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# The Learning Curve

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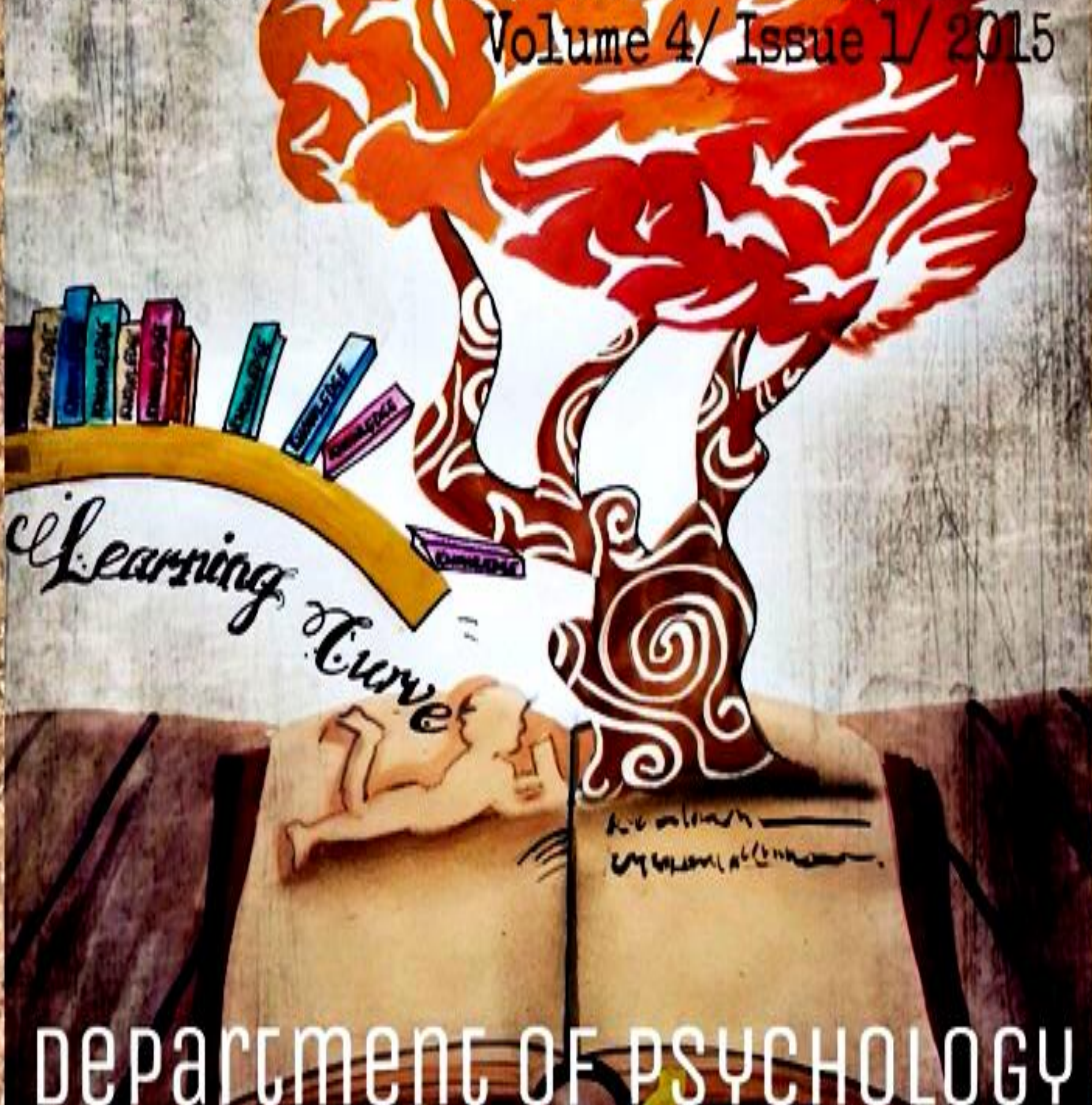


DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
LADY SHRI RAM COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

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# The Learning Curve

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Annual Academic Journal of the Psychology Department
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# NOTE FROM THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

*Ms. Sentisungla Longchar*

In the midst of constant engagement and growth of the mind, the Department of Psychology at Lady Shri Ram College for Women has come up with the next issue of its Annual Academic journal 'The Learning Curve'. Over the years it has been a constant effort to hold annual National Paper Presentation Conferences and Seminars where we have received many articles and participants from all over India. These articles reflect an active exploration of the human mind, emerging trends in psychology and narrations of lived experiences of the researchers to bring about gradual yet important changes in the field of psychology.

# NOTE FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

*Apurva Sapra and Yamini Kaul*

Working on an academic publication was a unique and precarious task. There was a lot of room to learn and apply concepts taught in the classroom. Working with the authors and reading their papers was a different experience. There was negotiation and reconciliation between different ideas on what a paper 'should' look like. A similar review process was followed from last year i.e. there were double blind peer reviews, internal reviews by the Editorial Board, and expert reviewers for each of the papers submitted for publication. The Editorial Board would like to thank Dr. Parul Bansal, Dr. Pushpita Behera, Dr. Suparna Bakaya, Dr. Gauri Thakar, Ms. Bhuvaneswari Balan, Ms. Khyati Tripathi and Ms. Ketoki Mazumdar for their valuable inputs as the experts.

We received many papers from different parts of the country, with varied topics, methodologies and orientations. This was partly possible because of the National Paper Presentation Competition, held as a part of the two-day National Seminar organized by the Psychology Department at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, themed 'Psychology at the Edges'.

It was a pleasure to read each author's paper and understand their research and rationale behind choosing a particular topic. Novel concepts have been explored in each paper, such as research on play and the mother-child dyad in a brothel, physiological aspects of behaviour, work-life balance, socio-political phenomena analyzed from a psychological perspective, and philosophical inquiries into the nature of self. We also have papers on the critique of mainstream psychology from a gendered and cultural perspective, as well as of the current etiological frameworks in classification and psycho-diagnostics. It is this uniqueness that we want to reflect in the 2015 issue of The Learning Curve which covers a vast expanse of topics.

We thank every author who submitted a paper for considering our journal worthy of their research.

We would also like to thank the Association and Ms. Megha Dhillon, the association-in charge, and the Union for providing support and guidance, wherever it was needed.

We hope that the quality of research articles and reviews written continue to maintain such a standard, and further contribute to the field of psychology and behavioural sciences, and most importantly, inspire those wishing to take a similar path.

## The Editorial Board

# About the Reviewers

***Ms. Khyati Tripathi,*** currently pursuing her PhD in Psychology from Department of Psychology, University of Delhi is a graduate from Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi and has completed her post graduation in Psychology from the Department of Psychology, University of Delhi after which she went on to pursue an interdisciplinary M.Phil in Social Anthropology from the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. She is an ardent research scholar who has presented and published many papers at National and International conferences and most of her research work deals with Death and related themes like death rituals, death anxiety, etc..

***Dr. Pushpita Behera*** is a senior Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. She has over 12 years of teaching experience. Dr. Behera has completed her graduation and post-graduation from Utkal University, Orissa. Thereafter, she received her M.Phil in Clinical Psychology from the University of Delhi and PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. She stood First in her Bachelors and Third in Masters in the University and got a National Scholarship for the same. She has also received NET/JRF from UGC for carrying out her research work. She has authored a textbook titled "Social Psychology" published by Tata McGraw Hill educational Pvt. Ltd.  and published research articles. Her research interests include Stress and Coping, Quality of life, Work-Family Conflict, Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Social Psychology, Research Methodology, Statistics and Neurosciences.

***Dr. (Mrs.) Gauri Thakar*** has been a UGC scholar and has a PhD from Bhopal University. She has been a lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology at N.C.E.R.T. Her areas of interest are women studies, stress and coping, self and consciousness. She is currently teaching psychology in Gyan Bharati School, Saket, New Delhi.

***Ms. Ketoki Mazumdar*** is a PhD scholar at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her research interests include the burgeoning field of positive psychology – meaning in life and well-being studies, cross-cultural psychology, clinical psychology, adolescent and youth research, and qualitative methodology. She has an MPhil degree in Social Sciences from TISS, Mumbai and a Masters degree in Applied Psychology from University of Calcutta.

***Ms. Bhuvaneswari Balasubramanian*** is a social scientist with a PhD in Social Sciences from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai as a senior research fellow under the University Grants Commission, India. Her areas of research interest include urban health, spaces and safety, child rights, gender studies, and social & cultural psychology

***Dr. Parul Bansal***, an Assistant Professor at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, was awarded the Shashi Kala Singh Gold Medal for topping her master‟s degree. She received the ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship to conduct her PhD research, which was published as a book titled "Youth in Contemporary India: Images of Identity and Social Change", and focuses on psycho-social processes of identity development in urban Indian youth using biographical and narrative method. Her academic and research interests are in subfields of Psychology of Self, Personality and Identity, Social and Cultural Psychology, Psychology of Human Development, Qualitative research methodology, Psychoanalysis and Mental Health.

***Dr. Suparna Bakaya*** is working in the Department of Psychology at Shyama Prasad Mukherji College, University of Delhi as an Assistant Professor. Her research interests are in the area of developmental and social psychology. Her doctoral research was on the topic of 'Dimensions of Peer Relationships Among Adolescents‟. In the near future she plans to conduct further research in the area of developmental psychology with an emphasis on the role of culture in the various developmental issues across life span.

# Problem Of Causality In Mental Disorders

*Arushi Kothari*
Lady Shri Ram College for Women

**ABSTRACT**

The search for a ‘cause’ is considered essential in almost all fields today, including psychology. However the notion of a singular ‘cause’ or monocausation for mental disorders can be very misleading. The following paper using various research studies, contradicts this idea by critiquing assumptions behind establishing causality and pointing out larger conceptual and methodological problems in the understanding of causality in mental disorders. Also, it has been suggested that causal explanations are not the only valid forms of explanations especially when one takes into account something as complex and dynamic as human behaviour. A more holistic approach is required to understand factors and not causes that play a role in the etiology of mental disorders.

*Keywords: causality, monocausation, limitations*

*This paper could not have been completed without the continuous guidance and support of Dr Parul Bansal who is an Assistant Professor in the department.*

**Problem of Causality in Mental Disorders**

The search for a ‘cause’ is one which seems to be primary in major research endeavours in clinical psychology and psychiatry. The Oxford dictionary defines the word cause, synonymous with root, source or origin as “any person or thing that gives rise to an action, phenomenon, or condition”. Danks (2009) has suggested that:

*“.....human beings are clearly causal cognizers, as we easily and automatically (try to) learn the causal structure of the world, use causal knowledge to make decisions and predictions, generate explanations using our beliefs about the causal structure of the world, and use causal knowledge in many other ways. The understanding of cause plays an important role in several areas”* (Danks, 2009, p.1)

Ahn, Novick, and Kim (2003) found that clinicians who received the additional life-event root cause explanations judged people to be more normal than those who did not receive such explanations. Concepts of causality in psychopathology are important elements in psychological assessment and clinical case formulation (Haynes, O’Brien, Kaholokula, Witteman, 2012). Causality also informs the clinician about assessment strategies, methods, instruments, and measures to use for a particular client, and is important in all psychotherapy paradigms (cf. Allen, 1993; Magnavita, 2006).

But, when the demarcations between normal and abnormal are still debated, then naturally what causes abnormal behaviour or more specifically mental disorders seems even more obscure. A key point to be considered is that when one speaks of ‘cause’ it is to suggest that there is only one; this has been called the doctrine of "monocausation" (King, 1982, p.204).

Haynes et al (2012) have provided several critiques of the assumptions of causality. The “domain of causal effects”, temporal or in terms of situational contexts provides a unique understanding to the problems associated with causality. Two variables can be causally related but only with

-in particular domains or contexts. If measurements are made out of those domains or contexts, a significant relationship may not be found. They have also elaborated on the fact that the temporal relation between variables can be difficult to detect in clinical assessment. They argue that:

*"Precedence is a necessary but insufficient condition for excluding the possibility of a "third variable effect." A causal variable could create two effects, but with different causal latencies i.e. effect of the causal variable would show earlier in one variable than the other. Consequently, in this case of let's say the two behaviour problems would demonstrate co variation and one would reliably precede the other, even though they were not causally related. Causal relations sometimes have restricted temporal boundaries such that the latency and the duration of a causal effect can vary across types of causes, for different behaviour problems, for different dimensions of a behaviour problem, and for different persons. For instance, a client's inability to resolve family conflicts could precede and affect the severity or duration of his depressive episodes but not their onset"* (Haynes et al, 2012, p.5).

Another assumption is that the association between two variables must be specific i.e., the presumed cause, such as child sexual abuse, must be present for one, and only one, disorder, such as for dissociative identity disorder, but not for others such as depression or conversion disorder (Haynes et al, 2012; Shrout et al, 2011). This is very difficult to isolate in case of mental disorders. There is also another problem, as several authors believe that the categorical classification imposes artificial boundaries on naturally existing phenomena. Thus several categorical classifications and their placements are constantly revised with newer versions of DSM, meaning that even if we narrow down on a specific association, that category in itself may not hold true for long.

There are several other problems with the conceptualisation of causality in mental disorders. Biomedical models more than any other model have tried to establish the idea of cause of mental disorders. With the exception of organic brain syndromes, there is no convincing empirical evidence that mental disorders have a unitary biological cause.

It is also important to understand the distinctions between correlation and causation. Correlations represent associations, not causation. Ingleby (1990) argues that:

*"....the neurobiological correlate of depression or psychosis, and the associated mental state may be understood in terms of other factors, such as the person's life story, and the enmeshment of narrative and biology in an endless variety of contexts, social, historical, political and cultural. Human contexts do not provide causes for human action but grounds or reasons for action. Scientific methods are useful to establish how things happen, but not why they happen."* (Thomas et al, 2007, p.148)

In fact clinicians infer causality using diagnostic criteria and characteristics of a disorder even when causality is not stated. Kim and Ahn (2001) presented clinical psychologists with the *DSM* diagnostic criteria of a variety of disorders. When asked to specify any relations among the symptoms within a mental disorder 97% of all relations participants drew were causal relations or relations that imply causality (Carey, 1985; Wellman, 1990), indicating that clinicians' concepts of mental disorders are not merely statistical correlations of symptoms.

Some may argue that the diathesis-stress model may help us identify the root cause of a disorder. But here also if we are able to identify the diathesis or the vulnerability (which has not been possible for all disorders) it does not say anything about the cause because that vulnerability may have been affected by several other factors or it is also possible that a set of ''third variables'' predispose to both the vulnerability and the disease. Such a case will produce a non-casual risk factor–disease association. This is a particular problem in psychiatric epidemiology because so many exposures of interest—stressful life events, social support, educational status, social class—are themselves complex and the result not only of the environment (with causal effects flowing from environment to person) but also of the actions of human beings themselves (with causal effects flowing from people to their environment) (Kendler and Prescott, 2006).

Even if one is able to identify that one cause, singular causation does not act in a vacuum. It always takes place in a particular causal field (a notion due to J.L. Mackie, 1972) containing some circumstances that allow, or at least do not prohibit, the nexus to happen (Dorato and Faye, 2003)

It is also difficult to separate cause from effect in abnormal behaviour. Morgan et al (2008) for instance have suggested in the case of psychosis and social functioning that:

*"The development of a psychotic mental illness is frequently preceded or accompanied by a decline in social functioning which includes loss of employment, failure to establish social networks etc. It is consequently unclear whether the social experience is the cause or consequence of the developing psychosis"* (Morgan, 2008, p.246)

This difficulty also goes for chemical imbalances, wherein one has to question that did the imbalance actually precede the onset of the disorder. And more importantly did it act in isolation in causing the disorder.

Kiesler (2004) has suggested that it is "invariably difficult and complex to understand, explain, or predict mental disorder through knowledge about causal factors" because of the overwhelming number of possible causes and even the possible combinations of only a few factors is very unwieldy, the unknown critical events that can occur that may never be isolated and situational influences unique to the individual that seem to play a crucial role in mental disorders.

Breslau (1987) in her article 'Causes of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder' in *Causality and Psychopathology: Finding the Determinants of Disorders and their Cures* has used the example of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to further explain the problem of causality in mental disorders. She stated that:

*"PTSD was an exception to the rule of creating a classification that is 'atheoretical with regard to etiology or pathophysiological process'. Not only did the PTSD definition include an etiological event, but it incorporated a theory, an underlying process, that connects the syndrome's diagnostic features"* (McNally, 2003; Young, 1995). The centrality of traumatic event implies a causal order: the memory of the event causes the onset of the syndrome. The problem of whether symptoms followed or instead preceded the traumatic memory has not disappeared and is a central point in litigations and compensation claims. A person with current unexplained symptoms may attribute a connection with a past event after gaining some new knowledge that allows him to reassess the original experience in a new light (Young, 2001). While some authors believe that ''the nature and intensity of the stressor is the primary etiological factor in individual differences in response to stress'' (Green, Lindy, & Grace, 1985), the fact that all victims of trauma do not develop PTSD, indicates that "social and individual factors may modify the response in the same way that they modify the response to ordinary stressful life events" (Breslau and Davis, 1987) Thus even in the case of a disorder like PTSD it is difficult to identify necessary and sufficient factors that can then be attributed the label of a 'singular cause'. (Shrout, 2011, p.297)

There are certain methodological problems in causal inference as well. The definition of the causal effect depends on a counterfactual consideration, namely, what the outcome of someone with treatment A would have been had he or she received treatment B or what the outcome of someone assigned to treatment B would have been had he or she received treatment A. Our inability to observe both outcomes is what Holland (1986) called ‘‘the fundamental problem of causal inference.” Schwartz et al (2011) have elaborated various problems with experimental designs such as failing to adhere with the treatment, switching treatments, selectively adding additional treatments, or withdrawing from the study entirely, mortality and morbidity as key problems. Also the potential outcomes model used in experimental studies, limits the types of factors that can be defined as causes such as attributes of people e.g. gender are not considered to be causes. This requirement clearly derives from the experimental, interventionist basis of the model (Schwartz et al, 2011). For it to be a cause, the factor must be manipulable; in Holland (1986, p. 959) and Rubin’s terminology, ‘‘No causation without manipulation.’’

The overemphasis on causal explanations as the only legitimate form of explanation has also been criticised. Non-causal explanations that only aim to make the behaviour comprehensible and intelligible are especially fit for behavioural sciences because human beings and their experiences are far too complex to be studied by the narrow boundaries of positivism. To assume that causal explanations that aid prediction are the only acceptable form of understanding may indicate a biased view and prevent wholesome insight.

