates fight it out?" (Sullivan 1993, 3). Such type of negative appreciation implied the media representatives' firm conviction that Jackson "had no place on the political stage" (Sullivan 1993, 3).

In the footsteps of Purnick and Oreskes (1987), Sullivan notes Jesse Jackson's "exaggerated stories" (Sullivan 1993, 3) about his personal life. He talked about playing in the football team of the University of Illinois, which he said he left because of racism, although others have suggested it was a matter "of competence"; about the childhood that according to him he spent in poverty, although others have said there was "no way he was a poor man"; and, more importantly, about the moment of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, when according to him he was the last one the King addressed, but according to commentators he was not even there. Reporters regarded with endless suspicion Jackson's qualities as a public orator. The "dramatic, messianic fervor" (Sullivan 1993, 3) emerging from his rhetoric induced fear, as if in front of a danger. The implication was Jackson lacked the ability to control himself and even encouraged others to proceed the same way. The general concern over Jackson's "reasonableness" made the overall "expectations" of his candidacy much higher than those of the other (white) candidates. Sullivan suggests that an explanation for

such a reading of Jackson's campaign resides in "a fundamental misunderstanding of the oral tradition he represented" (Sullivan 1993, 4). She draws on Walter J. Ong's (1982) classic text to map the attributes of "oral traditions" and question the privilege "white" culture confers on written discourse.

Sullivan appreciates that *the academic community* deems such "oral traditions" "naive" or "unsophisticated," but "these assumptions are unwarranted and reflect a misunderstanding of the patterns which characterize 'oral thinking'" (Sullivan 1993, 4). The patterns of signification specific to oral traditions privilege "oral cultures, untouched by writing" (Sullivan 1993, 4). The African-American academic community *values them, rather than others*. Gates (1988) also confirms that authors of color try to "recover orality" within the act of writing and appreciate the "speakerly text" (Sullivan 1993, 4). Such effort describes African-Americans' perpetual attempt to mediate between their own expectations and those of others. Drawing on William Edward Burgchardt (W. E. B.) Du Bois' ideas, Johnson (1984) claims African-Americans, compelled to generate a "double consciousness," produced their own patterns of signification, the so-called "black tropes" (Sullivan 1993, 4). In the face of an urgent need to create "a space for themselves in language," as they "were forced to name themselves" because "their experiences were muted by the dominant white culture" (Sullivan 1993, 4-5), African-Americans appealed to "black tropes" as to a new *axis mundi*. They defined and articulated their experiences in relation to that unique point of reference. Their entire discursive experience transposed itself onto "the Y axis of blackness" rather than "the X axis of white signification" (Sullivan 1993, 5).

In his attempt to identify the African-American "patterns of signification" or "black tropes," Gates appeals to African-American scientific research to find proof in support of Ong's theses. Every source with "authority" agrees upon oral cultures' features: the dynamic character of the statements and the "magical" (Sullivan 1993, 5) potential of the utterances. For instance, in his 1988 speech, Jackson used "set expressions"/"call/response formulas." Sithole (1972) states that preachers or soul singers use call/response formulas to "establish rapport" (Sullivan 1993, 5) with members of the audience. In oral traditions, set expressions

convey an orator's attention and care towards the community. They function strategically to remind "oral" communities that they share the same condition and an entire history of common sufferance. Moreover, the call/response formulas make of discourse a performance. The discursive act adapts to the actual audience. Consequently, orators adapt their discourse such that it resonates with audience expectations. Hurston (1978) confirms that oral cultures' supreme desideratum to adapt messages to various types of public produces spectacular effects. When storytellers get together to tell each other "lies," they practice oral tradition. They introduce new elements in older stories, such that "the shape of the subsequent tale is determined by the one which preceded it" (Sullivan 1993, 6). Oral communities give those who do not readily share these oral traditions a difficult time in their interpretations. In fact, such an effect constitutes the very desideratum of those who surround the patterns of signification with a mysterious aura which connotes the "secret."

To demonstrate that the accusation that Jackson overbid the emotional appeal could itself be unsubstantiated, Sullivan points to Kochman's (1981) ethnographic study, which demonstrates that orators who reclaim themselves from the African-American tradition reckon the foundation of knowledge may reside only within human experience. The study sets out to emphasize the differences between the "debating styles" (Sullivan 1993, 7) of white and African-American students. It finds that during a debate, white students support viewpoints based on (re)sources they perceive as "authoritarian." To them, presenting such sources represents the purpose of the debate itself. They do not take responsibility for the ideas they sustain, and avoid taking a "personal stance" on any issue. On the contrary, African-American students "insist" on voicing their personal opinions on the debated issues. They take it as an imperative to have their own views, to convey them, and to take full responsibility for any sustained opinion. They will not engage in any debate unless they feel the position they are called on to take is warranted. Arguing for its own sake, just like knowing for the sake of it, means nothing to them. Sullivan suggests that the emotional "overbidding" the media representatives accused Jackson of followed from the "differences" identified by Kochman. All tributary to their oral culture, Jackson as well as other members of the African-American

community believed that "abstract proposals could not be made without references to real people" (Sullivan 1993, 7).

Sullivan proceeds to identify the "patterns of signification" (the "black tropes"). She looks at Jackson's speech through "the critical lens based on the African-American patterns of signification identified *by a number of scholars*" (Sullivan 1993, 7; italics mine – G. G.). This emphasis draws explicit attention to the fact that Sullivan thought it was imperative to document her "opinion" – which we may not call "personal" – on the existence and functionality of the "patterns of signification" of oral cultures by reference to as many "authoritarian" sources. Thus, Sullivan seems to (re)produce what Kochman identified as white people's "style" in debates and argumentation. At this point, Sullivan "looks" at Jackson's speech through the "lenses" the "army" of scholars who support African-American "patterns of signification" make available. In other words, she analyzes Jackson's discourse according to certain *particular* qualitative criteria (within the theoretical framework of the patterns of signification) and not others. In each instance, the critic rapidly identifies the "patterns of signification": set expressions or call/response formulas, tall tales or stories adapted to audiences, and common-sense stories. Sullivan specifies that African-American patterns of signification are not limited to those she manages to identify. She proceeds to illustrate that what she has identified as "black tropes" are that, indeed: they have all the attributes the pertinent literature states that they should. For instance, she identifies the following call/response formulas: "common ground," "your patch is not big enough," "common sense," "use some of that money," "I understand." Jackson's speech is organized around such repetitive call/response formulas rather than (chrono)logically. These formulas help Jackson to execute smooth, almost unperceived transitions from one unifying call/response formula to another. Thus, the call/response formulas invite participation. They prompt those present to embrace the agenda of the politician. According to Jackson's agenda, the Democrats' "common ground" means "common good." As "common good" represents the "greater good," the Democrats' "common sense" helps them to actuate it through common-sense actions. Choosing the "greater good" requires common sense. The large

American quilt sewn of unusable fabric patches, "a thing of beauty and power and culture," helps Jackson to illustrate "common sense" actions. In the logic of democracy, the patch every social community represents does not mean "enough" in and of itself. They only acquire their "true identity" when taking part in a more comprehensive whole, the American nation. The call/response formula at the end of the speech ("I understand") closes the circle of Jackson's demonstration as, at this point, he embodies all the virtues he has placed in his equation. His statement recalls the progression of the argument: common ground is common good; common good is the greater good; it is common sense to do the greater good; so act in the spirit of common sense. In the end, when Jackson urges his audience to keep hope alive, his public remembers his entire argument, because *it actively participated in Jackson's construction.* That proves call/response formulas are indeed African-American "patterns of signification."

As for "lies" or "tall tales," Sullivan identifies and *illustrates the identity of* such tropes in Jackson's speech. The story about his personal life, "an inspiring story" (Sullivan 1993, 11), "an enactment of the American dream" (Sullivan 1993, 10), reveals Jackson's engagement in "improvising upon a given theme" (Sullivan 1993, 10). In telling his story by adapting his speech to the given public, Jackson did exactly what one would expect from an African-American orator. Thus, rather than proof of Jackson's dishonesty or insincerity, his "mystifications" represent as many occasions for him to invite his public to participation and identification. Jackson counts on his public's ability to transcend the literal level of language and elevate themselves to the symbolic level of interpretation. The "lies" he introduces in his discourse function, thus, perfectly, as another "black trope." As for the stories which appeal to the common sense of his public, Jackson maintains that any abstract theory is meaningless if it does not regard real people, people of flesh and blood. Accordingly, he interrogates one of the slogans of the Reagan regime, "Just say no to drugs." Jackson demonstrates such an abstract slogan totally lacks utility, as "common sense" says that simply shouting the slogan does not get anyone out of the impasse of drug use. Jackson "made the audience wonder about bureaucratic logic – logic that was based on the authoritative sources Kochman's young debaters called into question" (Sullivan 1993, 11). Of course, the African-American "young

debaters"! Indeed, common sense functions as a "black trope" and illustrates Jackson's commitment to "oral culture."

Sullivan also refers to certain occasions wherein common sense represents a real "bounce" on "the Y axis of blackness." In other words, where the "logic" and "reasonableness" which guide white communities fail – as they comprise contexts too "abstract" and, therefore, too meaningless for the "taste" of African-Americans – Jackson finds specific solutions. He appeals to an embodied type of "reasonableness," based on people's everyday experiences and grounded in common sense. Sullivan appreciates that those who accused Jackson of overbidding the emotional side failed to comprehend Jackson's interrogation of the dichotomy of reason–emotions, as well as the privilege "white" culture confers to the former. He simply chooses something else. The path Jackson himself creates means *redefining "reasonableness" according to the exigencies of "oral culture."* In so doing, he *celebrates* it!

> *It is time for me to make another confession. At the time I was a doctoral student in the United States, I met a colleague in a class I took for methodological reasons. The American educational system prescribes that students "navigate" through the entire curricular offer, guided by an "adviser." Throughout the educational cycle, the student has to acquire a certain number of credits in a certain discipline (their "major") and another, smaller number of credits in a second discipline (the so-called "minor"). I chose the majority of classes in communication studies and accomplished a minor in popular culture. In the fall of 2001, I chose a "big" class which offered me no less than six credits: Theories and Methodologies in Popular Culture. Professor Joe Austin, whose class I had frequented the year before, hosted the class. He also had a decisive role in the writing of my doctoral dissertation in the form in which I defended and published it. He and Al González co-chaired the dissertation committee. Their "intellectual alliance" brought the project to a happy end.*

I managed to understand Jackson's discursive undertaking as a unique act of celebration of his oral culture because of an event in Joe's class. I met this colleague who was working on his Ph.D. in American culture studies with a "minor" in history. This colleague dedicated to me a paper he wrote for class. He told me he had written "about me." I am quoting the paragraph I need to carry on with my analysis. I cannot do without it: "Instead of modeling a political project on an admission of lack, which exposes the individual body to discipline as pathological, why not found it on a confession of excess, *of something beyond discourse, such that the individual's deviation from the discursive normalcy becomes the lack of the discourse itself?" The idea helped me to articulate my "voice." I owe everything to my colleague, who urged me to be courageous and overcome the world. Sullivan's article gives me an occasion to pay back some of my debt. Why not?*

Jackson's choice and mine reads, simply: Instead of looking at our "difference" as a "lack," a "shortcoming," a "deficit," or an "absence" from a dominant discourse's "normalcy," why not articulate it as an "excess," an "advantage," "something extraneous" to discursive "normalcy"? I know no other way to make room within the discursive space. Instead of *endlessly* trying to "align" to the "white" dominant discourse, Jackson *celebrates* his cultural identity. The "black tropes" help Jackson to make his voice heard. He obviously creates an antecedent in political communication. Through a final, meta-discursive "alliance" with James Boyd White (1985) Sullivan concludes that rhetorical critics should interrogate their own theoretical frameworks, those interpretive grills they deem adequate when engaged in discursive analysis. Only by "embracing diversity" (Sullivan 1993, 13) might rhetorical critics understand and accept multiple criteria for "reasonableness." Our "persuasive motions of the mind that we call reason" (Sullivan 1993, 13) help us to relate the rhetorical critics and the object of their inquiry to each other.

Every time I explain to my students the "object versus subject of inquiry" question, they stir with unrest and confusion. Many times, in their attempts to address the question, my

students articulate answers such as "In this study, the object of inquiry is the film City of Joy*," or "The object of Sullivan's inquiry is Jesse Jackson's speech." I have no choice but to write the word I dislike most on their papers: "No." Not because I assume a "correct answer" to my questions exists. In fact, I only wish to emphasize that such answers lead to paths without perspective or dead ends. While the critical intention of such a question is clear, they try to relate the subject and the object of inquiry in the same manner in which the philosopher interrogates the relation between being and knowledge.*

So no, the film *City of Joy* is not the "object" of Shome's inquiry; "whiteness" is. Raka Shome contributes to the discursive production and deconstruction of "whiteness" by positioning in relation to it in a particular way. The object of inquiry and the subject engaged in it relate through a cognitive act whose meaning challenges the rhetorical critic. Given that a *particular* territory, the territory of communication studies, hosts this particular process of knowing, critics' effort to *stick to it* displays higher or lower heuristic value. How does Sullivan position herself subjectively in relation to the object of her inquiry? We read that she got her Ph.D. in Communication Studies in 1983 at the University of Iowa. At the moment of publication of her article in *Communication Quarterly*, she was an assistant professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz. She initially presented the study at the 1989 Speech Communication Association convention in San Francisco. So much for the author. The "author," though, reveals her political identity in the most eloquent way. Whether a member of the African-American community or not, Sullivan "makes room" in the discursive space for Jackson's different "voice." In so doing, she makes room for "oral cultures" themselves.

Sullivan solicits an impressive number of (academic) sources to support and demonstrate the existence and functionality of the "patterns of signification" which help her to name the "oral cultures" of which she must have had experience, *unmediated by a cognitive act*, when she listened to Jackson's speech. That makes me believe that the "author" is "white," according to the credo implicitly conveyed in the citation of the results of Kochman's study. An extra proof resides in the perfect "alignment" to the norms of academic writing

specific to communication studies in the United States. Regardless of their cultural-political identity, critics must pay tribute to these norms of academic writing, which vary from one discipline to another, from one culture to another, from one publication to another. For instance, communication studies scholars in the United States respect the norms of academic writing which the American Psychological Association endorses. Yet, if we refer to the "voice" she conveys within discourse, Sullivan felt it imperative to pay tribute to the "dominant discourse," although she *did not have to*. Sullivan is "white" through her discourse and, from that position, she tries to legitimize a problematic specific to a different culture as an issue of general academic interest. She contributes to the expansion of the possibilities of representation by giving voice to a community traditionally left at the margin of culture and by celebrating it through a balancing inversion.

Sullivan manages to "balance" the re-partition of voices within the space of academic discourse. The critical apparatus she documents, which prompts the critic to self-reflexiveness and responsibility for the *particularity* of their subjective positions in relation to the object of their inquiry, makes a step forward in *identifying the political dimension* of the project of intercultural communication. Sullivan legitimizes such a necessity and makes the later articulation of the political project of intercultural research possible. Sullivan's object of inquiry, the "patterns of signification" or "the black tropes," define the "oral cultures" which the African-American community reclaims itself from. An extremely complex discursive construction, Sullivan's "object" of interest (re)produces an entire academic community's efforts in articulation. For that reason, her subjective position in relation to the object of her inquiry is dual: she speaks *about* the object or, at most, *on behalf of* the African-American community, but not *as one of them*. Sullivan perceives Jackson as responding, within and through his discourse, to what Lloyd Bitzer called a "rhetorical situation." *The critic herself takes a meta-critical stance* in rapport with her own critical undertaking. Sullivan's remarkable attempt to confer and legitimize, within intercultural academic research, a place for a radically different theoretical interpretive model later called "Africalogy" (2000) makes us salute her

welcome contribution to the expansion of the possibilities of representation in intercultural communication.

