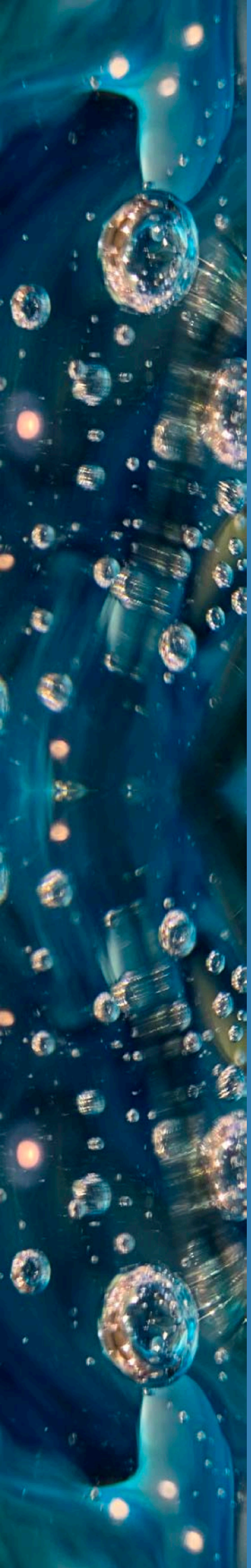

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"He Was Such a Block of Ice." Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Adolescent Girls' Work in an Intimate Relationship

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Keywords:
Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis; Adolescent; Romantic Relationships; *Gender*

Abstract: The first romantic relationships of adolescents are of significant developmental importance, and the acquired experience is a cultural issue. The study aimed to capture what meanings young teenagers give their first love experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted with six teenage girls. A detailed idiographic analysis, based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), allowed us to present the work of adolescents to maintain intimacy and ensure the stability of a romantic relationship. It was noticed that young girls take an emotionally leading role in their romantic relationships, feel responsible for them, and act following the stereotypical gender order. The interpretative framework adolescents adopt may result from therapeutic and utilitarian narratives, addressed mainly to women.

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The considerations undertaken in the article aim to represent the meanings adolescents give to their experiences of being in a romantic relationship. Their starting point is the effects of analyses offered in the doctoral thesis (Kacprzak-Wachniew 2020). The analytical work carried out at that time showed that the romantic experiences of adolescents are combined with a complex of rules and norms referring to the cultural and social gender order (*gender*). Therefore, we revolve in the article around the assumptions of the interpretative and humanistic paradigm (see: Burell and Morgan 1979). While the first one allows for "understanding the subjective human experience by testing knowledge in the practice of specific communities" (Rubacha 2006:62 [trans. KKW, JSS]), the second one directs attention to the manifestations of inequality, power, and domination occurring in it (Humm 1993; Ryle 2012; Chołuj 2014, Czarnacka 2014; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2018). The combination of feminist theory with the assumptions of social constructivism led to the conclusion that the romantic experiences of adolescents are a cultural issue regulated by the axionormative structure of society (see: Giddens 1992; Hochschild 2003; Płonka-Syroka and Stacherzak 2008; Płonka-Syroka, Radziszewska, and Szlagowska 2008; Szlendak 2008; Foucault 2009; Gdula 2009; Stadnik and Wójtewicz 2009; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2013; Bieńko 2017; Kalinowska 2018; Wróblewska-Skrzek 2022).

As a result, the article is divided into two main parts. In the theoretical one, we outline the cultural framework for adolescents' experiences of love based on previous research results. In the empirical part, we represent adolescents' experiences in romantic relationships captured during research.

A Cultural Framework for Experiencing Romantic Love

Experiencing love is not possible outside of culture. The emotions people experience are shaped by the norms, language, stereotypes, metaphors, and symbols in that culture. They constitute a framework where stimuli coming from the body, emerging emotions, and thoughts are organized, named, classified, and interpreted as love or the lack of it. Culture provides symbols, images, and stories where romantic feelings can be captured and communicated (Illouz 1997; Czernecka and Kalinowska 2020). Cultural notions of love sink deep into a person's mind, showing how to shape one's feelings. Ready-made narrative scripts are later used to give future episodes of life an appropriate structure (Illouz 2016). Young people have access to many areas where the idea of love is disseminated. These include fairy tales, series, advertisements, songs, and films (Werner 2012), as well as the Internet, where other people formulate guidelines on how interpersonal relationships should be created (Suzuki and Calzo 2004; Fliciak et al. 2010; Kim, Weinstein, and Selman 2017; Żurko 2018).

The connection of love with such phenomena as marriage and reproduction, sexuality and erotica, and sexual orientation and *gender* combines the issue of intimate relationships of young people with the contemporary contract of gender "organizing relations between women and men at the institutional, cultural, and individual level"

(Titkow 2014:250 [trans. KKW, JSS]; Fuszara 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2004). Culturally and socially (re)produced beliefs, patterns, and roles legitimize the *obviousness* of relationships between people and determine their attitudes and mutual expectations. They are also a source of ambiguous socialization messages, responsible for preparing individuals to play the role of a partner in an intimate relationship (see: Odegard 2021).

Despite the empirical changes observed in traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity, cultural models of representatives of both sexes are still a source of the unequal status of partners in an intimate relationship, a different distribution of rights and obligations assigned to them, and even experienced violence (Chybicka and Pastwa-Wojciechowska 2009; Chybicka and Kosakowska-Berezecka 2010; Borrajo, Gámez-Guadix, and Calvete 2015; Masanet, Medina-Bravo, and Ferrés 2018; Nava-Reyes et al. 2018; Cava et al. 2020; Ruiz-Palomino et al. 2021; Jiménez-Picón et al. 2022). The model of romantic love promoted in mass culture gives its recipients almost ready sets of beliefs about the *true face of love*. The myths, stereotypes, and cultural roles of gender occurring within them fuel the imagination of the recipients, thus equipping them with almost ready scenarios of loving and being loved (Cubells-Serra et al. 2021).

Adolescent Love Relationships

Undertaking activities by young people, such as dating (in the real and virtual world) (e.g., Montgomery and Sorell 1998; Szarota 2011; Kacprzak-Wachniew and Leppert 2013), experimenting with one's sexuality (Durham 1999; Usher and Mooney-Somers 2000; Jankowiak and Gulczyńska 2014; Sikora 2014; Jankowiak 2023), and establishing, sustaining, and participating in the breakdown of an intimate relationship, is the source of essential life experiences that play a crucial role in the process of forming identity (Erikson 1968; Havighurst 1972; Pindur 2002; Pawłowska 2006; Kacprzak-Wachniew 2015). *Love experimentation* determines the self-esteem and self-attractiveness of young people (Harter 1988; Furman and Szaffer 2003; Luciano and Orth 2017), teaches coping with stress and intense emotions (Nieder and Seiffge-Krenke 2001), and is also a source of social status achieved both in the peer group and relationships with the family (McIsaac et al. 2008; Suleiman and Daerdorff 2015; Kaczuba and Zwadroń-Kuchciak 2020). Adolescents' belief in the possibility of experiencing a happy, full romantic excitement of love at first sight coexists with a relatively orderly, thoroughly thought-out vision of the expected relationship. However, the discrepancy observed by adolescents between the "expected" and the "actually experienced" relationship (Guzman et al. 2009) confirms that people of all ages enter into intimate relationships with the baggage of top-down beliefs, expectations, and values (see: Sternberg 2001; Wojciszke 2006; Collins, Welsh, and Furman 2009). Intimate relationships become a source of heterogeneous romantic experiences for adolescents, filling their teenage biographies with diverse cognitive, emotional, and behavioral phenomena with romantic content (Collins et al. 2009; Ruszkiewicz 2013).

Therefore, there is a need to give voice to young people. Their experiences in romantic relationships have not been discussed in detail so far (Williams and Hickle 2010; Cheema and Malik 2021; Couture, Fernet, and Hébert 2021). Filling that gap

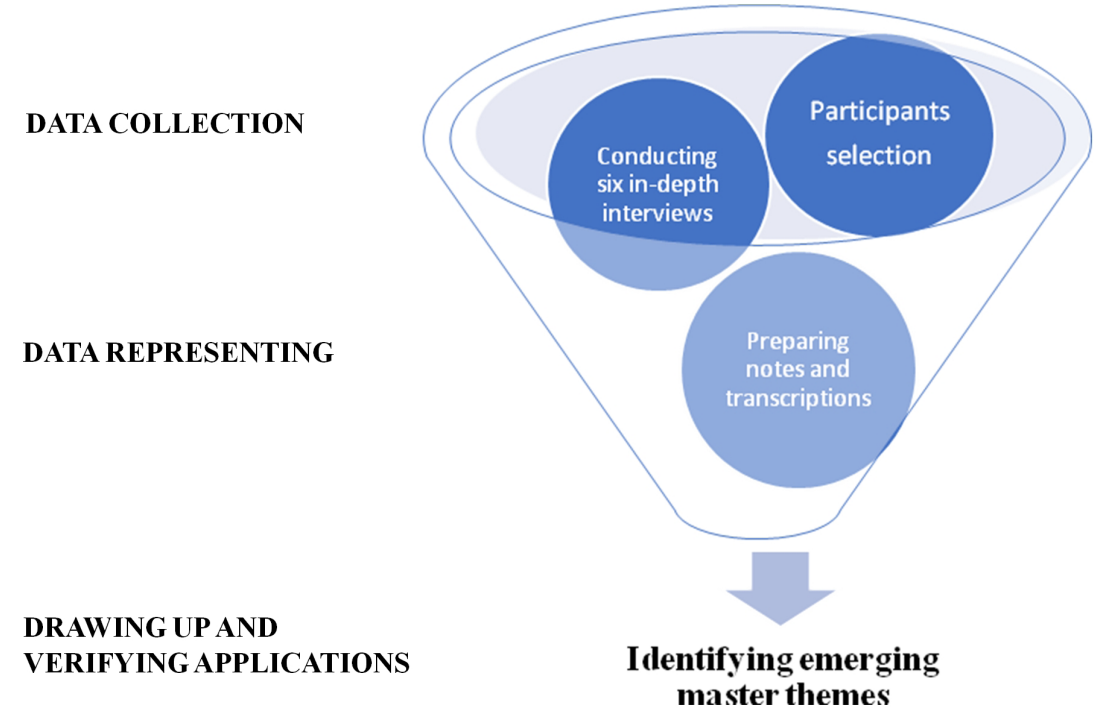
is salient because the first romantic relationships have significant developmental functions, and the accumulated experiences impact the psychosocial functioning of young people. To understand what adolescents experience, the framework of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was adopted (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). The subject of IPA's interest is the position of an individual—one's dilemmas and problems or, more broadly, one's coping in and with the world. As an approach that fits into the assumptions of the qualitative research strategy, IPA makes it possible to investigate how people give meaning to their meaningful life experiences. Thus, the study aimed at capturing adolescents' experiences in romantic relationships.

The following main research question was: What meanings do adolescents give to their experience of being in romantic relationships?

Research Design

The study's methodological framework is determined by IPA. It refers to the basic methods of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. It is a method that is both descriptive (describes how things appear) and interpretive (things have their hidden meaning) (Smith et al. 2009). As part of that approach, the researcher emphasizes generating rich and detailed descriptions of how the studied entities experience the phenomena being analyzed. The research was conducted in three stages presented below.

Figure 1. Research stages



Source: Self-elaboration.

The data collection stage involved the need to develop criteria for including participants in the research and to settle a preliminary version of questions for an in-depth interview. The data representation began with transcribing the interviews and taking notes from their course. Such arrangement of data allowed the preparation of tables and analytical matrices, which were the starting point for proper data analysis. The phase of derivation and final verification of conclusions identified five themes emerging from the adolescents' narratives. Their detailed description is presented later in the article.

Participants Group

Purposive sampling was used to gain insight into how adolescents understand their first romantic experiences. Since psychological similarities and differences are usually analyzed within a uniform (homogeneous) group in IPA, it was vital to determine the features based on which the group was distinguishable. The selection of candidates for the research was subordinated to such a criterion as:

- gender (girls),
- experience of being in a romantic relationship (for at least three months in the past year),
- number and nature of experiences (no more than three, up to four heterosexual romantic relationships),
- moderate attitude toward religion,
- current marital status (being single),
- living with both parents.

Ultimately, two groups of three girls participated in the study. The characteristics of the research group were presented based on the length and number of existing emotional relationships (see: Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of participants due to differentiating variables

PARTICIPANT	AGE	SCHOOL	LAST RELATIONSHIP LENGTH	RELATIONSHIPS TO DATE
R1: MILENA	18	high school	about 2 years	1
R2: JUDYTA	18	high school	about 6 months	4
R3: NATALIA	17	high school	about 1 year (2-month break)	2
R4: MAGDA	15	middle school	about 5 months (break)	3
R5: ALICJA	15	middle school	about 2 years (4-month break)	2
R6: BEATA	16	middle school	about 2 years (2 breaks: 6 and 2 months)	2

Source: Self-elaboration.

Data Collection

The data were collected through an in-depth interview conducted under one-on-one conditions. Its use seemed to be the most beneficial due to the subject and object of the study, that is, adolescents telling about personal experiences gained from a romantic relationship. To the guidelines for conducting IPA-style interviews, a plan for the interview was prepared, including the main questions and areas to which the meeting referred.

The prepared interview dispositions contained ten questions general and follow-up specific questions. For example, a general question was: How did you meet and start a relationship with your partner? The specific questions were: How did you meet your partner? How did it happen that you became a couple? What did you think about this person at the time?

An information brochure distributed in schools to students and their carers was a tool enabling the search for people for research. After obtaining their and their parents' consent, meetings with students were held in school conditions or the university room.

The meetings with the participants began with introducing themselves, discussing the purpose of the study, and ensuring their anonymity and voluntary participation. Each time, it was also reminded that the interview was recorded (audio), and the participant was asked for permission to record it to prepare a transcription.

The following request was addressed to the participants at the beginning of the interview: *I would like to ask you to tell me about your last relationship. I am curious about your experiences in a relationship, what you think about the relationship, the events that took place, and the person you were involved with*. Most often, it was necessary to ask an initiating question to get the participant to describe an episode or experience or to refer to what was already said. At the end of the conversation, the girls were asked about their emotional state. The length of the interviews ranged between 90 and 150 minutes, which translated into 165 pages of interview transcripts. The analytical work in IPA proceeds in several steps: from taking notes on the transcriptions and extracting emerging themes, which are then assigned to more general themes, each step is developed on a case-by-case basis so that patterns can be searched across all participants. Finally, tables of results and tables of quotations are also produced and used in the development of the research report.

Credibility and Ethics

The research process presented in the article was conducted according to the guidelines for IPA research implementation (Smith et al. 2009). The correctness of the implementation of the IPA assumptions was discursively reviewed with the creator of the approach—Jonathan A. Smith. The feedback obtained during the discussion is testimony to the reliability of the study's results. In addition, both authors of the article were involved in the analytical work, which allowed for the ongoing confrontation of their pre-assumptions, contentious issues, and interpretive doubts. The principles of voluntary participation in the study, anonymity and confidentiality of the information, and its safe storage were observed in the relations with the participants of the study. Adolescent girls, with prior consent from their parents, were informed about the aims of the project and knew the tools for collecting data and

their role in it. In the transcriptions, the real names of the participants were replaced with pseudonyms, and any information that would allow them to be identified was deleted. The audio-recorded interviews were collected in a folder and secured with a password. The data produced during the study were also secured.

Data Analysis

Interview transcriptions were raw empirical material analyzed according to the IPA guidelines (Smith et al. 2009). The analyses aimed at preparing notes on transcriptions, identifying emerging themes, and compiling them to search for common master themes. Such a scheme was repeated for the development of each transcription. The basis for further analysis was tables of results, developed separately for each examined case.

Age was to be the variable that would divide the participants into two groups of three so that internal comparisons could be made. During the analyses, it became apparent that revealing themes were present in both groups, and the division by age did not, at that point, provide noticeable differences in how emerging feelings or fears of the end of relationships were experienced.

Findings

As a result of the analyses, five master themes common to the entire group emerged. Below is a table of results (see: Table 2), from which one master theme will be described in detail regarding the engagement and work the participants performed for the relationship. The participants' narratives, representative of the subject described, are directly quoted under their pseudonyms.

Table 2. Overview of the master theme and subordinate themes

Work to maintain intimacy and ensure a lasting relationship
1. Troubleshooting the relationship • Diagnosing, discussing, and explaining problems • Encouraging partners to talk, mitigating conflicts • Starting, conducting, and ending difficult conversations
2. Responsibility for the boy's emotional development • Recognizing (guessing) partner's feelings • Interpreting partner's behavior through the prism of diagnosed emotions • Stimulating partner's feelings, seeking their attention and concerns
3. Recognizing the partner's and own feelings • Analyzing the partner's intentions, behaviors, and gestures • Showing concern and interest • Caring for the emotional needs of partners and their health
4. Saving the relationship, hoping that the partner will change • Strong involvement in the relationship and invalidating the emotions experienced in it • Striving for personality transformation of the partner • Ignoring the disrespectful attitude of the partner, betrayal, and violent behavior
5. Shifting responsibility from the boy and burdening others with it • Rationalizing the reasons for the gradual departure of the partner • Blaming peers for decisions and mistakes made by the partner • Self-blaming of partners

Source: Self-elaboration.

Troubleshooting the Relationship

The difficulties encountered in the intimate relationship were the main topic of most of the narratives disclosed by the participants. The problems indicated by the girls usually concerned disregarding their emotional needs and the lack of involvement of partners in maintaining a satisfactory bond. The participants expected confirmation of their uniqueness in the form of showing them attention, time spent together, readiness to conduct conversations, and recognizing the importance of a relationship as a couple. Attempts to reach an agreement in the relationship were initiated only by them, making daily efforts to seek the attention of partners and their well-being. According to the participants, the experienced crises and the accompanying tensions resulted from the lack of readiness of the partners to talk freely and honestly. The participants of the study, at all costs, although sometimes unsuccessfully, sought to clarify the misunderstandings within the relationship, often colliding with the partners' reluctance to participate in the dialogue. Thus, the boys' communication difficulties are one of the most salient problems in a relationship, leading to the gradual distancing of partners and even breaking relationships.

The topic of the lack of conversations was most widely revealed in Beata's narrative. Initially, the girl tried to show understanding toward her partner's unexpected reluctance to stay in touch. In the face of receiving distant and evasive answers to her questions, her frustration grew, which led to minor conflicts and misunderstandings.

> **In the beginning, I found, "Well, he's probably busy or just doesn't have time to write, or something,"** but then as it was longer, well, I talked to him, for example, **as he wrote with this one sentence, then "Oh, you don't want to talk to me again" or "You don't want to talk to me again," and so on, and he texted back with something, then the topics would get cut back on again, then I would give up, then as we met, I would tell him again that it bothers me that he doesn't text me, that he can text with others for hours, and with me not anymore, and there he would say that I** exaggerate that it is not as I see it.[1] [R6: Beata]

The girl's attempts to inform her partner about the feeling of being invalid and disregarded resulted only in a temporary change in his behavior. After short episodes of improvement, he returned to his earlier habits, withdrawing from talks with Beata. Attempts to draw attention to themselves did not bring the expected results but even deepened the partner's lack of recognition of its value and uniqueness. Thus, the relationship experienced by the participant was a source of constant frustration, anger, and dissatisfaction for her.

> When I love someone, that is, or if I am infatuated and I know that I can text that person about problems, and since he would not text me, I just felt that I am not such a person for him because I also like being a person to whom one can text, talk to, and I would like to help, and since he would not text me and treat me in such a way that I am such support for him**, then I simply stated that I am not so important to him.** [R6: Beata]

Similar feelings accompanied Magda, who struggled with her partner's disrespectful approach to the difficulties encountered in the relationship. To identify the source of the problems, the girl tried to

[1] All emphases in the quotes by the authors.

control the expression of her emotions. The repeated suggestions of the partner deprived the girl of her self-confidence:

> I was convinced that there was something wrong with me because he kept saying, "Well, a bit of slack," so I wouldn't clasp. [R4: Magda]

Her need to engage naturally in issues crucial to the quality of relationships has been weakened by the belief that she takes the topic too seriously. At the end of the relationship, however, she noticed that her greater independence and setting boundaries allowed her to maintain her position in the relationship.

> Now, in retrospect, **if I did not let them do it all so easily, maybe they would gain a little more respect for me** and also, say, for example, as they did that they stopped talking or spoke so little, they would **not do it, because, for example, they would know that "Gosh, if I do so, she will just walk away from me and not want me, if I act like that**, because she is so serious." [R4: Magda]

In the case of Magda, the experience gained from intimate relationships resulted in the feeling of inadequacy in her efforts to achieve the results. The open formulation of perceived needs and expectations has been marked with a label of excessive problem-solving and the lack of expected distance.

While in the case of Beata and Magda, attempts to establish a conversation about the difficulties in the relationship did not bring the expected results, Alicja's actions proved to be somehow compelling. The participant effectively managed emotions in the relationship, took responsibility for their sensation, and, most importantly, encouraged the partner to participate in the conversation. However, the manner and circumstances in which that occurred are associated with exerting pressure.

> There are sometimes some quarrels, such as that something does not suit me, I immediately go and say it, and I say, "Listen, I would like to talk to you because it does not suit me," and then it often **happens that he does not necessarily as if he wanted to talk to me and was so open at once, only it was necessary to press him a little to talk to me about it.** [R5: Alicja]

Responsibility for the Boy's Emotional Development

The lack of readiness of the boys to openly communicate the experienced states triggered in the participants the need to develop their partners' affection. Embedding themselves in the role of emotion management specialists, the girls attempted to diagnose (or rather guess) the emotions felt by their partners and interpret their characteristic behaviors. An element combining the diverse romantic experiences of girls taking part in the study is the belief that they know much more about their boyfriends than they do. Striving to change a partner and shaping their readiness to function in a relationship based on closeness and mutual engagement are the signs of taking responsibility for the development of boys' emotionality.

In the case of Alicja, shaping an intimate relationship was associated with arousing the partner's feelings during the relationship as well as after its completion. The girl stood in the role of a competent person, emotionally mature and aware of her expectations. She played the role of a mentor, leading to a personality change in her partner.

> I was just such a person who also **saw some things after him, and I, as if, directed him to show feelings** because he was such a closed person when it comes to feelings, and I was the person who **awakened** those feelings in him, and he liked it. [R5: Alicja]

Her boyfriend was a particularly closed and emotionally withdrawn person. Alicja even described him as a "block of ice," which was supposed to symbolize a cold and distant man. Most likely, she wanted to emphasize the partner's helplessness and thus, the need to manage him:

> he is such **a difficult person when it comes to love.** Not everyone would be able to be with such a person because it is sometimes a bit **like with such a child, but on the other hand, such a block of ice, such a very mysterious person.** He is very mysterious, and you never know what he wants, so not everyone can be in such a mystery, and he is also a person who is **not able to show everything.** [R5: Alicja]

Being with a difficult person was something to be proud of for the participant. Convinced of the strength of their feelings with extraordinary effectiveness, she crushed the emotional barriers of the partner, leading to his gradual opening. Thus, the sense of influence was a source of growing self-satisfaction and confirmed the girl's conviction that she had special interpersonal skills.

Recognizing the Partner's and Own Feelings

Recognizing a partner's feelings is not only part of the work related to the development of their emotionality. It is also a condition to feel loved. The participants revealed a similar idea of what it means to be loved. They thoroughly analyzed the signs of falling in love resulting from the bodies of partners (gestures, facial expressions) and their behavior. Verbal declarations did not occur on their part, and the belief about the duration or gradual disappearance of love was assessed by a subjective interpretation of the observed facts. Being in physical contact, showing support and giving help, caring for health and safety was what meant that you loved or were loved. In turn, the lack or insufficient number of signs of interest was a source of concern and doubt.

For example, Judyta looked for indicators of her boyfriend's crush based on his desire to maintain constant physical contact:

> **he showed it more just by hugging me, he always had to hold my hand, so I sometimes knew somewhere around here I had to correct my purse or something, I say: "What? Am I going to hold your hand all the time, as soon as I have to take it out?" and he "No, always by the hand."** [R2: Judyta]

Beata identified the boy's feelings in his spontaneously externalized concern in everyday situations. His interest in her affairs, inquiring about her well-being or health brought her to the state of certainty that the feelings nourished between them were authentic and sincere.

> **I see that someone cares about me the most, I see that I am just important to this person because you can't pretend to care, pretend to be interested.** [R6: Beata]

She responded to the partner's experience with the same commitment. She was eager to take care of his physical health, she watched over the results in science. Taking care of her partner was a natural determinant of her emotions toward him. Beata is an example of a partner who validates her role in

the relationship by providing certain services to the partner.

Caring for a partner is also revealed in the narrative of Judyta and Alicja:

> **It was with him that I had to go to the doctor because I said: "If I do not go with you, you will not go at all."** [R2: Judyta]

> It was difficult for me just that he... that I will not always be in the first place, that I will always be the most important, that there will be a school, that the change of school and also **it was difficult for me to give such support, just that sometimes you have to take a grip and be with such a person, and not only have to care about their problems, and sometimes you have to break through and listen to their problems even for a week.** [R5: Alicja]

It can be seen that being in an emotional relationship is about meeting each other's emotional needs. The scant involvement of participants has been a source of concern as to the quality of the experienced relationship. The partner's greater efforts testified to his love and gave a sense of security.

> **He was always there to walk me home, to watch** over whether I was all right. It was as if he could **take care of me** and, gradually, it came out on its own. I have seen **what he does for me** and that he is so dear to me. And that, even though he once told me that he was afraid of my parents, he talked to them anyway, he was coming there anyway, and **he was coming to me more than I was coming to him,** and he was taking the tram himself. [R3: Natalia]

The issue of taking care of the safety of the girls is often mentioned by the participants. Sometimes, it comes down to treating the participant as someone who simply requires help, like a younger sister. For example, Alicja saw herself in the eyes of her partner as his younger sister:

> **he always looked at me as such a younger sister, as such a person that he could take care of**, that he could always come to and listen to, but also who needed, and he felt needed. [R5: Alicja]

The concern for girls' safety in their partners' behavior coincides with the features and behaviors attributed stereotypically to both sexes. Gentlemen are usually described as strong and courageous. Women as physically weaker and exposed to various dangers.

Saving the Relationship, Hoping That the Partner Will Change

The sense of responsibility shared by the participants for shaping relationships had far-reaching consequences. Strong commitment to the partner, belief in the uniqueness of feelings, and the effort put into developing the relationship resulted in deep conviction about the need to save the threatened relationship at all costs. Although Alicja does not explicitly say that she shapes her statement based on her experiences, she encourages her colleagues to fight for relationships if they are convinced of their feelings. Love, even if one-sided and imagined, is a sufficient condition to reactivate the relationship and arouse the feelings of the partner.

> **If they love this person, it is possible to arrange everything and get along with this person**, and if you do not feel it to such a fairly severe degree, well, then there is already a problem because feelings that are already dormant disappear, then there is a problem

with **saving anything or building** anything. [R5: Alicja]

Magda and Milena took various actions to save the relationship, even when participating in it was associated with experiencing unpleasant emotions and, in Milena's case, even violence. Significantly, the participants' hope for an effective change of partner was not understood by people from their immediate environment.