## Conclusion

Thus it is key to understand and accept that mental disorders are “etiologically heterogeneous” and no one cause is applicable for all or even one mental disorder. As a science we must come to understand "which explanations are best for which disorders" (Holmes, 1997, p.g. 20). In the case of mental disorders, complex causal chains are often involved, and it's not always clear which processes should be regarded as the primary causal factor (Meehl, 1977; Whitbeck, 1977). It has also been suggested that it is “possible for a single set of causal factors to produce different psychopathological symptoms depending on the severity of the causal agent, accompanying environmental circumstances, or other mediating variables” (Kiesler, 2000, p.11). The unfortunate part is that even though there seems to be no one necessary cause, research has been focused on finding that ‘one’ cause wherein psychiatry has been focused on a search for biological necessary causes; psychology with cognitive and behavioural necessary causes and sociology by cultural and societal necessary causes (Kiesler, 2000). Psychological disorders thus involve complex gene-environment interactions and a number of risk factors have been implicated, but their relative contributions vary across disorders and patients. Therefore, the notion of monocausation may not hold true for mental disorders.

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# Work-Life Balance among Indian Employees and Indian Expatriates in the Corporate Sector

***Kaveri Mehta, Rashi Sinha and Samridhi Pahalwan***
Lady Shri Ram College for Women

**ABSTRACT**

The research aimed at studying the differences in the perceived work-life balance of Indian corporate employees working in NCR, India and Indian expatriates working in London, UK through the means of an online survey which required the participants to answer questions about their work and non-work activities and also assessed their work-life balance through a standard tool. It was found that even though the Indian corporate employees and Indian expatriates have high levels of work-life balance, the expatriates were found to have significantly higher levels of work-life balance than their Indian counterparts. Also, gender disparity in work-life balance was found to be significant in the case of Indian employees and virtually negligible in the case of expatriates. These factors were observed to have been impacted by the number of hours spent on work and non-work activities, the availability of organizational policies for work life work-life balance as well as the domestic architecture of the homes of the participants. The findings of this research may be applied on an individual level to strike a balance between the life inside and outside of work and may also be applied at an organizational level to impact employees work-life balance and in turn their productivity and satisfaction in the work place.

*The authors would like to thank Dr. Kanika K Ahuja for her continuous guidance in making this paper possible.*

## Introduction

Work-life balance is an interesting phenomenon with a wide range of thoughts and responses. Determined subjectively, it is also sensitive to the culture and context. The concept stems from the fact that an individual's work-life and personal-life may put forth conflicting demands and the demands from both are equally important. It may change over a period of time as the person evolves as a worker and a family person when he/she goes through different life stages.

Greenhaus et al., (2003) defined *work-life balance* as “the amount of time and the degree of satisfaction with the work and family role.” Kalliath and Brough (2008) defined *work-life balance* as “the individual’s perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities”.

The work-life balance issue has come to the forefront due to the many changes in the workplace, in employee demographics plus in the family sphere. There is an increased concern to understand the boundary and the interactions between employee work and non-work lives (Hayman, 2005). In recent years, the global labour market is becoming highly competitive and employees feel compelled to put in longer hours of work to prove their worth and meet the organization’s expectations. The ‘24/7 lifestyle’, dominates the lives. Advancement in technology has blurred the line between office and home (Thane, 2002). Also, the changes in the traditional family system have led to an overall increase in tasks due to the coordination needed for child and elderly care while decreasing the leisure time spent. Yet another change is an increasing emphasis on leisure activities and thus demands on available time are increasing leading to frustration when unable to fulfil their interests.

*Initial Conceptualization to Current Concepts*

Work-life balance was initially conceived in terms of work-family conflict. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as: "A form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect."Workers' everyday experiences show both work and family as sources of growth and support as well as burdens and strains (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

In recent years, it has been realized that life involves multiple domains and is not restricted to the domains of work and family only. A broad, more inclusive term thus emerged in literature to refer to work/non-work conflict which came to be known as "Work-Life Balance" (Fisher, 2001).

The following theories provide a framework to illustrate the relationship between these two domains:

*Compensation theory*: This theory proposed that workers try to compensate for the lack of satisfaction in one domain (work or home) by trying to find more satisfaction in the other (Lambert, 1990).

*Spill over Theory*: According to this theory people carry the attitudes, emotions, skills and behaviours that they inculcate in either their work setting to their family and vice versa and hence, one impacts that other.

*Employee*

An Employee is a person who works in the service of another person under an express or implied contract of hire, under which the employer has the right to control the details of work performance (*Black's Law Dictionary*). Employees usually work in organizations or subsidiaries in their country of origin.

*Expatriates*

An expatriate is a person who works and resides in another country other than his/her native country (Griffin & Pustay, 2002). They may live in a host country while working for an organization from their home/parent country. Expatriates' failure may result in a financial drain for the company and also affect his/her career. Spousal problems, personal dissatisfaction and lack of organizational commitment (Vögel, Millard, & van Vuuren, 2008) may lead to expatriate maladjustment. Time, language, geographical and cultural differences are other factors.

*Impact of Demographic Variables on Work-Life Balance*

Variables such as age, gender, marital status and family structure have a considerable effect on work-life balance. The escalation of two-income earner families brings challenges for the family management where both caregivers are career-oriented. Dual-income households with dependent children are more likely to suffer from the time crunch resulting in frustration and exhaustion.

*Organizational policies addressing work life work-life balance of employees*

Organizations and employees are becoming aware of the potential benefits of employee work-life balance. Some of them include employee satisfaction and well-being; reduced absenteeism and turnover; successful recruitment and retention; increased productivity; and customer satisfaction (Morgan, 2009).According to Kofodimos (1990), imbalance between work and life leads to high levels of stress and reduces people's capacity to effectively function in either domains.

An organization's work-family balance policies are significant in attracting job applicants and retaining current employees (Rau & Hyland, 2002). Flexible work alternatives, on-site child-care, working at or from home, parental leave, and employee assistance programs are some ways to reduce work-family conflict and achieve balance.

**Review of Literature**

Industrial Relations Counselors Inc. (IRC) conducted a global study on the work-life balance of expatriates (2007). The survey found that the extra work hours put in by the expatriates disrupt their family life. Additionally, the study found most companies' expat work-life balance policies to be weak. It also saw that expatriates face additional stress from cultural and language differences and female expatriates have higher levels of work-related stress than their male counterparts.

A research by Gupta (2012) applied the grounded theory method in a study of the adjustment process of expatriates and their spouses due to relocation and the impact of such problems in adjustment leading to expatriate failure. It was found that the spouses' perceived gender role ideology to play a critical part in their adjustment process along with other factors like country demographics, organizational and family support and pre-departure training.

A cross-cultural study was conducted on work-life balance between Germany and India by Shah (2014). The findings show that as compared to the German managers, the Indian managers experienced higher time demand at work, less flexibility with work timings and work place and demanded more support from facilities like mentoring. Also, in comparison to the German managers, the Indian managers from the current study perceived the work-family culture in Indian organizations was not up to the mark.

## Rationale for Study

It's a common belief that work and lifestyle are better in developed countries rather than developing countries. However, current research literature lacks studies associated with the same. Fewer researches have been conducted that examine the differences in the levels of work-life balance between Indian expatriates and native employees. The research was, therefore, undertaken with the aim of bringing out the contemporary trends in work-life balance.

Expatriates were studied as they helped the researchers control the extrinsic cultural variables that affect an individual. Since both samples had similar set of work expectations owing to their common cultural background, the difference in their level of work-life balance was due to differences in the organizational cultures as well as other lifestyle policies available in their country of work.

For this study, a survey seemed appropriate because of its utility for gathering data from number of people in a relatively short time. Moreover, the survey method allows for the discovery of incidents and distribution of psychological variables, such as work-life balance, in one population, as well as assessing the variation in two populations.

## Aim of the Study

To examine the differences in work-life balance of Indian expatriates working in the corporate sector in London, England and Indian employees working in the corporate sector in the National Capital Region, India.

## Method

### *Design*

The study adopted a methodological framework based on quantitative research by the means of a survey. The research was exploratory in nature. It was a two-group controlled comparison survey where data was collected from the two samples in a single session online.

The survey comprised of close ended items that amassed the demographic information and explored the work and non-work activities of the participants in concurrence with a standardized tool, the Work-life Balance Scale, which was used to assess their levels of work–life balance.

### *Sample*

Snowball sampling and purposive sampling types of non-probability sampling techniques were applied to garner potential participants for the study. Snowball sampling and purposive sampling types of non-probability sampling techniques were applied to garner potential participants for the study. Data was collected from twenty-five male and female employees working in the corporate sector and belonging to the upper middle class stratum from each country. The sample comprised of married couples with children, ranging in age from thirty years to fifty years. It consisted of 8 females and 17 males from both UK and India, making it a total of 50 participants

*Measures*

An online survey questionnaire was constructed. A demographic sheet was used to obtain the preliminary data about the participant. Variables assessed in the questionnaire were selected based on the previous studies and included questions about their work front and their non-work front.

The Work-lifebalance Scale (Hayman, 2005) provided an opportunity to measure the interface between work and non-work activities. It tested for reliability under the Indian conditions and Cronbach alpha was found to be 0.89 (Walia, 2012). It consisted of fifteen items that used a seven point time related scale to record responses, designed to assess three dimensions of work-life balance, i.e., work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, work/personal life enhancement and a total work-lifebalance score.

*Procedure*

A survey on work and non-work activities was prepared after a thorough review of literature. An appropriate questionnaire, the Work-life Balance Scale (Hayman, 2005),was included as a part of this survey for quantitative analysis. The sample characteristics were determined. Data was collected as per the design. After gaining their informed consent, the respondent filled demographic details and the questionnaires. The respondents were thanked for their cooperation by email and debriefed after completion of the survey. All participants were treated according to the ethical standards.

Descriptive statistics were computed to study the nature of distribution of work-life balance and other variables. Inferential statistics with Student's t-test for independent samples and Mann Whitney U test were conducted for analysing the data.

## Results

Quantitative analysis was carried out on the data collected from fifty individuals. Equal numbers of responses were collected from Indian expatriates working in UK and Indian employees working in NCR, India. The number of female and male respondents from both the countries was also kept constant. The study focused on employees working in corporations; organizations were primarily from the IT sector and the banking sector.

### Work-life Balance

*Difference across countries:*

Table 1

| | *Mean and SD* | *df* | *t* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Employees** | 71.16 ±16.6 | 48 | **4.18*** |
| **Expatriates** | 87.5 ±10.3 | | |
| **Sample** | 79.3 ±16.0 | | |

*t-value was found be significant at $p < 0.05$. Hence, there exists a significant difference between the levels of work life balance of Indian employees and Indian expatriates.

Note: The normative population was established by a research conducted by Rajput et al. (2012) where the test was given to a population of one hundred and forty IT sector workers and the mean performance was found out to be 54.95 (SD = 9.83).

| | *Mean and SD* | *U* |
|---|---|---|
| **Female Employees** | 61.35 | **10*** |
| **Female Expatriates** | **88.5** | |
| **Male Employees** | 75.7 | 7**1.5**** |
| **Male Expatriates** | **87** | |

***Table 2: Differences Across genders***

*U value significant at p ≤0.05. Hence, there exists a significant difference between the levels of work-life balance of both Indian female employees and Indian female expatriates.
**U value significant at p ≤0.05. Hence, there exists a significant difference between the levels of work-life balance of Indian male employees and Indian male expatriates.

Note: There was no significant gender difference found between the levels of work-life balance of the Expatriate population, but the gender difference amongst Indian employee came out to be significant. The U-value was 26.5. The result was significant at p≤ 0.05.

| | **Work Hours** | | | **Overtime** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean and SD | t | df | Mean and SD | t | df |
| **Employees** | 49.5±11.1 | 4.28* | 48 | 2.13±1.9 | 3.22** | 48 |
| **Expatriates** | 39±5.1 | | | 0.7 ±1.1 | | |

***Table 3: Difference across countries and Comparison of Overtime***

**Work Hours**
*Significant at p ≤0.05. Hence, there exists a significant difference between the number of working hours of Indian employees and Indian expatriates.
**Significant at p ≤0.05. Hence, there exists a significant difference between hours worked overtime by Indian employees and Indian expatriates

**Organizational Policies**
The data showed that most of the organizations in India as well as England had certain work-life balance policies, the most common among them in India was maternal/paternal leaves followed by flexi-time whereas in England the most policies were Telecommuting followed by maternal/ paternal leaves and flexi-time. The research findings showed there to be a moderate positive correlation of 0.56. between the presence of work-lifebalance policies and the level of work-life balance.

| | **Work Hours** | |
|---|---|---|
| | Mean | U |
| **Female Employees** | 43.6 | **Not Significant** |
| **Female Expatriates** | **39** | |
| **Male Employees** | 52.29 | **10*** |
| **Male Expatriates** | **39.02** | |

***Table 4:*** *Differences across gender*

*Significant at p ≤0.05. Hence there exists a significant difference between the number of working hours of the Indian male employees and Indian male expatriates.

**Non-Work Hours**

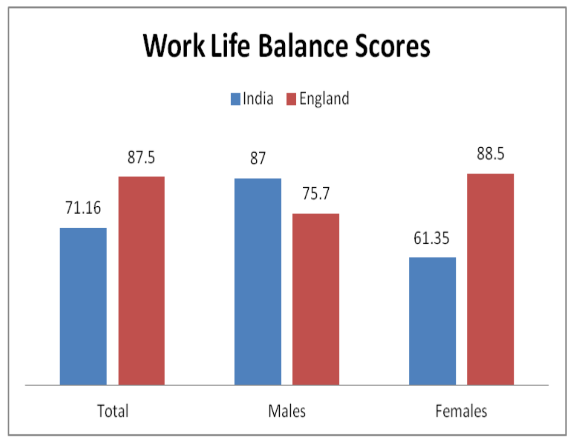
Table 5

| | Time Spent on Dependents | | | Time Spent on Household Chores | | | Time Spent on Leisure | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean and SD | t | df | Mean and SD | t | df | Mean and SD | t | df |
| **Employees** | 22.48 | **2.18*** | 48 | 23.6 | **Not Significant** | 48 | 6.3 | **Not Significant** | 48 |
| **Expatriates** | 40.12 | | | 17.4 | | | 12.74 | | |

*Significant at p ≤ 0.05. Hence, there exists a significant difference between time spent on dependents by Indian employees and Indian expatriates

Additionally, in India, 52% of respondents receive paid domestic help whereas in England, only 28%of the respondents receive domestic help. The correlation between work-lifebalance and paid domestic help was found to be very low.

Only 36% of the Indian employee sample responded that they were satisfied with the time spent on non-work activities while almost 60% of the Indian expatriate sample responded that they were satisfied.



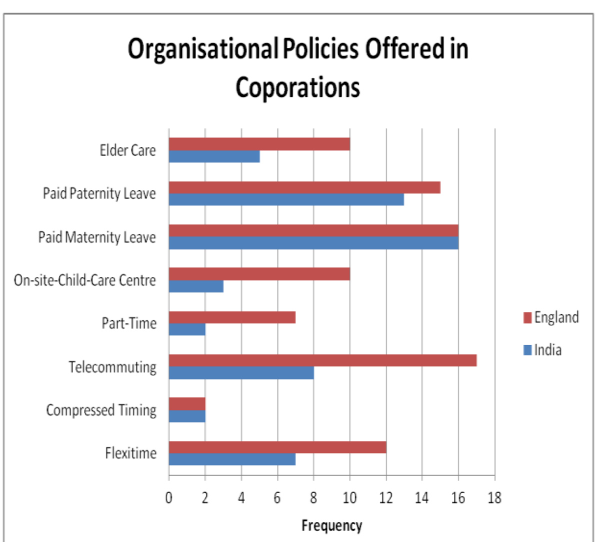

**Discussion**

The findings give valuable information about how employees and expatriates manage their work and non-work dynamics. The research findings indicate that both the samples from England and Indian scored high in comparison to the normative population. However, there is a significant difference in both the sample scores as indicated by the t-test with expatriates scoring higher than Indian counterparts on perceived levels of work-life balance.

We'll now attempt to explain this difference between the work-life balance scores with the help of various work and non-work variables.

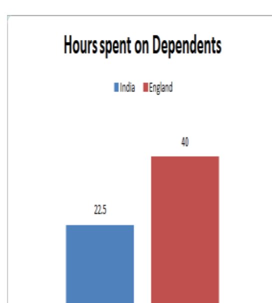
The 2007 Expatriate Work-Life Balance Survey concluded that the work-life balance of expatriates is lower than their counterparts in home countries given that the expatriates face additional stress from cultural and language differences and it affects their daily life. The higher work-life balance scores for the given sample of Indian expatriates can be related to their adjustment in London. Since they seem to be quite well-adjusted as mentioned by the participants, we might say that their work-life interface is not influenced negatively by culture.

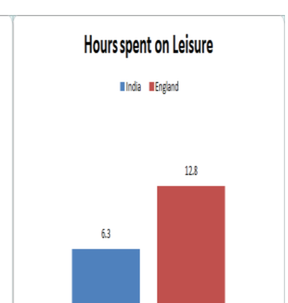

According to the Far East Economic Review (1998), urban Asians were found to be working an average of 2149 hours per annum in comparison to their European counterparts who worked for only 1773. The findings of the research are consistent with the previous findings as they showed that Indian employees work for an average of 52 hours per week whereas expatriates working in London work for an average of 39 hours per week. This difference may be due to the changing work cultures in Europe characterized by high intensity of work (working with a high speed and within strict deadlines) (Guest, 2002). This might help us explain why the work-life balance is higher among Indian expatriates than Indian employees as researches shows there to be a negative relation between the number of hours spent on working and work-life balance.




The research findings indicate the presence of a higher frequency of work-life balance policies in England than in India. In India, there's a rising trend towards provision of facilities like flexible location (telecommuting) and time facilities (Morgan, 2003), but these facilities are widely used in the developed countries (Singh, 2013). Most Indian researchers also acknowledge that a greater variety of organizational policies are provided to employees in the developed country than in developing countries. Our research findings indicate the same. Apart from paid paternity and maternity leave which were observed with high frequency in the Indian sample, the prevalence of other policies like part-time, on-site child care, flexi-time, telecommuting, elder-care etc. were low in India, whereas they were relatively higher for the expatriate sample. The research findings also indicate towards a moderate positive correlation between the work-lifebalance policies and the perceptions of work-lifebalance. Hence, the organizational policies play quite an instrumental role for a better work-life balance.

There exists a significant relationship between demographic variables like age, experience, marital status, income, type of family, number of dependents and perception of work- life balance (Thriveni et al., 2012). It was observed that most expatriates in our sample live in nuclear families and their primary depends are their children and also, they do not employ additional domestic assistance whereas most of the Indian sample lived in joint families, with elders and children as dependants and regularly received assistance.



A cursory look at the difference between the time spent on leisure activities by both the populations also accounts for the variation in the work-life balance scores where the expatriate sample while spending more time on domestic activities than Indian employees also enjoyed more leisure time.

**Differences across gender**

Women irrespective of their employment status still take care of domestic tasks. So, many women employees continue to face difficulties in balancing these two forces (Hyman and Summers, 2004).