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War Correspondents, Illustrators and Spies in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

Lucian-Vasile Szabo Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habil.

e-mail: vasile.szabo@e-uvt.ro

Departamentul de Filosofie și Științe ale Comunicării

Facultatea de Științe Politice, Filosofie și Științele Comunicării

Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara

Abstract: The Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), Romania's War of Independence, had the characteristics of a complex confrontation, with many battles in different areas, involving numerous armies, using the best weaponry available at that time. At the same time, the conflagration was also a complex diplomatic effort, both the great powers and the countries involved or nearby trying to influence the fate of the war, in order to obtain advantages at its end, as it was obvious that the geography of Central and Eastern Europe would change radically. At the same time, the confrontation would benefit from complex journalistic coverage, the first of its kind in history. Bucharest would become a logistical center of war, but also of media support. The reports from the front were made under difficult conditions, but war correspondents and illustrators did their job and provided concrete information, but also informed opinions for a highly interested public.

KEYWORDS: *communication; newspapers; media history (Romania); war correspondent; Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878).*

Correspondents and illustrators on the front

Reporting in theatres of war is always difficult and needs professionals dedicated to their craft. The more difficult was the mission of the front correspondents in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), known in Romania as the War of Independence. It was the first major armed confrontation to receive full media coverage, with reporters and illustrators from all the world's major newspapers present in the theaters of operations. They had to face material problems, travel, accommodation and meals being carried out in poor conditions, often the lives of press correspondents being endangered. The stories dealt not only with victories and defeats, but above all with the unspeakable suffering of thousands of victims killed or wounded in the clashes. Some of them were spies, and others were accused of transmitting information to enemies. A major problem was the sending of publishing materials to newsrooms, as post offices were barely functioning and telegraph stations were few and far from the front line.

There were many places where press correspondents were needed. Among them, illustrators, who would express themselves mainly by making drawings, and less photographs. Camera obscura had begun to be used, but the technological process was still extremely complicated, especially when reproducing clichés in the pages of publications. The engraving technique remained a priority, i.e., the reproduction of drawings by corroding surfaces on metal plates, thus managing to highlight the lines of the drawings. This way of working had been experimented in the Crimean War (1853-1856), but the engraving as press illustration would reach its peak during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878).

As Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, an art theorist who focused on these aspects with great interest, would remark, the press service during that war would be well organized, leading to the appearance of the front correspondent and special artist, as the prototype of the later photojournalist (Ionescu 2002, 17). They were looking for information on the ground, gathered

by their own means, and that was another development in the history of world journalism. Among the front correspondents we find great names such as: Irving Montagu, Melton Prior, William Heysman Overed, Joseph Bell, Richard Caton Woodville, Dick de Lonlay, Francis David Millet, Jose Louis Pellicer, Hippolytus Napoleon Henryk Dembitzki, Auguste Meylan, Frederick Villiers, Ivan de Woestyne, Frédéric Kohn-Abrest, Franz Duschek, Johann Lichenstadt, Mathes Koenen, Friedrich Lachmann, Johann Nepomuk Schönberg, Alexander Ivanov, Nicolai Karasin, but also Nicolae Grigorescu or Theodor Aman, along with other Romanian painters. Among them, the incomparable Carol Popp de Szathmári, Hungarian draughtsman and painter, born in Cluj, who, in 1854, had taken the first war photographs, of the confrontations in Crimea.

A review of the contents found in the Romanian publication *Războiul*, a daily newspaper edited by Grigorea H. Grandea and mocked (unfairly!) by I. L. Caragiale in the play *A Lost Letter* [*O scrisoare pierdută*], showed that Grandea used information from important publications of the time, of which there were many. It was primarily Romanian sources: *Monitorul oficial, România liberă, Pressa, Curierul, Săteanul, Reforma, Gazeta Transilvaniei.* The English-language ones were: *Daily Telegraph, Daily News, Times, Morning Post, Standard* (designated as a Turkophile newspaper)*, Birmingham Post, Vanity Fair* and *New York and Commercial Chronicle.* Some of the French-speaking ones were: Le *Figaro, République Francaise, Le Nord, Le petit Marseillais, L'Orient, Le Temps, La France, Le bien public*. There were also many German-speaking ones, those in Vienna being often cited: *Die Presse, Neue Freie Presse* (Grandea asked that the two Viennese publications not be confused. He appreciated the former, claiming *Neue Freie Presse* was a newspaper 'par escelentiam Turkish')*, Fremdem-Blatt, Deutsche Zeitung, National Zeitung, Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Post, Deutsches Montagsblatt, Kölnische Zeitung, Politische Corespondenz, Wiener Presse, Wiener Abendpost, Berliner Tagblatt.* Of the Italian ones, *L'Italie* caught his attention. Russian-language newspapers also appeared: *Golos, Ruskjckir, Ruskij Mir, Sowremennye Iswestje, St. Petersburgkija Viedomosti, Novoja Vremja.* Hungarian newspapers would be often mentioned: *Pester Lloyd, Kelet Nepe, Hon, Egyetértés, Budapester Corespondenz, Ellenòr,* but

also *Hestia*, from Greece. Among the Turkish ones, there is mention of *La Turquie, Itihat and Vachit*. Grandea would often criticize other publications, most commonly *Românul, Telegraful* or *Dorobanţul.* The latter was also published by C. A. Rosetti (same as *Românul*) and its ambition was competing with *Războiul* as an illustrated paper.

In order to present the armed conflict of 1877-1878 in various publications, press people organized their activity thoroughly (Szabo & Ciortea Neamţiu, 2016). Journalists traveled in carts or carriages, many of which were adapted to provide working and sleeping conditions for a longer time, which meant at least a twig roof and a canvas over it. Some of the correspondents disposed of significant amounts of money, so that, for a while, refined food, good wine or even champagne would be present. However, hardly collected from the front, information was difficult to transmit because there was no effective telegraph network. Journalists had to cross the Danube to use the telegraph from Bucharest, Giurgiu, Zimnicea or Turnu Măgurele. At one time, telegraph stations were so in demand that some of the journalists transmitted their news from Braşov. The drawings were sent by post, so a few days or even weeks passed from the date they were made until they were actually published (Szabo, 2015).

We find out more significant details concerning the cumbersome manner in which telegrams from war correspondents were sent from a note in the newspaper. Some publication had gone to great lengths to send people into the field. The teams consisted of reporters and illustrators, and their communication products had to reach newsrooms in order to be published, that is, to reach readers. The mechanism was complex and expensive: "*The Daily Telegraph* in London has six correspondents on the battlefield of Europe, and yet they send their telegrams to Braşov, where there is a seventh correspondent, who sends them to London. The telegram about the battle of Pleven contained 6.000 words and cost a thousand florins (200 gold coins)." (*Războiul*, 24, 1877)

Information from official sources was very difficult to obtain. Not even the authorities involved could benefit from efficient information services, being dependent on the post, the telegraph or their own couriers, having to travel long distances, in a period of time when data

lost its importance or was superseded by contrary events. In Bucharest, an important source of information was the Ministry of War. At the time, Ioan Slavici was working at the *Timpul* newspaper, which he had to edit almost by himself, from June to the end of October, when Mihai Eminescu appeared in the editorial office. Slavici recorded a dispute with the directors of the Ministry of War. They had decided to traffic information from the front. They gave them, in time, only to the pro-government newspapers, a habit both old and new. The journalist protested on October 5, 1877, when he also published an open letter. In it, he demanded that news be posted on the door of the Ministry of War, so that everyone would have access to it indiscriminately. D. Vatamaniuc noted that some officials might have even tried to commercialize information from the front (Vatamaniuc 1968, 214).

Images and words

By following the daily newspaper *Războiul*, we can find interesting information not only about the course of battles and other events on the front, but also about the evolution of media communication. For *Războiul* has the merit of being the first Romanian illustrated publication, but the field and typographical conditions were not the best. Graphic designers needed to prepare, so the early drawings were not directly related to the theme of armed confrontation. The first large graphic illustration, which occupied half of the first page, in the middle section, was a drawing bearing the title *Ternova*, and below it the continuation: *The Old Capital of Bulgaria*. It appeared in number 24 of the newspaper, with a caption underneath: "Street during the Russian occupation." A parenthesis interesting for the history of press follows: "Designated (drawn, ed.) from nature by D. Szathmary". It is in fact the great artist Carol Popp de Szathmári (Szathmári Papp Károly), originally from Cluj (then in Austria-Hungary), but who carried out an intense activity in Bucharest. He published several illustrations in *Războiul*, having works published in many Romanian and foreign publications. Szathmári's collaboration had been announced in the previous issue as follows: "The beloved and talented artist D. Szathmary, the photographer of the Court, will procure for our readers the pleasure of giving views from the theatre of the war, where he follows the movements of the armies. In

tomorrow's edition we shall publish a view from Tarnova." *The Illustrated London News* was the newspaper that requested his work the most, the collaboration having been established since the time of the Crimean War. This first drawing by Szathmári depicted in detail a square in Veliko Tarnovo, a mountain town, with two streets separating, one going up towards some one- or two -storey buildings and the other going to the right, towards what appears to be a periphery. The drawing was simple, expressive in its contour lines. Several people also appeared, three of whom were women, right in the centre. On the top and on the right, there were groups of soldiers. Their faces are indistinguishable, the features being only sketched. As Adrian-Silvan Ionescu points out, it was the modern mode of illustration at that time, the artist deliberately leaving aside the individualization of people, in order to give editors and engravers in printing workshops the freedom to outline physiognomies (Ionescu 2002, 141).

His illustrations were multiplied and offered to newspapers in a quasi-official regime, Szathmári being the official artist of Carol I. Grandea would use graphics from several sources, in the first months often from unspecified authors. Subsequently, very expressive portraits, signed by C. Weidlich, are reproduced. Afterwards, most of the graphic appearances will be signed by Thiel-Weiss, so with the names of those who owned the printing press of the newspaper. In the pages of the gazette, however, one could also find other famous graphic signatures, such as Smeeton-Tilly. These were indeed the two great artists, Englishman Joseph Burns Smeeton, and his French pupil Auguste Tilly, their works being found in some of the greatest museums of the world. Another important graphic artist present in the pages of *Războiul* would be Charles Baude, a French engraver, who was 24 years old at the time. Auguste André Lançon also came from France, and he signed simply A. Lançon. Towards the end of 1877, the publisher Grandea devoted more and more space to illustrations in the gazette. They appeared on the fourth page, sometimes also in the interior pages, with printing over the white section delimiting the page. It was at the time another innovation introduced by the editor. It sometimes happened that the first page reproduced two illustrations, one by Smeeton-Tilly, and the other by Ch. Baude, or both by Baude. Another French illustrator that published was Riballies.

Journalists and spies

The front correspondents, whether they were just reporters or illustrators (sometimes both!) had a hectic life, always ending up in extreme situations. They would be killed or wounded, they would be made prisoners, they would endure humiliation, they would be exposed to cold or heat, they would suffer from hunger and thirst, but they would remain on duty (Szabo 2020, 49). Journalists would be under bombardment, and English journalists would rush to capture the scene. The illustration was published by *The Illustrated London News*. Two months later it would be printed in the Romanian publication. In *Războiul* it was rendered in full on the first page, below the frontispiece. The title was "The Bombing of Rusciuc", and the caption read: "Before the *Times* correspondent and illustrator of *The Illustrated London News* enters through the gate of the citadel, a bomb drops before their carriage (12th of August)". The depiction showed an open carriage with three horses at the entrance to the fortress is. The two journalists were in the back, and the Turkish coachman was in front. The explosion took place a few metres in front of the horses, with the cannonball breaking into pieces. The scene was expressive, although the faces portrayed did not show fear. The illustration was not signed, which meant that it was delivered by their own correspondents, who did not have the honour of seeing their names on the drawings.

The Turks were illustrated on the walls of the fortress, from where they fired their rifles and cannons at the opposing forces. The carriage was drawn there, the horses scared by the explosion of the cannonball. The illustrator of The *Illustrated London News* may have drawn himself in the field, which did not only give satisfaction to a small bout of vanity, but was also evidence of the difficult conditions in which journalists worked in theatres of war (Szabo, 2015). Another significant illustration would reproduce a real story: one night, the journalists' camp was attacked by wolves! The drawing was reproduced in *The Illustrated London News* and was very expressive, showing the wolves growling amongst the tents at the frightened people. (Szabo, 2015).

Some of the journalists were also spies, but they were all watched closely, especially by the Russian Military Commandment. The newspaper *Războiul* published an illustration in one of the October issues, under the title "Russian Ante-posts and Outposts," depicting a horse rider stopped by a military man. The explanation given to the illustration was the following: "*Daily News* correspondent stopped on suspicion of being a spy" (*Războiul*, 77, 1877). It was a broader and more difficult context, as Britain supported the Ottoman Empire and was interested in keeping the Bosphorus and Dardanelles free. The following issue featured another illustration on the front page, showing three Russian soldiers surrounding a Turkish spy who had climbed a tree. When sensitive military actions were being prepared, the presence of journalists could be a risk factor. For this reason, they were removed, as the *Telegraful* newspaper recorded before the Pleven offensive: "The difficulty of the correspondent becomes more and more difficult, if not null, because apart from staying in his country to give imaginary correspondences from the battlefield, I do not see what he could write (...) It is natural, it is indispensable even, that in a regular siege the most inviolable secret should be preserved, every indiscretion, committed even thoughtlessly, resulting in incalculable losses." (no. 1749, 1877).

The problems of war journalists were peculiar during these confrontations, but two cases particularly grab one's attention. The commanders of the Russian troops allowed themselves to chase away two correspondents of important publications. The first case is that of Frederick Boyle, of the *Standard*, banished from the Russian quarter of Gorni Student. The reason stated by the Romanian publication is that this correspondent "violated his word of honour, by which he obliged himself not to communicate anything exact about the positions of troops and reinforcements" (*Războiul*, 80, 1877), adopting a tone considered hostile and insulting towards the Russian army, not to mention an ironic tone (Ionescu 2022, 37). Boyle admitted his guilt and prepared to leave. Frederick Boyle was a writer and journalist. He travelled all over the world, writing several volumes of memoirs that prove to be very interesting to this day. He defended himself in front of Colonel Hasenkampf, who responded for the war correspondents, by stating that, being a writer as well, he might have accidentally

used darker nuances in describing the pitiful state of the Russian army. In fact, Boyle himself described the incident in a volume full of information and extraordinary events (Boyle 1877). As we can see, the book appeared shortly after the expulsion, that very year, which proves the rigour and promptness of a journalist! His big surprise came when he learned that he was not allowed to stay on Romanian territory either. The aspect is interesting, showing that Grand Duke Nicolae also commanded Bucharest. In this first situation, Grandea did not comment, but delivered the news as such. Martina Baleva examined the collection published by *The Illustrated London News,* where she discovered that two British war correspondents had been taken prisoners. They were depicted walking in a dignified manner through the snow, at the head of the column of prisoners. When they returned home, they were received as heroes (Baleva, 2012). The illustration referred to was made by one of the war correspondents himself, Joseph Bell.

Two weeks later, history repeated itself with the correspondent of the *New York Times,* general Carol Tevis (Florescu 1989). Things are a little clearer here, because Tevis had been, in 1854, a squadron commander in the Ottoman army. The expulsion order, signed by General Dreutsche, stated that the journalist was obliged "to leave Bucharest and the main areas of the Danube region within 24 hours." This decision, taken on Romanian soil, would make Grandea react, considering it a violation of the independence proclaimed a few months before. The argument was simple: "Today an American correspondent is being sent across the border. Tomorrow it will be the turn to expatriate, arrest or shoot all those Romanians whose patriotism will upset Russian generals." (*Războiul*, 88, 1877). Unfortunately, Grandea was right: those times would come and claim many victims!

However, the problem of spying through journalists or people with this coverage is not negligible. As shown, many major publications around the world had sent correspondents to military headquarters, to be as close as possible to events. Among them was Friedrich Lachmann of the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*. He was useful to both the Bavarian publication and the German government. A researcher points out that, as he was misinformed and not knowing, in fact, about Lachmann's secret activity, Carol I decorated him as a token of

appreciation for his journalistic activity, the fault being that of the inexperienced Romanian counterintelligence service (Popescu 2011, 125).