> Everyone told me then, "Magda, it doesn't make sense, break up with him because it will be the same again and you will be tired; break up faster because later it will be too late for you and you will be just worse," and I said then that **"It is not that it can't be saved somehow."** [R4: Magda]

> Those girls in the class also advised me against it; **they said that I should leave him as soon as possible, but I could not because, in theory, I loved him, and I did not want to, and I hoped that he would change.** [R1: Milena]

At the time of the interview, Magda and Milena were already after the definitive termination of the relationship. The determination to maintain a relationship and the belief that the boy would change his behavior for them was ultimately something that the girls regretted. Alicja still believes in the possibility of improving the relationship.

Shifting Responsibility From the Boy and Burdening Others With It

The participants, especially those who did not understand the reason for the deterioration of the relationship, repeatedly analyzed the possible reasons for the breakup, adopting different interpretations of what happened. Girls focused on searching for the sources of difficulties in the boy's person (his needs, family situation, psychological features), external factors, independent of the boys, less often assuming that they ceased to be loved. They were accompanied by a sense of confusion and misunderstanding of the boy, sometimes there was a hope of reactivating the relationship. The end of the relationship or its crisis was a threat to the girls' self-esteem. For example, Alicja's responsibility for the betrayal of the boy is initially attributed to herself. For her, betrayal was a humiliating experience.

> It was hard for me because betrayal for me was, above all, a very humiliating experience—for me, that I was not. Why it happened—I **also blamed myself for the fact that maybe I wasn't such a good partner, that maybe I broke something somewhere, and that maybe I wasn't enough for him.** [R5: Alicja]

She did not understand what led the boy to cheat. It was only with time that she freed herself from the feeling that she was not a good enough partner, blaming other girls in the club or writing to the boy.

> **Girls are also different nowadays**, not only boys because most people hide behind the fact that boys are so terrible, and so on, but, unfortunately, there are more and more cases that **girls are terrible and can sometimes cause such harm to another person that this person bounces back for a long time. Just like that. Well, a little bit of alcohol, a little bit of it, and it turned out that she somehow kissed him there.** [R5: Alicja]

Magda, on the other hand, denied the possibility of having no feelings or losing interest in her for

no reason. Her attempts to cope with difficult emotions involved analyzing the boy's family, school, and emotional situation.

> I was just so **broken down, and I started to think of some different theories**, that maybe, I don't know, that maybe he can't cope and that he can't cope, but that the **school overwhelms him**, well, the school does such things with us, we have such stress that maybe he **has such** stress that he can't handle it anymore, and that's why he did so that he didn't want to or his **dad left him and his** mom in general, like when he was little, I began to wonder **whether he did not have any disease, that he could not name feelings and I found the disease**, it was to such an extent that I simply sketched that I found the name of the disease, which, alexithymia it is called. [R4: Magda]

Discussion

The study aimed at capturing what meanings young teenagers give their first love experiences. A detailed idiographic analysis allowed us to present rich reports on the emotionally leading role of participants in their relationships. In most of the participants, there was a thread of experiencing the lack of involvement of partners, not only in the context of giving attention but also in readiness to discuss relationship issues. The participants undertook various strategies to deal with difficulties in the relationship. First, they analyzed emerging emotions (their own and their partner's), assessed the level of engagement, and analyzed the sources of failures in relationships and partner's behaviors by past experiences or character features. Secondly, the participants sought to improve the functioning of the relationship, which could be related to their idea of the relationship as a work area. During interviews, they often used such terms as building and expanding, awakening, solving, and developing. How the participants talked about intimate relationships corresponds to the model of love as work (Illouz 1997; 2010; 2016). In that cultural model, the relationship is a sphere of intentional activities, such as building, investing, negotiating, and ensuring the durability and satisfaction of both partners. Its source is contemporary therapeutic discourses often directed to girls and women, looking for the normative determinants of what a *healthy* and *unhealthy* relationship means. However, access to specific discourses has a cultural dimension. Eva Illouz (1997) showed in her analyses that romantic experiences and the superimposition of meanings on them can differentiate membership of a particular social class. For example, men from the lower social classes viewed emotional relationships in a much more romantic way than men from the middle and upper classes. Differences between classes were also highlighted in terms of the criteria taken into account when choosing a partner, such as having requirements to possess certain psychological characteristics indicative of cultural capital. Although both middle- and upper-class participants used the romantic narrative, they did not pursue it stereotypically, being more flexible toward the romantic love code. Participants' narratives and interpretations of their love experiences may thus stem from their habitus (Bourdieu 2005). Their middle-class membership and possession of higher cultural competence may also pave the way for them to access cultural texts in which the therapeutic discourse is revealed, but also to obtain psychological support. In the long term, it would be interesting to include people from different social classes and with different cultural capital.

Perhaps for this reason, the image of *youthful love* emerging from their narrative differs from stereotypical images, referring to spontaneous heartbreaks and accompanying joyful experiences. From the story of adolescents, an image of an asymmetrical relationship emerges, which, instead of winging and adding energy, adds many worries and complex emotions. Considering that the participants felt responsible for maintaining the relationship in good condition, it is not surprising that they could feel emotional exhaustion and disappointment with their experiences. In that respect, the relationships of adolescents were consistent with the results of research on the involvement of adult women in maintaining relationships (Duncombe and Marsden 1993; 1995; Brannon 2017) or with the "feminization of love" (Cancian 1986). Its essence boiled down to a culturally sanctioned division of duties customarily attributed to women and men in intimate relationships. Traditional gender roles, along with the accompanying gender stereotypes, set the standards of proximity and the types of behavior characteristic of them. The role of emotion management specialists was subordinated to women. The belief that women are emotionally self-aware, caring, and willing to sacrifice has made them responsible for the quality of their intimate relationships. The main areas of their influence were emotions and feelings between both partners. Men rather play the role of "hero, a conqueror who seduces, breaks the rules, protects, saves, dominates and receives" (Ceretti and Navarro 2018:80).

The obtained results indicate that the problems experienced by the participants are similar to those experienced by adult women—lack of emotional commitment of the partner and uneven efforts of women and their partners to maintain relationships. Such a division into emotionally developed women and cold men might be perpetuated by early childhood socialization. Boys have few opportunities to practice developing intimacy. Their communication with friends is less emotional than in the case of girls (Giordano, Longmore, and Manning 2001). Parents talk about emotional states depending on the sex of the child. As a result, the patterns of talking about emotions may affect boys' emotional development (Kyratzis 2001). Maybe that is why we may observe their lower level of confidence in managing emotional relationships and greater dependence.

The norms and restrictions typical of the modern gender contract are dynamic. The changes occurring in them are a consequence of broadly understood transformations taking place, among others, in the economy, politics, customs, and identities of people functioning in a globalized world (Szlendak 2008; Jasińska-Kania 2012). Although contemporary literature points to significant transformations in men's identity and identity construction, the obtained emotional research results do not allow them to be noticed in adolescents' intimate relationships. Stereotypes and gender roles functioning in culture are still an important interpretative framework for the love they experience (McQueen 2017; 2022). Thus, understanding the identity transformation of representatives of both sexes requires further research in which both boys and girls share their thoughts about their experiences in intimate relationships. Such a type of analysis would be a salient extension of the research presented in the article, encouraging us to undertake another research project.

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Why Is It So Hard to Talk About Same-Sex Experience? A Case Study of Veiled Silence in a Research Relationship through Reflexive and Autoethnographic Lens

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Abstract: Research into intimate details of human life can be challenging for the parties involved. This article is a case study of a research situation in which I, as an interviewer, failed to elicit information from a male Vietnamese interviewee who evaded discussing specific details of his romantic life. I argue that this situation—the man's avoidance of sharing details of his feelings toward people of the same sex and my discomfort in facing his avoidance—reveals a culture of silence regarding same-sex experiences in Vietnam. The study utilizes autoethnographic anecdotes of my experience of growing up in such a culture and observing similar evasive attitudes. It also adopts a reflexive approach that delves into segments of my second research encounter with the interviewee as well as my internal struggles, including feelings of anxiety and guilt about probing into an informant's romantic life. It seeks to enrich Lisa A. Mazzei's concept of "veiled silence," which describes the deliberate non-engagement with taboo topics by linking it with the idea of a "culture of silence," or a disempowering social environment, and discussing these concepts in the context of Vietnam. It also contributes to the literature on LGBTQ+ matters in Vietnam and qualitative research methods by recommending greater attention to silence in research encounters, which can offer unexpected insights for studies into sensitive issues.

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In the summer of 2019, I conducted interviews for my doctoral project on Vietnamese audience reception of soft masculinities, that is, the romanticized and aestheticized representations of male characters in romantic South Korean television dramas (known as K-dramas, now a globally recognizable television genre), often manifested in gentle and effeminate men (Gammon 2021a; 2021b; 2022). For this project, I traveled back to Vietnam, my home country, and recruited Vietnamese participants of any gender orientation who watched K-dramas and were willing to meet me twice[1] for interviews. My purpose was to ask these participants about their viewing experiences, for example, how they perceived soft masculinities and romantic relations in K-dramas, especially regarding gendered identification and desires. Initially, I recruited people through a post on my social media page, a Facebook ad funded by my university—the Victoria University of Wellington's research grant, and a recruitment ad, which a few friends posted for me at the cafés they owned. I only recruited people I was not friends with and had never met to minimize bias. While I had no difficulty finding female applicants, I struggled to find male ones, possibly because of the stigma linked to romantic K-dramas as a female-oriented genre (Ainslie 2017; Gammon 2021a). I therefore resorted to snowball sampling—asking friends and acquaintances if they knew any men who might fit the criteria and be interested in participating in my project.

A long-time friend of mine then introduced me to Lam (pseudonym), a middle-class man in his mid-twenties, who was working for a broadcasting company. According to my friend, Lam watched a lot of South Korean television and cinema. Without me asking, my friend told me that Lam was gay with the intention of providing me with an important detail about the person. The "revelation" of my friend, whom I trust due to our long-time friendship, resulted in a biased assumption in my mind—that Lam might be gay, and I did not even consider the other possibility that he might be bisexual. With that in mind, I had hoped that the man would come out to me and possibly share about his same-sex experience, as three other participants who identified as gay or bisexual did in their encounters with me. The reason why the others came out was because of my questions about their romantic experiences, which were outlined as part of my research in the Information Sheet sent to every participant. The relevant section of the document reads:

> I will ask you questions about (1) yourself and your background (education, lifestyles, hobbies, etc.), (2) how you view Korean television dramas and what you feel about male characters in those dramas, (3) your life experiences that involve men, including social, romantic, and family relationships, and what you feel about "masculinity." [Gammon 2021a:219]

However, contrary to my inappropriate expectation, Lam was evasive about gendered experiences, even though he attended two interviews, demonstrated friendly manners, and shared details about

[1] Following Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) psychoanalytically inspired free association model, I adopted a "double interview" method, which means most participants were interviewed twice on separate occasions. The first interview should afford a preliminary reading, with attention to contradictions, inconsistencies, evasions, and nuances of emotional tone in narratives, while the second further investigates information provided during the first. The time gap between interviews (at least two weeks) is for me to reflect on the first encounter, read through a draft transcript to get to know an informant better, and *immerse* myself in my thoughts and feelings about the informant (Whitehouse-Hart 2014). It also enabled informants to reflect on the research topic and thus possibly produced richer data in the second interview. Each interview lasted approximately two hours.

his childhood, studies, and work. At one point in the second interview, Lam acknowledged having felt attracted to certain men but did not elaborate. Because of my confusion and concern over the authenticity of the data collected with Lam at the time, I excluded such data from my doctoral thesis but have kept thinking about my research encounters with him from time to time. Exploring part of such shelved dataset, this article examines a research situation—the moments in our second interview during which Lam's evasion was evident and my discomfort as a researcher as I encountered the situation. Using a reflexive approach that probes into my emotional experience and autoethnographic vignettes, I discuss the double meaning behind the situation—why it might be difficult for Lam to be more open about his feelings toward men and why I found it challenging to probe questions about that aspect of his life. While I discuss the dialogues we had and offer some interpretation of Lam's attitude, I prioritize examining my emotional difficulty rather than the difficulty Lam might have. Overanalyzing his evasion runs the risk of imposing my assumptions on his self-presentation, while I have authority over my thoughts and feelings.

Seeking to make sense of such an *unsuccessful* research relationship, this article utilizes the concept of "veiled silence," a situation in which research participants speak, but their speech deviates from the question(s) being posed because they do not know how to directly address the issue in question (Mazzei 2003; 2007). The article argues that this silence, evident in the participant's response and mildly challenged by the researcher through vague questions, signals the culture of silence and ambiguity regarding same-sex experiences in Vietnam, which stifles open discussions of same-sex desires and practices. Joining Lisa A. Mazzei's call for greater attention to silences as "silent speech" and "absent presence" (Mazzei 2007), the article argues for the insights that can be gathered from such attention, in this case, the latent meanings of our shared difficulty in discussing same-sex desires and practices, and brings to the fore the broader problem of social evasion regarding such matters. The following section offers background information about the broader research project and the situation in question.

Contextual Background

My doctoral research, which focuses on gendered experiences and adopts the Free Association Narrative Interview method characterized by the solicitation of free talk and psychosocial attention to individual case studies involving biographical details (Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Whitehouse-Hart 2014; Gammon 2021a), requires probing into the intimate realm and involves intrusive questions. As such, it went through a rigorous ethical application procedure before being approved to take place.[2] Questions about romantic relationships are important because the method is about connecting lived and viewing experiences. For example, my research finds that a married woman watched romantic K-dramas to vicariously live out the passion lacking in her heterosexual marriage (Gammon 2022) and reveals a link between a straight man's losing interest in escapist romantic K-dramas and his disillusionment with romantic love (Gammon 2021b). My encounters with most participants proved satisfactory as they gave detailed responses about their gendered experiences and views of romantic Korean dramas, and some resulted in heartfelt, intimate stories.

[2] The ethics application ID number for the project is 0000026887.

It is salient to note that while before we met, I hoped that Lam would come out, I did not think it was absolutely necessary for him to explicitly do so by labeling his sexual identity. My commitment to queer theory, which challenges the idea of an inherent and fixed gender and argues that such an idea is a construction produced through reiterated enactments of gender in everyday life (Butler 2006), taught me to keep an open mind. I am receptive to the idea that some people may not identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others, also known as the LGBTQ+ community, even though they engage in queer sexual practices, and I am cognizant of non-binary identifications. Following Judith Butler (2006), who refutes a monolithic gender status for both heterosexuality and homosexuality, I assumed that people who identify as heterosexual could still have queer experiences, and queer-identified cis-gender people could also hold romantic emotions toward members of the opposite sex. In such an approach, queer theory problematizes the dichotomy of man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, feminine/masculine (Li 2018) and "honor[s] the complexity of human agency" and "the instability of identity" (Valocchi 2005:768). With that in mind, I did not ask participants to explicitly state their sexual orientation but encouraged them to share their romantic experiences where they were comfortable.

Thus, what made me confused and anxious was not simply the fact that Lam did not come out by labeling his sexual identity, suppose he is not straight, but that he acknowledged same-sex attractions briefly, only to deflect from that altogether. And even though he presented himself as a straight man, he was avoidant of most questions about romantic relationships. In revealing my hope, I did not claim it was an appropriate feeling—I simply shared what I honestly felt at the time. To me, then, the explicit labeling of sexual orientation was not essential, but a willingness to open up is important for authentic, reliable data, especially because the interview approach is grounded in the connection between biographical details and viewing experiences, as well as the discussion of gender relations and gender views. Lam's evasiveness thus caused me anxiety during and after the two interviews. Such (non-clinical) anxiety is linked to my ethical concerns as a researcher (that I may offend or upset him), concern about the authenticity of the data collected from Lam, and fear of failure. After the first interview, I wondered if I should meet him again for a second encounter. When I finally made up my mind to contact him again, I was determined that, while I would not pressure him into coming out due to ethical concerns and the possibility that my friend's assumption might be wrong, I would ask him explicitly if he had feelings for men, and if he could share with me some details of his experience with men. I figured that it might be inappropriate to ask him upfront about his sexual identity, but it would be okay to simply ask those questions, as the ambiguity would render it safe. When we finally met for the second time, before I started my questioning, I reassured Lam of my principle to keep participants' identities anonymous. I was also careful in progressing, sometimes resorting to indirect questioning. However, the result I got was still ambiguous responses, which I will present in detail later in this article.

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Seeking to make sense of an *unsuccessful* research relationship with the same participant formed through two interviews, this article utilizes the concept of "veiled silence," a situation in which re-

search participants do speak, but their speech deviates from the question(s) being posed, because they do not know how to directly address the issue in question (Mazzei 2003; 2007). Veiled silence is often accompanied by "avoidance, denial, deflection, reframing, and intellectualizing" (Mazzei 2003:363). My attention to Lam's veiled silence is to heed Mazzei's (2003:358) call to treat silence as part of the whole phenomenon that is the interview content because "we as researchers need to be carefully attentive to what is not spoken, not discussed, not answered, for in those absences is where the very fat and rich information is yet to be known and understood." Calling for a "problematic of silence," Mazzei (2007:46) proposes a deconstructive approach through attention to qualitative data likely to be "left out, excluded, and literally silenced."

Building on Mazzei's idea, Tracy Morison and Catriona Macleod (2014:696) explain how "talk about unrelated or peripheral topics can be theorized as 'noise' that serves to 'veil' silence on a topic." Extending Morison and Macleod (2004)'s argument that veiled silence masks people's inability to discuss a topic, I contend that continuous silence regarding an issue, in this case, same-sex experience (whether of emotional or sexual nature) in Vietnamese culture, reveals a societal discomfort with the topic and suggests a long way toward freedom in queer expressions and practices. Lam's veiled silence and my anxiety, stemming from my fear of offending him, will be explained through a link to this culture of ambiguity and silence surrounding same-sex feelings and dating practices. While contemporary Vietnamese society seems to have become more accepting of LGBTQ+ issues on the surface, it continues to stigmatize them through both straight and queer people's unwillingness to confront these issues in everyday life.

This article connects "veiled silence" with "culture of silence," a concept used by various scholars in discussing the oppression of marginalized groups. The term "culture of silence" is not coined by a particular scholar but is widely used to indicate the lack of communication regarding sensitive issues such as corporate misconduct (Verhezen 2010), disability (Yoshida and Shanouda 2015), HIV/AIDS (Grünkemeier 2013), women's sexual lives (Nkealah 2009), and poverty (Boone, Roets, and Roose 2019) out of fear and discomfort caused by an oppressive environment. A culture of silence is often sustained by the lack of dialogues concerning issues of inequalities perpetuated by both a dominant group that holds greater power and a marginalized group that internalizes their oppression through continuous compliance (Freire 1970; Boone et al. 2019). The most influential theorist who has used this term is educational philosopher Paulo Freire (1970:47), who argues that in a culture of silence, "the oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom." By connecting Mazzei's "veiled silence" with the "culture of silence," this article does not focus on deliberate, explicit attempts to silence marginalized voices using formal sanctions or explicit bullying but rather on the fact that the local culture is not enabling enough to allow for complete freedom of expressions concerning same-sex desires and practices, rendering discussions of these matters uncomfortable and challenging. Veiled silence is thus a symptom of a culture of silence or the lack of a supportive environment. In her 2007 book on silence in qualitative research, Mazzei mentions the "culture of silence" a few times but does not make clear its connection with "veiled silence."

In an attempt to paint a fuller picture of the local heteronormative culture the present literature has yet to adequately address, I use autoethnographic vi-

gnettes, or personal anecdotes, to reveal how I, a heterosexual woman, have experienced the culture of silence regarding same-sex desires and practices in Vietnam. Autoethnography utilizes academics' personal experiences to reveal the social and cultural context of an issue, thus "connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis and Bochner 2000:39). Although autoethnographic data are provided by researchers, these involve critical reflections on society to enhance an understanding of society through the lens of self (Chang 2008).

I also adopt a reflexive approach that delves into my internal struggles, including feelings of anxiety and guilt about probing an informant's romantic life. A reflexive approach, as Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg (2017:5-6) describe, "turns attention 'inwards' towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context." Through reflections on my experience of discomfort, I respond to the call for a queer approach, which "conceptualizes discomfort as a productive tool for challenging the status quo and inciting social change" and promises methodological and analytical insights (Connell 2018:131). James McDonald (2016) terms this combination of reflexivity and queer approach "queer reflexivity," acknowledging their common objective of challenging taken-for-granted notions. Reflexivity disrupts the entrenched idea that good research must be *objective* by demonstrating how such objectivity is impossible in social research. Reflexivity makes the research process, such as the decisions researchers make while collecting and analyzing data and the relationship between researchers and participants, transparent so that readers can explore the authentic context of research (McDonald 2016).

Through this case study, I argue that examining the researcher's background and personal experience helps expose the broader meaning of this awkward situation—that the heteronormative culture we grew up in affected both me and the informant in how we co-produced the data. Laying bare my feelings incurs risks as it makes my reputation as a researcher vulnerable and open to judgment (Custer 2014), but I deem it necessary for the insights it offers. Before the main discussion, I review the literature on societal engagement with LGBTQ+ issues across cultures and in Vietnam. While I do not argue for the participant's sexual orientation as a gay person because of what my friend said, I find the need to engage with the scholarship concerning the international and local LGBTQ+ movements and the coming out rhetoric to help explain why it is hard for men, regardless of whatever sexual orientation they identify with, to be open about same-sex desires and practices (whether they are of a sexual nature or not).

The (In-)Visibility of LGBTQ+ Issues across Cultures and in Vietnam

In many cultures, everyday discussions of same-sex experiences remain taboo. With the rise of the LGBTQ+ movement worldwide, there have been changes to varied extents. Moves to legalize same-sex marriages in Western countries over the past 10-15 years have allowed more people to open up about their non-heterosexual lives. Such progress, however, does not mean queer people can feel safe discussing their private lives in all circumstances. In most situations, they need to *read the room* and the people they encounter to decide whether or not

to come out (Gusmano 2008; Adams 2010; Orne 2011; Bosson, Weaver, and Prewitt-Freilino 2012).

With the LGBTQ+ movement comes the paradox of coming out. The coming out imperative, while seen as empowering for many, has been criticized as putting pressure on people who "can't afford the risks of sexuality disclosure" (Connell 2018:126). Those more willing to disclose their gender identity also face the dilemma of where and when to come out and face disapproval both when they do and when they do not (Adams 2010; Orne 2011). Tony Adams (2010:246) shares his struggles of being a gay man working in education: "I risk being awkward, selfish, and politically motivated for coming out too soon, and feel guilty, shameful, and dishonest for coming out too late or not at all." This dilemma explains why many gay people remain secretive about their sexual identity (Adams 2010; Bosson et al. 2012; Collins and Callahan 2012).

Brian Horton (2018) reveals that Indian activists may be expressive about their sexuality in public spaces away from home but keep silent in the family and home community out of a desire to avoid conflict and protect their family from censure. Lucetta Yip Lo Kam (2012), who documents Chinese lesbians' everyday struggle to reconcile their same-sex desire and dating practices with the local dominant rhetoric of family harmony and compulsory marriage, argues that silence can be a form of symbolic violence and that such violence takes away queer people's will to speak. Such silence, disguised as quiet *tolerance* marked by a lack of extreme reactions toward same-sex practices, keeps those engaging in such practices in the shadows. I would argue that Vietnam has shown the same phenomenon of silence as symbolic violence regarding LGBTQ+ issues.

In Vietnam, under the influence of Westernization as a result of the 1986 *Đổi Mới* (reform) policy, marked by the transition from a command economy to a "socialist-oriented market economy" that has fostered Vietnam's integration into global networks (Werner and Bélanger 2002; Hayton 2010) and a more relaxed, flexible social life (Nguyen 2007; Martin 2013), the LGBTQ+ movement has made visible progress since the 2010s (Gammon 2021a). Such progress is manifested by the more appearances and discussions of LGBTQ+ members and issues in the public sphere, including local mainstream media, during the past decade (Ives 2018; Gammon 2021a). Multiple Vietnamese celebrities have come out as gay or transsexual and enjoy continued support from audiences, mostly the younger groups. Compared to many other Asian countries, Vietnam has even been regarded as more open-minded in this matter (Ives 2018; Gammon 2021a). Although same-sex marriage has not been legally recognized, it is neither banned nor condemned by state officials, and same-sex weddings have taken place and appeared in the news (Nguyen 2016; Horton 2019; Human Rights Watch 2020). In 2014, the government legalized sex-affirmation operations. In 2022, the Ministry of Health sent an official letter to health care services requesting equal treatment toward LGBTQ+ people, asking these services not to treat homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality as medical conditions requiring treatment (Thư Viện Pháp Luật n.d.). This gesture was considered a progressive milestone by the LGBTQ+ community as it helped remove a deep-rooted stigma against homosexuality that views it as a disease—a view long perpetuated until the recent LGBTQ+ movement (Horton 2014; Tran 2014; Trần 2016). Meanwhile, Vietnamese youth began consuming Japanese and Chinese "boys love" fiction and celebrating same-sex romance (Nguyễn and Nguyễn 2018; Trịnh and

Nguyễn 2020). Many urban middle-class millennials have started to enjoy the benefits of the LGBTQ+ movement—they have some freedom in their private lives, such as having same-sex relationships and disclosing such relationships to peers (although they are less likely to discuss it with families) (Trần 2016). These benefits, however, are often not enjoyed by queer people living in rural areas due to limited local understandings of LGBTQ+ issues (Ha 2020).

Despite such progress, the local heteronormative culture (Warner 1991), which perpetuates the ideal of the heterosexual family and reproduction (see: Horton 2019; Gammon 2021a), still marginalizes the LGBTQ+ group and makes it hard for queer people to openly embrace their sexual identity and same-sex dating practices. Under the influence of Confucian-inflected teachings of complementary gender roles, men and women have been subject to the regulation of hegemonic gender ideals. Men are traditionally expected to continue the patrilineal line, be "head of the household," and act as their family's breadwinners (Soucy 1999; Rydstrøm and Drummond 2004; Tran 2004; Nguyen and Simkin 2017). Women are, by contrast, expected to serve as the primary caregivers (Luong 2003; Drummond 2004) and "keepers of morality" (Nguyen and Harris 2009) in the family. In this culture, every man and woman is expected to marry a member of the opposite sex and have children; otherwise, they risk being seen as abnormal and disapproved by their families and living community (Soucy 1999; La 2012).

Societal expectations demand that local gay people "keep a low profile" and confine same-sex intimacy to the private arena (Nguyen 2019:548). A man looking and acting conspicuously gay in Vietnam often suffers from homophobic harassment (Horton 2014; Human Rights Watch 2020). While discussions of LGBTQ+ matters have become more common, the majority of gay people tend to be misrecognised or remain invisible in everyday life; some live publicly as straight men and even get married to a woman (Horton 2019). Many gay men call themselves shadows (*bóng*), which metaphorically captures how they keep their queer identity a secret and thus remain socially invisible and misrecognized as straight (Horton 2019; Tsedendemberel 2021). When queer people do come out, they tend to do so to a few people. Gay men, in particular, often seek to display a "healthy" lifestyle to prove themselves "normal" and be socially accepted (Trần 2016). This echoes Kam's observation of how people engaging in same-sex experiences in China are under pressure to build a reputation of "a socially respectable person," that is, "an economically productive member of society" and "positive representation" (Kam 2012:90) before they can live their non-heterosexual lives publicly.