In our research, there virtually existed no gendered difference between the work-life balance and number of working hours spent by Indian expatriates, unlike the results from the Indian sample, where these differences prevail. These findings may imply that in the case of Indian employees, women are more family-focused and their work-life balance depends more on how much time they can spare outside work which can be explained by the fact that in spite of more women going out to work, there has been little change in patterns of household responsibilities (Singh, 2004). Women continue to undertake the majority share of domestic chores, and child rearing. On the other hand, men are more job-focused and their levels of work-lifebalance depends more on how much satisfaction they can derive from their work. Men feel more satisfied when they achieve more on the job even at the cost of their family life.

It was also observed that the level of work-life balance between male and female expatriates was comparable. Given that the majority of expatriate sample live in nuclear families, it may be maintained that shared responsibilities in non-work activities between couples in England contribute to their stable work-life balance.

**Implications**

The current study confirms some gender differences especially in India. It also highlights how the Indian expatriates break the traditional stereotype of women having a family oriented view and men having a job and achievement oriented view.

The two-country study tries to shed light on the situation of work-life balance related initiatives and interventions in some of the England and Indian organizations. The participants of this study have highlighted their favourable opinion about work-life balance in England rather than India. This implies that there is still scope for improvements regarding the work-family culture in India. Company-level training related to work-family enrichment that teaches the employees to integrate work and life in a positive way should be the immediate practical implication. Having a work-life balance means higher chances of career growth and career satisfaction and if employees are satisfied with their work, then their efficiency increases, ultimately leading to the organization's growth.

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# The Self and Beyond: Exploring the Paradigms of Consciousness in the Wake of Descartes' Cogito.

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper represents my venture into the phenomenon of self in light of Descartes principle, "Ego Cogito, Ergo Sum". I have tried my best to paint the profound progress of the philosopher from the idea of the 'thinking self', as an incorporeal substance accommodated within a framework of his dualist theory, in a common association with consciousness and the intelligible aspect of thought. Exploring in brief the arenas commonly associated with the "unconscious mind" at the end, within its effect of losing identity of Mind and the Self. I have, tried my best, to present the understanding of Descartes' primary texts by various researchers, who have explored the idea of 'Mind' in Descartes' philosophy, the ones who have remained unconvinced and even those who have stringed new interpretations to Descartes principles, to convincingly scientific levels. I begin with the Self, understanding the prejudices associated with his principle and exploring the method involved in achieving the same. I have subsequently followed it up with the understanding of the dualism, in the mind-body aspect. This, I claim is the bridge between the Cogito principle and the principles regarding the Mind, for Descartes. The quality of our understanding associated with the interchangeable terms of 'mind' and 'consciousness' remains encapsulated within his Cogito principle. I have sketched various dimensions to show the different aspects of this terminology. Our careful speculation of Descartes' mind is necessary to give us a coherent sense of his idea of God. The objective of the paper is to trace the journey of thought, from establishing our existence, to casting a doubt over the question of our body as related to our thought, passing through the realms of thinking as a process, and developing the arguments of the Mind. This paper shall try to reduce the complete randomness of the mind, to fragments of comprehensible reality.

*The author would like to acknowledge the guidance given by her supervisor , Ms. Silika Mohapatra in making this paper possible.*

*"….The secret strength of things,*
*Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome*
*Of Heaven is as law, Inhabits Thee!*
*And what were thou, and earth and stars and sea,*
*if to the human mind's imaginings*
*Silence and solitude were vacancy?"*
*[Mont Blanc, P.B Shelley, 1816]*

**An Existence of the 'Thinking' Self**

Descartes' ego theory was first written in 1637, in his book '*Discours De la Methode'* as "*Je pense, donc je Suis*". In the course of its Latin translation, the formula became, " *Ego Cogito, Ergo Sum"*, which all assured is translated in English as "I am thinking, therefore I am/I exist." Peter Markie, in his article shows that Descartes may have even admitted to it by underplaying this important principle, as so obvious a proposition, that "it may have occurred to any writer.[1]" Hence, in this principle he achieves his epitome of certainty, free of any sort of error formed of either sense-perception or mathematical demonstration or even the *'evil demon'*. He insists:

"So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist,* is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind."[2]

To proceed with this thought, we must understand the relationship between the two 'I's, in his principle, "I think, therefore I am". He upraises the first 'I', as of the self-conscious person, which is a precedent to the second 'I'. He emphasizes here on the existing self, the state of existence as being the fall out of the action of thinking, indicated by the phrase 'I think'. Contrary to holding the two premises- ' I think' and 'I am'- in equality, he makes one the immediate inference of the other. But for Descartes, we shall see that the state of existence is not a method of deduction. For he claims that he doesn't derive existence logically from thinking, but it is the reflection of the knowledge of intuition. As Markie further reinstates Descartes' position, " It follows that those propositions which are immediately inferred from first principles can be said to be known in one respect through intuition."[3] Hintikka raises yet another point, as he questions the impact of the '*Cogito*' to the thought of '*Sum*'. He indicates that intuition for Descartes may have been more than just an irrational event but an "intellectual intuition"[4]. But dwelling on the issue of formally expressing the cogito in the form of logical inference, he formulates the following argument:

$B(a) \rightarrow E(x)\ \ (x=a)$ ------------ (1)

Where, $B(a)$ is of the form that 'I think' and there exists at least one individual which is identical with 'a', then " $E(x), (x=a)$".

Now,

If 1. $B(a)$

2. $B(a) \rightarrow E(x), (x=a)$

Then, by Modus Ponens we get

$E(x)$.

If Descartes' first premise is ' I think', hence $B(a)$ and given that (1) is true, then by applying Modus Ponens, it can be concluded that then- one exists, when one thinks.

Hintikka formulates Descartes' "immediate inference" in a formal logical argument. But does this deny Descartes' claim of the Cognito principle being a self-evident, intuitive derivation? Probably not. But it definitely brings about the shortcomings of the Cogito principle. Hintikka, later dismisses his own argument, for the first premise itself is existential. For, it is argued that, one cannot become aware of a particular substance merely by being of that particular attribute or nature, which is here 'to exist'. Peter Markie, explains that for Descartes 'we think' exists prior to learning the general proposition that, 'whatever thinks, must exist'. In response to one of the similar objections by Gassendi, he repeats the point,

" .. When I say 'I am thinking, therefore I exist' I presuppose the major premise 'Whatever thinks, exists', hence I have already adopted a preconceived notion…that the knowledge of particular propositions must always be deduced from universal ones, following the same order as that of a syllogism"[5]

The fame of the adage of Descartes' dictum, despite its own shortcomings continues to raid the highly philosophical discussions of the western philosophy. Not only does it whip on the unresolved issues, it digs on the arenas of Cartesian thought where many questions seem to be unasked. What is crucial though is to retain the method by which Descartes defends the beliefs and proves it to be beyond any mode of doubt. His claim to certainty of his thought plays out in the issue of his mind-body dualism. For with his confidante as indented in his Ego principle, it may be important to distinguish the Ego, from any Ego-affecting substance.

**Thinking Self and Other**

After having declared the principle of initiation that claims to certainty his thought and his existence, Descartes observes that its real value is when it is used to "establish that this I which is thinking is an immaterial substance with no bodily existence."The central claim of Descartes' dualism lies in the Mediations,

"There is a real distinction between the mind and body, the mind is distinct and independent 'thing'. The thinking thing that is 'me', is really distinct from the body and can exist without it."[6]

In his Principles, he clearly states the argument in the following form:

"1.I can assume or imagine that no bodies exist.

2. I cannot imagine that I do not exist or do not think

Therefore, I am not a body and thought is not a mode of the body."[7]

In the Discourse on the Method, he begins his premise by suggesting that he may be certain of his thought, which may yield the non-existence of his body. But as long as he doubts, even of the things he imagined were true, he could assert his existence. He gives 'thinking', the power to waver the very existence of our body. In his Principles, he will argue that by 'thinking', we may even think of disappearing hands and arms and even that God doesn't exist. But it's improbable for him that a person having such thoughts, does not exist. Then Mind, a principle which is known to us, as *a priori* to our knowledge of our body is, for Descartes, "more evident".

The certainty of his thought of his 'thinking self' as distinct from his corporeal self, is quite evidently inferred in his arguments, "This 'I' –that is, the soul by which I am what I am – is entirely distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know that the body, and would not fail to be whatever it is even if the body did not exist".[8]Then he furthers his argument about why it's easier to know the self better than the body as a subtitle to the Second Meditations, and explains:

"If we find some attributes or qualities, there is necessarily something or substance to be found for them to belong to; and the more attributes we discover in the same thing or substance, the clearer is our knowledge of that substance."[9]

Here he distinguishes thought from the 'thinking self'. Making 'Thought', then the only part of a being's essence, proves the existence of that being and subsequently the existence of God. However, this argument is met with an immediate criticism by an astute contemporary critic of the Discourse, who points out the underlying lost link between the fact that- the human mind when directed towards itself, perceives itself to be a thinking self- and the thinking self being of its essence as the thinking thing. So it excludes everything that could be said to belong to the nature of soul. However, in the Second Mediations, he seems to make the same controversial move, "I am in the strict sense only a thing that thinks, that is I am a mind or intelligence or intellect or reason".

There is however a causal connection between these two radically different substances. But how they wish to act upon each other or how an extended substance brought about change to an un-extended substance was a constant theme in the letters Elizabeth wrote to Descartes, where she seems to raise the famous objection on Mind-Body Dualism, "How can the soul of a man, being only a thinking substance, determine the bodily spirits to perform voluntary actions?"[10]

Descartes may not have convincingly addressed the problem, even after having recognized the problem of interaction between an immaterial substance with material substance. Each of which is an intelligible substance which forms this unintelligible union. So, he finds it more comfortable to explain this union in terms of being a "primary notion", that which cannot be explained to the senses, for they seem to be obvious truths of facts. He explains the interaction with ideas of motion and impact. The union of mind and body for Descartes is an interaction in a substantial form.

Lilli Alanen in her paper, establishes that, "This real union of the mind and body is not introduced *ad hoc* to account for the Unintelligible mind-body union, but represents Descartes mature view of human person as a conscious and embodied agent". [11]

**Consciousness and Mind: Seeds of the "Cogito Self"**

For Descartes, the soul and spirit were practically redundant terms adding nothing of importance to the preferred term mind (mens). With this we shall proceed towards the upholding principle of mind in the dualism theory which takes shelter in the very cogito principle. Descartes' mind is *'res cogitans'*, i.e. the 'thinking thing'. Therefore, giving the mind sort of inner parameters within which the metaphysical philosophy of Descartes progresses. A Cartesian assumption which is essentially believed is that knowledge of the mind must start from the point of view of first person. Therefore, 'what is self?' becomes synonymous with 'what is mind?' for most philosophers, contemporary of Descartes.

Now it is often assumed that the '*cogitans*' can be equivalent to 'being conscious'. Such a view could be a result of Descartes' use of the Latin term '*conscientia'* as used when defining thought. Also in his Fourth reply to the Meditations he writes, that "Nor can there be any thought in us, of which at the very moment it is in us, we are not conscious". However, Boris Hennigs argues that we must not take the word 'mind' and relate it to its scholastic use of the term as '*conscientia'* as to mean anything more than Descartes may have tried to imply, on our present understanding of consciousness- the introspective knowledge of our own mental activity. So, in Hennigs view, Descartes has a narrower understanding of thought.

Alison Simmonson drawing a parallel between our modern definitions of consciousness with the Cartesian concept of consciousness hints at the idea that consciousness might just be a "phenomality on our mental life" for Descartes. Alison asserts that consciousness might just be the experience aspect of our mental purview. Quoting texts from the 'letters to Arnauld', she shows how Descartes associates the experiences of pain, pleasure, titillation, heat as the primitive thoughts of the mind of an infant. Hence, reiterating thought as phenomenon: for it is something we experience when we have it.

Delving on the contentious issues of thought and conscious, Alison says that the use of the two terms interchangeably in Descartes' texts may not mean anything more than that he may be distinguishing between the mental and substance self, for he goes on to say," We can use any other term we like, provided we don't confuse this substance with the corporeal substance". Later in her paper, she concludes that, "it's not that thought is consciousness, but that thought is the principle object of consciousness". [13]Subsequently, she observes that if thoughts are objects of consciousness then so shall be the mind.

She draws the conclusion from the following passages of Descartes works:

"By the term "thought" I understand all those things that we are conscious ofhappening in us insofar as we are conscious of themin us."[Principles of First philosophy]

"The word "thought" includes everything that exists in us in such a way that we areimmediately conscious of it." [Second Replies to the Meditations]

Hennigs, on the other hand, uses the same passages quoted above to draw a radically different conclusion on the distinction between thought and consciousness. He says these are two different definitions of thought, which imply motion as conducted by our thought or consciousness. Emphasizing on the phrase 'in us', he says Descartes means it in a broader sense of the term, i.e., things that are attributable to us. The second phrase then means that there some thoughts we are mediately conscious of, such as the bodily movements which follow from our thoughts. So, everything that we may be conscious of need not be a thought. The difference is one of immediacy. So we may be conscious of our bodily movements which are a result of our thoughts, but by only being conscious of something else, i.e. the mediacy. In the first phrase, he says the difference is of respect. If there are any such bodily movements of which we are conscious of, they may be thoughts only in the respect that we are conscious of the thoughts. He cites the example of us walking. So if we are conscious of the fact that we are walking, walking may be a thought only in the respect that we are conscious of the fact that we are having the thought of walking.

**Sleep and the 'Unconscious mind'**

Descartes has strict distinctions between the dream and the wake state and quite conveniently asserts that both fall under the speculation of doubt, when searching for truth. However, in this paper we will limit our discussions to the conscious element of, dreams with regard to Descartes' dream argument. In his argument in First Meditations, he proceeds from the fact that there are occasions in which contrary to his belief of his perception even in the awake, he in fact finds himself to be dreaming. Then he talks about his "clear and distinct ideas" and how in fact even they seem to be deceiving in the dream state. Descartes seems to believe that because of the realistic experience of sense perception, one may never be able to distinguish the dream state from the wake state. Therefore, dream becomes a state of conscious experience as well; however one may not be able to use a certain first person perspective, as explain Metzinger and Windt.[14] Thus, they further their dream explanation as "the appearance of an integrated, global model of reality within a virtual window of presence.", drawing a distinction between the degrees of consciousness as achieved in the varying stage of real and virtual. The conscious self seems to be equally aware in states of dream and wake, for Descartes. The thinking here might occur at an insignificant level, where one may seem to think that they're thinking, but one is only scarcely in control of their thoughts. So, even in a dream state thinking takes place but only at a superficial level.

James Hill, on talking about the dreamless sleep, gives a new dimension, as he explains the concept of deep sleep in Descartes' writings. Hill asserts that for Descartes, the mind must always be conscious, so long as it exists. As in the Second Meditations he asserts:

"I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist."

[Second Meditations]

Descartes succumbed to the view that even in the deepest sleep the mind is conscious, for he couldn't afford to give mind, a substance, a pause from existence while it's having a deep sleep. To objection, that- if we are conscious in a dreamless sleep then how is it that we are not conscious of it in that particular state- Descartes tried to meet the observation, thus:

"So long as the mind is joined to the body, then in order for it to remember thoughts which it had in the past, it is necessary for some traces of them to be imprinted on the brain; it is by turning to these […] that the mind remembers. So is it really surprising if the brain of […] a man in a deep sleep, is unsuited to receive these traces?"[15]

Hill observes that for Descartes, the mind can lay down no new memories during the dreamless sleep state. This withdrawal from the memory state happens because the consciousness doesn't engage with the physical mechanisms of memory in the brain. Nicholas Melebranche, adds to the explanation of memory withdrawal theory that it may be so that only 'pure intellection' takes place and that the abstractions of thought thereby leave no imprints on the brain.

So, the cogito can never cease to exist.

**Weaving the Self, the Consciousness and Existence: Colors of Abstractness**

Descartes seems to weave in beautifully the establishment of the existence of self to the aspects of our mind and consciousness. For Penrose says, "Consciousness…is the very phenomenon whereby the universe's very existence is known."[16] There may be many variants of abstractions in the way concepts are sometimes portrayed . This however, should not be to shake the foundations on which concepts are formed by the imposition of such abstractions, as experimented on the self. Progress must be made towards a more reasonable approach towards knowledge, as arising from understanding of the self. Let us not be 'persons without mind', as Richard Rorty puts it. For it is essential to the self that one must return to reflections which draw upon the concepts of self for a reasonable beginning.

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# Career Choice in Higher Education– An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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**The Problem Being Addressed**

Career can be thought of as a long term project for an individual's life. Every individual will undergo the experience of choosing a career. This experience, especially for students, comes not once but at multiple stages in life. Starting right after their class tenth boards exams they have to make a choice regarding what they want to pursue for the next two years. The choice here is not just crucial for short term goals but it is considered to be significant with regard to their future career prospects. For students, this choice making process for career doesn't end with the completion of high school; rather it marks a beginning for them. While climbing the higher education ladder, they are always confronted with what to study in order to make a career out of it. A huge psychological investment is involved as one's thoughts; hopes, aspirations and sense of worth come into active play.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to understand the phenomena of career choice as it presents itself to a student. Students who resolve to seek a career are supposed to negotiate the issue of choice on the basis of their own best estimates of their long-term interests, capacities, and circumstances. Although it is a crude assumption but it seems natural to think that career choice is linked closely to the individual's expression of the self.

The aim of the study, apart from understanding the dynamics of choice, leans more toward exploring the meanings individuals attach to the choice made, for which it becomes necessary to problematize the issue of choice. Every year when the board results are out, news about student suicides follow in. Suicidal tendencies among students have gone up dramatically. Statistics show that more and more students are taking this extreme step in a bid to end their misery. What forces them to take this extreme step is something which demands the attention of everyone associated with the field of education, since academic pressure is frequently identified as a determining factor.

The focus of the study is not to determine the factors relating to suicide but the relation it shares with the phenomenon of choice. And yet, while the problem is seen as an individual one, the quantitative aspect alerts us to the prevalence of the phenomenon and gives cause to investigate the factors determining the career choice. Moreover, this troubling reality is not just limited to school students but it is also highly common at higher levels of education. Students attempting suicides at the best institutions of the country only adds to the seriousness of the issue.

Another aspect of the problem is linked with the capitalist economy. Speaking of choice in this context would be irrelevant if the market driven forces marked by 'competition' are not highlighted. Student selection and admissions in higher education through entrance exams are of particular concern today in the context of rising aspirations of young students. With an increase in academic competition, where each one is driven to excel at the expense of the other, most of the college entrance examinations have been notorious for their high stakes and high pressure nature. Entrance examination has been one of the most pressing problems for the youth. The basic feature surrounding the exams is that of intense competition, pressure and urgency. College entrance tests and related test preparation activities have contributed to what has been called the "educational arms race" - the ferocious competition for admission at highly selective institutions (Atkinson, 2009).