The Pleven of world press

The news of the encirclement (siege) of Pleven by the Christian armies was officially recorded by Grandea on November 29 (December 11) 1877, on the last page, which showed that it was last minute information. It was rendered with a bold font of size 14. The wording was very cautious: "The talks that had begun a long time ago between the supreme commander of the Danube army and Osman-Paşia eventually resulted in the surrender of his army and of Pleven, the Russian-Romanian armies entering it victoriously." (*Războiul*, 130, 1877) The same would be printed in the next issue, but on pages two and four. Some of the news was a bit older, temporally speaking. The same agglomeration of breaking news with outdated information was recorded in the *Telegraful* newspaper, here the encirclement of Pleven being announced only in the October 30 issue (*Telegraful,* 1665, 1877). Pleven was only conquered definitively on November 22 (December 4), 1877.

Providing data taken from various places, Grigore H. Grandea would often signal manipulation attempts or errors. A special incident would be recorded on September 1 (13) 1877, when a gazette announced the fall of Pleven, without the event actually occurring. Frédéric Damé, a well-known press editor, then in Bucharest, launched, together with Caragiale, *The Romanian Nation* [*Naţiunea română*]. At that point a correspondent sent a telegram that would become famous: *"Médoc fini. Vodka, Tzuica, dedans."* Decoding was provided by Caragiale: *"Médoc* - Pleven; *fini* - taken; *Vodka* - Russians; *Tzuica* - Romanians; *Dedans* - inside" This article appeared in the widely circulated daily *Universe,* issue of 31th of December 1899. It has been reproduced in various volumes with the author's writings (Caragiale 1997, 437). But Pleven had not fallen, and the siege would last another three months. The correspondent had taken for granted false information given by drunken Russian officers... A clear example of fake news, the fake news of those times.

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Stoicism in the contemporary era. Can stoicism improve our lives in today's technologically dominant world?

Emil Toma

E-mail: emil.toma95@e-uvt.ro

Philosophical Counselling and Consultancy Master Course

Departamentul de Filosofie şi Ştiinţe ale Comunicării

Facultatea de Ştiinţe Politice, Filosofie şi Ştiinţele Comunicării

Universitatea de Vest din Timişoara

Abstract

The aim of this article is to look at how stoicism has been interpreted and applied in different fields, such as psychology, psychotherapy, philosophical practice, and personal development and share the findings with the reader. We will also explore the empirical research on Stoic practices, such as negative visualization, self-reflection, and embracing adversity, and their impact on psychological well-being. In addition we shall be covering

practical applications of Stoicism in everyday life, such as managing emotions, developing resilience, and finding purpose and meaning.

Ancient Stoicism had a profound influence on the philosophical, ethical, and psychological traditions. Its ideas and practices continue to resonate in modern times and have inspired various fields, including psychology (CBT), ethics, leadership, and personal development. Stoicism's emphasis on accepting what is beyond our control, focusing on personal virtue, and cultivating resilience in the face of adversity remains relevant and offers valuable insights for navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

The intention is to showcase the importance of stoicism and how its concepts and practices align themselves with today's therapy with individuals who may suffer from negative emotions and cognitive dissonances and also individuals who seek to perfect their understanding of the universe and choose to live a more fulfilling life with gratitude and mindfulness.

Additionally, we must be aware of the misinterpretation that has also risen along with its popularity. Today's technological advancement has also created an environment where hedonistic desires are stimulated for the profit of money or for the meaningless purpose of external validation, which the stoics did not see as healthy. Moderation has become just a saying among individuals who only show intention, but no practice. Individuals have fallen into great depths of sadness and are afraid to ask for help.

This work aims to present the beauty of stoicism and its ability to supply people with reason and meaning in life and also to showcase the effectiveness of meditation as a stoic practice for a better lifestyle.

Keywords: Stoicism, Mindfulness, Meditation, Journaling, Mental Health

Contemporary Stoicism

Pierre Hadot's concept of the "Inner Citadel", we may make a reference to the experiences of the psychologist and holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, and his book "Man's

Search for Meaning" where he presents the dichotomy of control in his own words. He claims that the last thing that someone cannot take away from you is your ability to choose. He argues in his book that between the stimulus and the reaction, there is a space where your freedom to choose lies. In that space is where the citadel resides and where your power to make a decision exists (Frankl, 1946). Every time when we choose to make the right decision based on the virtues of stoicism we add another brick to our inner citadel:

"All Hellenistic schools seem to define [wisdom] in approximately the same terms: first and foremost, as a state of perfect peace of mind. From this viewpoint, philosophy appears as a remedy for human worries, anguish, and misery brought about, for the Cynics, by social constraints and conventions; for the Epicureans, by the quest for false pleasures; for the Stoics, by the pursuit of pleasure and egoistic self-interest; and for the Sceptics, by false opinions. Whether or not they laid claim to the Socratic heritage, all Hellenistic philosophers agreed with Socrates that human beings are plunged in misery, anguish, and evil because they exist in ignorance. Evil is to be found not within things, but in the value judgments people bring to bear upon things. People can therefore be cured of their ills only if they are persuaded to change their value judgments, and in this sense all these philosophies wanted to be therapeutic." (Hadot, 1995)

This philosophical lifestyle that Hadot is fond of can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophical figure, Socrates. Although it is a widely known fact that Socrates, one of the most revered philosophers of all time, did not write a single piece of literature. Rather, he was known for his Socratic method of inquiry, through which he dismantled commonly accepted notions and ideas that remained unchallenged by the masses. Socrates would often traverse the streets of Athens, engaging with locals and urging them to elaborate on straightforward concepts such as friendship, gods, justice, religion, and bravery, only for the interlocutors to realise that they were unable to provide an adequate explanation and would, at times, contradict themselves. Even with the claims of the Oracle of Delphi claiming Socrates to be wisest person in the city of Athens, it was his belief that he was wiser than others due to the

fact that he was the sole individual who acknowledged his own lack of knowledge. It is undeniable that Socrates stood in stark contrast to the sophists, individuals who were known to peddle their wisdom for a fee and were motivated by self-interest. Socrates, on the other hand, refused to accept any form of payment and always prioritised the well-being and enlightenment of his interlocutors. He imparted the invaluable lesson of heeding one's conscience, the internal voice that serves as a moral compass, guiding one towards what is truly just. Socrates exhorted his followers to engage in a perpetual cycle of introspection and inquiry, advising that they continue to ask themselves and others probing questions until they arrive at an answer that is borne of their own intellectual faculties. It was the process of philosophical contemplation itself, rather than the answers that it produced, that was of utmost importance to Socrates. Questioning mandates that an individual must think for oneself and never take anything at face value. This way of thinking has later been named the "Socratic Dialogue". It has been espoused that rational argumentation alone is insufficient when it comes to uncovering the truth. Instead, we must surrender ourselves to the Logos and allow the dynamic and living word to lead us to our ultimate destination. It is through this process that we may establish a meaningful connection between two individuals and arrive at a genuine state of dialogue. It is worth noting that this form of dialogue is distinct from the conventional notion that we hold, and it is aptly expressed in its original Greek form, dialogos.

Within Pierre Hadot's book, we find the concept of the Daimon, which refers to the guiding divine force within every individual that influences a person's thoughts, actions, and destiny. Pierre Hadot notes that by replacing the word "daimon" with "reason" we are able to clarify the meaning of this term. It is believed that every individual has a daimon, which is a part of the universal Logos (cosmic reason). The daimon is seen as a personal guardian or inner voice that directs one towards living in accordance with nature and fulfilling their unique potential. While individuals have control over their thoughts and actions, they are encouraged to align themselves with the guidance of their daimon and accept the unfolding of events as part of a greater cosmic plan. Within Stoicism, the daimon is considered an integral part of an individual's ethical and spiritual journey, guiding them towards virtue and eudaimonia

(flourishing). One might see the Daimon as the highest version of themselves. It is widely acknowledged that the Greek concept of Logos embodies the faculty of reason and coherent thought that is inherent in each individual, as well as the principle that is leading the cosmos and the arrangement of reality. The attainment of rationality and clear-mindedness facilitates a harmonious coexistence with the Logos. Through the transformative power of dialogos, individuals are able to undergo a profound metamorphosis that would have been impossible to achieve through solitary introspection or monologue.

Pierre Hadot's concept of "Spiritual Exercises" is central in his books and mainly in his book of "*Philosophy as a Way of Life*". He argued that philosophy was not merely a theoretical journey but a way of life that involved engaging in specific exercises to cultivate fulfilment and that "modern philosophy appears above all as the construction of a technical jargon reserved for modern specialists". Hadot pointed out that in his eyes, modern philosophers are more inclined to be artists of reason and while the ancient philosophers are artists of life. Although he has studied many other ancient philosophies, such as epicureanism and neoplatonism, for our study we shall be focusing primarily on his approach to stoicism. It has to also be said that the term "spiritual" in French doesn't necessarily exactly translate the same in english. The french term for spiritual "esprit" means "mind" and so we could translate his concept as "mind exercises". Hadot didn't want to use any of these conventional terms and settled for the word "spiritual" as his preferred adjective. Through such practices, philosophy transforms from a mere theoretical topic into a powerful vehicle for teaching individuals to perceive and interact with the world through a fresh and enlightened lens. Its ultimate goal is to initiate a metamorphosis in humanity. The term *"askesis"*, which denotes exercise, should not be conflated with *"asceticism"*, the rigid practice of total abstinence from food, drink, sleep, and even sexual activity. Rather, askesis represents a form of inner activity that fosters not self-denial, but rather self-transcendence. These exercises were designed to shift one's way of thinking, acting, and being, and ultimately lead to personal transformation and a deepened understanding of oneself and the world. To practise a spiritual exercise is not solely contingent upon the type of activity that one engages in, but rather, on the manner in which it is executed.

The disposition and methodology that one employs, as well as the end goal that one is striving for, are the key determinants of a spiritual experience. A state of complete attentiveness and concentration is mandatory, wherein one immerses oneself in the task at hand to such an extent that one is able to lose all sense of self and achieve what is commonly referred to as a "flow state".

"The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to be more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom." (Hadot, 1995)

Hadot has seen contemplation as an important tool for these exercises, involving deep reflection and meditation on philosophical concepts, virtues, and ethical principles. It aims to foster self-awareness and develop a clearer understanding of one's values and priorities. Furthermore, the practice of self-examination involves regular introspection and critical evaluation of one's thoughts, desires, and actions. By doing so we identify flaws, passions, and attachments, and work towards aligning ourselves with reason and virtue.

Hadot's major influence on Stoicism can be seen in his work "*The Veil of Isis*", written in 2006. In this work, Hadot explored the idea of nature in ancient philosophy, including Stoicism. Hadot argued that the Stoics saw nature as a divine and rational order, and that the goal of the Stoic philosopher was to align themselves with this order. The idea of nature underwent a significant transformation in the early modern period, as the emergence of modern science led to a new understanding of the natural world and our relationship to it. Prior to this, the idea of nature was closely linked to the idea of God, and was often seen as infused with spiritual meaning and purpose.

Albert Ellis, although not a philosopher by trade, was an American psychotherapist and psychologist and founder of the REBT concept (rational emotive behaviour therapy), which later became known as CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy). His first works on this concept were published in 1962 and presented his technique as a philosophical-empirical based psychotherapy. The goal of this form of therapy was to address emotional and behavioral problems and disturbances, empowering individuals to better understand their thoughts and emotions, and learn effective strategies for managing them. (Ellis, 1962)

It is quite intriguing to consider the historical roots of modern cognitive psychotherapy and the role that Stoic philosophy played in shaping its development. Indeed, the principles of Stoic philosophy were a key source of inspiration for Albert Ellis. At its core, Stoic philosophy emphasises the importance of developing a rational and self-aware approach to life, recognizing that our emotions and behaviours are shaped by our beliefs and attitudes. This approach resonated deeply with Ellis, who saw the potential for applying these principles to the practice of psychotherapy.

Through his work, Ellis helped to popularise the use of cognitive and behavioural techniques in psychotherapy, drawing heavily on the principles of Stoic philosophy. By helping individuals to cultivate a more rational and self-aware approach to their emotions and behaviours, he helped to empower them to transform their lives and lead happier and more fulfilling existences.

One of the key tenets of Ellis's approach is the importance of accepting oneself unconditionally, recognizing the unique value of being alive and that of being human. At the heart of this therapeutic approach is the process of disputing irrational beliefs, which can have a profound impact on our emotions and behaviours.

In REBT, individuals are encouraged to examine their beliefs about activating events, recognizing how these beliefs influence their emotional responses. By disputing irrational beliefs and replacing them with more effective and rational beliefs, individuals in therapy can develop a deeper sense of self-awareness and learn to manage their emotions and behaviours in a more positive and fulfilling way.

While in cognitive therapy, individuals can learn practical techniques for disputing irrational beliefs and replacing them with more effective beliefs. By engaging in behavioural practice and committing to these positive changes, they can truly tune into the change and develop a more positive and empowering relationship with themselves and their emotions.

Ellis emphasised that individuals should not give themselves a global rating or be influenced by the opinions of others, but rather should embrace their individuality and recognize their inherent worth as human beings. By cultivating a deep and abiding sense of self-acceptance, individuals can develop a more positive and fulfilling relationship with themselves and with the world around them.

Massimo Pigliucci, a philosopher and scientist, has made significant contributions to the popularisation and modern understanding of Stoicism. His work has had a profound impact on the contemporary Stoic movement. Pigliucci has engaged extensively with the online Stoic community through his blog *"How to Be a Stoic"* and *"Rationally Speaking"*, social media presence, and involvement in Stoic gatherings and conferences. He has contributed to fostering a sense of community among Stoics, providing guidance, answering questions, and encouraging dialogue on Stoic philosophy and its practical applications. Pigliucci played a pivotal role in the revival and reinterpretation of Stoic philosophy for modern audiences. He has written extensively on Stoicism, exploring its practical applications in personal development, ethics, and resilience. Through his books, articles, and public speaking engagements, Pigliucci has helped popularise Stoicism and make it accessible to a wide range of individuals.

Pigliucci has explored the connections between Stoicism and CBT, highlighting the compatibility of Stoic principles with modern psychotherapy. He has written about the integration of Stoic ideas into cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and acceptance techniques, contributing to the development of Stoicism as a therapeutic tool. It is also worth mentioning that the integration of Stoic principles in CBT has been an ongoing process, and many clinicians and researchers have contributed to this development over the years. The

specific techniques and approaches used in integrating Stoic principles with CBT may vary among practitioners, and the influence of various figures in the field has collectively shaped the incorporation of Stoicism into CBT. His regular contributions on climate change denial or scepticism, intelligent design, pseudoscience, and philosophy highlight his expertise in these important areas of inquiry. Massimo always believed that stoicism was part of his italian heritage and felt a natural affinity towards the school but it was when he got into Buddhism that he noticed the many similarities of both philosophies:

"I actually tried to study Buddhism for a bit, but the parts I managed to get exposed to felt too alien, couched in cultural, linguistic, and conceptual terms that did not resonate with me. By contrast, when I picked up Epictetus, or Marcus, or Seneca, I immediately felt at home." (Holiday, 2017)

Although he is well-acclaimed for popularising stoicism, he announced in 2021 that he will be shifting his interest away from the school of stoicism towards what he calls

"a new synthesis, something that I have called Neo-skepticism, and which uses the combined insights of the ancient Sceptics and Stoics to craft a better way to think about and especially live one's life." (Pigliucci, 2021)

We can see the shift he is taking by challenging the beliefs of individuals on controversial topics such as climate change denial, evolutionism, consciousness and theism. Despite being a realist, he criticises the hard problem of consciousness and claims it to be just a category error.