Autoethnographic Anecdotes: My Experience with Queer People in Vietnam

As a middle-class heterosexual Vietnamese woman who lived in urban Vietnam for nearly thirty years before immigrating to the West, I find it relevant to discuss my previous experience of ambiguity and silence in LGBTQ+ matters in everyday contexts, which helps explain my discomfort in encounters with Lam. In what follows, I tell a few mini-stories to illustrate my point.

One of my earliest friends, whom I have known since I was in high school, is not a straight man. However, I only learned that after about fifteen years of our acquaintance. When we met in our teens, the man spoke of his high school ex-girlfriend. Therefore, I always assumed that he was heterosexual. One

time, in an intimate moment in which we confided about personal issues, I asked, "Have you ever dated a man," and he told me he had. It turns out that all the people my friend had been dating within the ten years until that moment were men. I felt surprised, not by the fact that he had had same-sex experience, but that he had never told me before that moment, even though we had been good friends all those years. We did not regularly meet but shared personal stories and emotions with each other, even intimate feelings. He talked to me about his romantic relationships multiple times but used feminine nicknames to refer to his partners (whom I never met). I did not ask him why he had never told me, but I supposed that he was not comfortable enough to tell me, or he might assume I already knew.

Another anecdote is about another friend I hung out with a group of friends. He never said he was gay, but all of us (heterosexual men and women) assumed that he was, probably because he is a *sensitive*, well-read guy and seems to have never dated a woman. Even though we occasionally met (before I emigrated to the West) and talked about many issues in life, we never really discussed his sexuality together. At times, someone in the group would tease him about dating another man, and we, including himself, would laugh over it. We never went beyond those jokes.

When it comes to *learning* about others' same-sex experiences, most people seem to figure that out through the so-called "gaydar," that is, the ability to read others' sexual orientation from observing cues in their looks and behaviors (Rule and Alaei 2016); people assume rather than ask anyone upfront. Most of my friends who engage in same-sex experiences never told me straight away that they were not straight. Some would only reveal their sexual orientation after months or years of knowing each other. Only one man came out to me early on while asking me, "Are you okay with this matter," before going into the details, as if afraid to make me uncomfortable. My experience has taught me that while it is now more acceptable for more people to reveal their queer sexuality and talk about LGBTQ+ issues in the urban context, it remains a sensitive issue for most. I have also rarely seen queer people's expressions of affection on the streets, even though public displays of intimate behaviors such as kissing and cuddling have become increasingly more accepted in urban spaces (Charton and Boudreau 2017).

While one would argue that gender, in general, is a sensitive topic of discussion, and dating and marital status count as personal issues, which many may not want to discuss, I would contend that same-sex experience is much more sensitive. During everyday conversations, questions such as *anh/chị lập gia đình chưa* (Have you got married? [presumably to a member of the opposite sex] or *anh có vợ chưa/chị có chồng chưa* [Do you have a wife/husband] are not supposed to be offensive questions, even though they can be considered intrusive. In a collectivist, communist society like Vietnam, people tend to have greater tolerance for others' scrutiny compared to more individualistic cultures such as those in Europe (Sharbaugh 2013). Until recent discourses about privacy due to growing individualism under Western influence (Gammon 2021a), inquiry into marital status remains the most common question people ask one another. Those questions appear in books teaching Vietnamese for beginners, manifesting how marriage (understood as heterosexual marriage between cis-gender people by default) is a recurring topic of conversation in local culture. However, asking a cis-gender person whether they have feelings for or have dated a same-sex person is to go against

the norm and risk exposing a secret they might not want to share. In my entire life, I recall only asking a few people about this possibility, and I only did so after having been friends with them for a while and feeling that we were close enough to ask.

As I reflect on local culture, I realize that when assumptions of heterosexuality keep being made and not go challenged, for example, by open dialogues regarding queer practices, the hegemonic discourse of heteronormativity will be perpetuated. While I do not argue that my anecdotes represent the truth for other Vietnamese people (who may experience more openness regarding this matter because of various reasons), I assert its congruence with the findings of multiple studies regarding LGBTQ+ issues in Vietnam, as presented in the previous section.

The Research Situation, My Anxiety, and Ethical Concerns

When we met in 2019, Lam was a single man in his mid-20s, while I was a woman in my early 30s. Lam worked for a broadcasting company and shared that he had an interest in history. Lam said he liked watching movies and TV shows of various genres. He showed a tendency to intellectualize as he talked. For example, when asked about romantic dramas, he said he enjoyed how the love stories were told in a particular professional context, such as a couple working in a broadcasting company or a publishing house, which reveals the intricacies of those working environments. He added that he liked to observe scenarios rather than characters. Lam framed his media consumption as a learning process, a tendency seen as typical of middle-class audiences (Seiter 1990; Skeggs, Thumim, and Wood 2008; Gammon 2021b). However, Lam did offer some personal details. He shared that he was a child born out of wedlock and grew up without a father. He confided that he was single-handedly raised by his mother.

Lam presented himself as a heterosexual man but remained evasive about the details of his romantic life throughout our two encounters. In response to my questions about relationships, Lam gave generic, vague answers. For example, he said he did not like dating a possessive person. He said, "I wouldn't like it when a wife says, 'You have to do this, you have to do that.' Mutual trust is necessary." His referring to "a wife" indicates the self-presentation of a heterosexual man. When I inquired who exactly he was referring to, he said he only gave a general example. The following dialogue (which was originally in Vietnamese and translated into English here) reveals his evasiveness more clearly. It happened during the second interview after I had gathered the courage to finally ask him a straightforward question.

Me: Have you ever had feelings for men? [*Em đã bao giờ rung động với đàn ông chưa*]
Lam: Feelings in what way? [*Rung động là như thế nào*]
Me: I don't know, just generally.
Lam: Maybe, because… Because some men, not just actors on screen… Some men are so beautiful that both girls and boys find attractive.
Me: Yes, that's true. I think so, too.
Lam: Like... they are so beautiful that even I find attractive, not just girls. Or there are girls that even girls find attractive, not just boys. But, for me to have feelings, there's only one type.
Me: What's that?
Lam: The manly [he used the English word "manly"] type. How can I say? It's not easy to describe. For example, in this context, you're likely to be drawn to this type, but when you're in a different mood, you're drawn to another type.

Me: You mean in real life?
Lam: Yes.
Me: I have found, from my conversations with a few people, that people now are quite comfortable with that… They do not make a distinction [between heterosexual or queer feelings]. So I'm a little bit curious. Do you have any special experience?
Lam: What kind of experience?
Me: I don't know, a romantic experience, for instance.
Lam: Actually, it's up to each person to see if something's special.
Me: Something you find meaningful?
Lam: [Pauses] Special. Perhaps every relationship is special, and it's hard to choose one that can be called "special." Because it's up to the individuals. So, it's hard to categorize relationships. [Pauses] It's difficult.

The dialogue shows my effort to be reassuring with affirmative expressions such as, "that's true," "I think so, too," and "people now are quite comfortable with that" (hinting at same-sex romantic experience). Here, Lam shared that he could have feelings for certain men and, in fact, a particular type of man, but he tempered this "revelation" with a vague "maybe." Note the irony in his statement: "they are so beautiful that even I find attractive, not just girls." While acknowledging that men can find other men attractive *too*, he ironically evoked a heteronormative stereotype that men are supposed to be only into women, lest a few exceptions. He attributed these exceptions to certain men's overwhelming physical beauty or charisma that exceeds heterosexual logic. His way of responding was evasive. The question is explicitly about romantic feelings (*rung động*), but the way he framed his answer is within a sense of admiration. Furthermore, when I asked, "Do you have any special experience?" (translated from *Em có trải nghiệm gì đặc biệt không*?) which is a yes or no question, he deflected. His refusal to answer this question drove the conversation to a dead end.

Applying Mazzei's (2007) conceptualization of veiled silence, if Lam's later answers are veiled responses, then my question, "Do you have any special experience," in the dialogue above, is a veiled question. The question does not directly mention but alludes to queer dating practices because it follows the earlier question, "Have you ever had feelings for men?" While "Have you ever had feelings for men?" is an attempt to confront his evasiveness until that moment, "Do you have any special experience?" shows a tactic to temper the confrontation while sustaining the inquiry, signaling my fear of pressurizing and offending the man. By "special experience," I alluded to non-normative dating practices but framed them in a positive tone (that this experience is non-normative but valuable) to advance the inquiry in a safe manner. Afterward, in an attempt to save this line of talk, I related back to his "type."

Me: You said you like manly men. What do you mean by that?
Lam: Manly means… manly… manly… like [long pause] very manly.
Me: But there are many types. Any example…?
Lam: Perhaps a well-experienced person [*người từng trải*]. Not necessarily clearly manifested in his face because I'm quite into looks. [**Me:** Is that so?] When it comes to romantic feelings (*trong chuyện tình cảm*), I am quite concerned with looks. I mean, my impression of them, not a dating relationship (*cảm nhận về họ chứ không phải yêu đương gì*). For example, if I find this girl pretty, lovely, then, I become more excited when talking to her. So manly men that make me have feelings for are those… Perhaps I can cite a specific example for you to visualize. It's the actor Song Seung

> Hoon [referring to his role as a gangster in the Korean television series *East of Eden*].

Again, Lam was evasive. He explicitly said he cared about looks when it comes to romantic feelings (*trong chuyện tình cảm*), but then corrected himself, saying that he meant his impression of people rather than a dating relationship. Then, he gave an example of how he would become more interested in talking to a girl if she was attractive before referring back to my question about the "manly type." This time, he gave the example of an actor and his traditionally masculine role in a Korean television series rather than a person he met in real life.

It is important to emphasize that Lam was quite articulate during our two interviews. He went about his familial problems or a few issues at work, but he became vague and paused a lot when faced with questions about romantic feelings and relationships. It is also worth noting, however, that while Lam became evasive in response to my questions, he did not appear upset at all. He remained open in his discussion of other issues. At the end of the second interview, we parted ways amicably—I thanked Lam sincerely for his time, and he said he had enjoyed our meetings.

After my encounters with Lam, I felt that the interviews failed. I was unable to make the participant open up, even though he selectively revealed other personal details, such as his growing up without a father. This failure was difficult for me to accept because I had thought of myself as a non-judgmental researcher who fully supports the LGBTQ+ community. And I did, multiple times, remind participants, including Lam, that I was there to listen. Although my attempt was not successful, I still felt guilty for asking Lam the question about same-sex feelings. I kept asking myself—as a researcher, how far should we push for information while trying to be respectful of a participant's privacy and personal choice?

In my encounters with Lam, he did not show palpable discomfort either through words or uneasy facial expressions. While a few participants have told me that they did not want to talk much about certain issues, Lam never explicitly did that. Apart from questions about romantic relationships, Lam was open to other sensitive topics, such as his distant relationship with his absent biological father. Yet, how he kept evading certain gender-related questions suggested he was not willing to engage with them. I thought it was unethical to pressure him for answers in this case, and, indeed I stopped. Despite my commitment to remain respectful, I could not help but feel helpless and frustrated. His assumed lack of trust left me unsettled. A few years after the encounters, I still, at times, think of Lam and wonder why he was evasive. The lingering feeling of unease regarding this case stems from a sense of *unfinished business* I had with Lam. I had expected an intimate story that never came. I acknowledge, however, that such an expectation was not appropriate and may come across as entitlement.

Discussion

My encounters with Lam were not my only experience of discomfort stemming from a participant's evasiveness. Within the same project, I had uncomfortable meetings with a heterosexual man who refused to talk about his family (see: Gammon 2021b). However, the discomfort I felt with Lam was different because of my feeling that Lam was concealing information about his sexuality and gendered

experiences, a suspicion partly raised from the fact that he only gave superficial answers to questions regarding romantic feelings and relationships and a trusted friend's "information." My friend's "revelation," whether true or not, contaminated my impression of Lam from the start. That is an unexpected risk associated with snowballing recruitment. While I was conscious that questions about intimate relationships can feel intrusive for everyone, I know that it is *more* intrusive for people who deviate from normative gender practices—heterosexual relationships in Vietnamese culture. They can even offend people. As stated earlier, asking straight people about romantic experiences can be a bit intrusive, but it, from my experience, does not offend.

I dread upsetting the participant by assuming he was involved in non-normative gendered practices. If he was not, he might feel offended, as I have encountered some heterosexual men saying that they felt uncomfortable when misrecognized as such, probably because they view queerness as a threat to their masculinity, as research (e.g., Dean 2013) has shown. If he was but chose to present himself as heterosexual, he would possibly still feel offended for several reasons—having someone intruding on his privacy or fear of this information leaking to others, as Catherine Connell (2018) shares from her interview experience. Aside from ethical concerns as a researcher, my anxiety also stems from my experience of growing up in a heteronormative society that privileges heterosexuality by taking it as the default and thus marginalizing queer discourses. That constitutes a culture of silence and ambiguity. With this culture comes a lack of straightforward discussions of LGBTQ+ matters in everyday life. Despite some progressive changes, queer identity and experiences are still stigmatized. Talking about it, asking about it explicitly, can be offensive. In a heteronormative culture like Vietnam, queerness is understood implicitly rather than explicitly. That was why it was so difficult for me to ask questions, why I felt overwhelming anxiety about asking. The anxiety I felt associated with interviewing Lam may be similar to the discomfort experienced by Eva Cheuk-Yin Li (2018), as she interviewed women with gender-ambiguous looks when they gave ambiguous answers to Li's questions. Like me, Li was very careful in her approach, felt uncomfortable when posing questions, and encountered veiled silence—when a participant "spoke without speaking" (Mazzei 2007:633; Li 2018:54).

Offering a reflexive account of uncomfortable moments during a research interview, this article contributes to the literature concerning the experience of discomfort and challenges in producing authentic data, which have proven common in sensitive research interviews that inquire into intimate details (Connell 2018; Li 2018; Gammon 2021b). Li (2018:55) notes a similar situation of veiled silence in which Chinese participants deflected her questions about people with gender-ambiguous looks by not giving a direct answer, pointing out that such an evasive attitude reveals "complex and uncomfortable realities." Connell (2018) recalls her personal experience of being responded with anger while trying to recruit a gay teacher, as the person was upset about being outed by someone who introduced him to the researcher. In this case, while I was not successful in my attempt to make Lam open up, I argue that cases like that should not be cast aside but instead examined for further reflection due to their rich sociological meanings. Here, it is likely the local culture of silence regarding queer practices that rendered a genuine discussion of queer desires and experiences impossible.

I have met many people who claim that life has become much easier for members of the LGBTQ+ community in Vietnam. The ongoing vibrant activism and the visibility of some gay and trans celebrities give the misleading impression that society is now accepting. While increased awareness has been raised, there are not enough discussions of the culture of silence. I am convinced that more talks can help remove the stigma and taboo associated with same-sex desires and practices. I wish for a changed future in which people no longer feel offended by questions about same-sex experience as the topic is normalized. While I appreciate everyone's right to privacy, I argue that no one should have to feel guilty, embarrassed, or threatened to discuss same-sex feelings and practices. Only so would we enjoy true equality and fully embrace differences when it comes to gender relations.

Concluding Remarks, Limitations, and Implications for Further Research

As I have acknowledged earlier, my speculation that Lam was gay and pre-interview expectation that he might come out were inappropriate and I do not defend them. At my own risk, I reveal that I had human biases despite my role as a researcher. In addition, the risk of snowballing sampling, as this study shows, begs the question of how to prevent unsolicited revelations from a third party. This is one example of the limitations of snowballing recruitment that researchers may need to consider before research.

Heeding Mazzei's call for problematizing silence, I contend that this approach results in insights through its in-depth discussions of the latent meanings of silence attributable to inequalities. Making silence during research encounters the center of discussion means "breaking down the culture of silence" to "give voice to that which is produced beneath the layers of a hegemonic discourse" (Mazzei 2007:49). This particular case reveals how the culture of silence inhibits open discussions of same-sex experience. Despite the lack of openness in the dialogues between me and the interviewee, the situation can still be analyzed as texts and count as meaningful data. I recommend that studies into sensitive issues such as mine pay attention to datasets showing signs of veiled silence. That said, considering the vagueness, the data need to be handled with care.

Given the fact that my consideration of the possibility of Lam's being non-heterosexual is significantly affected by my friend's "information," I accept the potential criticism that I may have overinterpreted his evasion. I want to re-emphasize that my discussion focuses on his evasiveness and how evasive attitudes like his are symptoms of the local culture of silence; I never intended to indulge inappropriate assumptions about his sexuality (whether he is straight or gay or bisexual). I also focus more on my feelings of anxiety and unease, which I have authority over. My reflections clearly show the impact of the local culture of silence on me. I do not claim to represent the ultimate truth to a situation permeated by vagueness but rather argue that it is worth taking risks to delve into the kind of data often overlooked due to confusion and uncertainty. For future studies into sensitive issues, I do not mean to recommend a more pressurizing attitude for other researchers in case they encounter an informant's evasiveness concerning a risky topic, as that would be unethical, but I call for the courage to delve into silence and vagueness for unforeseen insights.

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Language at Stake in International Research Collaboration—Methodological Reflections on Team-Based and Time-Intensive Ethnography

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Abstract: Based on experiences from multiple international research projects, spanning several decades and utilizing various forms of collaborative ethnographic approaches, this article aims to reflect on challenges and potentials regarding language and communication when researching across jurisdictions. Thematically, the research projects that we draw on in this paper, are concerned with aging and healthcare, while the primary focus of the paper remains on the methodological implications of conducting international, collaborative, and time-intensive ethnography. Moreover, the aim is to contribute to enhancing researchers' awareness of and preparedness to meet and address such challenges in future research endeavors. The article discusses how English often serves as a lingua franca for Western-dominated international research collaborations, having implications for researchers and study participants alike, as well as the use of interpreters and potential linguistic pitfalls. In the article, we argue that attention and reflection on language and communication in research are significant for how collaboration in research transpires, the opted methodical choices, and, ultimately, for research quality, while often being under-appreciated. International ethnographic fieldwork requires thorough preparation and reflection to properly handle linguistic and cultural competencies, nuances, and understandings incorporated in the researchers, with subsequent consequences for research processes and outcomes.

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This article focuses on methodic challenges and possibilities related to language and communication when doing research, based on experiences from Scandinavia as well as from Scandinavians participating in multiple international research collaborations about age and aging conducted in and across several countries, utilizing various forms of collaborative ethnographic approaches. Communication between researchers and between researchers and research participants is a topic scarcely dealt with in research literature, particularly within the broad field of health. Despite that, international, interdisciplinary, and interprofessional research collaborations are a current trend in continuing development in health-related research and in general. This trend is expected to add different perspectives to research and contains the possibility to solve complex problems (Pinho and Reeves 2021) while being driven by the need to address global challenges and leverage diverse perspectives and resources. Moreover, the trend is expected to enhance the overall quality and impact of research endeavors. Furthermore, international, collaborative projects often attract more funding opportunities as they are seen as addressing complex challenges that require concerted efforts, for example, addressing global policy priorities like health systems strengthening or the development of coordinated public health policies at a regional level (Kentikelenis et al. 2023). The interplay between the local and the global has been termed *glocalization* by some social science researchers exploring local sense-making of global trends and calls for "the need to pay attention both to the role of non-local globalizing discourses and to the emerging local arrangements in which the non-local discourses are interpreted for the specific contexts of the local regime" (Wrede and Näre 2013:57). That also paves the way for increased attention to research mobility and collaboration. Consequently, international research collaboration has grown in scope and size in later decades, both in terms of *what* and *how much*. That is described as moving from an "emergence" to a "fermentation" and finally to a "take-off" phase from the early 2000s (Chen, Zhang, and Fu 2018).

The current article has its starting point in different international, interprofessional research collaborations utilizing collaborative ethnography as a preferred method, including researchers with varied first and second languages. In these projects, English served as the dominant language in many cases, while the researchers also conducted qualitative research *in English* in jurisdictions where English was not the first language. A commonality in many of these international projects is the use of multiple languages and a thematic preoccupation with aging, and the relatively short timeframe of the ethnographic efforts or fieldwork. Such a condensation is contrasted to more *traditional*, individual ethnography that allows longer data collection periods with more ample opportunities to talk to and observe the explored phenomena at stake (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008; Vindrola-Padros and Vindrola-Padros 2018; Cox et al. 2022). The short timeframe implies, as we will discuss, a fundamental weakness or limitation to the approaches. A potential strength, on the other hand, is that the multidisciplinary and multinational team contributes to differences in what is observed and how when different team members are observing the same institutions and social occasions (Baines and Cunningham 2013). Some of the challenges in conducting international research are nevertheless related to linguistic barriers, as well as wider cultural differences in the research team and between researchers and study participants. In line with

Robert Gibb and Julien Danero Iglesias (2017), we argue that there is a need to break the silence about language-related issues for field researchers.

Background

The current article aims to highlight and discuss methodical challenges and potentials to language in international research collaboration, primarily addressing time-intensive ethnographic research, as regarded from a Scandinavian perspective. Moreover, the aim is to contribute to enhancing researchers' awareness of and preparedness to meet and address these in future research endeavors.

Language constitutes a significant barrier in conducting multinational research, which can be amplified when both researchers and study participants speak different languages. Studies highlight that language is an often underestimated barrier in international research, in many cases only by addressing technical aspects (Lor 2019; Wöhlert 2020). In a review of 168 articles focusing on international research collaborations, Romy Wöhlert (2020) shows that the studies largely focus on the structural dimension of communication while focus on the actual communication processes among researchers, including language, is sparse. In general, language can both unite and divide people (Kinzler 2020). Language is per se intrinsically connected to power and, as such, also connected to discourses and social reproduction (Fairclough 2013; Odrowąż-Coates 2019) both in the sense of the power *of* (language can change) and power *over* (the powerful are able to speak). While people's speech largely reflects the voices heard as children (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Kinzler 2020), people can, to some extent, change how they speak, for instance, by learning new languages, whether foreign or task-specific, or by switching between dialects. Language can thereby become a vessel for social- or self-positioning when communicating where one is positioned in a given context (Odrowąż-Coates 2019). In most cases, what is considered a *native tongue* holds significant influence in such processes and, on a fundamental level, for communicating with and understanding other people. That further implies that people's language(s) filters not only what they perceive in a concrete interaction but also how they perceive and process situations and relations more broadly, including how they understand, evaluate, and construct experiences (Werner and Campbell 1970; Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu et al. 1999; Ingvarsdotter, Johnsdotter, and Östman 2012). Language, therefore, is significant not only for communication but also for how people *make sense* of social life, also as a basis for the complex processes of social categorization and stratification within a given social context (Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu et al. 1999). Consequently, language is also significant when traversing between cultures and countries. Being exposed to multiple languages can, for instance, contribute to an enhanced understanding of the diversity and nuances of languages and embedded cultural understandings, whereby the world opens up and complexities are seen and perhaps even better understood (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Kinzler 2020).

In an academic context, researchers often comprehend, speak, and possibly master several languages. Academic education can also be a marker in terms of social position in society, with academics from different regions of the world sharing some kind of common language platform. For example, researchers have language competencies related to their respective mother tongue and oftentimes have the ability to speak and understand foreign languages, but also a competency with regard to their academic discipline (Berger and Luckmann 1966). While

language differences may present challenges, also in research, they can facilitate relationships, mutual understanding, and international collaboration. Moreover, being a newcomer to a society or community (or an academic field) and not mastering the language can potentially be a means to create social contact and collaboration. As many anthropologists and other researchers have experienced, *locals* may act particularly friendly and helpful toward visitors who are obviously not familiar with their language (Manderson and Aaby 1992). However, the lack of familiarity with the language and cultural setting comes with inherent risks of (un)conscious misunderstandings.

Even though a lack of native language competence may be turned into an advantage and opportunity for learning, including when working with interpreters, there is a need to deal explicitly and seriously with language challenges and barriers in research. Challenges connected to language are salient to consider and reflect on to achieve successful collaboration (Serrano and Linares 1990), especially, as we will return to, when collaborating across jurisdictions. International, collaborative ethnographic fieldwork often has a short timeline for fieldwork activities and is conducted in settings with limited time and resources to conduct the research, for example, in healthcare settings (Vindrola-Padros and Vindrola-Padros 2018; Cox et al. 2022). As ways to compensate for the time-limited fieldwork, also multiple, parallel data collection methods and conducting fieldwork as a team, including local and external researchers, can be used as time-deepening strategies (Ranabahu 2017). To simplify, the number of eyes and the differences in how the gazes are directed can, to some extent, compensate for the limited time of observation. Still, when conducting more time-intensive forms of ethnography, challenges connected to language can be particularly significant. As this paper discusses, such challenges relate both to internal (within the research team) and external (between the research team and participants) communication.

The article assumes the perspectives of Scandinavian researchers. First, we discuss the theme of *World languages as lingua franca in research, with a main focus on English*, with the sub-themes *Challenges related to native and non-native English-speaking researchers*, *Language at stake in the encounters with participants*, *Lost in interactions*, and *Lost in translations*. Subsequently, *Required attention to linguistic competencies* is discussed as a second theme, including *False friends*, *Missing words*, and *Challenging and challenged definitions of concepts*. Finally, the article ends with a conclusion.

World Languages as Lingua Franca in Research, with a Main Focus on English

Challenges Related to Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Researchers

Our experiences in international collaborative research are that English serves as a lingua franca. This is typical for many Anglo-phone international research collaborations, where English-speaking researchers are privileged in international research collaboration (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2014; Kamadjeu 2019), following general societal trends in which English is the dominant language, perhaps particularly in Europe (Odrowąż-Coates 2019). Giampietro Gobo (2011) shows how the English language, from the 1950s and onwards, significantly contributed to the globalization of Western academic culture and Anglo-phone research methods. Through a slow and

tacit juxtaposition between the international context and a single national language (English), the local Anglo-American culture's approach to methodology and research methods became the general framework for addressing research problems, as also seen in journals, textbooks, and other academic resources (Gobo 2011). Robert Phillipson (2016) shows how such linguistic imperialism activities serve to bolster Western interests, and especially the interests of countries where English is an official language, at the expense of others. Gobo (2011) demonstrates that meanings can disrupt shared understandings on at least three different levels: across countries, within countries due to plural and multilingual societies and dialects, and across social categories such as social class or age. All three levels must be reflected in all phases of international research, also when it comes to ethnographic studies. That leads to challenges that, in principle, are the same when another language, like French (Wright 2006), Spanish (Godenzzi 2006), or Arabic (Jacobsen 1998), functions as a lingua franca in international research and where that language might not be the mother tongue of the local population nor the majority of researchers involved.

