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CROSS- CULTURAL ENTITLEMENT AND RESILIENCE: A SUGGESTION FOR WESTERN COGNITIVE THERAPY

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Abstract

The focus of this review is to qualitatively research the cross- national dissonance between psychiatric findings suggesting that affluent countries of the West suffer a greater prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders as compared to countries of the Developing world that are proven more resilient. The author of the paper has aggregated the multiple definitions of resilience, has detected examples of its disparity across different countries and has analyzed cognitions of the developing world that are reinforcing it, differences in cognition between the Developing and the Western world as well as a sense of entitlement and other cognitions of the Western world that counteract it. Through a parallel analysis of entitlement - based cognitions of the Western world and of adaptive cognitions of the Developing world, the author suggests a resilience- promoting cognitive therapy route, in which the latter can act as superior alternatives to the former.

Keywords

Cross- Cultural Research, Maladaptive Cognitions, Entitlement, Adaptive Cognitions, Resilience

1. Introduction

The *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2014* report, classifies the countries of the world based on their financial resources, their ability to cover their versatile national needs and

their potential of growth. Through this spectrum, the world consists of *Developed Economies*, *Economies in Transition* and *Developing Economies*. Additionally, countries are deciphered based on their status as being at war or at peace (Country classification, 2014). Another world-based release, the *World Mental Health Survey* attests to a coincident difference in the extent to which psychological disorders have prevailed in these countries, a distinctness often attributed to the dissimilar cultural beliefs burgeoning in each geographical location. Despite the peaceful and financially prosperous circumstances of countries in the American and European continent (Bieda et al., 2017), the levels of depression and anxiety are paramouly greater in them as compared to these maladies' presence in territories carrying the onus of war, negotiation of national borders and financial unpredictability. With statistical findings corroborating the idea that mood and anxiety disorders find fertile soil in economic fortune and political security, Asian and African countries show little susceptibility to these disorders (Heim, Wegman & Maercher, 2017), while disorders that do exist, such as Post Traumatic and specifically post war, Stress Disorder are overcome much faster than they are in countries of prosperity (Kessler, 2017).

The focus of this literature review is to research the cross-national dissonance between these psychiatric standings based on the concept of resilience. The author of the paper has aggregated the multiple definitions of resilience, has detected examples of disparity in resilience based on country of origin and has analyzed cognitions of the developing world that are reinforcing resilience, differences in cognition between the Developing and the Western world and a sense of entitlement and other cognitions of the Western world that counteract resilience. Through a parallel analysis of entitlement - based cognitions of the Western world and of adaptive cognitions of the Developing world, the author suggests a cognitive therapy route, in which the latter can act as superior alternatives to the former.

2. The Concept of Resilience

The findings of the aforementioned surveys may impress the reader as opaque. Why is it that people of the Developed world - that the author will from now on be referring to as the Western world - are more vulnerable to depression and anxiety than are humans of the developing world that are continuously confronted with war or other terrorizing, health-hazardous conditions? To this question, the exploration of the idea of a differing level of resilience might be elucidative. Before evaluating whether this difference in resilience is, in fact, existent, an accumulation of the definitions of resilience is necessary.

With much literature attempting to grasp its essence, resilience has been described as a developmental output (Johnston et al., 2015), a personality feature (Liu, Reed & Girard, 2017), an advanced form of coping that only takes positive forms (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013), or the antagonist of susceptibility (Eshel & Kimhi, 2016). For there to be resilience, trauma is required. Described as a catastrophe, a conflict, or a confrontation, this is an event that disrupts the normal progression of a person's life, resulting to a possible activation of one's resilience mechanisms (Chmitorz et al., 2018). After this disruption, resilience is a pathway to adaptation, identified as the ability to safeguard one's psychological stability and to progress in life (Nolty, Bosch, An, Clements & Buckwalter, 2018), as well as to eschew maladaptive ways of dealing, such as alcohol or drug misuse or some form of delinquency (Rudzinski, McDonough, Gartner & Strike, 2017). Linked to acute life disruptions, resilience has been shown to develop most in a milieu either of limited challenging occurrences or of ongoing struggles such as in countries that have been war zones for years on end (Liu et al., 2017). Contrarily, countries that have been peaceful or taxed by conflict only once do not provide a burgeoning land for resilience.