Romano Madera is an italian philosopher that has written many practical books on philosophy as a practice. Most notably he is known for his book "*Philosophy as Life Path: An Introduction to Philosophical Practices*", written in 2007. In his book, Madera emphasised that philosophy is used in search for wisdom but sadly it has seen a decline in interest among

students. He later revels in the idea of finding meaning through philosophical practice. Additionally, he highlights the need for a renewed focus on cultivating wisdom, and provides a compelling call to action for professional philosophers to re-evaluate their approach to knowledge and truth. He is the founder of the *"analisi biografica a orientamento filosofico"*, or philosophically oriented biographical analysis (ABOF). A philosophical practice aimed at using and transforming the psychoanalytic method, born at the beginning of the 21st century and now practised in various Italian cities.

The practice of the philosopher analyst addresses the "healthy" dimensions of the person and is aimed at a conscious self-care of the existence of the client. The philosophical orientation is understood as a search for meaning which, unlike philosophy as a way of life of antiquity, starts from the historically, culturally and socially embodied biography. Taking care of the whole personality and the life of groups has always been the essential centre of the vocation of philosophy, re-proposed as a container of different approaches and disciplines of the human sciences, from psychoanalysis to pedagogy.

To use ABOF in a philosophical practice, the analyst is required not only the professional competence but also the vocational orientation of his life to philosophy, dedicating himself to personal and community philosophical exercises.

Those who practise and profess philosophically oriented biographical analysis (also called philosophical analysis) define themselves as philosophically oriented biographical analysts (ABOF). The practice of the philosophically oriented biographical analyst offers, to those who feel uneasiness due to existential disorientation and the difficulty of finding meaning in life, a method of accessing one's own inner resources which is essential for turning uneasiness into opportunities for growth. It does not address the psychopathological dimensions that require treatment other than the caring skills of the philosophically oriented biographical analyst, unless he is also a psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist

Romano, together with Luigi Vero Tarca, have developed 5 rules of biographical-solidarity within the practice of ABOF in the last years and have been promoted in Italy in various philosophical communities. The rules provide for the conscious assumption

of a nonviolent form of communication, capable of stimulating fruitful encounters and the emptying of sterile and destructive contrasts, without thereby denying the transformative effect inherent in the conflict and in the difference between theoretical, political, existential positions, and religion. These rules invite the practitioners to: 1) approach communication by referring to oneself, that is to one's own biographical experience, the contents that are submitted to the attention of others; 2) promote mutual recognition and curb the thoughts of opposition where the intention to affirm one truth to the detriment of all the others prevails; 3) empathise with the other's story and prohibit substitute interpretations that suggest "You said, but in reality you meant"; 4) use the so-called "anamorphic offer"(changing of perspective in order to broaden one's perception of a topic) to provide new opportunities for reading events that are capable of grasping further points of view, however renouncing the claim to possess superior knowledge on what the interlocutor narrates; 5) to suspend the inner assent to critical/destructive fantasies and thoughts, working on one's own shadow projections in view of an integration of the negative that weakens the toxic and fruitless aspects.

In the perspective of biographical analysis with a philosophical orientation, body language must be listened to, considering it an active protagonist. The idea is that nothing done in a caring relationship should be separated from the awareness of bodily mediation in which care and training are implemented and reflected. The creative evolution of Màdera's converging efforts towards an integral care of human existence is concentrated with the utmost intensity in the idea of a possible "solidarity of self-realisation" that allows the individual to be in search of a lifestyle free from excess of the passions (apatheia).

Madera is considered to be a neo-stoic, implementing a lot from Pierre Hadot and trying to bring back and analyse the old ancient philosophy of stoicism and its practices. Transcendences as a characterization of ancient philosophy are, for Pierre Hadot , the transcendence towards true discourse, towards the world and towards others. To these forms of transcendence are added, in the practice of the ABOF, those towards the inner magisterium (inner citadel), towards the transformation of the negative, towards a reconstruction of experiences and, finally, towards the opening to the desire for wisdom and eudaimonia. This

perspective greatly expands the concept of health and entrusts each person with the right/duty, as advised by Socrates, to put their own life under scrutiny so as not to act automatically and unreflectively. The specific "therapeutic" side of philosophy can be found in the choice to problematize the obvious, refining the tools of conscious questioning and the search for meaning, cultivating one's own capacities for transcendence of egoic centering and understanding of events in their interweaving in the face of inevitable discomfort complex of contributing causes.

Ryan Holiday is a writer and considered to be an influential figure in the context of modern stoicism. He has published multiple books regarding stoicism and runs the blog *"The Daily Stoic"*. Ryan's most notable works are considered to be *"The Obstacle Is the Way"*, *"Ego is the Enemy"*, *"Stillness is the Key"*, *"Courage is Calling"*, and *"Lives of the Stoics"*. Ryan worked with the famous Author of the book "The 48 Laws of Power", Robert Greene and managed to create his own movement and impact on stoicism. His journey continues and he is currently considered to be leading the charge of contemporary stoicism. Throughout his career he has influenced many army men, athletes, actors and individuals through his writings and has gained credit for it. This passion for Stoicism began after reading Epictetus in his student years and it has inspired him to delve deeper into this ancient philosophy.

Through his books, articles, and lectures, Holiday has been widely credited with increasing the popularity of Stoicism, with The New York Times even describing him as "leading the charge for Stoicism."(Alter, 2016) This trend has been noted in various fields, including among Silicon Valley entrepreneurs.

While Holiday is not bringing anything new or revolutionary in the philosophy of Stoicism, he can be seen as an "influencer-philosopher" type of figure within the internet community. Some critics argue that Ryan Holiday's presentations of Stoicism oversimplify the philosophy, focusing primarily on its practical aspects and self-help applications. They claim that this approach may neglect the nuanced philosophical depth and complexity of Stoicism as a whole.

Another reason for criticism would be that, as a prolific author and entrepreneur, Ryan Holiday has built a brand around Stoicism, which some critics argue can lead to a commercialised or superficial understanding of the philosophy. They express concerns that this commercialization may dilute the essence of Stoicism and create a market-driven approach that detracts from its original intent. Some critics argue that Ryan Holiday's works may lack the scholarly rigour and depth found in academic studies of Stoicism.

While there may be disagreements and differing perspectives, his work has sparked interest in Stoic philosophy and encouraged many individuals to explore its teachings. Ultimately, the reception of his work may vary depending on one's personal preferences, level of familiarity with Stoicism, and scholarly expectations.

Stoicism Today

Revival

In an era marked by increased stress, anxiety, and distractions, there has been a growing interest in mindfulness and self-care practices. Stoicism's emphasis on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and being present aligns with the principles of mindfulness. Many individuals turn to Stoicism as a way to cultivate resilience, reduce suffering, and improve their overall well-being.

Stoicism offers practical tools and techniques that can be applied to everyday life. Its focus on understanding and accepting what is within our control, and letting go of what is not, provides individuals with a sense of empowerment and equanimity in the face of adversity. Stoicism's emphasis on personal responsibility and self-improvement appeals to those seeking practical wisdom to navigate life's challenges. Many people are seeking deeper meaning and purpose in their lives. Stoicism provides a framework for examining our personal values, developing virtues, and living in accordance with reason. Additionally there is a fine availability and accessibility of ancient Stoic texts, such as the writings of Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, have contributed to the resurgence of interest in Stoicism. Translations,

commentaries, and modern interpretations of these texts make Stoic philosophy more accessible to contemporary readers. The wisdom and timeless relevance found in these ancient works have sparked curiosity and engagement with Stoicism.

The rise of digital communities and social media platforms has facilitated the sharing and discussion of Stoic ideas. Online forums, blogs, podcasts, and social media groups dedicated to Stoicism provide a space for individuals to connect, learn, and exchange ideas. These platforms have contributed to the popularisation of Stoicism and have created a sense of community among modern Stoics. We have authors such as Ryan Holiday, Massimo Pigliucci, Lawrence C. Becker and William B. Irvine, and many others, and have taken their time and made it their mission to share the philosophy of stoicism in a more compact and practical way that can be applied in today's world.

Why is stoicism important in today's world? Or better yet, why are we witnessing this sudden interest in stoic philosophy? The contemporary era has witnessed the emergence of a renewed interest in Stoicism, manifesting as an intellectual and popular movement that seeks to revive the practice of this ancient philosophy. This movement, known as "modern Stoicism," implies not only a resurrection of interest in ancient Stoic philosophy but also an attempt to adapt its teachings to the language and conceptual framework of today's standards of living.

The rise of modern Stoicism can be traced back to November 2012 when the first annual Stoic Week event was organised, gaining significant attention from the international media. This event served as a catalyst for the popularisation of Stoicism, prompting a renewed interest in its principles and practices. (Modern Stoicism, 2012)

A lot of individuals are now following a neo-stoic idea of "dopamine detox" where one would cease to use every technology based dopamine release such as phone, social media, video games and such to rehabilitate themselves and get in tune with their inner selves. This combined with meditation has seen great success in the online community. The same is applied for alcohol consumption, fast-food, drinks, and mainly anything that is deemed to be an unhealthy passion.

Another reason for the growth in popularity of Stoicism is the increasing interest in mindfulness and other contemplative practices. Stoicism shares many similarities with mindfulness in its emphasis on self-awareness, present-moment actualization, and acceptance of one's thoughts and feelings. As mindfulness and related practices have become more popular, many people have been drawn to Stoicism as a complementary philosophy that can help them deepen their practice and cultivate greater wisdom and insight.

There has been a contrast between the ancient and modern iterations of Stoicism, particularly with respect to their attitudes towards money and power. However, it is worth noting that some scholars have identified an apparent contradiction within Stoicism that its modern adherents may not be aware of. This contradiction lies in the philosophy's emphasis on coping with problems rather than fixing them, which may discourage individuals from seeking to rectify issues altogether. Nonetheless, it remains a matter of scholarly debate, and many Stoic practitioners would argue that the philosophy provides a robust framework for dealing with life's challenges in a constructive and meaningful manner. Indeed, it is true that there exist certain problems that are beyond our capacity to solve, and in such cases, Stoicism can prove to be a valuable tool for coping with these challenges. However, it is equally true that many problems can be resolved through proactive measures and problem-solving strategies.

Misinterpretation of Stoicism

In an age of decadence, many people, primarily men, are turning to stoicism as a means of understanding how to manage their emotions and build their character. Technology has snatched the attention span of many individuals and has diluted people of temperance and ethics. Stoicism has begun to get attention and because of this, many self-help groups have been formed that have begun quoting the stoics. The age of men today has been feeling attacked by the media and overall general public in the west. Suicide rates (World Health Organization, 2021) among men and divorce rates (Danielson, 2022) have grown tremendously and have only increased depression and it is not being talked about. The global suicide rate among men is double than the rate of women. Over half (58%) of all deaths by

suicide occur before the age of 50 years old. Most marriages fail out of lack of commitment. Generally around 70% of married women initiate divorce. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 1 in 4, live without a father in their home. (US Census Bureau, 2022) Not to mention the increasing rise of depression cases in young adults and even teenagers or children. (Goodwin, et al., 2022)

These numbers do not clearly show a bright image for men or for women , but generally men are the most impacted and usually the ones to turn to stoicism for guidance, which should be considered good news since that means they choose salvation of some sort. Too often we have seen young boys without fathers who have no role model to look up to and have nothing else to do than to look for the missing piece in the external world. Oftentimes bad faith or negative circumstances drive these children towards reckless behaviour which cause dangerous outcomes and sometimes the death of themselves or others. Fathers who fail to accept responsibility or succumb to depression. We are seeing an age of men who have no support or role-models to learn from. An age of decadence where you are rewarded for what you have and not for what you are.

This is completely against the idea of stoicism and many men have turned to the virtues to feel relevant. There is a great difference between the boys from 50 years ago and the boys of our century. The culture we are now seeing is not anymore invested in virtues but instead into hedonistic pleasures without temperance. But something that has also been of great remark is how often stoicism has been misinterpreted in the online community and within so called self-help gurus. We often hear this concept of being "stoic" being "immovable" but oftentimes the way it is portrayed is almost clinically dangerous. The way it is presented in the community is that you have to rid yourself completely of emotions and to reject any kind of pleasures, this is almost sociopathic in a sense and not in tune with what stoicism is actually about.

We are seeing young boys that are being influenced by these false idols and begin to act in a very self-destructive way by completely invalidating their own feelings and almost becoming sociopathic in a sense. Empathy is one of the main attributes of stoicism and by

having none, you are also not acting according to apatheia and additionally you are failing to temper yourself. In reality, Stoicism teaches emotional resilience and cultivates an inner state of tranquillity. Rather than suppressing emotions, Stoics aim to understand and regulate their emotional responses through reason and mindfulness.

This has all begun after many people started seeking the meaning of masculinity and what it means to be a man and most often than not stoicism was among the answers. They portray characters of silent nature and of assertiveness. These characters are often portrayed as tough and unemotional, with their lack of expression being a hallmark of traditional masculinity. While this ideal has been celebrated in popular culture for many years, it is important to recognize that it can also be harmful, as it can encourage men to suppress their emotions and deny their vulnerability. This can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including mental health issues, relationship problems, and a lack of fulfilment and connection in life. Fortunately, there is a growing recognition of the importance of emotional expression and vulnerability in men, and a movement towards a more balanced and authentic approach to masculinity. The characteristics associated with traditional masculinity, such as aggressiveness, dominance, and competitiveness, seem to be inconsistent with greater male stoicism. This suggests that the stoic ideal of emotional restraint is likely to be more a product of socialisation than biology.

Another misconception is that Stoics advocate for complete detachment from the world and a lack of concern for others. While Stoicism encourages individuals to focus on what is within their control, it also emphasises the importance of virtue, social responsibility, and empathy towards others. Stoics believe in acting virtuously and contributing to the well-being of society. Stoics are often portrayed as unfeeling or lacking in emotions. However, Stoicism teaches the cultivation of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, and love, while seeking to minimise negative emotions through rationality and wisdom. Stoics aim for emotional balance rather than a complete absence of feelings. Stoicism is sometimes misunderstood as a philosophy that denies the existence of free will or personal agency. This in essence is not true and the Stoics do believe in the existence of free will and the power of personal choice. They

encourage individuals to focus on what is within their control and accept what is beyond their control, recognizing that they can choose their responses and attitudes towards external events. Stoicism is often associated with enduring hardship and suffering without complaint. While Stoicism does teach resilience and the ability to endure adversity, it also emphasises the pursuit of virtue, personal growth, and leading a flourishing and meaningful life. Stoicism provides guidance on how to live a good life and find fulfilment, not just in times of hardship but in everyday circumstances.

Lastly, I would like to emphasise that today's world is very driven towards the idea of "meaning in life" that has been pressured by all the online personalities. It has come to be seen as the ultimate goal, to find meaning in life. While this does not sound like a bad thing, it becomes one when it revolves around unrealistic expectations or unnecessary pressure. Every young man is being told that they should find their meaning or "mission" right there and right now, something to work towards and look forward to. Many fail to do so and begin feeling frustrated or saddened by this and turn to philosophy for answers but they mistake it to have all the answers. While it is only natural to say that the meaning of life is to be happy, it is not enough, for it becomes a problem when it interferes with the mental health of the individual. Although nowadays happiness has been seen as a distant goal that everyone strives for and yet it is misunderstood. The age of materialism and instant gratification has diluted people into thinking they always need a purpose or goal to work towards. While this may not really sound like a bad thing at first glance, it is actually a pressure set upon individuals and makes them think that they require a purpose in order to have meaning in life. This has been promoted by the media and so-called „self-help gurus". Taoist philosopher Alan Watts has stated that:

"The meaning of life is just to be alive. It is so plain and so obvious and so simple. And yet, everybody rushes around in a great panic as if it were necessary to achieve something beyond themselves." (Watts, 1999)

It might sound too simple to be accepted but we are free to choose our path and what we enjoy. There is too much pressure on this topic and it only deepens the anxiety and fear of a meaningless existence.