In a collaborative research context, collaboration processes occur on multiple levels, such as on the team level, task level (e.g., to define goals, procedures, and manage collaboration), and structural context level, which can encompass different institutional contexts (Wöhlert 2020). All these levels can be affected by language comprehension and the inherent power relations stemming from them. A basic element, for instance, such as the speed at which conversations are held, can serve as an inclusion and exclusion mechanism in collaborations (Berger and Luckmann 1966), simultaneously making visible power relations and implicitly designating the right to speak (Bourdieu 1995). From the perspective of Scandinavian researchers, the speed of conversations, when a majority of researchers talk in a shared common tongue, can be a real challenge. Ultimately, when not addressed, that can influence the internal communication within a team on a profound level and create not only challenges in communication but also asymmetry between researchers who are native speakers of the dominant language and those who are not. That is, for quite obvious reasons, problematic when working in multi-disciplinary and international research teams.

Language at Stake in the Encounters with Participants

The external communication with participants during field studies where English is not the native language demanded increased attention toward similar and other language-related challenges. Language barriers take a different form during Scandinavian field visits, for instance, regarding the researchers' encounters with study participants. In our experiences, native English-speaking researchers often expect people to be able to understand and speak their language while accepting imperfect versions of their language related to faulty pronunciation and grammar, a mix of words from other languages, et cetera. On a more concrete note, when doing international ethnography in a Scandinavian context, some study participants may agree to do the interviews in English, while others may decline. Some participants tend to be relatively proficient in English, while others express that they can only speak *tourist* English. Such situations contribute to unequal opportunities for study participants to convey their perspectives and narrate their stories.

In contrast, and as Scandinavian researchers, we have often experienced how many details in local people's narratives unfold when the mother tongue is spoken. However, speaking the non-English mother tongue can influence the English-produced narratives when translated, often taking a less nuanced and more condensed form. When attempting to speak in English, on the other hand, informants often search for words and concepts never to be found, for instance, also influencing the ebb and flow of a conversation. Additionally, not speaking in one's mother tongue may be a potential risk, resulting in miscommunication and misunderstandings (see also Pinho and Reeves 2021; Matusiak, Bright, and Schachter 2022). From our research, we have experienced that it is a challenge in particular when interviewing or having field conversations with people in a vulnerable position or situation, like frail elderly people or people marginalized due to, for example, a low socioeconomic position or suffering from homelessness and/or drug addiction. Not being able to frame their experiences in their language or being dependent on an interpreter with a different social position from their own, easily makes them feel further marginalized in their encounters with researchers. Similarly, Katharina Resch and Edith Enzenhofer (2018) call for attention to participants struggling with expressing their thoughts when they must talk in a foreign language. Such problems often become more obvious when speaking a foreign language, although people can have similar difficulties expressing themselves and finding words or expressions in their mother tongue, related to language skills, education, illnesses, et cetera (Lee, Sulaiman-Hill, and Thompson 2014; Toki et al. 2018). The problems may especially pertain to tacit knowledge and untold stories, which the researchers may not notice at first glance but that may, either through conversations or the researchers' analysis of it, reveal otherwise hidden phenomena or viewpoints (Bourdieu et al. 1999; Glasdam and Øye 2014). On the other hand, participants struggling with expressing their thoughts might result not only in the researchers' inadequate interpretation of local understandings, for instance, related to health and sickness, but even in misunderstandings as to what is important for people in their daily lives in general (Jacobsen 2006). The ability to express oneself verbally in a preferred language can be important in part for the participant's sense of well-being and in part for the quality and trustworthiness of the empirical material. Language and related challenges are thus concerned both with research quality and research ethics. Those are dimensions that should be reflected upon before, on the spot, and after the conduct of a study. Similarly, Danau Tanu and Laura Dales (2016) show that language use and fluency, moderated by contexts, impact ethnographic research in profound ways. Working in a non-native language may call for awareness of the difference between one's fluency and that of the participants. A certain level of (non-native speaker) fluency may be understood as full fluency by participants who are pleased to engage in their language and vice versa. Perceived fluency shared between researchers and participants can, as such, create a perception of sameness and proximity in the research process, where the researchers or the participants fail to realize that this may still encompass risks of misinterpretations.

Furthermore, it is important to reflect on the fact that language barriers can result in biases when recruiting informants and study participants, which also can have implications for the study's results. From our experiences of collaborative, international ethnographic studies, we notice that informants proficient in English tend to be prioritized, although

there are exceptions, as we will return to. That tendency can imply a selection bias, primarily because language competency is connected to social and cultural resources more broadly, thus potentially excluding important voices. As such, language barriers can contribute to further silencing the voiceless in society, whether in matters of health and well-being (or else), as in the current international project collaborations. Caroline Fryer (2019) recommends researchers remove the (often non-articulated) *English-speaking participants* criteria from research studies and pay attention to how it can, in unintended ways, function as hidden criteria to conduct inclusive research with culturally diverse communities. That argument can be equally valid for any dominating language in other countries where people from *minority* languages risk being underrepresented in research. That goes in line with the idea of linguistic imperialism, which implies that the dominant language is favored and transferred to other people (Phillipson 2012; 2016; Rose and Conama 2018), risking discrimination in the form of linguicism (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1996). That is where Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (1998) argue for the necessity of linguistic human rights that aim to maintain and protect linguistic diversity, thereby reducing the risk of their dissipation. As we have alluded to and will further argue for, that can also occur in research contexts, particularly when conducting ethnographic field studies.

A different observation from our international research collaboration is that a mix of languages in meetings between researchers and participants with varied mother tongues can also be regarded as a language-learning process. In addition, local researchers are often more familiar with their *home-based* study site and national context compared to international researchers. Language learning takes time, which is challenged by more time-intensive ethnography because of the limited time spent together at the field site. Pierre Bourdieu (1995) points out that people never learn a language without simultaneously learning the language's conditions of acceptability, which also means learning the potential of a language in different situations, such as choosing well-suited phrases or expressions. In this light, native-speaking field researchers have an obviously better opportunity to understand the contextual relevance of informants' words, or even that of a concrete phase or concept. However, Phillipson (2016) demonstrates that being a native English speaker is seldom a crucial qualification for grasping the language nuances of other cultures where English serves as the lingua franca in collaborative contexts, even when English is a teaching subject. Yet, with Bourdieu in mind, researchers who are not, to some extent, proficient in the language spoken in the culture they are studying have a harder time grasping the contexts of what informants express and understanding what is at stake for the informants. At the same time, languages are dynamic and keep growing and changing, including language *subcultures* and dialectical variations. Also here, international ethnographic research collaboration is challenged by its time-limited period. It calls for intensive preparation of the research team to cope with cultural peculiarities, including language-related challenges, as ways to minimize misunderstandings and misinterpretations. However, as seen, there is also a great research value in being a tourist or foreigner in a new country, as newcomers can challenge all common-sense understandings in the studied setting and among the national researchers (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Bourdieu 1990). As such, language barriers, in the sense of researchers using their second language in meetings with first-language-speaking informants, can also

be advantageous at times, opening doors otherwise shut or perhaps not even noticed by native researchers. It may, in such instances, be accepted by native informants that researchers lacking competence in native language and culture ask questions that would be considered unnecessary or even impolite if asked by a researcher being familiar with the culture and in full command of the native language. By way of trial and error, by investing the necessary time and effort for understanding local concepts, ideas, and traditions, and by well-planned use of interpreters, researchers lacking native competence may, therefore, arrive at valuable information not easily accessed by any researcher (Jacobsen 1998).

Lost in Interactions

Challenges connected to the speed of the spoken language can be further enhanced by other factors concerning interaction and communication. The examples we allude to below concern cases where additional or confounding aspects distort communication between researchers and participants, and they are, we believe, illustrative of a more general mechanism. Here, difficulties of translating and/or interpreting for non-native-speaking researchers are *put to the test*. One example of such a mechanism was experienced in different contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic, with concerns about communicating while having facemasks in face-to-face meetings. In our experience, wearing facemasks reinforced language barriers both in the internal communication with researchers and external communication with participants, as it was difficult to *see* what people said and to read their facial expressions. Words faded into a murmur, which made the on-the-spot audio decoding difficult. As such, the use of facemasks is illustrative of how existing challenges—interpreting both verbal and physical communication—can be made visible and further reinforced under more extreme conditions. In line with previous research, we experienced that the wearing of facemasks impairs speech understanding (Francis et al. 2023), verbal and nonverbal communication, and it blocks emotional signaling (Yosef, Mokhtar, and Hussein 2022), thereby obstructing communication and learning opportunities for, especially, the non-native speaking researchers. The wearing of masks was a new phenomenon for many people during the pandemic. Even if rare, such events may reoccur, and wearing masks can affect research processes in contexts where this is more common, such as healthcare contexts, where decoding and interpreting body language, including sensations and emotions, may be key. Another example that illustrates but also enhances challenges connected to the speed of oral (first) language is fieldwork through digital platforms. Because of COVID-19, research team meetings were, in many cases, altered to digital platforms. While the technical aspects of that worked out well in our experiences, largely thanks to available technical solutions as well as adaptive collaborators, in some cases, it presented a similar challenge for non-English native-speaking researchers. Here, as for listening to people wearing protective masks, facial expressions and mannerisms become less visible, less *live*, and, likewise, make it more difficult to *hear* or *sense*. Also here, in other words, the Scandinavian researchers are made aware of the importance of facial and bodily mannerisms, this time contorted through a digital medium, to understand what was being communicated. The use of facemasks and/or digital meetings reinforced the language-related challenges within the research team but also between researchers and participants. Such challenges are not only related to the method in use but also call for general awareness and attention in all kinds of research projects where communication is at stake, regardless of whether the

dominant language is English or not (see, e.g., Godenzzi 2006).

Lost in Translations

The use of interpreters when conducting qualitative data collection, even though providing opportunities for access to and interpretation of research data, has the immediate advantage that real-time interpreting gives participants the opportunity to use a language that they master, at the same time as it gives the researchers the opportunity to have a dialogue in the situation itself and clarify answers or reformulate questions on the spot (Fryer 2019). The use of interpreters also comes with multiple challenges (Werner and Campbell 1970; Ingvarsdotter et al. 2012). Challenges connected to alternating between languages, between researchers, and between researchers and study participants are, as alluded to previously, an additional challenge when conducting collaborative, time-limited ethnography using English in Scandinavian countries. When left to the preference of study participants, most interviews will be conducted in a Scandinavian language, not the least if interviewing older adults. In our experience, when using team-based ethnography where English is the dominant language, interpreters in the form of a Scandinavian student or researcher are used on the spot as a conduit between the native speaker and the English-speaking researcher. That is a cumbersome process as the conversations have to be translated both ways, from English (from the international researchers) to Norwegian/Danish/Swedish (to the participants) and vice versa. The ebb and flow of the interviews can suffer accordingly. That has, at least in the experience of the authors of this article, two unintended consequences. First, the answers from the participants tend to be relatively short and to the point and, one would assume, not as in-depth as if the interviews were conducted without interpretation. The participants often must wait for longer periods of time before, for example, returning or elaborating on a theme. Second, and in part as a reaction to this, the interpretations tend to be short and efficient, more summaries than verbatim interpretations, again because of the sheer volume of the *work*. Particularly for focus group interviews, this is noticeable, as the interpretation part makes conversations virtually impossible. Hence, both depth and nuances in meanings are easily lost in translation.

This discussion goes beyond the use of English as a lingua franca in research, as the dominant language may be any of the world languages. Regardless of the dominant language employed, major challenges relate to the use of interpreters, of which some of the challenges are dealt with above. A study on the use of interpreters in research shows that *technical fixes* are not enough, as there are many layers that can complicate the communication and translations between the involved parties, including cultural differences, sociodemographic factors, language, and disciplinary proficiency, and more (Bourdieu 1995; Ingvarsdotter et al. 2012). Those factors can represent barriers that lead to biases, miscommunication, and different *levels of freedom* in how interpreters handle their tasks (Ingvarsdotter et al. 2012). Karin Ingvarsdotter and colleagues (2012), for instance, showed that interpreters at times chose to translate or not an interview question and/or response from the participant based on what the authors interpreted as potential cultural discrepancies/prejudice, insufficient language skills, with more. Such scenarios ought to be taken into consideration in international ethnographic research projects, in which interpreters often are non-professionals with varied language, cross-cultural, and disciplinary skills and

knowledge. As mentioned previously, it takes time to prepare and conduct a good research interview (Bourdieu et al. 1999), and it takes even longer to integrate a *natural*—or rather *cultural*—interpreter function along the way in such interviews. Doing ethnographic field studies across languages thus calls for reflection on such language challenges.

Required Attention to Linguistic Competencies

As mentioned earlier, language competence relates to power. Increased language competence, including speaking more than one's native language, improves the position of the language users and their understanding of what is happening in a given context. However, there are several obstacles to acquiring increased linguistic competence. Some of those, relating to more general challenges when traversing between countries and languages, have been addressed, while others, related more concretely to *linguistic pitfalls*, will be discussed below.

False Friends

Our experiences are that language comprehension can be hampered by so-called *false friends*. In linguistics, a *false friend* means a word in a different language that seemingly directly translates into a concept in the other language or looks or sounds similar to a word in a given language but differs significantly in meaning (Carrol, Littlemore, and Dowens 2018). There are several examples of false friends, which have been actualized in our research. A nurse, in the Scandinavian context, for example, refers to a registered nurse, while in other jurisdictions, the concept of a nurse covers a range of different care staff with a varying degree of formal health education (American Nursing Association n.d.; National University 2023). Even when research is carried out exclusively in the Scandinavian countries where the three different languages are based on a historical language community (Lund 2006), there are many false friends to be aware of. For example, *frokost* means "lunch" in Danish, whereas in Swedish and Norwegian, it means "breakfast." The use and translation of words and concepts that have one meaning in one country and a different meaning in another come with an inherent risk of not being understood correctly.

Another example pertains to Denmark, where there is a municipal job position called a *visitator*. A Dane can easily associate this word with an English origin, and research participants with English as their mother tongue may be included to translate this job title to "visitator," easily associated with the English word "visitor" or "visitation." A Danish *visitator*, however, is an administrative homecare allocator responsible for assigning municipality assistance according to existing laws and local standards. That could be, for example, allocating personal and practical help, meal arrangements, dental care, and emergency help to people who need it. It can also consist of allocating housing, nursing homes, and short-term/respite stays for the elderly (Skanderborg Kommune 2020). Such examples point to inherent translation difficulties, as also experienced by Stinne Glasdam and colleagues (2013). Marianne van Remoortel (2022) calls for reflections on how researchers make sure that they truly understand each other, from the basic comprehension that is needed to operate as a team to a more in-depth level of understanding of cultural contexts that are not their own. That must be reflected upon in all kinds of research.

The example of the *visitator* moreover points to another general fact about languages, namely, index-

icality. Language in daily use frequently points to contexts, both more distant, like the concept of nurse relating to a jurisdictional context, and more immediate, like when the Danish word *visitor* is used when speaking about homecare services. The concept then functions like an index finger pointing in a certain direction (Duranti and Goodwin 1992). As another example, in a healthcare setting, when an older patient suffering from pulmonary disease is described as *sour*, it likely points toward the blood pH value being low and, hence, the patient being in need of oxygen. Further, being described as a *heavy* patient in a mental health ward may not necessarily refer to their weight but to being in a low mood or even depressed. Hence, the inherent indexicality in language illustrates, in another way than discussed earlier in the article, that language and cultural competence are intertwined.

Missing Words

Researchers from non-English-speaking countries often become accustomed to *thinking* in a language that is foreign to their own (Andersen and Hellman 2021), alleviating to a certain extent the aforementioned pitfalls, for instance, connected to misunderstandings. However, it can be difficult to spot such situations and realize that there may be miscommunication, misinterpretation, or misunderstanding. Sometimes, words appear in one language, which are so embedded in a web of multiple cultural meanings that they do not directly correspond to words in English or another world language employed in international research. Sometimes, such words may seemingly be similar across languages (and, hence, also can be seen as false friends), but frequently not. As an example, frequent concepts in the Scandinavian languages like *hygge* in Danish or *kos* in Norwegian, both words relating to ways of organizing homes, family life, and space-time, and referring to a quality of cosines and comfortable conviviality that engender a feeling of contentment or well-being (Cambridge Dictionary 2023). In a complex way, such words communicate core cultural values with connotations to material as well as social aspects of intimacy in social situations and social relationships. *Hygge* and *kos* are concepts that signal, to competent native language users, a situation of relaxation, trust, intimacy, and enjoyment (of people, activities, the place, the natural or manmade environment). Missing words in researchers' mother tongue may often relate to such core symbols. Core symbols, expressed by such complex concepts as *hygge* or *kos*, are particularly important to understanding local culture and society and require much work and careful observations over time to be grasped (Geertz 1973). Another example is the term/concept *dannelse* in Norwegian and Danish and *bildning* in Swedish, where an equivalent English term/concept does not exist. *Dannelse/bildning* means the process through which a person grows up, matures, and acquires knowledge about themselves and the world around them and grows to understand the fabric of the society and the culture that they are exposed to, both autonomously and through other people. It designates a social norm pointing to a certain behavior, manner of being, and knowledge. When researchers explore people's understandings in matters of lived lives, health, and well-being, it is important to consider how those understandings are closely linked to the understanding of complex cultural core symbols and the specific social contexts at stake (Jacobsen 1998; 2009). In our experiences, considerable time is spent on clarifying linguistic technicalities, being perhaps necessary for the foreign researchers to understand the contextual features but also

somewhat disturbing the main issues intended to be discussed. That calls for the importance of careful preparation by all involved researchers, including language and context-specific concepts. It is not a new method-related issue (Ranabahu 2017) but obviously challenging, considering active field study days that require *handling on the spot*, perhaps particularly relevant for time-intensive ethnographic fieldwork.

Challenging and Challenged Definitions of Concepts

Another arising issue relates to the complexity involved in the definition and understanding of words/concepts and divergences within and across borders relating to what can be understood as the word's/concept's correct meaning. That challenge may occur both for concepts in everyday speech, like discussed in the section about false friends, and for technical terms connected to a professional or academic field. Regarding the latter, when doing research, the translation of technical terms may pose a challenge. Some specific words, for example, related to staff categories, like the English word *healthcare assistant*, frequently employed in the United States and Canada, seemingly means the same as *helsefagsarbeider* in Norwegian, *undersköterska* in Swedish, and *social- og sundhedsassistent* in Danish, but are, upon further investigation, not equivalents. As used in North America, the concept may encompass workers with no or less than one year of formal health education. In the Scandinavian context, it designates healthcare workers with at least two years of health education. In this, and several similar examples, translating between jurisdictions is not too hard. However, such translation work needs a preparedness not to take any concept in other contexts for granted. Some other concepts, such as senior co-housing, are more challenging, as they tend to inform contexts at a higher level of abstraction. Senior co-housing exemplifies a way of organizing housing for older adults and relates, at the same time, to the overall organization of services for this category of people. Senior co-housing may, in other words, be additional to and outside public services or part and parcel of public services, depending on specific jurisdiction.

According to Ditte Andersen and Matilda Hellman (2021), Scandinavian researchers often use English concepts that quickly spread across the world, leaving the grassroots level with the predicament of figuring out what the concepts mean in new contexts. Signe Ravn and Tea Bengtsson (2015) show that concepts' meaning changes when they cross borders, and researchers must, therefore, be careful to reflect on how they adapt concepts (Andersen and Hellman 2021). Pre-defined propositions of a concept can make researchers blind to the complexities of the culture at stake and, thus, also to the embedded possibilities. It seems necessary to continually discuss and reflect on pre-defined concepts, as they can be challenged and developed throughout the research process, not least in meetings and intersections across nationalities and research disciplines. Contemporary social research methods originate from local cultures. However, throughout the twentieth century, the cultural contexts embedded in those methods became obscured, transforming methodology from a locally rooted practice into a body of knowledge guided by universal principles detached from context (Gobo 2011). That transition positioned methodology as one of the most globally disseminated forms of knowledge. Yet, the constraints of globalization are discernible across various domains, spanning economy, politics, marketing, culture, and social

spheres. The methodology is not exempt from these constraints. Gobo (2011) contends that it is conceivable to adopt a mindset of global thinking in methodology while maintaining local action.

Conclusion

In general, the article argues for the importance of being sensitive to language issues in international ethnographic research. That, among others, pertains to tacit knowledge and untold stories, which may reveal otherwise hidden phenomena or viewpoints. As seen, language-related challenges can occur on multiple levels and affect the interaction and dynamics within the research team and between researchers and participants in several ways, including the threshold for research participation, language comprehension, the interpretation of what is being communicated, and more. That may ultimately affect the research process and, thereby, the outcomes of research projects, including their quality and trustworthiness.

Language-related challenges can occur in all types of research projects and methods, whether carried out over a prolonged time or limited time span. Working collaboratively in international research teams can represent an additional challenge as the time slot for researchers to collaborate and collect data in the field is narrow. That has consequences for the researchers' time for immersion in the studied sites and their opportunities to *get to know* the culture, including local language idiosyncrasies, before collecting and analyzing data. Although researchers' *naïveté* may be an advantage at times, unawareness of such challenges can, nonetheless, affect the collection, analysis, and interpretation of empirical material, which ought to be problematized as a potential limitation in such types of studies. The currently described challenges can serve as *food for thought* and be capitalized into experiential knowledge and an enhanced preparedness in similar future research endeavors and may be relevant for collaborative ethnographic research and other kinds of research collaboration. Furthermore, the article calls for attention to both visible and invisible language-related challenges. Such attention is significant for international research collaboration, methodical choices, research ethics, research quality, and trustworthiness. International ethnographic fieldwork requires thorough preparation and reflection to embrace and think through linguistic and cultural competencies, nuances, and understandings incorporated in the researchers, and their potential consequences for research processes and outcomes. Such research requires an open climate and reflexive, democratic processes among researchers, taking into consideration blind spots, pronounced and unspoken knowledge and assumptions, and the ability to question and challenge preconceived ideas in both previously known and unknown contexts. An inquisitive, patient, and open-minded attitude can result in valuable learning, benefitting the overall research process and outcomes.

Discussions and reflections on cultural differences, linguistic codes, and common-sense understandings can be advantageously developed with the ambition to promote mutual learning and understanding. That is valid both internally in the research team and externally toward participants to strengthen the research itself, the empirical material that is generated, and the related ethical considerations. It could also be a way to balance power asymmetries within research collaborators and to recognize that different competencies are equally important to facilitate a well-conducted study.

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"Maintain Your Hope and Know That You Are Loved." Mr. Anthony Albanese's Discursive Construction of Collective Emotional Resilience

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Abstract: This paper employs Stephanie Paterson's empathic policy analysis framework to explore the discursive construction of emotional resilience. The research conducted for the paper focuses on Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's notion of emotional resilience during a press conference he delivered on October 15, 2023, in the context of the Voice referendum. Mr. Albanese discursively frames the concept of emotional resilience as emotional stability that builds the community's resistance to crisis situations, enables progress, and avoids division. The study identifies two emotional discourses influencing this portrayal of emotional resilience: (1) a discourse of emotional stability among opponents of the Voice referendum and (2) a discourse of emotional stability among supporters of the referendum. The article analyzes the assumptions underlying this representation and the silences—that which has been left unspoken or implied—associated with it.

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Over the past few decades, political sociologists have increasingly examined the role of emotions, and this has given rise to the political sociology of emotions (Berezin 2002; Heaney 2019; Demertzis 2020). The conceptualization of emotions in politics aligns with the broader "emotional turn" in the social sciences, contributing to an enhanced understanding of how emotions shape and are shaped by policy debates, processes, and outcomes. Emotions are defined as the translation and expression of affect, encompassing unconscious bodily experiences in response to stimuli (Paterson and Larios 2021:288). Emotional discourse is described as a set of ideas and metaphors that encompass both written content and enacted behaviors. It encapsulates problem representations that reflect emotions. Emotional discourse shapes, and is shaped by, how we experience the world around us. This discourse influences what can be said, thought, and felt, and produces various subjectifications and material effects (Paterson 2019:253-254). The analysis of emotions has significantly advanced our understanding of the emergence, duration, action, decline, and effectiveness of social and political movements (e.g., Flam and King 2005; Goodwin and Jasper 2006; Benski and Langman 2013; Van Troost, Van Stekelenburg, and Klandermans 2013). Scholars also explore the intricate relationship between emotions and rationality using psychoanalytic approaches to specific emotions (Clarke, Hoggett, and Thompson 2006; Thompson and Hoggett 2012). Some have undertaken to explain the connection between power and emotions (e.g., Ahmed 2004; Heaney and Flam 2015), while political sociologists have also focused on concepts including "political fear" and/or the "politics of fear" (e.g., Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011; Barbalet and Demertzis 2013; Boukala and Dimitrakopoulou 2017). The role of emotions in media communications and the public sphere has also taken on greater importance (Benski and Fisher 2014; Yates 2015; Papacharissi 2015; Demertzis and Tsekeris 2018; Slaby and von Scheve 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen 2019). There has been a notable emphasis on understanding the elicitation, generation, and suppression of emotions, ultimately contributing to the shaping of a specific emotional culture within parliamentary debates (Konecki 2016). However, despite the growing interest in the role of emotions in politics, relatively little is known about how politicians engage with society's emotional resilience.

This paper aims to enrich the current discourse on emotions in politics by scrutinizing Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's discursive construction of collective emotional resilience. It focuses particularly on the efforts to achieve emotional stability in a democratic society facing polarization, using Australia as an illustrative example. Employing the concept of emotional resilience, it sheds light on the intricate and challenging aspects of emotional discourses in politics. The paper begins by presenting the theoretical background of the research. It then examines the study context, the research methods, and the findings of the original empirical study. The article ends with the conclusion and discussion section.

Collective Emotional Resilience and Its Discursive Construction

Initial research on resilience focused on individual resilience, defined as an individual's ability to adapt to adverse conditions. The first studies on resilience, conducted by psychologist Norman Garmezy in 1973 and later extended by psychologist Emma Werner, explored the resilience of individuals and small groups. These studies examined children's

resilience to challenging living and social conditions, including having parents with schizophrenia, which did not negatively impact their development. Psychologists argue that resilience can be learned and developed throughout life (Smith et al. 2008).

With time, researchers took up other aspects of resilience, including community/collective resilience, which encompasses the adaptive capacities of communities and societies to manage change and adversities over time. Pablo Servigne and Raphaël Stevens (2015) investigated the resilience of social systems and explored potential scenarios for society to transform in the face of various crises. Karim Fathi (2022) introduced the concept of "multiresilience," demonstrating that crises in the 21st century are interconnected, multi-dimensional, and occur on multiple system levels. While the concept of resilience is intricate and not easily defined, there is consensus that it applies to both individual and community levels, signifying successful recovery from or adaptation to the adversity of stress (Sousa et al. 2013:238). This involves utilizing individual or community characteristics, resources, strategies, and processes (Sousa et al. 2013:238).

In the study of resilience, structural or systemic adjustments that enable adaptation in crisis situations are often considered. However, many aspects of resilience are still not fully understood. While the recovery of well-being requires agency from individuals and social groups, the social and political context in which they operate is also crucial. James Brassett (2018:17) argues that, in the case of events of global significance, political discourses on trauma ("a story of universal human vulnerability in the context of vital existence") and resilience ("a story about adaptability and strength") affect the emotional perception of the global market. As for emotional and collective resilience, only a handful of studies have addressed the topic of positive emotions (e.g., Meneghel, Salanova, and Martínez 2014).