It is interesting to point out that despite the sudden increase in the number of private institutions especially in the field of engineering, the problem has taken a new shape. While the issue of accessibility to education has been addressed with a sense of urgency, it is recognized that the rapid increase and multiplication of opportunities also has an impact on the 'career choice' of the students. There is a law of economics called Say's law which states that supply creates its own demand and it can be applied superficially to explain the career choice patterns of increasing preference of students towards the field of engineering with the widespread mushrooming of engineering colleges.

The present study addresses the issue of career choice from an existential - psychological perspective. The purpose of the study is to "understand the phenomenon of career choice by adopting an existential/ phenomenological approach." An effort is made to gain insight into the conscious experience of career choice. The study is informed by existential theory more generally, and the conceptual framework developed in the existential writings of the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. The Sartrean conceptions of freedom, intention-motive-reason, responsibility and alienation will be informing the phenomenological analysis.

The present study attempts to explore how an individual perceives meaning in the career choice made. Understanding meaning from the window of intentions, motives and reasons; the role of agency constituting the career choice– how much responsibility one feels for the choice made; Exploring the notions of freedom; are there any significant factors leading to the manifestation of any such anxiety or crisis in career choice and the implications are of career choice on one's lived experiences.

Existentialism is not a coherent and easily summarized philosophical position but it can be characterized as a reaction against rationalist philosophies which were committed to the vision of man as a rational animal. Existentialism was an attempt to place the 'experiencing individual' at the centre of philosophy, where humans are looked upon as agents and creators of both action and its meanings. The attempt was to understand humans in their capacity to rise above external social existence and how they create freedom by acting according to self perceived feelings, thoughts and meanings. This should not be misunderstood as an 'individualistic stand, for the individual does not create meaning except within a set of social relations and the relationship to the worlds is established by this mode of experiencing and perceiving" (Manning, 1973).

Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism attempts to describe the 'being' of man in reality in a radical and irreducible manner, namely man's 'being in the world', which then becomes the objective of his analysis. Being, for Sartre, is that which appears to us – phenomena.

To explicate this, we need to trace back to phenomenology – origin of existentialism – which claims the opposite "essence precedes existence" to understand the phenomena of human conscious experience. Essence here means an idea of things in terms of its functions, nature and uses where the idea precedes the actual creation of the objects as the value of the object depends on how well the object conforms to its functions. Thus, when we talk of the natural world, it could be said that the essence precedes its existence. But the same does not apply to the human world. Sartre rejects the view that the idea of the human being exists in the mind of god prior to our creation and that humans can be evaluated in terms of their essence as he says "There is no human nature since there is no god to conceive it"( Sartre, 1946). For Sartre, each human being is abandoned and free. Humans create and recreate the essence in every moment through their choices and actions.

Since human beings simply exist, it is freedom that characterizes the existence of being. The aspect of being, comes into light through consciousness which in turn is marked with intentionality that links the being of man with the being of objects.

**Meaning of Choice**: The mode of existence of a self is characterized by the act of choice. Man, Sartre tells us, chooses his essence; he creates it by his act of choice. He finds humans as 'thrown into the world ' which means that man does not choose to be; he does, however, choose his essence.

**Existentialism in Education**

The aim of education upheld by existentialists is to awaken awareness in the learner – an awareness of himself as a simple subjectivity present in the world (Liberman, 1985). Criticizing the behaviorist school of thought by finding fault in treating students as a 'thing' who is to be cultivated based on the presupposed idea of what they should become, he espouses an existentialist position against the preconceived notion of human nature where students are treated as an object rather than a subject.

Paul McCoy(1973) has highlighted profound implications of existential thought for contemporary education especially for career choices. Due to the awe-inspiring magnitude of the area of life-choices, the student experiences ambivalence and experiences existential anguish. Silberman (1970) is right when he says students understand that choice of a career involves far more than the choice of how to make a living. "What shall I do?" ultimately means "What shall I make of myself?" And that means asking "Who am I?""What do I want to be?"(Silberman as cited in McCoy, 1973).

**Statement of the Problem:** Exploring the phenomenon of Career-choice in Higher Education- An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

**Objectives of the Study:**

1)Contextualizing the phenomenological concepts of Intentionality, exploring the factors that explain phenomenon of career choice.

2)Anchoring the social world of the student, exploring the notion of freedom experienced by the student while choosing a career.

3)To understand the dynamics of agency with regard to the role of responsibility in career choice.

4)Exploring the notions of alienation, what are the implications of career choice made.

Though Sartrean concepts such as *freedom, responsibility* and *alienation* are employed to explicate the phenomenon of career choice, these concepts have been purposefully reduced structurally to various psychological categories to explore the participant's experiences about the phenomenon of career choice. For example, the Sartrean conception of intentionality is extensively broad and exhaustive and reliance on the data based on immediate conscious experience won't be conclusive. A phenomenological account of conscious experience incorporating every significant aspect of an individual's subjectivity remains a prerequisite to carry out existential analysis with full vigour. Pursuing such an analysis would require an encounter with the participants that cannot be structured around the conventional psychological interview. Thus, to translate the phenomenological into the psychological, the philosophical concept of intentionality was operationalised by exploring correlates manifest in constructs such as intentions, motives and reasons. Knowing very well that Sartre himself would have approached the problem very differently and would have explored the phenomenon of career choice perhaps by employing tools of existential psychoanalysis, it has been important to point out the limitations of the study. It is precisely due to these impediments that IPA offered a `psychological' resolution of the dilemma.

## METHODOLOGY

*Design of the Study & Sample*

The present study employs the phenomenological framework as a methodological instrument and Sartrean Existentialism as a theoretical framework, since the latter draws upon Husserlian Phenomenology. The study is a 'Qualitative research' and employs a 'Case study method' in order to explore the subjective aspects of career choice. The sample size was restricted to two IIT M.Tech students due to the exhaustive nature of the data and keeping in mind the time and distance constraints. Semi structured interviews were used as a method of data collection. The interviews were analyzed using IPA and the appearing themes which explained the phenomenon of career choice were identified and explicated using the transcripts of interviews. Thereafter, the meanings given to specific phenomena of career choices were analyzed using the Sartrean conceptual framework of Freedom, Responsibility and Alienation. IPA sampling tends to be purposive and broadly homogeneous because small sample size can provide a sufficient perspective given adequate contextualization (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

**Tools for Data Collection/ Measures**

*Semi- Structured Interviews*

The most well recognized technique employed while using a phenomenologically-based methodology is the qualitative interview (Kvale, 1996).The fundamental aim of the interview was to elucidate the meaning of career-choice for the participant. The use of semi- structured interviews in phenomenological research helps "the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participant's response and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise" (Smith & Osborn , 2008 , p57). It is also extremely important that the questions posed to the participants are of an open ended nature.

*Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

IPA has been chosen as the tool for data analysis as it is appropriate for exploring the objectives of the present study. Interpretive phenomenological analysis, has its origin in phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interaction. IPA is phenomenological in the sense that it is concerned with the individual's subjective reports rather than the formulations of objective accounts. Smith (2004) describes IPA as phenomenology in principle which focuses on the individual experience and strong connection to the interpretive or hermeneutic tradition. IPA works with dual facets or with a double hermeneutic approach as it involves joint reflections of both participant and researcher to form the analytic account (Osborn & Smith, 1998).

**DATA ANALYSIS & EXPLICATION OF THEMES**

The emerging themes do not symbolize any objective truth, instead they are based on possible interpretations. The themes highlighted in this research are central to the experience of 'Career choice' and have been analyzed later to find answers to the research questions

**Steps Involved: Based on the guidelines set out by Smith and Osborn (2003)**

*Step I - Looking for initial themes*

The first step involved reading and rereading of the text. The aim is to become as close and intimate with the participant's account (Smith & Osborn, 2003). At this stage, all themes significant to career choice were listed down in a tabular form as first order themes. An effort was made to produce a list of all such exhaustive themes.

*Step II –Looking for connections*

After the identification of all the exhaustive themes, some of the themes were clustered together or were regrouped into 'second order' themes based on the connections between them.

*Step III – Introducing the themes into analysis*

This stage is concerned with translating or transforming the themes into a narrative account centered around the phenomena under study. The second order themes identified in the above step were structured systematically and were presented using the excerpts from the interview transcripts.

**Phenomenological Findings and Conclusion**

Understanding of human subjectivity requires a considerable acknowledgement of historical, cultural and social factors, that leads to the understanding of individual's meanings formed through experience.

Anchoring the findings around the concepts of freedom, responsibility and alienation, it can be said on the basis of analyses that in both the cases, family played a significant role in shaping the career intentions. Based on the evidences from their narratives it appears clearly that both the participants internalized family values and have chosen the career that the parent and the immediate neighborhood, including school, valued most. Both justified their act of choosing and what they choose against the patriarchal parameters and reasoned out for themselves using the parameter of 'returning the obligations and fulfilling the expectations of parents' (in the case of Sahil) and 'confirming to the pressures of parents' (in the case of Ravi). The middle class patriarchal norms and values were fully operational in the life worlds of both the cases. Both participants have spoken about the role played by their father in determining their career choice and have avoided uncertainties in professional careers by aligning their decisions with parental aspirations. Both after moving to hostels tried to follow their passions for a short while and gravitated towards the conventional safer career choices at the end partly out of fear of disagreement with the parents and partly because of the fear of shouldering the uncertainties and the unfavorable financial consequences of the careers of their choice of patriarchy in Indian middle class. This study reveals the workings of families and the manner in which it operates in shaping the consciousness of children's career choices and identity. Returning parental emotional and financial obligations and letting parents shoulder the responsibility of their career choices defined the intentionalities of both the cases that shaped their consciousness. A careful examination of motives and reasons behind the act of career choice substantiate these findings.

The second finding which was with regard to the societal norms and established conventions about the various career options in India and how these run in tandem with the middle class patriarchal values. The ideas and notions about various career paths as described by the cases seem to be operating in a normative structure. Both of them acknowledged the role of social gradation that exists in the academics of school and the preference for the science stream as it provides job security. These provide instrumentality of freedom, choice and intentions that constitute the consciousness of both participants and they have acknowledged their confirmation and acceptance to these norms and conventions. Their acceptance and conformity reveals lack of experience of freedom in exercising their choice in critical areas of their lives.

The experience of choosing a career was not limited to family and social factors. A set of institutional factors such as procedures and norms have been identified by the participants that influence their acts of choosing the discipline. Both reflected on the impact of the larger economic and cultural factors such as the capitalist market economy and the aligned middle class values but couldn't adequately see them as structural and also constraining their choice behavior. The psychological foundation for this was laid by the experience of helplessness, the anxiety regarding getting a good job after college, ability to return parental obligations and still being able to fulfill some of the personal goals. Both were consumed by these worries more than having the time and scope to raise more fundamental questions regarding their freedom to choose a career. The real freedom was probably not experienced by both the participants as far as career choice was concerned.

Both the cases had played a less agentic role and lacked a critical reflection to take up the ownership of their act of career choice. Thus, the experience of alienation and anguish were less conspicuous and therefore played a non-significant role in constituting their consciousness. Anchoring on the above discussions, it can be concluded that both failed to realize absolute freedom and did not exercise their career choice in freewill.

The notion and the place of freedom in Indian society is very different from the Sartrean concept of freedom. It is evident from the two case studies that the understanding of freedom and its experience differs across societies and individuals. In Sartre's existentialism, freedom was given an absolute position as it is what forms the permanent structure of being and shapes the individual's consciousness. Whereas a relational orientation, mutual respect and obligations are valued more in the Indian society than independence and freedom.

Many empirical research studies have been done to study the factors affecting career choice within the discipline of economics, sociology and social psychology. Their findings have resulted in identification of all the factors that determine the career choice. But these studies have been done to look at choice in higher education from a macro perspective or situating it in a specific social domain. They have highlighted the determinants without examining how an individual situates this phenomenon in the larger context of meaning and how an intentionality towards the career choice is getting shaped, to what extent the individual experiences absolute freedom or doesn't experience it at all and to what extent an individual assumes complete responsibility for the outcomes and consequences of the choices he makes. Without the analysis of freedom and responsibility, it is difficult to explore the conscious experience of the phenomenon of career choice.

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# A Psychoanalytic Inquiry Into The Fundamentals Of Conflict And Violence

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**ABSTRACT**

Through a textual analysis of essential literary texts, this paper attempts to provide a conceptual understanding of the psychoanalytic concepts surrounding war and conflict. It delineates the role of destructive impulses and further explores the potential for humans to break out of the cyclical tensions between the civilization and the individuals. Using Civilization and Its Discontents by Sigmund Freud as a foundational understanding of the evolution of the individual and the society, this paper further analyzes the inhibitory and facilitative aspects of civilization. Reviving the letters of correspondence between Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud on the vagaries of war and the origins of violence, the paper further explores these issues against historical characters from literary texts of Mahabharata and Oedipus Rex.

## Introduction

*"People have not sunk so low as we feared because they had never risen so high as we believed."*

*~ Sigmund Freud*

This paper is a psychological and philosophical inquiry into the nature of conflict and the ideas of peace shared by a society. Based on the psychoanalytic understanding of the human existence, the role of impulses and the idea of the political, this paper attempts to understand the vagaries of war and conflict. Through the analysis of the evolution of man and the society, the primary conflicts that become the sources for all of human aggression and violence have been discussed below.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis and the wealth of knowledge we can glean from literature. An often overlooked source, our literature is an aggregation of all human experiences that are condensed into symbolic forms and are transferred as artifacts through time and across cultures and generations. By reviving symbolic references from the texts, this paper presents a psychoanalytic inquiry into the nature of conflict.

Through an analysis of the correspondence between the Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud, the relationship between the 'personal' and the 'political' has been problematized and scrutinized intensively. The analysis was aided by literary texts of Mahabharata, Oedipus Rex and George Orwell's Animal Farm. All these texts though explored intensively for the study of the paper, have been discussed in limited ways to be able to draw from history and symbolic interpretations of the esoteric nature of the human psyche.

There has been extensive work done on the nature of war, human aggression and the notions of peace and conflict. However, tracing them to the evolution of man and the civilization has been done remarkably by Sigmund Freud. This paper is an attempt at the revival of the work that Freud did ages ago and see its relevance in today's time. Many psychologists find Freud's understanding of the human psyche as archaic and redundant, this paper doesn't claim to sideline such views. However, this paper aims to generate a more well-informed critique of his scholarly work through the analysis of conflict.

Lastly, the rationale of this paper is to pore deeply and intently over the oft used terminologies like war, conflict, violence and peace, which have lost their weight somehow by their over-use. My attempt is to put them under the psychoanalytic lens and understand their meanings and structures right from their origin to their function. I believe, the act of meaning making is the first attempt of a human to distinguish himself from his pre-lingual animalistic self, towards self-expression and sublimation of the innate desires. Hence, redefining meanings and questioning the existing definitions will be an endeavor in this paper so as to make sense of the chaos that ensues as a product of conflict; and to prevent ourselves from falling into silences that exist when language cannot reach the deeper crevices of our existential realities. This paper aims to discuss the following questions:

- What is conflict? Where does it originate?
- Is there any hope for man to escape his own inherent destructive impulses?
- How does the society, which is an aggregation of the individuals, become a deterrent force inhibiting human potential?

This paper derives its structure from the methodology that has been employed. The methodology used attempts to incorporate the mechanisms of discourse analysis and narrative analysis, both of which have been used extensively in qualitative research and have been implicit in many psychoanalytic researches as well.

The structure is a sequence of insights which were formulated on the basis of the correspondence between Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud via the medium of letters. It explores the issues around war and conflict and the destructive impulses inherent in all human beings. The research for the paper has been done mostly within the psychoanalytic framework. The structure further evolved with the introduction of literary texts and, tests the insights gleaned from the theory against the texts that were employed. Mythological texts such as Mahabharata and Oedipus Rex have been analyzed to formulate hypotheses. George Orwell's book 'Animal Farm – A Fairy Story' has also been referred to. Since myths and fairytales have set the foundations for our psychic evaluations of existence, they become an integral part of our cultural/historical heritage as well as a documentation of our personal struggles with meaning-making.

**Review of Literature**

Sigmund Freud's 'Civilization and Its Discontents' has been one of the most intensive study of civilization, its origins and emergence. It comments on the fundamental tensions between man and civilization. The theoretical frameworks set in the paper are largely derived from this book.

How these fundamental tensions between instincts and morality, order and chaos, peace and liberation have reflected themselves in conflicts and wars remains an essential question which got addressed and intensified by engaging with a lesser known correspondence between Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud (1931-1932). These letters constitute the question "Why War?" and represent Freud's final position on war, conflict, civilization and aggression. The correspondence was initiated by Einstein where he sparked a dialogue with Freud seeking ways to understand the destructive impulses inherent in humans and how could we hope to become proof against these urges. Freud's response, an elegant one, is descriptive of the history of civilization and the conflicting impulses of the human where he delineates the inevitability of chaos and violence as well as offers potential possibilities for a peaceful existence. The present study was enriched by the phenomenal insights into the mechanisms behind war and violence presented in this correspondence. These have been used in the paper to further build and comment on the nature of impulses and the potential for human. It helped retract themes like the personal and political nature of the human psyche which could further be deepened by looking towards mythology and literature. Mahabharata has been one epic that has been used as it is one of the greatest cultural treasures of our times and a storehouse for all human experience and existential conditions. Another text exploring the inherent political struggles in human relationality has been the Greek tragedy

Oedipus Rex. Yet another literary reference to the dynamics of power and subjugation are reflected in George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' which helps understand the sinister side of power and the transition from leadership to dictatorship. All these texts become descriptive frameworks to locate the theoretical concepts.

In order to develop an understanding of the methodology used in Discourse Analysis and Narrative analysis texts like "The Mother Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism" by Marianne Hirsch and "Discourse analysis and Psychoanalysis" by Ian Parker from the British Journal of Social Psychology have been used. These texts have helped in gleaning the expanse of language that has aided individuals and cultures in the task of meaning making.

**The Evolution of Man and Society**

To locate the origins of conflict, we need to go back to the origins of man and society. In the pre-historic age, man found solace in the nature's bounty as it was assumed to be an all-powerful and all-providing comfort against the wounds of existence. Freud states the three main sources of displeasure we attempt to master:

- Our own painful and mortal existence;
- The cruel and destructive aspects of the natural world;
- The reality that we must live with other human beings in a society.

The last one was considered as the most painful by Freud. Psychoanalysis views man as an aggregation of his impulses and considers all his thoughts and behavior as a derivation of those impulses. These primitive impulses are *Eros* and *Thanatos.*

Conflict can be located at two levels. At the first level, it is in the constant conflict between the desire to create and the desire to destroy.

At the second level, things become more politicized because of the entry of the "other". Being one of the most painful woes of existence, it gives rise to a conflict of interest between individuals usually leading to violence.

These conflicts if left unattended would result in utter chaos. Hence one important function of the society is the regulation of human impulses. Civilization was built to realize the human ideals of control, regimentation, order and beauty in order to ensure a productive environment for the individuals to exercise their highest intellectual functions. The problem arose when the civilization itself became an inhibitory entity and began to limit the possibilities of human desire. This repression became a primary source of aggression and violence against the rigid societal structures.