Factors that favor the maturation of a resilient individual have been described as multi-faceted and oscillating from corporal attributes such as physical robustness, to calm psychological reactions, a composed behavior, a sense of appreciation for life, a belief in god or higher powers to a feeling of determination and of ambition (Nolty et al., 2018). In like manner, a person's locus of control which can be described as their understanding of the forces that determine their life can also affect resilience. More specifically, a belief that someone capable such as a political leader or a deity is safeguarding them, or the belief that they are in charge of their future, that motivates action is highly correlated to plasticity and endurance to difficulties (Munoz, Brady & Brown, 2017).

Besides single human beings, resilience can bloom in greater institutions such as in governments as a whole (Haimes, 2009), as well as in people who work with individuals affected by a traumatic event and are thus indirectly exposed to the infectious source of disquietude (Adamson, Beddoe & Davys, 2012). Notwithstanding the ambidexterity of the attempts to its definition, resilience is an academically acknowledged matter that has even been subjected to efforts for its quantification through the use of scales such as the Essential Resilience Scale developed in 2015 (Chen, Wang & Yan, 2015) and has also been described as a phenomenon apparent not in uniform expressions but in a continuum, from low to high (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter - Brick & Yehuda, 2014).

3. Trauma and Resilience

As mentioned above, resilience arises as a response to a traumatic experience (Etain & al., 2017). In the context of this essay, trauma is perceived as the product of one or many occurrences or of an assembly of conditions that was sensed by a human being as pernicious or menacing to his or her corporal or sentimental structure and that has resulted in persisting negative consequences to his or her operations as well as to their bodily, affective, theological or community-based sense of welfare (Stover & Keeshin, 2016). Occurrences defined as traumatic are events that are clearly different from other ones, perceived by the individual as normal and that are emotionally experienced in this way, they are based on external conditions such as a natural disaster, they can have negative effects on people who have only witnessed them and not experienced them such as a witness of rape and that either are or are experienced as debilitating, unavoidable or uncontrollable by the person surviving them (Streets, 2015). Traumatic events vary from polemical combat (Goral, Lahad & Aharonson - Daniel, 2017), to relational assault that can be targeting a human's body or emotions, environmental calamities and terrorizing bloodsheds (Southwick et al., 2014). With the aforementioned forms of traumatizing events being mostly associated with the experiences of the Developing world, the Western world has until recently been facing traumatic events such as the unanticipated passing away of a familial person, an occupational mishap that could result to grave physical injury, parental indifference, terminal diseases, car accidents or multiple forms of domiciliary conflict, physical and psychological (Wamser - Nanney & Vandenberg, 2013).

Traumas of ubiquitous quality, all coincide to their association with emotional ache, a persistent and disconcerting feeling linked to a sense of personal ineptness and inferiority to external circumstances (Meerwijk & Weiss, 2011). Beyond this feature, trauma can be embodied in different manifestations such as an action deliberated from one person to another, such as a personal attack for revenge, that has more persistent negative effects than a non-targeted event such as an earthquake (Wamser - Nanney & Vandenberg, 2013). Trauma can also be bifurcated in an objective experience and a subjective one. The former, refers to events such as a robbery, a rape or a war battle that has its foundations in real life events. The latter, addresses the effect that either actual (as the ones mentioned before) or fictitious events have on a person's life story and the extent to which they are perceived as a pivotal point of their personal life's narrative (Boals, 2018).

Measured through questionnaires (Lang & Connell, 2017) as in the case of resilience, trauma surfaces in the Western world, mostly among marginalized populations such as in racial minorities (Kerig, Bennett, Chaplo, Modrowski & McGee, 2016) or in social deviants (McCleary & Figley, 2017), in the United States of America. In the developing world however, trauma is omnipresent, affecting the majority, if not the entirety of the population. More importantly, the ever-proliferating magnitude of wars, poverty and other of life's gravest plagues has given rise to a particular type of trauma, named Complex Trauma that is never ending, beginning from childhood and evolving well within the expectations of these people's futures. While trauma has been repeatedly linked to the precipitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the field of psychiatry, chronic trauma has suggested the addition of disorders such as "Developmental Trauma Disorder" in the diagnostic manuals of the field (Wamser - Nanney & Vandenberg, 2013). Along the vein of this research, what remains to be clarified is thus not the type of qualitative distinction between Western and Developing world traumas but the reasons why the former are evidently less resilient to their misfortunes than the latter who do not develop mood and anxiety disorders post or during conflict.