This article looks at Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's use of positive emotions to emotionally stabilize Australia's national collective. It assumes that emotional well-being is crucial for collective resilience (e.g., Liu et al. 2022). According to Claire Yorke (2020:45), "[t]o withstand future threats and challenges, as well as to help society build back better, emotional resilience is required at the collective level." Ensuring that it is provided involves fostering public trust, offering hope, and cultivating cohesion and compassion to enable society to adapt and rebuild. If emotions are incorporated into preparedness planning, they can prepare people to accept the certainty of risks while equipping them to respond proportionately and collectively. It is also assumed that a political leader, through discourse, can either dampen or reinforce strong emotions that arise when a society faces a crisis. Political leaders can influence the well-being of individuals and groups, enabling them to be resilient. As Yorke (2020:45) emphasizes, "[h]ow people feel about their country and its choices inform not only public perceptions and support but also contribute to the ability of people to respond to, and recover from, threats."

The examination of collective emotional resilience can be framed within Durkheim's theory of collective effervescence, which posits that intense, often negative, collective emotions following a disaster (such as a terrorist attack) increase solidarity within the affected community (Garcia and Rimé 2019). However, this theoretical approach is somewhat limited in capturing the actions of political leaders aimed at mitigating negative emotions in a divid-

ed, polarized society where the negative emotions associated with a significant event do not necessarily strengthen solidarity. Isabella Meneghel and colleagues (2014) draw upon Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build theory, which explains how positive emotions expand an individual's thought-action repertoire, subsequently enhancing their personal resources over time. The theoretical framework employed in this study is valuable for investigating the importance of cultivating collective positive emotions to help teams foster resilience and improve performance, as well as for identifying practical strategies for developing collective positive emotions. However, it does not focus on the analysis of the discursive construction of emotional resilience by political leaders.

Some scholars propose alternative conceptualizations, such as grounded theory (Liu et al. 2022), which is useful in examining the evolution of public opinion and emotional expressions related to mass focal events (e.g., a Covid-19 pandemic), revealing the characteristics of collective resilience development processes and changes in emotional behaviors during an emergent public crisis. This approach is invaluable in capturing political discourse production (Borowiec 2017:41- 42). However, it is not as systematic and focused on examining the relationship between emotions and politics as the empathic policy analysis framework. The same observation emerges in the context of applying international political economy to the study of collective emotional resilience (Brassett 2018). The empathic policy analysis framework I use in my research is situated within a constructivist ontology.

In this paper, I assume that access to the material world occurs through discourse, in which language and our intellectual constructions about the world (socially constructed knowledge) play a crucial role. Like Sarah Bierre and Philippa Howden-Chapman (2022:6), I "focus on the assumptions informing behaviours" and examine political discourse and rhetoric. Emotional resilience discursively constructed by a political leader can be treated as a "problematization" that encompasses "implied problems" (Bacchi 2018). In this paper, I posit that emotional resilience discourse has the potential to frame public policies. It can indicate what is considered real and exists within the policymaking arena. However, in my study, I am dealing with a declarative statement that others can follow in putting forward solutions to actual problems. At the same time, I do not track the political actions that followed these declarative statements, and therefore, I cannot demonstrate how the discourse I analyze translates into the practice of public policy.

The presentation of emotional resilience follows specific patterns and includes socially constructed meanings. With respect to this, the paper focuses on the conceptual foundations upon which the emotional resilience discursively constructed by a political leader is built. It critically questions the "taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie…policies and policy proposals by scrutinising (problematising) the 'problem' representations it reveals within them" (Bacchi 2009:xv). Thus, it aligns with a "problem-questioning" paradigm (Bacchi 2009:xvii). It adopts the empathic policy analysis framework developed by Stephanie Paterson (2019), which is based on the "What's the problem represented to be" (WPR) approach by Carol Bacchi.

Devised by Carol Bacchi (1999), WPR serves as a discursive framework for policy analysis in academic research. Its objectives include: (1) discerning the depiction of the issue under consideration within

a proposed policy, (2) scrutinizing the underlying presuppositions and unexamined assumptions inherent in these depictions, (3) assessing how these depictions influence the framing of an issue, thereby constraining potential avenues for change, and (4) identifying the omissions and lacunae in policy discourse by probing what aspects remain unaddressed in specific depictions.

Bacchi delineated the method into seven interrogative prompts: (1) What's the "problem" represented to be in a specific policy? (2) What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem?" (3) How has this representation of the "problem" come about? (4) What remains that is unproblematic in this problem's representation? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently? (5) What effects are produced by this representation of the "problem?" (There are discursive effects, subjectification effects, and lived effects). According to Carol Bacchi and Susan Goodwin (2016:23), "a study of discursive effects shows how the terms of reference established by a particular problem representation set limits on what can be thought and said. Subjectification effects draw attention to how 'subjects' are implicated in problem representations, how they are produced as specific kinds of subjects…Lived effects, as an analytic category, ensures that the ways in which discursive and subjectification effects translate into people's lives"). (6) How/where has this representation of the "problem" been produced, disseminated, and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted, and replaced? (7) Self-problematization: Apply this list of questions to your problem representations.

Inspired by Bacchi's approach, Stephanie Paterson and Lindsay Larios (2021:274) introduced the empathic policy analysis (EPA) framework to help analysts emotionally situate themselves and foster connections with subjects that prioritize emotional engagement, receptivity, and concern. The framework's objective is to prompt analysts to empathize, project, and comprehend, striving toward the development of more socially equitable policies (Paterson and Larios 2021:278). An emotional comprehension of phenomena, crucial for effecting social change, can be nurtured through an emotional examination of policy (Paterson and Larios 2021:273). EPA is designed to assist officials and policymakers in becoming more empathetic, ultimately making the public policies they implement more empathic.

Paterson and Larios provided policymakers with an opportunity to reconsider the construction of policy issues and subjects within policy discourse, aiming to enhance their critical thinking and empathetic reflection when addressing social problems. The analytical tool proposed by the researchers consists of two parts. The first assists in examining how emotions function in policy, shaping the representation of policy problems and constituting subjects (Paterson and Larios 2021:278). This section comprises four sequential questions: (1) What is the problem portrayed to be, and what emotional landscapes contribute to its emergence? (2) Where and by whom is this representation endorsed or challenged? What silences exist, and how is this influenced by emotional discourses? (3) What are the underlying assumptions supporting the representation, and how are they influenced by emotional discourses? (4) What are the effects, both discursive and lived, and how are subjects emotionally formed in this representation? The emotional positioning of various subject positions is mapped out, linking these positions to power dynamics such as authority, legitimacy, trustworthiness, rationality, et cetera (Paterson and Larios 2021:278).

The second part of the research framework instructs the analyst to position themselves within the analysis, scrutinizing their emotional responses to the issue and subjectivities involved. It further prompts them to explore why they feel a certain way and how these emotions might impact their responses to the issue and/or subjects (Paterson and Larios 2021:278). This section comprises five consecutive questions: (5) How do I feel about the way the problem is represented and the emotional positioning of various subjects? (6) In what ways do I identify with specific subject positions, and with which subjects am I more aligned? How does this alignment affect my feelings toward the subjects presented in this case? (7) For those with whom I least identify, can I recall instances where I was similarly emotionally positioned (e.g., powerful/powerless, helpless, voiceless, marginalized, invisible, etc.)? How does that experience relate to the current investigation, and how does it shape my thoughts and feelings about the case and the subject positions produced therein? (8) What did, or what would have helped in that situation? Can any of those responses be adapted for the present case? (9) Can we envision alternative and more socially just representations of the problem? (Paterson and Larios 2021:278). This framework is considered one of the most comprehensive in addressing the issue of empathy (and emotions more broadly) in discourse analysis. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first such analysis of emotional resilience.

Study Context

According to Edelman's 2023 Trust Barometer (Australia on a Path to Polarisation: Edelman Trust Barometer 2023), Australia finds itself teetering between the categories of "moderately polarised" and "at risk of severe polarisation." A recent report indicates that nearly half of Australians (45%) perceive the country as more fragmented now than previously. The primary factors contributing to this division are identified as the wealthy and influential (72%), followed by adversarial foreign governments (69%), journalists (51%), and government officials (49%) (Australia on a Path to Polarisation: Edelman Trust Barometer 2023). Australian politics is also fraught from polarization, with distinct differences between political parties. Divisions among politicians from different parties or their respective electorates revolve around issues such as social policy, Indigenous people, and immigration. However, in Australia, political leaders ultimately govern, and win elections, from the center. Thanks to the country's compulsory voting policy, politicians are not compelled to campaign on contentious issues that mobilize voters, thus helping to reduce polarization. Factors exacerbating social and political polarisation include Australia's income inequality and political disinformation on social media (Kousser 2020).

Australian society is diverse and marked by social inequalities. Indigenous people are situated at the most challenging end of the social spectrum. Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, First Nations of Australia, First Peoples of Australia, First Australians) include individuals who trace their ancestral lineage to, or are affiliated with, the ethnic communities that inhabited regions of the Australian continent prior to British colonization, or possess both connections. This demographic comprises two discernible categories: the Aboriginal communities residing on the Australian mainland and Tasmania, and the Torres Strait Islander communities located amidst the waters spanning Queensland and Papua New Guinea. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (n.d.) reported in 2021 that there were 812,728 Aboriginal and Tor-

res Strait Islander individuals, constituting 3.2% of the total Australian population. In 2018, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males had a life expectancy of 71.6 years (compared to 81.2 years for non-Indigenous males), while for females it was 75.6 years (compared to 85.3 years for non-Indigenous females). By 2021, 46% of Indigenous people had at least one chronic condition, reflecting an increase from 40% in 2012-2013. Indigenous students had lower school attendance rates (82%) compared to non-Indigenous students (92%) in 2019. In 2016, unemployment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were higher across all age groups, with the greatest disparity among young individuals aged 15 to 24 years (27% versus 14% for non-Indigenous people). Homelessness affected 24,930 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals in 2021, constituting 20.4% of the overall homelessness in Australia. Despite making up only about 3% of the total population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals represented 27% of the incarcerated persons in 2016. According to the Australian Council of Social Service (n.d.), over 30% of Indigenous Australians lived in households with incomes below the poverty line in 2016, in contrast to over 13% of the general population.

Australians are divided on strategies to improve the quality of life for Indigenous people. In 2023, the socio-political polarization of Australian society on this issue even deepened. In a referendum held on Saturday, 14 October, 2023, Australians exercised their democratic right to determine whether amendments should be made to the country's constitution to officially acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia through the establishment of a body known as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The primary purpose of this institution would be to provide counsel on legislative matters concerning the Indigenous peoples of Australia. The incorporation of the Voice into the political system was a key proposition outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Crafted and endorsed by leaders of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in 2017, the statement served as a petition to the Australian public. The referendum question was as follows: A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognize the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve of this proposed alteration?

The referendum was positioned as a pivotal initiative toward acknowledging and empowering the Indigenous peoples of Australia. Its objective was to extend their involvement in decision-making processes that impact their lives and communities. Despite these intentions, all six states[1] voted against the proposal to amend the constitution for the recognition of First Nations people and the establishment of an advisory body. Nationally, only 39.6% of the population supported the amendment, while 60.4% opposed it. As a result, the referendum did not obtain either of the two required majorities: a majority of voters across the nation and a majority of voters in a majority of states.

The referendum campaign and its results polarized Australian society, stirring strong emotions within various social groups. In response, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (Labour Party) addressed the public in a press conference on October 15, 2023, seeking to rebuild emotional resilience in Australian society. In this context, the Australian

[1] The Commonwealth of Australia comprises six states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia) and ten self-governing territories (excluding the Jervis Bay Territory).

case is particularly useful for analyzing the discursive construction of collective emotional resilience. Moreover, in shaping the discursive narrative, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese appealed to positive emotions such as empathy rather than fostering social unity by highlighting internal or external threats. This discursive strategy is rare and worthy of investigation.

Data and Methods of Analysis

In my research, I explore the narrative of emotional resilience as articulated by Mr. Albanese. To accomplish this, I utilize "part 1: the problem" of the empathic policy analysis framework (Paterson and Larios 2021). While Paterson advocates for a comprehensive application of her framework, the scope of my small-scale study necessitated a more focused analysis to establish a well-defined research approach. The research questions, based on "part 1: the problem" of Stephanie Paterson's EPA framework (2019), are formulated as follows: How does Mr. Albanese discursively construct his take on emotional resilience? Where and by whom is this representation endorsed? Where and by whom is it challenged? Where are the silences? How do emotional discourses shape it? What are the underlying assumptions that support Mr. Albanese's discursive construction of emotional resilience? How does emotional discourse undergird them? Are the effects discursive, subjectification, lived?

The research has been limited to the transcripts of the press conference (Press Conference 2023), which took place at the Parliament House in Canberra on October 15, 2023. In the process of data analysis and interpretation, a textual analysis of the transcripts was conducted to identify and describe the representation of emotional resilience. This involved examining the problematizations that were reconstructed from the text. The text was read twice, each time using open coding. Previous codes were revisited and compared with later ones to achieve a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the text's content. Secondly, how the representation of emotional resilience was constructed within dominant discourses was described. The broader context of this representation that was silenced is then outlined, and the underlying assumptions that support the representation of emotional resilience are then reconstructed. Next, an effort was made to understand the range of consequences that the emotional resilience representation has on different groups in society. There are three interrelated categories of effects—spanning both symbolic and material dimensions—that require careful attention from analysts: discursive, subjectification, and lived effects. Finally, I have related the findings of my analysis to the literature on emotional resilience. The Polish Sociologists' Code of Ethics was followed throughout the research process, and the rules outlined in the code were reflected upon during the research. However, my research entails challenges, which I elaborate upon in the conclusion and discussion section.

How Does Mr. Albanese Discursively Construct His Take on Emotional Resilience?

During his press conference, Mr. Albanese addressed the results of the Voice referendum, seeking to strengthen emotional resilience, discursively constructed as emotional stability, within Australian society. This stability was seen to build the community's resilience to crisis situations, enable progress, avoid divisions, and move forward. The Prime Minister based his representation of emotional resilience on positive emotions. As Siyao Liu and colleagues

(2022:14958) observed, "[p]ositive emotions are one of the key components of the psychological dimension of collective resilience. When there is a crisis, a positive attitude can be a functional manifestation of psychological resilience." The emotional landscape influencing Mr. Albanese's representation of emotional resilience was influenced by both a discourse on emotional stability among opponents of the referendum and a discourse on emotional stability among its supporters. The latter discourse was considerably more developed than the former.

Mr. Albanese endeavored to find a common point of reference for both opponents and supporters of the referendum. In so doing, he fostered a sense of belonging to the "great Australian nation" for opponents of the referendum and his political adversaries alike. He sought to enhance the emotional well-being of referendum opponents by providing them with a sense of understanding, respect, and a listening ear. He emphasized: "We just had a referendum. We had a referendum and it wasn't successful. I respect the outcome of that referendum." Mr. Albanese acknowledged and accepted the result of the referendum, expressing respect for the decision made by the majority of Australians, even if it was not the option he advocated. He underscored gratitude for the peaceful, democratic political process, respecting the equality of all citizens. Within the discourse of emotional stability among opponents of the referendum, Mr. Albanese discursively constructed a national community (cf. the emotionality of the nation-state [Demertzis 2020]) by utilizing references to history. Rationalizing this decision, he noted that, historically, a majority of referenda have been rejected (eight out of 44 have succeeded). Consequently, he discursively forged a national bond that was undermined by societal polarisation accompanying the referendum campaign. Albanese's approach aimed at transcending political divisions and emotional strains within society by emphasizing shared national identity and fostering a sense of unity among Australians. He declared his willingness to collaborate with individuals holding diverse political views on the future of reconciliation: "In that spirit, just as I offered many times to co-operate with people from across the political spectrum on the next steps in the event of a Yes victory, I renew that offer of cooperation tonight." He emphasized that Australians, as a community, must collectively confront this challenge: "And it is as Australians, together, that we must take our country beyond this debate."

At the same time, hope, optimism, grace, and humility were apparent in the discourse of emotional stability among proponents of the referendum. This emotional and discursive strategy cast the Australian Prime Minister as a politician intent on conveying hope in his political communication (cf. Benski and Langman 2013). He appeared to employ a strategy based on a "discourse of hope," emphasizing positive aspects and perspectives in his policies. He also seemed to act as a "guarantor of hope," implying a commitment to delivering positive changes and outcomes. At the same time, he refrained from stigmatizing political opponents, presenting instead a politics based on "emotional reconciliation," indicating a desire to unify society through an understanding of the emotions and perspectives of various groups. It is worth noting that, in contrast to other politicians (cf. Boukala and Dimitrakopoulou 2017), Mr. Albanese avoided creating a dichotomy between hope and fear. He did not call for others to fear his political adversaries nor attempt to construct a narrative focusing on the opposition of hope and fear. This may suggest a more positive and unifying approach to politics, one based on building common understanding and trust. He called on

citizens to accept and humbly embrace the results of the referendum while continuing to work towards reconciliation: "tonight, we must meet this result with the same grace and humility. And tomorrow, we must seek a new way forward with the same optimism." He stressed that improving Indigenous Australians' rights and living conditions has been a crucial but challenging issue, making it difficult to resolve.

According to Mr. Albanese, the supporters of the referendum should acknowledge defeat but treat it as one possible outcome when dealing with challenging issues: "And of course, when you do the hard things, when you aim high, sometimes you fall short. And tonight, we acknowledge, understand, and respect that we have." It was not a cause for shame or frustration. As the Prime Minister emphasized, he did not shirk responsibility for his decisions and their consequences, such as the rejection of the referendum question: "I will always accept responsibility for the decisions I have taken. And I do so tonight." However, being ambitious and optimistic in working toward Australia's development remained paramount: "But I do want Australians to know that I will always be ambitious for our country, ambitious for us to be the very best version of ourselves. I will always be optimistic for what we can achieve together." While the referendum proposal was ultimately rejected, it was an opportunity to strengthen social empathy in Australian society: "All of us have been asked to imagine what it would be like to walk in someone else's shoes." Mr. Albanese asserted that reconciliation was crucial, and by maintaining optimism, a collective effort should be made to find alternative solutions:

> And I want to make it clear. I believed it was the right thing to do. And I will always stand up for my beliefs. It's now up to all of us to come together and find a different way to the same reconciled destination. I am optimistic that we can. And indeed, that we must… It is in the interest of all Australians to build a better future for our nation.

Mr. Albanese observed that First Australians' disadvantaged living conditions would not disappear or resolve themselves. There was a need to maintain hope and kindness, to collaboratively seek new ways to improve this challenging situation:

> The issues we sought to address have not gone away, and neither have the people of goodwill and good heart who want to address them. And address them we will, with hope in our heart, with faith in each other, with kindness towards each other. Walking together in a spirit of unity and healing. Walking together for a better future for the first Australians.

The Prime Minister alluded to the "walkabout," a rite of passage in the culture of the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia. The purpose of this traditional journey is spiritual transformation. According to tradition, young males, typically ranging from 10 to 16 years of age, historically underwent an immersive experience in the wilderness, lasting up to six months, to facilitate their spiritual and traditional transition into adulthood. Through this reference, Mr. Albanese implied that reconciliation had served a similar role of spiritual transition in the context of Australian politics. He referred to a "new beginning," emphasizing that the matter was not lost and that joint effort would help improve the fate of the first Australians: "From tomorrow, we will continue to write the next chapter in that great Australian Story. And we will write it together. And reconciliation must be a part of that chapter." Quoting Churchill—"Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is

the courage to continue that counts"—Mr. Albanese emphasized that it is not only hope and optimism that matter but also courage. He turned to an iconic figure in Anglo-Saxon culture (a symbol of victory) to provide supporters of the referendum with hope for a successful outcome of their political project—reconciliation. His objective was to inspire these individuals and capture their public imagination. He assured the nation that the government would continue its efforts toward reconciliation: "We intend, as a government, to continue to do what we can to close the gap. To do what we can to advance reconciliation. To do what we can to listen to the First Australians."

Where and By Whom Is This Representation Endorsed? Where and By Whom Is It Challenged? Where Are the Silences? How Do Emotional Discourses Shape It?

In Mr. Albanese's representation of emotional resilience and the emotional landscape within which this representation was generated, a number of aspects were omitted. Due to space limitations, I will briefly mention only a few of them. Firstly, through discourse on emotional resilience, Mr. Albanese attempted to ameliorate divisions in Australian society, which he himself had somewhat exacerbated by organizing a referendum. Opponents of the referendum, including Peter Dutton, leader of the Liberal Party, pointed out that the measure could create divisions among Australians based on race without effectively addressing the disadvantages faced by Indigenous communities: "When we need to unite the country, this would permanently divide us by race" (Dutton 2023). Furthermore, adversaries cautioned that the Voice could potentially serve as an initial stage for Indigenous demands related to repatriation and compensation. Some noted that the proposed solution was not radical enough and did not sufficiently strengthen the rights of the First Australians. However, many of the critical arguments have been assessed as manipulation, in response to which the government failed to reach citizens. It was observed that the Voice referendum campaign was beset by false and distracting information and was conducive to an information space so confusing that many people switched off or were diverted away from reliable sources (Johnson 2023). Moreover, Mr. Albanese organized the referendum aware of the lack of support for his project from the opposition and the impossibility of achieving success in the referendum given the lack of support. Consequently, he exposed society to unnecessary polarisation.

Secondly, the impact of the referendum campaign on the emotional resilience of the First Australians is assessed negatively. The rejection of the referendum proposal brought disappointment and sadness: "This is a bitter irony," Indigenous leaders said in a statement. "That people who have only been on this continent for 235 years would refuse to recognise those whose home this land has been for 60,000 and more years is beyond reason" (Menon 2023). Elements of racism were said to have emerged in the public debate leading up to the referendum: "This heart-breaking result comes after rampant online disinformation in Australia about the consequences of the referendum, and the reverberation of the racist myth of 'Terra Nullius,' the false premise of 'nobody's land' upon which Australia was colonised 235 years ago" (Amnesty International 2023). There was concern that a "No" result might significantly delay reconciliation efforts for an extended period: "It's very clear that reconciliation is dead," Marcia Langton, an architect of the Voice, said on NITV. "I think it will be at least two generations before

Australians are capable of putting their colonial hatreds behind them and acknowledging that we exist" (Menon 2023). Government action geared to rebuilding the emotional resilience of this population group was deemed insufficient. As a result, Australian Indigenous leaders called for a week of silence and reflection after the referendum proposal was decisively rejected (Menon 2023). It is worth noting, however, that reconciliation is pursued not only at the federal level but also at the state level, where the situation looks much better, especially in the state of Victoria, which has engaged in an advanced treaty negotiation process with the First Australians (Linder and Hobbs 2023).

In the narrative of the Australian government leader, one can identify silences in the understanding of what needs to change and what should not. In the first instance, Mr. Albanese states: "The fullness of our history has begun to be told." He then adds, "But we have had, including in outlets represented in this room, discussions about a whole range of things that had nothing to do with what was on the ballot paper tonight. You all know that that has occurred." Mr. Albanese points out the need to improve First Australians' quality of life and to improve structural factors related to Australia's socio-political system (such as access to education and the healthcare system). However, as a representative of power, he overlooks other significant phenomena related to the emergence and perpetuation of the aforementioned structural factors. One such phenomenon may be racism, which underpinned discriminatory policies toward Indigenous People in the past and has now emerged in the discussion surrounding the referendum.

In the second instance, Mr. Albanese repeatedly speaks about accepting the results of the referendum. At the same time, he assures listeners, "I made it very clear that this was the only referendum that I was proposing in this term. I made no commitments about any further referendums." The silence here is that the referendum results turned out to be not a moment of success but a crisis of social legitimization for the ruling authorities. At such a moment of crisis, there is a risk of a conflict of discourses between the ruling government and the opposition, resulting in a discursive shift towards an alternative discourse. Therefore, Mr. Albanese is assuring voters that the status quo they may desire will be maintained, which, in turn, will allow his government to maintain social legitimacy in power.

The above silences align with an atmosphere of positivity, optimism, and mutual goodwill of the two emotional discourses dealing with the Prime Minister's representation of collective emotional resilience. This creates the risk that the collective emotional resilience constructed by Mr. Albanese will be superficial and instrumentalized—and become a new tool for governing the population.

What Are the Underlying Assumptions That Support the Discursive Construction of Mr. Albanese's Emotional Resilience? How Does Emotional Discourse Undergird Them?

Mr. Albanese's discursive construction of emotional resilience was underpinned by several assumptions. First, he referred to external solidarity as a crucial element of collective resilience (Brassett 2018:16; Liu et al. 2022). Jardar Sørvoll and Bo Bengtsson (2020:67) perceive solidarity as "the willingness to share and redistribute material and immaterial resources drawing on feelings of shared fate and group loyalty." Solidarity is defined as "the feeling

of belonging to a certain group (collective) and voluntary behaviour consisting in cooperation with other members of this group, in providing them with help and support" (Szarfenberg 2001:193). External solidarity is seen as a contractual relationship of exchange (Perl 2021). Thus, emotional collective resilience, of which external solidarity is a part, is based on social cohesion (enabling exchange). Building resilient, flexible communities requires the development of skills for collectively coping with difficulties, effectively supporting and mobilizing one another in the face of shared challenges. Thus, social inequalities must be addressed.

In the case of Australia, a country with a colonial history, this will particularly involve improving the rights of Aboriginal Australians. Hence, Mr. Albanese acknowledged that the issue of improving the living conditions of the First Australians was an important matter that should be addressed. He explained his position as follows: "I supported recognition through a Voice because this was the vehicle that Indigenous Australians believed could change this. This was the change they asked for at the First Nations Constitutional Convention at Uluru in 2017, after a process that involved hundreds of meetings and thousands of people." The problem of the disadvantaged living conditions of Aboriginal Australians is multifaceted: "the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in life expectancy, in educational opportunity, in rates of suicide and disease. The gap which separates Indigenous Australians from the right to make a good life for themselves." The gap represents a void in Australian society's emotional stability. Indigenous Australians are often marginalized in social life: "Because too often in the life of our nation and in the political conversation, the disadvantage confronting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been relegated to the margins." The Australian authorities have long promised reconciliation with the First Australians. However, it was the government of Anthony Albanese that sought to make good on this promise:

> Prime Minister John Howard promised to have a referendum on recognition, that Scott Morrison prior to 2019 promised to have a referendum on recognition. I was there in 2019 at the Garma Festival with Ken Wyatt, who I have total respect for, who stood there and gave, just as I did after the 2022 election, after 2019 there was a speech at Garma saying we would advance this. We promised to accept the graceful invitation of First Australians to put this to the Australian people. We did that.