Einstein questions Freud, "Whether psychoanalysis could offer any hope that the individual might become proof against these destructive urges?" In response, explaining the facilitative and inhibitory forces of society, Freud proposed that the prospects for a future free of war would depend on the outcome of the struggle between the process of civilization and the innate instinctual impulses.

**Personal is Always Political**

This inherent conflict within the individual influences his interactions with others resulting in unprecedented violence. History has been a witness to many such instances of the duality of human nature and the ensuing sense of paranoia and violence it sets off. This gives rise to another set of conflicts that individuals suffer in the face of mass destruction and violence. In such times, one can see the rise of the political, the mono-

*Locating the Personal in the Political*

The relationship between the mother and the child is a symbiotic one where all the impulses and wishes of the child are instinctively understood and fulfilled by the mother, giving the child a sense of omnipotence and a state of pure bliss. However, this blissful state is interrupted by the entry of the "other" or the "third" which is the father. Now for the first time the child realizes that sole ownership (of the mother) isn't possible and the sense of omnipotence is shattered. The father isn't just a rightful partner but also a powerful force whose authority the child cannot challenge. The father in that sense becomes the local representative of the greater society that would impose itself on the individual later. In the play Oedipus Rex, King Oedipus, fulfills the prophecy made by the Oracle by killing his father (unknowingly) and marries his mother. Here the idea of control is depicted as possible only by the elimination of the other. However, according to Freud, in real life it plays out differently by the child surrendering his will in front of the father's authority and this becomes the first political act of the child. When the society comes in with its set of norms and limitations for existence it evokes a similar violence in the individual to either eliminate the society or the will within. However as a developmental milestone, we can see that it was important for the father to interrupt the mother-child dyad for the child to regain his individuality and venture on independently. In that sense, the role of the father and later of the society can be seen as a positive one as well.

*Liberating the Libido: Eliminating the "Other"*

What would happen if the child did manage to overthrow the father? Or in other words, if the society was abolished?

To be able to understand this we once again turn to mythology. Following the metaphor of blindness, we can see how the character of *Oedipus* who after eliminating the father, racked with guilt and grief, gouged his eyes out and went into exile. From the epic Mahabharata *Duryodhana*, the epitome of greed, lust and hatred, who's unrelenting and all-consuming desire for ownership unshaken by all pleas of reason and compromise resulted in the war of *Kurukshetra*. While deconstructing the character of *Duryodhana* to understand this rigidity in his stance, the first thing that strikes a chord is the passivity of his blind father *Dhritrashtra* who was powerless in front of all that his son did. *Duryodhana* suffered from chronic dissatisfaction, where his mind was never at rest and he hardly enjoyed the luxuries afforded to him as a king. The depth of his hatred and the blind allegiance that was at his disposal resulted in him leading a paranoid existence.

The idea of blindness put forth in both these cases seems interesting as it sheds light on the question we're trying to address. The son who kills his father punishes himself by blinding himself while the son whose father is blind leads a life of chronic dissatisfaction. Hence we may conclude that guilt and dissatisfaction become the cornerstones of human existence irrespective of the censorship of the society.

*Politicizing the Personal*

Up until this point, we've understood the society and its structures and how the inevitability of the human despair is bound up against each other. Another question that arises is how does the society which is an aggregation of the individual become a deterrent force inhibiting human potential?

In the Einstein-Freud correspondence, Freud explains how, initially it was the survival of the fittest in physical terms that transformed into technological prowess reflected in the skill of the individuals' weapons. Now superior brains began to oust polizing streak of the society and the emergence of a power much greater than the individual. The following sub-sections would explore these themes in greater detail.

brute force, yet the object of conflict remained the same: how to deal with the injury done by the other?

There were two ways. One where the opponent is definitely put out of action by being killed which has 2 advantages, first the enemy cannot renew hostilities and second it sets examples for others. However there was an even more sinister, political act which became the expression of violence inherent to all human beings which is subjugation as it gives the possibility of breaking the enemy's spirit while sparing his life. Here violence finds an outlet not in slaughter but in subjugation.

One can see in this ominous act how the repressed impulses which were left unresolved and had been bubbling beneath the surface burst out opportunistically. This perhaps reflects itself in the collective aggregation that we call the "state" that needs to exist to create order in chaos. When it begins to dictate the limitations of the individual's existence, the biggest conflict arises. Freud comments on the matter of civilization and instinct saying, "The state has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrongdoing, not because it desires to abolish it, but because it desires to monopolize it."

An example of this can be seen in George Orwell's book 'Animal Farm' which explores the journey of a movement for equality gone horribly wrong. The essence of the book is captured in one statement "All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others." It traces how the whims and selfish motives of one individual express themselves politically which results in mass domination and exploitation. Freud talked about this unending cycle of violence and in this unending cycle we find ourselves, repeating history and the question arises, how do we align the interests of so many individuals, especially given the duality of human nature, to achieve a common goal? Is it ever possible? Even within groups we find the inevitability of violence, can we ever hope to achieve peace?

A possible and quite an idealistic solution is provided by Freud where he says, "complete suppression of man's aggressive tendencies is not an issue; what we may try is to divert it into a channel other than that of warfare."

**The Question of Peace and Liberation**

Diverting instinctual impulses into channels other than that of warfare opens up further questions: Are we offering more choices for conflict resolution or merely a distraction from a conflict that can rouse one's inherent violence?

More choices for conflict resolution mean generating opinions and fostering an environment where it is safe to express one's thoughts and desires. To achieve this, initial efforts need to be made which question societal norms time and again to check whether they have become antiquated and archaic. Lesser the taboos in the society lesser would be the repression of the instincts. To understand this better, let's have a look at the idea of madness. Any behavior that isn't in accordance with the masses is attributed as abnormal. This mindset of the society, from the very outset, throws the individual at the peripheries of civilization with its doors tightly shut. The terrified, isolated individual then screams and shouts in fear demanding and pleading to be let in, and in turn completes the process of attribution by confirming the society's notions of his madness by appearing mad. Now the choice facing such an individual is to both change his reality and repress the impulse or to accept the reality and become an outcast. Both ways violence is being perpetrated and giving rise to more violence.

Our ideals of liberation need to be accommodating in nature, if we hope to avoid violence. But when we talk about peace, it becomes a different matter altogether. In my study of conflict, desire became the key factor underlying all aggression, so it would be safe to conclude, that peace in many ways is the renunciation of desire. The renunciation is also an attempt to break the shackles of one's existential possibilities and to further push the boundaries. The question becomes what is the purpose of your existence: happiness or freedom?

Human beings will always find themselves at odds with the civilization and experience the duality of both creating and destroying it. Our hope at peace or liberation exists not simply by a diversion but by channelizing of those instincts into subliminal experience which is possible in a freer world. In our age of technological and intellectual prowess, the task is yet again at hand, how we destroy the walls of repression closing in and rebuilding a world more tolerant and more facilitative for the human potential.

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# Brain and Heart Rate on Neuroplasticity: ADHD v/s Normal Children

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**ABSTRACT**

When a learner is anxious about the test taking situation, performance is affected in many aspects. In this study it is aimed that through relaxation therapy, it is possible to make changes between neural networks in brain to reduce test anxiety and to improve attention among ADHD and average learning normal children. For the present research, quasi-Experimental design with pre-test and post-test having control group (N=8) is used for the two ADHD (ADHD-HI and ADHD-C) single case studies and without control group (N=5) is adopted for the average learning normal children group. Electroencephalogram for brain waves and electrocardiogram for heart rate are recorded for pre- and post-tests. Attention and test anxiety scores are measured among ADHD-HI and ADHD-C children through questionnaires and blood choline level is estimated through blood serum before and after the intervention program. Relaxation therapy which includes breathing techniques, guided visual imagery and progressive muscle relaxation are conducted to the children for one month as an intervention program. Modified paired samples t-test ($t_D$) by Crawford, Howell & Garthwaite (1998) for single case study method is used for the study. Brain rate is calculated from the brain waves for understanding the impact of relaxation therapy on student's brain. Increase in brain rate, attention and at the same time decrease in heart rate and test anxiety are noticed after relaxation therapy. These changes lead to neuroplasticity with the newly developed smoothened networks which results in enhanced cortical representation for improved attention among the sample and the impact could be increased through continuous and long term practice of relaxation techniques among ADHD children comparatively normal children.

*Key Words: Attention, Choline, Electroencephalogram, Relaxation Therapy, Test Anxiety.*

## Introduction

Attention is a cognitive process of selectively concentrating on one aspect of the environment while ignoring other things (Anderson, 2004) and it is a significant problem among children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Normally attention decreases during test anxious situations, which is an unpleasant state characterized by feelings of tension, apprehension and worrisome thoughts by the activation of the autonomic nervous system (Spielberger, 1972). An integral brain state indicator that may serve as a simple indicator of the arousal and attention scores is an element of neurophysical substrate known as brain rate (Markovska-Simoska & Pop-Jordanova, 2011) and it can be a helpful parameter for understanding the activation of the brain waves in relation with attention and the influence of test anxiety.

Choline is a chemical precursor needed to produce the neurotransmitter acetylcholine (Zeisel, 1991). A variety of attentional tasks is done with the involvement of this neurotransmitter (Yu & Dayan, 2002) and acetylcholine also acts as an inhibitory neurotransmitter in cardiac tissue (Campbell & Reece, 2002).

Relaxation therapy is selected for the present research as an intervention program in-order with the supporting results of previous studies, where relaxation training has been used to demonstrate promising results in lessening the anxiety, impulsivity, hyperactivity, distractibility, and emotional ability of exceptional learners, while positively influencing their self-concept, academic achievement, and classroom behavior (Margolis, 1990).

In the process of learning, neurons send information from one neuron to another neuron and create permanent neural pathways through changes in the internal structure of the neurons and increase in the number of synapses between neurons (Durbach, 2000) and such changes in neural pathways and synapses which are due to changes in behavior, environment and neural processes are termed as Neuroplasticity (Pascual-Leone et al., 2011). The main aim of this study is facilitating the children to concentrate on the 'relax' stimuli to improve attentional processes and brain rate, its impact on heart rate and test anxiety with the purpose of understanding and comparing the neuroplastic changes in ADHD and normal children to bring out positive outcomes.

**Objectives of the Study**

- To uncover the impact of relaxation therapy on brain rate of ADHD and normal children in order to understand the neuroplastic changes in brain.
- To find out the differences between pre- and post-test scores of attention, choline and heart rate due to relaxation therapy.

**Hypotheses**

- Relaxation therapy does not increase brain rate and does not decrease heart rate significantly among the total sample.
- There are no significant differences between pre-test and post-test of attention and test anxiety scores due to relaxation therapy.
- Relaxation therapy does not change the blood choline level.

**Design of the Study**

Quasi-Experimental design with pre-test and post-test having control group is used for the two ADHD single case studies (ADHD-HI and ADHD-C), and without control group is adopted for the normal children group.

ADHD-HI predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type presents with excessive fidgetiness and restlessness, hyperactivity, difficulty in waiting and remaining seated, immature and destructive behaviors. ADHD-C is the combined type, and is a combination of the ADHD-predominantly inattentive type and ADHD-predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type (American Psychiatry, 2013).

**Sample:**

Out of 150 slow learners (age range 14-17 years) based on Intelligence Quotient value ranges (70-89), 15 ADHD-HI (Hyperactive-impulsive), 12 ADHD-C (Combined), students were chosen, from which eight ADHD-HI and ADHD-C students were randomly selected from special school for learning disabilities and are called as control group (N=8). One student who had high test anxiety score in test anxiety inventory (Spielberger, 1980) was selected from each category and that single student in each category was selected for the experiment.

Randomly selected students were given Raven's advanced progression matrices test (1962) for classification of average learners based on the IQ level. Out of 112 average learners, five students (N=5) who are highly test anxious were selected with the mean age of 16.2±0.84 years for the experiment and were considered under normal children category.

**Tools Used for the Study**

a) Advanced Progression Matrices (1962) by John C. Raven.
b) Attention Questionnaire (2007) by Johann M. Schepers.
c) Test Anxiety Inventory (1980) by Charles D. Spielberger.
d) Electroencephalogram (EEG) for recording brain waves.
e) Electro Cardiogram (ECG) for measuring heart rate.

## Procedure

Permission had been obtained from individual students, class teachers, school authorities and parents of the selected students in order to conduct the research. Electroencephalogram was recorded for all the students to measure their brain activation and electrocardiogram was also recorded to measure heart rate with the help of technicians. Attention and test anxiety scores were measured among ADHD-HI and ADHD-C children through questionnaires. Their blood samples were collected and sent to Ranbaxy laboratory to estimate the blood choline level. The ones with high test anxiety score as assessed by 'Test Anxiety Inventory' (Spielberger, 1980) were selected as experimental sample from each category. These selected student from each category were taught relaxation therapy individually for one week before the beginning of the experiment. The therapy included Breathing Techniques, Guided Visual Imagery and Progressive Muscle Relaxation. After making the students familiar with the techniques, 'Relaxation therapy' was given to the students individually with a mixture of all the three techniques each fifteen minutes with five minutes pause in-between each technique, for one hour everyday as an intervention program for one month. At the end of the experimental period post-test was recorded on brain waves while doing relaxation therapy for the experimental case and immediately after 10 minutes of the relaxation therapy heart rate was measured through electrocardiogram. Test Anxiety and attention scores were also assessed at the end of the intervention program through questionnaires. After relaxation therapy, their blood serum was also collected for estimating the choline level. During this time the attention, test anxiety, heart rate, brain waves and choline level were also measured for the control samples who had not received relaxation therapy. The same procedure was repeated for average learning normal children having no control group. The entire sample received group relaxation therapy, pre- and post-tests were conducted among all the children on attention, test anxiety, heart rate, brain waves and choline level.

## Statistical Analysis:

Modified paired samples t-test ($t_D$) by Crawford, Howell & Garthwaite (1998) for single case study method is used for the study. In this study for brain rate and heart rate the probability range of level of significance is taken from 90% to 100%, i.e., from p<0.10 to p<0.00.

*1. Brain* $f_b = \sum_i f_i P_i$

*Brain Rate*

Where the index i denotes the frequency band (for delta i = 1, for theta i = 2, for alpha i=3, for beta i=4) and P is the corresponding mean amplitude of the electric potential or power. Following the standard five-band classification, one has $f_i$ = 2 for delta, 6 for theta, 10 for alpha, 14 for beta.

*2. Heart Rate*

Heart rate is calculated by 60 (number of seconds in minute) divided by the average R-R interval.

*Heart Rate = 60/R-R interval*

## Results and Tables

**(**Tables given in the following page)

*Hypothesis 1: Relaxation therapy does not increase brain rate and does not decrease heart rate significantly among the total sample.*

(Tables 1 and 2)

*Hypothesis 2: There are no significant differences between pre test and post test of attention and test anxiety scores due to relaxation therapy.* (Tables 3 and 4)

*Hypothesis 3: Relaxation therapy does not change the blood choline level.* (Tables 5 and 6)

| Table 1: Differentiation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Brain Rate and Heart Rate in Individual Cases | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Category** | **Brain Rate ( $f_b$)** | | | | **Heart Rate (HR)** | | | |
| | *Pre Test Mean (Hz)* | *Post Test Score (Hz)* | *'$t_D$'* | *'p'* | *Pre Test Mean (bpm)* | *Post Test Score (bpm)* | *$t_D$* | *'p'* |
| **ADHD-HI** | 28356.29 | 66559.49 | 1.87 | 0.10 | 81.75 | 70 | 2.02 | 0.04 |
| **ADHD-C** | 103734.2 | 171207.5 | 1.80 | 0.11 | 85.25 | 77 | 1.94 | 0.05 |
| **Hz: Hertz, BPM: Beats Per Minute** | | | | | | | | |

| Table 2: Differentiation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Brain Rate and Heart Rate among Average Learning Normal Children | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Category** | ***Brain Rate ( $f_b$)*** | ***Heart Rate (HR)*** | ***Brain Rate ( $f_b$)*** | ***Heart Rate (HR)*** | ***Brain Rate ( $f_b$)*** | ***Heart Rate (HR)*** | ***Brain Rate ( $f_b$)*** | ***Heart Rate (HR)*** |
| | *Pre Test Mean (Hz)* | *Post Test Mean (Hz)* | *'t'* | *'p'* | *Pre Test Mean (BPM)* | *Post Test Mean (BPM)* | *'t'* | *'p'* |
| **Average Learning Normal Children** | 8168.13 | 10835.22 | 3.91 | 0.01 | 80 | 63.2 | 7.41 | 0.002 |
| **Hz: Hertz, BPM: Beats Per Minute** | | | | | | | | |

| Table 3: Differentiation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Attention and Test Anxiety in Individual Cases | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Category*** | ***Attention*** | | | | ***Test Anxiety*** | | | |
| | *Pre Test Mean* | *Post Test Score* | *'$t_D$'* | *'p'* | *Pre Test Mean* | *Post Test Score* | *$t_D$* | *'p'* |
| **ADHD-HI** | 160.25 | 189 | 1.89 | 0.10 | 59.88 | 40 | 2.18 | 0.07 |
| **ADHD-C** | 170.375 | 199 | 1.74 | 0.13 | 61.38 | 47 | 2.35 | 0.05 |

| Table 4: Differentiation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Attention and Test Anxiety among Average Learning Normal Children | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Category*** | ***Attention*** | | | | ***Test Anxiety*** | | | |
| | *Pre Test Mean* | *Post Test Mean* | *'t'* | *'p'* | *Pre Test Mean* | *Post Test Mean* | *'t'* | *'p'* |
| **Average Learning Children** | 209 | 225.8 | 5.72 | 0.005 | 46.80 | 32.20 | 13.56 | 0.000 |

| Table 5: Differentiation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Blood Choline Level in Individual Cases | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Category*** | ***Choline*** | | | |
| | *Tests* | *Level (Units/Litre)* | *'$t_D$'* | *'p'* |
| **ADHD-HI** | *Pre Test Mean* | 9974.20 | 1.58 | 0.16 |
| | *Post Test Score* | 8595.90 | | |
| **ADHD-C** | *Pre Test Mean* | 12067.69 | 1.65 | 0.14 |
| | *Post Test Score* | 11667.00 | | |

| Table 6: Differentiation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Blood Choline Level among Average Learning Normal Children | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Category** | **Choline Level (Units/Litre)** | | **'t'** | **'p'** |
| | **Pre Test Mean** | **Post Test Mean** | | |
| **Average Learning Children** | 12586.94 | 11029.97 | 4.23 | 0.01 |

It is clear from table 1 and 2 that the calculated '$t_D$' values are greater than the table 't' values in ADHD-HI ($p<0.10$, N=8), average learning normal children group ($p<0.01$, N=5) and it is not greater than table 't' values in ADHD-C. Hence the hypothesis is rejected for ADHD-HI and average learning normal children group and accepted for ADHD-C case and it is proved that relaxation therapy significantly increases brain rate among individual cases. And also from table 1 and 2 that the calculated '$t_D$' values for heart rate are greater than the table 't' values in ADHD-HI ($p<0.04$, N=8), ADHD-C ($p<0.05$, N=8) and average learning normal children group ($p<0.002$, N=5). Hence the hypothesis is rejected and it is proved that relaxation therapy decreases heart rate significantly among ADHD-HI, ADHD-C and average learning normal children group. The results are consistent with the study of Pop-Jordanova, N. et al., (2005) which showed that the change in brain-rate, showing the spectrum shift, appeared (in certain cases) to be a more realistic indicator of the change in clinical symptoms in EEG biofeedback training among ADHD children.