4. Cognitions of the Developing World Reinforcing Resilience

In trying to pinpoint the reasons why citizens of disadvantaged societies are more resilient to some types of psychological disorders, research unanimously proposes their ability to adjust better than fortunate individuals can (Ungar, 2012). In the case of immigrant children for example, this adjustability can be defined as a general exhibition of welfare in regard to the developmental expectations based on their age, their social and familial relationships, the everyday activities they engage in, in their new surroundings, as well as their ability to combine their own cultural values with the values inherent to the country they have settled in (Motti - Stefanidi, 2018). Reinforcing to this capacity to adapt, are motivating factors such as educational opportunities for refugees and security - granting factors such as the provision of housing for resettled individuals (Masten, 2014). Research on the ways in which the adjustment - required for the presence of resilience - is achieved, has emphasized the cognitive factors employed by challenged populations during and after specific crises. In the case of Afghani people dealing with war and impecunious resources, a sense of dedication to their country and to their family was able to aid them in successfully adapting to catastrophes. By creating a simple storyline regarding their traumatic experiences which they did not dwell on, they found hope in their

future by renegotiating their personal aims in order to face the communal disaster faced by their people (Panter - Brick, 2015).

The example of adaptability and resilience created by individuals after times of armed conflict, has also emphasized the role of a strong sense of religiosity (Norris & Anbarasu, 2017), trusting political and governmental proxies (Bleich, 2017), maintaining a feeling of solidarity between their cultural relatives (Mccleary & Figley, 2017), cherishing their cultural beliefs (Berger, 2017) and appreciating the values of hosting societies in the case of relocation (Motti - Stefanidi, 2018), in aiding the prosperous survival of humans that have faced death threats. Enlightening to this review, are also the examples of the cognitions incorporated in the lines of thinking of people during war. In a time of ongoing dread, when the fear of death is not an abstract concept but a graspable reality, emphasis on survival of the self along with the community, a sense of duty to their people (Senesh, 2017), a sense of personal capacity to overcome unimaginable circumstances (Corzine et al., 2017), as well as a wish to lose as less as possible (Berger, 2017) has also raised well - adjusted and resilient humans.

With the intention to propose the utilization of cross - cultural information in the substantiation of successful treatment plans of mood and anxiety disorders of Western individuals, that have not undergone such violent conditions, an assembly of cognitions that favor adjustability and resilience is created. These include the willingness to deal with marginalization and to process the harassing messages that are addressed to them, as suggested by the experiences of refugees in unwelcoming countries (Motti - Stefanidi, 2018), the deliberate effort to safeguard their own sense of identity, independently of the probable disrespect they may be facing through attacks of war enemies for instance (Berger, 2017), the appreciation of a life meaning that they believe that they will fulfil no - matter the impediments found in their ways (Corzine et al., 2017), the emotional distancing of themselves from the experiences of people who have faced even worse circumstances, such as of the people who suffered deadly injuries in a war zone, with the reminder that life could even worse for them (Dekel, 2017) and finally and most interestingly, the developing world's populations facing life difficulties and struggles as a given that is to be expected, thus incapacitating it from bearing with it the disastrous effects of an unexpected event (Rudzinski, McDonough, Gartner & Strike, 2017).

5. Differences in Cognition between the Developing and the Western World

Consistent with the findings that suggest a dissonance in levels of resilience between privileged and underprivileged populations (Ungar, 2012) is the scientific claim that cross-

cultural cognitions differ among these groups. Attributed to the decipherable cultural values that these ways of thinking are built upon, different cognitions are exhibited through information processing, decision making, logical thinking and speech deliveries (Oyserman, 2016). The three main axes along which international cognitive discord is detected have to do with priority setting, work ethic and the arrest of over-demanding cognitive efforts. Regarding priorities, while Western people value their professional aspirations over all, residents of war zones or refugees seek safety over a profession that will be relevant to their training, potential or aspirations (Campion, 2018). As for work ethic, tried humans believe that progress and survival is only succeeded through hard work and determination, while Westerns emphasize favorable working conditions and augmented levels of life satisfaction resulting from their vocational activities (Obschonka, Hahn, ul Habib & Bajwa, 2018). Lastly, an important cognitive characteristic of people such as immigrants or refugees is that of trusting a narrative regarding their past, without ruminating on it, unlike the tendency of Western individuals to seek cognitive confidence in their reasoning of their life's events (Kashima et al., 2017).

6. Entitlement and Cognitions of the Western World Counteracting Resilience

Agreeing with the detected cross-national difference in cognitions, the Developing world expects misfortune (Oyserman, 2016), people of the West feel entitled to safety, human and legal rights, health, opportunities, prosperity and happiness (Green et al., 2017). It is in fact this sense of entitlement, that the author promotes as the main counteracting agent of adaptability and resilience in the Western world, based on previous research that views this tendency as susceptibility to the development of mental disorders, through the un-fulfilment of one's anticipations and the feelings of distress and anger, associated with such a disappointing circumstance (Grubbs & Exline, 2016).