The question of the meaning of life has been a subject of human inquiry for centuries, and it is a question that has never been fully answered. Each answer is subjective and can be accepted by individuals that feel that it resonates with their core beliefs. The search for meaning is a natural human impulse, as we seek to make sense of our existence and find a sense of purpose in the world. However, the pressure to find meaning can be intensified by various factors, including cultural expectations, social norms, and personal experiences. In many cultures, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of finding meaning in life. This can manifest in religious traditions that offer a specific set of beliefs and practices aimed at answering questions about the nature of existence and the purpose of life. It can also be seen in secular cultures that place a premium on personal achievement, fulfilment, and success. In both cases, the pressure to find meaning can be heightened by the sense that one's life will be incomplete or unsatisfying without a clear sense of purpose.

One thing that ancient philosophies like Taoism, Stoicism, or the teachings of Miyamoto Musashi have in common is the detachment of external factors, in a sense that you do not let it control your emotions, for these are things that are out of our control. By controlling our reactions to the outside we develop a more calm and grounded character without letting our emotions get the best of ourselves. For the Stoics, "meaning" is closely tied to the idea of living in accordance with nature and fulfilling one's role in the universe.

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus famously said, "*Nature has given us one tongue but two ears, so that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak*". (Epictetus, 125 AD) This quote illustrates the Stoic emphasis on listening and learning from others as a means of discovering one's place in the universe. From a Stoic perspective, the meaning of life is not something that can be objectively defined or measured, but rather something that must be discovered through a process of self-discovery and cultivation. The Stoics believed that each

individual has a unique role to play in the universe, and that fulfilling that role is the key to living a meaningful and fulfilling life.

The Stoics also believed that virtue was the highest good, and that living a virtuous life was essential to achieving a sense of meaning and purpose. Virtue, in this sense, was not just a matter of individual morality or personal conduct, but also involved a broader sense of social responsibility and duty to others.

The Stoic view of meaning is closely tied to the idea of living in accordance with nature, fulfilling one's role in the universe, and cultivating a sense of virtue and social responsibility. While the specifics of what this means may vary from person to person, the overarching goal is always to live in a way that is consistent with one's own nature and the natural order of the universe.

Can Stoicism Improve Our Lives in today's technologically dominant world?

Hypothesis. There have been in the last 10 years a lot of dramatic changes in our world on a macro level and maybe also on a micro scale. We do not know where the world is going and it is all up to fate and we have the concept of amor fati on our side. A lot of the concepts require a lot of mindfulness and self-awareness that is said to be achieved via meditation and journaling, rational thinking and using wisdom to apply the dichotomy of control. Given what we have discussed and discovered, we can assume that a lot of stoic concepts can be implemented within meditation. The goal of meditation and stoicism is to reach eudaimonia, a state of flourishing, a state of awareness and equanimity. One cannot reach such a state without practising mindfulness in order to implement the concepts of stoicism. Many stoic concepts are similar to self-awareness meditation. Realising what is within our control and what not is something that meditation teaches us. Negative visualisation is part of the CBT in therapeutic practice where one would cease to catastrophize by progressively asking himself questions about the thing he fears and realising that it is not as bad as our mind makes it seem.

The famous quote from Epictetus is oftentimes given to clients seeking help through CBT: *"It's not the events that upset us, but our judgments about the events."* (Epictetus, 125 AD)

Method. I have gathered studies that praise the use of meditation, with the aim of mindfulness, on a daily basis and that has shown positive results following its practice. These studies have been gathered from multiple online sources such as: PubMed, PsychMed and others as such. We will be reviewing the ones that are relevant to mental health and personal development and the practices of meditation.

Background. This section examines studies that investigate the role of meditation in personal growth and self-improvement in regards to mental health and common negative emotions. It explores how Stoic principles such as practising virtue, focusing on what is within our control, and embracing adversity can contribute to psychological well-being, resilience, and flourishing with meditation techniques based on the results of the studies.

Results. A study ran in 2020 by Alexander MacLellan and Nazanin Derakshan with the title "*The Effects of Stoic Training and Adaptive Working Memory Training on Emotional Vulnerability in High Worriers*" from the Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck College, University of London, have given positive results in the area of mindfulness meditation using stoic concepts in those who are at risk of anxiety and depression. (MacLellan, Derakshan, 2021, 45, 730–744) The researchers have conducted a study that compares the effectiveness of three different online cognitive training sessions over the course of eight days. The first cluster had to undertake a structured journal training, involving three exercises derived from the principles of Stoic philosophy. The second experimental group underwent the same Stoic training, but also completed an adaptive cognitive training that adjusted the difficulty of a memory task based on the participant's performance. The third group served as an active control and underwent a simple, non-adaptive cognitive training where the memory task remained at the easiest level throughout. The study assessed all three groups on their anxious and depressive symptoms before and after the training period.

This study sheds light on the efficacy of various cognitive training methods and their potential to improve mental health and well-being. The incorporation of Stoic philosophy in cognitive training is particularly intriguing, as it suggests that ancient wisdom can still be relevant and useful in our modern world.

These findings have been accepted for publication in the journal, *"Cognitive Therapy and Research"*. The groups, who underwent various cognitive training methods, had significant reductions in rumination, by 18% and 13% respectively, in contrast to the control group. Rumination, as we know, is a thought process that tends to dwell on sad or dark thoughts, and is often a precursor to the onset of depression. Therefore, this study is of great significance in the field of mental health, as it demonstrates the potential of cognitive training methods to reduce the risk of depression.

Furthermore, the group that underwent Stoic training showed an impressive 15% increase in self-efficacy, which is a crucial factor in promoting positive coping mechanisms in response to stress. These results suggest that the incorporation of Stoic philosophy in cognitive training may have significant benefits for mental health and well-being, and may offer a promising avenue for future research in this field.

An article on the topic of the benefits of mindfulness written by Alvin Powell in 2018 showcases the effects it has on the mind and how its popularity has grown. The number of studies on the topic have significantly increased within the last decade to approximately 220 between 2013 and 2015. The studies have monitored patients that were asked to use meditation techniques and the effects were seen in the anatomy of the brain. It is quite fascinating to learn about the effects that meditation can have on the brain. Research has shown that meditation can stimulate the growth of the left hippocampus, which is responsible for episodic memory, self-awareness, and spatial cognition. This is a remarkable finding, as it suggests that regular meditation practice can enhance cognitive abilities and overall brain function. (Powell, 2018)

One of the most active areas in the brain, Posterior Cingulate, is linked to most notably wandering/intrusive thoughts. This area of the brain has also been shown to benefit from

meditation. Studies utilising generative topographic mapping have demonstrated that meditation can increase the density of the area, allowing individuals to observe sensations and emotions without overreacting. Applying stoic concepts to this can be particularly beneficial for those seeking to cultivate greater emotional regulation and mindfulness in their daily lives. (Mindworks Team, 2019)

Meditation has also been shown to decrease the size of the amygdala, which is the part of the brain responsible for processing emotions such as fear and anxiety. This finding is particularly significant, as it suggests that meditation can be an effective tool for reducing stress and anxiety, and promoting overall mental health and well-being. The amygdala controls the "flight or fight" response in the face of environmental stressors. This region is the core fear system for the body, and it interprets external factors and events into internal physiological responses, such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, and the release of adrenaline via the adrenal gland.

Studies have shown that regular meditation practice can decrease the size of the amygdala, which may have significant implications for mental health and well-being. By reducing the size of this fear centre in the brain, meditation can help individuals to manage their stress and anxiety more effectively, and to cultivate greater emotional regulation and resilience. These findings underscore the potential of meditation as a powerful tool for promoting overall health and well-being, and highlight the importance of continued research in this field. (Best, 2004)

It is quite intriguing to consider how modern-day life may be impacting our amygdala, which was originally designed to respond to ancient predator and prey situations that threatened our ancestors' survival. In today's world, our amygdala may be firing in response to modern-day emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger, which can lead to a "flight or fight" response. While human civilization has certainly evolved and provided us with a more stable society, our response system, which is tailored for detecting and reacting to stressors, has not necessarily kept pace with these changes.

That being said, meditation offers a promising avenue for better managing our emotional responses, particularly those that trigger the "flight or fight" response on a daily basis. By practising meditation regularly, individuals may be able to cultivate greater emotional regulation and resilience, allowing them to respond to stressors in a more balanced and effective way. This is an exciting area of research.

Lastly, an article published in the "National Institutes of Health" gathered multiple studies and researches that have concerned themselves with using meditation as a tool to combat the negative impacts of life such as: Stress and Anxiety, Insomnia and Sleep Disorders, Pain, Weight Loss and Eating disorders, ADHD, Cancer, Substance Use, PTSD and High blood pressure. (Ginexi, Burke, Shurtleff, 2022)

In the United States, according to a 2012 survey of around 35 thousand adults, only 1.9% reported practising mindfulness meditation within the past year. However, among those who did practise mindfulness meditation exclusively, a significant majority (around 73%) reported doing so for the purpose of promoting general wellness and preventing disease. Additionally, the vast majority (92%) of respondents cited relaxation and stress reduction as their primary motivation for meditating.

Interestingly, the survey also revealed that more than half of respondents reported practising mindfulness meditation in order to improve their quality of sleep. This finding underscores the potential benefits of meditation for promoting healthy sleep habits and overall well-being. It is truly remarkable to consider how meditation can positively impact so many areas of our lives, from reducing stress and anxiety to promoting better sleep and overall health.

Let us take a look at one of the most commonly encountered negative effects in individuals, primarily Stress and Anxiety, Pain, Substance abuse and Insomnia. These aspects were chosen for the sake of this thesis and without the intention to undermine the other serious aspects.

A 2018 analysis encouraged by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) examined the efficacy of mindfulness-based approaches for treating

diagnosed psychiatric disorders such as anxiety and depression. (Goldberg, et al., 2018) The study compared mindfulness meditation approaches with both no treatment and established evidence-based treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy and antidepressant medications. Remarkably, the analysis included more than 12 thousand participants, and the researchers found that mindfulness-based approaches were more effective than no treatment at all for treating anxiety and depression. Remarkably, they found that these approaches were as effective as evidence-based therapies in addressing these conditions. These findings underscore the potential of mindfulness meditation as a powerful tool for promoting mental health and well-being, particularly for individuals struggling with anxiety and depression. It is truly remarkable to consider the impact that mindfulness-based approaches can have on the lives of those suffering from psychiatric disorders.

Additionally, in regards to pain, it is quite interesting to learn about the findings of a 2020 report by the esteemed Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. According to the report, mindfulness-based stress reduction was found to be associated with short-term improvement in low-back pain, but not fibromyalgia pain. This finding highlights the potential of mindfulness-based approaches in managing certain types of pain, particularly low-back pain. However, it also underscores the need for continued research in this area to better understand the potential benefits and limitations of mindfulness-based interventions for pain management. Overall, these findings are a promising step forward in the field of pain management.

According to another 2020 analysis supported by the NCCIH (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health), meditation practices were found to be strongly associated with pain reduction in adults using opioids for acute or chronic pain. (Skelly, et al., 2020) The analysis included five studies with a total of 514 participants, and the findings suggest that meditation may be a promising tool for managing pain in individuals using opioids.

Another intriguing find is about the potential benefits of mindfulness meditation practices in managing insomnia and improving sleep quality. According to a 2019 analysis of

18 studies, comprising a total of 1,700 participants, mindfulness meditation practices were found to be effective in improving sleep quality. In fact, the analysis revealed that mindfulness meditation practices were more effective than education-based treatments in this regard. However, it is important to note that the effects of mindfulness meditation on sleep quality were comparable to those of other evidence-based treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy and exercise. (Rusch, et al., 2019)

Numerous clinical trials have explored the efficacy of mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP) in this regard. MBRP is a powerful tool that can help individuals increase their awareness of the thoughts and emotions that trigger cravings and learn effective strategies to manage their automatic reactions to those cravings. By cultivating greater mindfulness and self-awareness, individuals in recovery can develop a deeper understanding of their triggers and underlying emotional states, as well as learn coping mechanisms to overcome their cravings. This approach is particularly promising for individuals with a history of substance use disorders, as it can help them to develop a more balanced and positive relationship with their thoughts and emotions.

According to a 2018 review of 37 studies, comprising a total of 3,500 participants, mindfulness-based approaches were found to be effective in reducing craving levels in individuals with substance use disorders. The review revealed that mindfulness-based practices were slightly more effective than other therapies in promoting abstinence from substance use. These findings underscore the potential of mindfulness-based approaches as a powerful tool for supporting individuals in recovery from substance use disorders. By cultivating greater self-awareness and developing effective strategies for managing cravings and triggers, individuals in recovery can develop a deeper understanding of their underlying emotional states and develop a more balanced and positive relationship with their thoughts and emotions. (Cavicchioli, Movalli, Maffei., 2018)

A 2017 analysis of 9 studies, comprising around 900 participants, specifically focused on the efficacy of MBRP (Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention) in preventing substance use relapses. The analysis found that MBRP was not more effective at preventing relapses than

other treatments such as health education and cognitive behavioural therapy. However, the analysis did reveal that MBRP was effective in reducing cravings and alleviating symptoms of withdrawal associated with alcohol use disorders.

These findings highlight the potential of MBRP as a promising tool for managing substance use disorders, particularly in reducing cravings and alleviating withdrawal symptoms. However, it is important to continue to explore the efficacy of MBRP in relation to other treatments for preventing substance use relapses.

Lastly, we have noticed that in the case of people suffering from PTSD, meditation has been of great effect in these cases. Additionally, a study from the "*JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE Volume 89 July 1996*" found a potential connection between greater pain tolerance with stoicism of recreational athletes. In many cases, individuals may continue to engage in physical activity despite injuries or other physical challenges, demonstrating a remarkable level of resilience and strength. The same could be said of soldiers that have survived the effects of war. (Malvin, 1996)

A 2018 review examined the effects of meditation and other mindfulness-based practices on symptoms of PTSD, drawing from a pool of eight studies that included a total of 511 participants. The study participants included veterans, medical staff, and people who had been victims of interpersonal violence, highlighting the diverse range of individuals who may benefit from these interventions. The results of the review were quite promising, with 6 of the 8 studies reporting a reduction in PTSD symptoms following some form of mindfulness-based treatment. (Nidich, et al. 2018)

An additional study from a 2018 clinical, supported by the U.S. Department of Defense, compared the effectiveness of meditation, health education, and prolonged exposure therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This study included 203 veterans with PTSD resulting from their active military service. The findings suggest that meditation may be as effective as prolonged exposure therapy in reducing PTSD symptoms and depression. Furthermore, the veterans who used meditation also showed improvement in mood and overall quality of life, highlighting the potential benefits of this approach for individuals seeking to

overcome the emotional and psychological challenges of PTSD. (Niles BL, Mori DL, Polizzi C, et al., 2018)

Stoic Practicality. Now that we have already covered the stoic concepts and shown how these were implemented in today's therapeutic field, we shall be mentioning some exercises that have been influenced by stoicism and now play a great role in the process of well-being of the individual.

The mentioned studies about meditation are proof that meditation is a tool that can be used on many occasions, regardless of the context. It has many benefits and its impact is surely to be recognized as beneficial if done consistently. Stoicism is the nuance that we approach meditation with. These are some of the common and easy practices that have shown to be effective in treating negative emotions. A lot of these practices involve changing one's perspective but I would like to also mention tools that along with these perspectives can fundamentally change one's lifestyle for the better.

Journaling

As the title suggests, one can begin journaling in order to release tension within their mind and body. There are two ways of doing this. Journaling every day at the end or beginning of the day, practising gratitude or simply releasing their thoughts on paper. Afterwards, if necessary, challenging his texts and looking for irrational or negative beliefs, applying the dichotomy of control. Additionally, one may use negative visualisation to progressively unfold the story of the fear that one might have. For example, if one might have a fear of failing a test, we would progressively write the scenario and notice the patterns of cognitive dissonances which are irrational or subject of our imagination and outside of our control.