It is observed from table 3 and 4 that the calculated 't' values are more than that of table 't' values in ADHD-HI ($p<0.10$, N=8) and average learning normal children group ($p<0.005$, N=5) for attention and it is less than that of table 't' values in ADHD-C case. Hence the hypothesis is accepted for ADHD-C case for attention and it is rejected for ADHD-HI case and average learning normal children group for attention. From table 3 and 4 it is noticed that the calculated 't' values are more than that of table 't' values in ADHD-HI ($p<0.07$, N=8), ADHD-C ($p<0.05$, N=8) and average learning normal children group ($p<0.00$, N=5) for test anxiety. Hence the hypothesis is rejected for ADHD-HI, ADHD-C and average learning normal children group for test anxiety. The results are in line with the study of Benor, et al., (2009) which showed that test anxiety decreases after 8 week long treatment of progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, self instruction training as well as training in study and test-taking skills. And also the results are supported by the study of Khilnani et al., (2003) which demonstrated that increased concentration and decreased hyperactivity after children with ADHD received 15 minute massage for 10 consecutive school days.

From table 5 and 6, it is evident that the blood choline level is decreased in post test but it is not statistically significant for ADHD-HI and ADHD-C but it is statistically significant for average learning normal children ($p<0.01$, N=5) and it is proved that relaxation therapy changes the blood choline level. This result is corroborated with the report of Mackenzie, (2005) which showed that choline level drops dramatically only when we exercise continuously for approximately two hours or more.

**Discussion**

ADHD-HI, ADHD-C and normal children show increasing level of brain rate, the same result was noted by Pop-Jordanova & Pop-Jordanov (2005) where an improvement had been registered for ADHD children, and the calculation of the brain-rate showed higher values at the end of EEG biofeedback training. Theoretically, sound waves exhibiting a frequency-following response may be effective in the regulation of arousal levels by way of inducing fluxes in cholinergic neurons or the "gatelets" of the nucleus reticularis. Binding of acetylcholine to cholinergic neurons (Scheibel, 1980; Macchi & Bentivoglio, 1986; Groenewengen & Berendse, 1994) or the "gatelets" of the nucleus reticularis is affected by sounds when the rhythmic patterns become neural oscillations within the brain stem. In the present study instead of the sound waves, the relaxing tone plays a major role in the regulation of arousal in students' brain. The auditory stimuli 'relax' alter the arousal state and it connects with the increases in brain rate. The alterations in arousal happen with the mechanical changes in the cholinergic system.

Reduction in heart rate due to relaxation therapy is obvious from the present investigation and practicing breathing techniques in relaxation therapy is beneficial for the activation of parasympathetic nervous system. Telles, Nagarathna, & Nagendra, (1995) observed that simultaneous reduction in heart rate (possibly related to increased vagal tone with reduced cardiac sympathetic activity) and finger plethysmogram amplitude (decreased sympathetic vasomotor activity) was observed during repeat meditation sessions among 7 experienced ‘Om’ meditators. The vagus nerve has traditionally been considered a parasympathetic efferent nerve that was responsible only for regulating autonomic functions, such as heart rate and gastric tone (Boyd, 2008). The vagus nerve (cranial X) also carries sensory information to the brain from the head, neck, thorax, and abdomen and research has identified that the vagus nerve has extensive projections of its sensory afferent connections to many brain areas (Armitage, et al., 2003). During relaxation therapy the vagus nerve which carries the relaxing stimuli from the body parts to the brain with the reduced activity of the sympathetic nervous system and it generates new neural connections in the brain regions. Vagus nerve stimulation changes levels of several neurotransmitters implicated in the development of major depression, including serotonin, norepinephrine, GABA, and glutamate in the same way that antidepressant medications produce their therapeutic effects (Forbes et al., 2003). Depending on the nature of the heart’s input, it can either inhibit or facilitate working memory and attention, cortical processes, cognitive functions, and performance (Hansen, Johnsen, & Thayer, 2003; Lacey & Lacey, 1974; Rau et al., 1993; Sandman, Walker, & Berka, 1982; Van der Molen, Somsen, & Orlebeke, 1985). In cardiac tissue acetylcholine neurotransmitter has an inhibitory effect, which lowers heart rate. However, acetylcholine also behaves as an excitatory neurotransmitter at neuromuscular junctions in skeletal muscle (Campbell & Reece, 2002).

The present research proved that the amount of choline after relaxation therapy is reduced in ADHD-HI, ADHD-C and average learning normal children. Significant improvements were achieved in learning and behavior disorders after Dimethylaminoethanol (DMAE), a precursor to choline supplementation among children with learning disabilities including hyperactivity (Croonenberghs, Wauters, & Devreese, 2002; Croonenberghs, Bosmans, & Deboutte, 2002). Nerve cells collect the choline floating by in the blood to make new acetylcholine and consequently the blood choline level starts decreasing. Naturally, if choline level falls too far, acetylcholine production cannot continue and the nerve cells will simply refuse to stimulate the muscles. Cohen & Wurtman, (1975) noticed that acetylcholine is actually broken down inside the neuromuscular junctions during prolonged exercise and a signal is transmitted from the brain to the end of the nerve attached to the muscle that it wishes to contract. There is a small space between the end of the nerve and the muscle and it is across this neuromuscular space that the nerve pushes small quantities of a chemical called acetylcholine. The muscle cell contracts when sufficient acetylcholine attaches to the outer surface of the muscle cell (Cohen & Wurtman, 1975). From this support it can be interpreted as, during relaxation therapy the brain produces signal to the muscles to relax and the muscles throughout the body absorbs the blood choline and start producing acetylcholine to continue the process. This is evident from the present study that relaxation therapy decreases blood choline level to create acetylcholine for the uninterrupted relaxing activity, irrespective of the available choline level in their blood serum in each individual.

Improvement in attention level and decrease in test anxiety is evident after relaxation therapy. A balance is maintained between the activities of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems during relaxation , during stress free situation (Seo & Lee, 2010) and relaxation reduces test anxiety and balancing sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems activities. Reduced test anxious feeling increases concentration in students' brain. Increasing concentration of attention evokes transformation of preconscious into conscious (Freud, 1989). During increased attention the amplitude of hippocampal theta activity also increases because more neuronal ensembles become involved into synchronization due to enhanced excitation of reticular activating system (Vertes, 1981). Cortical EEG analyses by Low Resolution Electromagnetic Tomography method (LORETA) revealed that significantly decreased theta activity in the hippocampus, para-hippocampal regions, and the cingulate cortex areas are known to play a role in cholinergic-associated cognitive functions (Browne et al., 2006).

Repeated experience must be combined with focused attention in order for the physical changes in the structure and future functioning of the nervous system to take place. When distracted, the brain cannot map the information and memory is not stored and neuroplasticity stops when without too much attention (Jade, 2013). Paying attention to the relaxed stimuli without distraction makes structural and functional changes in the nervous system activity, thus it creates neuroplastic changes in the students' brain and is evident from the present investigation. Besides repetition and focused attention, brain researchers generally agree that a compound called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) is what allows neurons to connect and combine into new networks. The more BDNF available, the more neural network formation can take place (Jade, 2013).

According to Porges' theory, an increase in vagal tone is indicative of a stress-free, hoemostatic physiological state whereas a reduction in vagal tone is an indication of stress or a response to stress. Strong effects of Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) on behavioral measures associated with anxiety produced an increase in vagal tone (Bell, 2010). Porges' theory (1995, 2001) says that an increase in vagal tone results in a reduction in peripheral sensations associated with arousal and a decrease in level of anxiety. Reduction in test anxiety is also noticed among ADHD-HI, ADHD-C and normal children group. Studies have shown that children with high levels of vagal tone tend to exhibit greater psycho-physiological health, higher mental and motor functioning, and more adaptive behavioral and social performance than those with lower vagal activity and these results hold true over a wide range of experimental contexts (Dufey et al., 2011). It is known that the vagal afferent pathways (locus coeruleus, orbitofrontal cortex, insula, hippocampus, and amygdale (Grundy, 2002) affect brain areas known to be involved in affect regulation and mood. Vagal afferents activate hypothalamic vigilance areas and enhance attention and alertness, whereas pathways through the thalamus quiet frontal cortical activity and reduce anxious worrying (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005). Increasing attention level and decrease in test anxiety scores are obvious from the study results which supports the activation of vagus nerve.

Dawson (2013) added that evidence from animal studies suggests that vagus nerve stimulation could cause the release of neurotransmitters which help facilitate neural plasticity and help people re-learn how to use their arms after stroke, particularly if stimulation is paired with specific tasks. It can be linked that vagus nerve stimulation leads to neuroplastic changes in brain and in this manner it forms permanent neural pathways through enhanced cortical representation.

**Limitations**

- Number of sample could have been increased. Because of cost effectiveness, sample size in each group has been limited.
- It was not possible for doing ECG and EEG simultaneously in the present scenario of our sample with their mind set.

**Conclusion**

Conclusion has been arrived based on the present research outcomes and the discussed evidences. The vagal nerve activation is induced by relaxation therapy which increases the parasympathetic nervous system activity and simultaneously reduces sympathetic nervous system activity. Decrease in sympathetic nervous system activity diminishes test anxiety and heart rate. Attention increases after relaxation therapy and in this mechanism choline plays a vital role. The repetitive cycle of breaking of choline produces acetylcholine which increases attention and this process continues. Vagus nerve stimulation leads to activation of acetylcholine neurotransmitter through which attention processes are enhanced with newly generated network pathways and acetylcholine shows inhibitory effects in heart muscles which reduces heart rate. Brain rate increases, with these biophysical and chemical changes in the body by altering the activation of brain waves and continuous practice of relaxation improves the availability of Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) which facilitates more number of neurons to form new neural networks. These transformations lead to neuroplasticity with the newly developed smoothened networks which results in enhanced cortical representation for improved attention and learning. The changes occurred after relaxation therapy in ADHD-HI and ADHD-C are almost similar level and among average learning normal children the outcomes are better than ADHD. Relaxation therapy is beneficial for ADHD children for neuroplastic changes in brain which can act as one of the key factors to manage attention problems and more number of intervention sessions with continuous practice is essential in comparison to normal children.

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# Playtonic Sift- A Psychoanalytic Account of Childhood & Play in a Brothel

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**ABSTRACT**

Do you remember the day you were no longer a child? Or the precise moment you became an adult? Were you *ever* a child? This paper attempts to reexamine the dimensions of 'childhood' to bring into question the apparent distinctions between the child-adult states of being while revisiting childhood as a site of marginality. It is a psychoanalytic account of what it could mean to be a child within the fluid spectrum of subject-hood, particularly when and where the time and space separating the child and adult, intersperse. The brothels of GB road are visited as such a site of interwoven spatiality, where daughter and mother are locked in a boundless embrace, creating a distinct constellation of self-other relationality that could give us insight into society's patterns of initiation into sexuality.

Through play (or the lack of it) a child maps out its inner world, preciously and wholeheartedly like an elaborate story; with layers and levels of vivid images, rich with emoted spontaneity or knotted up anxiety; a world where the given norms of society have not yet neatly categorized the mess of life. A playground where the boundaries of self and other, that build the foundation of identities, are scribbled in chalk like for a game of hopscotch. Drawing from a Winnicottian emphasis on the infant-m(other) dyad, *play* is used as a narrative and analytic tool to explore the experience of childhood in this setting and the concentric marginality of the child in a brothel.

**Introduction: De-dimensioning Childhood**

Who is a child? How do we locate childhood on the spectrum of human experience? Is a child characterized by a certain experience and understanding of the world, and an accompanying lack of 'mature' understanding of self and other? Is the child-adult binary one that has only a physical and chronological dimension?

We can understand the child by the spaces that are deemed 'appropriate' to his/her presence. There is a time that grants access to this space. An age deemed appropriate to enter into the adult world. It is apparently a transition from innocence to maturity, an 'evolution' as such, of understanding the world and the self's relationship to it. So the dimensions of childhood are a certain time and space, that uphold its place as separated from adulthood. (Even anatomical and physiological distinctions can be questioned on the child-adult spectrum. Where does the breast begin? Where does it end? What is the experience of corporality that marks adulthood?)

What happens when this time and space collapse? What happens to the construct of childhood in such a fluidity of subject experience?

The brothels of GB road are one such space that question our notions of a 'child'. There is always a certain expectation we have of every place; it comes with an image of a person 'typical' to it. But there is always also that stranger you don't recognize as native to a space, and you see in him/her *an Other* amongst others, a concentric marginality in this case. In the brothels that I visited, what immediately intrigued me about this 'adult' district, this "red light zone", was the presence of a child. How could we understand this subjecthood, placed so precariously on the child-adult boundary? How do we situate this subjecthood experientially and relationally without the dimensions of time and space that otherwise frame childhood? Not only was this subjectivity placed at the margins of society's contradictory ideals of *desire and sexuality*[1], but was doubly marginalized in such an "*adult*erated" space.

In simpler words, *what is the childness of this "child", and what happens to it in the overwhelming omnipotent adulthood of the brothel*[2]?

**Playtonic Method**

The psychoanalytic entry into the psyche of the subject has been through a folding out and folding back of language and symbolization, through free association, dream analysis, interpreting jokes, slips, puns as metaphors of unconscious processing. *Play* has a similar relationship through its symbolic intertwining of the latent and manifest. "*The play element is not just an occasional aspect of analysis, but functions continuously to sustain a paradoxical reality where things can be real and not real at the same time. This paradox is the framework of psychoanalysis." " Fantasy, symbolism and play are closely related. All three have both regressive and exploratory functions, which depend on their ambiguous, provisional relationship to reality*." (Parsons, 1999) This was a way to enter the space where the depths of the unconscious, the base of the writing pad would open itself through spontaneity and fantasy, recreating and retelling stories from the child's inner and outer worlds. It was my hope that through play I could interact with the child on that which is unspeakable, unformulated and that which can only be touched in a precarious framework of porous boundaries between reality and fantasy, the desired and disavowed, the lived and dreamed, invented and discovered.

My field work at the red light area on GB road involved 6 months of frequent visits to the brothels where I was able to interact with and observe the every days of the didis (sex workers) and their children. Through KatKatha[3], an NGO that works with children and women on GB road, I was able to have one to one 'play sessions' with the children over this time. Every day I would sit with a different child, within the privacy of a designated play-room and just let the child use the space to play and express herself in whatever way came naturally and spontaneously. As the weeks went by, I was able to follow up on certain recurring themes in their play narratives in an attempt to create a relationship of genuine engagement. It was these hours of play with different children (5 girls ranging from 6 to 11 years) that provided me with insights into their inner worlds and relationships[4]. I would also spend a few hours a week with the whole group of children from different brothels (both boys and girls between ages 6 – 18) talking with them and playing[5] with no dictating agenda of tasks or events.

**Limbo of the Unclaimed**

A child is born into a world of relationality. Its development and socialization depends on these relationalities through pre-oedipal, oedipal and extended matrices, through which the child learns and identifies, claims its space and position. It is like an initiation into time and space through relativity that a child enters into a consciousness of being.

It is these different claims laid on the child, on its body and being, to great detail and dedication by Indian society, that allow its own claim; on the timeline of life and the spatiality of the world. This is how the child knows she is a daughter, a sister, a granddaughter, a student, a Hindu, has an idea of by whom her body has been and should be held, a map of authorized play rooms and unauthorized bedrooms, a name that represents her legality and role in the societal structure and a position in an age and skill based system of psychosocial development.

How do we understand the child whose relationality has been defined by society's disavowals? Within the brothel environment there is a different set up that leaves the child, as if in a limbo; waiting to be assigned a subject position in an ever-warping time and space. There is no space for the child in this large omnipresent bedroom, no clear timeline that charts out when the child (psychosexually) *becomes* an adult. The time and space of an adult is so deeply interwoven with the everyday of the child that privacy ceases to exist, and the child has no safe seclusion without the seduction of adulthood. This is different from the pervasive "growing up" of a socially accepted and claimed child. This is not a transitional stage that culminates in milestones. The child of a sex worker lives in a limbo of unclaimed, uncertified, anabaptized, un'*naamkaran*'ed, placelessness and a chaotic witnessing, relating and disassociating to a timeline that blurs maturity, precocity and 'coming of age'.

This is not to undervalue or leave out the maternal and communal claims of a sex worker on her child, but to bring attention to the larger social dynamics that this particular child is placed in.

Winnicott, (1971) explains the mother's task of providing the infant, opportunity for illusion and then through mediating the supply of the world in small doses, initiate a gradual disillusionment process. He explains disillusionment as a weaning off from the illusionary state of fusion where the infant first enjoys the magic of an omnipotent state. "*It is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience (cf. Riviere, 1936) which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is 'lost' in play*." (Winnicott, 1971). If an extended play area was required for reality acceptance to happen, I wondered about the feasibility of such an area in the field I was working in. I was interested to observe the manifestation of this 'area' and it's functioning, in an environment that was so extremely pressed for space. I further wondered how the child and mother in a brothel, created such a space to regulate reality testing and accommodate bearable reality acceptance through play. This sort of illusion-to-disillusionment movement seemed to work in an environment that allowed such a regulated and smooth movement, in small and bearable doses. In an environment where such a regulation was not possible due to the collapse of child-adult designated spaces and the mother is unable to protect the child from a harsh overwhelming reality, *perhaps her function continues to be that of creating an illusionary cradle to protect the child*, rather than initiate a disillusionment that the child was already born into[6].

A recurring theme in play with the young girls was a very abstract reference to time and an inability to refer to time frames and age, realistically. The children would identify some dolls as "*bacche*" and others as those who "*bade ho chuke hain*" but were unable to indicate the age of these dolls that had "become big". They were unable to express an awareness of this "*bade ho jaana"* into a woman who would have lovers, "do romance", get married and have children" and yet played around these characters often. One of the girls, 7-year-old P, finally calculated that if a crawling baby is about a year old and she was 7 and I was 23, then the doll who she had just gotten married off was 30 years old! The graveness of her estimation immediately struck me! She pushed fully 'growing up' and being sexually mature to 30 years old. She would soon hit puberty and was part of the family that ran one of the brothels, her mother in charge of keeping it going with enough women working. P would soon be initiated into the trade. She had no idea how old her mother was and for a very long time, she was uncertain of her own age, saying that no one would properly tell her how old she was.