The second assumption is that, in seeking to address the above issue and achieve emotional resilience in Australian society, divisions must be counteracted. Mr. Albanese referred to two divisions—the first an artificially created one between supporters and opponents of the referendum, and the second a genuine one involving the persistent disparities between the living conditions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples: "The real division is one of disadvantage." To alleviate this inequality, Australians would need to act together, in agreement and with goodwill: "let us now co-operate to address the real division." As Mr. Albanese observed, the need for agreement and cooperation has been embedded in the Australian political system: "the truth is that no referendum has succeeded in this country without bipartisan support. None." A significant factor in the negative outcome of the Voice referendum was the opposition parties' resistance to the proposed changes.

The above assumptions, regarding solidarity and cohesion, as well as the avoidance/alleviation of di-

visions and the need for cooperation, are not neutral. Mr. Albanese linked his vision of collective emotional resilience in Australian society with the ideology of social democracy (Jackson 2013). To promote his narrative, he evoked compassion, empathy, respect, and promise-keeping, the latter of which fosters effective interpersonal connections rooted in trust. Meanwhile, trust is frequently cited as the adhesive in the construction of social capital (Grubiak 2019). Mr. Albanese suggested that these issues are important for emotional stability among opponents of the Voice referendum and emotional stability among supporters of the referendum.

What Are the Effects: Discursive, Subjectification, Lived?

I discussed many of the discursive effects earlier in this paper. They included, first, framing the concept of emotional resilience as the emotional stability that builds community resilience to crisis situations, thus making it possible to overcome impasses, move forward, and avoid divisions; and, second, the tangible consequences, including accepting the results of the referendum as well as the commitment to cooperation and the search for new solutions and a new path toward reconciliation. I will, therefore, now direct my focus toward the subjectification effects. Mr. Albanese used a significant portion of his speech to discuss the support of individuals who voted "Yes" in the referendum. These are people with hope and goodwill. Many of them are volunteers charged with energy and enthusiasm. However, Mr. Albanese gave a bit more attention to another group—the First Australians. He observed the hopes and aspirations they have expressed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which is a generous, optimistic, humble, and gracious invitation to reconciliation. As Mr. Albanese perceives it:

> Tonight, I want to recognise that for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this campaign has been a heavy weight to carry, and this result will be very hard to bear. So many remarkable Indigenous Australians have put their heart and soul into this cause, not just over the past few weeks and months but through decades, indeed lifetimes, of advocacy.

The Prime Minister emphasized their courage and grace, as well as their great love for Australia. He appreciated their deep faith in the people. These individuals inspire him and make him proud to be an Australian: "I have never been as proud to be Australian as when I sat in the red dirt at Uluru with those wonderful women. I have made lifetime friends. And for that, I am grateful." It was them specifically that he addressed in saying: "Maintain your hope and know that you are loved." The Prime Minister announced further measures to be taken for this population: "I will tell you that the first thing we will do is that we will continue to listen and we will engage with those Indigenous Australians, treating them with respect."

However, mindful of emotional balance, he did not forget about the rest—indeed, the majority—of Australians. Mr. Albanese portrayed opponents of the referendum as being essentially close to those who supported it. He played down the differences between the two groups: "Indeed, those arguing against a change to the Constitution were not arguing for the status quo because no one could say that more of the same is good enough for Australia." He also pointed out that the experience of the referendum campaign had strengthened empathy for the difficult situation of the First Australians among everyone. While Mr. Albanese observed that his compatriots were fair and compassionate people, he also noted that, during the referendum campaign,

inappropriate topics had been introduced into public discourse that had little to do with the content of the referendum.

Mr. Albanese sought to build an emotionally stable community composed of equal Australians, not winners and losers: "Because this moment of disagreement does not define us. And it will not divide us. We are not Yes voters or No voters. We are all Australians." There is no discursive distancing between "us" and "them." In fact, as Mr. Albanese puts it, we are dealing with different positions within the same "great nation."

Conclusion and Discussion

Drawing on theoretical implications for research in the political sociology of emotions by further exploring the issue of collective emotional resilience, this study adds to the ongoing debate on emotions in the public sphere within the political sociology of emotions. The paper illustrates the use of positive emotions in constructing collective emotional resilience. In his press conference on October 15, 2023, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese discussed the Voice referendum and sought to enhance emotional stability in Australian society. He constructed two emotional discourses influencing this portrayal of emotional resilience: (1) a discourse of emotional stability among opponents of the Voice referendum and (2) a discourse of emotional stability among supporters of the referendum. He worked to unite Australians by fostering understanding and a sense of belonging among opponents (using the emotionality of the nation-state) while at the same time expressing hope and humility for supporters in the face of rejection (using a discourse of hope). In contrast to Albanese's strategy, political leaders often attempt to discursively build collective emotional resilience by invoking negative emotions.

For instance, in his speech delivered to the people of France on October 12, 2023 ("Address to the French People"), Emmanuel Macron embeds his vision of an empathetic French nation in a broader context of the reality of warfare (Zubrzycka-Czarnecka forthcoming). Mr. Macron seeks to strengthen the emotional collective stability of French society, weakened by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by creating a division between empathetic people of peace and cruel, cynical, and law-breaking people of war. Mr. Macron constructs discursive distancing between "us" and "them." He attempts to define French society as a cohesive group of people of peace, glossing over internal divisions and simplifying the complex social issues (including integration and discrimination against immigrants) that France grapples with. The consequence of such an approach to building collective emotional resilience may be to provoke aversion and lack of trust from society toward this concept, behind which lies not only the desire to strengthen the emotional stability of the community but also the desire to maintain and strengthen power in specific areas (such as among Muslim voter demographics).

In the highly polarised US, Republican Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, in his press conference on April 24, 2024, at Columbia University, attempted to discursively craft collective emotional resilience in the context of pro-Palestinian protests at the Ivy League school (Speaker Johnson to Antisemitic Protestors: "Go Back to Class" 2024). Unlike Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Mike Johnson based his entire speech on criticizing the protesters. He juxtaposed two contrasting visions of Columbia University: the first, a historical one, was that of a university as a bastion of truth, democracy, reli-

gious freedom, morality, and freedom of speech; and the second, a contemporary one, cast the institution as divided by protesting campus students, whom he described as antisemitic, unlawful, dangerous, radical, extremist, and linked to Hamas terrorists or Iranian Ayatollahs. Mike Johnson tried to build communal emotional stability through threats of withholding funding for the university, punishing protesters, having President Shafik dismissed, and deploying the National Guard. These actions may only deepen polarisation in American society.

In the Australian case, however, collective emotional resilience is a type of political narration created by a political leader within the emotional discourses. As such, it pertains to socio-political power. The Prime Minister's discourse regarding collective emotional resilience serves an underlying purpose—maintaining power and its direction in a particular manner. This action is undertaken at a specific time—during a crisis of power and discursive crisis. The rejection of the Voice institution in the referendum undermines the social legitimization of the ruling authorities and the vision of the power relations they promote. There is a risk of a discursive shift toward an alternative discourse—that of opposition. Here, Mr. Albanese's conceptualization of collective emotional resilience takes on the characteristics of a discursive strategy in the struggle to maintain a certain truth regime. The presentation of collective emotional resilience follows specific patterns and includes socially constructed meanings. Below, I explain how.

First, the Australian politician embeds his discursive representation of collective emotional resilience within a set of underlying assumptions related to the rationality of social democracy (close to his political party). Mr. Albanese's conceptualization of emotional resilience relies on external solidarity in society, viewing it as the willingness to share resources based on mutual fate and group loyalty. It hinges on social cohesion and calls for the development of skills for collective coping and addressing social inequalities, particularly concerning the rights of Aboriginal Australians in the context of Australia's colonial history. Mr. Albanese acknowledges the multifaceted challenges Aboriginal Australians face, whilst emphasizing gaps in various aspects of life and well-being. The government, led by Mr. Albanese, commits to fulfilling promises of reconciliation with First Australians, aligning themselves with the historical pledges of other administrations. Mr. Albanese redefines the term "divisions." He points to the artificial division between supporters and opponents of the Voice project and the genuine division rooted in persistent disparities in living conditions. To address these inequalities, cooperation and goodwill are deemed crucial. Mr. Albanese attempts to shift the term "divisions" from the political sphere (political views of opponents and proponents of the Voice institution) to the social sphere (division as social inequalities, associated with the responsibility for the country's past and the moral obligation to improve First Australians quality of life). This promoted understanding of the term "divisions" is tied to empathy, a sense of responsibility, and respect.

Second, the Australian government leader constructs "subjects" by discursively creating the concept of the "great Australian nation." In so doing, he makes common ground for both opponents and proponents of the Voice institution. Balancing emotional considerations, he portrays opponents as essentially close to supporters, emphasizing unity over division. Mr. Albanese aims to build an emotionally stable and united community, rejecting the notion of winners

and losers and emphasizing the shared identity of all Australians within the same "great nation." He attempts to restore social peace, a shared identity, and mutual trust; he encourages everyone to collaborate. He defines the "great Australian nation" as composed of ambitious individuals striving to be their best selves. These are courageous people. The "great Australian nation" respects democracy, traditions, and rights, including those of First Australians. Mr. Albanese invokes hope, optimism, respect, kindness, peace, and empathy in this context.

Finally, the Australian Prime Minister remains silent on what is inconvenient for him. For instance, he ignores critical arguments from the opposition, pointing out the negative impact of the Voice referendum on social cohesion in Australia. According to political opponents, it deepened socio-political divisions. Critics, including Peter Dutton, raise concerns about potential racial divisions and the inadequacy of the referendum in addressing Indigenous disadvantages. The rejection of the referendum proposal negatively impacts the emotional resilience of First Australians, leading to disappointment and fomenting racism in public discourse. Moreover, the critics reveal the government's inability to deal with misinformation on social media, which negatively affects the political process and exacerbates political polarisation. Additionally, Mr. Albanese fails to address the issue of racism as it influences the situation of First Australians and the referendum campaign, ultimately posing a threat to social cohesion and the quality of democracy in Australia.

Methodological Implications for Research in the Political Sociology of Emotions

This paper has examined the use of a discursive approach to collective emotional resilience. It incorporates Stephanie Paterson's empathic policy analysis framework, which is rarely employed in the political sociology of emotions-related studies. Nonetheless, it holds promise for analyzing the role of emotional discourses in politics. At the same time, my research has shown the limitations of EPA.

As I employ EPA, only relatively small segments of text can be scrutinized. Consequently, the analysis is potentially susceptible to allegations of partiality or bias. Hence, I elucidate the criteria for selecting cases and research materials. EPA may be criticized for purportedly reducing all aspects of social existence to language. Nevertheless, in my study, I do not posit that there is no differentiation between material and discursive realms. Rather, I assert that access to the material world is mediated through the lens of language and discourse. Another critique might suggest that EPA favors individual actors and subjectivity while downplaying structural influences. Given this limitation of the applied method, I contextualize individual agency by delineating the broader social and political context. In practice, texts are not examined in isolation but are interconnected with historical and other sources, thus linking text and wider social processes. Furthermore, EPA could be depicted by some critics as obscure and lacking in scientific rigor. Ever aware of this criticism, I strive to be transparent about the research process and the methodologies I employ in my text selection and analysis. I also prioritize coherence and acceptance of arguments within the text. Furthermore, I endeavored to ensure that my analysis was grounded in the data I collected; however, I recognize that a set of intellectual interests and normative commitments guided my involvement in the research process. Consequently, my interpretations are never entirely free of theoretical and other assumptions.

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The Hegemonization and Counter-Hegemonization of Polish Copyright Discourses

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Abstract: This article explores the nature and structure of Polish discourses on copyright, specifically revealing to what extent social conflict over copyright is visible within these discourses and presenting the most important parties in this conflict. Following Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discursive reconstruction of the hegemony, the article indicates that Polish copyright discourses are structured by an alternating sequence of discursive hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. The article specifies the most important logic applied within discursive battles over copyright by deconstructing the central dualities visible in Polish copyright debates. Hegemonization and counter-hegemonization of the discourses are indicated based on the discourse analysis of the Polish public debate on copyright and a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with representatives of selected parties in the social conflict over copyright.

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In January 2012, young Poles took to the streets to protest against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)[1] and prevent further online copyright regulation (Jurczyszyn et al. 2014). These protests triggered a wave of anti-ACTA movements across Europe, which, according to some authors, changed the initial position of the European Parliament on the treaty (see, e.g., Vetulani-Cęgiel and Meyer 2021). The anti-ACTA protests also resulted in the emergence of the Polish discourse on copyright (Gracz 2013). Since then, copyright issues have occasionally been discussed in Polish public debate. One of the last opportunities for such a debate occurred during negotiations on the EU directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market (DSM Directive),[2] which in Poland was deliberately called "ACTA2" and discussed in 2018-2019.

The article[3] primarily aims to characterize the nature and structure of contemporary Polish copyright discourse by presenting a discourse analysis of public debates on copyright and interviews with representatives of certain groups participating in these debates or interested in their outcome. Assuming a social conflict is built into the copyright system, I determined to what extent such conflict is visible within Polish copyright discourse and its relations with this discourse. To achieve this goal, I first define and describe the social conflict over copyright and identify the conditions under which such a conflict may lead to the emergence of a hegemonic order. Second, I provide a general characterization of Polish discourses on copyright. Third, an analysis that was conducted of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices (Mouffe 2013) within Polish discourses on copyright is presented, showing how discourse participants play out "a game of signification," consequently deconstructing hegemonic and counter-hegemonic constellations (Laclau 1996; Andersen 2003:58). Finally, discursive manifestations of copyright hegemony and counter-hegemony are examined.

As a result, I frame the hegemonization and counter-hegemonization of Polish copyright discourse by describing discursive practices used by conflicting parties and competing narratives on copyright law (Ewick and Silbey1998) characteristic of those who use it daily. In addition, by deconstructing differences present in the discourse, the most important logics unfolding within the Polish discursive battles over copyright are identified (Laclau 1996; Andersen 2003). The description of discursive practices is based on the discourse analysis of the Polish media debates on copyright and a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. In contrast, the description of competing narratives is based mainly on the analysis of the interviews.

Social Conflict over Copyright

Social conflict over copyright has been studied mainly in disciplines such as law and economics (see, e.g., Gordon and Bone 2000; Geller 2013), critical legal and cultural law studies (see, e.g., Coombe 2000; Tehranian 2012; Craig 2019), political economy (see, e.g., Dobusch and Quack 2013; Burkart 2018;

[1] The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) is a multilateral treaty establishing international standards for intellectual property rights enforcement. The agreement did not enter into force but aimed to establish an international legal framework targeting counterfeit goods, generic medicines, and copyright infringement on the internet.

[2] Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market and amending Directives 96/9/EC and 2001/29/EC.

[3] This article is a result of the research project "Social Conflict over Intellectual Property Rights on the Example of Polish Discourses on Copyright" (No. 2015/19/N/HS6/00783) financed by the National Science Center and carried out at the Institute of Sociology of the Jagiellonian University.

Cartwright 2019), and, of course, intellectual property law (see, e.g., Litman 2006; Frankel and Gervais 2014). A few sociological works have also addressed this topic (e.g., Rodríguez 2003; Mylonas 2011; Gracz and De Filippi 2014).

In intellectual property studies, the social conflict over copyright is an imbalance between the interests of three groups: 1) the creators, 2) users, and 3) intermediaries whose rights and freedoms are defined by copyright regulations. The third group (i.e., intermediaries) enables the transmission of creators' works to users. Due to the development of the internet and the related mass dissemination of digital content, this group has undergone significant changes in recent decades. Intermediaries currently include those who acquire rights from creators (right-holders), such as book publishers and music and film producers, and those who use creators' works (non-right-holders [Frankel and Gervais 2014]). The former are referred to as the "copyright industry" or "old intermediaries," and their business model sells the intangible goods of creators. In contrast, the latter "new intermediaries" have developed business models related to advertising or fair use. The largest and best-known new intermediaries are big internet corporations, such as Google and Facebook, which profit from exchanging content between internet users.

In the economic analysis of copyright law, the social conflict over copyrighted goods is the consequence of the nature of these goods. According to representatives of the law and economics, the works of authorship are quasi-public goods plagued with monopoly and free-rider problems related to the non-excludability and inexhaustibility of these goods. Per economists, problems with inefficient exploitation of creative works can be solved by "fashioning property rights that minimise transaction costs and facilitate market transactions" that transfer copyrighted works to their highest valued uses (Gordon and Bone 2000:194).

A more diverse understanding of the social conflict related to copyright is characteristic of critical legal and cultural law studies. For example, a critical theorist of copyright, Carys J. Craig (2019:301), highlighted the importance of conflict over "control of information, communications, and cultural content." In contrast, a critical theorist of intellectual property, John Tehranian (2012:1233), wrote about conflict over the "power of cultural reproduction." Regardless of the terms used, both authors—similar to other representatives of critical studies of law—point out that the copyright regime creates convenient conditions for struggles over access to cultural goods and the rules for producing, reproducing, and protecting these goods. Moreover, critical cultural researchers have observed that conflict over copyright is a "conflict over culture": conflict over preferred forms of creative expressions and accepted cultural meanings (Coombe 2000; Fredriksson 2014).

According to political economists, the conflict over copyright is a struggle over valuable knowledge, which entails broader social tensions with transforming industrial societies into information and network societies (see, e.g., Haunss 2011). Such a struggle involves two (Dobusch and Quack 2013; Burkart 2018) or three essential groups of actors (Cartwright 2019). In the bipolar conflict model, two coalitions are distinguished: "the strong copyright coalition"[4] and "the free culture coalition"[5] (Herman

[4] The name "strong copyright coalition" was used by Herman; Dobusch and Quack called the first coalition "the copyright coalition."

[5] The name "free culture coalition" was used by Herman; Dobusch and Quack called the second coalition "the fair use coalition."

2008; Dobusch and Quack 2013). The first group primarily includes decision-makers and organizations representing old intermediaries and, to some extent, creators. The second group mostly includes organizations representing users of culture. However, some authors have indicated the need to distinguish a third group consisting of new intermediaries. For example, Madison Cartwright (2019) observed that although large internet corporations support social organizations guided by public good values (i.e., members of the free culture coalition), the interests of the former are only partially aligned with those of cultural users. Thus, new intermediaries cannot be identified with internet users and the organizations representing them. These intermediaries cannot also be included in the strong copyright coalition, as strengthening copyright protection is contrary to the interests of large internet corporations.

Finally, Marxist (see, e.g., Mylonas 2011) and systemic analyses (see, e.g., Gracz and De Filippi 2014) have dominated sociological approaches to the conflict over copyright. Systemic analyses have highlighted the discrepancies between the logic of particular systems, including the inconsistencies between the cultural and economic systems (Rodríguez 2003). Notably, the Frankfurt School previously highlighted the contradictions between economy and culture. According to Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (2002), these contradictions are integral to the oppressive nature of the cultural industry, which commodifies and fetishizes culture, also using copyright law (Adorno 2001:36).

Using the abovementioned theoretical approaches to social conflict over copyright, one can conclude that this conflict is multifaceted and is built into the social system. Social conflict over copyright is simultaneously legal, economic, and cultural. Additionally, it is a conflict over power and values. This conflict's economic nature develops from conflicting interests between the right-holders and users and the specific features of copyrighted goods. Nevertheless, because copyright law defines the framework within which members of society can create and share their creative works, the conflict over this law affects culture and the values it promotes. Finally, the political character of the conflict concerns how particular groups of stakeholders cooperate in various coalitions to influence copyright regulations adopted by decision-makers. As a result, at stake in the battle over copyright are the economic profit associated with monetizing works protected by copyright and the possibility of promoting specific types of creativity and cultural values.

The parties of conflict over copyright are practically all members of society, but various groups have shown different levels of involvement. From the triad above of creators, intermediaries, and users, the most active participants in the conflict are old intermediaries, who, despite their conflicting interests, quite often claim to represent the interests of creators. The latter, although the most critical addressees of copyright law, take relatively little action to influence the content and scope of copyright regulations; if they do take such action, they do so mainly through the organizations representing them. However, the least active parties in the conflict are users whose interests are represented by various social organizations. The most important reasons for the differences in the level of engagement in the conflict are the level of awareness (see, e.g., Felczner et al. 2013), the number of resources, and the type of actions taken, including joining coalitions to increase the scope of representation (see, e.g., Vetulani-Cęgiel 2015). These reasons manifest the unequal power distribution among the particular parties in the conflict over copyright.

Copyright Hegemony as an Example of Local and Legal Hegemony

A hegemonic order may emerge when a struggle for power and cultural values accompanies the struggle for valuable resources. Such an order, in the form of copyright hegemony, has been indicated by legal scholars who have studied copyright, especially regarding the pursuit of the globalization and universalization of copyright law by the US and EU (see, e.g., Cammaerts 2011; Perry 2018). Although these authors have not defined this type of hegemony, it seems indisputable that copyright hegemony is simultaneously legal, economic, cultural (see, e.g., Hemmungs Wirtén 2006), and political. It is also a "local hegemony" (Hunt 1990; Santos 2020).

Knowing the main characteristics of the hegemony of copyright law, one may create its definition based on existing theoretical concepts. An extremely valuable source of inspiration in this regard is Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Gramsci 1971; Mouffe 1979) and the related conception of hegemony and counter-hegemony, indicating the important role of law (Hunt 1990; Santos 2020). In addition, since the copyright hegemony is founded on the law, one can draw from Patricia Ewick and Susan S. Silbey's critical concepts of law (see, e.g., Ewick and Silbey 1998; Silbey 2005).

According to Gramsci, hegemony is possible only for the dominant class and involves exercising political, intellectual, and moral power in a system cemented by "organic ideology" (Mouffe 1979:193). Although such hegemony is "ethico-political," "it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity" (Mouffe 1979:189). Additionally, this hegemony may involve the power of the state, which Gramsci (1971) described as the continuous formation and superseding of the equilibrium (in the legal field) between the interests of the dominant group and subordinate groups. Consequently, the Gramscian conception of hegemony, as the intellectual and moral leadership within the state, emphasizes the influence of economic factors and ideological persuasion. The latter is, for the author of *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, a precondition for acceding to political power (Niezen 2018).

If one displaces the assumption that only the dominant social class can exercise hegemony, one may be able to point to the possibility of the emergence of a local hegemony (Hunt 1990:312-313). According to Alan Hunt (1990:313), a local hegemony is a useful concept specifying the potential construction of counter-hegemonic projects within particular areas or regions of social life, such as the abortion rights movement, environmental movement, or civil rights movement. However, before I define counter-hegemony, I briefly characterize a legal hegemony as an example of a local hegemony.

According to Silbey (2005:330), a legal hegemony can help explain "the practical determinacy of a legal system," that is, systemic power through which social interactions become patterned, principled, and naturalized. Hence, the hegemony of the law does not result from any social arrangement. Instead, a legal hegemony is produced and reproduced in everyday transactions and acts of communication, in which action structures and cultural symbols are experienced as a given and consequently as "unnoticed, uncontested, and seemingly not open to negotiation" (Silbey 2005:331). Ewick and Silbey (1998) explained that "legality"—people's perceptions of the law—draws its hegemonic power from the existence

of competing narratives about the law's character. These narratives are based on how people describe their relationships with the law. Because people perceive the law "as something before which they stand, with which they engage, and against which they struggle," there are three opposing narratives: 1) "before the law," 2) "with the law," and 3) "against the law" (Ewick and Silbey 1998:47). In the first narrative, legality is a separate, distinctive, and authoritative sphere of social life (Ewick and Silbey 1998:57-107). In the second narrative, the law is "a game" in which rules can be adapted to serve particular interests and values (Ewick and Silbey 1998:108-164). Finally, within the against-the-law narrative, the law is described as oppressive to people who oppose its "schemas and resources" (Ewick and Silbey 1998:165-220). However, regardless of their differences, all three narratives may be invoked in divergent circumstances, allowing legality to maintain its dominance.

Indeed, some authors have questioned the hegemonic power of state law. For example, Marc Hertogh (2018) indicated that ordinary citizens feel alienated from the law because they have turned away from it rather than turning toward it in "blind faith." However, as Simon Halliday (2019:13) observed, "[t]he existence of legal alienation does not, in itself, challenge a claim about the hegemonic power of state law." Additionally, Halliday indicated that any conception of hegemony must consider counter-hegemony. According to Ewick and Silbey's (2009:225) conceptual framework, counter-hegemony involves an after-the-law narrative that indicates the importance of individual acts of resistance. As Simon Halliday and Bronwen Morgan (2013) highlighted, this kind of resistance should be extended to collective practices of counter-hegemony, including those indicated by Alan Hunt (1990).

Although Gramscian theory has no counter-hegemony, Gramsci's conception of hegemony leaves plenty of room for agency and dissent among the dominated, which some authors call counter-hegemony. As Ronald Niezen (2018) noted, the fact that there is no "counter" in Gramsci's works assumes that a change in power means the emergence of a new hegemony, while counter-hegemony is merely the exertion of influence over the current hegemony. Such an understanding of counter-hegemony requires the "remodeling" of constitutive elements of the prevailing hegemony, including, in particular, the reconstruction of the existing discourse. As Hunt (1990:314) asserted, "[t]he most significant stage in the construction of counter-hegemony comes about with the putting into place of discourses, which whilst still building on the elements of the hegemonic discourses, introduce elements which transcend that discourse." Thus, counter-hegemony is a kind of "transcendent project" whose strategy is not to reject that which exists but seek to construct—using Gramsci's terms—"good sense" from "common sense" to give prominence to "new" elements (Hunt 1990:314).

Consequently, in the case of legal hegemony, part of the struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony occurs within the discourse on law. Such discourse, as any discourse, is "constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:112). Positions within this discourse are developed using two types of discursive practices: hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. Chantal Mouffe's (2013) hegemonic discursive practices used by participants in the copyright discourse are "practices of articulation," through which a copyright order is created and the meanings of copyright institutions are established. In contrast, counter-hegemonic discursive practices seek to disarticulate

the existing copyright order and its institutions "to install another form of hegemony" (Mouffe 2013:2).

In the following sections, I focus on Polish discourses on copyright as a tool through which copyright hegemony is constructed, as are the attempts to undermine it. Focusing on hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices provides a closer look at the social conflict over copyright, including its relationship to discourses.

Polish Discourses on Copyright

The first Polish public debates on copyright appeared in the 1990s and were dominated by narratives created by copyright-collecting societies.[6] These narratives focused on stigmatizing piracy and drawing attention to the need to pay for public music performances. With time, the latter narrative began to be countered by entrepreneurs, such as restaurateurs and beauty salon owners, who publicly objected to signing public performance licenses[7] with proper collecting societies. Subsequently, in 2006, a new narrative emerged, opposing excessive copyright regulations while highlighting the importance of freedom of expression and the right to access knowledge and culture. This narrative, still in use today, was mainly created by new non-governmental organizations interested in copyright policy, including the Modern Poland Foundation (*Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska*)[8] and the Digital Center Foundation (*Fundacja Centrum Cyfrowe*).[9] The narrative and the organizations applying it—derived from the free-software[10] and the free-culture movements[11] originating in the US—are examples of the copyright counter-hegemony.

As mentioned, wide public discourse on copyright in Poland was triggered by anti-ACTA protests. In 2012, when the EU was planning to ratify the ACTA agreement, all Polish media and political parties discussed the subject of copyright. This sudden public interest in copyright law increased both public awareness and the politicization of copyright debates. Moreover, this interest contributed to copyright becoming a recurring theme in Polish public debates.