On a psychological level, entitlement has been defined as a dominant belief of being special and deserving, associated with disproportionate demands from one's surrounding environment (Grubbs & Exline, 2016), or else, a feeling that one deserves to be celebrated without the substantiation of an achievement (Stronge, Cichocka & Sibley, 2016). Often comorbid with disorders such as narcissistic personality disorder (Zemojtel - Piotrowska et al., 2015), entitlement has been academically deciphered in several subtypes. More specifically, entitlement has been described as active, with a person acting to safeguard their legal rights based on the belief that they deserve them, passive, with an emphasis placed on the actions of others to safeguard such rights or revengeful with trying to counteract a violation of these rights

through aggressive behavioral responses (Zemojtel - Piotrowska et al., 2015). As for the fields in which it has proliferated, entitlement has also been conceptualized as romantic, taking place between couples (Grubbs, Cambell, Exline 2016), sexual, being expressed through forms of sexual forceful acts such as rape (Richardson, Simons & Futris, 2016), generational, with millennials being described as a self-centered, non-altruistic generation as compared to their ancestors (Ayudhya & Smithson, 2016), spiritual, with people believing that God is indebted to their personal service (Grubbs, Exline, 2017) and academic (Lemke, Marx & Dundes, 2017), emphasizing on quantifiable recognition of one's deservingness that is uncorroborated by according performances (Knepp, 2016) and disqualifying any provider of negative evaluations (Holderness, Olsen & Thornock, 2016).

With entitlement being prevalent mostly among right-wing voters (Knepp, 2016) and among White males based on what has been recognized as an effort to extend their dominance over colonized territories (Hall, 2004), the phenomenon has been established on the grounds of a feeling of victimization of a person who believes that they have been mistreated in the past, for example from their parents (Tolmacz, Efrati & Ben - David, 2016). The most effective contender of entitlement has been self-efficacy, or else a sense that one can handle a demanding situation (Credo, Lanier, Matherne & Cox, 2016).

With academic consensus being formed around the idea that entitlement is a cognitive structure, the author of this research suggests the realization of a link existing between this construct and some of the Cognitive Theory's popular cognitive distortions, the maladaptive ways of thinking that precipitate psychological distress and the onset of mental disorders (Peters et al., 2014). The cognitive distortions at play in the case on entitlement are the sense of always being right, blaming, emotional reasoning, the fallacy of fairness, overgeneralizing, personalizing, making "should" statements and splitting (Beck, 2016). In the following section of this article, the author suggests a parallel review of these maladaptive cognitions and the aforesaid adaptive cognitions of resilient humans of the Developing world in order to create a framework for Cognitive therapy.

7. Entitlement - Based Maladaptive Cognitions and Resilience - Promoting Adaptive Cognitions: A Suggestion for Cognitive Therapy in the West

Aiming at drawing a therapeutic outline for clients suffering from depressive or anxiety disorders in the West, the author abides to the idea that cognitive procedures are pivotal not only in creating but also in mitigating psychological distress and symptoms of these mental illnesses.

Given the central role of thinking processes in the onset and the progression of such pathologies, *cognitive restructuring*, or else, the identification, negotiation and replacement of maladaptive cognitions with more adaptive ones (Beck, 2016) is suggested, through a parallel analysis of entitlement - based cognitions of the Western world and of these of the Developing world that could act as the formers' superior alternatives. In particular, the author has matched cognitions in the following order:

- A sense of *always being right*, a tendency to *blame others* for misgivings and *overgeneralizing* can be replaced by the protection of one's sense of identity. Entitlement may lead to the cognitions supporting the idea that one can never be wrong, that any fault is attributed to the actions of others and thus no personal responsibility should be taken, as well as the idea that one is special or perfect which is thought of as being adamant and unquestionable on all levels of a person's existence (Beck, 2016), whether it be their personal relationships, their educational environment through academic entitlement, or their work (Stronge, et al., 2016). Through gaining perspective to the insight of challenged individuals who have exhibited a strong sense of self in becoming or in being proven resilient, a Western man or woman may understand that believing in oneself does not mean cherishing their existence and bypassing all shortcomings. In refugees and asylum seekers for example, one's self is inextricably bound to responsibility to their community and to the exigent need for not only becoming altruistic but for potentially sacrificing their own lives for the protecting of more people. To humans of the developing world, the self is the protector of the collectivity and no soil for egoism to grow, remains exposed.
- *Emotional reasoning* can be replaced by emotional distancing. Judging a circumstance's rightfulness or wrongfulness based only on one's emotional reaction, or else, their intuition and gut feeling (Beck, 2016), can be readdressed through the technique of deciphering one's self and temporarily insulating their emotional reactions to extreme stress, applied by survivors of war who have suffered the desiccation of their relatives, their friends, their societal bonds and their sense of home and belonging in the battlefield. For these individuals, thinking that life could be worse or even no-longer existent had they been in the place of the deadly victims helps them gain perspective and hold distance from an unimaginable source of pain, horror and insecurity. If survivors of such experiences can safeguard their sanity through emotionless reasoning, the fallacious idea