This blurring of age seemed a condition

of the timeless limbo of their everyday. It was almost as if the mothers wanted to preserve a certain chaos and uncertainty around age so that sexual initiation flows into the everyday like adulthood flows into childhood. So that in the continuum of this sexualization of the woman, the child is not stunned by sex work or violated by it, but is instead always engaged with it through a seductive play with adulthood. Perhaps the mother used this abstraction of time to maintain some little sense of uncertainty and illusionary separation from the reality that pervaded the child's vision.

**Oedipal-pal Mein…**

In an attempt to place the child of the brothel, into an oedipal structure, it could perhaps be useful to imagine a prolonged 'ambivalence of maternal fusion'[7]. At once the child knows and has experienced the mother as the only consistent secure and intimate relationship since birth, yet she is seen to be with different men, some who stay on for months or years and some for hours or days. Witnessing the mother in this role is as if a fresh and new oedipalization in *perverse pervasion*; every time she is imagined to choose a new man or he exerts his claim on the child's only possession. Through my interactions with the children and in their role play, male characters and dolls were engaged minimally and superficially. Any attempts to explore this theme in their personal lives, was met with unenthusiastic acceptance of a situation they did not understand or confusion about the terms of the present arrangement at home. This lack of a consistent third person to maintain a balanced internalization of the oedipal triad, seemed to form a confused constellation in the child's inner world, where there is a periodic relinquishment of the mother, with undertones of anger, envy, confusion, possessiveness or destruction but never a complete resolution, as in moments of reclaiming their 'personal' lives, the mother overwhelmingly returns to a engulfing fusion with the child, as her only true possession. This does not allow for a consistent enough internalization of a triadic structure. It appears almost like the oedipal conflict is woven into the child's experience of the mother but the child can never feel a resolution or understanding of the relationship as securely internalized. Their attachment to the mother is like a constant battle of possession, in flux, because of her little understood involvement with a third. There was no internalization of the oedipal third as a consistent figure or role that would alter permanently the constellation of the child's dyadic fusion with the mother as is outlined in Freudian psychosexual oedipality.

The women often went into fits of overwhelming emotion and clung onto the child with promises and cries of them being the only real reason for their lives. This was often discussed by the women as sudden bouts of dependence on the child to renew their lives' meaning and purpose, especially when their temporary husbands/lovers left, stole from them or got into fights with them, or when they sunk into periodic bouts of hopelessness.

For the girls that I worked with regularly, the central theme of their role-play and in their use of dolls was an aspiration to be with the mother, engaged with her, impressing her, caring for her, involving her intimately in dressing, sleeping and eating rituals, returning to her in different plot twists after running away (in role play, with puppets, picture descriptions and narrations). There seemed to be a heavily invested fusion fantasy, a desire to return to the state of oneness with the mother to keep her happy and 'satisfied', but simultaneously an unprocessed and unexpressed fear of collapsing within the mother's dramatic engulfment. There seemed to be an utter struggle with existential balance of presence and absence of the (m) other, leaving the child unable to root it's self relationally in a functional way.

Kakar (1978) gives us the sense that *there is something preoedipal about our culture*, where more than the 'normative' duration of time is spent by the child, enjoying the mother's exclusivity. He covers very well the mother's presences and engagements with the male child.

When he talks of the mother's eroticism being turned full force towards the infant son who feels fear and is overwhelmed and helpless, he gives us the different defenses drawn from mythology, that the son then uses to ward off this uncomfortable 'transgression' by the mother. In the case of a girl child who is said to be in a state of fusion-identification with the mother, how can we understand the overwhelming mother? What happens when these boundaries are not yet conceived and transgressions become blurry? Could a transgression be detected when the child's imagination and fantasy of fusion leaves her sense of self unguarded by thick boundaries?

Could we imagine this devouring mother as something other than fearful, as perhaps desirable in her all encompassing embrace? There is a longing for the mother, to be held and fed by her, yet instead of an accompanying 'fear' of her devouring presence; there is perhaps excitement of stimulation at her engulfing contact. Especially in the case of a girl child whose tolerance to the devouring mother is built on a fusion-identification, what is the elasticity and permeability of self-other boundaries? Seduction could become the early memories of union, fusion with the (m) other. Does this intensely fantasized fusion with the mother, blur the boundaries of self and other for the girl child? Is this state of confusion around boundaries perhaps preserved in a way for a 'smoother' initiation into sexuality within a 'conservative' society? Similarly does it have a function and value of initiation into sex work as well?

If a fusion fantasy is the child's yearning to return to the preoedipal state of uninterrupted fusion with the maternal being after an introduction of the oedipal third, a resolution would be to internalize both the maternal and oedipal third function. In this case, could we understand the fusion fantasy as interspersed with an irregular undefined oedipal third, fourth and fifth, who take turns to play triangle, but aren't around long enough or cannot be depended on or trusted such that, a secure internalization be made. So neither is the fantasy relinquished and the complex resolved, nor does the fusion happen with an absence of the third. This *neither nor state of being*, seems like a broken dream, the pieces of which the child carries around, unable to make sense of, unable to cast aside, unable to fix. But life and sleep move on, and the pieces become part of the familiar chaos that frames the child's world, with a building tolerance for *pricks*.

The distrusted man is hence internalized as part of the triad, forming a constellation that keeps the mother and child close, yet 'inexplicably' and for extended periods, separate. This keeps alive the fusion fantasy parallel with caution and confusion against this 'father' as well as the subsequent outburst/collapse of the mother that will cling to the child for dear life. What is also interesting to note, is that this distrust yet cordial maintenance of the relationship with the 'man', possibly goes on to form the kind of distant intimacy involved in the relationships of sex work. The most important of the oedipal sentiments although, seemed to be the state of confusion around self-other boundaries stemming from the permeating tug of war with maternal fusion.

"*The question of course is that is it necessary that the third in the triad be a stable figure at all.'Reality' itself is a third to the mother-child dyad. As the child individuates, both the mother and child come into their own, and this coming into their own has to do with how they have a relationship with an 'outside' other than each other*." (Sachdev, 2014)

Playing here takes the function of an experimentative deployment of signification, before it sediments as concrete meaning in the child's symbolic world. Its function also extends to experimentation with boundaries of the self and other that are pushed and pulled, to determine its permeability and elasticity in the child's social world. It is the latter function that I am concerned with in play analysis, for it is here that object-relatedness is set up.

It is through the child's use of me as an object that I could understand its capacity to use an object, and hence its relationship with reality and the need for facilitation. "*To use an object the subject must have developed a capacity to use objects. This is part of the change to the reality principle. This capacity cannot be said to be inborn, nor can its development in an individual be taken for granted. The development of a capacity to use an object is another example of the maturational process as something that depends on a facilitating environment.*" (Winnicott, 1971)

My interest lies in analyzing the 'facilitation' of home environments that initiate the capacity to use objects and relate to them in ways particular to the nature of reality in the setting. The question then becomes not *if* this particular environment is good/bad enough but *how* can the environment create a space for the child to play outside, yet within the vicinity of the maternal dyad, facilitating the child's relational experience of self and other.

**(S) Mother**

One of the girls, 7-year-old T, had a history of being pulled out by different hostels and schools by her mother. She would first be convinced that it was too much of a burden and disruption to care for her at the brothel and her mother would set up her departure as if it were an intentional 'good riddance'. Once T would begin settling down in the hostel, her mother would tumultuously demand that she be brought back. She confessed that some days she would wake up feeling very low and emotional and would decide that she cannot live without her child. In those moments, she claimed she couldn't do without T and had to have her back at the brothel with her. I could imagine in these moments, her clinging onto little T, smothering her with her need to love and be loved in that one intense but transient moment. How confusing it must be for the child to be grabbed so tightly and then dropped again. Perhaps this is the failure of an environment to facilitate the capacity to use an object that Winnicott talks of. Her mother's every breakdown made her the container that must survive her mother's destructivity. If the objects in her life are in an unstable state of destructivity and cannot survive in their own right, she builds instead a capacity to *be used by* the object.

T could not play. She would spend all her playtime arranging toys, propping up the dolls, setting up an immaculate kitchen but never really playing with any of it. She would arrange the entire room, repeatedly checking for any out of place objects and rearranging the place accordingly. When we did begin playing, she would instruct me in detail on which I was to be, what I was to do and say and the entire act was perforated with her instructions and clarifications. She couldn't let play manifest spontaneously between us. Anything that wavered from its designated place was intolerable and immediately made the environment too chaotic and threatening for her to exist. Her tantrums too came from an imbalance of mutuality; if someone was not listening to her or understanding what she said, or giving into what she wanted, all hell would break lose. An immediate reciprocation and reflection of her state had to be established for her to feel adequately and securely in engagement, validating for herself her own presence.

No characters/ toys in her play were allowed to be in conflict. The lion had to befriend the rabbit and become a vegetarian. This was part of her preservation of a stable non-violent and unconflicting state even in play. She could not even play with the idea of a possible destruction or conflict between characters out of fear that it would go out of control. All the characters had to be friends. Her play was a careful enactment of what she was trying to recover and hold onto in her unpredictable and violent environment. She could not let that reality cross over and destroy her fantasy of peace and mutual love, rooted in an existential threat.

She couldn't enjoy new toys or gifts, play with them or celebrate receiving them with the other children. She was lost in the overwhelming anxiety of preserving the stable, contained state of the toys, unable to bear all this violent ripping open. There was something amiss in the way she was unable to use the toys. It reminded me also of her inability to play with others unless they followed a fixed plot. If, "*in the sequence one can say that first there is object-relating, then in the end there is object-use; in between, however, is the most difficult thing, perhaps, in human development; or the most irksome of all the early failures that come for mending. This thing that there is in between relating and use is the subject's placing of the object outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control; that is, the subject's perception of the object as an external phenomenon, not as a projective entity, in fact recognition of it as an entity in its own right.*" (Winnicott, 1971) It seemed like T was struggling to return to a state of omnipotent control out of fear of what might happen if it is lost. If one can find, as Winnicott (1971) explains that it is only when the object survives destruction can it be allowed to exist outside of this omnipotent control, it appeared that there was an overwhelming fear of destruction that did not let T let go of the object, outside of her compulsive control.

On one occasion, T came to me and said, "*Woh (her mother) toh bass mujhe hostel main phekna chaahti hain."* I realized in that moment that this sending away to hostel had been used as a punitive threat and she had never been able to make sense of why her mother kept pulling her back home. As her mother came and sat down with us, I turned to T and asked her if she wanted to tell her mother what she just told me. Her mother had previously shared with me that singular condition on which she could tolerate putting her daughter in hostel was that she would be allowed to see her at least 3 to 4 times a year. I asked her to share with her daughter this condition. I told the mother that her child thought she wanted to throw her in a hostel to get rid of her. She looked like a child caught in a lie. She shook her head and smiled, looking away from me and the child. I then turned to the child and told her that her mother didn't want to send her to hostel unless she got to see her and spend time with her at least 3-4 times a year. T's eyes widened as she looked at her mother. Her mother let out a playful laugh, and her body emanated the claim I just made with warmth and lightness that the child immediately picked up on. I jokingly added that these two had never told each other how much they want to be around each other and need each other. T's face let out a toothy grin and she started giggling looking at her mother in this state. I wondered when the last time was that they shared a moment of intimacy and mutual affection light heartedly enough to not drown one another.

"*Strictly speaking, to exist and be undifferentiated is not possible. Anything that is, must, in some way, be differentiated. Otherwise, it could not be noted, addressed, or engaged. Gestalt psychology suggests that perception requires a differentiated field and this includes self-perception as well. A self with no object or reference point outside it would vanish. Pure merger and isolation are abstract terms that do not characterize living experience. Areas of union and distinction occur together, with one or the other emphasized in a given situation. Later developmental stages build on elemental capacities to distinguish and unite*." (Eigen, 1986) It was the precarious balance of distinguishing and uniting that she was trying to negotiate. I hoped that with time, her capacity to do so would ease her of the anxious impossibility of splitting the two.

"*Over and over, primordial self-consciousness is threatened, dies out and returns. The ministrations of the other support its being. In time the primordial self learns to trust in the merciful interventions of the other. Without help, it cannot face the pain of its needs and after initial wrath-panic, drops into stupor. It is resurrected through the other's care. It repeatedly goes through this cycle of distress, wrath, fear, dying out, and return*

*Since there is as yet no well-developed body image, and no mind-body split can occur, the drama takes place on the plane of the pure self-other feeling. One's whole being is involved without barriers against oneself or chronic self-hardening."* (Eigen, 1986). Though Eigen here is talking of the primordial state of mother-child fusion before the child develops a sense of self, it seemed relevant to think of this state of boundaryless-ness and chronic self hardening in the context of sex work. Perhaps it required a state of being, where barriers against oneself are torn down and an image of the body given up, in order to be able to disavow the shame and violation that accompanies the transgression of these self-boundaries. Was it this state that induced the sudden urgency in T's mother, to be "*resurrected through the other's care*" (ibid). The chronic hardening and inner deadness[8] might have pushed her to a regression that yearned a fusion that ironically, *recovered* her sense of self. This in turn led to an impingement on T and her own set up boundaries against the mother.

Both mother and daughter were stuck in this double bind of being; unable to be alone without the other, yet unable to maintain a self with the other. This was perhaps the condition of such a space, where the mechanization of physical intimacy left an emptiness that gasped for human warmth and a sense of the familial, yet the anxiety of a persecutory other, that can consume and overpower the self, preserves the distance, disconnection and self-hardening. This shifting deployment of boundaries of the self seemed also like a mode of survival in a setting of transgressions.

**Conclusions**

Though this work did not conclude in neat answers to the questions I began with, I was able to make sense of the relevance and critical need of posing those questions. If a 'child' is defined by certain time and space that is mapped out as mature and 'ready', accessible and forbidden, a collapse of this time-space, puts to question the 'child-ness' of this subjecthood. This reopens the dimensions of childhood and society's role towards perpetuating them.

How can we arrive at the image of an ideal mesh that protectively filters out and preservatively keeps in, the inner and outer worlds of the child? If *play* can be that process which allows the child to make sense of its chaotic enmeshment with an adult world, can we imagine/implement such a space for the child in a brothel not as a correction but as *facilitation to the maternal dyad*. Can we relook at the preservation of the fusion fantasy in this setting, as a way of preserving magic and illusion in a space with a deeply disillusioned relationship with reality? Can play with its therapeutic framework; help heal the psychosocial and sexual marginality of the child in this setting?

There appears additionally, a need to question NGO interventions that separate the child from the mother and her environment and perhaps work towards the logistics of a play space that cradles the mother-child-reality triangle and facilitates meaningful relationality and agency in the child. When the child witnesses moments of coyness and flirtation, and enacts them in play, it is perhaps its form of reality-testing a space that becomes in some sense, a transitional object where the child could control and negotiate boundaries of self and other, before playful flirtation becomes real seduction. This is not to imply that play is to provide for a passive acceptance of a defeated state of affairs but rather that, it provides a way to meaningfully and dynamically experiment with reality and access the agency to actively transform it.

It ought *not* to be stated that the child in a brothel, is necessarily in a 'not good enough environment' that exploits its unbounded self-other relation and fantasies of fusion, to preserve a hardening of self-boundaries that bubble wraps an initiation into sex work. Rather this is to imply that we could view this exploitation, preservation and initiation as *conditions of adapting* to an environment of 'sexuation' that is perhaps simply a magnification of certain customary psychosexual patterns in Indian society.

### Notes

1. The brothel is deemed undesirable in its vulgarity, yet its essence is premised on a carnal desirability.

2. Can we perhaps rethink our notions of child and adult spaces and the nature of their interactions, questioning how the time and space for the child holds him/her in a particular subject experience?

3. Additional information on KatKatha can be accessed on their website: www.kat-katha.org Or on their facebook page:www.facebook.com/KatKathaa

4. Original documentation of these sessions and the themes that emerged through them are provided in my MA thesis titled "*Kat-Kathayien; A Playtonic Ethnography of Childhood in a Brothel*".

5. Playing involved group sessions where we would role play according to plots decided by the children or just sit around molding clay or even just talking about their lives. The primary aim was not to have a given agenda or guide their self expression with instructions of games or topics of discussion.

6. It should be mentioned here that by calling the environment one that is 'harsh' or 'overwhelming' is not to assume the qualities of such a marginalized community to be lacking and perverse but it is in terms of the observations of the lack of space that the child is constantly struggling with here.

7. The irresolution that accompanies the state of fusion with the mother, who is initially identified with strongly as an intimate part of the Self.

8. The experience of inner deadness was not deduced based on the nature of the community's work but rather a quality of the emotional expression of coping with their lifestyle for years at end.

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# Rethinking *Critique* At The ‘Edge Of Psychology’: The Role of Gender-Sexuality in Cultural History

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper is an oscillation between three turns towards rethinking critique in psychology through gender-sexuality. The first turn is a turning away from mainstream psychology, seen in its normalizing and interiorizing functions. Towards critical psychology then, that imagines a psycho-social. The second turn is a turn to bring face-to-face mainstream and critical traditions in psychology with cultural specificity in the Indian context. Towards a cultural history of the hijra then, juxtaposed with the transsexual, transgender, intersexed that demonstrates the incompleteness of the mainstream and the critical. The third turn is a turning point in cultural history, where linear stories of hijra history as shaped by colonialism are made difficult through understanding colonialism-as-process. Towards critical cultures and cultural critiques then, a to-and-fro between these turns in order to remain reflexive to the paleonymic weight of history, of culture, of geo-politics in psychology.

**Keywords:** *diagnosis, critical psychology, hijra, colonialism, critical cultures, cultural critiques*

## RETHINKING *CRITIQUE* FROM THE ‘EDGE OF PSYCHOLOGY’: The Role of Gender-Sexuality in Cultural History[1]

To be at the ‘edge of psychology’ implies two things. First, that there exists a mainstream psychology. Second, that there is a particular relation of the edge to mainstream psychology. The first is about establishing the centre of psychology or rendering apparent ‘centrisms’ in psychology. The second is about establishing a relation with that centre, while occupying the margin/edge. For the purposes of this paper, mainstream psychology as it can be seen in the contemporary Indian context comes from two traditions – the first is that of nosology or diagnosis, the second is that of a medical model of treatment and cure (Dhar & Siddiqui, 2013). The first is exemplified by classificatory systems like the DSM and ICD. The second is exemplified by the model of treatment and cure followed by mental hospitals and asylums. Both traditions come together in establishing mainstream psychology; where anything that does not follow the nosological, medical system of psychopathology is relegated to the edges of psychology. These margins include, but are not limited to, certain branches of psychoanalysis[2] faith healing, models of community mental healthcare, and kinds of qualitative psychology. The first section is an attempt to delineate the contours of this mainstream tradition, and establish an elementary relation of this tradition with one possible edge – critical psychology.

### The First Turn to the Critical

Contemporary mainstream psychology relies on psychiatry in order to classify ‘madness’. It also depends on the division of reason and un-reason, which translates into the division between sanity-insanity and normality-abnormality. This tendency to function in binaries becomes important when there is a hierarchy in the relation between the two ends of this binary. With respect to the binary of reason/normality/sanity and unreason/abnormality/insanity, it is the former that is seen as superior (Biswas and Dhar, 2010).