An analysis of the discourse from 2012 to 2019 revealed that in 2013-2017 (i.e., between the end of the debate on ACTA and the beginning of the debate on the DSM Directive), Polish discourse on copyright was occasional and fragmented. Copyright issues were discussed mainly during debates on specific legal acts (e.g., a bill on open resources prepared by the Ministry of Administration and Digitization in 2012[12]) or during particular copyright disputes, especially when a well-known person was involved (e.g.,

[6] A copyright collecting society (also called copyright collective or copyright society) is an organization created by copyright law or private agreement that licenses copyrighted works on behalf of the authors and engages in collective rights management.

[7] A public performance license is an agreement between the rights holder of the music and a user who grants permission to play the music in public, online, or on radio. In Poland, most public performance licenses are issued by collecting societies.

[8] Official webpage of the Modern Poland Foundation: https://fundacja.wolnelektury.pl/about-us/. Retrieved June 17, 2024. In 2022, the foundation changed its name from *Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska* to *Fundacja Wolne Lektury* (Free Readings Foundation).

[9] Official webpage of the Digital Centre Foundation: https://centrumcyfrowe.pl/en/homepage/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[10] The free software movement is a social movement with the goal of respecting users' freedom, such as the freedom to run, study, modify, and share copies of software.

[11] The free-culture movement is a social movement that promotes the freedom to distribute and modify creative works without the consent of or compensation to the original creators.

[12] The act was aimed at guaranteeing access to public resources created by employees of public cultural institutions or financed from public funds. However, due to the huge opposition from artists and collective societies, this law was never enacted. The content of the bill and information about the parliamentary work on the project can be found at the following website: https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/lista/1/projekt/86492. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

Sapkowski and the CD Projekt dispute[13]). Thus, it is more legitimate to talk about multiple discourses on copyright rather than a single copyright discourse.

The most important exception from the fragmented character of Polish copyright discourse—apart from debates on ACTA and the DSM Directive—is a long-standing dispute between the largest Polish collecting society—the Society of Authors ZAiKS (*Stowarzyszenie Autorów ZAiKS*)[14]—and Digital Poland Association (*Związek Cyfrowa Polska*).[15] This dispute involves a private copying levy (a reprographic fee in Poland) regulated in Article 20 of the Polish Copyright Act.[16] Per this regulation, producers and importers of blank media (e.g., DVDs and memory cards) and devices that enable making copies of copyrighted works (e.g., DVD recorders and scanners) must pay a fee to collective societies[17] as compensation for the free use of cultural works under fair use.

According to representatives of the Polish creative sector, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage ordinance defining categories of media and devices for which the reprographic fee should be charged is outdated.[18] The list of carriers and devices attached to the ordinance comprises cassette tapes and VCRs, which are no longer used in practice, while omitting the most popular devices currently used to copy and store copyrighted content, such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Hence, the Society of Authors demands an amendment of the ordinance by updating the list of devices for which a fee should be paid. Additionally, this society believes that the ordinance has not been amended thus far due to the lobbying activities undertaken by the Digital Poland Association, which represents consumer electronics and IT companies. At the same time, Digital Poland stresses that the idea of a private copying levy is anachronistic and argues that the costs of new levies from new devices (e.g., smartphones) would be primarily borne by users of those devices. In recent years, Polish right-wing political parties—such as the Confederation (*Konfederacja*)—have joined the dispute and criticized the Ministry of Culture for making another attempt to amend the aforementioned ordinance during the COVID-19 pandemic.[19]

Three decades of Polish public debates on copyright have led to the institutionalization of these discourses. As a result, there is a significant polarization among them, as with other discourses in the Polish public sphere. Consequently, two main

[13] The dispute began in 2018 when Polish writer A. Sapkowski reached out to video game developer studio CD Projekt with the demand that he receive PLN 60 million in additional compensation for the company's continued use of the universe of Sapkowski's *Wiedźmin* book series. For more information, see: https://medium.com/farbovanyi-lys/andrzej-sapkowski-vs-cd-projekt-red-eng-30c4dc6fcfb4. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[14] Official webpage of the Society of Authors ZAiKS: https://zaiks.org.pl/en. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[15] According to the official webpage of the Digital Poland Association (https://cyfrowapolska.org/en/about-us/ [Retrieved June 17, 2024]), it is "an industry employers' organization, a non-profit organization bringing together the largest companies from the consumer electronics and IT operating in Poland, including both manufacturers, importers, and distributors of electrical and electronic equipment." In the past, the association used the name the Association of Importers and Producers of Electrical and Electronic Equipment—ZIPSEE "Digital Poland."

[16] Act of 4 February 1994 on Copyright and Related Rights (Dz.U. No. 24, item 83) (Dz.U.2017.880-tłum.).

[17] In the amount of no more than 3% of the sale value of such media and devices.

[18] The ordinance on defining the blank media and devices that enables making copies of copyrighted works, and the fee that should be paid for the sale of these media and devices by their producers and importers (Dz.U. 2003 No. 105 item 991). Available at: http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20031050991/O/D20030991.pdf. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[19] The attempt to amend the ordinance came on the occasion of the debate on a bill concerning the rights of professional artists, which aims to improve the financial situation of Polish artists. The idea for the bill emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic when the situation of artists was particularly bad.

groups of social organizations are essential in Polish copyright discourse: organizations representing the creative industry's interests (i.e., creators and intermediaries) and organizations representing citizens' interests (i.e., culture users). Polish organizations representing the creative industry's interests primarily comprise collecting societies, the Legal Culture Foundation, and the Creative Poland Association, while organizations representing citizens' interests primarily include organizations such as the Modern Poland Foundation, the Digital Centre Foundation, and the Panoptykon Foundation. The first group of organizations is "the strong copyright coalition," while the second is "the free-use coalition" based on the bipolar conflict model described earlier (Herman 2008).

As mentioned, the largest Polish copyright-collecting society is the Society of Authors ZAiKS. It is also the most active and most recognizable collecting society, which was founded in 1918 by outstanding Polish artists. This society's current statutory objectives include "the protection of copyrights and the representation of authors' interests," "the improvement of copyright," and "the development and dissemination of creative works and Polish culture" (Polish Society of Authors ZAiKS 2023:2 [trans. ER]). The second most active collecting society pursuing copyright policy is the Polish Society of the Phonographic Industry (*Związek Producentów Audio Video—ZPAV*),[20] founded in the early 1990s by representatives of the Polish music industry. This organization is famous for its anti-piracy campaigns and incidental lobbying on copyright issues, and its goals include the continued extension of legal protection for phonogram and videogram producers and intellectual property education (Polish Society of the Phonographic Industry 1991). Additionally, eight other Polish copyright-collecting societies represent the interests of creators such as filmmakers, performers, scientists, journalists, and folk artists. The activities undertaken by these organizations are far less visible to the public than the activities of the two described organizations.

Furthermore, the Legal Culture Foundation (*Fundacja Legalna Kultura*)[21] was established to make citizens aware that how they access and use cultural goods impacts the condition of culture. Thus, the foundation aims to act for the common good in terms of "culture, art, protection of cultural goods, and national heritage [while] limiting the illegal distribution of cultural products and their use with the violation of rights and interests of producers of cultural goods" (Legal Culture Foundation 2011 [trans. ER]). Finally, the Creative Poland Association (*Stowarzyszenie Kreatywna Polska*)[22] is a typical umbrella organization, representing many creative and innovative organizations, including the Society of Authors ZAiKS, the Polish Society of the Phonographic Industry, and the Legal Culture Foundation. The most important goals of Creative Poland (2014 [trans. ER]) are "acting for the development and protection of Polish culture, science, creativity, and innovation" and "inspiring and participating in all activities related to the law-making process and decision-making that affects the situation and possibilities of the actions of creators and scientists, as well as the shape of the Polish creative and innovative industry." As mentioned, the Legal Culture

[20] Official webpage of the Polish Society of the Phonographic Industry: http://www.zpav.pl/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[21] Official webpage of the Legal Culture Foundation: http://fundacja.legalnakultura.pl/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[22] Official webpage of the Creative Poland Association: https://www.kreatywnapolska.pl/about-kreatywna-polska/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

Foundation and the Creative Poland Association are members of the Polish strong copyright coalition.

The Modern Poland Foundation was the first Polish non-governmental organization acting in the interests of culture users to become interested in copyright policy. This organization has operated since 2006, adopting the primary goal of "promoting and protecting the freedom to use cultural goods" (Modern Poland Foundation 2022 [trans. ER]). Its flagship projects are *Wolne Lektury*, *Prawo Kultury*, and the *CopyCamp*.[23] Soon after the Modern Poland Foundation launched its first project, the Digital Centre Foundation began its activity in copyright policy. One of the foundation's strategic objectives is "adjusting regulations and using legal tools to support the needs and rights of users as they participate in open circulations of resources online."[24] This foundation is part of the Creative Commons movement.[25] Finally, the last of the aforementioned organizations is the Panoptykon. Although this foundation does not discuss copyright or culture in its priorities,[26] its members were very active during public debates concerning ACTA and the DSM Directive, when the issue of the dangers posed by excessive copyright protection on the internet was discussed. The Modern Poland Foundation, the Digital Centre Foundation, and the Panoptykon Foundation comprise the Polish free culture coalition.

Beyond the groups of organizations mentioned above, important participants in Polish copyright public discourses are the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Digital Affairs (previously the Ministry of Administration and Digitization), cultural institutions, famous artists, the aforementioned Digital Poland Association, and political parties. Ministerial authorities and cultural institutions declare that they consider the interests of both creators and users of culture, so it is difficult to assign them to either of the two distinguished coalitions. Well-known artists mostly speak on behalf of the entire artistic community and support the arguments raised by the strong copyright coalition. Digital Poland, on the other hand, claims to stand up for consumers (as shown later in this article) by portraying itself as an ally of the free-use coalition. In reality, it primarily represents "the broad interests" of consumer electronics and the IT industry.[27]

Finally, most Polish political parties support either increasing copyright protection or guaranteeing appropriate freedoms to users of culture. The party most frequently declaring support for the arguments of the strong copyright coalition is the centrist Civic Coalition (*Koalicja Obywatelska*). Among the parties primarily favoring the freedom of users and thus joining the voices of the free culture coalition, right-wing parties, such as Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) and the Confederation, are

[23] *Wolne Lektury* is a free online library that archives books (including school readings) in the public domain. *Prawokultury.pl* is an educational website that teaches on matters concerning copyright. *CopyCamp* is "an event on law," during which people share their experiences in international and interdisciplinary groups of artists, experts, scientists, and social activists, revealing how copyright law affects everyone.

[24] A description of the Digital Centre's mission is available at https://centrumcyfrowe.pl/en/co-robimy/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[25] Creative Commons (CC) is an international non-profit organization advocating for "better sharing" by equipping people "with technical, legal, and policy solutions to enable sharing of knowledge and culture in the public interest." The organization has released several public copyright licenses, known as Creative Commons licenses. Official webpage of CC: https://creativecommons.org/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[26] The priorities of the Panoptykon Foundation include protecting freedom and human rights in the surveillance society: https://en.panoptykon.org/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

[27] A description of the mission of Digital Poland is available at https://cyfrowapolska.org/en/about-us/. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

notable. Polish left-wing parties—that acknowledge the need to protect creators' economic interests and user rights—present the most balanced position on the Polish political scene. The copyright policy pursued by these parties cannot be attributed to either the strong copyright coalition or the free culture coalition, despite the latter being associated with leftist views in public opinion.

Method

The purpose of this article is to present the most critical findings from a discourse analysis of the Polish discourses on copyright. This analysis investigated press, television, and internet discourses. The press discourse analysis was based on a corpus of press texts on copyright from dailies[28] and weeklies[29] with nationwide coverage from 2000 to 2019.[30] The television discourse analysis involved the analysis of TV content covering the following periods and topics: 2012 (ACTA), 2013 (copyright), 2014-2015 (private copying levy), 2016 (copyright), and 2018-2019 (DSM Directive).[31] Finally, the internet discourse analysis explored selected websites (such as those of particular organizations involved). The study included the results from 26 individual in-depth interviews and four focus group interviews. The interviews were conducted with Polish copyright lawyers (11 interviews), intermediaries (Polish book publishers and music producers—12 interviews), and representatives of six Polish non-governmental organizations pursuing copyright policy.[32] The focus group interview participants were young Polish writers and musicians. All interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2020 in three large Polish cities (i.e., Warsaw, Cracow, and Lodz).

The data from the media were gathered and analyzed using spreadsheets and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (QDA Miner). Individual and focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a spreadsheet. The analysis aimed to find the narratives that indicated the nature and structure of the social conflict over copyright while examining the narratives that contained interpretations and explanations about the relationship between this conflict and the discourse. All data presented in the article were translated into English.

Since one of the goals of the analysis described here was to examine the relationship between social conflict over copyright and discourse, I decided to apply the agonistic model of discourse. Thus, this article presents the results of the discourse analysis based on Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discursive reconstruction of the concept of hegemony. Assuming that hegemonization and counter-hegemonization involve the imposition of certain logics onto public discourse (Laclau 1996; Andersen 2003), I analyzed hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices while examining the discursive manifestations of copyright hegemony and counter-hegemony. The former was accompanied by the "deconstructive intervention" (Derrida 1988; Laclau 1996), pinpointing the most important logics unfolding within the discursive battles over copyright (Andersen 2003:58).

[28] The corpus of texts consisted primarily of the following dailies: *Gazeta Wyborcza* (GW), *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Dziennik Gazeta Prawa* (DGP; earlier, *Gazeta Prawna* [GP]), *Fakt*, and *Super Express*.

[29] The corpus of texts consisted primarily of the following weeklies: *Polityka*, *Wprost*, *Tygodnik Powszechny* (TP), *Przegląd*, *Angora*, and *Newsweek*.

[30] I created the corpus of press texts using online archives of daily and weekly newspapers. The corpus consisted of 1,876 press materials.

[31] The database of TV materials was prepared by the Press Service company. 953 TV recordings were included in the analysis.

[32] Some participants acted in more than one role (e.g., as a lawyer and as a representative of an organization).

Both the deconstruction and the related analysis of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices consisted of systematically reading and viewing all the qualitative materials collected and simultaneously distinguishing and analyzing the most important dualities present in the Polish discourse on copyright. In turn, the analysis of manifestations of hegemony and counter-hegemony was carried out by analyzing the narratives used by selected participants in the social conflict over copyright. This analysis focused on searching for manifestations of the three types of narratives distinguished by Ewick and Silbey (1998) presented earlier.

To present the results of the analysis of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices within Polish discourses on copyright, I 1) identify the most important dualities (i.e., two-sided differences) adopted by the discourses' participants as mechanisms in "a game of signification" ("logics of signification"), and 2) demonstrate hegemonic and counter-hegemonic constellations within which particular logics are played out (Andersen 2003). Hence, the basis of the deconstruction carried out in the article is the logic of signification "as the mechanism present in signification and in the displacement of signification onto the signified" (Andersen 2003:58). By revealing such mechanisms, this deconstruction can help recognize that "what appears to be the norm" is instead an imposed understanding of a particular concept or difference (Andersen 2003:58). Because copyright hegemony and counter-hegemony are built by discursive practices made by entities representing the interests of particular parties to the social conflict over copyright (i.e., government and social organizations), two specific applications of the general logic of signification are critical: the logics of power and representation.The logic of power indicates the mechanism underlying the difference between power and liberation (Andersen 2003). As Ernesto Laclau (1996) observed, despite the commonly accepted assumption that power is the restriction of freedom, there is an unavoidable paradox within the antagonistic relationship between emancipation and power—the paradox highlighting that power simultaneously limits freedom and makes it possible. Such an observation emphasizes the need to analyze the negotiation and shifting of the boundary between power and freedom, which is particularly useful in the case of legal hegemonies (Andersen 2003).

In contrast, the logic of representation arose from deconstructing the difference between representative and represented (Laclau 1996). This deconstruction leads to the displacement of the classical theoretical question of representation, focuses on the insight that the representative participates in constructing the represented, and initiates a discussion about the struggle of representation as "a struggle over the construction of the represented" (Andersen 2003:60). Laclau (1996:52) described this logic as "internal ambiguities of the relation of representation."

While the logics of signification, with their associated dualities, form a point of departure for the analysis of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices, three competing narratives about law's character distinguished by Ewick and Silbey (1998) form the basis of the analysis of the discursive manifestations of copyright hegemony and counter-hegemony (see: Table 1). The latter analysis examined the narratives of particular parties in the social conflict over copyright (e.g., book publishers, music producers, non-governmental organizations pursuing copyright policy, creators, and lawyers). The before-the-law and with-the-law

narratives used by these parties are treated as indicators of copyright hegemony within this study, with the against-the-law narrative as an indicator of counter-hegemony.

Table 1. Indicators of hegemonization and counter-hegemonization of Polish copyright discourses

Hegemonization	Counter-Hegemonization
Hegemonic discourse practices	Counter-hegemonic discourse practices
Before-the-law and with-the-law narratives	Against-the-law narratives

Source: Self-elaboration.

Hegemonization of Polish Copyright Discourses

Hegemonic Discursive Practices

In Poland, hegemonic discursive practices through which a copyright order is created and maintained are characteristic of the government, organizations representing the interests of the creative sector, old intermediaries, and lawyers. The logic of power underlying these practices is built on the difference between the power of copyright law and freedom identified with the state of anarchy. Based on this duality, copyright's proponents and defenders, such as book publishers and organizations belonging to the Polish strong copyright coalition, present a world where copyright law exists as safe, civilized (e.g., "[introduction of copyright] is a rite of civilization; it is done along with raising living standards" [O2][33]), and fair (e.g., "the world of copyright is just a fair world to me" [BP3]). According to representatives of the strong copyright coalition, this world also functions based on proper norms (i.e., moral and religious). For example, collecting societies have frequently indicated the relationship between copyright compliance and observing religious norms, mainly by using a narrative equating copyright with religious principles. The following statement by a representative of the Society of Authors ZAiKS made during a debate on ACTA organized by the Polish Prime Minister (at that time—Donald Tusk)[34] is an exemplification of such a narrative: "I think that if…everyone agrees on one directive, we will come to an agreement. This is a directive that has been in force for more than 6,000 years: directive number seven, commonly known as the seventh commandment: 'Thou shalt not steal.'"

At the same time, those who co-create and co-maintain copyright hegemonic order contrast the orderly world with copyright with the world in which copyright does not apply. The latter, according to copyright proponents, is the world characterized by anarchy (e.g., "I believe that either the [copyright] law or anarchy" [O4]), numerous risks (e.g., "P2P is full of viruses and spyware" [*GW* 2006][35]), and non-compliance with moral and religious norms.

[33] Statements of particular representatives of organizations are marked as O1…O6, statements of book publishers as BP1…BP6, statements of music producers as MP1…MP6, statements of writers as w1…w12, statements of musicians as m1…m10, and statements of lawyers as L1…L11.

[34] The debate occurred on February 06, 2012, lasted over seven hours, and was broadcast on television. A video recording of the entire debate can be viewed on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnT4ZVhWa-o&t=5s. Retrieved June 17, 2024).

[35] Quotations from the press and television are marked with the name of the press title or TV station and the date.

On the one hand, using the logic of power behind the dichotomous division into a world with and without copyright helps supporters of the existing copyright order strengthen their arguments. On the other hand, this logic leaves no room for discussing changes to existing regulations and negotiating new legislation. Hence, it is a manifestation of the hegemonic discourse. The hegemonic character of discursive practices based on the copyright-freedom duality stems from the paradox that copyright not only limits users' freedom but also makes it possible. Representatives of the strong copyright coalition confront people with this paradox by presenting a negative image of a world without copyright law. According to the image provided by copyright proponents, this world could not provide freedom to those who use cultural goods due to the lack of adequate regulations and the many risks involved. As shown later, supporters of the free culture coalition use the same distinction between copyright and freedom for entirely different purposes.

Regarding the hegemonic narratives created by old intermediaries and organizations representing the creative sector, revealing the logic of representation underlying these narratives is particularly important. In the case of Polish intermediaries (i.e., Polish book publishers), some of their representatives presented themselves during interviews as responsible for ensuring that the creators with whom they work are aware of the copyright regulations applicable to them (e.g., "I reach out to copyright law and discuss, try to verify some knowledge, and also show how copyright works in the publishing market" [BP6]). Thus, although intermediaries are not formally obligated to represent the broader interests of creators (except for obligations assumed by signing contracts), they take the role of the representative while simultaneously creating the role of the represented: the "lost artist." The latter, as revealed in the group interviews, is sometimes accepted, especially by young writers, in a thoughtless manner (e.g., "the first representative of our interests is…the publishing house" [w12]).

However, the logic of representation is exploited much more by organizations representing creators or intermediaries than by the intermediaries themselves. Both groups of organizations, unlike the intermediaries, are formally obligated to provide representation and, as shown by the analysis of the interviews, are aware of the limitations associated with this representation, such as a lack of awareness and interest on the part of the represented. Some members of these organizations treat the mentioned limitations as a manifestation of the incompleteness of the represented's identity and provide the represented with a language through which their proper identity can be constituted. At the same time, other members of the strong copyright coalition use legitimacy to speak on behalf of the represented, thus creating an image of the represented that is primarily compatible with their interests. The following press statement of a member of the Polish copyright collecting society from the debate on ACTA is an example of creating such an image, depicting the will of the creators in a manner favorable to their representatives.

> General Director of the Society of Authors ZAiKS… supports the signing of ACTA on the grounds that it is intended to facilitate the protection of the interests of the authors his association represents. "We have an obligation to support everything that the Polish state wants to do to protect the interests of Polish authors. I think this is a natural reaction"—he acknowledged. [*Newsweek* 2012]

The author of the cited statement resorted to simplification, assuming that the entire group his organization represents has the "only right" view of a given legal regulation. This simplification may help influence legislators. However, it constitutes a kind of manipulation of artists' will at the hands of their representatives when viewed from the perspective of the diverse community of creators.

The discourse analysis and accompanying deconstruction made it possible to identify other indeterminate dualities—related to other applications of the logic of signification—used in hegemonic practices within Polish copyright discourses. These dualities included the following: 1) the duality between legal and illegal (piracy) ways of using cultural goods, 2) the duality between valuable and non-valuable cultural goods, and 3) the duality between acting for and against Polish culture.

Although the line between compliance and non-compliance with copyright is unclear and constantly changing, even for lawyers, organizations working for the interests of the creative sector deliberately present this line as clear and definite. The representatives of these organizations use the logic of signification founded on such duality when convincing the public of the need to adopt either a specific copyright regulation or a certain position toward specific social practices. The following statement by a representative of the Polish Society of the Phonographic Industry regarding the legal evaluation of actions taken by movie subtitling services is an example of the application of this kind of logic.

> When it comes to websites with movie subtitles, it's hard to concede the point of those who claim that it's only about free culture. The closed website had about 700,000 downloads per month. This means that those who used it must have previously downloaded the film from the internet as well. In either case, therefore, it took place in violation of the creators' copyrights. [*DGP* 2007]

The duality between cultural goods carrying values and cultural goods devoid of these values is frequently used by the participants in many Polish debates on legal regulations concerning culture. Regarding hegemonic discursive practices, the logic based on this duality mainly emphasizes the need for copyright law in society. Indeed, intermediaries and organizations representing the interests of the creative sector indicated that the creation and dissemination of works using copyright institutions and tools would guarantee that these works would be of appropriate quality. The following statement made by the representative of a Polish book publisher displayed this logic: "If we go in the direction of open domains, releasing without rights, without publishing houses, we will end up being flooded with crap literature…I would be against…opening licenses and open texts in general because, in a moment, no one will control it" (BP4).

Finally, organizations belonging to the strong copyright coalition have often used the duality between acting for and against Polish culture. In their press statements, organizations representing the interests of the creative sector have identified respecting copyright law with acting for the sake of culture (e.g., "By using legal sources, you support culture!" [*GW* 2013]), although many studies have indicated otherwise (see, e.g., Lessig 2004). Moreover, according to the members of these organizations, any activity taking care of the interests of Polish creators (e.g., "I am not prone to bombast, but I believe that Polish culture would be much worse without *ZAiKS*" [*TP* 2016]) and those who represent them

is the manifestation of activities for the benefit of Polish culture. These activities are contrasted with activities against the culture, such as those undermining the functioning principles and institutions of copyright law, even if the authors of the research report do the undermining. Accusing the authors of a study whose results did not speak in favor of the copyright system of acting to the detriment of Polish culture can be observed in the following excerpt from the press statement of the Society of Authors ZAiKS' representative: "The report proves the incompetence of authors in the matter of collective management in Poland and around the world… What is the purpose of such action? Perhaps nothing more than weakening the position of the creators. This report works against the national culture" (*GW* 2015).

Notably, the duality between acting for and against Polish culture, like the duality between valuable and non-valuable cultural goods, is an example of exploiting the ambiguity of the concept of culture. Assuming that only those works and those activities that are visible to and compatible with the copyright system deserve the title of culture, the strong copyright coalition privileges the particular meaning of culture while marginalizing others.

Manifestations of Hegemony

Beyond the hegemonic discursive practices described above, some participants in the social conflict over copyright use narratives presenting the law as a separate and authoritative sphere of social life (i.e., before-the-law) or a playing field where specific rules can be negotiated (i.e., with-the-law). These narratives manifest existing copyright hegemony, not an action seeking to introduce or maintain this hegemony, such as hegemonic discursive practices. Before-the-law narratives are primarily visible within the narratives of lawyers and representatives of organizations undertaking awareness-raising activities, highlighting the need to explain the complexity of copyright to citizens. Among organizations with educational missions, the Legal Culture Foundation is particularly notable. The foundation's website contains the following description of the social campaign of *Legal Culture*:

> You'll meet us throughout Poland in schools, cities, towns, and villages during the most important film, music, and theatre festivals but also at showcases and cultural events organized by us…We're informing, inspiring, acting, debating, and trying to change the tone of the conversation regarding copyright and piracy into a constructive dialogue. We're promoting the use of legal sources of culture.[36]

Within the discourses examined in the study, the with-the-law narrative was typical of Polish music producers (especially DJs) and young musicians. During the period studied, two main types of this narrative were observed: 1) those indicating factors or circumstances where copyright may not be complied with and 2) those rationalizing the use of "illegal" sources of culture. The former was dominated by arguments justifying the use of "illegal" sources of access to content by people without sufficient financial resources. The following statement by a music producer displayed this type of argumentation:

> Everyone has experienced this process of going from piracy to legalization. I must say that today, I use mainly legal versions of software, but sometimes I in-

[36] For more information about the campaign of *Legal Culture* see the following website: https://www.legalnakultura.pl/en/social-campaign/activities. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

> stall something illegal, especially if it is something that will be used sporadically or I will be using it for fun…I know a lot of people…from having fun to making music for money, [and] this is the rule that applies to everyone. [MP2]

According to music industry representatives, another circumstance that can cause music producers and musicians to "turn a blind eye" to copyright infringement is the willingness to disseminate cultural goods.