A second way of journaling is by simply letting your mind run free with the pen. This may take hours but it can release tension that one has stored within. Bottling up emotions and never managing to release them in a healthy way can gradually impact our way of life and

perception of the world. After this was done, one might find relief and also review the texts and apply the dichotomy of control to rationalise which are and aren't in our control. One might ask themselves if they were acting according to the stoic virtues.

Stoic Meditation

Meditation in essence is a relaxation technique that has been practiced since ancient times. There are many ways to meditate, many body positions and many activities that serve as a form of meditation. We will only be referring to the most widely used meditation, which is simply sitting with your thoughts and emotions. It is quite a big misunderstanding that someone has to "clear their mind" or "control your thoughts" because such an action goes against the very anatomical nature of the brain. Our psyche is working constantly and you can never cease brain activity unless you yourself cease to exist. Meditation is just sitting in a comfortable upright position, looking at thoughts and feelings from a spectator's perspective, without judging them, along with breathing deeply.

To apply stoicism is to meditate on the impermanence of life and how grateful we are to be chosen to experience life in all its glory. It is to meditate on the things that are out of our control and not let ourselves attach negative feelings to events or unhealthy passions. Releasing ourselves of the desire for control and accepting that we may leave this world at any moment and that our fate is dictated by the universe.

Breathing techniques are a big part of meditation and I must mention one that is clinically proven to impact our body in a positive way is the "physiological sigh" that was discovered in the late 30's and has been popularised by Stanford Professor of Neurobiology Andrew Huberman. The way he describes it is that this technique involves two nasal inhales, a deep one and a second one that serves to fill and expand the lungs further, followed by a long exhale. Anatomically, when we are exposed to a stressor we start to inhale more vigorously and the process happens in the following order, the lungs expand, the diaphragm is pushed down and the heart grows slightly in volume, causing the blood flow to slow down in that

expanded volume, neurons send signal to the brain and alerts it that blood is flowing slower and it should ramp up the heart rate, thus we are experiencing anatomical stress. If we wish to slow our heart rate, the already mentioned technique does just that. The way it works is that the diaphragm, during the long exhale, pushes the lungs and the heart up, the heart shrinks in size and blood flow runs quicker in the tightened valves this in turn sends a signal to the brain via the sinoatrial nodes (neurons) and this activates the parasympathetic nervous system which is tasked with calming the body down. The way this is effective is that it can be done in real-time and regardless of the context one might be in. We must understand that, and I quote Professor Huberman, *"we can't use the mind to control the mind, we need tools".* (Huberman, 2021)

Exposure Therapy

The approach of exposure therapy, which is a form of psychotherapy, is used to treat anxiety disorders and phobias. In this form of therapy, psychologists work with individuals to create a safe and supportive environment in which they can confront and overcome their fears.

By gradually exposing individuals to the things they fear and avoid, exposure therapy helps to reduce fear and decrease avoidance. This process can be challenging, but it is also incredibly empowering, as individuals learn to confront their fears and develop greater resilience and inner strength. What we might call it "baptism by fire".

This along with journaling and changing the perspective of the process to something that is a constant evolution. One must see that every action in his power that he has done, no matter how small it might be, brings him closer to sharpening himself. Exposure therapy has a few methods of applying it but a simple stoic way is to journal about their gradual exposure to the feared stimuli and applying the dichotomy of control. The participant can grade his experiences to the exposure and become more accustomed to his response and internalize them.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which is a form of psychotherapy that aims to help individuals break free from negative cycles of thought and feeling. CBT is based on the concept that our thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and actions are interconnected, and that negative patterns in one area can lead to negative outcomes in others.

Through CBT, individuals learn to identify and challenge negative thought patterns, and to break overwhelming problems down into smaller, more manageable parts. By developing a more positive and realistic outlook, individuals can learn to cope with challenges more effectively and cultivate greater resilience and inner strength. (Robertson, Codd, 2019)

One stoic way of using CBT is the Behaviour Modelling Technique which influences individuals to overcome certain phobias or disorders based on the example of others that resonate with them and have overcome the same condition themselves. This in accordance with the Sage, who has turned to stoicism and achieved eudaimonia through virtue, can influence individuals and help them achieve a better well-being. While behaviour modelling can be effective in promoting short-term learning, it is often most effective when combined with other techniques such as role-playing and reinforcement. When used together in sequence, behaviour modelling, role-play, and reinforcement can improve the effectiveness of this therapy and promote lasting behaviour change. Additionally, several factors have been shown to increase the effectiveness of behaviour modelling therapy, including the skill level and likability of the models, the clear demonstration of target behaviours, and the enactment of behaviours by multiple different models. An example would be to ask yourself how your role-model would act in this particular situation or how would they deal with it or what course of action would they take.

Stress Inoculation Training (SIT)

This method of therapy is similar to the stoic practice of *premeditatio malorum* which involves regularly imagining a variety of feared situations as if they were already happening to you. (Tull, 2021)

This can include experiences such as exile, poverty, sickness, and death, among others. The purpose of this exercise is to mentally rehearse a more philosophical attitude toward these challenges, in order to cultivate a sense of apatheia, or inner calm and resilience. SIT involves more techniques such as exposure therapy and cognitive restructuring techniques where one individual would identify and challenge negative patterns of thought, and replace them with more realistic and self-affirming beliefs. By practising negative visualization, we come to terms with what might be our negative views on it and we are able to reconstruct our way of thinking about a particular event, feeling or individual. Someone who has a fear of stage can reconstruct his process of dealing with such feelings and label fear to look more like an "excitement" of stage.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

ACT, which is a psychotherapeutic approach that is focused on action and commitment, has its roots in traditional behaviour therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy. (Psychology Today Staff, 2022) In ACT, clients are encouraged to halt their efforts to evade, reject, and battle with their inner emotions and, instead, appreciate that these profound emotions are legitimate responses to particular situations that should not hinder them from progressing in their lives. With this realisation, clients start to accept their afflictions and pledge to make essential modifications in their conduct, irrespective of their life's circumstances and how they perceive them.

Similar to the Amor Fati concept in stoicism, with the help of meditation and accepting one's mortality and fate, we can live a more grateful life and be able to strive towards greater productivity in all areas of interest.

The concepts involve six core processes that greatly impact the results of the individual. Acceptance, where one should accept the actions of avoidance or denial as part of his disturbance. Cognitive Defusion, its intention enables one to detach oneself from and alter the way one responds to troubling thoughts and emotions, thus diminishing their detrimental impact. Mindfulness, which can be achieved through meditation and grounding exercises. Self as context, is a profound notion that broadens the understanding of self and identity, proposing that individuals are more than the mere sum of their thoughts, emotions, and encounters. Values (Virtues), selection of personal principles in various domains of life and the exertion of effort to live in accordance with them. This is in stark contrast to actions that are motivated by the urge to evade distress or conform to societal expectations. Commitment, the devotion of oneself to the practice of achieving a better self.

Conclusions

The main goal of this work was to highlight the effectiveness of stoicism in today's practice. While it is still not yet fully implemented within clinical practice, meditation is. Stoicism has been alive and with multiple resurgences throughout history for a good reason. It teaches us to be mindful of our emotions and shortcomings while striving to become the best version of ourselves and live life to the fullest. In today's world where we are bombarded with information and chaos from every direction, more and more individuals are seeking to find some wisdom somewhere and because stoicism has such a great grasp in the current spotlight, it is also the first one to be taken seriously. The books are very easy to come by and accessible even online. It must be also noted that one must be careful not to fall into the trap of becoming an emotionless individual as the philosophy is sometimes often misportrayed.

The great news out of all our findings is that meditation has been increasingly proving science that it can have a great impact on the mental health and physical body. The art of letting go is something that is taught in almost every philosophy, be it buddhism, taoism, shintoism and so on. The main ideas of stoicism, the dichotomy of control and amor fati,

which are also "mistakenly" practised within meditation, are the cogs for a better understanding of the self and the universe.

The fact that meditation has been proven to be such a powerful tool, only shows how much it can be used in stoic practices. Additionally, neuroscience has also proven many times that breathing exercises have a benevolent effect on the body and the mind.

Given the data found and how the resurgence of stoicism has increased the desire of knowledge and wisdom, we can be sure that its influence will spread to many other areas of psychotherapy and psychology as it did before as well.

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Gender and social dumping practices, as reflected in journalistic investigations on the construction and textile industries[1]

Redanka-Erika VARGA

E-mail: erika.varga94@e-uvt.ro

Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communication Sciences University of West Timisoara

Abstract

The present study sets out to explore two highly gendered, seemingly contrasting industries, construction and textile, with workforces that showcase distinct issues yet can be brought together by their mistreatment in the name of profit through labour made cheap by social dumping practices. The starting point for this research were four investigative documentaries on the two industries, uncovering a wide array of unethical practices: *Race to the Bottom* (2014), *In the Construction Pit* (2015), *The True Cost* (2015) and *Clothes to Die For* (2014). Hence, the impact of the pressures of profit-led globalised economies and the flexibility of labour longed for by the neoliberal and capitalist principles, disproportionately carried by the more vulnerable, will be addressed from socioeconomic and cultural perspectives, especially through the use of documentaries and existent journalistic work. Social dumping undertakings and the gender problematization will be exemplified by relevant case studies, namely Atlanco Rimec in the Netherlands, respectively the case of the second biggest exporter in the textile industry, Bangladesh. The former allows for a comprehensive look at social dumping practices

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in Western Europe's construction industry and helps give an account for gender considerations regarding masculine norms that can both represent a glass escalator and be toxically capitalised on, the hypothesis of worsening working conditions in the field due to the increased vulnerability of the majority of the workforce in light of evasive practices and the continued lack of openness to female workers. The latter case study was chosen due to availability of information and the tragic Rana Plaza factory building collapse, which illustrates the phenomenon of relocation of production, alongside the injustices and traumatic experiences of the predominantly female labour force, revealing debatable notions of both emancipation and exploitation, while confirming the continued preference to traditionally considered male gender norms and their domination even in typically female occupations.

Keywords: *social dumping, neoliberal capitalism, investigative journalism, investigative documentary, gender at work, offshoring.*

Introduction

"Please, pray for me, I am going to work", said Shopna Khatun on the morning of April 24th 2013 (Santana, 2015, 22:33). The garment worker did not want to lose her £2.30 in attendance bonus and her daily wage of £1.50. A few hours later, she was buried beneath the stories of the Rana Plaza building for 9 hours (idem, 23:36-39:57). All for a mere sum of £3.80. Around the same time, Polish construction worker Andrjez Szulczewski was battling his hiring company in court for not being able to access social security benefits in his home country after having sustained an occupational accident on a building project in France that crushed his leg and left him unable to work. After costly lawsuits, oddly enough, the Cypriot authorities had to be involved in order for the worker to receive some form of compensation (Bnnvara, 2015, 07:03-08:04; Van Brempt & Moreels, 2020, p. 65; Rasmussen, 2014). The latest economic developments of our world have shown us that profit-making has a cost.

The fast paced world we live in brought significant changes to the world of work, resulting in the undeniable success of the capitalist sphere. As globalisation settled and the world became more interconnected, the economy flourished on the shoulders of the working people and the environment alike. Demand in an overruling market entails rapid production while the chase for profit is the fundamental process and scope. Success has often come at social costs that have been neglected, hidden or manipulated. Carelessness towards working conditions, long hours, little pay, evasion of social security contributions are some of the conducts that maximise profit. The concept of social dumping and the practices it entails allowed for even more elbow room regarding evasion, making use of overall cheap labour through different methods and loopholes resulting in opportunities for some companies to gain competitive advantage. Furthermore, this behaviour has given rise to a worrying phenomenon, termed as the "race to the bottom", in which different entities rival in providing businesses the legal framework that allows for diminished wages, taxes, labour regulations and responsibilities. The capitalist drive for financial gain snowballs into the crossing of ethical lines regarding worker welfare. Most commonly, migrant workers are subject to exploitation while developing countries are capitalised on for their poor regulatory systems and the peoples' need for work.

This theoretical paper's objective is bringing together and analysing two industries, construction and textile, that have in common a highly gendered workforce, albeit of different sex and apparent contrasting environments, under the same umbrella of inadequate labour conditions and mistreatment in the name of profit through labour made cheap by social dumping practices. This approach will be the basis for a gendered lens problematization of the ways in which social dumping practices have brought about changes both within the world of work and outside of it. The construction sphere of activity tops unfortunate statistics when it comes to workplace danger and accidents, whilst the new dimension of social dumping adds to the industry's volatility, employment insecurity, unsafe conditions and defiance of Occupational Safety and Health procedures and the possibly destructive organisational culture due to ethnic fragmentation and toxic masculinity. The 2012 factory fires in Pakistan and the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh represented turning points in the textile industry. The

accidents brought public awareness towards the safety of the workers employed in the garment sector, or lack thereof, and the conditions under which our clothing is being produced. The contrast between the industries is noticeable through the typically gendered distribution of workforce: the construction industry is essentially made up of men, while women represent the backbone of the textile industry. This specificity and the different types of social dumping practices present in these sectors allow for an interesting exploration of gender issues and development in the globalised world. The methodology used encompasses qualitative research methods, using secondary literature data and information extracted from databases, legal documents, case studies, documentaries and articles that include interviews. The research question for this undertaking is the following: How have social dumping practices changed the construction and textile industries and what has been the impact of said practices on gender specific conditions encountered in the workplace?

Economic perspectives of gender roles at work

Women's work has historically been closely linked to the home, taking care of the family's establishment, children but also responsible for the agricultural activities of the family and the production of consumables, such as personal hygiene products, as well as clothing and shoes. The Industrial Revolution made for women and their female children's move from producing goods in the house, to the factory, but the Victorian era brought about changes in their status as workers, considering them incapable of working in factories. During that time, women established themselves as nurses, educators and clerical workers. The more they were absorbed into these positions, the more wages decreased, alongside prestige. Even though a helpful labour reserve during the First World War, most of the women returned to their homes. Although it was expected from them to do the same after the Second World War, a majority of women did not, especially married women, which gave way to significant tensions and changes in relationships, families and societies. By then, men were already settled in their earner roles. From then on, women had to manage the infamous juggle between family life and work life, resulting in the work-family spillover. The domestic work carried out by women in

their families is all unpaid work. Because it is unpaid, it has been largely ignored on the economic scale. Regardless, this labour is the foundation of any economic debate since no man or woman would be walking or talking without it. Despite the fact that it is illegal for employers to base their hiring decisions on marital status and age of children, they often discriminate in such a way. Interestingly enough, married men with children are thought of as an asset to the company, but married women with children are considered to be unreliable and less committed. Gender stereotypes affect hiring, firing, advancement opportunities and decisions and perpetuate the image of female labour as a highly flexible pool of labour that can easily be discarded. The gender roles serve for the rights and responsibilities of both sexes, although both men and women consider men superior, their privilege outweighing that of women's (Lindsey, 2015, p. 316-326).

Behavioural expectations link occupational roles to the gender roles traditionally socially imposed. As such, occupations that require empathy and nurture, such as nursing, counselling or social work are considered as "natural" for women, while detached, risky, leading positions are linked to men, exemplifying "the stereotype that 'women take care' and 'men take charge'" (idem, p. 338). The latter situation is "instinctively" more prestigious and paid accordingly. Even though there are some difficulties to overcome, when males enter typically female jobs, they benefit from more structural advantages, higher positions and higher pay, which translates to the "glass escalator effect". This effect also takes into account the quicker advancement of men in these careers, as they rapidly move up to at least more technical or supervisory positions. Even in female occupations, the work of women is under the subordination of males, further translating into hierarchical segregation that comes in the way of equality. If men take the escalator up, women encounter the "glass ceiling". The concept of glass ceiling emphasises the barriers put in place by male management that women face regarding advancement. It is usually done through their isolation, their denied access to informal information and networks or the lack of focus on their training and constructive criticism. As such, women cannot move up hierarchically neither in female dominated jobs, nor in those of male dominated jobs. Gender typing, occupational segregation, the glass

escalator and the glass ceiling have effects on women's pay. The ensuing wage gap still holds globally, regardless of race, ethnicity, or education level (idem, p. 326-348).