that every event should carry with it an emotional burden for an entitled individual of the West who feels inclined to emotionally react to most events, such as in the case of depression (Tolmacz et al., 2016) may grow un-stabilized.

- Adhering to an *either/ or attitude* that views the world as either *completely benevolent or completely malevolent* can be replaced by trying to find meaning in one's life in uncertain, volatile and ambiguous environments. While citizens of the Developing world have been described to successfully fathom the idea of a collusion of the good and the bad in a world where their villages are bombarded by they still insist on believing in the ties of their community and in the power of their people through solidarity, the Western world's seek of an all- good over an all- bad surrounding (Beck, 2016) has yet to be dismayed. Feeling entitled to safety, happiness, human and legal rights, health and prospects (Grubbs & Exline, 2016), people of the West believe in a benevolent world as long as their demands are intact. In the case however when a traumatizing event such as a rape or a robbery disrupts this serenity, they tend to review the world as a malevolent structure. Being able to appreciate however the coexistence of serendipity with misfortune, they may grow more adaptive and resilient to trying events, to keep pursuing their hopes and dreams despite conflict and to still grow, following the example of the Developing world.
- *Seeking celebration for minor or for no achievements* at all, as well as *insisting on a way that things "should" be*, can be replaced by a willingness to work harder and to expect, process and adjust to events that did not unfold in the way that they anticipated, as in the case of ever- relocating refugees who enter a new country only to be sent to another one and not knowing what they future has in hold for them. As mentioned earlier, people of the West who desire "a trophy" without performing in a praiseworthy way (Stronge et al., 2016), as well as people who believe that they should be given equal opportunities with others for example (Beck, 2016), can learn from underprivileged individuals who know no other way that extremely hard work to rebuilt and recreate lives that they had but that they were forced to let go of and who also are not accustomed to having their human and legal rights granted for them since before they were born. The suggestion here is not that political rights should not be sought after far all humans of the world, but rather that the experience of individuals who not only were not entitled to them but who have also never

imagined such liberties, can give perspective to Westerns who view rights as givens and not as privileges (Zemojtel - Piotrowska et al., 2017).

- Lastly, the *misbelief that life should be equitable* can be replaced by the valuable life-stance of viewing conflict, misfortune and adversity as something to be expected and not as an entirely disrupting force with unmanageable effects on a person's life. Even though fighting for equal rights among populations and celebrating an equitable community may be noble causes, the belief that as citizens of the West we are entitled or, we deserve, fairness can bear with it a great source of disappointment once unfairness arises (Beck, 2016). In a world however where war is prevalent and unfairness is the status quo, citizens are seen to be resilient to disappointment, not only by not surrendering to mood and anxiety disorders but also by being willing to handle unfairness through trying even harder than they did before, through developing entrepreneurial initiatives for example (Campion, 2018). Through the lack of entitlement, the anticipation of disappointment and the willingness to work with what life brings to them, disadvantaged people can operate as role models to people of the West who feel immobilized and incapacitated after minor, or grave afflictions.

The aim of this review is not to attack Western populations suffering from mood or anxiety disorders as consisted of entirely entitled individuals whose cognitive distortions have led to their suffering. While a manifestation of psychopathology can be multifactorial and better explained through an inconclusive integrative approach that takes into account the psychological, cognitive, behavioral, biological and environmental ingredients of such symptoms, viewing the lack of resilience exhibited in the West through a cognitive lens and linking it with the concept of entitlement can be helpful among others, in creating an innovative therapeutic plan for a client suffering from mood or anxiety disorders in a stable, affluent and opportunity- providing environment. Examining the cognitive standpoints of disadvantaged individuals of the Developing world, may be proven an invaluable source of cognitive replacements of maladaptive thoughts, with views that aid the adjustment and thus resilience to conditions that could otherwise trigger the onset of a depressive or anxiety disorder.

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