An example of the second type of with-the-law narrative is an argumentation based on the so-called "sampling effect."[37] People using this argument indicate that it is a common, justified social practice to use illegal, free sources of access to culture to determine whether a given work is worth its price. Such argumentation was exemplified in the following statement by the young musician:

> Most people have something like this, especially when they see that some things are expensive. Computer games are very expensive, and music is also not the cheapest, especially foreign music…So most people, while spending their money on culture on something that will be of no use to them but for entertainment and will eventually sit on the shelf getting dusty, would like to know that it is really good and that it is worth buying. Thanks to such practices, often illegal, people have the opportunity to check the cultural goods they want to buy. [m5]

Although the presented examples of the with-the-law narrative indicate numerous exceptions accepted by users and creators, they are still exceptions to the validity of the rules of the copyright order. The fact that copyright addressees build such elaborate arguments to justify the need to deviate from the principles of copyright law shows that the copyright order is nevertheless considered dominant.

Counter-Hegemonization of Polish Copyright Discourses

Counter-Hegemonic Discursive Practices

In the Polish public sphere, counter-hegemonic discursive practices aimed at disarticulating the existing copyright order and its institutions are used mainly by organizations representing the interests of users or producers and importers of electronic devices through which people use copyrighted goods (such as Digital Poland Association). The former organizations, as mentioned, are, to some extent, supported by the major internet corporations. Additionally, counter-hegemonic narratives are used by politicians. However, these narratives manifest the instrumental use of copyright counter-hegemonic practices.

The supporters of liberalization or deregulation of copyright law, similar to copyright proponents, build their discursive practices on the logic of the duality between copyright law and freedom. However, members of the free culture coalition define the latter not as a state of anarchy but as an absence of restrictions imposed by copyright law. As a result, opponents of this law employ not so much the logic of power but the "logic of freedom," which is the inversion of the former. The counter-hegemonic character of discursive practices using this logic stems from the same paradox from which stems the hegemonic character of discursive practices described earlier. However, supporters of the free cul-

[37] The "sampling effect" is one of the possible positive effects of online piracy on the purchase of content from legal sources (see, e.g., Poort et al. 2018).

ture coalition undermine copyright law's positive and inevitable nature, emphasized by those who support the strong copyright coalition. Thus, they do not propose a new hegemony but merely seek to undermine the existing hegemony by exaggerating the dangers of copyright. For instance, the Modern Poland Foundation has often emphasized that copyright law restricts access to culture (e.g., "A huge number of works that could be used freely were taken away from the public domain" [*GW* 2008]). At the same time, other representatives of the free culture coalition present values justifying the protection of creative and cultural freedoms as being at odds with the values underlying the protection of copyright.

Although counter-hegemonic practices are primarily aimed at disarticulating the existing order, to some extent, they also close the discussion by equating the restrictions imposed by copyright law with the existence of that law. For example, by identifying copyright law with the state of lack of freedom, users of such practices close the debate on which solutions could be sought to reconcile the rights of creators and intermediaries with the rights and freedoms of users.

The duality between freedom and copyright was particularly emphasized during the debate on ACTA. Counter-hegemonic discursive practices using this duality and the related logic of freedom appeared in the statements of protesting internet users and members of organizations representing them. For instance, the Panoptykon's representatives identified the ACTA agreement with a lack of civil liberties, as evidenced by the following statement made on television: "The point is to remove the ACTA from the table as soon as possible and… start…a conversation on how to regulate civil liberties in the digital age" (*Polsat News* 2012). Additionally, politicians from the Law and Justice, who in 2012 were part of the opposition, quite often delimited the field of debate on ACTA by pointing out the inevitable contradiction between intellectual property rights and freedom. An example of such delimitation is in the following statement: "This is actually a dispute between two important values—the value of protecting intellectual property and copyrighted works and the value of freedom of expression and access to culture" (*Polsat News* 2012).

For counter-hegemonic practices, another critical difference applied by the organizations supporting the free culture coalition is that of the representative and the represented. This difference, like the difference between the power of copyright and freedom, has also been used by both sides of the conflict. Specifically, the logic of representation associated with this duality has been used by the Digital Poland Association. The president of this organization has criticized the system of private copying levy in the media by emphasizing the need to protect and represent the interests of ordinary consumers of culture while indicating what exactly should be considered by those obliged to such representation. He has repeatedly pointed out that the Ministry of Culture's support of the private copying levy system fails to represent the interests of Polish cultural consumers. The following statement made by the president of Digital Poland during a TV interview, creating an image of poor Polish consumers unable to bear the costs of fair use of cultural goods, is a perfect example of the counter-hegemonic use of the logic of representation.

> It is weird that the Ministry of Culture is in favor of this fee as if trying not to look at this business from the other very important side in this dispute, from the side of the consumer who has to put out these few

> dozen zlotys for each device out of his pocket, and unfortunately for the Polish consumer, still in the era of coming out of the crisis, it is a big expense. [*TVP Info* 2014]

A consumer image depicted in this statement is, of course, in line with the interests of Digital Poland, which, as explained, seeks to strengthen public criticism of the private copying levy.

A slightly different image of Polish users of commercial culture can be found in narratives created by the free culture coalition. Organizations of this coalition undertake numerous activities to increase the rights and freedoms of culture users. At the same time, members of these organizations indicate that the represented users are often uninterested in their entitlements when it comes to the copyright system (e.g., "When I use copyright, I try to get to know and understand it…One of my huge disappointments experienced some time ago, a life disappointment, was the discovery that people do not have such a need" [O6]). This lack of direct social legitimacy and the need to justify the initiated actions frequently cause members of organizations belonging to the free culture coalition to create images of the represented, consistent with their policy. The following press statement by the president of the Modern Poland Foundation is an example of this kind of "supplementation" of the represented identity: "We have reached the point where an ordinary citizen is unable to comply with the law because it is too complicated, imposes too-high barriers and criminalizes everyday communication behavior; this is a situation that must change" (*Wprost* 2012). An important question, although not resolvable at the level of the discourse itself, is to what extent the identity created is compatible with that of the typical user of cultural goods.

Other applications of the logic of signification captured during the analysis of copyright counter-hegemonic discursive practices have been based on the following dualities: 1) the duality between a world with open access to culture, knowledge, and information and a "fenced world," 2) the duality between free and "overregulated culture," 3) the duality between a free and censored internet, and 4) the duality between an analog and a digital world. The first three differences are somewhat derivative of the duality between the power of copyright and freedom. The main task of discursive practices based on these differences is to present a dystopian image of the world, culture, and internet subordinated to copyright.

The logic related to the duality between the fenced world and the world offering open access to knowledge and culture has been most frequently reiterated by the Modern Poland Foundation. The counter-hegemonic logic based on this duality can be illustrated by two excerpts from press statements made by the president of this organization. First, "it would be wrong, however, if fenced culture became a symbol of the information society" (*GW* 2006). Second, "in the open space of the internet, there are separate places that can be called—after the title of the album of [Polish music] band *Świetliki*—'concentration gardens'"[38] (*TP* 2011). Additionally, the division into the fenced versus open world appeared during the debate on ACTA mentioned earlier, organized by the Prime Minister on February 6, 2012. During this debate, a representative of the Polish Information Technology Association (*Polskie Towarzystwo Informatyczne*) made the following statement.

[38] For more information about the band *Świetliki* see the following website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9Awietliki. Retrieved June 17, 2024.

> The internet in the 1960s and 1970s grew out of counterculture trends, and at that time, it was about taking the information monopoly out of the hands of the government, big corporations, and the military and putting it in the hands of the people—a naive idea, but after all these years, it worked…And now others come who had nothing to do with it—lawyers, politicians—and they start "fencing off" the area that we have acquired and developed. They put up fences and prohibition signs: this way, it's allowed; that way, it's not allowed.

The free-overregulated culture duality—taken from the work of Lawrence Lessig (2004)—has been primarily used by representatives of the Digital Centre Foundation. The following press statement exemplified the logic related to this duality: "Increased control will cause that network culture that is rich today to soon resemble the relatively monotonous TV programs" (*GW* 2008).

Finally, the duality between the free and censored internet was introduced mainly by the opponents of ACTA and the "ACTA2." The counter-hegemonic logic associated with this division consisted primarily of identifying the ACTA agreement and the DSM Directive with the introduction of censorship. Such identification was made notably by protesting internet users (e.g., "No one wants censorship on the internet of any kind, and the internet is freedom of speech" [*Polsat News* 2012]). Furthermore, organizations supporting these users treat specific regulations in the ACTA or the DSM Directive as manifesting censorship. For example, a representative of the Digital Centre Foundation criticizing the mandatory content filtering rule observed, "It may turn out that the first widespread application of artificial intelligence imposed by European law will be the filters censoring the freedom of expression of internet users" (*Polityka.pl* 2018).

The narrative equating the introduction of the DSM Directive with censorship was also instrumentally used by the Law and Justice politicians during the 2018-2019 campaigns. The latter was exemplified in the following statement by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki during the Provincial Election Convention in Gdańsk.

> Dear ladies and gentlemen, you have access to the vast majority of media, and of course, you do not want the internet, the most liberal and free medium…to be also controlled because content filtering…sometimes under the guise of copyright protection, threatens censorship. They probably want to introduce censorship in this way.

In addition, the ruling party's narrative using the metaphor of censorship to discredit the DSM Directive was further reproduced by the Polish public television (*Telewizja Polska S.A.—TVP*). The following statements of *TVP* reporters exemplified such reproduction: "if the Directive comes into force, the website administrator will have to check whether we are infringing someone's copyright before publishing our text, photo, or video" [*TVP1* 2018]) and "under the guise of copyright protection, censorship is introduced on the internet" [*TVP2* 2018].

The last mentioned duality that counter-hegemonic practitioners use to construct their narratives is the duality between an analog and virtual world, which is commonly used and increasingly unclear. Within the analyzed discourses, this difference was emphasized primarily by the participants of the protests against ACTA (e.g., "We want to continue to have freedom on the internet" [*Polsat News* 2012]) and or-

ganizations supporting the anti-ACTA movement. For instance, specific excerpts from press statements by the Modern Poland Foundation and Digital Centre Foundation used the logic related to analog-virtual duality to argue against applying copyright to online activities. According to one such statement, "Access control systems limit our options. What for? They are trying to turn digital into analog" (*TP* 2011). Elsewhere, one member of the free culture coalition stated:

> Traditional entrepreneurs, whose business models date back to the pre-internet analog times, are often afraid of the changes brought about by the development of the internet. This fear is sometimes irrational; sometimes, on the contrary, it is a rational calculation because new technologies disrupt existing models. [*Rzeczpospolita* 2013]

Manifestations of Counter-Hegemony

Beyond the counter-hegemonic discursive practices, a manifestation of the counter-hegemonization of Polish copyright discourses is the against-the-law narrative. Such narrative was used primarily by musicians and music producers, mainly regarding the part of the copyright system concerning the principles of the functioning of collective management organizations. Collecting societies were referenced by people from the Polish music industry as ineffective, dishonest, and abusive of power. The following statements by music producers and young musicians illustrated this critique: "[*ZAiKS*] is a completely rigid institution…often bending the law to suit its own needs" (MP4); "we followed the advice of older musicians who had already had a lot of contact with these organizations, everyone unanimously described them as thieves" (m3); and "*ZAiKS* is considered a quasi-mafia organization" (m9).

Polish Discursive Battles over Copyright

As established, counter-hegemony is an unfinished project whose main task is to undertake actions to undermine the current hegemony's principles to introduce a new hegemony in the longer term. Although a counter-hegemony understood in this way is not a viable counterbalance to the existing hegemony, the interplay between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discursive practices can be described as a kind of discursive struggle. The actors involved in this struggle create discursive practices appropriate to produce and reproduce copyright order (i.e., hegemonic discursive practices) or undermine it (i.e., counter-hegemonic discursive practices) while seeking to discredit the discursive practices created by their "adversaries." A manifestation of such discrediting is the previously described logic of freedom used by Polish free culture coalition members. Other examples of discrediting the discursive practices of opponents are cases of undermining the dualities underlying the logic of signification they use.

Members of the free culture coalition question the differences imposed by copyright defenders as the duality between legal ways of using cultural goods and piracy and the duality between acting for and against Polish culture. An example of narrative questioning the first duality appeared in the following press statement by a member of an organization representing users of culture:

> The traditional approach promotes existing sources, urging users to consider the legality of the content as an important selection criterion. In our opinion, it is equally important to consider whether the law artificially restricts some form of creation or distribution that could be legalized without harm or even to the benefit of all. [*Rzeczpospolita* 2013]

The line between acting for and against the culture drawn by Polish collective societies was challenged mainly by the Digital Centre Foundation. Notably, this counter-hegemonic strategy was visible in media statements made by the representatives of this foundation and in their research activities. The latter was most evident in the case of the research report *The Circulations of Culture: On the Social Distribution of Content* (Filiciak, Hofmokl, and Tarkowski 2012), published by the Digital Centre. This report was a kind of manifesto for ACTA opponents because it undermined the common belief that downloading illegal content from the internet is harmful to culture. According to the authors of the report, "participation in informal circulation does not entirely exclude buying cultural goods. On the contrary… such people are culturally very active, especially when compared to the rest of the Poles" (*GW* 2012).

At the same time, copyright defenders, opposing counter-hegemonic discursive practices, question the duality between the analog and digital world and the duality between open and "locked" culture. The latter combines the duality between the fenced world and the world with open access to culture, knowledge, and information with the duality between free and overregulated cultures. The open-locked culture duality has been frequently questioned by lawyers, indicating that open culture also requires copyright. As a lawyer specializing in copyright law explained: "Copyright law makes it profitable to be an artist…and from this perspective, copyright is an important catalyst for filling open resources or open culture" (L3). In contrast, a narrative undermining the division between the "real" world and the digital world used by copyright opponents appeared in a 2012 statement by Prime Minister Donald Tusk during an interview for *Wprost* Weekly.

> In the case of the internet, it is customary to think that what is on it should be free of regulations. The internet, according to most users, should be treated differently than the world outside the internet. But today, for millions of people, the internet is the real world—they do shopping on it, meet people, and trade large amounts of money. [*Wprost* 2012]

The discourse analysis showed that the strategy of discrediting discursive practices of the opponents, including undermining dualities based on which opponents build their hegemonic or counter-hegemonic discursive practices, is typical of all parties to the social conflict over copyright. Moreover, the study indicated that this "deconstruction" is carried out alternately. First, opponents of the copyright order reveal the basis of hegemonic logic imposed by supporters of the strong copyright coalition. Next, defenders of the current regulations undermine the counter-hegemonic logic built by the oppositionists. Subsequently, those who seek to rechallenge the copyright hegemony counter the logic of those who produce and maintain this hegemony, and the latter undermine the counter-hegemony produced and maintained by the former. As a result, Polish discourses on copyright are structured as an alternating sequence of discursive hegemonic and discursive counter-hegemonic practices. However, this article describes only some logic used by the participants in the conflict under analysis.

Discussion and Conclusion

The theoretical considerations in this article have shown that copyright hegemony is a special kind of hegemony: a local hegemony built based on a legal order. This hegemony takes the form of diffuse hegemony in Poland: 1) due to the multi-level nature of Polish copyright hegemony, which primarily includes

the international, European, and regional (Polish) levels, and 2) because of the extraordinary diversity of social actors who are either "hegemons" (those who produce and reproduce the hegemonic order) or subjects of hegemony. On "the hegemonizing side," in addition to the previously mentioned participants in Polish copyright discourses producing hegemonic discursive practices, are legislators (both Polish and EU) and a broad group of international organizations and corporations lobbying in the area of copyright. In turn, the party subjected to hegemonization is basically the whole of Polish society.

Interestingly, some Poles participating in the analyzed discourses indicated who they thought was the hegemon, which was especially visible during the protests against the ACTA and the DSM Directive. According to members of the anti-ACTA movement, the US tried to hegemonize the rest of the world by imposing its copyright regime. For many, especially young people, it was crucial to establish the interests of the American creative industry to ensure that Poland would profit from signing the agreement and that Polish citizens would not be subordinated to the ruthless logic of "bloodthirsty corporations." A manifestation of such concerns is the following statement by one of the participants of a public debate on ACTA, mentioned earlier, organized by the Prime Minister: "Doesn't the Prime Minister think that this deal is a part of the US ploy to gain domination over the rest of the world?"

A few years later, during the debate on the DSM Directive, many Poles used the same logic and indicated that the only thing that had changed was "the hegemon's face." In 2018, this entity was the EU (e.g., a *TVP* reporter stated, "The EU has this legal hegemony" [*TVP Info* 2018]) and the corporations lobbying within EU structures. Moreover, according to the interviewees, there are "regional" copyright hegemons. Representatives of the Polish creative sector indicated that at the regional level, copyright hegemony is exercised mainly by collecting societies. As one music producer said, these organizations "act as if [they were] hegemonists" (MP2).

Because the copyright hegemony indicated by the Poles is a "perceived hegemony," it does not reflect the full range of hegemonic practices. Their disclosure is possible only after analyzing the actions taken to establish and maintain the copyright order. This article analyzed only one type of such action: discursive practices. However, as shown in the theoretical part of the article, the constitutive elements of any hegemony can be found in the discourse. Moreover, this feature of hegemony makes the struggle between the current order and the projects aimed at overthrowing it (i.e., counter-hegemony) particularly visible on the ground of discourse.

Most research on discourse and copyright has primarily dealt with legal discourse, a professional discourse mainly used by lawyers. This research has focused on the most important copyright institutions (e.g., intellectual property, creative work, and authorship) and the associated dichotomies (e.g., idea expression and the original-non-original dichotomy). The authors of such studies have criticized the ambiguous and unclear nature of these institutions and the divisions that co-create them and draw attention to their oppressive (see, e.g., Tehranian 2012) and hegemonic nature (see, e.g., Hemmungs Wirtén 2006). Since legal discourse is rarely directly reflected in public discourse, the analyses of the cited researchers are of limited applicability to public debates on copyright. Therefore, I focused on the narratives and discursive practices of the general public who are interested

but do not necessarily discuss the shape and content of copyright law through legal concepts.

The results of the analysis showed that the framework of Polish copyright discourse is determined by the conflicting discursive practices of two opposing groups: the strong copyright and free culture coalitions. Both coalitions primarily consist of social organizations representing the interests of particular parties to the social conflict over copyright supported by numerous political, business, and cultural actors. Since the structure of the Polish copyright discourse is determined by the narratives created by two main groups, and these groups refer to each other in their narratives, this discourse is constructed from an alternating sequence of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. This construction of the discourse leads to polarization while preventing the complete hegemonization of Polish society by ensuring the visibility of opposing solutions to the production and distribution of cultural goods.

Although Polish copyright discourses involve discursive practices and narratives created by supporters and opponents of the existing copyright system, hegemonic practices and narratives prevail in these discourses. The main reason is that hegemonic practices are used by those with power (i.e., legislative and economic), resources (i.e., EU and international government representatives), and organizations and corporations representing the creative sector. Moreover, hegemonic discursive practices used by copyright supporters are more effective, as evidenced, for example, by the higher visibility of hegemonic (i.e., before-the-law and with-the-law narratives) over counter-hegemonic (i.e., with-the-law narratives) narratives among discourses of those who use copyright law daily.

Moreover, the analysis of the Polish copyright debates demonstrated that the copyright hegemony of international organizations and corporations has encountered strong resistance in Polish society. This opposition was most visible during the protest against ACTA and "ACTA2." Counter-hegemonic narratives created and disseminated then were built mainly on logic related to copyright-freedom duality. Opponents of the current copyright law identified freedom with the lack of copyright regulations and advocated the non-application of copyright in the internet sphere. Non-governmental organizations representing internet and culture users were the primary sources of these counter-hegemonic narratives. Nevertheless, the difficult-to-define role of the large internet corporations that sometimes support civil society actors is worth recalling, mainly because underestimating the importance of these corporations can lead to overestimating the impact of counter-narratives created by social organizations (Cartwright 2019).

Although Polish society has strongly resisted copyright regulations protecting works distributed online, Poles have a surprising lack of openness to alternative solutions proposed by organizations seeking to change copyright law (see, e.g., Tarkowski and Majdecka 2015). The latter primarily include various free, open, and public licenses, created mainly by representatives of American organizations belonging to the strong copyright coalition. However, these licenses do not undermine the principles of the current copyright and thus do not constitute examples of a new hegemony. The lack of openness of the Polish public to new legal solutions proposed by American organizations is surprising, given that narratives created by American freedom movements have inspired most counter-hegemonic discursive practices of participants in Polish discourses on copyright law. The latter include the free-software, free-culture, and open-source-soft-

ware movements. Such narratives are typical of Polish social organizations representing users' interests. Another distinguishing feature of Polish counter-hegemonic copyright practices is the instrumental use of discourse by some participants in social conflict over copyright. Counter-hegemonic practices are used for purposes other than subverting the copyright regime primarily by Polish business representatives lobbying for copyright liberalization and Polish politicians.

The analysis of Polish discourses on copyright and the accompanying deconstruction of the logic employed by the main parties to the social conflict over copyright demonstrated the complexity of both the conflict and the discursive practices employed by its participants. Additionally, the conducted analysis revealed that the concept of hegemony, especially its discursive dimension, can be useful in analyzing public discourse on law.

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Book Review

Sena, Barbara. 2024. *The Case Study in Social Research. History, Methods, and Applications*. London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group

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Those involved in teaching social research methods and supervising students in social sciences will probably agree that case study is one of the most frequently used approaches for research (Tight 2010).

However, for many experts in the field, the term case study has a certain ambiguity. It is a sort of slogan or catchword often used as an excuse for everything.

This indiscriminate practice has transformed its methodological status into something suspicious that, in the words of John Gerring (2007:7), has made it "survive in a curious methodological limbo." Still, again, we come across the same problem, that is, the ambiguity in its use and the light-handed way in which the term is often mistakenly used—a practice that has emptied it of useful meaning. For this reason, the book centers the debate on the need to use case studies in social research with "methodological awareness" (something that is not common). Such a diagnosis has led Barbara Sena to produce a text with a language and structure that can be located "halfway between the classic introductory volumes of a particular method and monographs aimed at investigating specific methodological issues" (p. 1).

Those interested specifically in case studies, as well as those interested in general issues concerning methodology and methods of social research (whether doing empirical research or teaching methodology), will find elaborate and well-founded answers in Sena's recently published book, and a wide range of questions and doubts we often have to face when using such a versatile and rich approach.

What is a case study? A method? A strategy? An approach? A type of research design? What are the differences between a case and a case study? What does the case study offer compared to other research approaches? What are the links between it and quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods? What distinguishes it from other methodological approaches? What is the origin of the confusion and lack of consensus concerning case studies? Sena offers systematic and coherent answers to such and other questions that permeate the case study.

The book is presented as a resource for social sciences, especially for sociologists. The Author lays out the need for such kind of clarification given that two major references in the literature, Robert Stake and Robert Yin, are neither sociologists nor methodologists of social research in the strict sense. Moreover, their works are not always adaptable to the specific scope of sociology and social research.

The wide range of specialized literature covered in the book and the Author's experience in the research field and university teaching allowed offering a rigorous and systematic work of great didactic value. Sena states that the purpose of the volume is to offer material highly accessible to a diverse public. For this reason, she avoids complex explanations on how to define and apply case studies and rather focuses on those elements that are shared across a wide range of literature on the subject. In this dialogue with methodological literature, Sena recovers different arguments she considers relevant and constructs a clear synthesis of each of the subjects uncovered. Those arguments are by no means a repetition of the work of leading authors. On the contrary, Sena shows the nuances, tensions, inconsistencies, and gaps in knowledge that many of those references leave open, although they require some kind of answer. Using examples in practically every topic throughout the book, Sena builds a path to an educational resource able to constructively orientate the reader.

The volume is divided into seven chapters. The first two are socio-historical. The first gives a general perspective on the features of social research and the methodological debate that have influenced the recognition and spread of some methods and lines of research to the detriment of others. "In any case, the case study should be framed within the clash between quantitative and qualitative methods and in the recent affirmation of the mixed method orientation in the field of social research" (p. 3). The second chapter focuses on the history of case studies and begins with the Chicago school in the first decades of the twentieth century, where this methodological perspective first evolved. Analyzing that period, Sena concludes that the term was mainly used as a label associated with procedures of qualitative research—from life stories to in-depth interviews and participant observation, although methods were not always well-defined or made explicit in those early works.

With the decline of qualitative methods after the Second World War, the case study seems to have disappeared from the mainstream language of research only to reappear in the 1980s. However, on

its reappearance, the perspective of case studies followed two different paths. On the one hand, a group of sociologists recovered the original idea of the Chicago school and "tended to associate case studies with a type of qualitative research *tout court"* (p. 25). On the other hand, scholars from other disciplines, such as education, political science, or psychology, attempt to separate the case study from qualitative research and think of it as a specific methodological approach, such as Gerring and Yin. Considering the former group, Sena shows how the recovery of a generic idea of the case study did nothing to clarify its use. On the contrary, it added to the confusion. For Sena, the association with qualitative methods should be seen as a methodological affinity rather than a prescriptive definition. Considering the second group, the Author shows how, although they tried to clarify the objectives, procedures, and techniques of the case study, they did not always succeed in doing so effectively.

That dividing axis in the literature allows Sena to take a clear position: the identification of the case study with qualitative research should gradually be abandoned. Indeed, it would be more appropriate to consider a case study as a research approach able to overcome the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research.

In the third chapter, that issue is discussed in-depth. Among all the existing definitions and uses in the literature, Sena identifies a tendency to define case studies as an approach (neither method nor strategy). Here, she takes Creswell's definition of research approach and applies it to case studies:

> Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This plan involves several decisions…The overall decision involves which approach should be used to study a topic. Informing this decision should be the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study; procedures of inquiry (called research designs); and specific research methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. [p. 40]

This explanation is complemented in the same chapter by analyzing the notion of case, which has wide semantic versatility. Although cases are always studied referring to a unit or group of units around which data are collected and analyzed, this is not enough to deduce whether it can be the object of a case study. The specificity must be found elsewhere.

The fourth and fifth chapters look at specific guidelines for planning a case study with a wide and detailed reference to the main issues relative to why a case study should be conducted, introducing considerations concerning the research design (chapter 4) and how to conduct a case study (chapter 5).

The sixth chapter considers an aspect practically absent in the literature: what distinguished case study from other methodological approaches. Sena compares case studies with quantitative (especially surveys) and qualitative research. The Author establishes contrasts with life stories and ethnographic research. Then, she looks at the articulation of case studies with mixed methods.

The seventh chapter is dedicated to illustrating with examples specific fields where case studies have been used, both in research where the Author participated and in research on evaluation, a field where the perspective has been extensively used. The Author also discusses different sociological and socio-economic research, particularly those labeled

case studies, such as some of the seminal works by members of the Chicago school. According to Sena, those researches were inappropriately termed case studies because they did not start by identifying a concrete problem related to a well-defined case—they were simply examples of qualitative research in general.

Finally, the volume concludes by summarizing the principal arguments of each chapter.

In summary, the book represents a new contribution to the questions surrounding case studies, with the added virtue—the discussions unfold to bring order and clarity and not to confuse.

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