As regards masculinity, according to Chapter 9 of L. Lindsey's work (2015), the gender status prescribed for men encompasses values such as physical strength and toughness, leadership, courage and bravery, sexual prowess, individualism and independence, while the role of father implies ideas of a disciplinary, authoritative figure, the breadwinner and decision-maker of the house. These characteristics and norms of masculinity were set by those who acted out as the most influential men in society, meaning white, middle-class and heterosexual. The standards and informal guidelines that have transpired and perpetuated have turned into institutionalised norms, harming both the men that do not fit into the categories mentioned above, and women, since they are portrayed as the opposing party. The anti feminine norm which denounces the stereotyped female traits has implications for the relations men can and do create, in which vulnerabilities and emotions are seen as a sign of weakness. This bolsters toughness and aggression norms by renouncing any form of submissiveness, a female characteristic. Success and intellectual success are norms sought after, especially through financial achievement and security. Show of strength and risk-taking are also desired. In the workplace, this can hinder men's performance, as well as their safety (Lindsey, 2015, p. 279-282). These norms, which can often translate into toxic masculinity and tending to the image of masculinity comes at a great cost for the wellbeing of men and oftentimes exposes them to greater vulnerability than one imagines or is aware of.

Social dumping

As the world became more interconnected, the need for a single market that allowed freedom of movement and establishment became more acute. Labour migration is currently viewed as beneficial to both destination and origin country, especially through supplying workforce shortages for the former and the sending of remittances and knowledge gained for the latter. The European Union has made the necessary efforts to provide the benefits of the Single European Market to all of its Member States by removing some taxes and tariffs, bureaucratic

barriers or border regulations. However, the optimization of social costs and administrative or financial burdens are becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate from fraudulent behaviour. Cross-border employment of low-skilled workers poses some legislative loopholes that can be taken advantage of, together with some partiality when covering policies and provisions. A short explanation of social dumping is due so as to locate and understand the concept with more ease and build upon it thereafter. Social dumping is an approach in the world of work in which employers are utilising cheaper labour than they normally would employ in their country of operation. Authors Alber and Standing give an account of social dumping as "situations in which standards in one country are lowered relative to what they would have been because of external pressure" (Alber & Standing, 2000, p. 99). Magdalena Bernaciak defines the phenomenon as "the practice, undertaken by self-interested market participants, of undermining or evading existing social regulations with the aim of gaining a short-term advantage over their competitors" (Bernaciak, 2015, p. 82). Social dumping often implies the use of foreign work, a categorisation of two general branches: using migrant labour and the relocation of production. The workers are at disadvantage as they are provided substandard pay and working conditions according to the national law and agreements (EC, Migration and Home Affairs, social dumping: definition). Examples of social dumping include evasion of social security taxes, disregard towards directives, collective agreements, Occupational Safety and Health regulations or lack of written contracts and disobedience of workers' rights in order to gain profit. These outcomes are wanted to maximise profit and are achieved through a series of practices related most commonly to the posting of workers, temporary work agencies, letterbox companies, self-employment, subcontracting chains and relocation of production.

The construction industry, Atlanco Rimec and considerations on gender

The construction industry is one of the oldest and most profitable industries of all time, yet blessed or burdened by its reactivity to economic conditions. However developed, the general idea remains the same: people using natural resources to build the structures they need. The

construction process nowadays is complex, from designing to building, including studies on substances and materials, specific construction based on the end users' needs, standards on safety, management, assembly, coordination of workers, quality control, renovation, repair, maintenance and the list goes on. The scope going further is for the industry to focus more on issues such as sustainability, energy conservation and mindful use of resources. But is this sector's employment and modus operandi what we would call sustainable? A booming sector, ever growing numbers and extraordinary buildings. What are the costs?

In order to exemplify the social dumping practices that take place in Europe and the realities of construction workers, the case of Atlanco Rimec shall be observed. Its activity in the Netherlands is chosen because of the availability of material, both written and visual, produced by determined reporters that have found and recorded the means of evasion used by the company, workers' stories and government response. The documentaries used are the investigative reports entitled "Race to the bottom" and "In the construction pit". The former, although unavailable in English, is available in Danish under the name "Østarbejdernes bagmænd" [Generated translation by Google Translate: "The Masterminds of the Eastern Workers"]. It is a 2014 documentary by DR1, the Danish Broadcasting Corporation television channel, created by Director Poul-Erik Heilbuth, Georg Larsen, with Jonas Bach and Dagny Björk Kristiansdottir as co-organisers under the production of Sidsel Marie Jacobsen. The latter documentary, originally under the name of "In de bouwput" [Generated translation by Google Translate: "In the construction pit"] is a 2015 work by Hanneke de Jonge and carried out with the help of Jos van Dongen and Manon Blaas for the Zembla documentary programme within the sphere of the Dutch BNNVARA broadcasting association (IDFA, Race to the Bottom; Bnnvara, 2015). The case study also exemplifies issues of Occupational Safety and Health defiance and the migrants' more vulnerable position to workplace accidents, job insecurity and tensions within the national and foreign workforce, alongside evasion of social security contributions through nonpayment or profitable regime shopping and what this

practically means for the construction workers, defiance of national labour law, collective agreements and the Posted Workers Directive.

Atlanco Rimec was started in 1994, established in Ireland by Michael O'Shea and acting as a human resource agency, supplying labour. In the Netherlands, the building of Maastricht's A2 tunnel started in 2012. Even though the €600 million publicly funded project had been in prospect for a long time, due to the ongoing economic crisis at the time, it was decided that an investment in infrastructure and the resultant jobs would benefit the health of the economy. The project had to supply employment for the local people. The main contractor for the two and a half kilometres undertaking was Avenue2, an association between Ballast Nedam and Strukton, two Dutch businesses. Avenue2 subcontracted Atlanco Rimec for the provision of construction workers (Cox, 2015). The latter further used its Portuguese branch of business and employed a majority of Portuguese workers. Information regarding unfair practices unfolded with the article written by journalist Rob Cox and published by the newspaper De Limburger, entitled "De slaven van de A2" [Generated translation by Google Translate: "The slaves of the A2"] in November 2013. The journalist received a tip regarding the workers' pay and, when checking the payslips, noticed a high deduction for "appojo logistico" [Generated translation by Google Translate: "logistics costs"], of €968, half of their initial wage. This reduction was justified by the lodging and transportation costs provided by Atlanco. Analysing the surroundings, Rob Cox noticed that the housing was right next to the construction site, therefore no transport was needed, meaning an estimated €11,000 were paid for accommodation each year by each worker, around €900 per month. An entire house only cost €450 per month and it accommodated at least 4 workers. As such, an alleged profit of €3,200 was made each month, summing up to almost €39,000 a year per house (ibidem; Sjölander, 2014; Bnnvara, 2015, 02:19-03:43). Another problem was represented by the lack of compliance to the collective labour agreement as regards to pay. It was apparent that Atlanco Rimec was using a legislative loophole that allowed them to do so. The "Technisch Bureau Bouwnijverheid" [Generated translation by Google Translate: "Technical Office for the Construction Industry"], formed of unions and employers' organisations, started investigating

Atlanco and had reason to believe that pension contributions were also not paid. As it is often customary, Atlanco Rimec went on a suing mission, in order to buy some time and some profit. The company sued the technical office, one of its employees, one employers' organisation and a construction union, alongside two union officials. The pension fund involved in this situation found that indeed contributions were not paid. And so, they were also sued (Norberg, 2015).

After their Christmas holiday in 2013, the workers returned on site in Maastricht to see they were employed by another company, Oradeo. Although not possible to prove, as the company is owned by two other businesses in none other than the tax haven British Virgin Islands, union representatives and journalists believe that Oradeo is still Atlanco Rimec, only under a different name. Both Oradeo and Atlanco share the same subcontractor, Atop, have similar projects and methods of employment. Moreover, recruiters from Atlanco are found on the payrolls of Oradeo, as journalist Anna-Lena Norberg states, "he should have [kicked] out all the people. He did not. People who [have] been working for Atlanco [are] now working for Oradeo. So it's many [kinds] of links" (Bnnvara, 2015, 29:05-30:07; Cox, 2015; Van Brempt & Moreels, 2020, p. 71).

In the inquiries of the "In the construction pit" documentary, the creators received a tip on other projects. They continued their research in Nijmegen, where a €350 million project was underway. The company Dura Vermeer was the main contractor, while Atlanco was subcontracted for supplying labour. Portuguese worker Theodoro Homem made his April 2013 payslip available, showing that he was working over 60 hours a week, above the 48 hour week regulation, while €937.50 were deducted from his wage. By November 2014, a payslip shows that another worker was still working close to 55 hours a week, while €937.50 were still deducted from his wage, even after the Maastricht A2 tunnel allegations were public for a year. When asked for a reaction, the municipality and company stated that they ended their collaboration with Atlanco Rimec and started a new partnership, formally announcing their new collaboration with Oradeo. When confronted with the claims that Atlanco Rimec is likely

to be behind the new company, they responded by saying this allegation has not been confirmed by research, while Rijkswaterstaat, the executive organisation of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management which assists the government by awarding construction projects, offered an email statement, saying: "When awarding contracts, Rijkswaterstaat does not focus on the internal operations of market parties. Companies themselves determine which additional parties are needed in subcontracting to carry out the work" (idem, 26:51-32:37; Rijkswaterstaat, n.d.). And so hands become clean.

The strategic use of bankruptcy, alongside the freedom of transferring employees to other subsidiaries at any time can present advantages in court for the company, in case an employee decides to sue them for any reason. And indeed, reasons do come up. Andrjez Szulczewski is a former Polish employee of Atlanco Rimec, who was working on a construction site in France and sustained an injury to one leg as a beam crushed it. After spending 2 months in the hospital and covering his own medical costs, he was sent back to Poland. Requesting to access social security benefits, due to his inability to work, he found out he is not entitled to them, as his social insurance had been paid in Cyprus, since that is where he was employed, although having never been there. This explains why he had received and signed a contract written in Greek at the beginning of his employment. The company's choice of jurisdiction may seem strange, but it becomes more coherent when learning that the country has the cheapest social security rates in the European Union. After costly lawsuits, he was advised to stop pursuing legal action (Norberg, 2012; Bnnvara, 2015, 07:03-08:04; Van Brempt & Moreels, 2020, p. 65; UK Parliament, 2014). DR1 later corrected the information in the documentary, stating that the worker had received some compensation from the Cypriot authorities (Rasmussen, 2014).

Atlanco Rimec was also accused of blacklisting when journalists received evidence of 3000 workers' names and status alongside comments including "No. Not a reliable person. Contacted unions' ', "troublemaker, always complaining about everything, bad attitude", "big mouth' ' (UK Parliament, 2014; The cpworld, 2014, 47:11-48:25). This is an illegal practice

that discriminates against workers for becoming union members or raising working conditions and safety concerns. One of the most grave accusations was covered in the documentary "Race to the bottom", in which the abduction of Paulo Andrade was presented. Unfortunately, legal loopholes and grey areas, together with a tolerance of abusive use of temporary work agencies, letterbox companies, subcontracting chains offer the conditions to circumvent for profit, while the exploitation of and crimes against workers are still present. Atlanco Rimec is only one case out of the many in the construction industry.

With this context in mind, it is time to consider the gendered aspects of the workforce. Within the industry, the male workforce represents an overwhelmingly larger proportion, while "[m]asculinity is still an almost permanent hallmark of the professional identity of construction workers" (Vogel & ETUI, 2016, p. 10). Even though it is bound for masculine traits and norms to be reinforced and keep perpetuating in such a highly gendered industry, with debatable levels of harmful behaviour towards the individual and the group, I argue that the changes of employment brought about by social dumping practices put workers to greater danger by promoting toxic masculinity and capitalising on it.

The highly masculine environment can generally promote the notion of breadwinner and ideas of virility, bravery, competitiveness, dominance, violence. These are conditions in which accidents are prone to happen, especially by overlooking safety measures, and are likely to go unrecorded, as one may not officially declare an incident, his need to be hospitalised or take sick leave under the pretext of not appearing weak. Both national and foreign workers are subjected to high levels of anxiety on the grounds of the dangerous nature of their work, alongside the concern of losing their job. But the latter can impact the former. Fear of unemployment and actual joblessness, which challenge the image of breadwinner, can have a psychological impact that is prone to manifest through modifications in risk-taking behaviour. A heightened risk tendency, alongside "masculine strength interfere with safety and performance in a potentially deadly environment, especially when men try to prove themselves through toughness" (Lindsey, 2015, p. 289) and such is the case for the construction industry

and its workers. However, for migrant workers, which make up the majority of the construction workforce, the situation is far more volatile. Their vulnerability, the scarcity which they come from, their heavy reliance on the employer and uneven power relations make it so that they are more exploitable. In order to not lose their job, their work or residence permit, they become docile to working in all weather conditions, working overtime, injured or sick with no or little protest. The tensions brought about by the ethnic stratification of the workforce, the racialisation and the strain created between national and foreign workers can create a hostile atmosphere in which competition and individualism can have potentially dangerous consequences. As such, no protest to working conditions and collective bargaining can actually take place. To the already vulnerable circumstances of migrant workers, an increased tendency to risk-taking, collective tensions and individual pressures, little or no safety and health understanding, exhaustion due to long hours and inadequate housing, poor working conditions are all added in a hazardous concoction. Migrant workers' heightened susceptibility to nonpayment of social security contributions can translate to their failure to receive health, disability or any other form of social assistance in case of occupational accidents, of which they are already more prone to.

The small number of women employed in the construction industry is often formulated within the argument of biological traits and preferences, namely that women are not interested in this field and are not built for it. However, the number of organisations and women speaking out about this segregation and the issues encountered in entering the labour force shows us that there is a level of interest that may not be accurately represented by just 1 per cent. Sexism is prevalent each step of the way to a career in construction. Most women working in this field hold desk and secretarial positions, an estimated 86.7 per cent, but these off-site positions do not imply higher roles, since only 14 percent of staff executive positions are held by women and 7 per cent are employed as line executives (BigRentz, 2022). 60 percent of women report having been the victim of sexist discrimination and abuse, while most women report feeling excluded from social events and believe they were overlooked when advancement opportunities occurred, because of their gender. As for safety, the female labour

force is at higher risk of injury due to safety equipment that is ill-fitting (ibidem). What is more, the construction industry's gender pay gap is one of the largest out of all occupations. In 2021, in the US, women earned 94 cents for every dollar earned by men (Zippia, n.d.). In the UK, women earned "38% less than men" (George, 2022).

In her book entitled "Gender roles. A sociological perspective", Linda Lindsey (2015, p. 338) details how once women enter typically masculine jobs, "they tend to adopt the behavioural traits that retain the masculine qualities". It is worth to note 2 instances that exemplify the need to showcase a typically male behaviour in order to be accepted: "if you're a woman in construction, you keep your head down, don't talk about it and pretend you're a bloke" (Williams, 2015); "I have a very masculine mind. I don't cry … I don't gossip. I don't complain" (Hanan, 2020). In unfortunate irony, I find that the latter example, which is found in an article meant to demonstrate that the construction industry is progressing with regards to gender stereotypes, is actually contributing to stereotyping women and advancing ideas of toxic masculinity by discriminating against women or men showcasing emotion or statements of discontent. As such, we have seen exemplified occupational segregation, the not-so advantageous positions of women in male dominated jobs, concepts such as glass ceiling, wage gap and how traits associated with masculinity persist as desirable while stereotypes can keep perpetuating even in good intentions.

The textile industry, Rana Plaza and considerations on gender

Whether called the garment, clothing, apparel, or textile industry, the overall undertakings of this domain of manufacturing cover the processes of "research, design, development, manufacturing and distribution of textiles, fabrics and clothing" (Sayed, 2015). Like shelter, clothing fulfils an essential human need. If at first meant for covering and protecting the body and adapting to different weather conditions, climates and environments, clothing evolved to not only contain, but be defined by its social and cultural attributes.