Superiority of reason over unreason emerges in Western Modernity (see Foucault, 1967/1989). The historical process that leads to this development is traced in the *History of Madness*, where reason and unreason are born in their division from each other, separating the sane from the insane. Historically tracing this separation to the exclusion of lepers and the inclusion of plague victims in Medieval Europe, Foucault places the birth of madness between the 15th and 16th Century. This dual principle of inclusion and exclusion works simultaneously in defining today's 'mad' individual, for whom the problem is an excessive and uncontrollable instinct within the self; an instinct based on which she will be excluded from sane, civilized society. The mad individual of contemporary times is *abnormal* due to this instinct, which must henceforth be mapped and controlled by psychiatry, if not corrected entirely (Foucault, 2003). With these developments the structure and function of psychiatry and psychology changes; psychology becomes about maintaining *order* in society– its role becomes one of assisting 'normalization'.

Therefore, the very structure of mainstream psychology is imbued with power due to this superiority over madness, unreason, and abnormality, its perceived *expertise* on the individual, and the inner life, realities, and instincts of the (mad/abnormal) individual (Williams, 1976/1983). This understanding of psychology has certain characteristics such as an emphasis on biology, development of a classification system, emergence of views on causality in relation to madness, and experimental psychology (Carson et al., 2007). For the purpose of this paper, only the feature of classification is examined in detail.

Diagnosis as a classificatory system arises only in 1952. In the 63 years since the DSM and ICD have begun classifying mental illness, disorders have been added, removed, and changed. This can perhaps be taken as a sign of changing norms leading to changes in psychiatry and psychology, as also the ways in which mainstream psychology maintains these norms. For example, the diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria in Children in DSM-5 relies on symptoms which depict children as deviating from 'typically masculine/feminine clothing', rejecting 'typically masculine/feminine toys', and preferring 'cross-gender roles' and engaging in behaviours 'stereotypically' seen as belonging to the other gender. To diagnose Gender Dysphoria in Adolescents and Adults, one symptom includes having 'typical feelings and reactions' of the gender one thinks/believes one is (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). One critique of such symptoms as markers of mental illness is that what is *typically* true, or *normally* acceptable, may be problematic or oppressive, and not to mention, may change over time (Parker et al., 1995).

The above example delineates the first function of mainstream psychology - normalization. Another feature of diagnosis is its reliance on *clinically significant distress and impairment in functioning*, which is about quantifying distress in the abnormal individual. This enables mainstream psychology to maintain its rationale of compassion, inherited from Christian moral antecedents of psychiatry and psychology (Foucault, 1967/1989). Not only is it problematic to localize and quantify distress, due to the nature of mainstream psychology clinically significant distress is always considered as originating within/inside the individual. In such a formulation, the individual who has been diagnosed is seen as *being the problem* (Parker et al., 1995). Cure is imagined as a way of rehabilitating this person so that she no longer remains a problem. Such a framework of diagnosis, therefore, has an *interiorizing* function.

This framework of psychiatry and psychology is problematic in many ways. Diagnosis often does not fit an individual, because 'people are never only "patients" but complex thinking human beings' (Parker et al., 1995, p. 8). Because diagnosis is not able to turn individuals into cookie-cutter versions of mental illness, 'not only are "patients" pathologised by the diagnostic classification itself, but they are further pathologised when they do not fit, because it does not work' (Parker et al., 1995, p. 2). The phenomenon of co-morbidity perhaps illustrates how diagnosis is unable to grasp the complex ways in which human beings suffer.

In addition, mainstream psychology perpetuates an individualization of mental illness, aided by its interiorizing function, which results in contemporary mainstream psychology being seen as a purely personal problem – 'A powerful rhetorical device the DSM and ICD routinely employ in their understanding of distress is to individualize it, so it no longer seems to make sense to consider the gender or race of someone who is being diagnosed' (Parker et al., 1995, p. 37).

The task of any psychology 'at the edges' then, is perhaps to shed light on the fault-lines of mainstream psychology, and highlight its position of power. This is necessary because 'people who are pushed to the edges of what is considered normal [by mainstream psychology] … are positioned, a place is marked out for them, and a set of behaviours and experiences is defined for them' (Parker et al., 1995, p. 39). Individuals are confined to particular positions, most often of powerlessness, through the process of 'othering' that mainstream psychology creates. Through a turn to critical psychology, perhaps the possibilities of opening up the edges of mainstream psychology to more helpful models of care-giving can be generated. Critical psychology may create the possibility of a fundamental shift from the 'mad' individual as being the problem to *having the problem*. This enables an 'exteriorizing' of psychology; makes possible a psychology that is *social* and inter-personal.

## The Second Turn to the Cultural

Mainstream psychology, as seen in the contemporary Indian context, employs concepts and structures that emerged in the West – primarily in English speaking Europe and North America. The critical tradition in psychology also emerges in the West as 'an internal critique of the west's intimate principles' (Dhar and Siddiqui, 2013, p. 1). Given that the mainstream and its critical edge are located within a geo-politics of the West – how much of it converges with the Indian setting? What does the Indian cultural context do to mainstream psychology and its critical edge? Where do these traditions meet? How do they overlap and counter one another? This section of the paper tries to think through these questions using gender-sexuality as the grounds where the mainstream, the critical, and the cultural intersect.

DSM-5 made changes in diagnosing Gender Dysphoria in Children, Adolescents, and Adults. Its corresponding, unchanged diagnosis in ICD-10 is termed 'Transsexualism'. Broadly, a transsexual is an individual who identifies as the opposite sex/gender without any biological cause, along with harbouring desire to undergo surgery to fit their true sense of sex/gender. In order to undergo surgery, most transsexuals have to undergo compulsory psychiatric evaluation and receive a diagnosis of 'Transsexualism' or 'Gender Dysphoria'.

There is a proliferation of terms when referring to individuals who do not think of themselves in congruence with the gender they were assigned at birth. 'Transgender' is used to describe any individual who does not wish to be one's biologically assigned gender, but does not wish to undergo surgery to rectify one's body. The DSM and the ICD distinguish between transsexuals with and without a biologically intersex[3] condition. When these criteria are used in the Indian context, however – the problematic of diagnosis aside (Biswas, 1999; Achuthan, 2002) – they are faced with *hijras*, who may be transsexual, transgender, or intersexed.[4.]

'For the most part, *hijras* are *phenotypic* men who wear female clothing and … [undergo] a sacrificial emasculation – that is, an excision of the penis and testicles – dedicated to the goddess Bedhraj Mata' (Reddy, G., 2006, p. 2). Within Indian society, *hijras* occupy stratified roles with elements of class, caste, sexuality, religion, kinship, and gender performance. They are the 'principle "alternative" sex/gender identity in India – the so-called "*third sex*"' (Reddy, G. & Nanda, S., 2009, p. 275). Politically, socially, economically, and culturally, it is difficult to envision sameness between male-to-female transsexual, transgender, or intersexed individuals and *hijras*, especially since sameness often means an erasure of difference. It seems impossible that they will find a cohabiting space, unless that space is broadly at the margins. But – *the margins of what, and the margins for whom?* Both groups reside outside that which is considered normal and heterosexual, and consequently that which is acceptable.

In the contemporary, *hijras* may be individuals with an intersex condition. Since many *hijras* are intersex, they are seen to occupy a kind of liminal androgynous space which seems to persistently overturn the rigidity of hetero-normative boundaries. There are also those biological men (and we must wonder what is biological about masculinity) who, post castration, *become hijras*. It is here that the categories of the transsexual, transgender, intersex, and *hijra* remain ambivalent in being similar, yet separate. With respect to their liminal hold on the space between masculinity and femininity, we also must remain *in-between* (Achuthan, 2002), or at the cusp of, the two.

Historically, Reddy (2006) finds that the term '*hijra*' first originates in the 16th century with the Mughals. It is with the Mughals we see the prevalence of the 'eunuch', who plays political, religious, or slave roles. It is generally known that eunuchs enjoyed great social prominence under the Mughals and the Islamic Sultanates. There is evidence of sacred societies of *hijras* at Mecca and Medina; it seems hijras, despite their slave status, enjoyed immense power in those times.

By the 18th century, the *hijra* gets *identified* in different ways. *Hijras* began to be looked at as 'one among the scores of castes/tribes in India that were stratified according to gender and religion' (Reddy, 2006, p. 25). 'They were classified and registered along with other "criminal castes", *a new category of being* in the discourse and polity of Colonial India' (Reddy, 2006, p. 36. Italics mine). Highlighting the *hijra* as criminal and abnormal made space for control and legislation of *hijras* in terms of sexual work (Article 377 of the Indian Penal Code, for example), and asexual work which put under surveillance their singing, dancing, and other public acts. 'As hereditary castes, their bodies and their labour were to be regulated, surveilled, and controlled; in effect made into *"docile bodies"*' (Reddy, 2006, p. 27. Italics mine).

At this historical point we see discourse on body and gender-sexuality shift from its earlier polymorphosity to colonial linearity. In a culture where the collective unconscious seems replete with symbols of androgyneity, like the figure of the *ardhanarishwara* in mythology (Kakar, 1989), we now see a significant shift to abnormality with regard to the *hijra*. The previous tolerance, even prevalence, of the 'third' gender/sex is seen to now being 'suppressed with the coming of the Western philosophies of binarism' (Achuthan, 2002, p. 420). How did this suppression, take place? Is a simple understanding of colonial dominance enough to explain the collective psychic shift that categorized the redefined margins of gender-sexuality?

Through this version of history of the *hijra* in the Indian context, this paper attempts to do two things. The first is to demonstrate the inability of a predominantly Western model of diagnosis to grapple with Indian reality, which was the first turn. The second is to attempt to explain that a critical tradition, also born in the West (and about the West) may prove inadequate in dealing with cultural specificities. However, this version of history which draws a linear narrative – where colonialism is seen as a break/rupture in Indian socio-cultural and political configurations due to which criminalization and exclusion of the *hijra* emerges – leads us to the next section.

**The Third Turn to Critical Cultures/Cultural Critiques**

> *'It is now time to turn to the second form of colonization, the one which at least six generations of the Third World have learnt to view as a prerequisite for their liberation. This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds' (Nandy, 1983, p. 11. Italics mine).*

To think that the White Man came to India, ruled us, changed our discourse, shifted our traditional axes, and left when there was nothing to plunder is to have, perhaps, a simplistic understanding of colonialism. Here, colonialism becomes a thing, reified within history, as opposed to being seen as process. In this violent sense, the colonizer-colonized have a relationship based on activity-passivity, with the colonized as only passive, and the colonizer as only aggressive.

Deconstructively, the colonizer-colonized do not precede the process of colonization. This implies that:

> *'The contingent of colonialism has to be produced, produced discursively out of the infinitude of overdetermined processes. The contingent of colonialism is in itself a process; another process produced out of the mutual constitutivity of processes. In fact, colonialism is the provisional name given to a particular process, a particular relation; a (dis)position' (Dhar, 2007, p. 2. Italics in the original).*

The process of colonization itself ensures the creation of the colonized and the colonizer, with premium given to dissemination of meaning, to the way in which one culture determines, or over-determines aspects of another culture. This complicates the process of colonialism, creating space to question what colonialism means – political or psychological hegemony. For Khanna (2007):

> *'the power of colonialism lay … [in the] emergence of a 'subjectivity' that brought about a point where the colonized started understanding them'selves' in the same terms as the colonizers understood them; this, in turn being a paler version of the way in which the colonizers understood themselves' (p. 168).*

This paper tilts towards an understanding of colonialism as an internalized psychological process, not merely a politico-economic one. This internalization, perhaps, happens through *language*. For Dhar (2007), '[w]e arrive at colonial hegemony through an appreciation of language that emerges as *hegemonic* (albeit contingent) and language that remains *repudiated*, that remains as the realm of the unspoken' (p. 3. Italics in the original). This is the language of the DSM and ICD, of mainstream psychology that creates binaries and othering.

Gender-sexuality becomes a category being re-constituted through colonialism as process. For Nandy (1983), to legitimize cultures of violence and exploitation in post-Medieval European models, the homology colonizers bring to us is one that discounts bisexuality in favour of hyper-masculinity:

> *'[t]he change in consciousness that took place can be briefly stated in terms of three concepts which became central to colonial India: purusatva (the essence of masculinity), naritva (the essence of femininity), and klibatva (the essence of hermaphroditism). The polarity defined by the autonomous Purusatva and Naritva was gradually supplanted, in the colonial culture of politics, by the antonyms of purusatva and klibatva; femininity-in-masculinity was now perceived as the final negation of a man's political identity, a pathology more dangerous than femininity itself' (Nandy, 1983, p. 7-8. Italics in the original).*

Hyper-masculinity as negation-of-femininity was internalized by the colonized. The *Kshatriya* became the prototype of the 'ideal' man, and eventually Indians gained a 'second order legitimacy' from the British, becoming a colony that valorised aggression, masculinity, achievement, competition, and control. Hermaphroditism was slowly imbued with a threat, or danger (paralleling 19th Century Europe). Through a creation of such premium on male dominance, 'colonialism was not seen as an absolute evil. For the subjects, it was a product of one's own emasculation and defeat in legitimate power politics' (Nandy, 1983, p. 10). This fear of emasculation and its newfound meaning as powerlessness and helplessness is vital in understanding contemporary society's attitude towards the hijra, and to some extent, the transsexual, transgender, or intersexed person.

Within colonization, 'there is a multiplicity of ways in which ideas about sex and the politics of sex are being negotiated, at multiple sites, in different languages and idioms and for different political objectives' (Khanna, 2007, p. 166). This multiplicity suffuses us through the body and through the mind/psyche, to the extent that ' "sexuality" as though refers to something seemingly *inside* the person that defines a person's identity … [emerging] as a central constituent in the ontology of the post-colonial subject' (Khanna, 2007, p. 166-167. Italics in the original). Just as language becomes one register through which the discourse of gender-sexuality is re-constituted, another register is that of medicine. '[T]he idea of sexuality as personhood was most strongly articulated through bio-medical discourse, a mere century ago, where bio-medicine ascribed itself the authority to speak the "truth" about sex and desire' (Khanna, 2007, p. 176). This is the bio-medical model that also informs classificatory systems like the DSM and the ICD, which we have already seen as defining the contours of mainstream psychology, and consequently, "patienthood" and "abnormality".

What 'colonialism-as-process' does, however, is that it establishes the porosity of cultures. A historical tradition that experiences colonialism as a break that reconstitutes identities, categories, and personhood for the worse is rendered problematic. This is not to deny reconstitution of identities and categories, but to ensure that we do not fall into an easy celebration of Indian puritanical traditions, nor an unthought-of universalism. In the context of the *hijra* for example:

'While the hijra must be seen as a person facing increasing marginalization in the context of diminishing spaces of understanding for transgender categories that are not in transition, and as a person who is speaking more and more in the language she must speak under the gaze of the medical and legal discourses, an oppositional celebration of early Hindu androgyny will probably not stand the test in a culture with a long and oppressive history of patriarchal norms expounded in the same manuscripts and myths' (Achuthan, 2002, p. 420).

Thus, a simple cultural intervention in the mainstream traditions of psychology, or gender-sexuality theory is perhaps inadequate.

## Beyond Three Turns: A Conclusion

It remains difficult to assimilate what I have provisionally called the 'three turns' throughout this paper. Critical psychology, the *first turn*, is an edge of mainstream psychology and its structures of power and institutions of normalization. However, research that is unable to grapple with cultural specificities is therefore incomplete, and often misleading. What is on offer then, in a critical tradition in India, is perhaps cultural critique; the *second turn*. Cultural critiques though, sometimes take an easy turn to glorification of traditions that may have existed in one version of history. A universalism of the longing for a glorified past makes the present a dangerous territory. Thus the *third turn* to critical cultures. These three turns are also not *linear steps*, but a back-and-forth, a kind of to-and-fro[5] between each other. From the critical to the cultural … and back …

**Notes**

1. The ideas developed in this paper owe acknowledgment to Dr. Mamatha Karollil, Dr. Anup Dhar, Sabah Siddiqui, Kimberly Lacroix, Karuna Chandrasekhar, Dr. Rukmini Sen, Sappho for Equality, CUSP at CSCS, Bangalore, and School of Human Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi.

2.Psychoanalysis, by virtue of being psychoanalysis, is not at the 'edge of psychology'. Psychoanalysis has numerous strands, including those that rely on the medical model (Tutter, 2006), and those that mimic most of the fault-lines of mainstream psychology. However, psychoanalysis also possesses the ability to be at the edge. This requires a different understanding of psychoanalysis, of psychoanalytic practice, and of the divide of normal-abnormal (Parker et al., 1995). Later sections of this paper take some of these thoughts forward.

3. 'Intersex variations are congenital differences in reproductive parts and/or secondary sexual characteristics, and/or variations invisible to the eye such as chromosomal or hormonal differences' (LABIA, 2013).

4. When these terms are being used with reference to hijras, for the purposes of this paper, these terms connote only male-to-female transsexual and transgender categories. This paper is not on those individuals who were assigned female at birth, and do not believe they are so.

5. Here, one can invoke Freud's metaphor of the fort-da, which he inaugurated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1955/1920). 'Freud describes a game his grandson invented at the age of one and a half. He used to throw small objects away from him, and then say "*o-o-o-o.*" He also took a wooden reel attached to a piece of string, and threw it over the edge of his cot, so that it disappeared. After saying "*o-o-o-o*," he would pull it back to himself and say, "*Da*." Freud understood him to be saying *Fort* and *Da* (German for *gone* and *there*)' (Dhar, 2010, p. 1). This invokes the duality of absence-presence for Freud, but can also convey a sense of time and space that is non-linear and more attuned to a kind of psychoanalytic (and deconstructive) time-space, determined by past events, subjectivities, closures, traces, erasures, and so on.

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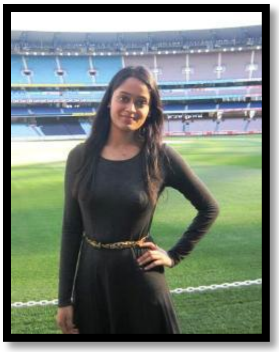
**Note:** In last year's The Learning Curve, the article titled "Cricket Team of Life", the citation provided was incorrect. The correct citation is:

Carmichael, L., Sardana, S. & Ananth, P., Dhingra, M., Kothari, F., Vaidya, S.

# About the Authors



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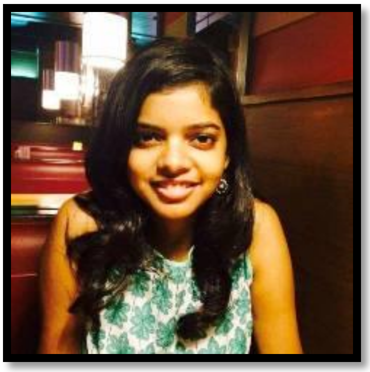

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