The general atmosphere of this industry was characterised by predictable production, a constant and stable supplier and two collections per year with fairly standardised products. The processes of production were also spatially close to the consumers. Until the late 1980s and 1990s, the United States of America and countries in Europe were great producers in the garment sector. In the years to come, this formula notably changed: more seasons, more styles, more distinct brands resulted in strong competition which lead to another dynamic: the designing, marketing and selling of products stayed in the developed countries, while the manufacturing was moved in developing countries, where the labour costs are low and the production is fast. The offshoring and subcontracting of fabrication lead to the industry value added dropping in the United States and European countries in some cases with more than 30 per cent, with United Kingdom taking a hit with a decline of 63 per cent, while for four countries, China, India, Indonesia and Brazil, it meant recording great profits in response to these global shifts in manufacturing, growing by over 100 per cent, China alone gaining 66 per cent. Even though profit is not extensive, some developing countries deeply count on the opportunities offshoring provides for them in order to enter markets and improve living standards. The textile industry is currently described as being unpredictable, profoundly volatile and competitive. This approach of relocating production has generated millions of jobs in the developing world and especially represented new, welcomed and culturally acceptable job opportunities for women, who make up the majority of this deeply labour intensive industry and are usually coming from low education backgrounds, seldomly highly skilled (ILO, 2014, p. 12).

The Rana Plaza factory collapse is considered to be the most tragic incident in the apparel industry and a turning point with regards to people's awareness of the conditions in which their clothing is being produced. The incident occurred in Savar, a Dhaka district, early in the morning of 24th of April 2013, killing 1,134 people and injuring close to 2,600 workers. Many survivors recount that once the generators had been started, the building started rumbling beneath their feet. One day prior to this disaster, the workers noticed structural cracks in the building and were evacuated. Upon inspection, the building was deemed unsafe for use, but

the building manager and factory owners pressed employees to start working the following morning. The establishments situated on the lower levels of the 8 story building, a bank and a few shops, remained closed. But for the garment workers, it was indisputable that they get back to work if they would like to receive a paycheck and keep their jobs. After the horrific incident, it was established that the building was constructed on a filled in pond, made out of poor materials and with an unauthorised, supplementary addition of 4 floors. A 9th floor was also under construction at the time. Corruption and bribery were responsible for much of what happened that day (CCC, n.d.; Marriott, 2013). In terrible circumstances, Rana Plaza has offered lessons to be learnt and has left a legacy that continues to inspire new measures taken by governments, organisations, and non-governmental organisations. Even though progress has been made since the Savar factory collapse, it is important not to forget about the people most affected by it. The following section will present the stories of garment workers and the Rana Plaza employees with the help of two documentaries, "The True Cost" and "Clothes to Die For" and a 2018 New York Times article by journalist Dana Thomas.

"The True Cost" is a 2015 documentary directed by Andrew Morgan that portrays both social and environmental implications of fast fashion. It covers a variety of relevant topics, from the pollution caused by processes of production and its effects on nearby communities, genetically modified cotton, the use of pesticides and the introduction of seed monopoly with farmers committing suicide over their indebtedness, the Rana Plaza disaster and protests in Cambodia, psychological considerations of consumerism, marketing persuasion, capitalism and globalisation. The documentary also follows the life of Shima Akhter, a Bangladeshi garment worker who exemplifies much of the industries' problems. She was 23 at the time of filming and disclosed to have received a mere $10 a month at the start of her working in the garment industry (Moconomy, 2022, 19:28-20:15). She managed to form a union and become its president and recalled an incident at the factory she was working in: "we submitted a list of demands and the managers received it. After they received the list, we had an altercation with the managers. After the altercation, the managers locked the door. And along with them, 30-40 staffers attacked us and beat us up. They used chairs, sticks, scales and things like scissors to

beat us up. Mostly they kicked and punched us and banged our heads on the walls. They hit us mostly in the chest and abdomen" (idem, 21:38-22:30). Because of the long working hours, the toxic substances and heat, she cannot take her daughter to the factory. However, the Labour Act enacted in 2013 requires all factories of more than 40 employees to provide childcare facilities, which are widely unavailable in the garment industry. The sector is especially affected by failure to act in accordance with this law, as the majority of its workers are women. Weak maternity protection, challenges for breastfeeding, the working mothers' poor health conditions and informal child labour are affecting the children associated to the garment sector (UNICEF, 2015). In Shima's case, the added lack of childcare provided by the factory or the community means that for the most part, she is separated from her daughter, who she sends back to her family in the countryside (Moconomy, 2022, 20:47-21:04). The low pay, the long hours, strenuous working conditions, lack of gender-sensitive benefits, the hindrance in collective bargaining activities and the violence encountered by Shima efficiently sum up the problems of an industry.

"Clothes to Die For" is a 2014 documentary providing an in-depth look at the Rana Plaza factory collapse and its victims, directed by Zara Hayes and produced by Sarah Hamilton for the BBC (Santana, 2015, 58:36-58:43). With the focus of the Bangladeshi export almost entirely on the garment sector, it was inevitable for this profit-making opportunity to turn corrupt. The relocation of production also offered the proper conditions in which to do so. Even though the suppliers were meant to abide by the ban of underage work and excessive hours, the sheer number of providers, subcontractors and different factories made it impossible to track and ensure their compliance to regulations. A garment worker, who was 15 when she started working, said "[t]hey would hide the young girls in the toilet when buyers visited" (idem, 8:16-13:54). The working hours were also unreasonable, another worker mentioning, "[s]ometimes we would finish at midnight. It would be 2am before we got to bed. Then we'd wake up again at 5am" (idem, 15:51-16:00). On the morning of April 24th 2013, Shopna Khatun said to her mother, "Please, pray for me, I am going to work" (idem, 22:33). She did not want to lose her £2.30 in attendance bonus and her daily wage of £1.50. The workers were

forced in, with promises that the building would last another 100 years. A few hours later, once the fateful moment had arrived, the building was down in less than 90 seconds (idem, 25:44-28:47). Shopna was buried beneath the stories of the Rana Plaza building for 9 hours (idem, 23:36-39:57). All for a mere sum of £3.80. Among other horrific accounts of that day, Rojina Begum, recalls "I never thought that I'd have to amputate my own arm". At the start of her third day trapped in the remains of the building, the doctor could not reach her, so she gathered all her strength remaining to do it herself (idem, 43:06-43:53). This disaster permanently scarred the survivors and the families of those who lost their lives, alongside the Bangladeshi garment workers' community.

Besides the ones that passed away in tragic circumstances, there are their children and family members who were dependent on them and the survivors that are left behind. In a 2018 New York Times article, journalist Dana Thomas presents a snippet of the long-term consequences of the event. Presenting the lives of Mahmudul Hassan Hridoy, a man who worked in the factory for just a couple of weeks before the collapse and now suffers permanent damage to his legs; Shiuli Begum, who has her spinal cord crushed and can no longer have children; Shila Begum who has her arm and kidneys crushed and therefore can no longer work and afford education for her daughter. But the effects of these physical injuries do not stop there. One of the survivors interviewed pulls his hair out at night, while another is addicted to sleeping pills and at least 2 of the survivors of the collapse have committed suicide. One of the women interviewed recalled: "I passed out and came to my senses 27 days later" (Thomas, 2018) and mentioned to have received no compensation from the government or brands, but some from nonprofits. Another said: "You had to lobby for the money [...] And I was too infirm" (ibidem). Mr. Hridoy was one of the survivors that managed to receive $600, which can be a questionable sum when considering his life-changing ordeal. Issues of compensation were, and still are, disputed.

The recent measures of relocation of production as a way to increase the profits of western companies has generated work opportunities for a lot of women in developing

countries and represented a chance at their emancipation by offering employment outside of the home, the status of worker and economic player and a higher level of autonomy, especially in patriarchal societies. However, scholars have been questioning the extent of this emancipation and pointing out extents of exploitation. It is of interest to consider the cultural and social norms that shape gender and occupational expectations. Women are overrepresented in this industry because it is considered to be a feminine job, although underrepresented in higher paid and higher skilled professions, because of the continued preference of what are considered masculine traits over feminine traits (Ahmed, 2006, p. 120). In 1999, Mary Beth Mills (p. 7) stated: "In part, women's labour is attractive to international capital investment because of persistent assumptions by employers regarding what kind of workers women make [...] women workers are more likely to put up with low pay, limited benefits and long-term job insecurity. Their youth and gender also suggest a work force already schooled in obedience to (parental) authority, hard work, and the patience and dexterity required for many domestic chores (such as weaving and sewing). As a result, women's character and skills are often seen to be particularly well-suited to the fine detail and endless repetition of textile and electronics assembly work". A 2016 article entitled "Feminization of Employment and Gender Inequality of Bangladesh Labor Market: The Case of Garment Industries" supports similar ideas, but introduces the element of patriarchal characteristics which are specific to some developing societies: "capitalist interests along with patriarchal norms and values influence the use of women as a cheap, flexible and docile labor to earn the maximum profits at the minimum possible cost" (Islam, p. 157).

The status of primary caregivers has not been challenged. As core reproductive agents, even though more women are employed and provide for the household, more men are not contributing to the care economy. Because of this juggle between paid work and care work, an on and off movement, it is more likely for women to engage in informal employment (Ahmed, 2006, p. 116). Unequal pay and advancement opportunities, lengthy and unpredictable working hours, unsafe working environments, job insecurity, lack of maternity protection and childcare facilities, limited collective bargaining power, sexual, physical, verbal and mental

abuse indirectly produce more strain on women and make them subjects of exploitation at work, as well as in the home (ILO, 2014, p. 12). In my opinion, emancipation is too strong of a notion, since the traditional views of women have not been challenged. Still seen as docile, flexible, submissive workers, employers profit from this plentiful and cheap labour force. Sexual harassment just for women to continue working and the offering of sexual favours to receive overtime is hardly emancipatory.

It is common for men employed in traditionally female occupations to encounter stigma. But the perceived masculine inclination for technological intelligence, together with the technological advances of the industry, have made for more men to be employed in the garment sector, and as such, in what are considered more culturally and gender appropriate positions. Particularly for the textile industry, discrimination against men is also common during the recruitment stages, since men are seen as "troublemakers" (Janssen & Rossi, 2018, p. 4). However, in most cases, cultural and gender norms and stereotypes concerning the characteristics and abilities of the sexes favour the male worker. Implicit traits such as leadership and decision-making allow for a glass escalator effect to perpetuate within the industries' supervisory, managerial or quality control positions. And this happens at a noticeably high pace. As Bangladeshi worker Sima recalls, "I joined this garment industry twenty-eight months ago along with five other girls and two boys on the same day. All of us were unskilled and this was our first time job [...] after one-year between the boys one became supervisor, another boy became line chief, but we all the girls are still working as the sewing operator" (Islam, 2016, p. 160). In the documentary "Clothes to Die For" it can also be noticed that the men interviewed held higher positions than the women interviewed. Mr. Dipu held the position of production manager (Santana, 2015, 14:16), Shariful Islam of supervisor (idem, 17:06) in the Rana Plaza factories and volunteer Kazir Monir Hossain is a businessman who set up a factory as a cooperative owned by Rana Plaza survivors (idem, 55:52-56:19).

Solutions and conclusions

We have seen how these highly gendered but contrasting industries have been brought together under the same umbrella of humanly indecent working conditions, while social dumping practices have heightened the vulnerability of the employees. If in the past, women were seen as a flexible, docile and cheap labour army, we can notice that at least the male labour in the construction industry is starting to be transformed into similar conditions. Workers in both industries are put in positions of vulnerability, making them more exploitable with no or little protest while capitalising on some biological traits of the sexes and on traditional norms and expected behaviours of the genders.

Regarding possible solutions, if neoliberal and capitalist principles that hold flexible work to high regards are still desirable, it is clearly the case that more encompassing, better coordinated and improved enforcement of regulations and efforts are needed in order to offer employees the safety, security and decency they all deserve. Regarding the construction industry, better coordination between the member states of the European Union is highly desired, from a more unified understanding of terms to consolidated labour laws and allied correction of grey areas and loopholes while the detection of illicit, bogus or artificial employment, inspections and independent audits, provision of proof and reporting should become more thorough. The joint effort of public institutions, inspectors, and social security authorities to ensure that migrant workers have all the necessary information they need in their language can go a long way in not only improving their safety on site, but also their safety net. Furthermore, ways must be found to facilitate, guarantee and safeguard the workers' right to collective bargaining, the access to and non-discrimination of union association (The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers, 2010).

As for the textile industry, the dumping of production in developing countries is, needless to say, extremely profitable. Ideally, and with quite a utopic implication, all developing countries involved in the industry should stand together in imposing the same regulations regarding labour, while western businesses pay what would be a decent wage. However, this solution is bordering on the inconceivable. A possible answer would be for the

clothing companies in the developed countries to simply pay more for the products they order and to demand and ensure the workers are in turn paid more. Measures such as investing in constant inspections carried out thoroughly, the rehabilitation of factory buildings and their emergency infrastructure, the training of workers in safety protocols, the provision of safe factory child care and guaranteeing non-discriminatory, non-abusive practices and gender-sensitive welfare could truly be life changing for garment workers. The clothing companies have the power to demand these conditions when ordering their products. Currently though, they are not pressed to do so and are aware that this resolution may decrease their profits, while factory owners do not demand more in fear of losing business. But consumers have the power to press companies to provide products that are created in conditions of decency. Once these individual decisions will affect profit, companies may budge towards equitable practices. Public attention is and will be more and more valuable. The use of media of all parties, such as companies, journalists, labour inspectorates, member states, nongovernmental organisations in order to report misconduct, to nudge and peer pressure all the participants in the entire industry to care about its workers and to raise awareness and help develop more responsible communities that can in turn challenge demand in the market and put pressure on businesses may move the current state of affairs in a much more respectable place.

As concluding remarks, it is worthy to note, once more, the importance of productive, sustainable, fair work and strive for universal humane conditions, in this "new labour-unfriendly international regime" (as Jens Lerche refers to the current state, 2007, p. 446). All people should benefit from labour that allows conditions for living and for rest, for quality time, to be creative, to pursue their passions and to improve their skills. As a final response to the research question, namely "How have social dumping practices changed the construction and textile industries and what has been the impact of said practices on gender specific conditions encountered in the workplace?", my conclusions accommodate a somewhat pessimistic view on the impact of the pressures of profit-led globalised economies and the oftentimes ensuing social dumping practices in the two industries because of the worsened

working conditions of the highly gendered workforces, the continued preference for masculine norms that can both represent a glass escalator and be toxicity capitalised on, alongside the overall poor development of employment conditions and advancement opportunities for women. It is apparent that the flexibility of labour longed for by the neoliberal and capitalist principles is disproportionately carried by the more vulnerable. The poor working environments and substandard employment rights of the labourers are time and again justified by their existing insecure economic conditions and their lack of choice. The lack of other decent working opportunities implies a precarious set of living conditions, not a factor in legitimising taking advantage of the vulnerability of these situations in the name of profit. One cannot help but notice how many companies in the western parts of the world, let to some extent by legislative loopholes and grey areas, capitalise on workers coming from scarcity. This can oftentimes translate to attributing a lower value to the lives of people with little economic power.

I think work life is strongly related to quality of life. And I believe that each person carrying out paid and unpaid work should do so in conditions of decency and good spirit and be economically empowered enough to benefit from basic needs as a bare minimum. It is essential for their worries for the unexpected and the future to be at least partially put to rest by the safety of social security and to feel enough contentedness, confidence and ease so that they can practise creativity, a sense of belonging, the choice "to be and do things in life that they value" (Sen, 1999, p. 285). A life lived with dignity is nourished by decent work, determining the possibilities of lives lived to their fullest potential by happy human beings.

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